This lecture highlights recent developments in international and comparative happiness, with particular focus on work, marriage and family in Japan. Our empirical study uses large-scale international data set to examine the determinants of happiness in a comparative perspective. We hypothesize that welfare states redistribute happiness among policy-targeted demographic groups in these countries. We apply multi-level modeling and focus on public social expenditures (as percentage of GDP) as proxy measures of state intervention at the macro-level, and happiness as the specific measure of welfare outcome at the micro-level. We find that aggregate happiness is not greater in the welfare states, but happiness closely reflects the redistribution of resources in these countries. Happiness is “transferred” from low-risk to high-risk individuals. For example, women with small children are significantly happier, but single persons are significantly less happy in the welfare states. This suggests that pro-family ideology of the welfare states protects families from social risk and improves their well-being at the cost of single persons. Further, we find that the happiness gap between high versus low-income earners is considerably smaller in the welfare states, suggesting that happiness is transferred from the privileged to the less privileged.

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The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on Thursday, December 13, 2012 at 6.30 p.m. at the DIJ. Admission is free, please register at: forum@dijtokyo.org or

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