



## **Active Learning and Ageing at Work:** New visions and opportunities for older workers in the Nordic countries



Nordic Council of Ministers

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***Older workers in the Nordic countries (OWN) Network***  
*The Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) and  
the Nordic Council of Ministers*

**Older workers in the Nordic countries (OWN) Network**

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## Lifelong learning:

# New visions and opportunities for older workers in the Nordic countries?

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## PREFACE

The need to include the perspective of lifelong learning in the discussion on older workers is increasingly becoming a necessity. In fact, it should have been there from the very start. More comprehensive perspective to this discussion has started to emerge during the last a few years, brought up by prestigious international organisations, such as for example by ILO, OECD and the EU. In the Nordic countries both the implementation of lifelong learning and the approach to the situation of the older workers in the working life have been somewhat different from the rest of the Europe. Clear indications of the latter are to be found in the participation statistics on education and labour market. This “Nordic model” has been the starting point to the work of the network Older workers in the Nordic countries (OWN). Nordic values and traditions, the principles of welfare state, learner-centred adult education, democracy, and equality, form the foundation for presenting a particular Nordic dimension to the discussion on older workers and lifelong learning.

The OWN network is one of the thematic networks within the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL). The steering group for adult learning (SVL) at the Nordic Council of Ministers has been focusing on the issues of work-place based learning and the challenges caused by the aging labour force in the Nordic region. The OWN network has addressed these themes during their work within the period 2006 – 2008.

The network aims to challenge long established mindsets, as well as the policy and practice concerning working and learning in later life. We take a comprehensive approach, underlining older workers’ ability and willingness as well as opportunities for them to work longer. Within ‘the Nordic model’ we wish to promote an overall wellbeing among older workers by advocating for more choices and opportunities in working, learning, and ageing.

Unions play a central role in the Nordic approach, as work force organisation is a particularly Nordic phenomenon – to a much higher degree than in other countries in Europe or beyond. The focus of the OWN network has been and is this report on the employed older workers. However, a good deal of the discussion and research presented apply also to the unemployed.

The main responsible for writing the report has been Tarja Tikkanen. The report presents the views of the network, based on the professional experiences of the members as well as on Nordic studies, reports, reviews and other publications on the topic of older workers and lifelong learning.

The OWN network members wish to thank the Nordic Council of Ministers for their support to the network provided through the NVL strategic means.

Stavanger 10.12.2008  
On behalf of the OWN network  
Tarja Tikkanen



## SUMMARY

In this report we have been looking at the situation of older workers from the perspective of lifelong learning in the Nordic countries. *Older workers in the Nordic countries* (OWN) is one of the networks within the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) supported by the Nordic Council. The task of the OWN is to promote discussion on employability of older workers and the opportunities available for them. Nordic values and traditions, the principles of welfare state, learner-centred adult education, democracy, and equality, are the basis of this work. **The network aims to challenge long established mindsets, as well as the policy and practice concerning working and learning in later life.** We take a comprehensive approach underlining older workers' ability and willingness as well as opportunity to work longer. **We wish to promote an overall wellbeing among older workers by advocating for more choices and opportunities in working, learning, and ageing.** To this end we need to confront stigmatising stereotypes and identify prevailing ambivalences, and, above all, to expand the existing discussion by bringing forward the voice and initiative of older workers themselves. This means that a strong ethical foundation of mutual respect and acknowledgement between all the parties concerned is the basis of the network. As we grow older, we become more different than similar.

The review presented in this report shows that, on one hand, the values and practice of the working life and the educational systems in the Nordic countries provide frames, which are supportive also for the older workers to remain active in working life and beyond. This view becomes especially pronounced when seen against the situation in the other European countries. On the other hand, the Nordic model shows weaknesses in its crucial aspects, such as in regards inclusion and equal opportunity among those with low-resources, both in the area of working life and education. This suggests that there are some structural-functional hindrances, which we need to work with. However, an equally, if not more powerful factor is in play: the long-established socio-cultural-cognitive mindsets in thinking about the equation of working, learning and ageing.

At the end of the report we make recommendations for further actions needed. We call the parliaments, governments, and local politicians, as well as employers and social partners, but also education and training providers to provide optimal frames for flexible and age-friendly policies and practice. Such a perspective is not completely new. Calls on this line have also been made by, for example, the OECD (2006), European Commission (2006), and Cedefop (Tikkanen & Nyhan, 2006). In this discussion OWN network wishes to bring forward the Nordic dimension with its rather distinctive, positive characteristics.

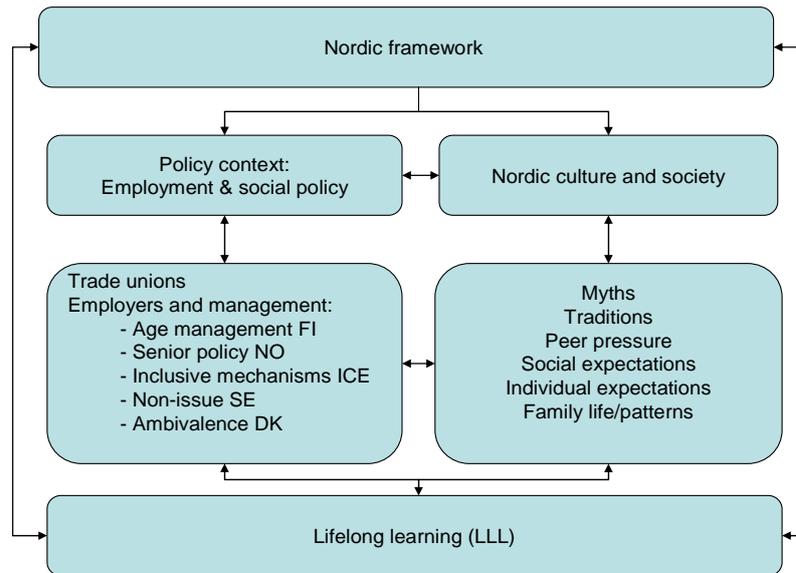


## 1 INTRODUCTION

The OWN network is one of the thematic networks within the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL). The steering group for adult learning (SVL) at the Nordic Council of Ministers has been focusing on the issues of work-place based learning and the challenges caused by the aging labour force in the Nordic region. The OWN network has addressed these themes during their work within the period 2006 – 2008.

The network brings together the competences from diverse institutions in the Nordic countries. The members have various backgrounds in research or practice in the context of education or labour market. The members are Bernharður Guðmundsson The Icelandic State Council on Ageing Iceland; Leif Emil Hansen, Roskilde University, Denmark; Susanna Paloniemi and Raili Moilanen, University of Jyväskylä, Finland; Hanne Randle, University of Karlstad, Sweden; and Jon Kristoffer Sandvik, NAV Arbeidslivssenter Sør-Trøndelag, Center for senior policy, and Tarja Tikkanen, International Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS), Norway. In addition Ingrid Caspersson, Utbildningscenter, Tjörn, Sweden, participated in the network in its early phases. The network coordinators from the NVL have been Carola Lindholm (FI) until March 2008 and Ingrid Rönnow (FI) from April 2008 onwards.

The task of the OWN is to promote discussion on employability of older workers and the opportunities available for them. Nordic values and traditions, the principles of welfare state, learner-centred adult education, democracy, and equality, are the basis of this work. **The network aims to challenge long established mindsets, as well as the policy and practice concerning working and learning in later life.** We take a comprehensive approach underlining older workers' ability and willingness as well as opportunity to work longer. **Within 'the Nordic model,' we wish to promote an overall wellbeing among older workers by advocating for more choices and opportunities in working, learning, and ageing.** To this end we need to confront stigmatising stereotypes and identify prevailing ambivalences, and, above all, to expand the existing discussion by bringing forward the voice and initiative of older workers themselves. This means that a strong ethical foundation of mutual respect and acknowledgement between all the parties concerned is the basis of the network. As we grow older, we become more different than similar. Thus, we call the parliaments, governments, and local politicians, as well as employers and social partners, but also education and training providers to provide optimal frames for flexible and age-friendly policies and practice. Such a perspective is not completely new. Calls on this line have also been made by, for example, the OECD (2006), European Commission (2006), and Cedefop (Tikkanen & Nyhan, 2006). In this discussion OWN network wishes to bring forward the Nordic dimension with its rather distinctive, positive characteristics. The main issues in the network and their interrelatedness are shown Figure 1. The structure of the paper follows the presentation in the figure. We take the policy context and the particular socio-economic and the cultural-historical heritage as starting points for outlining the Nordic framework for the discussion of older workers (Chapter 2).



**Figure 1.** The *Older workers in the Nordic countries* (OWN) network: Framework and core issues

We will describe the strong role of the social partners at the core, in particular – as we see it - when it comes to the situation of older workers (Chapter 3). Related to that, we will also characterise the somewhat different paths that each country has adopted as a response to their workforce ageing. Some aspects of the Nordic culture and society are also brought up as essential elements colouring of and influencing in the situation and decisions of older workers (Chapter 4). Last but not least, lifelong learning (LLL) will be discussed as a cornerstone of the Nordic framework and in the Nordic way of life (Chapter 5). The roots of LLL go a long way back in history, to Grundtvig and the work he started with ‘folk high schools’ (folkehøjskoler) in the 1800s in Denmark and Norway. The old concept was revived and revised starting in the 1990s. Yet, it remains to be seen to what extent it will have an impact on renewing the prospects and the situation of older workers in working life, and, indeed, on the concept of ‘an older worker’ - especially when the overall consequences of the very recent economic downturn are still unforeseen. Finally, we will make some recommendations for further actions needed to promote choice and opportunities for working and learning also during the second half of the life-course (Chapter 6).



## 2 NORDIC WELFARE FRAMEWORK

*”Den nordiske models udformning forklares ofte som et resultat af en decentral protestantisk kirke med stor administrativ dygtighed i blandt andet befolkningstællinger, en tidlig åben økonomi der gjorde de liberale bønder interesseret i at skifte fra finansiering gennem hartkornsskatter til indkomstbeskatning og universelle ydelser uafhængigt af tidligere lønindkomst, andelsbevægelse, oplysning, samt en forholdsvis stærk mobilisering af arbejdere i fagforeninger og politiske partier. Historisk har alle disse faktorer sat deres præg på principperne bag den nordiske velfærdsmodel.” - (Kvist, 2004, 62)*

### 2.1 Welfare, democracy, equality – common values

The framework here for promoting the discussion on employability of older workers and the opportunities available for them is formed by Nordic values and traditions: the principles of welfare state, learner-centred adult education, democracy, and equality (see also Box 1). In the context of working life these values manifest in a sustainable practice, constituting of:

- responsible use of resources through maintenance and development of human resources,
- avoiding of environmental problems – working for health and safety,
- promoting diversity through inclusion,
- securing good conditions to reproduction through investments in supporting measures throughout the life-course, so that people can continue working to the statutory retirement age and that the youth can look forward to their vocation (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007, 11 – *author’s translation from Norwegian*).

#### Box 1. The Nordic welfare model’s core values:

- Universal coverage
- Welfare based on citizenship
- Financing through (high) taxation
- Equal rights and status
- Equal opportunities and results
- Dominant role played by the state
- Decentralized services
- High-quality (public) services
- Generous benefits
- High level of employment

*”What lies ahead for the Nordic model?”* (2007) -

<http://www.norden.org/pub/ovrigt/ovrigt/sk/ANP2007725.pdf>

The recent historical development has taken place parallel in all Nordic countries. This development has been based on and promoted values from emancipatory movements (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). The overall picture is painted by the values of the unions, and socio-political goals, as well as later the values of environmental and feminist movements, which all have contributed to building of equality thinking – a thinking where equality and equal opportunities are the basis in the quality of life. (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007.) The cornerstone of the Nordic working life model is the tripartite cooperation between the working life parties and the government with a strong emphasis on social dialogue and proactive orientation (‘progressivism’ through continuous change and innovation).

## 2.2 The Nordic 'standard' in adult education

The common Nordic values are also reflected in adult education. There is a strong political commitment to creating conditions of equal opportunities and outcomes (Tuijnman, 2003). Cross-national analyses have shown that there is not a single overarching "Nordic model" to adult education since the countries show notable variation on a range of indicators (Tuijnman & Hellström, 2001). However, the same comparisons have shown that there are clearly distinctive Nordic 'patterns' of adult education and training (Tuijnman, 2003). These patterns are shown in Box 2. Specifically, three goals for adult education seem to be shared between the Nordic countries (Tuijnman, 2003, pp. 286-7):

- (i) participation in wider society with related notions of democracy, civil society and citizenship;
- (ii) adult education and training called upon to help improve the match between educational qualifications and skills as well as a broad participation in the labour market, and
- (iii) desire to create an 'inclusive' learning society in which participation is truly 'for all' (Tuijnman & Hellström, 2001).

### Box 2. The distinctive Nordic 'patterns' in adult education:

- High participation rate
- High volume per capita
- High public share in financing
- High share of public providers
- High share of personal interest education

*Tuijnman (2003, p. 290)*

Indicators, which tell about high level participation, are proportion of women, high levels of public investment, and numerous educational activities of the popular movements (study circles, folk high schools, etc.) (Tuijnman, 2003). The Nordic standard underlines societal conditions, particularly public support and equal access, as stimulating high rates of participation in adult education, particularly for the low-skilled, high-risk disadvantaged groups (Tuijnman, 2003).

*More attention to older workers as learners.* However, the learner-status of older workers, particularly the low-educated and those without any vocational qualifications ('low-resourced'), is far from established under the general adult education and lifelong learning perspectives (see chapter 5.1). Major governmental investments have been made in this area already, as we describe later in this paper (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, far more work is needed to bring forward the voice of older workers and to build a strong ethical foundation of mutual respect and acknowledgement between all the parties concerned.



## **3 NORDIC CULTURE AND SOCIETY: FOR CHOICE AND CONTINUOUS CHANGE**

The question is basically about workers having a choice, also in later life, and options available for them to make the most of their lives, individually and collectively, at work and outside of it. Crucial elements of this question are also how the socio-cultural-economic setting allows for such a choice throughout the human life-course, and finally, how lifelong learning can be both a means and a goal to this end. As we have described in chapter 2 in this report earlier, the Nordic welfare model and our cultural heritage provide perhaps one of the best settings in the world for such self-actualising purposes on an individual level, at the same time contributing to the collective prosperity of the local community and the wider society.

As in other parts of the Western world, also in the Nordic societies the life-course has been highly institutionalised around education, work and retirement – a framework which has been challenged and changing since the 1990s. The coming of lifelong learning, increased flexibility at work and the reshaping the pension systems and mandatory retirement ages, among others, have added individual choice – as much as a demand for it – in regards how to organise work-home-learning patterns in one’s life course and the decision when to retire. As a consequence, the latter is increasingly depending on issues such as health, adequacy of retirement income, financial status and retirement intentions of a spouse, peer-group pressure, need for workplace interaction and socialization, and family ties. Retirement benefits, health insurance, and possibility for recurrent education as statutory rights, are currently the privileges enjoyed in the Nordic countries. People want to have a choice concerning their lives and older workers are no exception. They want a choice when it comes to where and when they work, or whether they choose early retirement, work part time or fulltime as long as their health allows and their skills and experience are employable. This is a part of the human search for an overall wellbeing in life. Besides making visible this dimension, the underlying question in our work is, to what extent is ‘the Nordic model’ allowing for a choice, through lifelong learning, in the latter half of the human life-course for people to have a say in shaping their lives at work and beyond? The rest of this chapter brings up aspects of the Nordic socio-cultural setting for ageing and for lifelong learning.

### ***3.1 Myths and perceptions on older workers***

Like other Western societies, the Nordic countries are still characterised by a culture with powerful myths prevailing concerning older workers and learning in later life (Airila, 2007; Ilmarinen, 2006). These myths have been borne out from the realities of yesteryears. These long established mindsets tend to have a strong effect on our perception of and expectations from older workers – way beyond the facts. In all too many cases the consequences are far-reaching, all the way to the point in which they become a hindrance, albeit often in a subtle way, for older workers to continue working even if they would basically want to and be able to.

These mindsets are effectively contributed to and maintained by media and other powerful actors such as for example the trade unions. Media has been bringing forward a rather

negative image of older people by using a language, which affects both the young and older people, moulding their attitudes accordingly. Consequently, the older worker tends to be perceived as an exhausted and low-motivated person, who should stay at home and have a rest – or one who has narrowed her or his interests into private life; in leisure and the nearest family.

Also the spouse, family and friends may put a subtle pressure on the older worker in order to enjoy his or her company. Furthermore, the seemingly innocent inquiries from the part of the co-workers about ‘how long are you still going to continue?’ may influence the perception of the external expectations of an older worker. When it comes to the trade unions, they have fought relentlessly for shorter working hours and early retirement benefits and want their members to enjoy them. The working life has changed quite radically since the industrial age when the unions were established, but in case of their oldest members the unions have shown to be slow in changing their course (Tikkanen, 2008).

In the following we take a brief look at the most prevailing myths about the older workers. These have to do with abilities to work and learn, motivation and opportunities. For those interested in more comprehensive overview on these myths, a list of literature references can be found at the end of this report. The myths and realities in a broader international context, tend to be highly similar across the Western cultures (compare Box 3).

### **ABILITIES**

*“Older workers are often worn out and in bad health.”* Some are sick and worn out for sure. However, on average the older workers are healthier, have a more active lifestyle, and are more willing to contribute in working life than perhaps never before.

*“Older worker have less intellectual capacity”.* Research shows that older workers in good health maintain their intellectual capacity far beyond the statutory retirement ages. There is also evidence that older workers make better use of their experience for instance in problem solving. Older people are able to compensate the possible shortcomings regarding the speed of performance to optimize the outcomes. An increased use of crystallised intelligence on the side of fluid intelligence means often doing things smarter instead of faster.

*“Older workers have difficulties in learning something new”.* There are little explicitly age-related differences in the abilities to learn until the end of the normal retirement age of around 65 years. Younger people are better in absorbing details, whereas older learners are better

### **Box 3. Myths and reality about older workers**

- **Myth:** *Older workers can't or won't learn new skills.*  
**Reality:** Those over 50 are proving their ability to learn new skills by becoming the fastest growing group of Internet users. And career-changers in their 40s and 50s are taking courses to enhance their skills.
- **Myth:** *Older workers don't stay on the job long.*  
**Reality:** Workers between 45 and 54 stayed on the job twice as long as those 25 to 34, according to the Bureau of labor Statistics in 1998.
- **Myth:** *Older workers take more sick days than younger workers.*  
**Reality:** Attendance records are actually better for older workers than for younger ones.
- **Myth:** *Older workers aren't flexible or adaptable.*  
**Reality:** Because they've seen many approaches fail in the workplace, they are more likely to question change. But they can accept new approaches as well as younger workers can as long as the rationale is explained.
- **Myth:** *Older workers are more expensive.*  
**Reality:** The costs of more vacation time and pensions are often outweighed by low turnover among older workers and the fact that higher turnover among other groups translates into recruiting, hiring, and training expenses.

Source: Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers-USA.

comprehending the big picture and the relationships between different elements and factors ('how things work'). The qualities of the learning environment are more important for older than younger workers. Therefore, it is important that the teaching and training of older workers is based on geragogic or andragogic principles rather than pure pedagogical thinking (developed towards young learners).

*“Older workers have difficulties in adjusting to changes in the working place”* and *“Older workers are less productive”*. These are two widely spread myths about older workers. And, indeed, if this would be the case the employers could be reluctant to hiring and retaining older workers. But the fact is that the ability and willingness to adjust to changes is very much a result of former experiences from that kind of processes. People, who have worked with varying job tasks and experienced other changes at their work, have build and continue to retain their changeability, a competence and alertness that facilitate meeting further changes. Productivity is based on skills and an enjoyment of working, and there are no overall differences in these regards between young and older workers.

### **MOTIVATION**

*“The older workers themselves wish to retire early”* & *“The older workers are not interested in learning new things”*. It is true that many older workers may wish to have some more time at their own disposal. However the Norwegian annual senior barometer (Dalen, 2008) has shown that 64% of those aged 60 years would like to continue working even after they have reached the statutory retirement age. Furthermore, almost a half of the early retired persons would have liked to work 1 – 2 years longer. According to the findings, those employees who reported that they are always happy to go to work, were most often the oldest (aged 60 years or older). When older workers are respected, their contribution is being valued, they are included in competence building on the workplace, they get interesting tasks, and have a good relation to their supervisors and managers, they want to continue working and learning, even if they might have some health-related problems (Tikkanen, Lahn, Withnall, et al, 2002). The decision to retire early is often a result of older workers' lack of well-being at the workplace, in many cases related to various organisational factors. Furthermore, a retirement from a job does not mean that older workers would cease to remain active and learning new things, or wish to do so.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

*“Older workers are more expensive for the employer than younger ones”*. This myth has its origins in the seniority-based wage systems. More recently, however, many countries have transformed their wage systems as towards more competence- and/or results-based. Therefore the myth is losing its grounds. Only some private pension schemes may still make older workers more expensive, but this concerns a relatively small number of employers in the Nordic countries. One also has to take into consideration the costs of recruiting and training of new employees compared to the benefits of retaining competent older workers.

### 3.2 Mounting evidence: a more positive and dynamic view of older workers emerging

In recent years some crucial changes have started to take place in the Nordic countries in attitudes towards and practices concerning older workers and lifelong learning. Partly these changes are a result of relentless, long-term work by some agents of ‘targeted change’, such as *the Centre for Senior Policy* in Norway. The changes are also resulting from the targeted large-scale governmental programmes, such as the *National Age Programme* in Finland and *Life Competence (Livskompetens) 50+* in Sweden (also supported by the EU). Partly they are due to changes in legislation (e.g. non-discrimination, ‘inclusive working life’). And still partly they are due to other changes influencing the individual lives and life-courses. Those who are in their sixties today have much better health, are much better educated, and have experienced another reality concerning participation and involvement at the working place than the generations before them. They have also enjoyed longer and more vacation periods, shorter working hours, and less heavy physical work. There is also evidence of clear gains in job-competence by age and experience, especially among professional groups (Airila, 2007). Compared to their younger counterparts, older workers take greater responsibility for their own work, have less absence from work (especially short-term), and are very loyal towards their employers (Lunde, 2000). See also Box 4. Indeed, what we can learn from existing research is that by increasing age people do become more different than similar, a fact also reflected in images we hold about older workers (Table 1). Increasingly we also find these changing images from media, and to some extent also from the unions’ approach (for unions, see also chapter 4).

#### Box 4. Strengths in job-competence gained by age and experience:

- ability to think strategically
- human insight/knowledge
- social insight/knowledge and competence
- independency
- good command of language
- large and many reference areas
- ability to reflect
- ability to see relationships and the cause-effect
- holistic thinking
- knowledge based on experience
- tacit knowledge
- wisdom

Source: Lunde (2000) (*Translation from Norwegian: Tikkanen*)

Table 1. Images of older workers found out in different studies. Source: Airila (2007)  
[author's translation from Finnish]

Study	Positive descriptions	Negative descriptions
Ilmarinen & Mertanen (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strategic thinking</li> <li>- ability to contemplate</li> <li>- wisdom</li> <li>- holistic perception</li> <li>- willingness to learn</li> <li>- work commitment</li> <li>- work experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- deterioration of the sensory abilities</li> <li>- decreasing of health</li> <li>- deterioration of physical abilities</li> </ul>
Julkunen (2003); Julkunen & Parnanen (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- experience</li> <li>- competence</li> <li>- wisdom</li> <li>- trustworthiness</li> <li>- high work morale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- physical fatigue</li> <li>- slowness</li> <li>- cumbersomeness</li> <li>- lack of motivation</li> <li>- unwillingness to take on new challenges</li> </ul>
Juuti (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- experience</li> <li>- tacit knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- deterioration of physical and mental abilities</li> <li>- reduced learning ability</li> <li>- feelings of weakness</li> </ul>
Perkio-Makela, et al. (2006)	<p>Workers aged 55-64 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- daily more exited about their work than others</li> <li>- experience job-satisfaction more often than younger workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- subjective work-ability, memory and ability to concentrate deteriorate by age</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
Ruoholinna (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- experience</li> <li>- strong professionalism</li> <li>- high work morale</li> <li>- mental strength</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduced physical function ability</li> <li>- low job motivation</li> <li>- unwillingness to learn new things</li> </ul>
Uotinen (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- good mental function ability</li> <li>- mental alertness</li> <li>- action-orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduced health</li> <li>- reduced physical condition and agility</li> </ul>

\* For references in this table, see Airila (2007).



## **4 WORKING LIFE: THE ROLE OF UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT**

The workplace is an arena for participation in a value creation process, and the employment contract forms much of the core of the relationship citizens have to the contract with the society (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Based on a review of research on working life and work environment in the Nordic countries, Sørensen and Wathne (2007) have argued that the global, neo-liberal development has led to a re-introduction of older forms of work organisation (individual development programmes parallel with collective standardisation process). However, they also point out how the Nordic countries apply learning-oriented forms of work organisation to a greater extent than the rest of Europe ('the learning model' – Gustavsen, 2005). Indeed, the thinking of learning and a need for a meaningful work has been included in the agreements between the working life parties, first in Sweden and Norway and later in Denmark and Finland (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Under this line of thinking the link to the concrete development work at workplaces is seen as crucial for innovation and the sharing of responsibility (Lundvall, 2006; Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Much of the development work has been dealing with working environment, underlining the importance of overall workplace wellbeing for the people<sup>1</sup>.

However, not all people are provided with possibilities to continue their learning as part of career development due to situational and cultural issues (e.g. discriminating practices) at workplace level. Furthermore, not all people view further education as a personal strategy to create new possibilities for their future employment. Changing the mindset about learning and motivation plays an important role when recruiting learners.

### ***4.1 Trade union policies and lifelong learning***

Union membership has always been high in the Nordic countries, especially in comparison to other countries. However, we find also some differences between countries in the extent the work force is organised. Organisation is very high in Denmark (83%), Sweden (89%) and Finland (81%), being still higher in Iceland, and the lowest in Norway, 50% (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007).

#### **4.1.1 The unions' potentially excellent position to promote lifelong learning among older workers**

Trade unions should assist their older members through bottom-up processes in formulating their own needs and desires concerning their options for working and retirement. Participatory and action methods within learning should address the motivational structure of various segments of older workers. The role trade unions play in promoting lifelong learning and career development among their oldest members varies from union to union and from one country to another, and the importance assigned to lifelong learning among unions appear to be on rise (ILO, 2000). In fact, in many countries social partners are active in promoting of lifelong learning and providing training in general. It is argued that lifelong learning has

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<sup>1</sup> In 2002 the share of researchers involved in working environment issues was as follows: Denmark 151, Norway 170, Sweden 500, and Finland 730 man years, Iceland and Finland having the greatest number of researchers working in this area (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007).

become the new employment security objective on the agenda of trade unions, as 'lifelong learning is becoming as important an entitlement for today's employee as the right for a pension became in the past' (ILO, 2003, p. 11). However, until recently expanding the working careers of older workers has not been on their agenda (Tikkanen, 2006). This is not surprising, however, as one of the major focuses for the unions traditionally has been negotiating shorter working time and early exit pathways. Even if the unions have started to realise the need for options for longer working careers for older workers, their activity to promote these options on the grass-root level is still very low (Tikkanen, 2008).

Such an approach from the unions' side is unfortunate because often the unions are in the best possible situation to take up the issue of learning and competence development, particularly in case of low-educated older workers (Stuart & Perrett, 2006). WORKTOW project showed that management does not consider it as their task to initiate discussion about the competence of and with their older workers (Tikkanen, Lahn, Withnall, et al. 2002). Also the formal training providers do rarely have direct access to promote learning participation of older learners. And as for older workers themselves, for various reasons they may be reluctant to bring up their learning needs - or they may not even be aware of such needs in the first place.

#### **4.1.2 Unions' low activity in promoting longer careers among their older members**

A recent study from Norway (Midtsundstad, forthcoming), based on national data, show that even strong relations between the social partners at the enterprise level, do *not* seem to influence the enterprises' efforts to retain senior employees. In line with studies from Denmark, the findings from Norway show that small enterprises (20 employees or less) are less likely to be socially responsible relative to larger enterprises (more than 300 employees). Furthermore, the enterprises with many older employees (aged 57+) have not initiated senior employee policies more often relative to enterprises with fewer older employees (Midtsundstad, forthcoming). According to Midtsundstad, an explanation could be that the enterprises with many old workers regard it as too costly to prevent it, or that the early retirement challenge is so overwhelming to them that they neglect it. Also industry and enterprises, which primarily employ blue collar workers, have shown little interest in policies targeted at retaining older employees (Midtsundstad, forthcoming).

Towards the end of the 1990s Walker (1997) concluded a European-wide study by stating that there was no evidence for signs of 'partnership between the social partners on the way forward with regards to age and employment' (p. 40). Now, ten years later there are signs that trade unions have started to adopt a more proactive role towards the training needs of older workers. In the UK, trade unions are viewed as important conduits for advice on learning for older workers in particular as approaching their employer in this regard is something they may wish to avoid, as shown in a study from the steel industry (Stuart & Perrett, 2006). The British public-sector union, Unison, for example, has 39 education and training officers (ILO, 2003).

The European research project *Ageing and employment* (2006), which focused on identifying good practice to increase job opportunities and maintain older workers in employment, described the ambiguous role of social partners when it comes to older workers:

“The role of the social partners and, in particular, of trade unions with regard to ageing is rather ambiguous. This translates in many countries into a mix of opposing strategies at the different levels of intervention. Thus, trade unions may oppose the lengthening of working life at national level, whilst bargaining on the best way to enhance the ‘work ability’ of older workers at company or workplace level. Furthermore, for many years social partners have pursued two strategies: (a) they followed a seniority-based approach which became apparent in seniority wage systems and redundancy rules protecting older workers and at the same time (b) encouraged the early exit of older workers from the labour market. This strategy mix is now discouraged as the possibilities for early retirement have been restricted and retirement age increased in a number of countries. (Ageing in employment, 2006, s. 163.)”

The study showed that trade unions are in “an especially difficult position”, but also that they should develop clearer strategy in response to demographic change, and communicate it to their members. Also, the study on combating age barriers by the Dublin Foundation (Walker, 1997) concluded that at the workplace trade unions continue to face a dilemma, but also that there are national differences in the approach taken by unions.

### 4.1.3 Good examples of union involvement

In each Nordic country represented in the OWN network (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) research and/or development projects or programmes have been carried out in working life with a major union involvement. In these projects promoting learning has been only one aspect, sometimes the main aspect, and older workers have typically been only a part of the target group. On one hand, these projects have showed that the unions’ involvement can make a difference to the outcomes, especially among the low-resourced employees. On the other hand, these experiences show that unions’ participation does not automatically guarantee success for an older worker involvement or in regards improving their situation. The rest of this chapter takes a closer look to the projects and programmes carried out.

The project *Older workers in focus* (Hansen & Nielsen, 2006) was carried out among low-skilled male workers Renoflex-Gruppen (a refuse collection company) and the state owned DSB S-tog Rengøring (a branch of DSB undertaking cleaning on the Danish State Railways’ S-trains, i.e. Copenhagen subways) in Denmark. The study showed that it is possible to identify models to maintain and integrate older workers by means of bottom-up approaches and with support from the unions. The following recommendations were made for the development of positive policies for older workers:

- (a) Management need to clarify their intentions from the start;
- (b) Optimum internal information must be available for all;
- (c) There must be support from all players at all levels in the company: employees, shop stewards, top management, middle management, and trade union representatives, etc.;
- (d) Information meetings for employees should be held in the workplace, to ensure a large turn-out;
- (e) Arranging a future scenario seminar early in the process is recommended, to give democratic anchorage to policy-making;
- (f) When implementing educational programmes, attention ought to be paid to the fact that older workers have a low level of motivation for education and that time should be set aside for talking about this;
- (g) The aim of an older workers policy should be both to recruit new older workers and to retain those already in the company;
- (h) Formulating a policy ought to be practice-oriented with usable, action-oriented statements and not just general declarations of intent;
- (i) Both the company’s and the older workers’ wishes and requirements must to be taken into account;

- (j) Real dialogue ought to commence when employees are about 50 years of age. This should entail discussion on the company's expectations of those employees who have been 10-20 years in the company. Colleagues of the employees should take part in this dialogue;
- (k) All parties should accept that it takes time to develop a policy for older workers. A thorough and comprehensive plan is necessary to achieve a result to the satisfaction of everybody: the company and the older workers themselves. (Hansen & Nielsen, 2006, pp. 145-146)

The LO (employee organisation) has also made exemplary job in Denmark by launching a special website specially targeted to their senior members [www.LO.DK/SENIOR](http://www.LO.DK/SENIOR). The website is both spreading important information to older workers and employees as well as disseminating examples of successful senior-projects carried out in working life.

The education system in Iceland has a quite strong non-formal structure of continuing education. The unions have shown to be especially active, and more so than in the other Nordic countries, in providing continuing education and training (Jónasson, 2007). A major move in this development was establishing *the Education and Training Service Center for the Employment Sector ehf. (FA)* in 2002 by the Icelandic Federation of Labour (ASI) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA). FA operates according to a service contract with the Ministry of Education. According to this contract the Centre should assist the Ministry in increasing education opportunities for employees who have little formal education. Furthermore, FA should develop methods to evaluate education and work, including assessment and documentation of real competence gained through work experience, self education etc. in order to shorten study periods. We come back to the FA Centre activities in chapter 4.2.1.

*NOSTE* (2003-2006) in Finland was a governmental programme, aiming at encouraging adults who lack on basic vocational education to participate in education (Hulkari & Paloniemi, in print). The unions played an active role in establishing the *NOSTE*-programme. The studies in the *NOSTE* programme can be carried out until 2009. According to the guidelines by the Ministry of Education a project applying for the programme had to be organised as a larger network of institutions. The final form of the network was to be decided locally. As a consequence, the country is covered by a total of 60 *NOSTE* projects, which vary in size and composition. These local and regional networks represent clusters of education providers and social partners working together to enhance the participation of poorly trained adults in education. The programme was intended as a significant social innovation. Important forms of action have been training outreach services, studies alongside work, and regional cooperation between education and training providers, including advisory and guidance services (Hulkari & Paloniemi, in print). The results have shown that the programme has greatly enhanced networking forms of cooperation in working life, importantly also between enterprises and training institutions and that the outreaching activities have also more generally paved way to the development of and services in the working life (Hulkari, 2008). Furthermore, the job-competence of older workers has increased and the employers assess the effects of the programme and from the training as positive, not only through the learning outcomes but also the strengthening of the vocational identities among the older workers, which further has led to stronger self-confidence and increased work motivation. The latter again has increased the social interaction among the employees, which has improved knowledge sharing at the workplace and further led to an improved work environment and increased workplace wellbeing and learning (Hulkari, 2008). The results suggest that, as goals for the educational policy, reducing inequality through (the right of)

participation in lifelong learning for all and increasing competitiveness in working life, are not mutually exclusive (Hulkari, 2008).

The *Ageing and health on the continental shelf* was a project initiated by the petroleum sector in Norway. This company-driven innovation project (2003-2006) was carried out as a part of a large National Research Council programme in this sector and aimed at retaining older workers until the statutory retirement age and to reduce sick leaves (Bakke & Lie, 2005; Lie, Tikkanen, Kjestveit, 2007). OLF (The Norwegian Oil Industry Association) and other major unions were strongly involved in the implementation of the project. Most of the measures developed in the project companies were related to health and safety and the physical working conditions on the oil rigs, and only rarely addressed the competence or motivation perspective. Older workers were typically seen as competent enough to their work tasks. Companies participating in the study generally had not a very well developed learning culture. The results from the work carried out in the companies showed that companies' attitudes towards older workers change into less stereotypic. In the beginning of the project ageing was strongly coupled with health issues, but during the knowledge and experiences gained from the project resulted in a more nuanced image of older workers. Also, while in the beginning the measures developed in the companies were predominantly health-related, later more focus was placed on measures on job-competence and motivation. However, the results showed that it is crucial for the project success to engage older workers in the planning already in early phases (Lie, Tikkanen, Kjestveit, 2007).

Furthermore, in Norway the major unions are strong partners behind the activity of the key national actor in this sector, *the Centre for Senior Policy (CSP)*. It is not an overstatement to say that CSP stands behind most of the valuable, long-term work carried out in this area in Norway, covering everything from awareness raising to major development projects and research, and policy formulations. The CSP website ([www.seniorpolitikk.no](http://www.seniorpolitikk.no)) has become an excellent resource to older workers, to employers, to decision makers as well as to development workers in companies and to researchers. Interestingly, though, the only area where the work in the CSP still is in an embryo state, is promoting lifelong learning and continuing training to older workers. (For more on the work of the CSP, see chapter 4.2.3)

*In Sweden*, the trade unions have developed strategies for lifelong learning as a response to the rapid change in working life, especially related to changes at workplace level and skills requirements. Trade unions have defined their view to lifelong learning as *needs* in order to increase the overall level of knowledge among all workers, to match the technological development and other changes in the industry (Metall, 1999). The role of the trade unions is to make sure that the prerequisites will be fulfilled for their members so they have opportunities to satisfy their needs. The trade union shall also carry a heavier responsibility when it comes to the groups of workers that have special needs, e.g. those with low basic education, immigrants and women. The overall strategy in the trade union is that the policy documents and the national agreements shall guide the developmental work at the local arena. The competence advisors play a key role in how the issues are addressed at the local work places (Metall, 2000; 2002).

The *MULM* was a labour market project targeted for *Middle-aged Unemployed Low-educated Men*. It was carried out in collaboration in north Sweden with trade unions, local authorities, county commissioner and employers in the in the health sector. The steel and metal trade

union was involved in developing the programme as a mean to develop new career opportunities for their members in other sectors. Their work was to advise their members to participate in the training programme although it would mean working in another sector. The project showed that unions can be a powerful co-player in making a successful turn to older workers' employability, even in a radical way. New competence and career opportunities were successfully developed to older unemployed former steel-industry workers in a rural area. The most impressive example was training them into nurses. (Randle, 2006; Randle et al, in print). However, situational and personell-related factors were likely playing an important role in this project, as it has shown to be difficult to copy it and carry out a similar project in other locations in the country.

*Life competence 50+* is a development partnership partly financed by EU and the Swedish government. The employees' confederation (LO) has participated in the project. The main goal is to influence/change attitudes and systems in society to improve work life conditions for 50+ people. The project develops methods to ensure that 50+ people can work longer, enter or re-enter work life. The project has promoted positive attitudes towards ageing and older workers, through promoting partnerships and through investments in lifelong learning. As a part of the latter, new learning methodology has been developed, which is better suitable for older adults. The project underlines the importance of acknowledging the all the competence developed during one's lifetime ('the whole life competence'). As such it comes close to the 'real competence' (realkompetanse) approach developed in Norway.

*The Skills Escalators programme, "Kompetensstegen"* (2005-2008) is a state financed programme for competence enhancement for service employees in the public sector. The majority of employees are female (80%) and the average age of workers is high, in some municipalities the average age of public employees is over 45 years. The main driver was to boost the status of health and social care workers and to deal with the skills shortage and to improve the image of the elderly care sector. The aim was realised by providing new career paths for employees and by developing new methods for demand-led learning where competence enhancement was based on individual and work specific needs. The trade union for municipal workers (Kommunal) was an active partner in developing the programme and has taken on an active role for developing learning initiatives for their members. The state investment for the programme is more than 105 MEuros. Almost 60 percent of the target group has taken part in the skills escalators programme covering 287 (of 290) municipalities in Sweden.

## **4.2 Managing the ageing workforce in the Nordic countries**

There are many similarities in the approach working life has adopted towards older workers in the Nordic countries. However, there are also some differences in the ways these countries are facing the demographic challenge, partly because the contextual differences make the challenges itself look somewhat different. The rest of this section described the distinctive approach adopted in each of the five countries.

### 4.2.1 Inclusive mechanisms, Iceland

Iceland has been characterised as a country with strong working life orientation carrying still with it the values and orientation from the times of the sagas (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Under this view the Icelanders are identifying themselves with their work and to be “a competent person”, more so than in the other Nordic countries, and as being proud people who do not easily complain. They also work much longer hours on average, have lower sick-leave rate, and their older workers are continuing at work typically much longer than in other Nordic countries (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). According to the Statistics Iceland in 2001 70% of the men aged 67-69 were still working and 27% of those aged 70-74. In short, they are described as people who consider it natural to work as long as health allows it, also after the age of 70 years, plus also have a tradition among young people to get themselves a job early in the teenage years (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Yet – or perhaps because of this – the average life expectation of Icelanders is the longest among the Nordic countries.

Under such a culture, the approach to older workers is strongly inclusive, naturally. However, issues such as stress and burn-out are in increase: in 2002 reported 42% of the Icelanders of having a too heavy workload (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). There is no systematic knowledge available as of how does this trend play out towards the older workers.

When it comes to the role of lifelong learning, it is fair to say that during the most recent years, adult education in Iceland has developed as a result of initiatives from the employment sector. In comparison with the other Nordic countries, the involvement of the employment sector in the management and development of this type of education is quite special. The same holds for financing. In the other Nordic countries, adult education is usually publicly funded by the state and local government. In Iceland, however, it is normally both the employers and the employees who take the initiative and fund the education schemes jointly with the individual beneficiaries.

The role of the the Education and Training Service Centre for the Employment Sector ehf. (FA) is to be a collaborative forum of the founding parties for adult education and vocational training in co-operation with other education bodies operating under the auspices of the employers' and employees' associations (ASI and SA; see chapter 4.1.3 earlier). There are presently 13 centers for lifelong learning located all over the country which implement the training and educational courses based on curricula developed by FA and taught by teachers trained by FA. The Centre targets those who have not completed the upper secondary level of education. This target group comprises 40% of people in the labour market in Iceland. A distinctive feature is also that in the age group of 50 years and older 50+ there is a considerable gender difference (Jónasson, 2007).

Older workers have shown less motivation to join the available courses and tend to choose those who strengthen their working skills in their present working place. However, the FA is placing increasing priority on meeting their needs by developing a centre of andragogical knowledge of adult education and providing vocational guidance and career counseling to enhance the quality of their work situation and of the retirement period which normally follows. The documentation of real competence is instrumental in building up the self-confidence needed to enter further education courses to facilitate changes.

#### 4.2.2 An overall workplace well-being and age-management, Finland

Finland is one of the countries in the world with least social differences and poverty among its population. The last 15 years or so the country has had a simultaneous focus on innovation and a long-term perspective in the development of the working life and society (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Focus on social innovations has been particularly strong in Finland. One form of implementing these innovations has been large governmental programmes, also with cross-administrative perspectives. There has been a particularly strong focus on work-ability, at all ages and within a holistic perspective, under which physical health is only one of the issues and learning always plays a central role. The major working life development programme, *Tykes*, deals with workability within an emphasis on a preventive perspective. At core are the working processes and building a good work environment, with a focus on psycho-social aspects. There is a strong recognition and agreement on that a good working environment is also productive (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007).

During the past 10 years Finland has been described as a model country in the area of ageing policy. In September 2006 the international Bertelsmann Foundation awarded the Carl Bertelsmann Prize 2006 to the Finnish “Ageing Workers” policy reform. The reform was the outcome of an initiative by the Finnish Government in cooperation with scholars and various associations concerned with improving working conditions among older workers (see Figure 1). The reform has consisted of several programmes, of which the most important have been the National Working Life Development Programme (years 1996–1999 and 2000–2003), the National Programme for Ageing Workers (FINPAW 1998–2002) and the National Well-being at Work Programme (2000–2003). In these programmes, both main issues – older workers and lifelong learning – have been taken into account. The national-level strategy, as demonstrated by the level of cooperation among government ministries and the broad commitment (on the part both of the government, labour unions and employers) to its implementation, has been central to the success of the reform policy.

Based on the experiences and wisdom gained from the national programmes, in particular the FINPAW, focus has been set on a company level, underlining the responsibility of the management when it comes to the employee wellbeing and development at all ages. The approach in regards older workers has been defined as *age-management*, a work carried out especially in the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health FIOCH (Ilmarinen, 2006). Age-management focuses on the management’s crucial role and responsibility also when it comes to older workers’ situation in workplaces. A good deal of investment in the basic and continuing training of managers and supervisors has been made to promote the good practice of age-management. More generally, after the FINPAW, the work on the issue of ageing workforce in Finland has been concentrated in FIOCH. Among others, they have developed a web portal <http://www.ttl.fi/Internet/Suomi/Aihesivut/Ika+ja+tyo/> as a resource to all parties concerned. Older workers’ interests have been also served through the more general work towards overall employee wellbeing through several national programs. Much of the health and work environment issues are centrally regulated in Finland.

### 4.2.3 Focus on an inclusive working life for all, Norway

The framework set to the approach to older workers in Norway is framed by two major initiatives: *The National Initiative on Older Workers* (“*Krafttak*”) 2001-2005 (continuing) and *Agreement on an Inclusive Working life (IA)*. These initiatives may be regarded as an extension of the Norwegian workfare policy of the 1990s, with a distinction that they underline employers’ responsibility in finding solutions (Midtsundstad, forthcoming). Indeed, what was remarkable, and unlike in many other countries, was that after launching these initiatives older workers’ challenges and problems in the Norwegian working life were no longer to be considered as their individual issues. Focus was now shifting from older workers’ motivation and ability to continue longer in working life to their opportunities to do so, with the main responsibility being placed on employers. Thus, at least officially, the guideline for employers’ policy to and actions regards older workers is retaining and inclusion. On the background of this policy lies a severe shortage of labour in the country (see also Appendix 1 and the general description of Norway).

*The National Initiative on Older Workers* is coordinated by the Centre for Senior Policy (CSP), which for already much longer than the existence of the Initiative has been promoting more attention to and action in regards older workers in the country. This initiative is (i) promoting awareness of the potential and resources older employees hold, (ii) providing a better and more inclusive working environment for all workers, and (iii) creating more cooperation between social partners and government organizations and authorities concerning senior policy. Rather than talking about age-management, like Finland, the CSP promotes the development of a *life-course –oriented personal policy* in public and private sector organizations. Nevertheless, management and employers actions and attitudes lie at the core of this work. The work at the SCP rests on a major tripartite initiative: *Agreement on an Inclusive Working life (IA)*. The description of these two initiatives below is based on the work by Midtsundstad and others (2003) and Midtsundstad (forthcoming). IA has three main goals of which only one is explicitly target to older workers: (1) To reduce sickness absence by at least 20 per cent within four years, (2) to secure employment for a larger number of people with disabilities, and (3) to raise the expected effective retirement age (Midtsundstad, et al. 2003). IA rests on the assumption that the solutions to the problems of exclusion from the labour market, including too many early retirees, are to be found at the workplace and presupposes that employers and employees will work together in order to achieve this objective (Midtsundstad, forthcoming). All employers in Norway are called to sign up (voluntary). The sign-up requires an agreement with the local trade union and a representative from the local Employment and Welfare Office (NAV-office). The employer and the union representatives can jointly decide whether the enterprise wishes to pursue all of the three main objectives or just one of them. (Midtsundstad, et al, 2003; Midtsundstad, forthcoming.)

Figure 2 shows to what extent these initiatives have had an effect in practice. As the table shows, the Norwegian initiatives have increased choices and opportunities for older workers. However, there is still a long way to go. Public sector has been doing slightly better: almost one-fifth of the enterprises have established special schemes or initiatives to retain older employees, 37% in the public sector and 10% in the private sector. Only about 15% of the employers offer continuous training aimed at upgrading knowledge (or lifelong learning) for

older workers. A similar message is to be read from the results of the IA so far. There has been very little attention to the goal area concerning older workers (Midtsundstad, forthcoming). Nevertheless, those Norwegian employers who prioritize age management claim to do so in order to retain their competence (Midtsundstad, forthcoming).

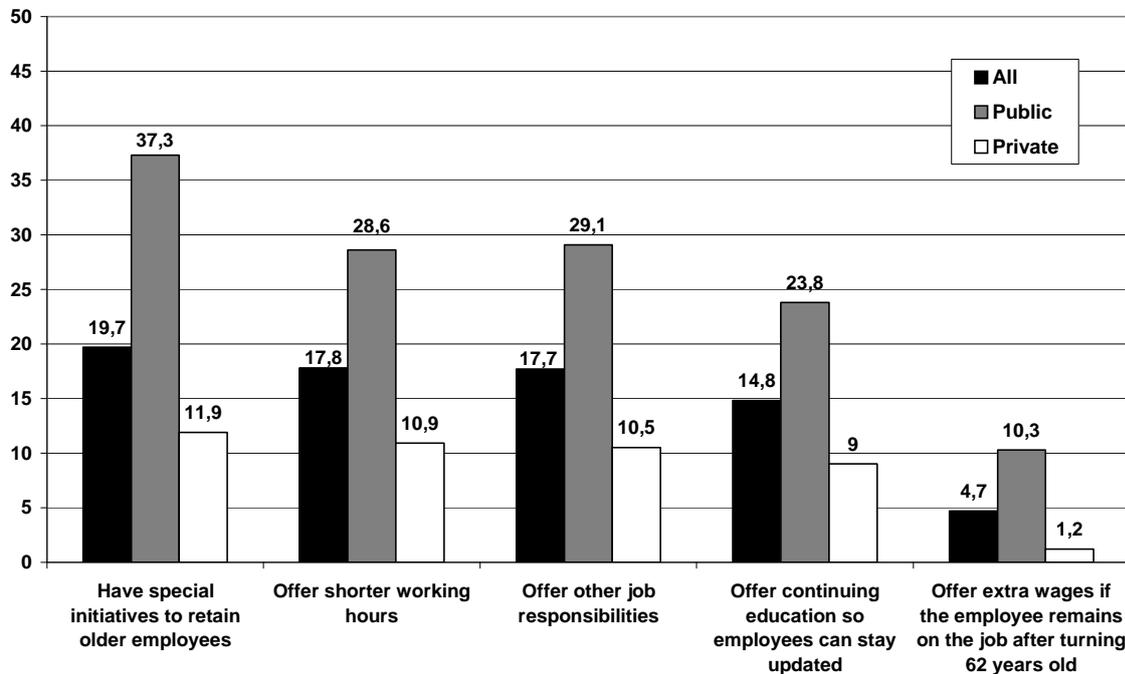


Figure 2. Share of enterprises in the public and private sectors which have introduced special initiatives in order to retain older employees in the job after turning 62 years old. N=2358 (weighted). [Source: Midtsundstad, forthcoming]

#### 4.2.4 Ambivalence, Denmark

In Denmark there is a strong emphasis on having a choice of opportunities in working life. To have a work is connected to having quality in life. Many are concerned about being able to have a “third life”. i.e. to have a good life as a retiree - although there are significant differences in the expectations about the “third life” (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Major focus areas in working life development are absence and exclusion (utstøting), “the whole working life”, and health-promoting workplaces. (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007.)

Nevertheless, when it comes to the issue of older workers and life long learning in Denmark the notion of *ambivalence* seems to be central. This goes for the social partners, the state and government as well as for the individual being. The *employers* and their organisations claim that there is a lack of work force, and that the pre pension schemes are too liberal and generous, implying that the average retirement age is too low in Denmark – and that the companies need the older workers. On the other hand it is a proven fact that it is extremely difficult for an unemployed older worker to find a new job, and there is some evidence that in many cases applicants of the age 50+ are discriminated. Also it seems as if the first ones to get sacked when a company cuts down are the older workers.

As for *the trade unions* there is by tradition the idea that work hours and work years should be reduced as much as possible; for the traditional industrial worker work was seen as a heavy

burden that should be minimised as much as possible. Also there might be an implicit understanding that workers 50+ are worn out, that they should leave space for younger colleagues, and that it is the task of the trade unions to influence political decisions on early retirement schemes etc. to benefit workers' own choice about when they want to leave the labour market. In accordance with this there has not in general been a committed effort from the side of the trade unions and their local representatives to promote senior policies and life long learning opportunities specifically aimed at older workers.

The ambivalence goes for *the state* as well: a lot of surveys, projects etc. have been initiated and financed, but in practise not a lot of initiatives have been implemented. Lip service has been made to the importance of the 'grey gold', but in practise older workers do not face a strong enough support. No labour market legislation has been passed to improve conditions for older workers, and also the public sector (state and municipalities as employers) seems to first of all get rid of older workers and seniors when it comes to reductions and cut downs.

When it comes to the *older workers* themselves there are statements that they want a maximum of opportunities and a freedom of choice. On the one hand they find that they have worked hard for many years and have contributed enough, and thus have a (moral) right to retire as early as possible. They want more time with family, grandchildren, they want to travel, do hobbies etc. On the other hand they are scared of leaving what has given them their identity throughout a long life: their job. Also the job has organised their time, given meaning and social contact in daily life. The older workers seem to be torn between different images or scenarios of a 'good senior life'. For more detailed discussion see Müller, Wendelboe Johannsen, Holsbo and Panton (2005).

#### **4.2.5 A non-issue? Sweden**

Sweden has been considered as the model country of social innovations in regards various issues. The Swedish case is of a special importance from a European perspective. A lot of changes in Sweden has been made in line with the policies and guidelines in EU – the combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning; the competence agreements; individual plans for competence development; the focus on workplace learning; the proactive strategy in a situation of redundancy or closedown; the co-ordinating role for local learning-centres etc. However, Sweden is the last EU member state to implement the EU anti age discrimination directive from 2001. The new law will be active from 1<sup>st</sup> of January in 2009.

A lot of objectives for individual development and learning are formulated both by the trade union for steel and metal workers and the employer's organisation. A lot of documents have been written in which the joint ambitions are stated. But the strategy to accomplish these goals is less clear. A competence agreement and the introduction of union competence advisors are examples of such solutions. Projects to close the gap between working life and the school system are another ways advocated by the employer representative. The local unions have tried to stimulate work-place learning activities and the development of local resource-centres in a situation of redundancies.

The problem with the joint initiatives developed by the partnership is the lack of co-ordination between different initiatives and the absence of a comprehensive strategy for life-long learning (see below). The most fundamental problem is not dealt with in the initiatives put forward, namely the lack of time for learning and development in the new organisations in

which the production logic dominate the learning logic. It is important that a strategy for lifelong learning be broader and more comprehensive than the short-sighted interest of production logic. The unions and the state must have a role in such a project to combine informal, non-formal and formal learning. Workplace learning can be a starting point, but must not be the end point in a lifelong and a life wide perspective.

During the recent years major issues have emerged, however, posing major challenges to the working life in Sweden. In particular sick-leaves (like in Norway) and the amount of disabilities (ufoeretrygdet), especially among those aged 30-39 years, have been increasing (Sørensen & Wathne, 2007). Managers' views on older workers seem also rather divided, as Box 5 shows.

It seems that unlike in its neighbouring countries, a particular focus on a national level on the situation of older workers is lacking. However, as a part of the general focus on working conditions, special attention has been placed to adapting these to encourage older people to remain longer in the workforce. Sweden's National Institute for Working Life and the Swedish Work Environment Authority have produced joint guidelines aimed at improving the working conditions of older workers. Based on Swedish occupational health and safety legislation and the application of systematic work environment management (SWEM), the guidelines are designed to assist labour inspectors in their work. Systematic work environment management is being used in 40% of Swedish workplaces, according to a report by the Swedish Work Environment Authority. This system, which came into force in July 2001, is designed to incorporate work environment management as an integral part of everyday work (Frick, 2002). Together with the joint guidelines for older workers the Swedish SWEM approach reminds in some regards the Finnish age-management model.

However, when it comes to the unions, the trade union confederation LO and the largest blue collar trade unions in Sweden, Kommunal and IFMetall, as well as the white collar trade union Unionen have no written strategies for older workers or for active ageing. They have policies about diversity management competence development, equality and inclusion and about developing working conditions; however older workers are not mentioned in these policies. Focus in trade union strategies seem to be on recruiting younger members as the union density among youth is only 50 percent. Many older members have recently left the trade unions, (500 000 members altogether during the last year) especially members of Kommunal. The trade unions have yet to develop strategies to deal with the loss of older members.

The official rhetoric is to promote active ageing which includes prolonging working life. By retiring later in life, pensioners can increase their monthly pension's payments. The minister of Industry has recently started to debate the official age of retirement and is looking into if it should be possible to work after the age of 67, or how the state should regulate the conditions for retirement in order to prolong an active working life.

**Box 5. Divided views of older workers (55+) among personnel managers in Sweden**

A new survey carried out by the The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees (TCO) shows that from among the almost 1800 personnel managers who answered the survey:

- 16% have a rather or very negative attitude
- 47% have a rather positive or very positive attitude

towards workers aged 55+ years in recruitment situations. The corresponding figures for those aged under 30 years were 1% and 78% respectively.

Source: TCO (2008) Jakten på superarbetskraften fortsätter! (The pursuit of the super labour force continues!)  
[Author's translation from Swedish]



## 5 LIFELONG LEARNING - NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS?

Nordic countries have long traditions in lifewide and lifelong educational opportunities and participation for all. Besides work-related education and training, there is a high prevalence of liberal adult education, as offered by the public high-schools and full-time municipal adult education, as well as through the active labour market policies for the unemployed (Tuijnman, 2003). The providers with long traditions are Adult Education Associations and the Folk High Schools. The lifelong learning provision profile is rather similar across the Nordic countries. However, in Norway the provision is structured differently from the other countries. In contrast to Norway, in Denmark, Finland and Sweden the adult education constitutes a comprehensive public provision with its own structures, with Adult Education Associations separated from the formal educational provision (NOU 2007). Iceland has only little experience with Adult Education Associations. In Finland this form of educational provision is only a very limited part of the liberal adult education sector (NOU 2007). Still another difference is that labour unions' activity in this area in Iceland is higher than in the other Nordic countries (Tikkanen, 2007). Finally, the learning opportunities provided by the Continuing Education Centres in connection with universities are significantly less developed in Norway than for example in Finland.

Lifelong learning (LLL) is a broad concept. Here we follow the European Commission's definition. The definition is shown with some further considerations in Box 6.

**BOX 6.** Defining lifelong learning (Source: Tikkanen, forthcoming)

The European Commissions Communication on lifelong learning defines it as *"all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective."*

Lifelong learning is therefore about:

- acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement. It promotes the development of knowledge and competences that will enable each citizen to adapt to the knowledge-based society and actively participate in all spheres of social and economic life, taking more control of his or her future.
- valuing all forms of learning, including: formal learning, such as a degree course followed at university; non-formal learning, such as vocational skills acquired at the workplace; and informal learning, such as inter-generational learning, for example where parents learn to use ICT through their children, or learning how to play an instrument together with friends.

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/III/life/what\\_isIII\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/III/life/what_isIII_en.html)

Cedefop definition for LLL is "All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons."

(Terminology of vocational training policy,

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Glossary/GlossaryApp/navigate.action>)

A recent book on older workers and lifelong learning from Cedefop shows that even if lifelong learning is generally a concept widely agreed upon across countries and various cultures, some cross-cultural variation in understanding it does exist (Tikkanen, 2006). For example in Japan the concept is understood very widely, and as a broader one than in Europe (Oshako & Sawano, 2006) and the same holds for China.

## 5.1 Participation in lifelong learning

Participation rates in lifelong learning are very high in the Nordic countries, also in international comparison (European Commission, 2008). Table 2, which is based on Eurostat, shows that in 2005 the five Nordic countries were among the six countries with highest rates among adults 24-65 years. Participation is most active in Sweden (34.7%), while Denmark, Iceland and Finland have rather similar rates (between 25-30%), and Norway somewhat lower. The latter may be surprising in the light of the fact that the country was the first to get a specific law on adult education (NOU 2007). Furthermore, the table shows that within the five year period 2000-2005, the increase in the participation rates in the Nordic countries is among the highest in Europe. The only exception is in regards the latter is Iceland, which already had the highest participation rate of all countries in the year 2000 (perhaps therefore the more modest increase of 3.1 percentage units by 2005).

Table 2. Participation in lifelong learning (excluding self-learning) of adults 24-65 years in 2000 and 2005 (%). The 5-year changes shown as %-units (Tikkanen, 2008).

Country	2000	2005	Change	Country	2000	2005	Change
Sweden	21.6	34.7	+13.1	<b>Germany</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>+2.2</b>
UK	21.0	29.7	+8.7	Lithuania	2.8	6.3	+3.5
Denmark	20.8	27.6	+7.2	Italy	5.5	6.2	+0.7
Iceland	23.5	26.6	+3.1	Estonia	6.0	5.9	-0.1
Finland	19.6	24.8	+5.2	Czech Republic	n.a.	5.9	
Norway	13.3	19.4	+6.1	Malta	4.5	5.8	+1.3
Slovenia	n.a.	17.8		Cyprus	3.1	5.6	+2.5
Netherlands	15.6	16.6	+1.0	Poland	n.a.	5.0	
Austria	8.3	13.9	+5.6	Slovakia	n.a.	5.0	
Spain	5.0	12.1	+7.1	Portugal	3.4	4.6	+1.2
Belgium	6.8	10.0	+3.2	Hungary	3.1	4.2	+1.1
Luxembourg	4.8	9.4	+4.6	Greece	1.2	3.7	+2.5(*)
Ireland	n.a.	8.0					
France	2.8	7.6	+4.8	<b>EU-25</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>10.8</b>	
Latvia	n.a.	7.6		Euro area	5.6	8.7	

\*For Greece figure taken from Europe in figures 2005, reporting years 1999 and 2004.

Source: European Commission, 2006. *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines*.

Table 3 describes the participation rates and trends 2000-2005 for only older workers (45-64 years). From the table we can observe level effects in participation both between the two age groups 45-54 years and 55-64 years, as well as between the EU25, EU15 and NMS10. The table also shows how the old Member States – including the Nordic countries, except Iceland and Norway – have increased their participation rates for older workers more during the five years' period (2000-2005) than the EU25, while there is basically no change in the new member states (NMS) within the same period.

The participation rates of the oldest group, those in the age range 55-64 years are in particular higher in the Nordic countries compared with the rest of Europe. The data from the Eurostat and Statistics Iceland show that these rates are as follows: in Sweden 44%, Iceland 40%, Denmark 38%, Finland 29% and Norway 25% (Jonasson, 2007). While a European wide

observation is that after the year 2005 the participation rates in lifelong learning have started slightly to decrease, the

Table. 3. Older workers' (45+) participation in education and training. Trends 2000-2005 (%)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>45-54 years</b>						
EU25	5.7	5.7	5.6	7.1	8.1	8.5
EU15	6.3	6.3	6.3	8.0	9.2	9.8
NMS10	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.0	3.3	2.9
<b>55-64 years</b>						
EU25	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.9	4.8	5.1
EU15	3.0	3.0	3.3	5.4	5.4	5.9
NMS10	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: European Commission, 2006. *Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines.*

'EU15' & 'EU25' refer to the number of the member states, i.e. before and after the European Union enlargement; 'NMS' = New Member States.

findings from Statistics Finland<sup>2</sup> show that the increase in learning activity has only continued in the oldest age group, 55-64 years.

*Continuing vocational education and training (CVT).* A very recent report on indicators and benchmarks on the progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training (European Commission, 2008), shows that the access to continuing vocational training courses remains unequal: older workers aged 55 years and older are less likely than younger people to participate in CVT. The only countries where workers in this age group participate more than those aged less than 25 years, are Denmark, Finland and Norway. The results from the latest Eurostat CVTS 3 enterprise survey from 2005 show that among the older workers, the training incidence in the Nordic countries is well above the EU27 average, except in Norway where it is the same as the European average (European Commission, 2008). The situation is the same also in the age groups of 25-54 years, again with the exception of Norway. The results are shown in table 4.

Table. 4. Training incidence by age in enterprises in 2005 (%). Data from Eurostat (CVTS 3)

Country	- 25 yrs	25-54 yrs	55 yrs or more
Denmark	29	35	36
Finland	25	43	34
Iceland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Norway	23	31	24
Sweden	39	50	37
EU27	29	33	24

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.stat.fi/til/aku/2006/01/aku\\_2006\\_01\\_2008-06-03\\_tau\\_001\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/aku/2006/01/aku_2006_01_2008-06-03_tau_001_fi.html)

### *Non-formal education*

Common across the Nordic countries is the variety of the providers of non-formal adult education, on one hand, and the low-level of central organisation and coordination of the activity in these institutes, on the other hand (Tikkanen, 2007). However, the participation patterns tend to be quite similar also in this area in all the five countries, although with some variation in the absolute levels of participation (Figure 3). As figure 3 (Jónasson, 2007) shows, the participation rates are highest in Sweden (44-52 % in different age groups) and are rather similar between the different age groups. Iceland and Finland follow very close behind and participation rates are only slightly lower in Denmark. The participation rates in Norway are on a lower level than in the other four countries (25-37% in different age groups) (Jónasson, 2007).

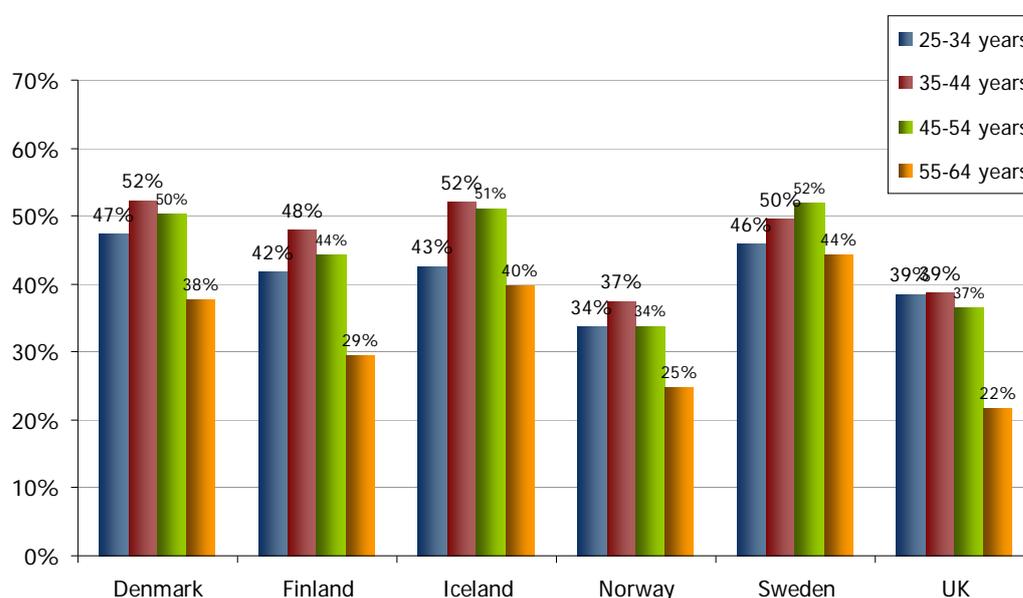


Figure 3. Participation in non-formal adult education in the Nordic countries and the UK shown for four different age groups. Data: Eurostat and Statistics Iceland. Source: (Jónasson, 2007).

*Age tends to strengthen the negative impact of low-education on further learning participation.* What makes lifelong learning of and for older workers a particular challenge is that the effect of age on participation coincide with and becomes strengthened by the more general negative effect of low-education, which relatively large proportion of older workers still have. Figure 4 shows the participation rates in non-formal education in different age groups.

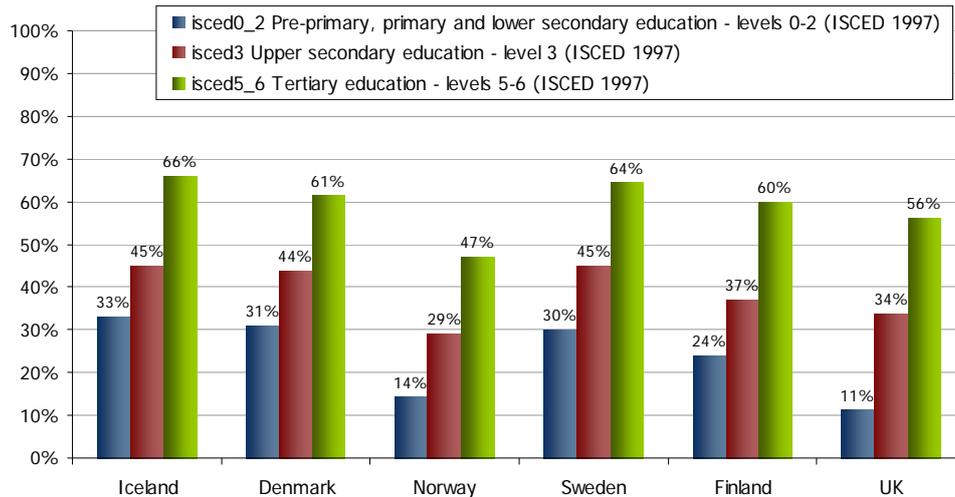


Figure 4. Participation in non-formal education in different categories of prior education. Data: Eurostat and Statistics Iceland. Source: (Jónasson, 2007).

Considering these together with the findings presented in figures 3 and 4, suggests strongly that lifelong learning and the competence issue concerning the employees in the age category 50+/55+ years remains a major challenge for the Nordic countries.

Thus, even if the educational system is highly developed and inclusive in principle in the Nordic countries – way beyond those in most other European countries – learning in the later half of the life-span still is among the weak points and urgently calls for further attention. Not least because these employees still have another 10-20 years in working life. The importance is further underlined by the signs showing that employers have started to be more selective and place emphasis higher education, especially in recruitment, leading to risk to be stigmatised on the basis of low education (TCO, 2008).

#### ***Further challenges concerning work-related LLL among older workers***

In the education and training markets older workers tend to be critical, no-nonsense consumers. Participation only for the sake of ‘being active’ or ‘having fun’ is not an option, as it may be for young people. For an older worker time and effort invested should make a difference, and therefore the expected benefits from training participation need to be clear – also to their employers. Participation in formal training is a matter which is viewed tightly related to training outcomes and incentives for it in the workplace (Tikkanen, 2008). Most of older workers quite rightly want know, “what’s in it for me in my workplace?” Obviously answering the question is not always easy. The Eurobarometer 2004 showed that one third of the 55+ workers do not know what would encourage them to take more training (Lipinska, Schmidt & Tessaring, 2007). A similar message is being conveyed by the findings from two other studies presented in Box 7. The study from Finland (Box 6) shows that employers’ and older employees’ (45-64 years) views are rather different when it comes to the importance of increasing educational possibilities and training that promotes occupational skills: while 40% of employers believed training to be important, only 13% of the older workers did so.

**BOX 7. Employees' (aged 45-64 years) and employers rating of actions which can be important for older workers for continuing in working life (%).**

Action	Employees	Employers
1. Improving possibilities for rehabilitation	37	34
2. Increasing wages	35	22
3. Reducing workloads and tight schedules and increasing options to affect work	32	56
4. Improving the work environment	28	71
5. More flexible working hours	27	32
6. Improving management skills and good supervisory action	21	68
<b>7. Increasing educational possibilities and training that promotes occupational skills</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>40</b>

Employees: Work Conditions 2003 study, Statistics Finland

Employers: Services for the workforce and Job Vacancies study 2004. (Ilmarinen, 2006, 83)



## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report we have been looking at the situation of older workers from the perspective of lifelong learning in the Nordic countries. The aim of our network, Older workers in the Nordic Countries (OWN) network as one of the Nordic Networks for Adult Learning (NVL), has been to challenge long established mindsets, as well as the policy and practice concerning working and learning in later life. We have taken a comprehensive approach underlining older workers' ability and willingness as well as opportunity to work and learn longer. We set to work to contribute to the overall wellbeing among older workers by advocating for more choices and opportunities in working, learning, and ageing.

The review presented in this report shows that, on one hand, the values and practice of the working life and the educational systems in the Nordic countries provide frames, which are supportive also for the older workers to remain active in working life and beyond. This view becomes especially pronounced when seen against the situation in the other European countries. On the other hand, the Nordic model shows weaknesses in its crucial aspects, such as in regards inclusion and equal opportunity among those with low-resources, both in the area of working life and education. Our conclusion is that the while some structural-functional hindrances are real, an equally, if not more powerful factor is in play: the long-established socio-cultural-cognitive mindsets in thinking about working, learning and ageing. Therefore, the OWN Network wishes to make recommendations for further actions needed to promote choice and opportunities for working and learning also during the second half of the life-course.

**1. Working life and industry** need to become more aware of their role as true promoters – or hindrance – of life long learning. Workplace is the most important arena for learning. Most of the skills and the knowledge development take place at the workplace. Promoting learning is good business.

**2. Training-the-trainers** to secure high-quality training provision and outcomes. Institutions providing learning opportunities must invest in the competence of the adult trainers in regards learning and education of and for older workers and their special needs.

**3. Trade unions and social partners** need to promote the change of the mindsets of working, learning and ageing by enhancing flexibility and diversity in learning and working in later life. In many cases a pre-requirement for this work is an active reflection within the unions themselves.

**4. Older workers themselves** must play a more active role in this equation. In particularly towards the unions, push them to promote their special needs more broadly and to support them for more choices for an active ageing.

**5. Media:** On one hand, the coverage of older workers in media should reflect their numerical part of the population. On the other hand, instead of emphasising problems, media should promote good examples and inter-generational discussion on “active ageing”, in its various dimensions and meanings, and its preconditions in various life contexts and for different people.

**6. The Nordic Council** should add momentum to the national governments' work in making LLL a living reality to all. This work has particularly to do with opportunities and partnerships for continuing learning for older workers. To this end we suggest that a working group should be established with representatives from working life / industry, training institutions and the unions.



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## Suggestions for further reading

### *On Myths:*

Ainsworth, S. & Hardy, C. (2007): The construction of the older worker: privilege, paradox and policy. *Discourse and Communication*. Vol. 1, No. 3, 267-285

Brampton, M. 2007. Brampton Factor: Ageism myths. There's no reason all ages can't work together. <http://comment.silicon.com/martinbrampton/0,3800005437,39167236,00.htm> (this article is also followed by an interesting commentary by older workers, so please read that too!)

Chiu, W. C. K; Chan, E. S & Redman, T. (2001): Age Stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards older workers: An East-West comparison. *Human Relations*. Vol. 54, No. 5, 629-661

Riach, K. (2007): 'Othering' older worker identity in recruitment. *Human relations*. Vol. 60, No. 11, 1701-1726

EurolinkAge - as several other organisations and associations, especially in the UK - have provided a lot of material about old age myths and facts:

[http://www.eurolinkage.org/AgeConcern/Documents/Symposium\\_report.pdf](http://www.eurolinkage.org/AgeConcern/Documents/Symposium_report.pdf)

Gray, L. & McGregor, J. (2003): Human resource development and older workers: Stereotypes in New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human resources*. Vol. 41, No. 3, 388-353

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*This paper includes also facts about ageing workers! And points to the need to train the managers (as through age-management training) as a more powerful means to improve the situation of older workers than legislation as such - and without a follow up.*

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## **Appendices**

## ***Appendix 1. Brief general descriptions of the Nordic countries***

### Facts about the Nordic Region and Nordic Co-operation

“The Nordic region has a population of 25 million. The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Finland, Åland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The Faroe Islands and Greenland are both part of the kingdom of Denmark, and Åland is part of the republic of Finland.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden are all monarchies. Iceland and Finland are republics. Regardless of the form of government, the heads of state in the Nordic countries have relatively little power. All the countries have a democratic constitution dating from the 19th century, and, with the exception of the Norwegian constitution, they have all been revised several times. The parliaments in the Nordic countries and the autonomous territories vary in size from 30 members in the Parliament of Åland to 349 members in Sweden's parliament.”

- <http://www.norden.org/web/1-1-fakta/uk/index.asp?lang=6#>

For more information about the Nordic countries visit the official website for the co-operation in the Nordic region: Norden.Org - <http://www.norden.org/>

In the following we have presented some facts from the five Nordic countries, relevant to the presentation in this paper. Besides demographics, the tables provide information about lifelong learning participation and provision, about the union membership, about working life participation of older workers, as well as about possible governmental initiatives target to older workers.

<b>ICELAND</b> 		
Population, Life & Work	Population (1.1.2008)	313 376
	Population 50+	31.6 %
	Life expectancy	Males 79.4 yrs
		Females 83 yrs
	Retirement age (statutory)	67 yrs
	Retirement age (real average)	-
	Employment rate (2. qrt 2008)	66.1 %
		Males 72.8 %
		Females 59.4 %
	Unemployment rate (2. qrt 2008)	3.1 %
	Unemployment rate 50+	1.2 %
	Part-time work rate	24.3 %
	Part-time work rate	-
		Males 9.5 %
		Females 48.8 %
Sick-leave rate	-	
Unions: Facts	Union membership rate	-
	Union membership Female/Male sector	-
	Union membership rate & 50+ rate	-
	Unions' senior policy / Employees	Yes/No
	Unions' senior policy/ Employers	Yes/No
Adult education	Adult education participation	%
	Adult education participation 55-64 yrs	
		Males 39 %
		Females 50 %
	Adult education provision	
	Govnt'l program(s) for older workers	Yes
	Govnt'l program(s) for older learners (LLL)	-

Official website: [www.iceland.is](http://www.iceland.is)

		<b>FINLAND</b> 
Population, Life & Work	Population (31.12.2007)	5 300 484
	Population 50+	38,0 %
	Life expectancy	Males 75,9 yrs Female 82,9 yrs
	Retirement age (statutory)	62-68
	Retirement age (real average)	58,4
	Employment rate (Sept 2008)	70,0 % Male: 71,8/ Female: 68,1
	Age 55 -74: 38,5 % Male: 40,8 % Female: 36,0 %	
	Unemployment rate (Sept 2008)	5,9 %
	Unemployment rate 55-74 (Sept 2008)	5,3 %
	Part-time work rate	12 %
	Part-time work rate Female/Male (age 25 -54)	7,9%/16,5% -
	(age 55 – 60)	-
	Sick-leave rate (Jan. – Mar. 2008)	- -
Unions: Facts	Union membership rate (2004) All	69%
	Female	73%
	Male	65%
	Union membership (2004):	
	Public sector	88%
	Industry	86%
Private (services)	50%	
Union membership rate & 50+ rate	-	
Unions' senior policy / Employees	-	
Unions' senior policy/ Employers	-	
Adult education	Adult education participation (age 18-64, participation in last 12 months, Adult Education Survey 2006)	52 % M: 45 % F: 58 %
	Adult education participation 45-54	56 %
	Adult education participation 45-64	37 %
	Govnt'l program(s) for older workers	Yes
	Govnt'l program(s) for older learners (LLL)	Yes

 Official website: [www.finland.fi](http://www.finland.fi)

<b>NORWAY</b> 		
Population, Life & Work	Population (1.4.2008)	4 753 373
	Population 50+	33,3 %
	Life expectancy	Male: 78,2 yrs Female: 82,7 yrs
	Retirement age (statutory)	67
	Retirement age (real average)	59
	Employment rate (May 2008)	71,7 %
	Age 55 -74: 49,5 %	Male: 74,4 Female: 68,9
	Male: 54,6 % Female: 44,6 %	
	Unemployment rate(May 2008)	1,5 %
	Unemployment rate 50+ (May 2008)	1,3 %
	Part-time work rate	27 %
	Part-time work rate Female/Male (age 25 -54)	50 % / 14 % 36 % / 6%
	(age 55 – 60)	50% / 14%
Sick-leave rate (Jan. – Mar. 2008)	6,2 % Male: 4,7 Female: 7,9	
Unions: Facts	Union membership rate LO	-
	Union membership Female/Male sector	-
	Union membership rate & 50+ rate	-
	Unions' senior policy / Employees	*)
	Unions' senior policy/ Employers	*)
Adult education	Adult education participation	%
	Adult education participation 50+	-
	Govnt'l program(s) for older workers	Yes *)
	Govnt'l program(s) for older learners (LLL)	No

Official website: [www.norway.no](http://www.norway.no)

\*) In Norway these issues are covered by the tripartite Inclusive Working life agreement (IA) (for more information, see chapter 4.2.3)

		<b>SWEDEN</b> 
Population, Life & Work	Population (30.4.2008)	9 201 650
	Population 50+	37 %
	Life expectancy	F 84,4, Yrs M 80, Yrs
	Retirement age (statutory)	65 Years
	Retirement age (real average)	58,2 Years
	Employment rate (May 2008)	66,9 %
	Employment rate 55-59 years, M 68%, F 62%	
	Employment rate 60-64 years, M 49%, F 42%	
	Unemployment rate (May 2008)	5,9 %
	Unemployment rate 55+ (May 2008)	2,8 %
	Part-time work rate	19,6 %
	Part-time work rate Female/Male	29,1% / 10,4%
	Sick-leave rate	4,7 % F 6,2 % M 3,6 %
Unions: Facts	Union membership rate (year 2008)	73 %
	Union membership Female/Male sector TCO, male and female	85 %
	LO - F 85,2 % , M 81,1 %	83 %
	Union membership rate & 50+ rate (Year 2000)	(year 2000) 80,5 % / 72,6 %
	M 78,7 % F 82,3 %	
	Unions' senior policy / Employees LO TCO SACO	No No No
Unions' senior policy/ Employers Employers' policy for older workers - (Svenskt näringsliv) Arbetsmiljöverket 2004	No Yes	
	Yes	
Adult education	Adult education participation (KOMVUX) (year 2006)	227 682 150393 F, 77289 M
	Adult education participation 45-54 yrs (KOMVUX) (Year 2006)	11 % (of 227 682)
	Adult education participation 55+ (KOMVUX) (Year 2006)	5 % (of 227 682)
	Other adult education (Year 2002) (lifelong learning)	46 % (of population)
	Other adult education 55-64 Yrs (Year 2002)	33 % (of population)
Govnt'l program(s) for older workers	No	
Govnt'l program(s) for older learners (LLL)	No	

Official website: [www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se)

KOMVUX = Municipal Adult Education Centres (financed by the government)

		<b>DENMARK</b> 
Population, Life & Work	Population (1.1.2007)	5 447 084
	Population 50+	42 %
	Life expectancy	78 Years
	Retirement age (statutory)	67 Years
	Retirement age (real average)	62 Years
	Employment rate	78 %
	Unemployment rate	1,7%
	Unemployment rate 50+	1,6 %
	Part-time work rate	Overall 20 %
	Part-time work rate Female/Male	24% /17 %
	Sick-leave rate	4%
Unions: Facts	Union membership rate	Overall 77%
	Union membership Female/Male sector	77% /77 %
	Union membership rate & 50+ rate	77% / 77%
	Unions' senior policy / Employees	Yes
	Unions' senior policy/ Employers	Yes
Adult education	Adult education participation	29% (Eurostat)
	Adult education participation 50+	Less than 29%
	Adult education provision	
	Govnt'l program(s) for older workers	No
	Govnt'l program(s) for older learners (LLL)	No

Official website: [www.denmark.dk](http://www.denmark.dk)

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