

## What is the Nordic Special Sauce for Happiness?

### Virtuous vs vicious cycles **Fill the gaps with the correct form of the word in brackets**

The Nordic countries are 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (CHARACTER) by a virtuous cycle in which various key institutional and cultural indicators of good society feed into each other including:

- well-functioning democracy,
- generous and 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (EFFECT) social welfare benefits,
- low levels of crime and corruption
- satisfied citizens who feel free and trust each other and governmental institutions.

While this summary focuses on the Nordic countries, a quick glance at the other countries regularly found at the top of international 3. \_\_\_\_\_ (COMPARE) of life satisfaction – Switzerland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia – reveals that they also have most of the same elements in place. Thus, there seems to be no secret sauce specific to Nordic happiness that is 4. \_\_\_\_\_ (AVAILABLE) to other countries. There is rather a more general recipe for creating highly satisfied citizens:

### The Not so secret Recipe **Fill each gap with ONE WORD**

Ensure that state institutions are of high quality, non-corrupt, able to deliver 5. \_\_\_\_\_ they promise, and generous in 6. \_\_\_\_\_ care of citizens who have difficulties or disabilities. However, there is a gap between knowing what a happiness-producing society looks like and transforming a certain society to follow that model. Low-trust societies easily get trapped 7. \_\_\_\_\_ a vicious cycle where low levels of trust in corrupt institutions lead 8. \_\_\_\_\_ low motivation to pay taxes and low support 9. \_\_\_\_\_ policy reforms that would allow the state to take better care of its citizens. Thus, there is 10. \_\_\_\_\_ easy path from the vicious cycle into a virtuous cycle. However, we shall give a few ideas for constructing what we see as helpful pathways.

**Possible Solutions Choose the most suitable word from A, B or C below**

Firstly, the quality of institutions such as health and education 11. \_\_\_\_\_ a key role in ensuring citizen happiness. Thus, minimizing corruption and 12. \_\_\_\_\_ citizen participation and representation in various decisions can help to ensure that institutions serve citizens and maintain their trust. Democratic quality and factors such as free press or media, informed and educated citizens, and strong civic society play an important role 13. \_\_\_\_\_ keeping the government accountable and citizen-oriented.

On a cultural level, arguably the 14. \_\_\_\_\_ important factor is to generate a sense of community, trust, and social cohesion among citizens. A divided society has a hard time providing the kind of public goods that would universally support each citizen's ability to live a happier life. In a divided society, people also tend to be less supportive of various welfare benefits because they worry they would benefit the 'other' groups, as well. When people care about each other and trust each 15. \_\_\_\_\_, this provides a much more stable base on which to build public support for various public goods and welfare benefit programs.

11. A. gives B. plays C. makes

12. A. maximizing B. bigging C. gianting

13. A. on B. to C. in

14. A. more B. most C. least

15. A. other B. another C. others

**Final thoughts Correct the spelling mistakes in this final paragraph**

Thus, institutionaly, building a government that is trustworthy and functions well, and culturally, building a sense of communnity and unity among the citizens are the most crushial steps towards a society where people are happy. While the Nordic countries took their own particular paths to their current welfare state model, each country must follow its own path. If citizen well-being and happiness are truly the goals of goverment, then taking seriously reseach on institutional and cultural determinants of citizen happiness is the first step in starting an evidence-based journey towards fulfilling that goal.