

Action plan for 2023 (- 2024)

1. Introduction

The NVL Digital Worklife network was established in the winter of 2022 consisting of representatives from authorities responsible for skills development for employees in working life, from four Nordic countries. In addition a reference group with representatives from the Nordic working life-, business-, and training provider organisations was established, to ensure that the labour market's interests are taken into account. The network follows and makes use of results from the research project "The role of lifelong learning in the digital transformation and digital inclusion". Read more about the research project in Appendix 1. The report from this research project will be published during 2023. In addition the network members has an opportunity to focus on other themes relevant to digital competencies and skills within the worklife.

From January 2023 the network and the reference group are joined together and all members belong to the NVL Digital Worklife-network.

This action plan describes activities for 2023. In addition, it contains, in appendix 2, a tentative description of the connection between the objectives of NVL Digital Worklife's exploration of how digital skills and knowledge for employees in working life can be strengthened and NVL's overall objectives from the action plan for 2021-2024, NMR's Vision 2030 and selected UN Sustainability Goals. The plan functions as a working tool for the network's and reference group's members.

2. Processes 2022 - 2023

The network spent 2022 following and giving input and feedback to the research project (see Appendix 1). By the end of 2022 the research report was not ready. It was introduced to the network in February 2023.

The network then spent the period between February and June assessing the recommendations and findings, and planning national events connected to these.

National processes and events will be carried out during the second half of 2023, more about this in Chapter 4.

3. Expected results

It is expected that the research report will provide knowledge that will be useful for industrial companies/enterprises, especially in a time where technological and digital development is taking place ever faster, while at the same time it is expected that the sector will adapt in line with the requirements for competitiveness, inclusion and consideration of the environment and climate. In addition, we hope that the results may be useful in other sectors and industries.

4. Activities 2023-2024

Introduction

This version of chapter 4 is written in June 2023, and includes the national dissemination plans for 2023, made during the spring of 2023. It was necessary to write a new version of this chapter (chapter 4 in this Action plan), because it was difficult to plan activities before the research results were ready. Results from the research project were presented to the network in February 2023, and discussed at the network meeting in Stockholm 1st to 2nd of March. During spring 2023 the network has established national work-groups which have assessed the research results and made plans for

national processes and activities connected to the dissemination of results from the research during the spring of 2023.

Meetings in 2023

- Online network meeting in February 2023 – presentation of research results
- Network meeting in Stockholm 1st to 2nd of March. The second day was a joint meeting between the two networks: NVL Digital Inclusion and NVL Digital Worklife
- Online network meeting in the end of March in order to follow up from Stockholm meeting and start planning national processes and events
- Online meeting early June in order to let national work groups present national plans
- Network meeting in Copenhagen 27th to 28th of September. Agenda: Present status from national processes and events, plan network activities in 2024
- 1-2 online meetings during October-December if needed

National processes and events 2023 - 2024

- **Denmark**
The Danish workgroup (Elise and Christine) have condensed the report to a short version/pixie-version with the five recommendations. These will be disseminated in a process where the union 3F will, during the autumn of 2023, spread the pixie and link to the report via newsletters, and invite the trade unions (62 local branches). Danish Industries will spread the recommendations both within and outside their organization. The intention is to reflect on and have a dialogue about the content, and to enhance the dialogue within the workplace using the practical tool. During the winter of 2024, dialogue meetings at specific workplaces will occur via the local branches within 3F. The preliminary process of this dialogue depends on reactions during autumn 2023. It is assumed that it will be most practical to start the process of inviting bigger enterprises, and perhaps invite a few smaller companies, even though experience has shown that it is difficult to get them involved.
- **Finland**
The Finnish workgroup (Leena and Krista and Ari-Matti, and Olli from the NVL Inclusion network) plan to organize 1-2 webinars (1 hour/2 webinars, or 2 hours/1 webinar) on the 4th to 5th of October 2023. The webinars' themes will focus on the report's results, and additional results from the SAK's Working Life Barometer (2023), JOTPA's research about competence needs of people furthest from the labor market and possibly the results of EK's Competence survey. The 'Inclusion' area will be presented by Olli (*see PPT*). The webinars may perhaps be recorded and spread; Leena will investigate possibilities.
- **Iceland**
The Icelandic workgroup (Helen, Hildur, Valgerdur) (May 2023) disseminated the results at meetings with representatives from the Confederation of Unions in Iceland. The result (an article about the Icelandic context) has been sent to the researchers. The Icelandic workgroup will also produce a video podcast in June 2023 together with a project manager at the University of Iceland, Tryggvi Brian Thayer, about future demands. They are in touch with the Communication staff in NVL regarding the use of the NVL logo together with their own. They will also look at possibilities when it comes to connect recommendations and findings from the report. In 2024 the plan is to look for an opportunity to start a company dialogue

with the board of directors about relevant themes. Valgerdur is going to write an article about the report.

- **Sweden**

The Swedish workgroup (Linda and Elin) will produce a prerecorded webinar on the LO's premises. The webinar will be about the recommendations and will be part of a broader "line-up", 1-2 presentations and a panel conversation. They plan to present a couple of good examples about digital competencies and skills needed for the future, and additionally using experts from Arbetsförmedlingen. The webinar will approximately have a duration of 45 minutes, and the plan is to stream and upload it on the digital platform [Digitalidag – En temadag om framtidens digitala samhälle](#) on the 13th of October 2023, which is the "Digital day" in Sweden (an annual event).

- **Norway**

The Norwegian workgroup (Linda, Benedikte, Tone, Mette and Kent and Tanja from the Digital Inclusion network) will contact the Norwegian Competence Council (Kompetansepolitisk råd (KPR)), to present results, reflections and recommendations from the report, aiming for KPR's October-meeting, if possible. In KPR all the eight social partners (hovedorganisasjoner, 4 unions and 4 employers organizations) plus relevant Ministries are represented. Before this, the work-group will disseminate the report more detailed and decide which parts they will focus on. At the KPR-presentation the theme will be to investigate how the (chosen) recommendations relate to Norwegian working life. Linda B will also collect other relevant Norwegian publications and write a review. The plan is to publish the review at nvl.org and – if relevant at hkdir.no.

Other activities to be considered

The NVL coordinators involved in both NVL Digital-networks consider planning a Nordic event, in order to present research results to a broader audience. A Nordic conference has been suggested. The NVL Digital Worklife Network will discuss this at their meeting in Copenhagen, autumn 2023.

5. Objectives

The network supports skills development in working life in the Nordics and contributes towards the NMR's Vision 2030 of a competitive Nordic region

The Nordic Council of Ministers action plan/[handlingsplan 2021-2024](#) has major goals for competence development and for how Nordic cooperation can contribute to a competitive, green and socially sustainable Nordic region in line with [Visjon 2030](#). Based on the vision and the action plan, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) shall:

- Support knowledge and innovation and make it easier for companies throughout the Nordics to utilise the development opportunities created by the green, technical and digital transition and the growing bioeconomy. NMR wants to strengthen the development of a common knowledge base (Goal K6).
- Develop skills and well-functioning labour markets that match the requirements resulting from the green transition and digital development, as well as support the free flow of labour, goods and services in the Nordic region. In this connection, NMR wants to strengthen people's connection to working life and to achieve increased labour participation in the Nordic region (Goal K7).
- Take advantage of digitization and education to bind the Nordic countries even closer together, as well as to contribute to even greater mobility in the region (Goal K8).

The desk research for the research project has been carried out with the aim of getting an overview of competence policy and strategies and major measures in the Nordic countries, as well as outlining any common challenges regarding competence development for employees in small and medium-sized companies in the Nordic industry. Subsequently, researchers analyse how both the individual and the company get (better) conditions to develop their own digital competence, and how the digital opportunities can be used for competence development in working life.

The research report is expected to highlight success factors for participation in digital competence development and provide knowledge that will be useful for small industrial companies in particular, at a time when technical and digital development is accelerating at the same time as the sector is expected to adapt in line with the demand for competitiveness, inclusion and respect for environment and climate issues.

The report from the research project is expected to be ready at the turn of the year 2022/2023 and the network will begin dissemination in the spring of 2023.

The network's results support the development of education and skills policy in the Nordic region

The network consists of authorities and organizations responsible for skills policy as well as an employer and employee representative from each country. Dissemination of the results will be planned in collaboration; aiming at increasing dialogue between education and work. The network aims to also look at the importance of motivation - to show that it is necessary, useful and that it pays to invest in competence development - both for the company - and for the individual employee. The starting point is to see competence development as a key factor for:

- Being competitive
- Participate in the green transition
- Contribute to employees staying longer at work

The action plan's conditions are linked to some of the UN's sustainability goals

NVL Digital Worklife's activities particularly have a potential when it comes to affect the UN's sustainability **goal 4** on good education and **goal 8** on decent work and economic growth:

- Sustainability target 4 is safeguarded by the fact that knowledge from the research project can be used to contribute to inclusive, fair and good education/training, and promote opportunities for lifelong learning for the target groups and selected sectors (the industry). The starting point is the five Nordic countries. Hopefully, the results can have transferable value to other countries and other sectors.
- Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth is about promoting enduring, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work for all. The project focuses on this by describing and uncovering success factors that ensure that more employees within the selected sector gain the skills necessary to survive in a new technological and digital working life. Our aim is that the results can be used across countries, groups of employees and sectors.

The network expects that result mediation will create opportunities to share knowledge and experience across the Nordic countries on how to support the development of systems that contribute to continuous competence development among employees and in this way contribute to preventing a growing wage and competence gap and exclusion from working life. If the budget allows, NVL Digital Worklife and NVL Digital Inclusion will organize a dissemination event in the autumn of 2023 with a focus on digital competence for work life, digital participation and green transition.

Appendix 1. About the research project

The research project was based on selected recommendations from the previous NVL working life network *Competence development in and for working life*. Existing practice is used as the basis for the analysis part of the research project.

The research project is limited to the industry-sector in the Nordic countries. Small and medium-sized companies (SMC) have been selected on the basis of NVL's previous employment network's recommendations.

The respondents in the project are employees with and without professional qualifications (unskilled and employees with short/low education). This is based on assessments from a preparatory input meeting when the establishment of the network was planned (October 2021). The reason is that this work group often has low motivation to participate in training activities, while at the same time they may have a great need for new/different skills in order to stay in work.

Desk research has also been carried out, the purpose of which was to obtain an overview of skills policy/strategies and major initiatives in the Nordic countries. (Potential) joint challenges are also outlined when it comes to skills development for employees in the Nordic industry's small and medium-sized enterprises.

The intention of the research is to:

- Find and describe success factors for participation in competence development
- Develop practices to make learning more efficient and benefit-maximizing by investing in competence development
- Support the development of systems that contribute to the continuous development of competence in the workforce in the Nordic countries to prevent wage- and skills gaps and dropouts

Relevant findings as of November 2022 indicate that there is a need to strengthen the national contributions towards SMEs, to strengthen cooperation with industry to develop solutions and generally more Nordic cooperation. There are several 'holes' that need to be closed at political level - locally and regionally in the Nordic region. The learning perspective of companies is not explicit.

There are different competence development strategies in the Nordic countries: In Norway the focus is on real competence, while in Denmark there is a greater focus on eLearning, but in Finland the focus is on collaboration across the sector. A joint solution should be to have joint arenas between the countries. There is a link to other political agendas - green transformation 2022 Iceland, and 2017 in Sweden, Innovation IC, Sweden and Denmark different countries.

The research project has obtained empirical data from field work: Denmark - company that makes equipment for marine engines for cargo ships, Finland - online focus group, agricultural machinery, Sweden - printing company, Norway - company that makes plant protection for agricultural crops - Iceland - printing company

Additional preliminary findings from phase 1 (based on field studies).

Analytical approach: The project does not approach digital technology as a deterministic driver of change. The project does not approach digital technology as intertwined with other factors in the digital transformation

The researchers have presented two linked analytical concepts: 1. *Bound automation* - organizational factors require digital transformation and 2. *Mixed automation* - organizational forms for development from human and non-human contexts

Findings: 1 a) local narratives about digitization - ordinary workers feel monitored and measured by digital technologies b) Ambiguity and paradoxes - digitization strengthens or weakens work. 2 a) Work transitions characterized by - misplacements (from first-hand experiences to second-hand experiences), non-linear things, peculiarity (transformations happen in small interruptions, small parts) b) Change of organizational phenomena - hierarchy, legitimate knowledge, professional identities, local phenomena (security, quality control)

There are various needs that can be solved through the research project, with the condition that it succeeds in its purpose. Through disseminating the results from the project, NVL Digital Worklife can share knowledge and experience across the Nordic countries for the purposes mentioned above.

The research results can display new knowledge that the authorities in the Nordic countries can benefit from in their work to develop competence policies/strategies and larger measures to contribute to competence development for adults in working life. As the governing group is to work to ensure that adults get additional skills (within digital competence) that will help them cope with changes and stay in work for longer, it is relevant to be able to communicate the results.

The (prev.) reference group, which consists of the social partners, will be able to spread the results among its sub-organisations and members. When the results are to be disseminated, providers of training (formal and non-formal) will also be an important target group based on the objective that new training offers are developed in line with the needs of working life and employees.

With target groups and stakeholders among authorities, the social partners and providers of training, it is expedient that the results will be useful both at a micro level (the individual employee and the individual business), a meso level (employer and employee organizations and providers of training) and at community level (the authorities participating in the network can use the results within ongoing and future skills policy initiatives and measures.

Appendix 2. The action plan towards goals and visions in the governing documents

The action plan seen in relation to NVL's objectives and NMR's action plan (2021-2024)

1. NVL will promote competence development in various areas of adult learning in the Nordic countries.

NVL Digital Worklife will follow the research project's part 2, which will investigate issues related to digital competence in working life (read more in appendix 1).

This will be useful when it comes to promote competence development in both digitization and participation in working life. NVL Digital Worklife will follow up results and recommendations from the NVL Digital Inclusion network and NVL's previous working life network (Competence development in and for working life). This applies in particular to the challenges and opportunities inherent in digitalisation, and how it can affect today's and future working life. Procuring information about the digital working life is a central theme in all the Nordic countries.

Several surveys show that both the digital skills and the utilization of digital tools are variable in different industries, occupational groups and countries. Digitization has increased interest in lifelong learning, and represents great opportunities, but can also lead to a greater degree of exclusion of groups that are already difficult to reach. More information about digitization processes is therefore absolutely central to counteracting the gap in society from widening due to green and digital development.

This is also a goal in NMR's action plan for 2021-2021, under goal S10. By considering practices and success factors for participation in digital competence development in workplaces, we also see that NVL Digital Worklife efforts as a governing group for research projects on this topic can contribute to achieving some of the other goals in the Nordic Council of Ministers' action plan for 2021-2024:

In order to achieve the Council of Ministers' goal 7, to develop skills and well-functioning labour markets that satisfy the requirements of the green transition and digital development (...), it is, for example, central to start work that examines what the existing practice is like in this field from before. In this way, one can further say something about what steps are recommended to be taken to develop employees to a greater extent in the direction of skills and understandings that will affect tomorrow's working life and create well-functioning labour markets in a green and digital shift. The knowledge that is developed here will also be able to provide a wider opportunity to see the potential for benefiting from the various Nordic countries' solutions, NVL Digital Worklife therefore has the opportunity to provide information that links the countries closer together. Such a result is in good line with NMR's action plan for 2021-2024, target S8, where the focus is on taking advantage of digitization and education to link the Nordic countries together.

2. NVL shall contribute to developing the Nordic education systems for adult education through strengthened dialogue with the Nordic Council of Ministers and the changing presidencies of the Council of Ministers.

NVL Digital Worklife contribute to goal achievement in that the research project to be carried out will contribute to finding possible solutions to challenges related to the rapid rate of development of working life and the changing needs for education, training and lifelong learning that follow from this. The research project will thus be able to provide knowledge that can develop the Nordic countries' education systems and working life. We know from previous research that digitization has

helped put adult education more on the agenda in several of the Nordic countries. The project thus has good prerequisites for providing good and relevant information and recommendations. Dissemination will take place in dialogue with the Nordic Council of Ministers, linked to the relevant goals in NMR's action plan for 2021-2024. For the NVL Digital Worklife network, the reference group and the research project to be followed up, goals K6 and K7, as well as goal S8, are particularly central. By having preliminary results presented at the Norwegian chairmanship conference Digitization and lifelong learning (DigiNorden) in September 2022, the participants in the network and reference group will both be able to share experiences and acquire new knowledge that can contribute to achieving this goal.

3. NVL shall contribute to personal development and democratic participation through various forms of adult learning

The NVL Digital Worklife network, the reference group and the research project will be able to contribute knowledge about how to develop practices that make learning more effective and that improve the usefulness of investing in various forms of competence development, both in and outside the workplace. Supporting the development of systems that ensure continuous development of competence in the workforce will be important both for individuals' personal development and for the working environment as a whole. As the focus here is digitalisation, it will also be important for democratic participation, as we know from previous work (see the report Basic Digital Skills for adults in the Nordic Countries) that the correct use of digital tools can make democratic participation easier and more accessible .

Giving workplaces more insight into digital competence development will also be able to prevent the growing wage and competence gap, as well as exclusion from working life. The research project thus has an important function in being able to provide insight that prevents alienation by ensuring that more employees stay in the job, despite major restructuring processes. This is closely linked to sub-target 2 in target K7 in NMR's action plan, where it is stated that close work must be done with the parties in working life to achieve increased participation in work and strengthen people's connection to working life in the Nordic region. The work of the network, the reference group and the research project can help ensure that employers/workplaces are attractive and that employees get the necessary replenishment and development, both personally, democratically and professionally.

4. NVL must contribute to cross-sectoral and national cooperation

NVL Digital Worklife will consist of representatives from authorities responsible for adult learning, skills policy and working life connection, in the five Nordic countries. The research project, for which the NVL digital working life network will be the steering group, will be based on practical examples from working life. The insight that is developed can give organizations and companies a better understanding of how digital competence affects practice, nationally, Nordic and cross-sector. This will be in line with goal K6 in NMR's action plan, where an important goal is to make it easier for companies throughout the Nordics to utilize the development opportunities created by the green, technical and digital transition. With industry as the selected sector for the research project, there is potential to see connections between competence development among the employees and the major changes that society as a whole is facing. This can have transfer value to other sectors.

5. NVL shall promote Nordic cooperation with civil society and working life and especially public information

By involving representatives from authorities responsible for adults' lifelong learning and participation in competence development in the various Nordic countries and working life organisations, cooperation between the government and organizational levels, as well as working life in general, can be promoted. It may also be appropriate to involve users in the work and in that way contribute to cooperation with parts of civil society. In NMR's action plan for 2021-2024, it is stated under Objective K6 that efforts must be made to contribute to Nordic companies being equipped to utilize data and digital technology for innovation. This is in line with the research project's purpose of

developing practices that make learning more effective, as well as supporting the development of systems that can contribute to the continuous development of competence in the workforce.

The research project is based on a four-step model inspired by Design-Based Research, this pragmatic approach is characterized by being problem-solving, action-oriented and close to practice. One of the aims of the research project is to identify factors that can increase the potential and the probability that learning benefits the individual. Another aim is that it should provide a basis for recommendations that can be translated into policy at the meso and macro level and for practice at the meso and micro level.

6. NVL must inform about experiences and results from the Nordic collaboration on adult learning.

As the network NVL Digital Worklife will consist of representatives from authorities responsible for adult learning and working life connections, and the reference group will consist of representatives from working life organisations, it is reasonable to assume that the work can highlight practical experiences and use these to influence the Nordic country's policy for and cooperation on adult learning. It is planned that the results will be disseminated through networks and reference groups in all the Nordic countries.