

## **‘We need to make sure that we are always something else’**

Victim support organisations and the increasing responsibility of the state in supporting crime victims in Finland and Norway

### **Abstract**

In response to international obligations many Western states have strengthened their responsibility over crime victims’ access to support services. This is also the case in Finland and Norway where this interview study explored the views of representatives from five key civil society organisations (CSOs) working with victims of crime in relation to public sector’s increasing duty to organise victim support services. The findings indicate that despite the fact that improvements in victims’ access to support services were generally welcomed, there was a growing concern that the position of these traditional CSOs could – or already had – become challenged by the public and private organisations and other CSOs as new funding streams and mechanisms attract new players to the field. This had created a need to highlight the distinctiveness of these agents as CSOs working with victims of crime. This article argues that while international standards for victim support services have been a triumph for victim movements in many countries, their realisation in the present era of austerity and mixed welfare economies presents the traditional victim support organisations with new

challenges in retaining their ownership and distinctive ways of treating the problem of victimisation.

**Keywords: Finland, crime victims, civil society organisations, Norway, victim support services**

## **Introduction**

During the past few years, several international instruments aiming at improving the access of crime victims<sup>1</sup> to specialist support services have been introduced. In Europe, for example, such instruments include the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (so-called Istanbul convention) that requires countries to provide specialised support services to victims of domestic violence and the European Union Directive 2012/29/EU (so-called Victims' Directive) obliging the member states to organise general and specialised support services for crime victims. These services consist of, for example, emotional support, advice on financial and practical issues, shelter and temporary accommodation, telephone helplines and rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres (Directive 2012/29/EU, articles 8, 9; Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 210, articles 20, 21, 23, 25).<sup>2</sup> The states can satisfy these demands in different ways by using their discretion.

For example, they may establish new services, expand financing to existing victim support services by distributing funding directly to current providers of victim support services or by arranging competitive tendering processes or introduce new legislation, which strengthens victims' access to services. As various civil society organisations<sup>3</sup> (CSOs) have traditionally acted as both providers of these services as well as interest groups for the victims in many countries, the measures increasing the states' responsibility over victim support services will have an effect on the work of such CSOs.<sup>4</sup> Previous research on victim support organisations has indicated that as the amount of public funding has increased in these organisations, it has become more difficult for them to stay faithful to their original missions, and their ability to challenge the state and raise new social problems to public consciousness has weakened (e.g. Lehrner and Allen, 2009; Maier, 2011; 2008). It has also been argued that as CSOs become more dependent on public funding, they endanger their independence as well as the qualities that distinguish them from the public sector such as flexibility, the ability to innovate and be responsive to the clients' needs (Simmonds, 2013; Williams, 2016). Essentially, the states' increasing duty to offer victim support services means that public agents will be increasingly more in charge of deciding *how* these services should be offered.

The purpose of this article is to examine how representatives of key CSOs working with victims of crime respond to the increases in responsibility of the public

sector to organise specialist support services for crime victims and how they reflect on their organisations' roles amidst these changes in Finland and in Norway. These two Nordic countries offer a distinctive context for analysing the CSOs' responses as Nordic CSOs have commonly welcomed state's responsibility in providing different kinds of welfare services and have tended to enjoy a rather harmonious relationship with the state (Stenius, 2010; Wijkström, 2011). By contrast, in the Anglophone countries where a great deal of the previous research has been conducted CSOs and the state have had a more confrontational relationship, and CSOs have also had more prominent roles in the delivery of welfare services (Taylor, 2004: 132). Therefore, Nordic CSOs may view the consequences of intensifying cooperation with the state differently than CSOs in the countries characterised by liberal 'civil society regime' such as the UK and the US (Anheier and Salamon, 2006: 106; Salamon and Anheier, 1998). Moreover, Finland and Norway offer interesting opportunities to analyse whether the differences in the level of attention that victims have received in Nordic criminal policies (Tham et al., 2011) surface in the attitudes of the Norwegian and Finnish CSOs.

The article commences by briefly outlining the development of victim support services in Finland and Norway and then moves to discuss in more detail the recent actions taken by these states. This is followed by a review of previous research concerning the relationship between public funding and CSOs working with victims of crime. The next section examines CSOs working with victims in Finland and Norway

by focusing on the CSOs interviewed for this article, after which the methods and data used are explained. Finally, the findings of the interview study are presented and discussed, and the article concludes by arguing that the states' growing responsibility for victim support services combined with increasingly mixed economy of welfare challenges the position of the traditional victim support organisations also in the 'state friendly' (Morken and Selle, 1995) Nordic countries. The competition for funding that no longer involves only CSOs, but public and private sector organisations as well compels these traditional actors to find new ways to articulate their distinctiveness and value in the eyes of the funders.

### **Development of victim support services in Finland and Norway: a tail-ender and a forerunner**

As noted in the introduction, the recent international instruments have set certain minimum requirements for victim support services. For instance, the recommendations and conventions of the Council of Europe concerning victims' assistance and prevention of victimisation as well as the recent Victims' Directive, which replaced the earlier Framework decision on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (2001/220/JHA), have, inter alia, urged the states to ensure that all crime victims have

access to confidential support free of charge. They also require that the member states ensure that all victims have similar access to specialist support services for victims of gendered and domestic violence, such as shelters and centres dealing with victims of sexual violence (Directive 2012/29/EU, articles 8, 9; Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 210, articles 20, 21, 23, 25). Furthermore, the Istanbul convention necessitates the establishment of a helpline for victims of gendered and domestic violence (Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 210, article 24).

These requirements have been particularly important for the development of specialist victim support services in Finland where responding to victimisation has been slower than in the other Nordic countries or elsewhere in Western Europe (Ronkainen, 2008). For example, whereas the first victim support group was established in the UK in 1974, it took 20 years for similar undertakings to be introduced in Finland (Tuorila and Siltaniemi, 1999). The first specialised support service for victims of sexual violence, rape crisis centre Tukinainen, was founded in 1993, and to this day its operations are run only in three locations in Finland. However, according to the recommendations of the Council of Europe, Finland should have 13 rape crisis centres (Council of Europe, 2008: 84). Also, the services for victims of domestic violence have developed slowly, and the amount of family places in Finnish shelters is well below the international standards.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast with Finland, both Norwegian civil society and the Norwegian state have developed support mechanisms for victims of crime more actively. The first Norwegian support service for victims of sexual abuse and incest was established in 1986, and today, there are 22 similar organisations functioning in Norway (FMSO, 2017; Pettersen, 2009). In that same year, Norway also opened the first Nordic open multidisciplinary assault centre within the public health and social service system, which currently operates in each Norwegian county (Nesvold et al., 2005; National Centre for Emergency Primary Health Care, n.d.). First such centre was opened in Finland only in May 2017 (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2017b). Furthermore, Norway is one of the few countries in Europe that meets the Istanbul Convention minimum standards of having one family place in shelters per 10 000 head of population (Logar and WAVE Team, 2016: 92), and it is an exception to many other countries in the sense that the general victim support services are organised by the state (Rådgivningskontorene for kriminalitetsofre, 2017).

Nonetheless, Finland, too, has recently improved and developed the support services for crime victims. In 2015, the Finnish parliament enacted a new law concerning the provision of shelter services along with the aim of gradually meeting the recommendations of the Istanbul convention by the end of the current decade (Act 1354/2014; Government Bill 186/2014: 7). Previously, municipalities were financially responsible for these services, granting individualised ‘payment bonds’ to their

inhabitants in need of a shelter (Government Bill 186/2014: 7). However, the new law shifted the responsibility for funding shelter services to the state and strengthened public duty to provide shelter for victims of violence. Shelter services are currently financed with five-year maximum contracts with the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare (Act 1354/2014: 9 §).<sup>6</sup> Just recently, Finland also opened a national state-funded 24/7 helpline for victims of domestic violence and introduced a victim surcharge in order to finance the increasing standards of support services (Act 669/2015; THL, 2016).<sup>7</sup> The helpline provider was decided via competitive bidding, and the contract was given to the Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses, a politically and religiously neutral organisation working with a range of different social issues (Settlementti Tampere, 2016). Furthermore, the Finnish Ministry of Justice has agreed to increase the funding for Victim Support Finland for providing the general support services mandated by the Victims' Directive (Suomen Mielenterveysseura ry, 2015: 9).<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, specialised services for victims of sexual violence have not developed as quickly in comparison with the other services.

Likewise, Norway has enhanced its provision of services for victims of crime during the past years. From the perspective of CSOs, one of the most significant changes occurred in 2009 when the so-called Crisis Centre Act was introduced (Act 2009-06-19-44). Similar to Finland, there was no special legislation concerning the provision of shelter services in Norway earlier, although the Norwegian state and



municipalities had steadily funded shelters – the ‘crisis centres’ – since 1982 with earmarked funding, first by evenly dividing responsibility for the costs and later on so that the municipalities covered 20 percent and the state 80 percent of the costs (Stefansen, 2006). As there was no special legislation concerning shelters, the crisis centres were relatively free to decide how they want to run their organisations. Morken and Selle (1995: 190) have noted that this was an unusual solution in the Nordic ‘state-friendly’ societies where state provided welfare services have been given preference. Indeed, the Norwegian women’s movement, which established the first shelters, was determined to keep the control over the shelter services despite demanding the public sector’s funding for them, as the movement wanted to deliver the services on the basis of feminist values (Morken and Selle, 1995). However, over the history, authorities often expressed that they want to move away from earmarked funding and commentators argued that without statutory duty, the municipalities would not prioritise shelter provision within their services (Laugerud, 2014: 290). This was one of the justifications behind the Crisis Centre Act that shifted responsibility for the crisis centre services to the municipalities. Furthermore, the Act stipulated the kind of services that the crisis centres need to offer and that their services must be open for men and children as independent client groups as well as for victims of human trafficking regardless of their sex (Act 2009-06-19-44, 2 §; Det Kongelige Barne- og Ligestillingsdepartement, 2009: 5, 39). In fact, as Laugerud (2014) points out, the Crisis Centre Act has, in many

ways, shifted the control in terms of deciding how victims of violence in intimate relationships are treated from the women's movement to the public sector.

### **Victim support organisations and public funding: opportunities and challenges**

Research examining the relationship between public funding and victim support organisations' abilities to pursue their own, unique lines of work is rather limited in the Nordic context, where the state and CSOs have generally shared similar goals. Hence, in order to understand the kinds of issues that may emerge from increasing public funding of and control over various victim support organisations, I will briefly look at some findings from Anglophone countries, where the majority of previous research in this area has been conducted. These studies have, for example, illustrated how feminist shelter and rape crisis organisations began to temper their social change activism as well as their feminist approach to violence against women after starting to obtain government funding. For instance, Matthews (1994) shows how, along with the increasing state funding and cooperation with government agencies, the rape crisis centres in Los Angeles shifted away from their political activism and awareness-raising activities and developed a more individualised and therapeutic approach to rape crisis work. Namely, rape crisis centres became more orientated towards treating the aftereffects of rape instead of striving for its prevention. Lehrner and Allen (2009) claim

similar observations in their study concerning the development of the domestic violence movement in the US; the need to ensure funding had changed the movement towards a more conservative and apolitical direction. Furthermore, as the funding agencies did not provide funds for social change activities, service provision grew disproportionately in the movement.

Similarly, Maier (2011) found that the rape crisis centres in her study had become more focused on delivering direct services for rape survivors and less concerned with pursuing social change in order to ensure the public sector funding. For example, the rape crisis centre workers had withdrawn from critique and speaking up for the victims, and the centres no longer emphasised the goal of eliminating rape from the society. In her earlier study, Maier (2008) had also noted that the rape crisis centres did not identify themselves as feminists as explicitly as before in the fear that feminism would turn away volunteers and victims. Therefore, it appears that public funding has been associated with the weakening ability of these CSOs to pursue activities that challenge social structures, making them more focused on serving the immediate needs of the victims. Moreover, becoming overly dependent on government funding may have even more radical consequences as Jones's (2004) study illustrates: when the Rape Crisis Federation in the UK had failed to generate alternative funding streams, the government's decision to withdraw from the funding led to the Federation's closedown.

As a further result, many of the Federation's ground breaking operations in terms of recognising the scope of rape in society and how it is dealt with ceased too.

Nevertheless, tempering CSOs' own ideology may also lead to an increase in the ability of these organisations to integrate their views to the policies of the state. For instance, Williams (2016) points out that the moderation of radical roots gave these actors significant opportunities to influence the government policy. Additionally, Campbell et al. (1998) showed that the form of activism in rape crisis centres had changed and become more adaptive to the current political climate, but not lost. Similarly, Beres et al. (2009) noted that the Canadian rape crisis centres were still active in raising awareness, although they had to increasingly rely on volunteers and engage in time-consuming fundraising in order to maintain it.

In addition to the research on CSOs that work with gendered violence, there are studies that have examined how the general victim support organisations have developed and changed due to an increase in public funding. For example, Simmonds (2013) demonstrates how Victim Support in England and Wales started off as a local, informal grassroots project that relied on volunteers but which soon developed into a nationwide, professionally managed and organised service. According to Simmonds (2013), this development resulted from Victim Support's need to prove itself as a professional and efficient in the eyes of the government. Consequently, Victim Support may have lost its character as a low threshold service enabling spontaneous and

informal support and become unable to reach some of the victims and respond to their true needs (Simmonds, 2013; see also Williams, 2016). Additionally, Victim Support became more orientated towards victims of more serious crimes such as rape as the government considered it to be a better partner than, for example, rape crisis organisations that were much more challenging and political in their work (Simmonds, 2013: 208). Moreover, the position of Victim Support as *the* victim support agency is currently being challenged due to a decision to open up victim support services to commissioning, which has attracted new organisations to compete for available funding (Mawby, 2016; Simmonds, 2016).

### **CSOs supporting victims of crime in Finland and Norway today: increasing proximity to the state**

There are various kinds of CSOs both in Finland and Norway that offer support to crime victims, and as elsewhere, giving an exact number of them is difficult as not all of them have focused particularly on helping crime victims. However, it is possible to distinguish the most prominent CSOs working in this area. The following paragraphs present them briefly after which their funding is discussed.

*Norwegian CSOs.* As general victim support services are provided by the state in Norway, a large number of CSOs working with victims of crime consist of crisis

centre organisations that provide support and temporary shelter to women who have been abused in close relationships and their children (currently also to men). Before 2015, there used to be two umbrella organisations for crisis centres that followed two different working approaches: the feminist Kriesesentersekretariatet and Norsk Kriesesenterforbund NOK! that had a gender-neutral view on violence and was less concerned about working against social structures (Jonassen et al., 2008; Paul 1998: 24). Unlike Kriesesentersekretariatet's shelters, these shelters had professionally trained, paid employees, yet both Kriesesentersekretariatet and Norsk Kriesesenterforbund NOK! encouraged their clients to self-help (Jonassen et al., 2008: 32-33; Morken and Selle, 1995: 195). According to a recent study, after the introduction of the Crisis Centre Act there has been a considerable decrease in the crisis centre services provided by CSOs and an increase in the municipal crisis centre providers (Bakketeig et al., 2014). In effect, Norsk Kriesesenterforbund NOK! was closed down in July 2015, and its remaining nine member organisations have continued their work as independent shelter organisations (NTBinfo, 2015). Kriesesentersekretariatet is still running, but its member organisations have decreased from 33 to 27 (Jonassen et al., 2008: 30; Kriesesentersekretariatet, 2017).

In addition to the crisis centres, Norway has 22 support centres for survivors of incest and sexual abuse and a majority of these centres are members of the umbrella organisation FMSO (FMSO, 2015). The first such type of support centre was

established in Oslo in 1986, and since then, the centres have worked on the basis of self-help ideology, underlining that sexual abuse and incest are social problems that derive from the misuse of power (SMI Oslo, 2017). Besides the above-mentioned organisations, there are other smaller CSOs that provide help and support for crime victims such as the Church Resource Centre against Violence and Sexual Abuse, the National Association Against Sexual Abuse LMSO, the National Association for Victims of Violence<sup>9</sup> and Stine Sofies Stiftelse.

*Finnish CSOs.* The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters is one of the first CSOs that has targeted services towards victims of crime in Finland. It started to provide shelter services in 1982 and its member organisations are managing the majority of Finnish shelters, 12 out of 22 (Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto, 2017). Unlike in many other countries, the Finnish shelters have not originated from women's movements, but the primary aim has been to help fatherless children and protect the interests of children and families (Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto, 2017; Bergman, 1999: 114; Heinänen, 1992: 84). The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters is also one of the CSOs that started Victim Support Finland in 1994 as a coalition project of six CSOs<sup>10</sup> and the Finnish Evangelic Church to respond to the needs of all types of crime victims (Tuorila and Siltaniemi, 1999: 37). Consequently, Victim Support Finland's ideological base is versatile. The Finnish state, too, had a crucial role in establishing Victim Support Finland. In fact, initially, Victim Support Finland intended that the

general victim support services would become statutory and financed by the state. Later on, however, it gave up this aim (Tuorila and Siltaniemi, 1999: 36-39). At the moment, Victim Support Finland runs a helpline, online advice service, legal consultations and volunteers' advice service at some police stations and shelters (RIKU, 2017).

The first Finnish rape crisis centre Tukinainen was established by the Feminist Association Unioni in 1993, and its ideological base is a combination of feminist and therapeutic approach to sexual violence (Raijas and Repo, 1999: 2). In 2004, Tukinainen became an independent CSO, and its main services include legal help, therapeutic services, a crisis help-line and online service for male and female victims of rape (Raiskauskriisikeskus Tukinainen, 2014). In addition to the above-mentioned CSOs, other important CSOs working with victims in Finland include, for example, Women's Line, MONIKA – Multicultural Women's Association, The Association for Families and Friends of Homicide Victims in Finland, Finland's Delfins and Pro Centre Finland.

*CSOs' funding.* As CSOs operating in the welfare field in general, CSOs working with crime victims have accumulated a larger share of their funding from the public agents as opposed to the other types of CSOs such as those working in the field of sports and recreation (Sivesind and Selle, 2010: 108–110). Furthermore, along with states' increasing obligations to organise victim support services, the amount of public funding has increased in these organisations, especially in Finland. For instance,



currently the Norwegian crisis centres' budgets derive in full from municipalities while the member organisations of FMSO are funded jointly by the state and municipalities according to the same model as crisis centres before the Crisis Centre Act. Thus, the incest and sexual abuse support centres must first acquire 20 percent of their funding from the municipality, and then the state will grant the missing 80 percent (FMSO, 2017). The payments from local incest and sexual abuse centres also cover around one third of umbrella organisation FMSO's budget and rest of the funding derives from the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (FMSO, 2015: 5).

With the introduction of the Victims' Directive and the Istanbul convention, the state has become an increasingly important funder for the Finnish Victim Support and for the member organisations of the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters. The main responsibility of funding general victim support services is now on the Finnish Ministry of Justice, although a share of funding is still derived from STEA – the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations. STEA and its predecessor Finnish Slot Machine Association has had a monopoly on slot machine and casino gaming operations in Finland since 1930s and it distributes its profits to CSOs in the area of health and social welfare (STEA, 2017a; Myllymäki and Tetri, 2001). It is a significant funder granting over 300 million euros annually to CSOs working in the welfare sector (STEA, 2017b). These grants are directed for the purpose of public good and, for example, cannot be used for production of services that are a

liability of the public sector, such as general victim support services, after the Victims' Directive (Oikeusministeriö, 2015: 70). STEA is also the main funder of the umbrella organisation the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, however, shelter services provided by its member organisations are based on agreements with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL, 2015). Besides small grants from municipalities, the operations of rape crisis centre Tukinainen are mainly funded by STEA (Raiskauskriisikeskus Tukinainen, 2016).

### **Aims, Data and Methods**

The overall aim of this article is to examine the increasing public responsibilities in the production of victim support services in Finland and Norway from the perspective of those CSOs that have traditionally been providers of these services. The data of this study consist of semi-structured interviews with representatives of five key CSOs working with victims of crime in Finland and Norway: the Federation for Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, rape crisis centre Tukinainen, Victim Support Finland and the Norwegian umbrella organisations FMSO and Norsk Krisesenterforbund NOK! Although Norsk Krisesenterforbund NOK! folded one year after the interview, I retained the interview in the dataset as it illuminated the kinds of issues that the organisation had faced after the crisis centre services became municipalities'

responsibility. I chose to interview the abovementioned organisations as all of them provide such support services that the recent international legal instruments have called upon to improve. The findings are not intended to be generalised to all CSOs working in this field, despite the fact that the sample here represents a significant share of victim support organisations in the countries examined.

All the interviewees worked in expert positions in their organisations, such as managers and they have acted as spokespersons for their organisations, which is why they were likely to have a good understanding of the CSO's outlook on the issues discussed. The interviews were conducted by the author between June 2014 and October 2014 either as face-to-face interviews (3) or via Skype or Facetime video calls (2). The tape-recorded interviews lasted from one to two hours, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim afterwards. Interviews with the Norwegian representatives were conducted in English and with the Finnish representatives in Finnish. Prior to the interviews, the interviewees signed consent forms explaining the purpose of the research and that, due to the nature of the study, the interviewees cannot be guaranteed anonymity and the names of their organisations would appear in the final publication of the study.<sup>11</sup> The interviewees were also given the outline of the interview themes beforehand.

The interview data was used to find answers to two specific research questions: 1) how do the interviewees from CSOs working with victims of crime

respond to the increases in responsibility of the public sector to organise support services for victims of crime, and 2) how they reflect on the role of their organisations amidst these changes?

I analysed the interviews thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006) reading through the interview data several times before initial coding of data segments with NVivo 11. After careful consideration, some parts of the interviews were discarded, as they did not appear meaningful in relation to the research questions at hand. After the coding was finished, the codes were organised into themes and subthemes, which I compared with the whole dataset at the end of the analysis. Finally, three main themes were identified. The following section explains the contents of these themes in detail with extracts from the interviews, which have been adjusted for standard English style. Ellipses in brackets [...] signify an omission of one or more words and ellipses without brackets – an untimed pause in speech. The Finnish interview extracts have been translated into English by the author.

## **Findings**

### *The biggest fear*

All of the Finnish and the Norwegian interviewees considered that the public sector should be responsible for funding the services they were providing to victims of crime. However, the views of the Finnish and the Norwegian representatives differed in terms of the form in which the duty should occur. Namely, whereas the Finnish interviewees were more open towards making their services required by law, the Norwegian respondents had a more firm opinion that the public sector should fund them *without* making these services a legal requirement, although for the Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK! this was no longer an option as crisis centre services had already become statutory due to the Crisis Centre Act. Nevertheless, the interviewee considered that the situation of their organisation had been better before the enactment of the new law when the local crisis centre organisations received their funding from the state as earmarked subsidies instead of the current situation in which municipalities are in charge of local crisis centres' budgets.

Indeed, the representative of Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK! mentions several problems that had arisen for the organisation after the introduction of the Crisis Centre Act. For example, the operation of the umbrella organisation – which, inter alia, gathered and distributed information about domestic violence – had become jeopardised as municipalities did not allow the local crisis centres to use their funding to pay membership fees for the umbrella organisation, but instead, they had to use their funding solely for service provision. Therefore, some of the local organisations had not

had other choice but to leave the umbrella body. Subsequently, as the umbrella organisation was dependent on membership payments from the local crisis centres, the Act had significantly weakened its operation:

All of those member centres that have left us, haven't done it because they were unhappy with our organisation, but because of funding. So, as municipalities have not allowed them to use their funding for a membership in an organisation, the centres have been forced to leave us. (Norsk Kriesesenterforbund NOK!)

However, regarding the victims of domestic violence, the interviewee considered that the Act might have been an improvement because it obliged municipalities to cooperate with the crisis centres and it might enhance the services too. Nonetheless, at the same time, there was a concern that the municipalities would weaken the service quality as the local crisis centres were now competing for funding with other municipal services. Moreover, the crisis centre organisations had become increasingly more attached to the municipal services, and the interviewee considered that in the future, the crisis centres might have to alter their focus and expand their services to other client groups as municipalities may want to provide other services alongside dealing with victims of violence:

I believe it is very likely that the municipalities want to utilise crisis centres as much as they can. For example, the child welfare services could use them for placement of children or young people. I think the crisis centres have to consider if they could cooperate or widen their services in municipalities. I think it is important and necessary. (Norsk Krisesenterforbund NOK!)

The enactment of the Crisis Centre Act had also raised concerns in the other interviewed Norwegian organisation, FMSO. The interviewee believed that making their services required by law might happen in the case of sexual abuse and incest centres as well, as they tend to follow the footsteps of the crisis centres. Yet, the interviewee from FMSO strongly objected to making their services statutory, because that would mean a loss of control in deciding how their clients are treated and what kind of help they are given. Furthermore, as the decision-making power on centres' budgets would shift to municipalities, the organisation probably would not be able to maintain the same spread of services as it currently has. Therefore, the fears expressed by FMSO's representative were similar to the reality that Krisesenterforbund NOK! was living at the time of the interviews, that is, shortage of funding and pressure to adapt to the wishes of the public agents:

One of our key concerns is that if the government would make our services required by law, like the crisis centers, we would lose our state funding, meaning the municipalities themselves would be in charge of providing the funding, and thus our services. If that was to happen, the actual services might have to change or there might not be enough funding to provide them. Also, I think not all centers would be able

to remain open. [...] So yes, we would like to remain as private organisations and as a supplement to the public health care system. (FMSO)

*It would not be such a bad option*

In contrast to the Norwegian representatives, the Finnish interviewees had less concerns about making their services mandatory by law. Instead, they considered this to improve the position of their clients. For example, the interviewee from the Federation of the Mother and Child Homes and Shelters had taken a welcoming stance towards the new plans to shift responsibility for shelter services to the state as the funding from the municipalities had often been unpredictable and insufficient. According to the interviewee, the new law would bring more stability to the shelter organisations. In addition, the respondent from Victim Support Finland considered that the current development of shifting general victim support services under the obligations of the state due to the Victims' Directive was positive, and the organisation did not feel that their position as the main provider of these services would be challenged in the near future.

However, the situation of the rape crisis centre Tukinainen was different than the other two Finnish organisations in this study in a sense that, regardless of the requirements set in the Istanbul convention and the Victims' Directive to increase the number of support services for victims of sexual violence, Tukinainen continued – and



still continues – to be funded by STEA, to which it has no legal obligation. Hence, despite the fact that STEA has steadily funded Tukinainen, securing funding for Tukinainen is not STEA's particular responsibility and its purpose is not to support services that are – or should be – the responsibility of the public agents. The fact that public sector did not have a specific duty to fund rape crisis services was considered as an unjust situation by Tukinainen's representative, who deemed that increasing obligations of the state were not a threat. In fact, the interviewee concluded that in order to improve the situation of victims, more specific statutory duties concerning support for victims of sexual violence would be needed:

If legislation had criteria on how many rape crisis centers need to be established in order that requirements of the Istanbul convention would be fulfilled, then it would also mean obligations. At the moment there are no obligations on anyone. When it is not the state's responsibility, STEA is the only one who understands us and we operate on STEA's funding. (Tukinainen)

Interestingly, limitations on critical voice and pursuing social change were largely absent in all of the interviewees' perceptions. Only the interviewee from the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters brought up the issue that depending on the funding from municipalities – which was the main source of funding for the local shelter organisations at that time – made it sometimes difficult for their member organisations to challenge municipalities. However, luckily, the umbrella body was

freer to speak up for their members as it was not dependent on public funding or payments from the member organisations, but received most of its budget from STEA:

Our member organisations say that the double role is a little bit difficult when they receive payment bonds or grants from a municipality and then at the same time they would have to, for example, stand up for mothers with substance addictions in that municipality. We in the Federation are freer to discuss the deficits in the services, but for them it is difficult to say that this is a great defect, if they also receive funding. The producer's double role is problematic at times. (the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters)

Instead of being worried about their ability to challenge decision-makers, the interviewees mostly discussed problems in terms of their development work and low threshold support that may occur due to the public sector's control. Therefore, the representatives from Victim Support Finland as well as the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters both emphasised that although authorities should be responsible of funding their services, it was important to obtain funding also from other sources. Indeed, the interviewee from Victim Support Finland acknowledged that if the organisation received its funding entirely from the state, there would be a danger that their services would become perceived as state's services. Thus, receiving other funding enables the organisation to continue development work – that is, innovation of new ways to help victims – and retain its nature as a CSO:

Interviewee: The funding of our basic activities comes entirely from the Ministry of Justice. However, it is not our goal in any way that we would be funded solely by the state. STEA's funding is still important, because they can fund volunteering, activities related to volunteering and development work. So, these kinds of activities are clearly those that remain funded by STEA.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: And so, we will not -, because of course, if all funding came from the state, then one could think that "well, should it be a state service then?" However, it still has not been -, the civil society base is essential for our activities. (Victim Support Finland)

### *We need to make sure we are something else*

The interviews also charted the respondents' understandings about the role of their organisation amidst the increasing obligations of the public sector in the area of victim support services. Majority of the interviewees emphasised – to some degree – the need to be something else than any other actor. This was particularly important to the Norwegian FMSO's representative, who emphasised that it was essential for the organisation to adhere to its own ways of working and its key idea – help to self-help – instead of adopting the public sector's line of work. According to the interviewee, sustaining the organisation's unique approach required constant care, which was essential, as otherwise they could be regarded as too similar to public organisations. In addition, the interviewee referred to the possible on-going professionalisation process in

the organisation, where lay approaches to treating victimisation are becoming replaced by methods of social and health care professionals. This process, which has been identified as one of the common international trends in civil society sector during the past years (Hustinx, 2014) appeared to be a challenge for maintaining FMSO's distinctiveness as well:

We need to make sure that we are always something else - that our services differ from what is provided in the public health care system. We don't provide treatment per se or therapy, like in the public sector. This could be a challenge sometimes, since we have many highly educated individuals working at the centres, who might previously have been working in the public sector. So we have to constantly be aware and only provide the kind of services we are supposed to offer, based on self-help and empowerment [...] So in other words, it is important that we continue to do what we do and that we don't become a service similar to what is provided in the public sector. (FMSO)

Furthermore, the interviewee from FMSO emphasised that it was important to remain as a supplement. Thus, if the organisation noticed some gaps in the public services, it should first and foremost prompt the public sector to close the gaps instead of starting to fix them by itself.

The need to be seen as a CSO, which has different tasks and strengths compared with the public and private sector organisations, emerged also in the interview with the Finnish Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters. The interviewee considered that investing in the typical activities of CSOs, such as

development work and advocacy, was one way of distinguishing the organisation from other agents offering shelter services. It had also invested in these activities in order to keep attracting funding from STEA. Indeed, it seemed that the continuing changes in the field of shelter services and the Finnish health and social care sector in general had made the organisation strengthen its profile as a CSO that does more than just provide services. However, intriguingly, whereas the representative of FMSO emphasised the importance of distinguishing their organisation from the public sector, the Finnish Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters respondent pointed out the need to differ from the private companies that already competed for service delivery contracts in the field of welfare in general and were perceived as potential competitors in the area of shelter services too:

Interviewee: Private entrepreneurs have come to this sector... It is the strength of CSOs that they have a role also as influencers. As an entrepreneur you only produce the products, which are bought. They are not expected to influence [policy].

Interviewer: Is the private sector then something that has specifically emerged now?

Interviewee: It has emerged in the area of service production, not so much in the area of influencing and interest representation, but in the area of service production, yes. It will be only a matter of time that somebody comes here and says that "I could buy all shelters". These things do happen. (the Finnish Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters)

In relation to the other interviewees, the representative of Victim Support Finland appeared to be the most confident about the position of their organisation before the upcoming changes. There was a justified reason for this because the organisation expected that the state would increase the funding for Victim Support Finland as it had already been doing for some years, and the secure position was probably reinforced by the fact that it had a long history of collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. Nevertheless, the interviewee considered it to be important that Victim Support Finland would not compromise its role as a low threshold service or a voice of its clients when its services would become funded increasingly by the state. This seemed to be important because services could always be provided by anyone – by the state or private sector – but interest representation and ‘working at the grassroots’ that were identified as essential for victim work by many interviewees, could only be done by CSOs:

As we work at the grassroots and we are that low threshold service, and we see that group, which is about to be left out of services, if legislation is changed in a certain way. So, then we speak up for those people, we feel that it is our task. Providing services is an important part of our tasks, but they can be shifted as statutory tasks and become part of authorities’ responsibilities. Then that low threshold support breaks down a little bit. (Victim Support Finland)

The Norwegian Norsk Krisesenterforbund NOK! too, attempted to strengthen its role as a CSO that does more than provide services as before the Crisis Centre Act the umbrella

organisation had mainly focused on trying to secure the funding for its member organisations. However, after the Act, the umbrella organisation lost this role. Consequently, in addition to the search for alternative funding sources, Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK! was now trying to invent a new role for itself. Without success, the organisation had applied for funding for different kinds of projects concerning professional development of crisis centres. According to the interviewee, the member organisations, too, were unsure of what the umbrella organisation's role should be. Yet, it seemed that the other crisis centre organisation – Kriesentersekretariatet – did not have similar problems despite losing some member organisations as well. The Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK! representative suspected that this was probably due to the members of the Kriesentersekretariatet sharing a common ideological base that held them together whereas Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK! had mostly concentrated on practical work instead of campaigning and pursuing a certain common vision that would unify the organisation:

They [Kriesentersekretariatet] work much more politically and the members have this political aim [...] And perhaps it is easier when the members and the [umbrella] organisation have the same political view, tasks and aims. We don't work in the same way. We have been much more focused on the daily work and services, I think we haven't been working in a political way. (Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK!)

While the other interviewees considered that it was important to strengthen, maintain or rediscover the profile of their organisation as CSOs, these issues did not surface in the interview with the Finnish rape crisis organisation Tukinainen. In fact, the Tukinainen interviewee considered the role of the organisation to be greater than it should in supporting victims of sexual violence and that the public sector ought to be much more involved in organising support for victims of sexual violence. Accordingly, the organisation did not believe its position to be threatened in any way by the public or the private sector in the field of victim support services. Instead, the organisation might be challenged by other, larger CSOs that have more influence in the field of victim services and which might absorb all the new funding for victim support services leaving small CSOs empty-handed.

## **Discussion**

This study examined how a group of representatives from Finnish and Norwegian CSOs working with victims of crime respond to the increases in responsibility of the public sector to organise support services for victims of crime, and how they reflect on the their organisations' roles amidst these changes. Whereas previous research analysing the effects of public funding and cooperation with public agents on various types of victim support organisations has mainly been conducted in Anglophone countries



(Beres et al., 2009; Campbell et al., 1998; Jones, 2004; Lehrner and Allen, 2009; Maier, 2008, 2011; Matthews, 1994; Simmonds, 2013; Williams, 2016), this study was set in two Nordic countries where CSOs have generally supported a stronger role of the public sector in provision of various types of welfare services than elsewhere (Wijkström, 2011). However, there are differences in the level of attention that crime victims have received in different Nordic countries (Tham et al., 2011) and this paper examined whether these differences would surface in the ways in which the interviewees perceive the state's growing role in the area of victim support services. This research had some limitations, too. First, had I been able to interview more representatives from other CSOs in addition to those in this study, there might have been more variety in terms of attitudes and opinions. Similarly, more interviewees from the studied CSOs could have added diversity to the findings. It is also important to note that as the arrangements in the provision of victim support services are constantly developing, the findings of this study reflect the opinions of the interviewees at the specific moment when the interviews were conducted.

The findings revealed that while all interviewees considered that the public sector should be responsible – for the most part at least – for funding their activities, the opinions of the Finnish and Norwegian respondents diverged in respect to the form in which this responsibility should occur. These differences in the views of the representatives may indicate variation in the quality of victim support services in these

countries, in the strength of the victim movements and in the nature of the civil society in general. Firstly, as the amount of victim support services is relatively low and responding to victimisation has been slow in general in Finland (Honkatukia, 2011; Ronkainen, 2008), the views of the Finnish experts may just reflect the fact that improvements in the victims' position are welcomed no matter who is in control. Secondly, the Finnish interviewees' less robust opinions on the form of responsibility of the public sector may be explained by the fact that the Finnish CSOs have not established victim support services to the same extent as the Norwegian ones or had as strong ideological views as, for example, the Norwegian crisis centre movement. Lastly, the Finnish respondents' attitudes may echo the less oppositional nature of the Finnish civil society in relation to the state in contrast to CSOs in other Nordic countries (Stenius, 2010: 73). However, confrontational relationships between the state and civil society are uncommon in the Nordic countries in general where CSOs and the state have pursued similar goals (Stenius, 2010; Wijkström, 2011). Furthermore, this may explain, why neither the Finnish or Norwegian interviewees discussed the obstacles for the CSOs' abilities to challenge the existing policies and practises created by public funding and the need to cooperate with public agents apart from the representative of the Finnish Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters. Yet, the fact that such problems were not mentioned by majority of the interviewees may also result from the profile of the studied CSOs. For instance, unlike the feminist Krisesentersekretariatet, none of the

interviewed CSOs profiled themselves as especially confrontational, and Victim Support Finland in particular had a close relationship with the Finnish Ministry of Justice.

However, in the long-term, dependence on public funding may impede the ability of traditional victim support organisations to advocate and strive for improvements for victims' position. For example, as the municipalities' control of local crisis centres' budgets increased in the case of Norsk Kriesesenterforbund NOK!, the member organisations became unable to sustain the umbrella organisation, which had been responsible for all kinds of advocacy and development work. Nonetheless, CSOs having strong ideological foundation can find ways to continue advocacy and awareness raising with volunteers despite the fact that the state would not support such efforts (Beres et al. 2009), which seems to have been the case of the other Norwegian crisis centre organisation Kriesesentersekretariatet (Laugerud, 2014). Yet, also that work may become less explicitly feminist and political overtime as has happened elsewhere due to efforts to secure government funding (Lehrner and Allen, 2009; Maier, 2011, 2008; Matthews, 1994; Williams, 2016). Nevertheless, instead of being worried about their abilities to advocate, the interviewees in this study were more concerned that too close cooperation with the authorities could compromise the low-threshold character of their services and their possibilities to innovate new responses to victimisation, if other funders withdraw from funding due to the public sector's increasing duty to offer such

services. The concern of moving away from the low-threshold provider profile is justified as studies from elsewhere (Simmonds, 2013; see also Williams, 2016) have illustrated that dependence on government funding and demands to demonstrate professionalism have led to compromises in victim support organisations' original characters and abilities to respond to clients' true needs. The potential change in CSOs' working approaches in response to public sector's requirements should be taken seriously as there is some evidence that indicates that it is beneficial to have different types of service models especially for victims of sexual violence. For example, Robinson and Hudson's (2011) study of public Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and Rape Crisis Centres in the UK illustrated that while SARCs appeared to be mostly contacted by victims of recent cases of sexual violence where the perpetrator was unknown to the victim, Rape Crisis Centres received clients who were victims of historical sexual abuse by family members, partners or ex-partners.

The respondents' concern over retaining their characters as grassroots agents and innovators was reflected also in the way in which the respondents emphasised the importance of being seen as 'something else': a civil society actor that not only produces services but also develops them and conveys the voices of their target groups to the decision-makers. In fact, these remarks of the uniqueness were a recurrent theme through the interviews. It seemed particularly important to make a distinction to both public organisations and private corporations. The need to distinguish from public

and private organisations can be interpreted to reflect the on-going rearrangement processes and ‘blurring of boundaries’ in both the area of victim support services as well as the provision of welfare services generally, which has been going on in these countries as well for some time. For example, in Finland, CSOs have been compelled to articulate the exceptionality of their services, especially in relation to the private sector, as the production of health and social services has been increasingly outsourced to non-public operators, mainly to private companies (Arajärvi and Väyrynen, 2011; Särkelä, 2016: 42, 48). Attempt to reduce costs and improve effectiveness of public services has also led to increased use of competitive tendering and a rising number of for-profit providers in the area of social services in Norway, although not to the same extent as in Finland or its other Nordic neighbours, Sweden and Denmark. Indeed, Norway has still preferred public sector provision, as it has the economic capacity for that (Sivesind, 2017). Thus, in the current situation, where Nordic public sectors – commonly distinguished by high public spending in welfare services – are looking for ways to reduce spending, increase diversity of providers and ‘user choice’, it is no wonder that also CSOs in this study felt the pressure of competition and are searching for ways to distinguish themselves from other service providers that have emerged or will potentially soon emerge to compete with them for provision of victim support services. This has already occurred in the UK, where Victim Support lost contract for witness support to contestant with no prior experience of court support services (Mawby, 2016:

214). Similarly, in Finland, actors without specialisation in victim support services have appeared into the field of victim support services in response to new funding streams. For instance, the Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses was awarded with contract for 24/7 helpline for victims of domestic violence and one of the Finnish representatives in this study considered that the private sector could become a potential competitor for them in the future.

In the case of Finnish CSOs, the need to clearly differentiate activities that no other actor provides has probably been also contributed to by STEA, which has withdrawn from supporting operations offered by the private sector due to competition regulations (Särkelä, 2016). Lately, STEA has further emphasised that it will not fund services that can be considered to be under the obligations of the public sector according to the Victims' Directive and Istanbul convention (Oikeusministeriö, 2015: 70). Therefore, CSOs offering these services must clearly separate the services regarded as statutory from their other functions if they wish to continue receiving funding from STEA, which enables development of new working methods and coordination of volunteers – activities at the heart of CSOs' traditional work for many Finnish CSOs. In addition, Finnish authorities have been stricter in interpreting the EU procurement directive than Norway that has enabled exception from competitive tendering when buying services from CSOs and which it wishes to maintain in future (Segaard and

Seglie, 2017; Särkelä, 2016). However, in Finland, CSOs have virtually been equated with companies as service providers (Särkelä, 2016).

Nonetheless, the concern of the Norwegian interviewees over losing service provision to the public sector has not been groundless either. Research by Bakketeig et al. (2014) shows that since the implementation of the Crisis Centre Act, municipalities have preferred to provide shelter services by themselves. Thus, whereas the majority of the shelter services were previously provided by CSOs, today, the main providers consist of municipalities or their consortiums (Bakketeig et al., 2014: 63). Although the employees and directors in the shelters viewed that being incorporated with the public service system had also brought certain advantages to their work, the ability to act quickly, flexibly as well as politically had become more difficult after the enactment of the Crisis Centre Act (Bakketeig et al., 2014: 64–65). These problems appear similar to the ones observed by previous Anglo-American studies (Lehrner and Allen, 2009; Maier, 2011; Matthews, 1994; Simmonds, 2013). Moreover, the introduction of the Crisis Centre Act turned out to be no less than fatal for the Norsk Krisesenterforbund NOK! which resources consisted almost solely of public funding prior to the Crisis Centre Act. Hence, it became vulnerable when the payment of membership fees was no longer possible for the member organisations. In July 2015, the umbrella organisation finally announced that it closes down and that its members continue their work as independent crisis centres (NTBinfo, 2015). In this respect, what

happened to Norsk Kriesenterforbund NOK! resembles the story of the Rape Crisis Federation in the UK (Jones, 2004).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that despite the fact that the interviewees mostly expected the public sector's investments in expanding the availability of victim support services to improve the position of crime victims – at least in Finland where the level of these services has been low – those investments come along with public sector's increasing control, which can and does challenge the position of the traditional CSOs in this field. This has already happened in the case of Norwegian crisis centre organisations and it may happen in the case of some Finnish CSOs as well. For instance, studies from the UK have shown that situations can change quickly and there is no guarantee whether the public sector will prefer such traditional CSOs with years of experience as partners at the time when savings are sought and free competition is emphasised (Mawby, 2016; Simmonds, 2016). The notion by Williams' (2016: 232) of the great care required from CSOs in retaining their original mission, keeping up with the needs of their clients, speaking up for them in meaningful ways and, essentially, surviving whilst cooperating with state agencies is a particularly timely reminder in the case of this study's CSOs as the conventional roles of CSOs are challenged by the



markets also in the ‘state friendly’ Nordic societies. Thus, although the states’ increasing responsibility to organise support for victims of crime has certainly been a triumph for the victim movements in many countries, its realisation in the current era of austerity and mixed welfare economies presents traditional victim support organisations with new challenges in retaining their ownership and distinctive ways of treating the problem of victimisation.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, I mainly use the term ‘victim’ to refer to a person who has been subjected to a criminal offence him/herself or in some cases to a person who is a relative of that person. However, I do this by acknowledging that the terms used by ‘victims’ themselves as well as by the studied CSOs may be different and where relevant, I use these other terms.

<sup>2</sup> In this article the term victim support services or specialised victim support services refer to the services required in the Directive 2012/29/EU, articles 8, 9 and in Council of Europe Treaty Series No. 210, articles 20, 21, 23, 25. Thus, primarily this study does not discuss e.g. guidance and advice that police or courts are required to provide for the victims.

<sup>3</sup> Civil society organisation can be understood as synonymous to such terms as voluntary, third sector, not-for-profit or non-governmental organisation. For a more detailed definition please see e.g. EU Commission (2000: 3– 4).

<sup>4</sup> In effect, the aforementioned Istanbul convention and EU’s Victim Directive both encourage state’s cooperation with CSOs in relation to their aims.

<sup>5</sup> According to the recommendations of the Council of Europe (2008), Finland should have about 500 family places in shelters, however, the current number is 143 (Council of Europe, 2008: 84; Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2017a: 10).

<sup>6</sup> The law on shelters enacted in 2015 is now under revision and according to the new proposal the state would continue funding the shelters, however, with state subsidies instead of contracts and it would restrict service users only to victims of intimate partnership violence (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2017a).

<sup>7</sup> In 2010, Finland also launched other measures to prevent violence and sexual violence against women and improve the support of the victims in its first Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriö, 2010). Additionally, Finland has established an official system of



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assistance to victims of trafficking, which offers help if a person is considered to be a victim of trafficking and in a need of assistance (Act 746/2011: 35 §).

<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, recently the Finnish government appointed a working group to consider new ways of supporting crime victims during the criminal process (Oikeusministeriö, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>10</sup> The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, Mannerheim League of Child Welfare, the Finnish Red Cross, the Finnish Federation of Settlements and of the Feminist Association Unioni.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymity could not be guaranteed, because of the limited number of victim support organisations in these countries. Thus, interviewees' organisations would have been easy to identify from their descriptions in the final report, albeit the efforts to withhold their names. The interviewees knew before agreeing to be interviewed that they and/or their organisations could be identified from the article.