



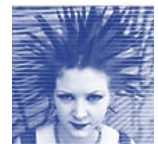
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Citizens' social support networks model (HYVE)

A model of building local partnerships in the context of universal welfare in Finland





Part A. Description of the main elements of the policy

Background of the policy

The Citizens' Support Networks Model is a reform strategy presented by the NGOs in the early 1990s to reform welfare and services in Finland. Universal welfare and services provided predominantly by the public sector were not judged to adequately meet the challenges of the welfare state and the needs for welfare among the citizens. New solutions were sought through co-operation and partnerships between the public sector, third sector organisations and NGOs. The Citizens' Support Networks model was introduced by the Finnish Federation of Welfare and Health in 1994.

The model aims to reform the service structures and strengthen partnerships between different actors at local and regional level. The model started with the idea that new forms of welfare provision and services could be generated by developing co-operation between public authorities, NGOs and citizens. Through local co-operation, projects and experimental schemes, the model wanted to build multi-actor services and improve the involvement of citizens in service structures.

The approach aims at tailored services in preventing social exclusion that take local circumstances into account. The development model started as a project in two regions, but has since been expanded to other regions of the country. The project is structured around an agreement among the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health, its regional associations and a relevant municipality, or several municipalities and other local actors. The goal is to achieve permanent regional partnership agreements to develop welfare and services.

Baseline system

The special circumstances of Finnish society in the 1990s form a base to the policy under evaluation. While still moderate in comparative terms, the risk of poverty and social exclusion has been growing since the mid-1990s in Finland. The growing risk of poverty and social exclusion is linked to long-term unemployment, the differentiation of economic development, and changes in the welfare state.

As a consequence of the economic downturn in the early 1990s, the welfare state was subjected to an increase in the number of people requiring welfare



support and a simultaneous erosion of resources. Universal welfare and benefits were maintained, but the level of welfare was less generous and the importance of means-testing has also grown. A total of 8% of the population is receiving social assistance, albeit mostly on a temporary basis.

Consequently, welfare services provided predominantly by local municipalities were under pressure. In the conditions of growing welfare needs and lower resources, local authorities aimed to maintain a basic level of services, whereas the level of services in many fields of provision was subject to cuts.

While social services are mainly provided by the public sector, the share of private and NGO provision has increased by 7 percentage points to 21% since the mid-1990s. In 1995, the share of private and NGO provision was a total of 14% of the human resources in social services, whereas in 2000 the share of NGO provision of human resources social services alone was 16%, and the share of private provision was 5%.

In the latter part of the 1990s, the economy recovered well, but unemployment decreased slowly. The average rate of unemployment in Finland is around 9%, slightly over one-fifth of this being long-term unemployment. Regional differences in employment are great. The rate is highest in eastern and northern Finland, where most of the declining municipalities are located. In contrast, long-term unemployment is most common in growth centres, despite their lower overall unemployment rate.

The rate of growth in the Finnish economy has declined since 2001, but unemployment has remained at more or less the same level despite the decline. The prevention of long-term unemployment and employment of the difficult-to-place are the main targets in the policy against social exclusion. Preventing social exclusion among the long-term unemployed is promoted through activation policies and co-operation between different branches of administrations and services.

Regional differences in employment and services have become polarised in the last ten years. The availability of services is weakened in municipalities with low economic development and negative migration. Challenges are different in growth centres with favourable economic development, whilst these have a higher high rate of structural and long-term unemployment. These regional differences in circumstances call for local and regional interventions to address the negative development.



National Action Plan

According to the Finnish National Action Plan against poverty and exclusion for 2003–2005, an action to combat poverty and social exclusion is primarily based on a universal housing-based social protection system supplemented by various measures – mainly benefits and services – targeted at risk groups. It is not seen as a justification for creating separate compensation systems for population groups threatened by social exclusion; rather, the risks they face should be addressed by the universal system plus any necessary and carefully targeted supplementary action. Raising the employment rate is the single most important measure in the prevention of poverty and social exclusion.

The municipal social service system constitutes the most important component in action against social exclusion. Simultaneously, the main challenge for the future is to safeguard the availability of basic services throughout the country. Although public authorities have the main responsibility in social welfare and healthcare services, third sector organisations have their role to play in producing services in these sectors.

To complement the welfare system, several good practice models have been developed for preventing social exclusion. Selected good practices have approached social exclusion in a broad manner, using the expertise of different actors and professionals whilst taking local conditions into account. The Citizens' Support Networks model (HYVE) is a major example of a regional welfare-boosting model that is built on co-operation between a third sector organisation, local authorities and other local actors.

The aim of the National Action Plan is to continue to expand the process of creating regional welfare support networks all around Finland. Shaping these networks into a structure linking the resources of the public administration, NGOs and members of the public is being pursued through co-operation with a variety of actors.

Goals and targets of the policy

The objectives of the policy model were twofold. The first objective was linked to reforming the overall welfare policy and services in Finland in a multi-actor direction. The model's second objective was linked to reforming the action of



the NGOs itself. The starting hypothesis was that by combining different forms of support and different skills and capacities, it was possible to achieve a better functioning and flexible network of support for the citizens.

The aim of the policy was to reform welfare and prevent exclusion by developing local partnerships, promoting regional social policies, and creating new forms of welfare support involving a variety of actors – including citizens. As regards the NGOs' policy, the objective was to increase the role of NGOs in service provision, bringing closer together the functions of national and local actions and concretely developing the functions of local associations.

Through co-operation between all the relevant actors in local service provision, the Citizens' Support Network model was meant to meet the new challenges of the welfare society.

Services provided for traditional risk situations – services which were cut as a result of the recession – were not viewed as adequate for the new risk situations and needs of the people. The problem with the existing services was a lack of client-centredness. The increased involvement of citizens' perspectives was required in the service structures.

Although basic welfare structures were in place, deficits in services and risks of exclusion from services among certain population groups were growing. Groups at risk were the long-term unemployed, the older unemployed and the young unemployed in particular. Other groups at risk from social exclusion and weakening welfare were people with mental problems and other long-term illness, people with alcohol problems, and homeless people.

The new policy was also justified by the needs arising out of the NGOs' own activity. While the public sector was not growing any more, the third sector had plenty of unused resources. High unemployment had provided human resources for third sector activities; simultaneously, the economic downturn called for the development of new and less expensive ways of providing welfare. Moreover, co-operation between the third sector organisations was sporadic and local work needed to be strengthened.

At the beginning of the development, in 1994, the Finnish Federation for Welfare and Health defined the objectives as follows:



- supporting the welfare of citizens by questioning the existing welfare concept
- developing welfare services in multi-actor directions
- reforming welfare structures and preventing social threats and risks of social exclusion

The model did not challenge the universalism of Finnish welfare policy, but aimed to promote regional welfare policies in partnerships between the public sector and third sector organisations. The overall goal of the action was to generate welfare services and support through co-ordinated action between the public sector, the third sector and NGOs. The service concept aimed to involve different actors and promote citizens' involvement in the service structures.

The objectives of the development model at the national level were set out broadly. The focus of action was in developing new regional and local forms of co-operation and services. New services and experimental schemes were actively developed to meet new welfare needs and to prevent exclusion. This implies that the concrete objectives of the policy and target groups were defined in local and regional projects.

The objectives of the project have been subject to some change over the period it has been in progress. A change in the objectives indicates that in the beginning, the development project aimed to promote joint local partnerships, whereas in the recent past, the development of regional social and health policies has become more pronounced. The development model that started with the development of welfare networks is starting to take on a broader meaning with regard to social policy.

The objectives were to be achieved by means of:

- developing partnerships
- creating new services and (tailored) experimental schemes
- promoting a regional approach in social policies

The model was built on a bottom-up approach, in which services are decided according to local circumstances and needs in a collaboration between the local actors. Within the general framework of the project organisation, the work was based on the social situation, needs, problems and challenges in the relevant area. The model aimed at a result where there are tailored solutions for preventing social exclusion, which take local circumstances into account.



Financing

The bodies participating in the project are the Finnish Federation for Welfare and Health, local municipalities, and other local and regional bodies. The project's funding is divided between the actors and supplemented by other available funding resources. The main part of the funding comes from the Finnish Slot Machine Association (*Raha-automaattiyhdistys*) and the participating municipalities. The project has also been funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and regional social welfare associations.

In the so-called project phase, funding was equally divided between the Finnish Slot Machine Association and participating municipalities. The whole budget for the project period from 1994 till 2003 was € 1.9 million.

In the period of permanent partnerships, funding from the municipalities has increased and funding from the Slot Machine Association has decreased. The regional social welfare associations are contributing to the funding. The whole budget for permanent partnership in the period 1994–2003 was € 3.7 million.

Funding for the experimental schemes and distinct local projects has been gathered from various sources including the Ministry of Employment, the Slot Machine Association and local municipalities. Research connected to the development project has also received funding from the Foundation for Developing the Local Government Field (Kunnallisan kehittämissäätiö).

Implementation of the policy

The Citizens' Support Networks model is based on an agreement between the Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health, the local authority or authorities, and regional social security associations. Co-operation and actions are specified in the annual joint project co-operation plans and networking budgets. In the regional development work, projects and experimental schemes are developed through co-operation networks. The objective of the development model is not actually to create projects, but to achieve a permanent change in the way services are provided at regional level. After the initial project stage and the experimental phase, the objective was to move towards a joint development scheme and permanent partnerships between the NGOs and local authorities.



The basic elements in the development approach adopted in the project have been a combination of:

- practice/experimental schemes
- learning processes/training
- information production/research

The practical working model that was applied is based on employees working in pairs. In each region, one member of the pair is employed (paid) by a municipality, whilst the other is employed by the Finnish Federation for Welfare and Health. The two employees are the concrete representatives of two different cultures, that of the public sector and that of the NGOs. Their task is to prepare arenas for communication and exchanges of information.

The work started regionally with a study about the existing service provision and deficits in the relevant services. Based on the inquiries of and communications between the relevant actors about concrete objectives, the first phases for the experimental scheme and development work were reduced. The definition of local targets took place through collaboration between the welfare workers in the relevant municipality and the NGOs operational in the region. In the second phase the experimental schemes were established and the different subprojects started.

Education and training was the model's second priority. The objective of the training was to support and educate team-working models and networking, but also to create a common language and joint orientation among the local actors. The assumption behind the importance of training was that it presupposed a change in the culture of doing things, and that took time. Short-term courses and longer training periods were organised. Training was targeted at employees working in the projects and teams. The training was composed of theoretical and practical training in the workplaces. Various local actors and universities were involved in organising training.

Research was closely connected to the development work. Studies of welfare provision and its challenges, changing welfare needs and the support structures for individual citizens are forms of research that are used as a part of the development work. The research undertaken as part of the project has served the project's broader objective by investigating the direction of welfare and conditions for partnerships, but also forming a base for local and regional development work by examining local support needs and services.



The research is composed of:

- local surveys of welfare needs and interests forming a base for local projects and experimental schemes
- regional surveys of welfare needs and support networks among citizens (first in 1996)
- national studies (social barometers) of the opinions and direction of welfare and services among local authorities and third sector organisations (since 1991)

Surveys – so-called social barometers – are part of the general activities of the Finnish Federation for Welfare and Health, but are also used in development work in the context of the Citizens' Support Networks model.

The local projects started by creating trust and networks of co-operation among the organisations and local actors. Co-operation was constructed along with equality in co-operation and partnerships and the involvement of citizens. One aim was to handle the tensions and constraints. Thereafter local experimental schemes and projects were created. In the beginning, projects focused on developing new working and action models. New forms of support were established. Long-term development work and moving from a project phase to development agreements based on permanent partnerships has given way to the formulation of larger issues and the formulation of regional social policy strategies.

Proceedings in the local development work can be described as being composed of the following steps:

1. forming networks and trust among the partners
2. concrete projects and experimental schemes
3. local operation and influencing local social policy (partnerships)
4. developing regional welfare policy, new dialogue and new experimental schemes

The model was introduced as an experimental development project in two cities in 1994 and has since been expanded to four other regions. Development work itself was started in two regional cities, in Joensuu in eastern Finland, and in Oulu in northern Finland. Later, along with the development of the project, the actions were expanded to four other regions.



In 2004, the permanent development model was established in three regions (Oulu, Joensuu and Jyväskylä region) and is in its experimental phase in two other regions in western Finland (involving the three cities of Kokkola, Seinäjoki and Vaasa) and in southern Finland (involving the Vuosaari region in the city of Helsinki). In one region in south-western Finland, Satakunta, the co-operation was interrupted after the project phase. New projects have been started or are under preparation, such as the "Syrjäkylä-HYVE", a project working in outlying villages introduced in 2003 in northern Finland. The Regional Association of the Finnish Federation for Welfare and Health in Lapland was responsible for this part of the work.

In the context of the broad objectives of the whole project, different regions had slightly different profiles.

In Joensuu the model performed a co-ordinating role for different local projects. As the most visible example of the local development work, a Citizens' House was set up in 1996 as a meeting point and arena for co-operation for NGOs, the municipality and citizens. Through the Citizens' House, local partnerships and initiatives and communication between various actors were promoted. Concretely, it offered a room for local organisations to gather, a low-threshold crisis point for residents, a meeting point for citizens and organisations, access to ICT and a café, for example.

In Oulu the model proceeded with local-based core projects. The objective was to improve citizens' opportunities to participate, find employment opportunities and prevent processes of exclusion. One concrete example of the action was a course to train unemployed people to act as the authorised representative of their fellow unemployed people. The training aimed to prepare the unemployed person to support other unemployed people in crisis, by working on a telephone crisis hotline service, starting and co-ordinating voluntary work, helping in liaison with the authorities, as well as supporting their own initiatives in employment.

In Jyväskylä, the goal of the action was a broad-based influence on local welfare policy. Work started with local networking and surveys about the role of local NGOs in the social welfare field and an investigation of citizens' opinion about welfare. A second activity was joint training for the NGOs and professionals in social services. Further action involved contributing to the preparation of local welfare strategies in co-operation with municipalities, NGOs and



other local actors. The Local Citizens' Support Networks project was a representative of the NGOs and their opinions in regional strategic work, but also acted in a co-ordinating role.

Links with objectives of the EU Inclusion Strategy

As accepted by the Member States at the European Councils in Lisbon and Feira, fighting poverty and social exclusion is one element of modernising the European social model. The Member States agreed the objectives of the EU Inclusion Strategy at the Nice European Council in 2000.

Within the EU Inclusion Strategy, under objective 4, all relevant bodies should be mobilised in combating poverty and social exclusion. The objective is further specified as promoting dialogue and partnership between all the relevant bodies, public and private, for example:

- by involving the social partners, NGOs and social service providers – according to their respective areas of competence – in the fight against various forms of exclusion;
- by encouraging the social responsibility and active engagement of all citizens in the fight against social exclusion.

By promoting these two objectives, Finnish policy in the context of the Citizens' Support Networks model is able to address the EU Inclusion strategy. The aim of the policy is to produce welfare services and support through co-operation and partnerships between the public sector, the third sector and NGOs at local and regional level. Through co-operation and networking, service structures are overhauled and new forms of support are generated for those at risk of exclusion. By approaching the combat against poverty and social exclusion at the regional level, it makes it possible to involve ordinary citizens suffering from long-term unemployment and other social problems.

Within the European context, the need to co-ordinate efforts to tackle poverty and social exclusion at the regional and local level is widely acknowledged. This is indicated in the growing emphasis in the NAPs/Inclusion 2003–2005 on ensuring integrated and multi-dimensional action at regional and local level. The 2003–2005 NAPs/Incl include ten programmes designed to mobilise all relevant bodies and public authorities in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. As well as in Finland, networked co-operation and local partnerships



are given significant emphasis in the NAPs of Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Sweden and the UK (Joint Report by the Commission and Council for Inclusion).

The models of local action and co-operation are increasingly recognised in the Finnish National Action against poverty and social exclusion 2003-2005. Alongside the Citizens' Support Network model, two other local models of good practice that promote local dialogue and partnerships are presented.

Part B. The results of the policy

Problems with the evaluation of the results concern both the objectives and targets, and the evaluations available. The overall objective of the policy is broad, and has to some extent been reformulated over the years that the policy has been in progress. Further, the fact that the model is linked to the overall policy and mission of the NGOs that make up the Federation for Welfare and Health complicates the evaluation.

The project is predominantly a development model that is concretely based on local co-operation agreements and local projects. In the context of the general objectives, concrete targets are set locally and regionally. Further, although research is an essential part of the development project, the research conducted is not directly linked to measuring the goal-attainment of the project, but rather to promoting the broader objectives of the policy and providing information for the development work.

The evaluation that is conducted in the context of the project is to a large extent based on local case studies and descriptions of overall progress in the whole project. The data provided includes mostly qualitative material, whilst only a few quantified performance indicators or outcomes are available (see appendix). The evaluation has not focused on achieving and monitoring the efficiency and quality of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

In its own evaluation, the Federation for Welfare and Health has admitted the difficulties in evaluating a temporal, project-based development model. The projects were practice-oriented and not based on theoretical concepts and frameworks. The evaluation was not based on a joint evaluation scheme, but aimed to describe different projects and sub-projects, their objectives, proceedings and results. The goal of the evaluation was to provide a picture of the develop-



ment and core results from the perspective of the organisers of and the actors in the projects (Särkelä & Kinnunen 1998b, 223-224).

The following results are based on the research and evaluation available. The evaluation is based on a stakeholder approach, involving the perspective of the Finnish Federation of Welfare and Health and to some extent local authorities.

Welfare among the citizens and orientation for partnerships

The surveys of local authorities and NGOs provided a picture of the local welfare situation and of the roles and expectations of different actors. The surveys showed that the move in the direction of partnerships and a multi-actor approach was to a certain extent supported by the local municipalities. The inquiries also showed a differentiation between the municipalities and the services they provided to the citizens. Local authorities were looking forward to a greater role for NGOs, private companies and individual citizens in providing services, whereas municipalities were providing only the basic services for the citizens (Eronen et al 1995).

The surveys of citizens provided information on the changing needs for welfare and support and information for the decision-makers. The surveys showed that welfare among citizens was – to a greater extent than was believed – structured by other types of support than that provided by the public services. Primarily, it was family and friends that had a decisive role in the support. For some citizens, the support provided by NGOs was the only option. One-fifth of the citizens were left outside any support structure (Kinnunen 1998).

Overall progress

According to the internal mid-term evaluation (Särkelä & Kinnunen 1998), the model focused on the two initial development periods to develop the model as a means of promoting new working and action models. According to the assessment, the model was successful in contributing towards a shift in developing regional social policy strategies and reforming service structures towards a multi-actor service model, but was not able to fully achieve the objectives at this stage.

Progress was different in different regions. Local sub-projects were organised on the basis of local interests and needs and progressed according to their stated objectives. Many sub-projects were forms of co-operation between various



actors and were based on communication between the different actors concerned. Through sub-projects, new forms of support were developed for groups who were at risk of exclusion. Similarly, deficits and the inadequate level of the existing support became visible. Working as a paired partnership between the public authority and the NGOs had proved a workable model and contributed to progress in the development actions. Local sub-projects and teams were to be established.

The model achieved new solutions and forms of co-operation that were not possible with the traditional welfare concept. First, by means of inquiries and studies, a citizens' approach to welfare has been outlined, and among the actors, local partnership solutions and a changing orientation have been traced. Second, through local experimental schemes, new working models, action strategies and team-based organisation models were developed. Third, a new combination of information production that involved practice, training and research was developed. The results showed a need for, but also a difficulty in practising, local social policy strategies. A further objective, to develop a number of indicators to describe the impact of the development project on society, was acknowledged (Särkelä & Kinnunen 1998, 224-225).

The primary results so far (2004) – as specified by the targets of the development model – are reported as follows:

Partnerships and citizens' involvement

The policy succeeded in establishing a contract-based development approach and permanent partnerships. Instead of a project, an established development scheme was achieved. Since the project has ended, joint development based on partnerships and local agreements has been maintained as a joint action. A permanent development model based on partnership was achieved in three regions. Co-operation in one region was interrupted after the project phase. The model was to be further expanded in other regions.

According to the actors involved, the development model has constructed a strong partnership orientation that was based on the trust that had been developed in the projects over the years. Achieving successful co-operation and partnerships required long-term co-operation, concrete experimental schemes, and positive results. A strong commitment among the actors and permanent staff was therefore required. Change among the staff and low commitment



create problems. The employees of the NGOs and the local municipalities working in pairs played a crucial role in facilitating the co-operation.

Citizens' involvement increased through actions. Local partnership forums were significant in engaging citizens and in expanding citizens' perspective on welfare. Citizens were involved as residents and service users in different local actions. New working models were adopted. Accordingly, surveys of citizens supported the provision of information about the services and needs of the citizens to the providers. These surveys functioned as a form of communication between the decision-makers and the citizens.

New forms of support and services

Community-based forums for joint action were initiated in all regions. They functioned as joint arenas for action and networking between the authorities, NGOs and citizens. The Citizens' House and a Partnerships House were examples of the development that provided low-threshold support for groups at risk, support for developing new services and projects, and co-operation between the actors.

In the context of the project, services provided through partnerships were generated for people in a vulnerable situation and groups at risk. Target groups were the long-term unemployed, long-term recipients of social assistance, and people with mental and alcohol problems. Examples include joint services for new or segregated living areas, peer support, voluntary work, models of grass-root services for people with social problems, authorised representatives for the unemployed, new forms of training for the unemployed and long-term recipients of social assistance, and support for NGOs in employment and skills provision and access to ICT.

Local and regional welfare strategies

The development model strengthened co-operation between the local actors. Communication between the third sector organisations and local authorities, and communication within the organisation between the national and regional actions, had increased considerably. Long-standing development work and co-operation had further contributed to local welfare strategies. The model has proved, according to the actors involved, that multi-actor development work starting from local needs is possible.



Further, the project has been working as a reform strategy for the organisation itself by closing the gap between the Federation and its local associations and developing forms of local action.

A condition for success has been a successful dialogue between practice, experimental schemes, training and research. In particular, surveys of citizens and long-term training in networking have contributed to the development of new working models and services. Surveys have been expanded over the regions. Further strategic conditions for success have included commitment among the actors, motivated and professional staff, and the existence of personal resources.

General remarks

The Citizens' Support Networks model has been developing over a ten-year period starting from local projects and experimental schemes in two regions. The development model, based on an agreement between the NGOs, local authorities and other actors, has been expanded to four other regions, one of which was interrupted after the project stage.

So far, the development model has been introduced mainly in smaller or mid-sized cities and in regional centres. The choice possibly indicates that a partnership strategy has a better chance of success when there is a manageable number of local actors, although the level of motivation and commitment of the local actors can also have a significant impact.

According to the qualitative results, the model has been progressing in the planned direction. The primary results of the model are in promoting regional partnerships and regional welfare policy, and in the development of new forms of services and citizens' involvement. Similarly, the progress has taken time and been different from one region to another. Limited resources relative to the challenges and objectives of the policy might be one explanation for the varied progress so far.



Part C: The policy debate

National policy context

In Finland the policy under discussion has to be placed in the context of the general welfare system and its rapid change in the last decade (Heikkilä & Uusitalo 1997). The general welfare system is predominantly based on universal benefits and services financed and mainly provided by the public authorities. In the last decade the scope of state welfare has been reduced substantially. At the moment, the share of GDP spent on welfare in Finland is lower than the EU average. Similarly, a less generous welfare state and the emerging risks of exclusion among a group of citizens have opened up the way towards a new form of governance.

Subsequently, private provision (including NGOs) has increased to form one-fifth of social service provision. However, there is great variation in the different proportions of private and NGO provision depending on the service branches. For example NGOs shared 10% of the costs of provision in residential care for older people, whereas their share is less than 1% of the costs of child day care (Kauppinen & Niskanen 2003). As many as 90% of municipalities purchase services from private providers. In the circumstances of regional differentiation and polarisation, local authorities have different options from which to choose. Some local authorities rely more on partnership strategies, others more on market-based strategies (Sosiaalibarometri 2004).

The widely accepted approach in Finland is that universal benefits and policies are the main tool in the fight against exclusion. As stated in the Finnish NAPs for Inclusion 2003, social exclusion is tackled mainly by universal policies and services whose organisational responsibility is decentralised to local municipalities. In this overall national context, the contribution of NGOs and third sector organisations is directed to providing targeted services to those groups at risk. In a Nordic welfare system that is aimed on the whole at the prevention of poverty and social exclusion, the room for targeted policies is more limited than in other welfare models (Esping-Andersen 1999, Kautto et al 2001).

Similarly third sector organisations and NGOs have achieved increasing importance in filling the gaps in existing welfare and services and promoting the involvement of all relevant actors. Within the context of the general welfare approach, a targeted and multi-actor approach has a complementary role to



play in universal welfare. Indicative of the new importance of the third sector organisations in social welfare is the fact that the Citizens' Support Networks model – introduced initially as a result of criticism of the general welfare concept – has been included in the National Action Plan.

The policy as introduced and promoted in the Citizens' Support Networks model has not been widely debated nationally. Within the national context the policy of the Citizens' Support Network has the character of a development project, and hence a limited significance nationwide. The policy, while initiated through a questioning of the existing welfare concept, was later directed to boosting regional welfare and regional partnerships in collaboration with the local authorities. The debate around the policy has mainly taken place within third sector organisations and in regional forums.

However, within the general welfare system, which is dominated by the public sector, the Citizens' Support Networks project is a major endeavour to broaden a welfare approach towards involving civil society, NGOs and citizens in the debate about the direction of the welfare society. Apart from the regional projects and partnerships, the Finnish Federation of Welfare and Health has – through its surveys of citizens, welfare providers and NGOs – raised awareness about the conditions and challenges of welfare. It concerns both the changing role of different actors in welfare provision and its regional dimension, but also citizens' changing welfare needs.

In Finland dialogue with NGOs and third sector organisations at the national level is a long-established practice, whereas service provision has been in the hands of the public authorities in most areas of the social services. Co-operation between various actors at regional and local level has intensified in recent years. EU funding made available for local partnerships has played a role in vitalising local action. The policy advocated by the NGOs in the context of the Citizens' Support Network has further promoted the involvement of various local actors and citizens in new forms of co-operation and partnerships. The policy has also promoted new participatory forms of services that can contribute to wider policy development.

It is apparent that in Finland government policy against poverty and social exclusion increasingly recognises the contribution of NGOs and third sector organisations. The policy so far has been rather limited in view of the circumstances of a reduced welfare state, the local differentiation of services, and an



increasing risk of social exclusion. Within the general policy of the government, mobilising co-operation and partnerships among various actors – including the engagement of citizens – in combating social exclusion has been left to the action and commitment of local authorities, NGOs and third sector organisations. The development model of the Citizens' Support Networks has so far progressed in a number of regions, and it seems that the importance of the policy lies more in the new approach it promotes than on the outcomes it creates in the general welfare system in quantified terms.

European context and debate

In the last two decades a variety of new public management innovations have dominated the reform of the public administration and services (Hood 1991). The NPM have steered public sector administration towards greater entrepreneurial spirit, greater decentralisation and more responsive forms of public administration. This trend towards new forms of public sector management and privatisation has been widespread and not merely confined to the Anglo-Saxon world. In the UK, the New Right embraced this new doctrine of managerialism and privatisation and developed reforms to put it into practice (Clarke & Newman 1997; Hill 1997). However, countries in continental Europe have until recently been reluctant to introduce these types of reforms in the areas of governance, something which suggests that national institutional factors and traditions play a significant role in the reform of welfare and services (Pierre & Peters 2000). The same is true of the Nordic countries, which traditionally have been confined to having a strong public sector.

Critics of the NMP have targeted the traditional way of providing welfare services that were not able to respond to new and individualised welfare needs. New forms of governance imply changing relations between state, market and civil society. The emphasis is on a market-type mechanism and the expansion of the role of non-profit and voluntary sectors. It is against this background of changing ideas and institutional forms that one has to view the changes welfare policies underwent in the 1990s. Co-operation and the integration of services can be seen as part of this trend to make public services more flexible and client-friendly. Policy formulation and implementation is seen to be composed of networks, sub-systems and partnerships. The lack of citizen engagement was linked to the criticism of traditional models of governance (Pierre & Peters 2000).



At a European Union level there has been an ongoing debate on the role of non-governmental organisations and civil society in social inclusion. Particular attention has been given to measures for social inclusion by strengthening the involvement of local partners. The focus has been on the importance of civil society supporting social inclusion (European Foundation 2003). 'Local partnership' as a concept refers to a formal organisational structure for policy-making and implementation. It mobilises a range of interests and partners for combating social exclusion (Geddes 1998).

The policy advocated by the NGOs through the Citizens' Support Networks model is an effort to introduce the European way of debate and policy to Finland. Despite limitations, it has influenced national and regional debate on the direction in welfare and to a lesser extent on the actual restructuring of services. The policy represents an agenda for new models of governance in a welfare system dominated by the public authority. It concerns both structures of governance and interactions between various actors.

In Finland, where local government and local autonomy has traditionally been extensive, the policy advocated by the NGOs has raised the distinct importance of a local and regional dimension in social welfare and services. Through mobilising NGOs, public authorities, and other local and regional bodies in co-operation and partnerships, the policy was intended to strengthen a local approach in welfare. Promoting citizens' participation and a citizens' approach in welfare were one of the targets. Promoting the engagement of citizens and the relations between citizens and decision-makers through research, experimental schemes and services are all experiences of good practice that may contribute to the European-level debate.

The role of the NGOs has been to actively promote new models of governance in social welfare services in Finland. Compared to Sweden, where the political system and social welfare administration are fairly similar, the way local partnerships were introduced has been different. Whereas in Finland, the Citizens' Support Networks model was introduced by the NGOs, the Swedish Metropolitan Policy, which aimed to promote local co-operation and mobilise all actors, was initiated by the government and is based on the Bill. The strength of the Swedish policy is a solid base of resources, which also makes for a sustainable and coherent policy, including a distinct evaluation of the model. The risk of the model is how the actions are continued after the project funding is over.



The institutional context is an important factor in terms of the transferability of the policies concerned. New forms of governance and partnerships are not easily established in a welfare tradition strongly dominated by the public sector as in Finland. In other Member States with different welfare traditions and welfare regimes, the civil dialogue has a long tradition. Similarly, the role of NGOs and the voluntary sector in welfare and services is traditionally stronger than in Finland. For example in the Netherlands, co-operation with non-governmental partners has a long-established tradition and, after being somewhat interrupted by governmental changes, has recently been picked up again (European Commission 2004).

In the UK, the governance system is fairly centralised compared to many other EU Member States. The role of markets, private provision, and the purchaser-provider split is remarkably higher than in Finland. Still, the strategy combines collaboration with devolved administrations and regional bodies, and local and neighbourhood action, with local government and voluntary and community sectors. Decentralisation of services and many area-based initiatives are introduced into the provision of services (European Commission 2004).

In Finland the development of multi-actor forms of governance has been based on the activity of local authorities and NGOs. Even given its limitations, the policy has been able to move thinking and to some extent action in welfare towards multi-actor forms of governance. The strength of the model is in its character as a bottom-up movement based on local innovations and development. The forms of co-operation and service structure are decided through local partnerships and networks between NGOs and public sector authorities. Furthermore, the policy has advanced citizen involvement, which is weakly developed in welfare and services provided by the public authority.

Conclusions

The development model to promote co-operation and partnerships in Finnish welfare has to be seen in the overall context of a welfare system that is dominated by the public sector. The public sector has maintained its dominance of social services, although the share of private provision, including provision by NGOs, has increased since mid-1995. In the context of universal welfare and services, the model of boosting local co-operation and partnerships and citizens' involvement has been innovative.



The Citizens' Support Networks model has advocated a sharing of responsibilities between public authorities and NGOs and building co-operative networks and partnerships. At the beginning the policy of the NGOs was to question the deficiencies in the general universal welfare concept, but later the policy was reduced to contributing and complementing the public welfare and service system. The policy has raised critical issues about the welfare state, but is not aimed at a broader restructuring of the authority.

The development promoted by the Citizen Support Networks model was initiated from the top, drawing from the European debate and new forms of governance that have spread in the last two decades. In practice, the development model was focused on being bottom-up – on developing local and regional partnerships, joint regional welfare strategies and services based on local circumstances and needs. The focus has been on vertical co-operation instead of control from the top.

The contribution of the Citizens' Support Networks model has been in its ability to promote debate about the changing welfare provision and needs of citizens. Further, the model has been able to reform the functions of the NGOs and strengthen their role in welfare service provision. It should be recognised that the development model has been introduced so far in a small number of regions with a very limited budget. The new model of governance developed within the model has contributed to the national and regional debate, but, so far, the influence of its specific approach to welfare and services seems to be relatively limited in relation to the dominant position of public welfare provision.



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Appendix

Quantified results and figures illustrating the impact of the Citizens' Support Networks model. 1994-1997

Field of action	Joensuu	Oulu
different employees	12	15
employment experiments	21	50
* employment contracts by		
- joint subsidy		
- work experience		
- on-the-job training	13	
- apprenticeship		
- other		
Arenas for action		
* trainees	40	-2 /year
* voluntary workers	65	5-10/month
* regular actors among the NGOs	87	10/year
* visitors (persons)	30,000	2,500 /year
* internet-café	5,000	-
* training	20	23
* other functions	50	
voluntary and peer support-projects		
* voluntary workers		140/year
* supported citizens		1,200
information society -projects		-
* citizens	5,000	-
* organisations	40	-
participants in projects targeted at living areas	data not available	data not available
actors in co-operation networks		
* intensively involved	32	50-60
* less intensively involved	40	159-200
Participants in training	2,000	c. 1,500 /year
Influencing work		
* local co-operation groups (within a municipality)	3	10
* provincial	1	3
* among the municipalities (social welfare management)	1	2
* influencing strategies	1	3
Demonstration of dissertations		
* Doctoral thesis		
* Masters	3	2
* other dissertations	3	3

Source: Federation for Welfare and Health



Quantified results and figures illustrating the impact of the Citizens' Support Networks model. 1998-2003

Content of functions	Joensuu	Oulu	Jyväskylä	national
different employees	18	19	2	
employment experiments	551	400		
* work subsidies				
- on-the-job training	72		9	
- apprenticeship				
- other				
Arenas for action				
* employed by subsidies			350	
* trainees	450	20/v	150	
* voluntary workers (different)	80	10	400	
* actors among different NGOs as users	100	30-40/year	250	
* visitors	45,000/y	7,500-8,000/y	600/day	
* internet-café	6,000/y	-	30/day	
* training	240	1,700/year	200	
* other functions	600		500	
voluntary & peer support-projects				
* voluntary workers		140	400	
* supported citizens		1,200	1,000	
information society-projects				
* citizens	13,000	-	2,000/year	
* organisations	106	-	c.150/year	
participants in projects targeted at living areas				
	7,680	data n.a.	data n.a.	
actors in co-operation networks				
* intensively involved	23	50-60	75	
* less intensively involved	40	150-200	150	
Participants in training	5189		2,450	
Influencing work				
* local co-operation groups (within a municipality)	18	12	10	
* provincial	4	4	4	
* between municipalities (social welfare management)	3	2	1	
* influencing strategies	11	4	5	
Demonstration of dissertations				
* Doctoral thesis	1			1
* Masters	2	3		
* other dissertations	21	5	15	

Source: Finnish Federation for Welfare and Health