



University of Zurich

Department of Psychology, Personality and Assessment

## Invitation to a guest-lecture by



**Prof. Dr. Ruut Veenhoven**, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Title: Greater happiness for a greater number: How can that be achieved?

Day: Thursday, September 25, 2008

Time: 10-12 am

Room: BIN-1-D.22, Binzmühlestrasse 14/7, 8050 Zürich

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### Abstract

There is growing support for the idea that we should aim at greater happiness for a greater number. Yet there are also qualms about the reality value of that ambition: some doubt that enduring happiness is possible at all in the human condition and others claim that we cannot get any happier than we are. There is also much skepticism about the possibility of planned promotion of happiness. These doubts are reviewed and rejected. It is argued that happiness can be furthered by improving the livability of society as well as by strengthening the life-abilities of individuals. One of the options in the latter approach is helping people to make more informed choices by investigating long-term consequences on happiness.

### Relevant references

Ed Diener, Richard Lucas & Christie Napa. *Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill*. American Psychologist, 2006, Vol. 61, 305 – 314).

Bruce Headey, *Subjective Well-Being: Revisions to Dynamic Equilibrium Theory using National Panel Data and Panel Regression Methods*. Social Indicators Research, 2006, Vol. 79, 369 - 403

Ruut Veenhoven, *Grösseres Glück für eine grössere Zahl von Menschen: Ist das in Deutschland möglich?* In: Beate Hentschel & Gisela Staupe (Hg.) Glück - Welches Glück? Carl Hansen Verlag, 2008, München, S. 107-115

Ruut Veenhoven *Measures of Gross National Happiness*. Presentation at OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy. Roundtable on 'Measuring Happiness and making Policy', June 27-30 2007

Ruut Veenhoven *Healthy happiness: Effects of happiness on physical health and the consequences for preventive health care* Accepted for publication in Journal of Happiness Studies

World Database of Happiness: Continuous register of scientific research on subjective enjoyment of life Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

### Short biography

Ruut Veenhoven (1942) studied sociology. He is also accredited in social psychology and social-sexology. Veenhoven is emeritus professor of 'social conditions for human happiness' at Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Netherlands. He is director of the 'World Database of Happiness' (<http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>) and editor of the Journal of Happiness Studies (<http://www.springer.com>). Veenhoven's research is mainly on 'happiness', which he defines as the subjective enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole. One line of research is *Happiness and Public Choice*, the purpose of which is to build an evidence basis for policies that aim at greater happiness for a greater number. In this line, he tries to identify in what kind of societies people live happiest. Next to nations he also considers the happiness revenues of institutions, such as schools and care homes. Another research line is *Happiness and Private Choice*, and the purpose is here to build an evidence base on which individuals can draw when faced with major life choices, such as having children or early retirement. In this line, Veenhoven gathers the results of long-term follow-up studies and initiates large scale follow-ups using the Day Recall Method. Major publications are 'Conditions of happiness' (1984), 'Happiness in nations' (1993) 'Happy life-expectancy' (1997) 'The four qualities of life' (2000) and 'Healthy happiness' (2007). Veenhoven has also published on abortion, voluntary childlessness and marriage.