

# Changing values and the Nordic countries

▶ The Nordic welfare model is highly valued and there is a common agreement to maintain it. However, the views differ on how to best maintain the model.

▶ Individual responsibility for health choices is gaining more ground in the political debate. Individuality may also be observed in the decreasing power of authorities.

▶ Economic values have become central in decision making. Often they seem to be more important than other values. Loss of human resources is not commonly perceived as an economic loss. The primary object in economics is the promotion of material welfare but it should be noted that economics is only one part of human welfare. There should be a wider understanding of health and wellbeing in economics, not only of the material welfare (e.g. wellbeing or welfare economics).

▶ There is a clear need to increase the assessment of human impacts in decision making as well as a continuous need of well-formulated arguments that defend the promotion of health and wellbeing.



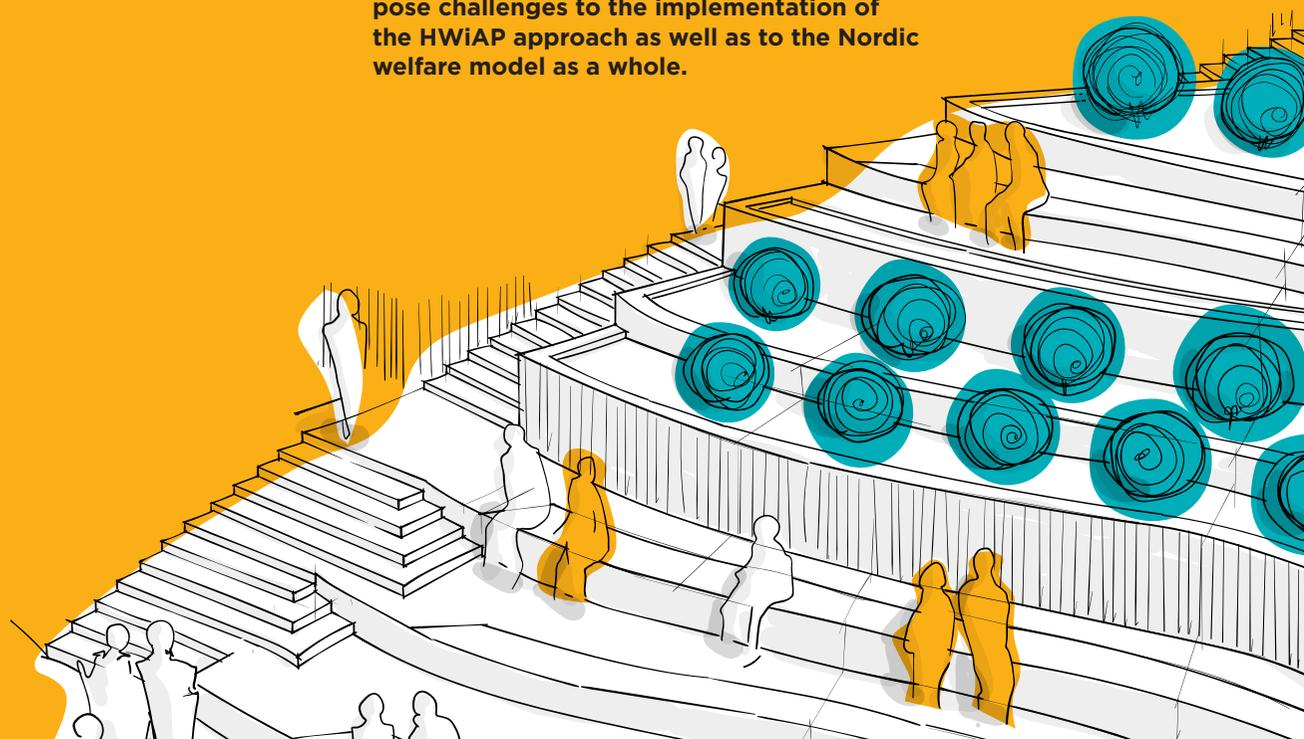
This paper is based on a workshop (Public health strategies, health and wellbeing in all policies and the Nordic welfare model in the future) held as part of a Nordic conference in Helsinki on 16–17 November 2016 (Nordic Welfare States and Public Health - A Need for Transformative Change?). The aim of the workshop was to discuss how the values underlying the Nordic welfare model are changing, and how this has been reflected in the design and implementation of public health strategies in the Nordic countries. Another aim was to explore the opportunities and successes of the Health and Wellbeing in all Policies (HWiAP) approach in the changing welfare model.

MINISTRY OF  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH  
Finland

# Health and wellbeing

## on agenda in every sector

**Health and Wellbeing in All Policies (HWiAP) is a well-accepted approach in all Nordic countries. There are good examples of how the Nordic countries have put HWiAP into practice with promising results. The societal development in the Nordic countries has, however, some features in common that pose challenges to the implementation of the HWiAP approach as well as to the Nordic welfare model as a whole.**



# Success stories

of the implementation of Health and Wellbeing in All Policies

## High-level political commitment to cross-sectoral work:

Cross-sectoral work is the key to improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities. Political commitment is essential and all sectors need to be on board. A good example is the Welfare Watch in Iceland where the Prime Minister is responsible for implementing the public health strategy. Cross-sectoral cooperation has succeeded well and produced good results.

## Structures, responsibilities and cooperation:

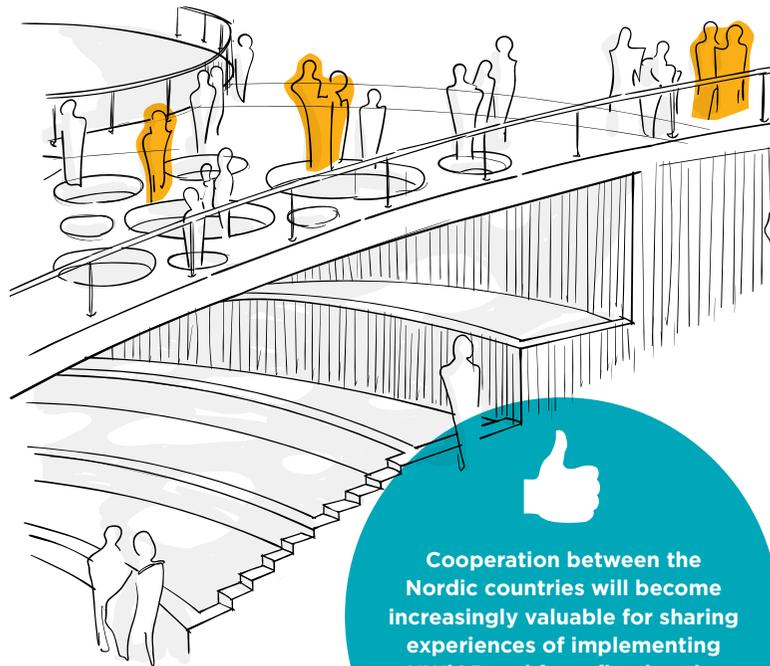
Clear structures and responsibilities enable the cooperation between different sectors at local and national levels. For example, the Finnish Health Care Act of 2010 and the Norwegian Public Health Act of 2012 define the HWiAP structures and responsibilities at local level. In both countries, the acts have proven to be useful tools for enhancing action across sectors for public health. The Finnish Act requires that a report of resident health and wellbeing must be submitted annually to the municipal council and a more extensive report needs to be given once during each council's term of office. Co-operation between administrative sectors, with other local actors, private enterprises and NGOs is an essential part of the cross-sectoral work.

## Whole-of-society approach:

As an example of a whole-of society approach, there are good experiences of cooperation between health policy advocates and industry. For example, salt levels have been reduced in food products as a result of such cooperation in Norway and Finland. It is important that governments create environments that make "healthy choices" easy and possible for everybody. This has previously been done for example by imposing high taxes on alcohol and tobacco products as well as through alcohol monopoly.

## Linking health and wellbeing promotion to the financial perspective:

In Finland, as part of the health and social service reform, a new coefficient will be introduced into the financing of municipalities and regional government. The coefficient consists of health and wellbeing indicators, including both process and outcome indicators. Depending on how well they perform in promoting health and wellbeing, the coefficient can influence the financing of municipalities and counties.



Cooperation between the Nordic countries will become increasingly valuable for sharing experiences of implementing HWiAP and for reflecting the challenges that the Nordic welfare model is facing.

# Ideas for future work

There is a clear need for defined contents and roles in the policy actions of the national, regional and local levels. For example in Sweden, the municipalities have an important role in tackling health inequalities and promoting sustainable development, whereas gender equality has a much bigger role at the ministry level.

Generating a critical mass is a basic requirement for successful implementation of HWiAP. The critical mass enables a broad enough basis for commitment to long-term change and for the integration of HWiAP into the routine of policy making in all sectors.

The effects and costs of actions need to be assessed and made visible. Methodologies for estimating social impact and investment such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) need to be tested and developed further. Public, private and third sector actors participating in the promotion of health and wellbeing need systematic support for improving their skills and understanding for the estimation of social impact and investment.

Ministries of Health and Ministries of Finance need to collaborate closer in order to build shared understanding of how to produce reliable evidence on the economic benefits of promotive and preventive work and of the interaction between health, wellbeing and economics (wellbeing or welfare economics).

Research and product development play an important role in developing new health technology that supports the health and wellbeing of people.