

Annex 3

Summaries of the status of guidance in VPL in the Nordic region

The following summaries are based on the information gathered in the mapping grid with the 7 focus areas described in the introduction chapter. They are brief overviews of the current status of guidance in validation seen from a general perspective.

Summary from Denmark

Laws and regulations for validation

The key legislation on validation of prior learning in Denmark is Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007, entitled “Development of the recognition of prior learning in adult education and continuing training”. This legislation has been effective since August 2007.

The legislation gives each individual the right to have his/her prior learning experiences validated in relation to specific goals of adult education and continuing training. It focuses on the needs of the individual and aims to make the process as accessible and flexible as possible.

Act no. 556 includes the following six educational fields:

Single course subjects in general adult education (basic level - AVU)

Single course subjects in general upper secondary education

Adult vocational training programs; (AMU)

Basic adult education (GVU). (Note: GVU will be replaced by vocational education for adults (EUV) with new legislation from August 2015).

Short-cycle post-secondary adult education (Further Adult Education VVU)

Medium-cycle post-secondary adult education (Diploma programs).

The legislation does not include Master Programmes.

Since 2007 legislation allows individuals to gain access to short-cycle and medium-cycle Higher Education (Bachelor-level degrees) based on an individual competence assessment. The educational institutions are responsible for information, guidance and assessment of the individual.

From August 2015 new legislation in Vocational Education for Adults (EUV) says that adults (25 year old or more) are obliged to start the education on the basis of validation of prior learning. Accordance to this the education will be tailor-made targeted the specific

vocational education the individual wants to complete. In general assessment of prior learning gives the individual the following opportunities:

- Access to educational programs.
- Tailor-made education.
- Obtain “competence certificate”, if the knowledge, skills and competences are equivalent with those obtained by completing a module or a course in the program.
- Obtain a “program certificate” if the knowledge, skills and competences are equivalent with the learning outcomes described in the entire educational program.

The opportunities differ in the different educational fields.

The implementation of the legislation is decentralized. The tradition in Denmark is that legislation provides a framework that outlines how the educational institutions have to act, to ensure quality assurance and to ensure evaluation with a view to developing quality systems, methods, etc.

Focus in the legislation on validation is recognition of prior learning in the educational institutions. Guidance is mentioned as part of what the educational institutions have to offer the potential users of validation.

The use of validation by institutions and other stakeholders has diversity in proportion and in degree of how the validation practices are integrated at an organizational level and in developments of procedures and methods.

In Denmark we have since 90th had an ongoing discussion about the need to establish independent guidance bodies, to ensure career guidance for the individual in a lifelong learning perspective, nevertheless we have no decisions about independent guidance institutions for adults.

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

The educational institutions are responsible for guidance primarily according to assessment in the validation process. Guidance institutions as e.g. eVejledning, Adult and Continuing Training Centres (VEU-centres), job centres and trade unions are responsible for career guidance in a very broad sense, which can include documentation of non-formal and informal learning and career guidance before and after the validation process. The non-formal adult education providers are also involved in guidance. Only a few examples show career guidance as an integrated part of the validation process. It's more an exception than the rule.

A counselling web portal provides general information about prior learning (www.ug.dk) and through this there is a direct connection to eGuidance. The guidance institutions provide

information, support clarification and documentation concerning the validation process, and provide guidance to the individual about choice of further learning and career.

The vocational education institutions providing AMU and the adult education centres (VUC) all participate in 13 local adult and continuing training centres, VEU-centres. The 13 VEU-centres were established in 2010 to provide a unified gateway to both general adult education and vocational adult education and continuing training, with greater focus on quality and effectiveness. The VEU-centres also have a responsibility for promoting the VPL-programs and for improving the quality of the programs in the participating education institutions. Guidance is defined as part of these activities.

In practice the individual often meets guidance personnel when he/she contacts the educational institution for information about validation, but it's usually not a career professional.

As the above-mentioned information shows, there can be many types of stakeholders involved in validation processes. It differs how much the single institution is concerned about guidance in validation and in validation as such. Establishment of co-operation between the main stakeholders differs a lot; several development projects are focusing on establishing better collaboration between e.g. job-centres, trade unions and VEU- Centres and guidance is central in this projects.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

As described above, guidance personnel have different tasks connected to the validation process, and their qualifications differ. In some areas there are mandatory descriptions of qualifications, in others not. The availability for education and training are diploma and master's degree in counselling, module in validation at the pedagogical diploma degree, courses and peer learning activities (networking).

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation is not described as common for all validation activities. The purpose is often described locally in the institutions carrying out guidance in validation.

Summary from Finland

The information on guidance in validation is mainly adopted from the Competence-based Qualifications Guide (2013:22. Finnish National Board for Education). The guide is available in English, Swedish and Finnish. The viewpoint provided in the matrix is mainly that of the Competence-based Qualifications (VET for adults). Validation does take place in HEIs and IVET also (and in general upper secondary to a very small extent), but the VNFIL procedures are not systematic and the role of guidance is not well or unanimously defined.

Laws and regulations, for guidance in validation

The Regulation on Personalisation (43/011/2006) defines guidance as an integral part of each phase of the personalisation process in Competence-based Qualifications. The phases are as follows: 1) application phase (information and identification of competences); 2) completion of the qualification (assessment and certification); 3) acquiring the required vocational skills (follow-up and further learning). Guidance procedures have to be described in a legally binding contract and plan for arranging qualifications as well.

There is no earmarked financing for guidance in validation, but the number of hours reserved for guidance per candidate has to be estimated in the contract and plan for arranging Competence Based Qualifications. Financing of the CBQs is mostly state funded. Some funding comes from companies or even individuals themselves. The entire funding system covers guidance activities during the personalisation process.

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

In Competence-based Qualifications, guidance is provided not only by guidance counsellors, but also by teachers, assessors, working life assessors and tutors. Specialists in Competence-based Qualifications have a central role in guiding and steering the VNFIL process and also further learning. Specialist in CBQs is a mandatory 25-credit programme. At least one of the assessors in the validation process must have the qualification.

In the contract and plan for arranging Competence-based Qualifications the organiser must write a detailed guidance plan regarding each phase of personalisation and an estimation on the number of hours needed for each candidate. The financing concerns the entire process, guidance being an integral part of the process.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

As stated before, many actors have the responsibility to provide guidance, not only guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors usually have an MA in guidance and counselling or other relevant qualification. Many have studied e.g. pedagogy or psychology and specialized in counselling. Quite a few counsellors also take the Specialist in Competence-based Qualifications training to have better competences in developing the CBQ system.

Teachers and assessors have an important role in terms of guidance as well. Mostly teachers in VET have a degree in HE (or the highest degree) of their particular field and they have additionally taken pedagogical qualifications. The assessors have additionally taken the Specialist in Competence-based Qualifications. The work/life assessors and tutors either are Specialists in Competence-based Qualifications or are specifically trained by the CBQ provider for the task.

Furthermore, there is continuing training for the Specialists in Competence-based Qualifications available.

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

- 1) Application phase (information and identification of competences)
 - ⇒ Information and guidance about the Competence-based Qualifications
 - ⇒ Mapping competences with the help of existing documents and other means
 - ⇒ Determining suitability for candidacy for the chosen qualification (or finding other solutions, if the candidate is not suitable for validation of the chosen qualification)
 - ⇒ Identification of competences => guidance to directly take a qualification or a part qualification through assessment
 - ⇒ Identification of competences => possible needs for further learning and guidance regarding different learning paths (on-the-job learning, self studies, school based learning etc.)
 - ⇒ Determining needs for further guidance (depending on the identification) or possible special needs
- 2) Completion of the qualification (assessment and certification)
 - ⇒ Guidance ensures that the planned assessment will be carried out in a suitable environment
 - ⇒ Guidance ensures that the candidate will be able to demonstrate all the qualification requirements in the assessment environment => if not, guidance helps in finding other contexts where to demonstrate one's competences.
- 3) Acquiring the required vocational skills (follow-up and further learning)
 - ⇒ Planning most suitable learning paths (individual learning plan)
 - ⇒ Identifying guidance needs in the learning process
 - ⇒ Identifying special life circumstances (e.g. regarding schedules etc.)

Summary from Greenland

Laws and regulations, for guidance in validation

The Inatsisartut law on counselling (Inatsisartutlov nr. 4 af 29. November 2013 om uddannelses- og erhvervsvejledning) includes access to Career counselling (Educational and Vocational counselling) for people with little formal education. Financing is allocated from the state budget and is distributed by two ministries (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church and Ministry of Industry, Labour and Trade).

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

The counselling and validation centres in Greenland are named Piareersarfik. Piareersarfik is characterized by one-door principle, which means that citizens can go to one place regardless of whether they want guidance to work or education. It makes Piareersarfik has a central role in the Governments desire to upgrade workforce skills.

The main target groups of the local Piaereersarfik centres are youngsters at 15- 30 years old, who has left Compulsory school but are not yet ready to become enrolled in a youth education program. In some regions this includes 50 % of the school leavers, which means, that the local centres play a key role in the Greenlandic society' s efforts to increase the populations general education level. The local Piaereersarfik centres are the providers of both guidance services, and various preparatory courses. For example, the centres offers specially designed (bridgebuilding) courses for youngsters who are not ready to enter a youth education program, when leaving compulsory school. But the centres also provide compensatory courses (e.g. language and mathematics) for students who have left school with insufficient qualification.

Labour market

The local labour market offices provides guidance for the unemployed adult population (above 30 years) and also cooperates with the local Piaereersarfik centre and/or other course providers in regards to competence assessment and development.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

The law describes the expected competencies of counsellors, § 12.

The local Municipality council must ensure that the municipal guidance centres offer guidance provided by qualified counsellors and appropriate physical environment. The guidelines shall be carried out by persons who have an education and career counsellor training approved by the Greenland Government, or who can demonstrate a similar guidance level of professional competence. The Greenland Government may upon application by the Municipality council allow counselling performed temporarily by someone who has other guidance professional qualifications when the counsellor has started or intends to begin career counsellor training, approved by the Greenland Government.

Financing is allocated from the state budget and is distributed by two ministries (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church and Ministry of Industry, Labour and Trade).

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

The main role of the counsellor is to inform and assist the individual in the process of identifying competences, support him/her through the whole process of validation and provide follow up towards continuing learning/career development. The counsellor looks after the interest of the individual and offers guidance through individual interviews.

Summary from Iceland

Laws and regulations, for guidance in validation

The Adult Education Act No. 27, 31 March 2010 includes access to Career counselling (Educational and Vocational counselling) for people with little formal education. Financing

allocated to VPL programmes and related guidance activities for the target group comes from the state budget and is distributed by the Educational and Training Fund. Guidance is embedded in the validation model used for the target group and coordinated by the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC). A regulation is in place which describes a defined process of VPL in steps and the roles and tasks of the counsellor, project manager and assessors are described in Guidelines for VPL.

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

The cooperative partners of ETSC are 14 Lifelong learning centres located around the country. The centres apply for financing to the Educational and Training Fund for specific validation programmes each year and a contract is made with the ETSC if approved. Career counsellors located at the centres provide information, advice and guidance in validation activities in their areas. This group of career counsellors is a formal network which shares experience and works towards the development of adult guidance in general through cooperation with the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC). This adult career counselling for people with little formal education in general is funded by the Education and Training Fund, including career counselling in validation activities, which is an integral part of the Icelandic validation model.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

Those who provide career counselling and guidance in VPL are mainly educated career counsellors, holding a diploma or a Master degree in Educational and Vocational Counselling.

All VPL staff, including counsellors, need to go through a training course at the ETSC on VPL where the concept of validation and methodology are reviewed and discussed. A network of counsellors meets regularly with the ETSC to improve guidance activities in general for the target group.

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

The main role of the counsellor is to inform and assist the individual in the process of identifying competences, support him/her through the whole process of validation and provide follow up towards continuing learning/career development based on the results of VPL. The counsellor looks after the interest of the individual and offers guidance through group work and individual interviews. The role of the counsellor is separate from that of the assessor and has proved to be crucial for the overall success of validation projects.

Information phase: The purpose is to provide information about the process of VPL and possible competence development, motivation and support, so the participant can make an informed decision. Screening interview follows, focusing on individual guidance; discussing participation in the validation process or other options, motivation and support.

Identification of competences: The purpose is to assist participants in bringing forth their competences, putting them into word in a portfolio (formative) and self-assessing against set criteria (summative). Preparing for the assessment interview (identifying/describing own competences). Supporting personal development.

Assessment phase: The career counsellor is present during assessment interviews and provides support to the individual when describing his/her competences. Referring to information in the portfolio and from individual interviews. Psychological support for the individual. Promoting fair results. Looking out for the rights of the individual.

In conjunction with the certification phase: A final interview is provided by the career counsellor where results are reviewed as well as the process and future plans. Counsellor provides support, information and motivation towards next steps (school, job etc). The purpose is to assist the individual in making decisions for further competence and career development based on validation results.

Summary from Norway

Laws and regulations, for guidance in validation

Validation of prior learning is regulated by law in compulsory education, tertiary vocational education and higher education. The curriculum in compulsory education and study plans in tertiary vocational education and higher education are used as criteria for validation.

Guidance in validation is not regulated by law in Norway. Guidance in validation is publicly funded, as a part of validation procedures.

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

The different actors responsible for validation are also responsible for delivering guidance. Career guidance may be given by county career centres, and may result in further validation processes if that is relevant.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

We have no current national overview of the guidance staff involved in validation.

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

In the national guidelines for validation in upper secondary education, guidance is considered necessary throughout the validation procedure. The following description may describe the objective of the guidance in each phase, as a general overview. It may not be the same person who delivers guidance in the different phases.

Information phase: The purpose is to provide information about the process of VPL and possible competence development, motivation and support, so that the participant can make an informed decision whether validation is relevant or not, and if it is, towards which curriculum.

Identification of competences: The purpose is to assist participants to bring forward their competences, put them into word in a portfolio (formative) and self-assess against set criteria (summative). And prepare them for the assessment interview.

Assessment phase and certification phase: In these phases, the guidance may not be especially highlighted. In the assessment phase the candidates competences are assessed by

experts, based on written documentation, interviews or practical performances. In the certification phase, the validation administration produce the certification according to quality assured procedures.

Follow up phase: The purpose is to assist the individual in making decisions for further competence and career development based on validation results.

Summary from Sweden

Laws and regulations, for guidance in validation

In formal adult education (including vocational education and training, not third sector) the possibility for validation is regulated in the Education act chapter 20, 21 and 22. And in the ordinance for adult education (SFS 2011:1108). For higher education and higher vocational education the possibility to get non-formal and informal learning accredited for access and exemptions is regulated.

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

Guidance is embedded in all formal education, but the link to validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is not regulated. You could say Sweden have a dual system with regard to VNFIL. Aside from formal education there is sector specific VNFIL where PES provides guidance and procures skills audits and validation services from different providers, some of them accredited by the sector specific model owners. There are only economic incitements for providers of VNFIL in formal adult education and when procured by PES and that goes for individuals as well.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

Those who provide career counselling and guidance in validation of prior learning (VPL) are mainly educated guidance practitioners, holding a university diploma in Educational and Vocational Counselling. For VNFIL professionals within formal education (i.e. guidance counsellors and teachers), there are no mandatory courses regarding VNFIL and few opportunities to get further training and competence development.

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

Career guidance in the different phases is not regulated. For sector specific VNFIL models there are sector standards for accredited assessors. Regarding VNFIL provided by PES, there is a focus on target groups of unemployed.

Summary from Åland

The Finnish system for Competence-based Qualifications is followed for vocational education in Åland. The most significant difference is that the amount of qualifications on Åland is limited to only a few (in Finland there are approximately 370 Competence-based qualifications, on Åland today less than 10), but a large part of the Competence-based

Qualifications in Finland are available to students on Åland by means of cooperation with Qualification committees in Finland.

The board of Ålands gymnasium, the authority in charge of all upper secondary education on Åland, including adult education and vocational education for both young people and adults, made last year the decision that Åland is to follow the Finnish system of Competence-based qualifications. No separate organisation or set of rules and regulations is to be created, instead agreements with Qualification committees granting qualifications in Finland as well as the system itself are made. The big difference is that Finland is far ahead of Åland, where the system is still under construction. The Competence-based Qualifications available within the system on Åland are very few (within the areas of health, seafaring, catering and business) but will increase in accordance with a long-term plan. Within Ålands gymnasium 15 teachers and other staff are now participating in the education of Specialists in Competence-based Qualifications required within the system.

There is a department for adult education within Ålands gymnasium, dealing with adult education including guidance of adults. Ams, the local authority for labour and study related issues provides general guidance.

Laws and regulations for guidance in validation

Åland is self-governed and has its own legislation within the areas of education and the labour market. There are no more than 2 provincial laws (landskapslag, LL) regulating these two spheres of activities: LL on labour market policy (2006:8) and LL on upper secondary education (2011:13), both containing brief decrees regulating the practical activities. Some other legislation touches briefly on the area, however.

Specifically for Åland the LL of upper secondary education contains the concept of “validant”. A “validant” can have his/her knowledge assessed through a validating process not leading to a qualification but a formal certificate for the labour market.

Otherwise the Finnish system of Competence-based qualifications is implied on Åland. The Finnish text is thus valid also on Åland: The Regulation on Personalisation (43/011/2006) defines guidance as an integral part of each phase of the personalisation process in Competence-based Qualifications. The phases are as follows: 1) application phase (information and identification of competences); 2) completion of the qualification (assessment and certification); 3) acquiring the required vocational skills (follow-up and further learning). Guidance procedures have to be described in a legally binding contract and plan for arranging qualifications as well.

There is no earmarked financing for guidance in validation, but the number of hours reserved for guidance per candidate has to be estimated in the contract and plan for arranging Competence Based Qualifications.

Financing of the CBQs in Åland is not separated from the general budget of education. Some funding may come from companies. For the category "validant" the financing comes from one of the following: insurance company (rehabilitation), municipality (integration programme for immigrants) or The Åland Labour Market and Student Service Authority.

Responsibility for delivering guidance in the validation process

Åland follows the Finnish system of Competence-based Qualifications and guidance is provided in the same way, but to a limited extent, as in Finland.

There is no separate financing of career guidance.

Qualifications of guidance personnel and training available

Guidance counsellors usually have an MA (mostly from universities in Finland or Sweden) in guidance and counselling or other relevant qualification. Many have studied e.g. pedagogy or psychology and specialized in counselling ("...som ger yrkesfärdigheter för uppgifter inom studiehandledning" - Landskapsförordning om gymnasieutbildning 2011:75).

And, like in Finland, teachers and assessors have an important role in terms of guidance as well. Mostly teachers in VET have a degree in HE (or the highest degree) of their particular field and they have additionally taken pedagogical qualifications. The assessors have additionally taken the Specialist in Competence-based Qualifications. The work/life assessors and tutors either are Specialists in Competence-based Qualifications or are specifically trained by the CBQ provider for the task.

A training programme for work/life assessors is under construction and is in use in the nursing sector.

The purpose of guidance in different phases of validation

See Finland.