

## **Expertseminar in Malmö, Sweden 6-7 December 2019**



### **Summary presentations from countries**

#### **Austria**

The presentation started with stating that income poverty raising among children. The material deprivation is however low. Those in higher risk of income poverty are living in big cities, single parents, low labor market participation rates. Income poverty affects the housing situation mainly leading to overcrowding which affect children's social situation in negative ways.

In Austria children are enrolled to schools where the child and parent have to make an active school-choice at the age of 10. Parents income is found to be a strong predictor for what types of schools children are enrolled to.

The poverty rate in Austria is among the lowest in Europe. The welfare state contributes to bring child out of poverty. It is however found that mobility, both social and physical is limited due to income.

Studies on those living on social support reveal poor living conditions. Applying for social support from the state is however connected with shame since 1/3 of those who have the right to financial support do not apply. This implies that 60000 persons would come over the poverty line. 1/3 of all people who in different ways are within the social service systems are children. It is also found that people do not know about their right to financial support, even if they are working poor.

Austrian Social services are provided by both the state and NGO driven and cooperation's do occur.

#### **Germany**

The presentation started with short introduction of social work in Germany. It was claimed that Germany is characterized by targeted benefits rather than universal and that social services directed towards children focus on education and participation in various societal contexts.

According to the presenters, the main predictor for poverty in Germany is low labor participation.

Furthermore, in Germany there are discussions on digitalization of social welfare services and what possible implications this might have.

The main part of the presentation consisted of a lecture by Irina Volf who has conducted a longitudinal study on the consequences of child poverty from 1997 to today. 60 day-care centers over the country took part in the study. The aim of the study was to highlight differences in living conditions between poor and non-poor children and coping strategies among poor children and parents. The studies have been both quantitative and qualitative studies. From 2002 on onwards, children participating in the studies have been interviewed.

Volf stretched that the concept of *child- and youth poverty* are insufficient as it is the family of the child who are poor.

In the studies conducted, four dimensions have been analyzed; *Material dimension. Cultural dimension. Social dimension. Health dimension.* In every dimension, focus has been on how deprived children are of these dimensions. When following-up on the life situation of young adults 2018 the following results emerged:

*Material dimension 23 %. Cultural dimension 27%, Social dimension 16%. Health dimension. 21%*

When further looking into the social situation of young adults the following was found:

64 % were autonomous, i.e. living by themselves and worked or participated in higher education. 16 % were living with parents. 16% Had education and work and no children. 10 % were “slow starters”, i.e. no job or higher education and often living with parents. Within this group, the poverty was high. Young parents represented 10 % of the population studied. Level of poverty was high within this group.

In conclusion, it was found that child poverty not autonomically led into poverty in young adulthood. Times of poverty, however, leaves “visible” traces later in life making transitions to young adulthood more challenging.

## **Denmark**

The presentation from Denmark focused on how policies over the past 20 years have led to decrease in social security. Studies have found that 65000 children are living in poverty in Denmark today. In Denmark there is no definition of what the concept poverty means, despite extensive discussions. According to Danish association of Social politics there is a need for more public discussions on poverty.

## **Finland**

Poverty in Finland has increasing over the past years. One major factor to this is inequality, which hits children the most. It was emphasised that poverty must be understood in terms of a multidimensional deprivation and that it is of importance to talk about children living in poor families and not solely focus on “child poverty”.

Need of change in perspective where family and child policies should increasingly be seen as investments in the future. Also of importance to reflect upon how policies are formulated as policies which do not correspond with social life and everyday needs of poor families can do harm.

Furthermore, it is of significance to acknowledge societal developments and the social environment and its influence on the social and economic situation of families.

In conclusion, children should be ever more be included in the sustainable development goals formulated by the United Nations.

## Norway

The presentation was largely based on a Norwegian report "Poverty Watch", that has found no decrease in social welfare. Meanwhile, however, increase in relative poverty has been identified.

The main problem of the relative poverty in Norway is lack of possibilities to participate in society in various contexts, where youth and young adults are those who are primarily excluded, socially and economically. The main group who receives social benefits in Norway are families where the parents are unemployed.

In the presentation it was stated that the consequences of living in poor families for children to be loneliness, exclusion, less activities, higher rates of mental health, less satisfied with school and poor housing conditions.



**Tapio Salonen**

Vice rector / Professor Malmö University

## Sweden

Summary of Tapio Salonens report "Child Poverty in Advanced Welfare States - The Swedish Case"

Although income for families with children is steadily increasing over time, income disparities have intensified, and the deterioration of those families with the worst can clearly be linked to reduced investment in family policy. Since 2002, Save the Children has regularly presented statistics on children and families living in financial vulnerability, and what the Save the Children can generally see is that investments in financial welfare aimed at families with children have ceased during the 1980s. It is not confirmed in the Welfare report for everyone that is launched today.

Many families with children have improved financially during the 2000s. But the proportion of families with children living with low financial standards \* has increased. In 2017, the share was 16 per cent of children's households.

In the early 1980:s, Sweden was distinguished as a more equal and equal society than other countries. In 1981, the most even distribution of household income was measured during the post-war period. In the last three decades thereafter, income inequality in the population has gradually increased, regardless of the business cycle and the policy that has governed. In recent years, Sweden has experienced a faster increase in income disparities than many other countries. Save the Children sees a somewhat more positive change as reforms were initiated in 2018, such as increased child support and maintenance support, but in summary, the economic family policy in Sweden is able to equalize the growing income inequality among families with children, and shows an ever-lower capacity to reduce poverty. .

The report shows that:

Economic family policy can no longer equalize economic differences between families with children just as before. Until the beginning of the 2000s, economic family policy succeeded in removing about two-thirds of financially vulnerable children's households from relative poverty. From 2003 to 2009, this effect then decreases from 65 to 42 percent. In 2014–2017, the anti-poverty effect is stable around 35–36 percent, ie about one third. The needs-tested grants, such as the housing allowance and maintenance support that could most evenly equal differences, are reduced in scope and importance.

The gaps have continued to widen between the children who live in the greatest financial vulnerability, and the vast majority of families with children who have the good financial position.

About the report

Tapio Salonen, professor of social work at Malmö University. The main purpose is to provide an overview of the importance of public family policy for the financial vulnerability of families with children. In the report, Save the Children examines economic family policy from a children's rights perspective, and is based in particular on Article 26 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the child's right to social security and Article 27 on the right to a fair standard of living.

\* A low economic standard is, according to the EU's relative poverty line, at a maximum of 60 percent of the country's median income.



## **Delegates in Malmö, Sweden - Expertseminar den 6-7 - 2019**

**Martin Schenk** from the Anti- Poverty Network Austria

**Stefan Angel** from the University of Economics, Department of Social Politics, Austria

**Dr. Irina Volf**, Head of department for the topics of poverty and migration, who has been researching the topic of child poverty for years with her department. (Germany)

Mr. **Andreas Krampe**, Head of the department "Basics of social protection, social assistance, social benefit systems", "Krampe, Andreas" (Germany),

**Mr Njål Petter Svensson**, President, ICSW Norway

**Solveig Askhjem**, ICSW Norway

**Randi Reese**, ICSW Norway

**Ronald Wiman**, International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) Regional President, ICSW Europe, (Finland+Europa)

**Kirsten Windekilde**, Board member, Socialpolitisk Forening Hovedstaden, Denmark

**Eva Holmberg-Herrström**, President ICSW

**Tom Johannesen** Executive Director. ICSW.

**Axel Ågren**, ICSW Sweden

**Bodil Eriksson**, ICSW Sweden

**Leif Öberg**, Chairman ICSW, Sverige

**Linda Lill**, Malmö Universitet,

**Anna Angelina**, Docent, Universitetslektor

**Emily Yueh-Mi Lai**, PhD Associate Professor/ Department of Social Work, Tzu Chi University, Taiwan

**Tapio Salonen**, Professor, Socialt arbete, Malmö universitet.