



**HEALTH CHECK OF THE  
NORDIC CHANGEMAKER  
LANDSCAPE**



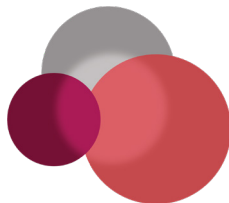
**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**

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LOUISE &  
GÖRAN EHRNROOTH  
FOUNDATION

**DENMARK**



**SWEDEN**



**NORDIC**



## Background:

# Why map Changemakers?



**C**hangemaker maps have been conducted across Europe since 2014 and proven to be **an efficient tool to strengthen communities and showcase the Changemaking ecosystem** for investors, government bodies, social entrepreneurs and young Changemakers alike.

Thousands of Changemakers have since its inauguration participated in this mapping and now **541 Nordic Changemakers** have joined the mapped community of individuals and organisations that lead societal transformation.

The Nordic Changemaker Map has been conducted in **Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden** during a span of 12 months. The northern star for this regional mapping has been to **take a health check on the Nordic Changemaker scene**, diving into pressing questions such as what challenges a Changemaker face, which support mechanisms are most effective and what collaborations are most fruitful for them.

## SO, WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

With 7 partners & 17 network partners, we have contacted Changemakers, conducted a total of 205 in-depth interviews and collected 495 online surveys. We have organized five events,

analyzed all gathered data and developed 4 national reports and recommendations, generated 20 interactive digital maps and 1 pan-Nordic analysis.

Yet, this is only the qualitative beginning of this mapping exercise. **The real impact begins now.** The Nordic Changemaker Maps aim to:

- ▶ serve as a springboard to **connect individuals and organisations**,
- ▶ provider **deeper and wider understanding** of the needs and challenges faced by Changemakers,
- ▶ assure **more informed decisions** by investors, governments and other institutions as the field evolves and continues to influence change on a national, regional, and international level.

This comparative summary outlines the key outcomes from each national map and analysis regional linkages and differences providing frameworks of how these can be strengthened or capitalized. At the bottom of this summary, you can find the link to all national reports and interactive maps.

## Method:

# Tapping into a community-driven approach



The Nordic Changemaker Map focused on 3 target groups:

### ▶ Social entrepreneurs

A social entrepreneur is addressing societal challenges in an innovative and entrepreneurial way while serving the common good.

### ▶ Young Changemakers

An individual between 12-25 years old who has gone from idea to action in addressing societal challenges. Young Changemakers engage her/his community to be a part of the solution.

### ▶ Changemaker initiatives

A Changemaker initiative is a joint project and/or collaboration between two or more established organisations with the objective to create societal impact. The initiative is, just like the other two categories, foremost driven by impact.

For the methodological purpose we used the following criteria when defining a Changemaker:

▶ **Establishment\***: Organisations and projects that are well-established and have been active in the field for at least one year

▶ **Societal goal**: The developed solution utilizing an innovative solution to a societal challenge

### ▶ Transparency and working together:

The Changemaker works together with others to solve the challenge (e.g., partners, funders, volunteers, etc.)

▶ **Scaling and impact**: The Changemaker is open to and want to scale the impact of his/her idea by e.g., sharing results, process, or methods.

To reach the wider community of Changemaker in each of the three categories we applied a so-called snowball methodology. The methodology enables a grassroots-led approach by using a nomination system where each engaged Changemaker nominates another.

This way the mapping was able to break silos, reaching beyond the usual suspects and enabling a stronger representation of voices. 89 of the participating Changemakers interviewed joined as nominations, constituting total of 43% of Changemakers that shared their voice through the map on a nomination basis.

*\* For young Changemakers, this criterion is applied per case as some may be underage and unable to register their organisation.*



# Nordic similarities: Regional linkages

**W**hen Ashoka Nordic and Reach for Change, together with all partners, ventured out to explore the Nordic Changemaker landscape we were aware that we would witness the emergence of known trends about the field as well as discover new insights and needs that had not been visible without a mapping of this scale.

We began this endeavor with a pilot in the autumn of 2020 and have since then developed 4 nation-wide maps in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden respectively. Each national map shares a treasure of insights, trends, recommendations, strengths, and vulnerabilities of Nordic Changemakers. And while each country carries own specific characteristics there are several overlapping themes that emerge when analyzing all the country reports.

This summary aims to share these regional linkages. To better understand what commonalities the 4 participating nations have and in what ways these can serve to strengthen the Changemaker ecosystem.

“**For me, not working to fulfill my values would mean my well-being would suffer”**

Jasmina Amzil, Young Finnish Changemaker,  
Director Ruskeat Tytöt ry

The “why” behind becoming a Changemaker holds a pattern across the Nordic. A majority of Nordic Changemakers start their initiative because:

- (a)** they have a personal experience with the challenge, and
- (b)** they are frustrated with the system and feel a moral obligation to challenge the status quo.

This trend was especially evident in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden where engaged Changemakers expressed repetitively that the reason for them to start a business, initiative or association derives from having either oneself or someone close to them

## #1: Nordic Changemakers are motivated by personal experience and want to disrupt status quo

directly experiencing an injustice or flaw in the system. For instance, among the Danish Changemakers a strong frustration of a failing system led them to feel a moral obligation to adjust or fix it. The most common systems the Danish Changemakers spoke of were either municipality, government, public institution, or legislative level.

While this regional linkage illustrates the importance of capitalizing on personal experience and frustration to foster more Changemakers another visible tendency become apparent: that the Changemaker identity is complex. While Nordic Changemakers claimed that the identity of “leading and creating change” was important for them. They also did not naturally think about calling themselves Changemakers nor they identified this chosen path as a career.

This awakes the question of why Nordic Changemakers do not perceive themselves as Changemakers, why is it not seen as a career option, and how this can be addressed? Let’s break down each question and seek the answers among the maps:


An illustration of a hand with a purple sleeve pointing towards an orange box containing text.

**Question:**  
**Am I a Changemaker?**

**Answer:** The trend of not perceiving oneself as a Changemaker—as someone who created, lead, and engage others in change—was most evident among Finnish and Danish Changemakers where several of the interviewed Changemakers stated that there was a strong skepticism towards social entrepreneurs and Changemakers at large.

This skepticism influenced the notion of the legitimacy of being a Changemaker, and the ability to express and explain one’s occupation to the general audience. Moreover, once again especially visible in Finland, was the case that being a Changemaker was not seen as a traditional occupation or career path.

Yet, regardless of these challenges several interviewed Finnish Changemakers also stated that despite not using the word “Changemaker” to define their work, their vision and mission was so strongly integrated into their being that it was rather seen as a part of who they were more than just a work title.



**Question:**  
**How to strengthen the  
Changemaker identity?**

**Answer:** The maps showcased 2 viable approaches to address the importance of both empower existing Changemakers in their identity and work, and to foster more individuals to identify and act as a Changemaker. These approaches are:

**(a) need for wider and stronger visibility through media and storytelling, and**

**(b) engage youth to foster more Changemakers through informal and formal education.**

In all Nordic countries the aspect of engaging media in promoting awareness about Changemaker was often referred to. Many of the engaged Changemakers meant that due to the low awareness of their role in society

they experienced that their impact was slowed down or halted. Regarding the engagement of youth, the Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish map all laid out the importance of introducing Changemaking as a concept to schools. This to build awareness about the agency of leading and creating societal change at an early age.

In summary identity is crucial for agency. A combination of low identification as a Changemaker, lacking acknowledgement of the field, and absence of engagement of young people in strengthening the ecosystem makes the ecosystem face an identity-challenge.

The consequences are that more community support is required to upkeep the motivation of Changemakers (see the upcoming regional linkage #2 for more details), as well as loss of enlargement of community, increase of investments, and media attention.



## #2: Nordic Changemakers need communities for scaling impact

“ At first, nobody wanted to speak to us. Today, when we enter for example Botkyrka Kommun, I’m almost treated like a queen. The difference is extremely big between being unknown to known and ‘approved’ by others first.”

Victoria, Changers Hub

Communities are at the core of human interaction, and the need for community does not differ for Nordic Changemakers.

All four maps outline the challenges that Nordic Changemakers face, from funding restrictions to low visibility, undermining legislative frameworks and more. A returning topic is the role played by networks and communities.

Changemakers often pave new and untested paths in society, this as they must undertake unconventional methods to solve complex societal challenges. In such a reality many of the engaged Changemakers, across all four Nordic maps, indicated that communities and networks support the field through:

### ◆ Ability to scale impact through the power of networks and not solely rely on funding:

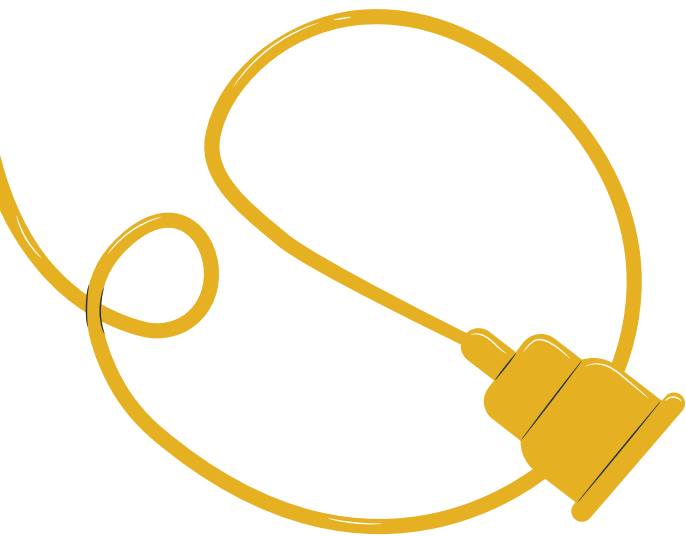
connecting with likeminded individuals and organisations can support the growth of the initiative and influences the ability to accelerate the intended impact. These connections also allow expansion of own networks, access to new funding opportunities and spaces to bounce ideas.

### ◆ Growth of skills- and knowledge through the support of mentors with diverse thematic expertise:

the importance of engaging different thematic actors has been a clear need for the Changemaker communities to better understand the market and systems they operate within.

### ◆ Sense of common language and safe space:

the maps showcase that many Changemakers experience themselves as “misfits”. This can be illustrated through the difference between introducing a “tech startup” and a “social enterprise” – the social enterprise most often raises an eye of suspiciousness among investors while tech startups are clearly established and



understood.

Therefore, Changemaker communities provide spaces for commonality and a “break” from constantly needing to explain one’s vision and model.

Yet, while networks and communities appear to be a strong asset to the field there are also several challenges linked to this regional linkage. One reoccurring theme is the lack of political engagement and support.

While there are some indications that progress is made—for instance, in Sweden the government, through Vinnova and Tillväxtverket, has invested over 150 million SEK into the Changemaker field during a period of 3 years—there is still a visible disappointment of the slow pace of government in engaging social entrepreneurs and Changemakers to accelerate societal change.

Another challenge is that due to the limited access to funding many Changemakers compete

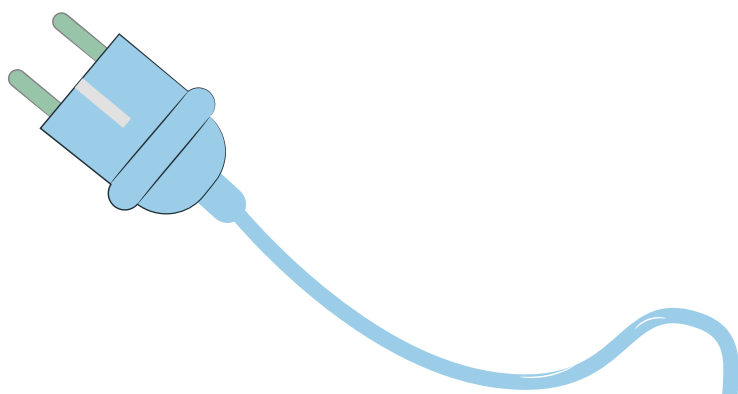
for the same investments. This leads to a more competitive rather than collaborative spirit among certain groups in the field.

In addition, through a more indicative and present engagement of the public sector in the Changemaker field the long-awaited legitimacy within the society can be raised.

This can be supported by e.g., beneficial procurement regulations for Changemakers as stated in the Norwegian and Finnish map and would also be a move to come closer to the favorable fiscal mechanisms found elsewhere in Europe but not in the Nordics.

Thus, the role of networks and communities are not to be underplayed in the Nordic Changemaker context. This regional linkage shows that communities are an appreciated and needed element to reinforce the field.

While there are some challenges surrounding the communities, the pros outweigh the cons as the Nordic Changemakers voice out the continued need to build joint platforms – digitally and in person – to continue the cementation of the field as a key player in leading change.







### #3: Nordic Changemakers are hybrid players

“ I've noticed a huge difference of attitude on uncertainty between social entrepreneurs and the private sector. For example, I sit on the board for a social enterprise with many board members from the private sector. They get stressed if they have a runway (cash flow) of 12 months, while we in the non-profit and social entrepreneurship sector are used to working on a 4-month cash flow. Then I usually tell them, 'Welcome to our world'”.

Sara Damber



Sara Damber

Our VUCAH (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguous and Hyperconnected) reality demands a new set of skills in comparison to previous generations.

Changemakers are at the forefront showcasing the various skills required in shaping a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable future. One of these skills has arisen in the maps, namely that of **being a hybrid player**.

The Swedish map showcased the **essential need to build stronger cross-sectoral**

**partnerships**. The map also pointed out that Swedish Changemakers were well-versed in combining public and private funding streams. Service/goods fees was pointed out as the most common income channel followed by government and foundation grants. This hybrid models were also apparent in the Finnish map where the respondents indicated a **strong will to contribute to growing the community of diverse stakeholders and willingness to work across sectors**.

However, albeit Changemakers carry the strength of moving across sectors this also



becomes a vulnerability. Some of the challenges shown in the mapping of undertaking a hybrid role in the society is :

► **Impactful partnerships become difficult when partners are not met on an equal basis**

Several Nordic Changemakers stated that some partnerships are seen as branding exercises by private company partners. This undermines the trust of the partnership and sets an unequal tone from the get-go.

As a result, Nordic Changemakers desire to build more holistic and collaborative partnerships across the various sectors and point to that there is a need for a mind-shift for investors—across the spectrum—to approach collaboration with Changemakers organisation from a more equal basis.

► **Changemakers must be careful not to be taken advantage of due to funding restrictions:**

Due to their hybrid nature many Changemakers must be creative in accessing different funds. This also makes them more vulnerable to partners who expect a service-minded approach of the partnership, meaning the Changemaker is treated as the full time implementor of the funder’s agenda due to the power imbalance.

Yet, Changemakers often aim to establish partnerships that are more holistic and trust-based towards a joint vision rather than solely a invest-and-report approach.

The maps highlight the potential of elevating the **hybrid nature of Changemakers and utilize this skill to build a more collaborative and intertwined societal order.**

However, as of today, Changemakers still face obstacles in being acknowledged or understood across all societal sectors.

That **halts the work of the Changemaker and traps Changemakers from being dedicated to the core mission and activities to instead focus on project deliverables.**

# Resources & Partners



**Y**ou can find each country report of the Nordic Changemaker Map here: [www.nordicchangemakermap.org](http://www.nordicchangemakermap.org). All interactive maps are gathered [here](#).



## Ashoka

Ashoka is the world's largest network for social entrepreneurs and Changemakers. We identify and support leading social entrepreneurs so that they can scale their social impact even further.

Our vision is an “Everyone a Changemaker” world, where all people regardless of age or position see their potential to develop solutions to wicked social challenges and feel empowered to act on them. To accomplish our vision, Ashoka has elected over 3,800 system changing social entrepreneurs from 93 countries into the Ashoka Fellowship and engaged over 50,000 youth to accelerate their Changemaking skills.



## Reach for Change

Reach for Change is an international non-profit founded in Sweden. Our vision is a world where all children and youth reach their full potential. We're working towards this vision by finding local social entrepreneurs and empowering them to develop and scale innovative solutions that help children to better lives.

We were co-founded by successful entrepreneurs in the non-profit and the business sectors in 2010, and since then we have supported more than 1,000 social entrepreneurs in 18 countries across three continents.

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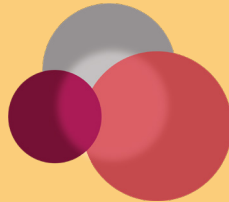
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