

Concluding seminar for the project “Poverty, social assistance and social inclusion – developments in Estonia and Latvia in a comparative perspective”

- Arne Grønningstæter - Fafo



The history of the cooperation:

10.05.2006

- Tartu University and Fafo have cooperated since 1993 in several research projects. University of Latvia was involved in 2003.
 - The first NORBALT living conditions study
1994
 - The second NORBALT living conditions study
1999
 - Social exclusion and social policy in Estonia and Latvia
1999 - 2002
 - Poverty, social assistance and social inclusion – developments in Estonia and Latvia in a comparative perspective
2003 - 2006



“Poverty, social assistance and social inclusion – developments in Estonia and Latvia in a comparative perspective”

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- Background: Developments early 1990s - 2002
- The conditions and constraints Baltic policy makers and implementers face in the building of welfare systems
- Welfare effects of the implemented policy
- How will trends and composition of poverty and social exclusion evolve under convergence to the west?
- What kinds of welfare systems are developing as a result of EU membership and European integration?



Background

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- From 1994 to 1999, unemployment at 11% in Estonia, decreased from 17 to 12% in Latvia
- This resulted in increased risk of poverty, but relative poverty decreased during the last part of the 90s due to public transfers
- Municipalities struggle with financial problems, social assistance often becomes a burden and receives low priority.
- The long way to go before the systems function according to the legal intentions, and according to the users' expectations.
- The combination of internal and external pressures when formulating welfare policy is a global phenomenon
- Path-dependency implies that choices of the past create consequences for the present and affects the options one may choose for the future.



Four main focus areas

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- Poverty trends and structures of social exclusion
- Policy responses – understandings of poverty alleviation and social inclusion
- Social practice – the implementation and impact of policies
- Policy learning and possibilities for policy transfer



Empirical basis of the project is threefold:

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- Secondary analysis of existing datasets
 - Norbalt surveys, Labour Force Surveys, Household Income and Expenditure Monitoring
- Qualitative data collection
 - focus group interviews, expert interviews and interviews with the subjects of the social inclusion measures (representatives of the target groups).
- Analyses of official documents and legislation
 - in order to track change in the legislation itself and the perceptions of poverty and exclusion inherent in the measures designed to address the problems
- Additional:
 - Survey on attitudes towards income disparities and income maintenance in Estonia, Latvia and Norway (May 2005)



Promised output from the application

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- The aim of the reporting is to make the project relevant for policy development as well as to the Norwegian Baltic cooperation, following the tradition from previous cooperation projects between Fafo and Baltic researchers.
 - Two publications with analysis of developments during the past period. These publications aim at mirroring the developments in the understanding of social policy and social problems, changes in living conditions and developments in social services.
 - In addition the aim is to use resources on writing papers for international conferences as well as international publishing of scientific articles.
 - A third important tool for reporting is to arrange a concluding seminar in one of the Baltic countries in 2005.



Published output

Website: www.fafo.no "Baltic Welfare"

- Avo Trumm: Poverty in Estonia. Fafo-report 497
- Ilze Trapenciere: Poverty in Latvia. Fafo-report 503
- Feliciana Rajevska: Social policy in Latvia. Welfare state under double pressure. Fafo-report 498
- Jüri Köre: Social policy developments in Estonia.
(PowerPoint presentation on the web site)

Under production:

- Feliciana Rajevska, Linda Ziverte, Zana Loza, Liga Staflecka and Aadne Aasland: Poverty, social assistance and social inclusion – developments in Latvia. Fafo-report
- Dagmar Kutsar and Tatjana Doroshko Social indicators between policy actors and research in Estonia. Working paper
- Liv Tørres: Labour and welfare in the Baltic states. Working paper.



Articles and other publications

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- Aadne Aasland: Poverty and social exclusion in Latvia: is ethnicity relevant? Social Science Bulletin no 3/2005
- Arne Grønningsæter, Riina Kiik: My work is exciting; social workers in Estonia and Norway (Forthcoming)
- Aadne Aasland, Tone Fløtten, Arne Grønningsæter: How egalitarian? Perceptions on social security in Estonia, Latvia and Norway. (Forthcoming)
- Riina Kiik, Arne Grønningsæter: Social work in changing environment – social workers in Estonia and Norway (Forthcoming)
- + student contributions
- + lots of papers and presentations in conferences

Summing up the project:

- The project team: Welfare state under quadruple pressure. Fafo report (Forthcoming)



Project presentation

“Quadruple” report – summing up the project

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- Pressure from above
 - Governments looking for new ways of organizing and managing welfare (f.ex. SATS-reform in Norway)
- Pressure from below
 - People look for other solutions than those offered by the welfare state (individualisation, liberalization, flexibility) Is it possible for public systems to meet everybody's needs?
- Pressure from inside
 - The system being problematic in itself (transparency, legitimacy, low employment, does the system treat people with respect etc) Perspective of those depending on the system
- Pressure from outside
 - Globalisation and international development (may influence both directly and indirectly)



Fruitful cooperation



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Project presentation



University of Latvia



University of Tartu



Fafo

More about the project:

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- <http://www.fafo.no/BalticWelfare/index.htm>

