



Peer Review on “Social entrepreneurship to tackle unmet social challenges”

Host Country Discussion Paper - Norway

Social enterprise in Norway – caught between collaboration and co-optation?

NORWAY, 12-13 December 2017

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



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1 Introduction

1.1 Setting the context for the Peer Review

There is global interest in the potential for social entrepreneurship in general, and social enterprise in particular, to realize 'win-win' outcomes. A widespread assumption is that social enterprises' combination of entrepreneurial behaviour and market economy strategies will lead to many desirable outcomes. For instance, it will provide people experiencing social needs opportunities to engage in active citizenship bottom-up, developing their agency through participation in governance of the enterprise, while simultaneously generating revenue by selling goods and services in the market economy, thereby creating sustainable jobs. Such outcomes can improve quality of life for those involved, contribute to more inclusive societies, reduce public expenditure on social needs, and generate tax revenues.

How the potential benefits of social entrepreneurship can be realized by means of activities organized in social enterprises, is an issue addressed in several initiatives by the European Commission following its *Social Business Initiative* (European Commission, 2011). Further initiatives have highlighted how the potential benefits with social enterprise can be developed through collaboration and comparisons between countries. Although social enterprises have been found to evolve in response to specific social needs in specific contexts, there are many similarities stimulating mutual learning opportunities. The international academic field of social enterprise has contributed to more conceptual clarity (Defourny, Hulgård & Pestoff, 2014), making comparisons between countries more feasible.

Norway is a wealthy nation not least because of its natural resources. It has an extensive public welfare state providing universal social services to its citizens. Compared to most countries the prevalence of child poverty, social exclusion and exclusion from the job market is low. Still, surveys indicate that the proportion of citizens experiencing such problems is rising. The public welfare services find it especially challenging to reach the most vulnerable groups. Although Norway avoided invasive austerity measures in public services in the aftermath of the financial crisis ten years ago, the gap between demands for social services and the welfare state's resources to address them is expected to grow in the foreseeable future. The reasons for this forecast are less revenues from natural resources, digitalisation in the labour market, and last but not least an ageing population (Meld. St. 29 (2016–2017)).

The Norwegian government stated in its political platform in 2013 that it will improve the conditions for using social entrepreneurs and voluntary organisations in the welfare system. The welfare state services have extensive experience and long traditions for inter-sectoral collaboration on the social problems to be highlighted in the peer review. Such experience is not necessarily transferable to collaboration with social enterprises, which have been described as 'a fundamentally new way of doing business' (European Commission 2016, p.6). As will become evident later in this paper social enterprises are still a relatively marginal phenomenon in Norway, and there is limited experience with collaboration between social enterprises and public welfare services. The Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is hosting a Peer Review focusing on mutual learning between countries on the following issues related to 'Fostering social entrepreneurship to tackle unmet social challenges':

- How can social entrepreneurs, academia, municipal and governmental actors work together to develop measures to support social entrepreneurship and tackle challenges currently unaddressed by existing welfare schemes? This will look in particular at children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion and support for labour market integration of those furthest from the labour market.
- How to best enable people that have experienced poverty and social exclusion to take part in social entrepreneurship, ensuring that schemes are well-targeted and efficient?

- How can we ensure that public support and schemes for social entrepreneurship are effective and efficient?

This paper seeks to clarify the status of knowledge on these issues in Norway, with emphasis on social enterprises specifically. There is growing academic interest in social enterprise, but no systematic evaluations of specific enterprises, policy initiatives or collaboration efforts related to the target groups specified in the issues highlighted by the Ministry. Several initiatives have been taken to map social enterprises and to support their eco-systems in Norway, but there are no designated laws, regulations or company forms. Existing documentation provide reasonably detailed information about what the social enterprises aim to accomplish and how many they are, but data are inadequate for in-depth analyses of consequences of the activities they initiate, and inadequate for evaluating specific policy measures. There is however good documentation of the context social enterprises emerge in, and how they are approached by existing actors in the public, voluntary and private business sectors. Taken together the documentation is sufficient for specifying areas of mutual interest between European countries.

The issues to be highlighted in the Peer Review relate specifically to *collaboration with social enterprises*, and this paper will therefore not detail public services to the identified target groups generally, nor detail collaboration between the welfare state and voluntary organisations specifically aimed at these target groups. The terms social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurship and social enterprises will be used to differentiate between an actor (social entrepreneur) engaged in activities (social entrepreneurship) organised independently in a formal organisation (social enterprise). It is *social enterprises*, not social entrepreneurs or the activity of social entrepreneurship that is predominantly highlighted in this paper. Emphasis is on how contextual factors influence the emergence and current status of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Norway, thereby identifying obstacles and opportunities for improved collaboration. The role of academia in such collaboration is commented only briefly, because of lack of relevant examples.

The issues for the Peer Review will first briefly be related to policy initiatives taken by the European Commission. From then on attention is mostly devoted to Norwegian experiences. For several decades the welfare state has been the dominant provider for social needs, and collaboration between the public, voluntary and private business sectors has been institutionalised and relatively stable. Social enterprises emerge in a context where the relationships between the three sectors are becoming more flexible, but they are also expected to adapt to existing practices. Powerful actors may limit the potential of social enterprises by co-opting them to serve the actors' own primary interests, instead of recognising the enterprises as equals in collaboration. Subsequently, the focus is directed towards social enterprises themselves and what they describe as their objectives, and the challenges they experience in their 'eco-systems' when trying to realise objectives. The implications from the Norwegian experiences – summarised as questions to be explored in the Peer Review – relate to how the potential benefits of social enterprise can be furthered through collaboration.

2 European policy context

2.1 Common points of reference

Social entrepreneurship is a subject of growing interest in the European Union, because of its potential to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to intractable social challenges, to contribute to job-creation and inclusion in labour markets, and contribute to the sustainability of welfare systems. The European Commission's 'Social Business Initiative' (2011) positioned social enterprise at the centre of developing the social economy and generating new solutions to societal problems, in particular poverty and exclusion. It also developed an elaborate set of definitional criteria for recognising an organisation as a social enterprise. These criteria were later simplified by a group of experts assigned by the European Commission, specifying the following as a minimum to be recognised as a social enterprise:

- 'The organisation must engage in economic activity: this means that it must engage in a continuous activity of production and/or exchange of goods and/or services.
- It must pursue an explicit and primary social aim: a social aim is one that benefits society.
- It must have limits on distribution of profits and/or assets: the purpose of such limits is to prioritise the social aim over profit making.
- It must be independent i.e. organisational autonomy from the State and other traditional for-profit organisations.
- It must have inclusive governance i.e. characterised by participatory and/ or democratic decision-making processes.' (European Commission 2015, p.v).

This definition was used to compare approaches to social enterprise and its eco-system across European countries. Based on systematic comparisons it was concluded that social enterprises are present in all countries in the European Union regardless of type of welfare system, non-profit sector, cooperative tradition or legislation. It was observed that 'social enterprises cover a variety of legal and organisational forms in each country studied, perform in diverse fields and entertain diversified relations with public agencies' (European Commission 2015, p. 13). A wide range of EU level actions has focused on access to finance, visibility and recognition, and enabling framework conditions for social enterprises.

The current and forthcoming EU actions build on experiences from the 2011 *Social Business Initiative* and the mapping of social enterprises' eco-systems in European countries, and include the following new measures:

- Improving access to finance.
- Improving access to markets.
- Developing better framework conditions.
- Boosting uptake of new technologies and use of new business models.
- Strengthening the international dimension.

The focus for the Peer Review initiated by the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 'Fostering social entrepreneurship to tackle unmet social challenges', are relevant to these policy initiatives. The considerable variation in activities and experiences between countries creates a potential for mutual learning, when contextual differences are also taken into account.

3 The host country experience

3.1 Historical influences on emerging social enterprises in Norway

This section explores the context social enterprises emerge in, and how such enterprises are influenced by powerful agents already engaged in addressing social needs. The context for social enterprise in Norway is influenced by several historical events and processes. Particularly important is the creation, practices and challenges of the public welfare state, and the continuously changing relationships between the public, voluntary and private sectors. Social enterprises can originate from within or outside of either the public, private or voluntary sectors (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011), and how they manifest is not arbitrary, but "deeply rooted in the social, economic, political and cultural contexts" (Defourny & Nyssens, 2014, p. 60). For instance, civil and social engagement is predominantly channelled through membership-based voluntary organisations in Norway. As commented by Eimhjellen & Loga (2016) hybrid organisations combining social and commercial objectives have been rare compared to many south European countries, and there is a weaker tradition for philanthropy than in countries like the United Kingdom.

Membership-based voluntary organisations contributed significantly to the creation of public welfare states in all the Nordic countries (Hulgård, 2007; Rothstein, 2001; Selle, 1993). They represented social groups and interest, channelled citizen engagement on a variety of social issues into the political arena, and initiated entrepreneurial activities to address social problems (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013). The Norwegian state generally welcomed and supported such initiatives from circa 1900 till 1940. In the period after World War II the then dominant Labour Party was a driving force for more state responsibility for social problems (Lorentzen 2007). The party was sceptical to charity and other forms of philanthropic civic engagement. Their position was that vulnerable groups and individuals should not have to rely on generosity from voluntary organisations or family, or rely on market solutions. Social services should be delivered by state-employed professionals. For the most part, these initiatives were supported by voluntary organisations, many of which had advocated state responsibility for social needs.

The public welfare state soon became the dominant provider for social needs. One consequence of this development was a relatively stable, or even static, set of relationships between the three sectors in provision of public welfare. Voluntary organisations and private businesses still contributed, but in limited volume and with few responsibilities. This arrangement has been popular and continuous to receive wide public and political support, even though it is costly in terms of taxes. It has been suggested that this support has a cultural explanation, for instance that Norwegians are particularly egalitarian, trusting, consensus-seeking or state-friendly. Without disregarding the potential relevance of such assertions, a simpler explanation is that the public welfare state has generated favourable outcomes for a majority of citizens, expressing their satisfaction in political elections. In recent years it has been established that a relatively equal distribution of resources and life chances (which is a consequence of redistribution of wealth through the welfare state) has beneficial consequences for public health (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), human development (UNDP, 2014), and democratic stability (Piketty, 2014). An even simpler explanation for the widespread support is, as previously indicated, that the public welfare state guarantees citizens' freedom from dependency because they are entitled to universally attainable services if they experience social needs (Vike, 2012). Seen like this the public welfare state provides mutual insurance for all citizens against misfortune. The strong public support for this arrangement is accompanied by widespread scepticism towards privatisation of public services, which is a highly contested issue on the political arena.

In the Norwegian context, if social enterprises are juxtaposed with private businesses they run the risk of being understood by many as undesirable attempts to privatise

services catering for social needs, and as combining two interests (social and economic value) that should be kept separate. On the other hand, if social enterprises by means of bottom-up approaches to participation and co-production can contribute to freedom from dependency for vulnerable individuals and groups, they are more likely to be perceived as legitimate contributors to social services. The extent to which either of these perceptions will become dominant is too early to assess.

Central to the Norwegian context is not only the extensive welfare state, but also a longstanding tradition for developing policy and practice through collaboration between stakeholders in all sectors. Such collaboration is dominated by powerful actors balancing interests between social groups. A commonly used example is the institutionalised collaboration between employer organisations, unions and the state on determining wages and working conditions for the majority of workplaces, but the same 'corporative' approach is used in all policy areas. Such arrangements provide stability but not necessarily flexibility, and social enterprises may, as will be examined in more detail later, find it difficult to operate outside of or between sectors.

However, the past few decades the distinctions between public, business and voluntary sectors have softened. Voluntary organisations have become more professionalised and similar to public service organisations in their approaches to social needs, while simultaneously becoming more similar to private sector businesses by engaging more in commercial activities to finance their initiatives. Private sector businesses have become more interested in contributing to social and environmental goals, often referred to as the triple bottom-line of profit, people and planet (Elkington & Robins, 1994), manifest for instance in corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy. The public sector has privatised more social services, and has 'privatised from within' by implementing business models and highlighting innovation in their daily operations (Ramsdal & Skorstad, 2004), while simultaneously setting up services facilitating participation by vulnerable individuals and groups in activities organised by voluntary organisations. It is reasonable to expect that these developments will make social enterprises' emphasis on combining social and economic gain more generally acceptable, and that they can develop markets for their activities in conjunction with cross-sector initiatives taken by actors in either sector.

So far, more attention has been given to voluntary organisations than to social enterprises as contributors to address social problems. Voluntary organisations already collaborate extensively on addressing social problems (Selle & Strømsnes, 2012), are acknowledged for their contribution to innovation in social services (Andreassen, 2011), and for their proficiency in catering for social needs of the most vulnerable (Sivesind, 2008). However, altruistically oriented voluntary organisations are not backed by social movements to the same extent as before. Similar to other countries citizen motivation has changed from social movements to philanthropy, from donation of time to donation of money, from society-wide to high social status engagement, from membership in voluntary organisations to individual contributions, and from collectivistic to individualistic projects (Wollebekk & Sivesind, 2010). Although the total level of engagement in voluntary organisations is stable, citizens are generally more motivated by personal interest and less motivated by collective objectives.

It is likely in the medium to long term that the combination of challenges in funding the welfare state and the challenges in recruiting volunteers will expand the market for social services. As noted by Defourny, Hulgård and Pestoff (2014) it is uncertain to what extent this market will be catered for by private businesses or social enterprises, but there will most likely be improved opportunities for social enterprises to sustain their activities. Whether such opportunities will materialise is influenced by how social enterprises are understood and approached. Hauge & Wasvik (2016) analysed what actors took interest in social enterprise in Norway, and the meanings they attributed to the concept. The data showed that the interested actors were few but powerful, and that they all adapted 'social enterprise' to serve their primary interests:

- The umbrella organisation for voluntary organisations in Norway, who wanted to distance itself from potential competitors, argued that social enterprise is a for-profit business different from voluntary organisations.
- The state-owned Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (NAV), being interested in using social enterprises to deliver services they procured, mandated in their criteria for providing seed funding that social enterprises had to be registered as non-profit voluntary organisations.
- The private investment company Ferd provided seed funding for social enterprises using a for-profit business approach similar to those used in their favoured approach of venture capitalism.
- The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (the employer association for all local and regional authorities) described social enterprise as a means for provision of local authority social services.
- The social entrepreneurs themselves described social enterprises as an opportunity for motivated individuals to realize social value on the outside of public, voluntary and private business sectors.

Social enterprises were thus understood as belonging either in the private or the voluntary sectors; as local service providers or as businesses aiming to upscale production society-wide for the benefit of maximum social profit; or as activities not belonging in either of the three sectors. As noted by Teasdale (2010) with reference to the United Kingdom, 'the label social enterprise means different things to different people across different contexts and at different points in time' (p. 2). In the United Kingdom different understandings can be organised around different opinions on which company forms should be recognised as social enterprises. Hauge & Wasvik (2016) asserted that in Norway different understandings were reflections of powerful actors' interests, which indicates that social enterprise is not yet recognised as an independent field of practice, but (except for social entrepreneurs themselves) predominantly a concept used as a rhetorical device to promote specific interests.

Ridley-Duff & Bull (2011) has asserted that it is likely that 'Over the longer term, social enterprise will be determined not by theorists but by social practices and institutions that are associated with, and labelled as, social enterprises' (p. 79). Precisely what social practices and institutions will prevail in defining social enterprise in the Norwegian context is not a foregone conclusion. The underlying problem is that the fact that different understandings of social enterprise can be in conflict, is seldom made explicit nor discussed in Norway. Ambiguity in the concept is not necessarily problematic, but it can be for instance when actors have markedly different expectations to collaboration and outcomes thereof, or if policymaking inadvertently fuels conflicts of interests by supporting one understanding of the concept without serious attention to other understandings. There is obvious risk of limiting the potential of social enterprises by restricting its meaning to serve specific interests, like for instance public welfare.

Taken together, the developments within and between the three sectors influence the context of social enterprise in Norway ambiguously. There is still a dominant welfare state, but it is adjusting its provision of services to increased demands and engage in innovative practices to do so; there are numerous well-established voluntary organisations finding it difficult to recruit volunteers and expand its services, and an increasing number of private sector businesses wanting to sell their products and services to the state, or alternatively engage in some form of corporate philanthropy. The backcloth for the emerging field of social enterprise in Norway is thus complex.

3.2 The emergence of social enterprises, and their eco-system

Without disregarding the potential relevance of historical experiences with organisations that could arguably be analysed as social enterprises, the first actors identifying themselves as social entrepreneurs and their activities as social enterprise emerged only ten to fifteen years ago in Norway. They also contributed with the first notable contribution to the documentation of social enterprises. After establishing a 'Network for Social Entrepreneurship' in 2008 a book titled *'Vilje til endring' ('Will to change')* was published the following year (Schei & Rønnevig, 2009). In the book ten social entrepreneurs describe their practices and objectives. They all developed goods and services related to one of two broad categories of social needs; work integration for vulnerable groups, or health, learning and integration for children and youth. The organising of their enterprises and their areas of engagement differed considerably; literacy, education, child abuse, domestic violence, sports, work integration of vulnerable groups, vocational training for young people, social business, aid to developing countries, and microcredit. Irrespective of differences they described themselves as sharing a critical outlook on deficiencies in the welfare state's provision of services, and as having the same overall approach to social needs: 'What characterizes a social entrepreneur is that he or she has a vision and an inner need to accomplish change for vulnerable groups. Their passion and belief in their cause make them persevere and be creative' (Schei & Rønnevig 2009, p. 5, own translation). All the enterprises described in the book were set up by one or two individuals taking personal economic risk.

Read in retrospect the book's descriptions are relevant to make a rough sketch of the landscape of social enterprise in Norway today: Social enterprises are typically set up by individuals seeking to address social needs not adequately catered for by the welfare state or the regular job market, they differ considerably in their organisation and activities but contribute most often to vulnerable children and youth and to work integration, and they are mainly approaching the welfare state with their goods and services. The extent of participation by people themselves experiencing social needs in initiating social enterprises is unknown, but it is probably much more common with participation in production and governance once an enterprise has been established.

In the period 2010-2014 altogether three reports were commissioned to explore the emerging field of social enterprise, what activities such enterprises were engaged in, how, and with what potential contributions to (in a wide sense) realisation of social value. Two of these reports were commissioned by the former Ministry of Trade and Industry (Damvad, 2012) and the former Ministry of Labour respectively (Gustavsen & Kobro, 2012), and the third by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (Kaupang, 2014). In all three reports the difficulties in identifying social enterprises was commented, and related to a combination of lack of an authoritative definition and limited use of the concept among practitioners. Many organisations that could qualify as social enterprises by definition did not use this concept themselves. There were (and continues to be) no register or company form tailored to social enterprises.

The three reports were based on different definitions of social enterprise and different methodological approaches to identify them. They all noted that the total number of social enterprises in Norway could not be determined by their approach. Perhaps most interesting in retrospect is that they nevertheless ended up with fairly similar descriptions of the emerging field of social enterprise. Most notably they all commented on the considerable variation in the social enterprises' choice of company form, formal organisation and commercial activities, thereby supporting the description of the field in the book by social entrepreneurs themselves. The report by Gustavsen and Kobro (2012) developed a conceptual framework for how social enterprises can alleviate poverty among children, but did not apply the framework on specific enterprises. The report by Kaupang (2012) highlighted how local authorities can benefit from collaborating with social enterprises, but also refrained from

analysing specific enterprises. Damvad (2012) took a somewhat different approach, and developed a typology in which social entrepreneurs were grouped either as concept developers, specialists, or idealists. The applicability of this typology was not investigated further. A fair assessment is that all three reports provided data relevant to mapping the landscape of social enterprise in Norway, and assembled many ideas on how it can be understood and approached by other actors, but there was little detail in the mapping, the ideas developed were not investigated empirically, and there were no analyses of collaboration between social enterprises and the welfare state.

Neither of the first three reports discussed how meanings and practices of social enterprises are influenced by specificities in the Norwegian context. Such issues were however addressed by the 'Social Entrepreneurship Research Network for the Nordic Countries' (SERNOC), which received funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers from 2010 onwards. A group of experts from the Nordic countries wrote an extensive report published in Norwegian (TemaNord, 2014) and in English the following year (TemaNord, 2015). A survey was commissioned in conjunction with the report, focusing primarily on the potential for work integration of vulnerable groups. Of the 193 social enterprises included in the survey 52 were Norwegian (37 responded), a majority of which operated in ways compatible with the expert group's description of social enterprise 'as a type of enterprise with the following three characteristics:

- It is targeted at a social objective where there is an unmet welfare need.
- It contributes innovative solutions to these challenges.
- It is driven by the social results, but also by a business model that can make the enterprise viable and sustainable.

We chose to base our work on this understanding and bring in another two characteristics:

- Involvement of the target group for the social entrepreneurial work, the employees and other key stakeholders.
- Cooperation across disciplines and business models'. (TemaNord 2015, p. 10)

This characterisation (bordering on definition) expands on more restricted definitions of social enterprise (encapsulated in the first three bullet points) by including two characteristics perhaps especially relevant in the Nordic and Norwegian context. Both these characteristics point to a wide outlook on collaboration, involving all affected by the social enterprise and emphasising interdisciplinarity. The report thus pointed to contextual features that could be especially relevant, and as will be commented briefly later this report is still being used by the Norwegian government.

Several of the researchers involved in the aforementioned SERNOC contributed to a scientific anthology on Nordic perspectives (Andersen, Gawell & Spear, 2016). The editors comment on similarities between the Nordic countries, among them the transition from relatively poor countries with legislation restricting social and political freedoms, into societies based on individual rights and a high standard of living supported by extensive public welfare services – a transformation forwarded by popular mass movements (for instance labour, temperance, suffragettes) promoting their interests through membership-based voluntary organisations. They asserted that the combination of extensive public welfare and a high degree of citizens' participation 'might affect the emergence of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise slightly differently than countries with other social contracts' (p. 2), but also that differences compared with other countries should not be overstated. Overall, they found strong similarities between Nordic social enterprises and enterprises in other countries.

3.2.1 Characteristics and barriers for social enterprises in Norway

Similarities have also been documented the last year or so. Three new reports provide more detailed information about the landscape of social enterprises in Norway, and what they see as barriers for their activities (Eimhjellen & Loga, 2016; Loga et al, 2016; Kobro et al 2017). The report by Eimhjellen & Loga (2016) was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs together. They conducted an explorative mapping of all actors identifying themselves, or being identified by others, as social entrepreneurs. A total of 400 enterprises or individual names were approached, of which 179 responded, yielding results likely to be representative for social enterprises in Norway today (here adapted from Eimhjellen & Loga 2016):

- More than half of the social enterprises have been established within the last ten years. The dominant types of activities they engage in are 'social exclusion and the disadvantaged', 'work inclusion' and 'community' (particularly in social enterprises emanating from voluntary organisations), and 'integration', 'youth' and 'health'. The newly established private businesses dominate within the field of 'school and education'. A majority of enterprises engage in some form of lobbying towards political and administrative levels. Furthermore, a majority of enterprises specify client participation as important for the enterprise to realise its objectives.
- One category of social enterprise is newly established private businesses with few employees and a small turnover most often operating at the national level (indicating an Anglo-American inspiration for choice of approach to social entrepreneurship), whereas another category emanates from older and larger voluntary organisations adapting to commercial markets and increased interest for social innovation (indicating a south-European inspiration for choice of approach to social entrepreneurship).
- Corresponding to this categorisation; half of the social enterprises have company forms in the private sector (like stock companies, ideal stock companies, business-oriented foundations), and the other half in the voluntary sector (like voluntary organisations, ideal foundations, cooperatives).
- Most of the enterprises have less than five employees, with an economic turnover of less than five million NOK per year. The majority are dependent on private or public support, and only about half of the enterprises have had economic surplus within the last five years. Among those who had generated surplus most of the profit was reinvested in the enterprise.
- More than half of the organisations participate in networks or hubs, some of which operate as incubators facilitating collaboration, shared working spaces and interaction between sectors. Such arrangements generate co-production and are regarded as important by the social entrepreneurs.

Because of lack of comparable data it is not possible to determine whether, how, or by how much the field of social enterprise is growing in Norway. However, Eimhjellen & Loga (2016) did not find indications of strong growth, supporting their assumptions that neither the needs for welfare production nor the economic situation in Norway stimulate growth.

The two latest reports (Loga et al, 2016, commissioned by Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, and Kobro et al, 2017 commissioned by the ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Education and Research, and Trade, Industry and Fisheries together) both strengthen the validity of the mapping summarised in the above bullet points. Loga et al (2016) also document how social enterprises emanate from initiatives outside of and within both the voluntary, public and private sectors, similar to developments in most countries.

Perhaps more importantly, the two latest reports go beyond mapping the landscape by using data from experiences of collaboration between social enterprises and local authorities. They document similar experiences, and have similar recommendations on how to strengthen what is often referred to as an 'enabling environment' or 'eco-system' for social enterprises. In the European context it has been argued that 'an enabling environment for social enterprises is critical if they are to fulfil their potential in contributing not only to the creation of jobs, but also to addressing wider social and economic needs, and to promoting more cohesive and inclusive societies.' (European Commission, 2013, p.3). Loga et al (2016) and Kobro et al (2017) document concerns relevant to this challenge, here first similar results from both of them are juxtaposed:

- Local authorities have limited knowledge of what social enterprise is, many are sceptical to the combined social and business motive, local authorities are primarily organised according to sector interests and find it difficult to prioritise intersectoral activities, they associate social enterprise with risk taking and their daily work practices discourage risk taking. Although politicians and individual employees can be enthusiastic towards social enterprise, administrative decision-makers and employees often are not. There are genuine tensions between values and approaches to social needs taken by local authorities and social enterprises respectively.
- The local authorities procure services specifying solutions they want delivered, not for instances open-ended processes for improving services through co-production with social enterprises and service users. There is lack of relevant tools to document social value. The procurement regulations are difficult to fulfil, privileging larger organisations in the voluntary or private business sectors in procurement processes. Hence, the market for social enterprises in providing social services in local authorities is small.
- Access to counselling and relevant education is scarce, both for local authorities and for social enterprises. There is also little exchange of experiences and knowledge between local authorities.

In addition, Loga et al (2016) found that employees in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization (NAV) were more experienced with and open to collaboration with social entrepreneurs than employees in local authorities. Kobro et al (2017) documented concerns from employees experiencing social enterprises as not fully understanding the complexities in public social services, thereby running the risk of providing poor services. The overarching challenge documented in both reports is scarce communication and knowledge, leading to a conservative strategy by local authorities in which they do not explore opportunities for facilitating social enterprise by flexible use of procurement rules and regulations.

The two reports differ seemingly considerably on concrete recommendations for strengthening the environment or eco-system for social enterprises. Relevant in this context is a conceptual model of the eco-system developed by a group of experts analysing developments in social enterprise in Europe (European Commission, 2015). Public policy and citizens' ability to self-organize are described as two pillars the eco-system revolves around, being influenced by 'a number of evolving factors that compose the social enterprise eco-system' (p. 19). These evolving factors are:

1. The political acknowledgement and legal forms that have been recognised at the national level.
2. Access to markets.
3. Public support (for start-up and scaling up, as well as the fiscal framework).
4. Access to finance.
5. Networks and mutual support mechanisms.

6. Research, education and skills development.

The experts found that reports from various European countries confirmed that the eco-system is shaped by the interplay between all these factors, and that it cannot depend on one factor alone. Still, the relative importance of these factors varied significantly between countries.

Returning to the reports by Loga et al (2016) and Kobro et al (2017) respectively, differences between them in concrete recommendations become less apparent using the framework above, and some interesting similarities emerge. Both reports make recommendations relevant to all six factors, and in both reports approximately half of the recommendations can be related to factor 1 or 6 above. Without downplaying the importance of the other factors (they are all obviously important) this is possibly an indication of political acknowledgement, and research, education and skills development being of high relative importance today in Norway.

The concrete recommendations on political acknowledgement were 1) initiate a debate on the future of the welfare state in which change and innovation is emphasised, 2) give political legitimacy for innovation, trial and error in local authorities, 3) see social enterprise in the context of upcoming reforms in the welfare state (Loga et al, 2016), 4) establish a register for social enterprises, 5) regulate social enterprises in a designated company form, and 6) make state responsibility for the field of social enterprise explicit (Kobro et al, 2017). The concrete recommendations on research, education and skills development were 1) Take initiatives to strengthen the competencies of all relevant stakeholders, 2) develop tools to measure social impact, 3) support research on social enterprise (Loga et al, 2016), 4) develop a wide-reaching program for competence building, 5) develop national indicators and a tool for measuring social impact, and 6) coordinate efforts to strengthen knowledge about (and doing) social enterprise in schools (Kobro et al, 2017). Political clarification of regulations and (in loose terms) playing rules relevant to social enterprise, and the development of knowledge and skills necessary to get social enterprises operating, can reasonably be thought of as basic requirements in the eco-system. These factors are probably critical to strengthen in the short run.

3.2.2 Recent initiatives in Norway

A different but compatible approach to strengthening the eco-system for social enterprises in Norway was organised by The Ministry of Local Government and Administration. The Ministry engaged a wide range of stakeholders including social enterprises and local authorities in developing a handbook, which was completed early in 2017. The handbook, called '*Veier til samarbeid*' ('Roads to collaboration') (Ministry of Local Government and Administration, 2017), seek to inspire more and better collaboration between local authorities and social enterprises within existing laws and regulations, for instance in public procurement. It provides several examples of successful collaborations, and is explicit in its political support of innovation in public services. The extent to which the handbook is being used, and with what consequences, is not yet known.

The aforementioned report on eco-systems for social enterprises (European Commission, 2015) noted that 'Given the general interest nature of the services supplied by social enterprises, these enterprises interact with public agencies, which turn out to be their main client in almost all EU countries' (p. 44). This is the case in Norway as well, as commented above. The report goes on to comment that public procurement strategies vary between countries, but across countries there is widespread concern about such strategies' suitability for social enterprises. The report recommends that public procurement strategies should adjust to the specificities of each welfare system, and also that reserved contracts and social clauses should be used more in competitive tenders. Seen from this perspective the Norwegian handbook's emphasis on opportunities within existing rules and regulations can

contribute constructively, but probably not sufficiently to boost collaboration between local authorities and social enterprises.

There are currently several ongoing initiatives, both public and private, to develop new indicators or test existing approaches for the purpose of measuring social impact of social enterprise. The government has also announced it will introduce social impact bonds as an approach to support work integration and reduce recidivism among people 18-30 years of age convicted of crime. These developments are indicators of activities to strengthen the eco-system, but it is too early to comment on experiences.

Access to funding is one of the six factors in the eco-system model described earlier. As previously mentioned, two institutions have consistently provided seed funding specifically to social enterprises the past six to eight years, limiting the meaning of 'social enterprise' in ways beneficial to their primary interests. More specifically, the family-owned investment company Ferd has had 'Social entrepreneurs' as an independent business area since 2009. In 2014 it provided funding in the region of NOK 25 million (EUR 2,7 million) annually. The social enterprises included in its portfolio also get access to business training and business networks, in return for making Ferd co-owners of the enterprise. The other institution is the state-owned Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization (NAV). Annually since 2011, it has provided seed funding either for developing or running social enterprises generating new solutions to combating poverty and social exclusion. NAV's seed funding has increased over the years, and is now around 16 million NOK (EUR 1,7 million) annually.

These two seed funding institutions use markedly different requirements for accepting an applicant as a social enterprise. NAV emphasises support in the local community whereas Ferd emphasises potential for up-scaling; NAV disallows dividend for owners whereas Ferd allows it; NAV requires the social enterprise to be qualified for inclusion in the public register for (non-profit) voluntary organisations whereas Ferd has no such requirement; NAV's support is limited to funding whereas Ferd requires part ownership in return for a combination of funding, business training and access to networks. In Ferd's approach social enterprises are adhering to the same logic as venture capitalism (consistent with Ferd's own business model), whereas in NAV's approach social enterprises are adhering to the same logic as voluntary organisations (consistent with NAV's practice of providing project funding for voluntary organisations contributing to social services). In return for a miniscule amount of their total resources both institutions are influencing the meaning of social enterprise in the Norwegian contexts in ways serving their own interests, thereby probably also restricting opportunities for developing an independent field of social enterprise. On the other hand, both Loga et al (2016) and Kobro et al (2017) found that social enterprises seek seed funding among different actors. However, the largest among these actors were state operated agencies supporting innovative private businesses, i.e. emphasising economic over social value, once more suggesting that social enterprises have to adapt to existing company forms and practices to receive support.

The Norwegian government has, as previously mentioned, since 2013 included in its political platform that it will improve the conditions for using social entrepreneurs and voluntary organisations in provision of public welfare services. As indirectly shown in this report, through information about which Ministries have commissioned reports on social enterprise in Norway, there is political interest across sector ministries. The Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has initiated a work group with representatives from altogether nine ministries. The work group's mandate is to use the report commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers (TemaNord, 2015) as a point of departure for addressing several issues related to what social enterprise is, its relevance to the different Ministries, and how it can be facilitated using existing (in wide terms) means administered by the public sector. The work group has not yet concluded. Depending on how the mandate is specified the group's conclusions can be more or less relevant – over a short or long timeframe – to the previously described

concerns related to the eco-system and to collaboration between social enterprises, local authorities and academia.

Academia has until now played a limited role in developing social enterprise as a field of social practice, and a miniscule role in collaboration between social enterprises and the welfare state. Some courses have been developed at the University of Oslo and at the BI Norwegian Business School. The University College of Southeast Norway and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology are currently collaborating with the social enterprise 'The Change Factory' on syllabus and teaching in the Bachelor's program for child welfare officers. The first academic textbook intended for a Norwegian audience was published in 2017, exploring how the business models adopted by social enterprises contribute to both business and societal development in ways transcending practices in either the public, voluntary or private sectors (Brøgger, 2017). Several academic institutions have been involved in the reports commented above, some have contributed with scientific papers intended for international scholars, and the University College of Southeast Norway has established the SESAM research and development centre for social entrepreneurship, co-production and social innovation. Consequently, there are some developments but, as is the case for the field of social enterprise in Norway generally, several of the initiatives are recent and it is too early to evaluate consequences.

There is insufficient data to analyse consequences or effectiveness of specific social enterprises tailoring their services to children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, or supporting labour market integration of those furthest from the labour market, or aiming to include people that have experienced poverty and social exclusion in social enterprises. Similarly, there is insufficient data for assessing consequences of policy initiatives, or for assessing collaboration between social enterprises, academia, municipal and governmental actors. Still, there are numerous examples of social enterprises addressing these issues, and many actors gaining experiences from policy initiatives and collaboration, constituting a potential resource for future learning. It is also possible to discuss implications of the context social enterprise emerges in, and the enterprises' experiences with factors relevant to their eco-system.

4 Discussion and learning opportunities

4.1 Implications and questions for the Peer Review

It is reasonable to assume that strengthening the collaboration between social enterprises and the various levels in the welfare state is a key challenge irrespective of what specific social needs are addressed. In the foreword to the book on Nordic perspectives on social entrepreneurship and social enterprises (Andersen, Gawell & Spear, 2016), Lars Hulgård asks 'if the Nordic model is a barrier or a platform for the making of resilient social enterprise and social innovation models aimed at building inclusive and socially just societies under the influence of demographic changes and profound globalization.' (p. x). The dominant position of the welfare state and its wide-reaching services may impede the development of social enterprises, and as shown in this paper actors in the other sectors may cause similar effects, undermining the potential for social enterprises to establish a new field of practice.

In theory and ideally, social enterprise can contribute substantially to generation of social value by combining practices traditionally associated with either the public, voluntary or private sectors. Hauge and Wasvik (2016) claimed that 'It is still too early to determine whether social enterprise will bridge resources in such a way, or if it will be more or less co-opted by strong interests in one of the sectors. At this point in time, however, the co-optation scenario seems most likely, as several powerful actors highlight sector interests' (p. 88). The public sector is ambiguous towards social enterprise, but at least at the local authority level seems most interested in how social

enterprise can contribute to social services, the voluntary sector is distancing itself from social enterprises as entities belonging in the private business sector, whereas the private business sector approaches social enterprise as a means for corporate philanthropy. It is probably not a sign of a vibrant field of practice when several of the social entrepreneurs who described social enterprise as an opportunity to realize social value on the outside of public, business and voluntary organizations in the book by Schei and Rønnevig (2009), later adjusted their company forms in order to conform with the private business Ferd's or the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization's criteria for seed funding. There is little comfort in the observation that similar challenges have been noted in Sweden (Gawell, 2014).

Despite uncertainties about if, how and with what consequences the field of social enterprise expands in Norway, there are indications of a growing infrastructure with various networks and hubs, initiatives to improve collaboration in public procurement, and to coordinate policy initiatives between ministries to further the government objective of improving the conditions for using social entrepreneurs in the welfare system. Analyses of feedback from social enterprises suggest that all factors in the eco-system need to be addressed, but perhaps in particular political acknowledgement on the one hand, and research, education and skills development on the other. Although most social enterprises approach the public sector with their goods and services, it is likely that their concerns are not identical. For instance, they may benefit from different forms of support depending on whether they address public welfare services, work integration, or social business opportunities outside of the welfare state. To what extent such concerns should be taken into account is interesting to learn more about.

Furthermore, the public welfare services do not constitute a fixed context for social enterprises. As mentioned in the introduction there are ongoing efforts to reform the welfare state to adapt to the anticipated increase in demands for social services. Norway has followed the global trend of continuous reforms in public services, attempting to attain better services at lower cost following 'New Public Management' philosophy. Employees in the public welfare state experience reorganising more frequent than their colleagues in the private sector (Endresen, 2014; Messel, 2013). There is growing concern about adverse effects of auditing and controlling services (Helsetjenesteaksjonen (Health Services Campaign)), 2015), which are not conducive to innovation. On the other hand, there is also a trend towards more public innovation and more emphasis on participation and co-production with the users of services, in line with 'New Public Governance'. Hence, public welfare services are not uniform, but a mixture of different approaches, forms of organising and objectives. Social entrepreneurs can expect to encounter a multi-faceted public sector, with varying opportunities for collaboration.

Experiences from other countries relevant to strengthening collaboration, as well as experiences from improving the eco-system for social enterprise, can be highly useful for learning purposes. Within the context of the issues to be highlighted in the Peer Review – i.e. collaboration between social enterprise, academia, municipal and governmental actors on addressing needs of children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and supporting labour market integration of those furthest from the labour market, and aiming to include people that have experienced poverty and social exclusion in social enterprises, while ensuring that public support and schemes for social enterprises are effective and efficient – the following three questions are particularly relevant to address:

- What approaches have proven to be effective for strengthening the eco-system of social enterprises, and what factors in the eco-system have proven to be most important for social enterprise to develop as a field of practice?
- How, with what measures, and to what extent has it proved effective to facilitate collaboration with social enterprise within existing frameworks of laws,

regulations and procurement procedures? What are the valuable learning experiences from adjusting or developing new frameworks, either for collaboration with social enterprises in general or for addressing the needs of the target groups highlighted in this Peer Review?

- To what extent are challenges in developing collaboration and the eco-system the same or different depending on whether the social enterprises address public welfare services, work integration, or social business opportunities outside of the welfare state?

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