Social investments in a life course perspective: Nordic public policies, perspectives and experiences

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The Nordic model

• Equality has high priority
• Two career and single earner model
• Large state responsibility for welfare
• From cradle to grave
• Generous benefits and good benefits in kind
• Decentral delivery of benefits
• Financing models differ
The welfare bus: dynamic perspectives

First perspective: Who are in the bus for how long?
Second perspective: Intergenerational risk transmission
Social investments over the life course: Policies, returns and transitions

Types of returns

Types of policies

Transitions between life stages

Social investments over the life course: Policies, functional capacity and socioeconomic trajectories

- Life course
- Functional capacity
- Range of function in individuals
- Rehabilitation
- Maintenance highest possible level of function
- Preventing disability and maintaining independence
- Disability threshold
- Facilitating transitions between life stages
- ≈ socioeconomic status

- Growth and development
- Policies, functional capacity and socioeconomic trajectories

- Unborn
- Infants + Children
- Youth
- Prime age
- Old age
Not the usual suspects

- Housing policies
- Long-term care
- Minimum income protection
- Sickness benefits
- Disability benefits
Housing policy

• If housing policies would adopt a life course social investment approach what kind of policies would we expect?

• We would expect
  – a general housing policy that provide low income groups with affordable housing
  – special policies for socially disadvantaged groups
  – policies aiding youth make the transition from parents home to own home
Housing policy

- General generous housing allowances (1 in 5 households receive € 282 per month)
- (social housing)
- Disadvantaged groups: Housing First with evidence-based intensive support (i.e. Assertive Community Treatment, Critical Time Intervention, Intensive Case Management)
- Transition from parents to own home: Stipends, student housing, unemployment benefits for graduates
Long-term care

**Expectations**
- LTC be directed at supporting the autonomy of the elderly and thus postpone the transition from own home into institutional care
- Home help and rehabilitation that increase the functionings of elderly (besides preventive measures at earlier life stages)

**Reforms**
- De-institutionalisation (old)
  - Home help, personal and practical
  - Making own homes accommodate elderly
- Increasing autonomy (new)
  - Home help, mostly personal
  - Increasing functional capacities
Minimum income protection

Expectation

• policies and incentives that address the reasons – social, skills, health - for claimants of minimum income, especially youth and other special groups

Reforms

• Replacement of social assistance for persons under 30 years of age with educational benefit
• Obligation to list and apply for education
• Coordinated multi-disciplinary teams for persons with complex social, health and economic problems
Sickness benefits

**Expectation**
Quick interventions offering help and measures to maintain or prevent problem to escalate, especially for those most at risk of getting excluded

**Reforms**
Early intervention, follow-up, contract between sicklisted and employers about gradual return
Disability benefits

Expectation

• Comprehensive measures to control and reduce intake, rehabilitation and curative measures, targeting informed by evidence

Reforms

• Replaced disability pension with resource program benefit for persons below 40 years
• Repeated reassessments
Common traits

- Evidence-based
- Coordinated, multidisciplinary teams for specific groups (e.g. homeless, sicklisted, disabled)
- Supported by economic incentives (individuals and providers)
The Danish social investment model

- Nordic pedigree
- Maximise everybody’s functional capacities and life chances
- Professionalised social services, education and health
- Local delivery
- Reforms of social services, education, health and employment policies
- Evidence-based turn in policies
Why adapt a life course perspective on social investments?

1. Enable engagement of many disciplines
2. Sensitive to social and structural change
3. Address population diversity
4. Acknowledge dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of social issues and of social investments
5. High on policy relevance: help identify where, when and what to do 😊
Thank you!


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The Nordic countries demonstrate four things

There is a case – economic and social – to be made for public policies

Nordic countries still have a long way to go – and they may not be going in the right direction

You do not need to embrace the social investment concept (or the state) to implement social investment policies

But – of course – social investments does not work for all socio-economic groups, risks and countries