

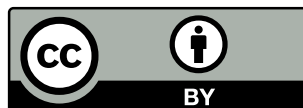
Nordic trust reforms

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Abstract

High levels of trust have long been a cornerstone of the Nordic welfare states, but in recent decades they have been challenged by governance models oriented toward control and reporting. In response, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have developed trust reforms aimed at strengthening professional autonomy, reducing bureaucracy, and improving the quality of public services. This article discusses the reforms in light of three governance paradigms – traditional public administration, New Public Management, and new public governance – and illustrates how trust can both challenge and be combined with established models. A comparison of the three countries highlights pragmatic and recurring reform waves in Denmark, a research-based but weakly implemented initiative in Sweden, and a Norwegian variant rooted in tripartite cooperation and local pilots. The municipal sector emerges as a key arena, where “soft” measures such as value-based frameworks and leadership development dominate, while “hard” structural changes remain more limited.

Keywords: implementation, magic concept, management models.



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