

Scandinavian Welfare Conference 2016

Oslo, 14-15 November

Programme

Day 1:

10.00 – 10.15: Cultural contribution by Maja Ratkje and Poing

The trio POING with singer Maja S. K. Ratkje has been described as the Norwegian music's finest, boldest and most innovative actors. On their new album 'Capital & Morality' they perform songs from the last one hundred years with themes that revolve around capital's impact on each and every one of us (<http://ratkje.no/>).

10.15 – 12.30: Plenary – Opening session

Democracy and welfare under pressure

The distribution of wealth in society are closely linked to democratic governance. So is the long term sustainability of our planet. However, democracy as well as the welfare state and our working conditions are under pressure in all Scandinavian countries.

Opening:

- Mette Nord, President of the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees

Speakers:

- Rosa Pavanelli, General Secretary at Public Services International
- Dennis Kristensen, President of FOA, Denmark
- Linn Herning, Deputy Director at the Campaign for the Welfare State
- Video message from Professor Robert Reich, former Minister of Labour, USA

12.30: Lunch

13.30 – 15.30: Parallel seminars:

1. From the welfare state to the competition state –

Where do we stand after decades of New Public Management?

Market-oriented management was portrayed as the solution to problems in the public sector. By using private consultants, more competition, new forms of organisation and private sector management principles, the public sector was expected to be more efficient, cheaper and better. We take stock of developments in the public sector after more than 30 years of New Public Management.

- Jan Ubøe, Professor of Mathematics at UiB
- Kjerstin Eld, Network for Common Welfare
- Christian Grimsgaard, The Health Care Campaign
- Rasmus Willig, Professor of Sociology at RUC

2. The end of the Nordic Model? – More intensive struggles on the labour market

The labour market in Europe is undergoing dramatic changes. More and more people are working under conditions which only a few decades ago would not have been accepted. The balance of power is shifting in favour of the employers. If this is allowed to continue, it will be the end of the Nordic Model.

- Eduardo Chagas, General Secretary at the European Transport Workers' Federation
- Bitten Nordrik, Researcher at the Work Research Institute, Oslo
- Morten Skov Christiansen, Vice President of LO in Denmark (tbc)

3. The welfare profiteers – strategies, rhetoric and power in the welfare services

The Scandinavian model with tax funded and democratically controlled welfare services staggers when confronted with huge for-profit welfare companies. Who are the welfare profiteers in Scandinavia? How do they operate? How do they earn money? Do they deliver better quality? What happens to wages and working conditions? How do they approach criticism and public debate?

- Ole Helby Petersen, Lecturer at RUC
- Sara Bell, Leader of the Union of Municipal and General Employees, Bergen
- Tobias Baudin, President of the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union (tbc)

4. Stable frameworks for whom? – Agreements and money without borders

In international trade and investment agreements political regulations are seen as "barriers to trade". Companies that take advantage of tax havens, justify this with the "stable financial conditions" which are offered. When international agreements like TTIP and TISA set up "stable framework for business", how big is then the room for manoeuvre for democracy, environmental struggles and welfare?

- Kenneth Haar, Corporate Europe Observatory
- Sigrid Klæboe Jacobsen, Director of the Tax Justice Network – Norway
- More speakers will be added

Day 2:

09.00 – 10.15: Live to work – or work to live?

Working conditions are under pressure all over the world. Government and employers require and introduce more flexibility in terms of working hours and job security. Mass unemployment has stabilised at a high level. Employers require more 'right to manage', while workers fight for their hard-won rights. Social dumping and illegal work arrangements are increasing. We bring the labour market parties together. How big are the schism? Is the Nordic model for fall?

- Ninna Thomsen, Mayor of Health and Care in Copenhagen
- Steffen Handal, President of the Norwegian Union of Education
- Daniel Suhonen, Leader of the think-tank Katalys
- More speakers will be added

10.15 – 10.30: Break

10.30 – 12.30: Parallel seminars:

Alternatives, alliances, struggles and successes

1) Codetermination, quality management, professionalism and trust reform – how to democratise and improve the public sector?

Experiences in managing public sector in accordance with principles from private business is discouraging. What other principles should we apply in the renewal of the public sector? More trust, cooperation and professionalism have for a long time been at the top of the wish-list of public sector employees. How can this be realised through new management models? How to combine codetermination, user involvement and democratic control of the public administration?

- Ninna Thomsen, Mayor of Health and Care in Copenhagen
- Daniel Suhonen, Leader of the think-tank Katalys
- Sverre Arne Lie, Adviser at the Campaign for the Welfare State
- Sten Svensson, Network for an Equitable School

2) Community works –

how to bring services back under public ownership and democratic control?

After decades with privatisation and commercialisation of public property and services, municipality after municipality, country after country, are now re-establishing these services under public management and ownership. Competitive tendering and commercialisation of services did not result in better quality. It rather became too risky, too expensive, and brought with it increasing problems of social dumping. We take a closer look at why and how services are now increasingly being re-municipalised and how politicians can de-commercialise welfare within the framework set by the EU/EEA.

- Kristin Røymo, Mayor of Tromsø (tbc)
- Jon Krog, Director at Selveje, Denmark
- More speakers will be added

3) Less, but better – How do we create a human working environment?

Working conditions reflect power relations at the workplace. We need to dampen competitive pressure, not increase it. How can we make use of modern technology to make work easier, more challenging and interesting? How can workers achieve greater influence at the workplace and increased control over the work process? Why are reduced working hours important, and how can it be implemented?

- Sten Gellerstedt, Professor at Luleå University of Technology (tbc)
- Roy Pedersen, President of LO in Oslo (tbc)
- More speakers will be added

4) Huge transformations ahead – infrastructure, energy and climate

The climate crisis and the fight for ownership and organisation of infrastructure and energy present us with enormous challenges. If we are to prevent climate catastrophe, we need to change the way we produce and consume. Strong economic interests oppose necessary changes – and many will be greatly affected by them. How can we create sufficient support and mobilize sufficient social forces to carry out the "green shift" in practice?

- Sean Sweeney, coordinator of the Trade Unions for Energy Democracy network
- Søren Hermansen, Director, The Energy Academy, Samsø
- More speakers will be added

12.30 – 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 15.00: Plenary – Closing session

This is how we will realise our visions

It is often said that the Nordic trade unions are among the strongest in the world, but are they strong enough to resist the increasing pressure that is now being put on them? Where do we go from here? Do we have solutions and alternatives that are not only good enough, but that also create sufficient enthusiasm and mobilisation in favour of the society that we want to build? We summarise the conference by looking forward. What are the visions, and how do we get there?

- David Eklind Kloo, Officer at Union of Commercial Employees, Sweden
- Sara Bell, Leader of the Union of Municipal and General Employees, Bergen
- Jan Hoby, Vice Chair of the LFS and active in the new Danish 'Welfare Alliance'
- Asbjørn Wahl, Director at the Campaign for the Welfare State

Chair: Per Olsen, President of LO in Copenhagen