

**Abstract for the 8th Annual ESPAnet conference on: ‘Social Policy and the Global Crisis: Consequences and Responses’, September 2-4 2010, Budapest, Hungary**

Suggested stream:

### **9.3. European Welfare States and Labor Markets in Situations of Crises**

**Working title:**

#### **Common shock, different responses? Policy recommendations of expert commissions in Norway, Denmark, Germany and the UK**

This paper will address the more general and continuous alleged crisis of welfare state sustainability and policy responses of Norway, Denmark, Germany and the UK. It does so by looking at how central expert commissions in these countries have reviewed existing welfare arrangements, as well as how policy makers have reacted to such critique and policy recommendations. How do these four commissions consider the future of the Norwegian, Danish, German and British welfare state? Is there a common understanding across countries and commissions? What kind of advice is issued; are there signs of convergence or divergence in these countries? What kind of influence do the commissions have? A central topic in debates on social policy is how to increase labour market participation, and the paper will focus on this challenge. Being given an explicit mandate to propose changes to current welfare policies the commissions constitute a potentially very influential actor in reform processes. The focus on this important actor could thus improve our understanding of governments’ policy choices to meet challenges of welfare state sustainability. Also, studying the use of commissions in such different contexts (political economy, type of welfare state) could shed light on how governments pursue unpopular welfare reforms, a topic of growing interest within social policy research. Methodologically, the cross-country qualitative comparison of commission reports is to be supplemented by interviews with national experts and policy makers.

#### **Contact details:**

Tord S. Lindén  
Rokkansenteret  
Nygårdsgt. 5  
5015 Bergen  
Norway

Email: [tord.linden@uni.no](mailto:tord.linden@uni.no)

Phone : + 47 55 58 38 74

Kind regards,

Tord S. Lindén  
Post doc, UNI Rokkan, Bergen