SURVEY ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

RESULTS FROM SWEDEN

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EFESIIIS
Enabling the Flourishing and Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship for Innovative and Inclusive Societies
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Summary

This report is based on a survey sent to 150 representatives of social enterprises in Sweden, out of which 47 responded. Despite not being statistically representative due to the low response rate and the fact that Sweden lacks reliable data on the number of Swedish enterprises, according to the knowledge and experience resulting from a three-year study on social entrepreneurship, social enterprises and social innovation, we believe that the results presented in this report depict the diversity of the social entrepreneurship sector in Sweden.

This report is based on a survey of 47 representatives of social enterprises and highlights the diversity of the social entrepreneurship sector in Sweden. The image of social entrepreneurship in Sweden as being dominated by a well-educated middle class and tied to the university environments – rather than being sprung out of bottom-up organising of disenfranchised groups in society – is corroborated in this study. This is unsurprising given the environment where most of the funding comes from collaboration with local or national government institutions as service providers, as the ability to conform to managerial standards set by these institutions requires bureaucratic skills.

Methodological framework

The Swedish sample comprises 47 social enterprises, accounting for less than 3% of the total European sample. The survey was carried out in the summer of 2015 and all respondents are individuals aged 18 years and over. Given that no representative list exists regarding the total number of Swedish social entrepreneurs, the sampling frame was based on a database of social entrepreneurs in Sweden prepared in the course of the EFSEIIS project. The definition of social entrepreneurs in the Sweden case remains contested among practitioners and scientists and no explicit legal form for social entrepreneurs exists. Against this background, the sampling strategy for a database of Swedish social entrepreneurs was focused on existing lists of (potential) social entrepreneurs as provided by organisations, companies, social projects and contests engaged in supporting social entrepreneurs and civic engagement. The database was compiled by applying selection categories (social innovation, sustainable entrepreneurial model, public benefit orientation) derived from the working definition of social entrepreneurs of the EFSEIIS project and amended considering the particularities of the Swedish case.

Data collection was executed via an online survey. A link to the webpage of the questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the social enterprises of the database, together with an explanation introducing the purpose of the survey and the benefits gained from their participation. This report does not consider the missing responses. Each graph has been elaborated counting the total number of respondents minus the missing ones (NS).
Introduction

This section presents an introductory analysis regarding the interviewees’ personal characteristics. Just over 40 per cent of the Swedish respondents did not answer the question regarding their gender. Out of the remaining respondents, almost half (49%) were male, 42 per cent were female and around 9 per cent did not want to respond. We find it probable that the gender distribution within the field is more or less equal, although fewer of the females chose to indicate their gender. The age distribution of the respondents was fairly even in the younger categories, with 21 per cent of the respondents being aged 18-30 years and 31-40 years, respectively. The largest group (42 %) was aged 41-50 years and only 16 per cent indicated that they were older than that.

1. Gender Distribution %

![Gender Distribution Diagram]

Male 48.90%
Female 42.50%
Do not wish to answer 8.60%

2. Interviewees’ Age Distribution

![Age Distribution Diagram]

- 18-30: 21.10%
- 31-40: 42.10%
- 41-50: 21.10%
- 51-60: 15.80%

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
From the sample collected, the large majority have a higher education degree. More than 35 per cent hold a master degree or equivalent and almost 60 per cent have an undergraduate degree from university. With less than 10 per cent of the Swedish respondents only having a further college degree, the sample suggests that the representatives of social enterprises are better educated than the overall Swedish population.

Furthermore, a vast majority of the respondents (almost 80 per cent) answered that their educational background and/or training is relevant for their current positions. Only around 20 per cent answered that this is not the case, which indicates that most of the respondents are active within the field in which they hold a degree.

3. Respondents’ Educational Attainment

4. Respondents following vocational education or training relevant in their current position
In terms of the diversity and geographical distribution, most of the respondents (79%) indicated that they identified themselves as Swedish, while the second largest group were those who did not answer this question (10%). The other percentages are evenly distributed between Iran, Chile and Albania, representing one (1) respondent each.

5. Respondents’ Nationalities

To summarise, the sample outlined a slightly older (41-50 years), well-educated member of mainstream society as the typical respondent, mainly active within a field in which their education/training is fairly relevant. This would correspond well with the EFESEIIS country report on Sweden, which indicates that most social enterprises are active in the intersection between the welfare sector and supported labour market, which would require a certain system knowledge and management skills congruent with an advanced welfare state.
When asked about their previous involvement in founding social enterprises, 82 per cent of the respondents stated having previous experience. Although the sample is too small to draw any general conclusions, the result potentially points at a degree of ‘serial-entrepreneurship’ within the social enterprise sector. Isolating those with previous experience in starting up social enterprises, the sample shows that this group is evenly distributed between males and females, with 50 per cent each. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as in the overall group, the largest group of respondents with multiple experiences in founding social enterprises is found among those aged between 41 and 50 years old. Indeed, as many as 62 per cent in the group aged 41-50 have previous experiences of starting up social enterprises.

6. Respondents’ previous involvement in founding a social enterprise

7. Gender distribution based on respondents who have previous involvement in founding social enterprise
8. Age distribution based on respondents who have previous involvement in founding social enterprise

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9. Respondents who have previously managed a social enterprise

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
10. Gender of respondents who have previously managed a social enterprise

- Male: 66.67%
- Female: 33.33%

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
Education

Among our group of respondents with previous involvement in social enterprises, 50 per cent hold a university undergraduate degree, followed by approximately 38 per cent who hold a master’s degree and 13 per cent with a college education. This more or less corresponds with the overall picture of the social entrepreneurs in our study, with a slight increase in the college degree group, especially among managers, where the groups are much more evenly distributed in the sample.

11. Education level based on respondents who have previous involvement in founding a social enterprise

12. Educational attainment of respondents who have previously managed a social enterprise

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
As the group of managers with previous management experience are in the last quadrant of their career, the differences in starting points – educationally – might be interpreted as having been mitigated by life experiences. Hence, the more even distribution of educational level could indicate that personal traits, ambition and experience can compensate for educational level over time.

**Motivation**

Why do individuals get involved in social entrepreneurship? What is it that motivates people to opt for what seems like a less prosperous career? Being well aware of our small sample, we have decided to look for similarities and/or differences in terms of male and female answers regarding primary motivation for working in or founding social enterprises. As we can see, most reasons are fairly equally distributed between the genders. The creation of personal employment and improving existing social services are two reasons that stand out from the rest. Given that females dominate the two categories – the inadequacy of existing social services and the creation of personal employment – this might be an indication of how the current systems still favour men, in terms of both design (existing services) and outcomes (personal employment).

13. Gender distribution based on the reason to work in/found a SE
In terms of age distribution, we can see that the largest group (41-50) are ‘over’-represented in the two categories addressing challenges (environmental and social), two categories that are more general and outward looking than those of personal experiences and knowledge of existing services.

14. Age distribution based on the reason to work in/found a SE

![Age distribution chart]

If we explore the correlation between educational background and the motivation for working with social entrepreneurship, we find that the respondents with only a college degree indicate that they are solely motivated by social problems and the inadequacy of existing social services. The connection between addressing self-experienced social problems and the inadequacy of existing social services seems logical, while it may seem strange not to find any of the respondents with only a college degree indicating any of the other reasons. Nevertheless, fully understanding this distribution would demand further research, as well as a larger sample.

15. Educational distribution based on the reason to work in/found a SE

![Educational distribution chart]

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
The issue of finances has been extensively covered in our country report. Structurally, most income streams are connected to the comprehensive welfare system in Sweden, mainly in the areas of labour market support and through social services in conjunction with local authorities. The philanthropic system is not as developed as in the more Anglo-Saxon tradition or the Catholic continental Europe. New streams seem to be developing through social media and phenomena such as crowdfunding, which is clearly indicated in the development of dependence on donations, grants, etc.

There has also been an increase in international funds being available to social entrepreneurs in Sweden, with globalisation, migration and foundations with religious, environmental or political ideas as a base more easily reaching minority groups and their social situation. This could explain the shift towards a more diversified income stream and the more frequent inclusion of grants and donations over time.

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
The fields of social entrepreneurship and social innovation have a strong institutional link in Sweden in terms of policy and discourse. The primary publicly-funded centre for knowledge sharing, dissemination of projects and programmes and networking platform for social entrepreneurs in Sweden is actually called the Forum for Social Innovation, hosted by Malmö University. Policy-wise, the field of social entrepreneurship is linked to the national innovation policy, although the entrepreneurs themselves are mainly active within social services and the labour market. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the respondents perceive innovation as important given the national discourse on the matter within the support system for social entrepreneurs.

Source: Own calculations from survey data.
18. How important was innovation in the start-up phase of your organisation?

Conclusions

for the EFESEIIS, with a comprehensive welfare system crowding-out the previous wave of social enterprises and entrepreneurship from the turn of the last century, this survey highlights a few interesting points that could be further investigated. As pointed out in the introduction, the sample is too small to draw any general conclusions, although we still hope to complement the more structural overview with this data, making it easier to design further research in a more detailed manner.

This study corroborates the image of social entrepreneurship in this century being more dominated by a well-educated middle class and tied to the university environments rather than being sprung out of bottom-up organising of disenfranchised groups in society. This is unsurprising in an environment where most of the funding comes from collaboration with local or national government institutions as service providers, given that the ability to conform to managerial standards set by these institutions require bureaucratic skills and training.

What is interesting is that the near monopoly of the comprehensive welfare state system that emerged during the industrial era of the nation state seems to be challenged in today’s more interconnected world, opening up more possible streams of funding through global media and social networks. As the issues and challenges change and new actors appear in a more globalised network society, so do the possible streams of financial support.

Source: Own calculations from survey data.