



Country report

Sweden

2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning

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1 Introduction and evaluation

1.1 Abstract

Between 2014 and 2016 Sweden has progressed further in the area of validation. The government has launched several initiatives suggested in the Budget Bill in September 2015. Enhancing prospects of assessing and recognising immigrants' prior learning is a priority in most of these projects. Also, a new Committee of Inquiry, The National Delegation for Validation 2015-2019, has been appointed. The delegation consists of 15 members representing trade unions, employers' associations and national authorities. Its main task is to follow, support and urge on a coordinated work to develop validation on both a regional and national level. The delegation will also, as a first interim report in the beginning of 2017, provide a suggestion for a national strategy for validation: that focuses on efficiency, is seen as long-term and provides an overall picture and that supports the development of sustainable and general structures for validation at both the national and local levels. The Swedish government has also, in June 2016, presented a report in the Ministry Publications Series that contains legislation changes regarding validation. At the time of writing (August 2016), the report (Ds 2016:24 Validering med mervärde) is being circulated for formal consultation. A Bill on Validation is planned to be presented to Parliament during spring 2017.

While there is progression, there are still weaknesses primarily connected to the decentralised, complex and pluralistic nature of validation arrangements. For example, it is still not possible to collect data on results and methods used. The strengths of current arrangements are that the government is taking clear action on the development of validation on both regional and national level.

1.2 Introduction and evaluation

Sweden has made progress in the development of validation of non-formal and informal learning since the last European Inventory update was produced in 2014. Sweden now faces one of the most intense progressions since 2007 and the government is funding several projects on validation from 2016 onwards.

Since 2010, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (*Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan*) has had the task of coordinating and supporting the national structure for validation of prior learning. Cooperation with education and training providers, sector organisations, social partners, universities and regional representatives has been an essential part of this work. In 2012, the agency presented criteria and guidelines on validation of prior learning.

In 2015, Sweden progressed further. In the Budget Bill presented in September 2015, the government launched several initiatives to develop validation and suggested a total of SEK 141 million to strengthen validation measures. It should be noted however that most of the new budget means are focused on cutting handling times in assessment and recognition of foreign educational qualifications. At this juncture in time, it is not possible to evaluate the outcomes of these recently funded ventures.

In November 2015, the government decided on terms of reference for a new Committee of Inquiry organised as a national delegation for validation. The delegation consists of 15 members representing trade unions, employers' associations and national authorities and has taken the name 'Valideringsdelegationen 2015–2019'. Its main task is to follow, support and promote coordination of work to develop validation on both the regional and national levels. The delegation will among other things provide a proposal for a national strategy for validation that focuses on efficiency, is seen as long-term and provides an overall picture and better coordination of validation. At the time of writing this report, this strategy is planned to be presented at the end of February 2017. The delegation is commissioned to

continuously present proposals to the government in interim reports, as found necessary. The final report will be presented in December 2019. While there is progression, validation in Sweden has grown even more complex when several sectors, organisers and contexts are trying to find a common ground. Yet, the appointment of the Delegation for Validation is a sign that the different actors are given the opportunity to move towards more coordination on validation and therefore with the potential of less complexity in the future.

In general, validation is now becoming more and more focused on issues relating to the labour market. Due to the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers to Sweden during 2014 and 2015, a priority area is validation of immigrants' prior learning and knowledge. A project report was published in 2015 by the Public Employment Service focusing on validating immigrants' competencies (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015). Another more recent development is the 'fast tracks', i.e. *snabbspår* (Regeringskansliet, 2015b) focusing on providing faster pathways for immigrants with prior education and work experience in occupations where there is a strong demand in the labour market. Here validation is used as one of the measures, but also when the focus is on using validation to enable pathways for immigrants into the labour market, there is broad consensus that the structures and measures used must be general, so that they do not become counter-productive.

Further, in October 2015 a Swedish Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (SeQF) was implemented and from 1 January 2016 all qualifications providers are able to apply for level placement. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is in charge of evaluating such applications.

In June 2016, the Swedish government also presented a report in the Ministry Publications Series that contains legislation changes regarding validation. The report (Ds 2016:24 Validering med mervärde) is now being circulated for formal consultation. A Bill on Validation is planned to be presented to Parliament during spring 2017.

It is evident that a lot of initiatives have been taken since the 2014 report, although most of these ventures are in their initial stages. Therefore, it is hard to report on results and how these will impact the development of validation in Sweden.

1.3 Main changes since the 2014 update

In general, the actions that have been taken to develop validation since 2014 are positive. Yet, results of actions taken are not yet visible. Most of the initiatives and projects are quite recently launched – as stated in the introduction they are in many cases in their initial stages.

The formal definition is *Validering*. Thus, it follows the general European way of defining it, which is Validation. As was stated in the 2014 country report, the definition of validation was formulated in a report from the Ministry of Education in 2003 (Ds 2003:23, *Validering mm – fortsatt utveckling av vuxnas lärande*). The definition states '*Validation is a process which involves a structured assessment, evaluation, documentation and recognition of knowledge and competences possessed by a person independently of how it is acquired*'. This definition is included in the Education Act (Skollag 2010:800) and is also the common point of departure for standardised methods and approaches, standardised quality assurance methods and the clarification of roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved. In the recently presented report on validation that is presently being circulated for formal consultation, this definition is suggested to be modified to make it clearer.

In the 2014 country report, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education was responsible for coordinating and supporting a national structure for validation of prior learning and in cooperation with concerned national agencies, promote the participation from public education and sector organisations when strategies, methods and information about validation is being developed. From June 2016, this responsibility has been revised to focus on supporting sector organisations in their work with validation and development of validation models. The agency's responsibility to promote the use of validation within higher vocational education is also being emphasised.

The change of responsibilities for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education follows the government's decision to appoint a National Delegation for Validation 2015–2019. The delegation consists of 15 members representing trade unions, employers' associations and national authorities. Its main task is to follow, support and encourage a coordinated effort to develop validation on both a regional and national level. In the terms of reference¹, the delegation is assigned to:

- provide suggestions for a national strategy for validation;
- work to establish a consensus between educational institutions and the labour market regarding validation;
- follow and analyse the extent and results of validation within educational institutions and the labour market;
- spread knowledge about good practice concerning validation and work towards making knowledge about validation visible for the specific individuals need; and,
- provide suggestions to the government and take well-needed initiatives that strengthen the development of validation within the educational institutions and on the labour market, and propose necessary suggestions for statutes.

Each concerned national agency is autonomous within their responsibilities and the implementation of validation is decentralised at regional and local level and embedded in the municipal adult education system and public employment services. The responsibility for validation is divided between different actors, e.g. public authorities within the field of education, the Public Employment Service, adult education providers and competent bodies for regulated professions, etc. The central social partner organisations are also involved in the development and implementation of sector models of validation.

Validation in Sweden has been developed in a more decentralised manner, from the bottom up. Yet, recent efforts suggest that there are concrete actions taken to develop validation on a national level.

On 27 August 2015, the government decided to introduce a qualifications framework for lifelong learning. The qualifications framework was put into action on 1 October 2015. The framework is introduced in accordance with the European Parliament and Councils recommendation concerning a European framework for qualifications for lifelong learning². The government has levelled qualifications within the formal education system fulfilling the criteria of learning outcomes and quality assurance, for example upper secondary degrees. From 1 January 2016 all qualification providers are able to apply for level placement. Applications are evaluated by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education. Thus, the SeQF-system is now in place. Even if it is not mandatory for the provider of qualifications levelled in the SeQF to validate knowledge, skills and competences acquired in other settings, the principle of learning outcomes could facilitate the process of validation. The requirements of quality assurance can also be a driver of interest for different qualification providers to apply for levelling in the SeQF (link: <https://www.seqf.se>).

Due to the sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers to Sweden in 2014 and 2015, a priority area is the validation of immigrants' prior learning and knowledge. Since December 2010, the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) has been responsible for coordinating the two-year personalised introduction programme for newly arrived

¹ En samordnad utveckling av validering Dir. 2015:120. Link: <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/89a784a13d4c4989ab3ed7e2604c6351/en-samordnad-utveckling-av-validering-dir.-2015120.pdf>

² Interview with Helena Asp, the (new) validation representative for Sweden in the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group (EQF AG).

humanitarian immigrants. Validation is one of the key measures used by PES to make skills acquired in other countries more visible and transparent for Swedish employers. A project conducted by the Public Employment Service was reported in 2015 and a priority is to develop better tools for this. Another action is the 'fast tracks' that focus on developing faster pathways for immigrants with education and skills in professions where there is a strong demand in the labour market. Several vocations are already part of this action (Regeringskansliet, 2015b) (chefs, butchers, doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists and child care teachers). Validation and recognition of foreign qualifications are key methods used here.

In the Budget Bill presented in September 2015, the Swedish government proposed a total of SEK 141 million to strengthen validation (Regeringskansliet, 2015a). A large share of these extra budget means are allocated to bringing down waiting and processing times for assessment and recognition of foreign educational qualifications. The National Board of Health and Welfare was allocated SEK 65 million for 2016, to minimise the turnaround time for applications for licences in health care for applicants with an education from countries outside the EU and EES. SEK 42 million will be allocated yearly from 2017 and onwards, to secure long-term development. Increased resources have also been allocated to the Swedish Council for Higher Education with SEK 8 million in 2016 and from 2017 it is estimated that SEK 12.5 million will be needed to assess and validate foreign education. Moreover, in November 2015, the Swedish Council for Higher Education was commissioned to set up a pilot validation scheme for migrants who either lack full documentation of their educational qualification or have started but not completed a higher education.

Another venture included in the Budget Bill for 2016 is directed to enhancing the possibilities for validating real competence in higher education. It is a priority for the government that all individuals in need of having their actual competence assessed for admission or for credits are given that opportunity. The situation is not seen as working satisfactorily and therefore the government has allocated a temporary venture on validation to enable the development of more effective assessment of actual competencies. The Swedish Council for Higher Education is appointed to coordinate and support in this project aimed at building capacity for validation within. The venture is between 2016 and 2018 and is allocated SEK 30 million per year.

A further venture is to design a standard for validation to contribute to the development of models for validation in different business sectors. SEK 2 million is allocated for this project. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education will host the project. Also, the Swedish National Agency for Education has been allocated SEK 2 million per year for 2016 and 2017 to develop courses on validation for study and career counsellors in adult education.

Moreover, the Public Employment Service has been allocated extra funding to allow a more extensive use of validation measures for unemployed. Since February 2016, validation is organised as a specific programme within the Public Employment Service. To organise more flexible and individualised introduction programmes for newly arrived humanitarian immigrants, the PES also continues discussions with several labour market sectors and societal organisations to gradually add more professions to the fast tracks initiative. (Funding for the PES not included in the above mentioned SEK 141 million).

The extent to which the outcomes of validation are trusted by stakeholders and in society depends on context. For instance, in adult education at upper-secondary level vocational education, there has been quite some development on local levels – especially around validating health care assistants. With increased funding in 2016 and onwards, changes may be expected to be positive. Yet, these are often local structured validation programmes and therefore it might be difficult to make any general suggestions on how stakeholders view validation. With a new SeQF system, this might change in the future.

A barrier to validation in Sweden, touching on the discussion above, is that it is still hard to find information on the results and the extent to which validation is used and implemented.

The use of validation varies greatly in relation to regions, vocations and educational sectors. Yet, the government initiated several projects in 2015 and are aware of these issues. The National Delegation for Validation appointed to follow, support and promote coordination of work to develop validation and a SeQF system might enable and promote the prospect of easier access to information and data.

In June 2016, the Swedish government also presented a report in the Ministry Publications Series that contains legislation changes regarding validation. The report (Ds 2016:24 Validering med mervärde) is, at the time of writing, being circulated for formal consultation. A Bill on Validation is planned to be presented to Parliament during spring 2017.

Yet, these initiatives are very new and it is not possible to make any significant conclusions.

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Historically, the first initiative in the field of validating informal and non-formal learning was the Adult Education Initiative (*Kunskapslyftet 1997-2002*), including a number of pilot projects focusing on developing new forms of accreditation of prior learning and validation. Soon after, the Bill on Adult Learning and the Future Development of Adult Education (*Vuxnas lärande och utvecklingen av vuxenutbildningen, 2000/2001:72*) emphasised the fact that any resident in Sweden should be able to have his or her knowledge and competences validated within the framework of municipal adult education, and this validation should be documented. A report in the Ministry Publications Series (Ds 2003:23) stated that more time should be given to pilot projects and to further discussion before deciding on regulations and the passing of acts. As a result, in December 2003, the Swedish government appointed the Swedish National Commission on Validation (*Valideringsdelegationen*) for the period 2004-2007 to promote and further develop validation methods and enhance (regional) cooperation. The Commission's final report (*Valideringsdelegationen, 2008*) 'Towards a National Structure' (*Mot en nationell struktur*) summarises the work of the commission and provides a number of recommendations regarding the further development of validation in Sweden, which has guided the present development of validation in Sweden. The Education Act (*Skollagen, 2010:800*) states the possibility to undertake validation in all types of adult education, including Swedish for immigrants (Sfi).

Since 2014, some new strategies and initiatives on validation have emerged. In November 2015, the government decided to appoint a Committee of Inquiry in the form of a national delegation. Its main task – given in the terms of reference – is to follow, support and promote coordination of work to develop validation on both the regional and national level. Validation is further covered as a part of the lifelong learning strategy in Sweden – especially in relation to adult education. As already mentioned, a national system for qualification (SEQF) was launched in 2015.

Currently, a priority area of validation in Sweden is validation of immigrants' knowledge and competencies and, in general, it is focused on supporting the overall European agenda of a lifelong learning strategy.

The definition of validation was formulated in 2003 (Ds 2003:23, *Validering mm – fortsatt utveckling av vuxnas lärande*). The definition states: 'Validation is a process which involves a structured assessment, evaluation, documentation and recognition of knowledge and competences possessed by a person independently of how it is acquired'. This definition is included in the Education Act (*Skollag 2010:800*). In 2016, this definition is still the same, but in the recently presented ministerial report on validation (Ds 2016:24, *Validering med mervärde*) mentioned above, this definition is suggested to be modified to make it clearer.

According to an ordinance by the government (2011:1162), the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has had the responsibility to coordinate and support a national structure for validation of prior learning and in cooperation with concerned national agencies,

promote the participation from public education and sector organisations when strategies, methods and information about validation is being developed. The ordinance was updated in June 2016 and now states that (§ 6) “The authority shall promote the participation from sector organisations when strategies, methods and information about validation is being developed”. Each concerned national agency is autonomous within their responsibilities and the implementation of validation is decentralised at regional and local level and embedded in the municipal adult education system and public employment services. The responsibility for validation is divided between different actors, e.g. public authorities within the field of education, the public employment service, adult education providers, competent bodies for regulated professions etc. The central social partner organisations are also involved in the development and implementation of sector models of validation. A list of providers of validation across the different sectors is available at: <https://www.valideringsinfo.se/>. Any individual seeking validation of prior learning has the opportunity to take up the process of validation, as guided on the website, even though individuals are not targeted specifically at the website.

Further, The Education Act (*Skollagen*, 2010:800) states the possibility to undertake validation in all types of adult education, including Swedish for immigrants (Sfi). In the above mentioned ministerial report on validation, it is suggested that it will be mandatory for all adult education providers to offer students validation from 1 July 2017.

2.2 Validation in education and training

Credit systems

As was described in the 2014 country report, Swedish curricula are on the whole outcomes-based. Each sector of formal education (e.g. GE/VET, HVE, HE) has its own unit-based credit system, which can be used when validating an individual’s knowledge, skills and competences. The individual, probably guided by a counsellor, must decide which credit system could be applicable to that specific purpose and choose an assessor accordingly. The decision must rest upon which sector of formal education is applicable.

Validation can be used to acquire credits or points towards a qualification. Validation can result in both partial and full qualifications. The national criteria and guidelines present the European credit systems applicable to higher education (e.g. ECTS) and vocational education and training (e.g. ECVET) in general terms, but no specific references to the actual use of the European credit systems in the validation process in the Swedish context is explained. The Swedish government has emphasised the mobility aspect of ECVET and there is no regulation that supports the use of ECVET for lifelong learning.

Standards

There is no regulated framework for validation in Sweden and in 2016 there is still no national system although the process continues to develop. As such, plans to introduce a national system are progressing. The National Delegation for Validation 2015-2019 has the responsibility to coordinate development in validation until 2019. Public agencies, such as the Public Employment Service, the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Council for Higher Education and the National Council of Adult Education (third sector education covering civic/liberal adult education, including folk high schools, study circles, etc.) all have separate responsibilities or governmental commissions to work on validation or the recognition of prior learning in their respective areas. In the earlier mentioned ministerial report on validation the tasks for each of the sector authorities are suggested to be clarified and expanded. The central social partner organisations are also involved in the development and implementation of sector models of validation in their specific sectors.

As was stated in the 2014 country report, validation practitioners in Sweden include different types of actors responsible for different stages of a validation process. Career and guidance counsellors within adult education, or the employment service, are generally key practitioners in the stage preceding the validation process in order to identify the purpose of

a validation for the individual and to follow up the process at different stages. In order to be able to make assessments of an individual's knowledge, skills or competences in a certain trade or subject, more in-depth knowledge in that specific area is needed. In this stage of a validation process qualified teachers or professionals within that specific area/sector lead the process.

Due to the recent increase of asylum seekers to Sweden, focus has been on developing better validation methods to assess immigrants' prior learning. Both increased funding and new initiatives from 2014-2016 focuses on this target group, along with a more general focus on building a better and more accessible validation system. A concrete process, expressed in policy, is the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry, a new delegation for validation that will present a new strategy for validation in the spring of 2017.

Open educational resources and MOOCs are not mentioned in any recent documents on validation.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

There are not yet data on projects concerning validation and the labour market but since 2014 there are clear developments. A notable one is the so called 'fast tracks' (*snabbspår*) initiative (Regeringskansliet, 2015b). In this venture the Public Employment Service, in collaboration with the different social partners, focus on developing more effective series of introduction activities for newly arrived immigrants with education and skills in areas with strong demand in the labour market. Measures for validating immigrants prior learning is a key component in several of the fast-tracks that has been started so far and more vocations are added continuously.

As in the 2014 country report, standards developed by different business sector organisations are used as trade-specific frameworks for the validation of vocational knowledge, skills and competences. These are mainly occupational standards focusing on an outcome-based evaluation of the extent to which an individual knows a certain occupation or trade. It is worth emphasising that the sector models have been developed in cooperation with business sector organisations, such as the Swedish Trade Federation (*Svensk Handel*), the Swedish Construction Industry Training Board (*Byggnadsindustrins Yrkesnämnd*) and the Vocational Training and Working Environment Council (Transport Trades, TYA), with part funding and support from national public agencies.

2.3.1 Skills audits

As in the 2014 country report, the notion of 'skills audits' is not relevant to Swedish formal education. All learners, including learners in vocational education and training, who aim to have their prior learning and competences validated, must follow the procedure relevant to the actual level of education. In higher vocational education and in university education there is the concept of Real competence (*Reell kompetens*), which means a person's actual knowledge, skills, and competences. This competence can be developed in formal education (organised education in the formal education system), non-formal learning (organised education outside the formal education system), or informal learning (e.g. working life or everyday life). Competence standards define the learning outcomes that an individual must have to be assessed and to be recognised to possess a qualification, such as a degree, a certification or an occupational certificate. In 2016, the government allocated funds to enhance validation of real competences in higher education (as was mentioned above).

As in 2014, models of validation developed by sector organisations, skills audits are still commonly used, specifically, in the stage of 'competence mapping'. There is no national classification for skills and the Public Employment Service, as well as the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, identifies this as a field for development. A skills classification would be useful for both skills matching and validation in different trades.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

Validation is performed and supported through Swedish '*folkbildning*' (liberal/civic adult education for adults), which is considered to be part of the third sector. It has largely focused on validation of generic skills and competences. '*Folkbildning*' is a parallel educational pathway to the formal system, with strong connections to various NGOs covering most of civil society. Folkbildningsrådet, the National Council of Adult Education, is one of the actors included in the reference group appointed to support the National Delegation for Validation.

3 Links to national qualification systems

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education notes that the link between validation and the NQF and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is under discussion and needs further development. The SeQF is now formally in place and, starting from 2016, qualification providers not levelled by the government can apply for levelling in the framework. Since all qualifications included in the SeQF need to comply with the principle of learning outcomes and quality assurance, the transparency of qualifications will increase. The principle of learning outcomes could be a facilitator for validation of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in alternative ways. If economic sectors find the SeQF useful, they now have access to an instrument for levelling of their qualifications expressed in learning outcomes thus facilitating validation towards levelled qualifications. Further information is available at: <https://www.seqf.se/>.

In the 2014 country report, The National Agency for Higher Vocational Education states that due to lack of data collection from the different actors, including education and training and labour market sectors, it is not possible to assess the overall scope of inputs, outputs and outcomes of validation in Sweden. This might change in the future because of a more centralised model for validation.

4 Standards

As in 2014, the aim of the national criteria and guidelines is to ensure a common quality approach in validation. However, it should be noted that although the criteria and guidelines are available for all providers to use, they are not mandatory. The systematic quality assurance requires that validation at all levels by different actors from the national level to individual validations is performed according to national standards. Quality assurance implies a structured and systematic approach with the aim to develop the quality of validation. It is recommended to the actors that they use appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in the validation process.

It is however necessary to look at the new SeQF system and other ventures that are now taking place in Sweden.

The Swedish curricula are on the whole outcome-based. Each formal education level has its own unit-based credit system, which can be used when validating an individual's knowledge, skills and competences. Validation can result in both partial and full qualifications in adult education, but in higher education there is no possibility for a full qualification. Standards developed by different business sector organisations are used as trade specific frameworks for the validation of vocational knowledge, skills and competences. These are mainly occupational standards focusing on an outcome-based evaluation of the extent to which an individual knows a certain occupation or trade.

In 2016, standards are being developed. As was mentioned above, one project is to develop a standard for validation to contribute to the development of business sector models for validation. SEK 2 million is allocated for this project. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education will host the project. Also, the Swedish Council for Higher Education has been appointed to support universities and university colleges in establishing a permanent structure for assessment of real competence within higher education. It is not

yet possible to say if these projects will enhance the market value of validation in relation to formal education and training.

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

According to an ordinance by the government (2011:1162), the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has had the responsibility of coordinating and supporting a national structure for validation of prior learning and, in cooperation with concerned national agencies, promote the participation from public education and sector organisations when strategies, methods and information about validation are being developed. The ordinance was updated in June 2016 and the National Delegation for Validation 2015–2019 will take on the coordination and development of validation.

Each concerned national agency is autonomous within their responsibilities and the implementation of validation is decentralised at regional and local level and embedded in the municipal adult education system and public employment services. The responsibility for validation is divided between different actors, e.g. public authorities within the field of education, the public employment service, adult education providers, competent bodies for regulated professions etc. The central social partner organisations are also involved in the development and implementation of sector models of validation. A list of providers of validation across the different sectors is available at: <https://www.valideringsinfo.se/>.

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

From 2016, the National Delegation for Validation is commissioned to follow, support and promote coordination of work to develop validation. In the recently presented ministerial report now being circulated for formal consultation, the government has also emphasised the task of each national authority to promote and support the use of validation within their area of responsibility. The clarified responsibility of each national agency includes easy access to information about validation for both individuals and practitioners.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has had an overall task to provide guidance to regional and local actors and providers of validation. The national criteria and guidelines that were produced in 2012 is an example of this. However, each national agency within the field of education has the responsibility to provide guidance to the education providers in its area of responsibility.

Also, the Ministry report (2016:24) points out that the task for each national agency within the field of education and for the Public Employment Service needs to be clarified and expanded. Yet, it is not possible to say how this will be organised in detail.

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

As in 2014, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Council for Higher Education and the Public Employment Service are all tasked to inform and raise awareness about validation within their areas of responsibilities.

Individuals are normally informed about validation through guidance or career counsellors in municipalities, in adult education at upper secondary level and in the public employment services.

6.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

The measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices are the same for the guidance practitioners as for all other actors and stakeholders as listed above. In 2016 this looks the same, while keeping in mind that this might progress further in the near future, see 8.3.

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In 2014, validation practitioners in Sweden included different types of actors responsible for different stages of a validation process. Career and guidance counsellors within adult education, or the employment service, are generally key practitioners in the stage preceding a validation process in order to identify the purpose of a validation for the individual and to follow up the process at different stages. In order to be able to make assessments of an individual's knowledge, skills or competences in a certain trade or subject, more in-depth knowledge in that specific area is needed. In this stage of a validation process, qualified teachers or professionals within that specific area/sector lead the process. In 2016, the profiles of validation practitioners has not changed.

7.2 Qualification requirements

In 2014, there were no formal requirements for carrying out a validation. When setting grades or issuing a certificate, you need to be qualified/authorised/accredited, for example as a teacher holding a teacher certificate, but otherwise it is not regulated. The national criteria and guidelines note that those professionals who contribute to carrying out validation should meet set competence requirements. Persons carrying out competence mapping include for example a guidance counsellor for studies or occupations, an advisor in a public employment office, or a teacher of a profession/occupation. The institution carrying out a competence assessment can be a school authority or a dedicated provider of a validation/occupation assessment in a sector. Persons who can make the assessment of a partial or a full qualification include for example a qualified teacher, an assessor or examiner with a mandate from the authority to make competence assessment. No changes can be identified in 2016, but the government is allocating money to develop courses on validation, as was mentioned above.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

SEK 2 million per year has been allocated to The Swedish National Agency for Education, enabling them to develop courses for career and guidance counsellors within adult education. The project will take place between 2016 and 2017.

8 Quality assurance

The aim of the national criteria and guidelines is to ensure a common quality approach in validation. However, it should be noted that although the criteria and guidelines are available for all providers to use, they are not mandatory. The systematic quality assurance requires that validation at all levels by different actors, from the national level to individual validations, be performed according to national standards. Quality assurance implies a structured and systematic approach with the aim to develop the quality of validation. It is recommended to the actors that they use appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in the validation process. In 2016, a research project within the Nordic Network for Adult Learning will be launched to try out a model for enhancing the quality of validation models.

In the 2014 report, quality assurance is seen as a central concept in validation in Sweden. According to the national criteria and guidelines, quality of validation will be achieved through carrying out validations in line with the national criteria and guidelines and when the results of validation are recognised in both the labour market and education. In this respect, it is important to achieve transparency with respect to how the validation process has been carried out and what has resulted.

The evaluation framework is provided in the national criteria and guidelines of validation in Sweden. The national criteria and guidelines focus primarily on systematic quality work and assurance to carry out validation at first hand and do not include external quality assurance. The criteria and guidelines may however be used as a basis for future development of external quality assurance. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education states that external quality assurance can be organised within the existing system in education and training. External quality assurance in labour market sectors remains to be developed, and could be linked to a national qualification framework

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

Development of validation of non-formal and informal learning has mainly been publicly funded by the national government through the Ministry of Education and Research, and the Ministry of Employment. Currently, the institution/sector that implements the validation is responsible for covering the actual costs of the validation process. The National Agency for Higher Vocational Education states that due to lack of data collection from the different actors, including education and training and labour market sectors, it is not possible to assess the overall scope of inputs, outputs and outcomes of validation in Sweden. In 2016, this remains the same, although recent governmental initiatives suggest changes in the future.

9.1 Funding

Part of the funding has been channelled through the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, but this is no longer the case. The agency only coordinates and promotes the development of a national structure for validation.

Much of the validation taking place in Sweden today is performed within the funding framework of the formal education and training system. This makes it difficult to assess the total amount of resources used for validation.

The responsibility for adapting the validation methods to the specific needs of a certain industry has been allocated to the business sector organisations themselves. The development of the methods has been funded partly by the government, but many business sector organisations have also contributed resources to develop methods and procedures for validation.

According to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education a central area of the development of validation is the question of how validation will be financed regarding

both the costs of validation itself and the costs for a person during the validation. There are still structural obstacles and that is the reason why the question of financing has not been included in the national criteria and guidelines of validation.

9.2 Distribution of costs

In the present situation, the institution/sector that implements the validation covers the overall costs and is also responsible for covering the costs of the candidate during the validation process. The individual is usually not required to pay a fee for going through a validation process. Not much has changed in 2016.

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

Data evidencing the benefits of validation to individuals is still not available in 2016. Since Sweden lacks general registers of individuals who have gone through a validation process, no solid evidence of benefits to individuals from validation has been established. There are however several 'success stories' available, in which individuals, who have gone through validation, testify to the benefits they have experienced both on a private and professional level.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

As stated in the 2014 report, the collection of national data regarding validation in Sweden has still not been given priority, although many providers of validation hold their own registers of their validation activities. Estimates of the number of applicants or persons actually going through validation are hard to obtain, since the term validation is used for many different kinds of activities and end results. Validation is also performed in many different institutional settings.

In the present situation, it is difficult to carry out monitoring and follow-up analysis, since systematic data collection is lacking in the different areas within the national structure. There is also the problem of how the concept of validation is interpreted in the formal adult education system. '*Validering*' in Swedish covers the whole validation process, and thus, different persons interpret validation in many different ways. Accordingly, systematic data collection may show fallacies based on this. In 2016, the situation remains the same, but changes might occur because of recently established ventures (the SeQF system, the National Delegation for Validation and government funding). Also, in the Ministry report that is now being circulated for formal consultation (Ds 2016:24), it is suggested that each national agency will be tasked to annually account for the amount of validation being performed in their respective sector of responsibility.

9.4.2 Validation users

See above.

9.4.3 Validation and migrants / refugees and other disadvantaged groups

There are significant efforts to develop validation models that address the needs of migrants/refugees. Today, newly arrived humanitarian immigrants are a clear target group. In 2015, the Swedish Public Employment Service reported on a project focused on developing methods and processes to expand the use of validation of occupational skills for newly arrived immigrants.

10 Validation methods

It is important to point out that there is not one single national validation process; there are in fact different processes in place. The actual process will depend on: whether validation is part of formal education or part of the private sector, adult education or higher education, and/or performed by accredited actors or non-accredited, etc. Thus a variety of methods are in use covering the full scale from self-assessment to formal tests and examinations.

In the national criteria and guidelines, the methods are described as follows: the competence mapping (*Kompetenskartläggning*) must be structured and can be carried out in different ways, e.g. debate, interview, analysing the existing documents, self-assessment, theoretical tests and practical demonstrations. It is recommended that references are attached.

Competence assessment (*Kompetensbedömning*) may result in a competence certification or a recommendation to undertake complementary studies. The assessment of a partial or a full qualification is carried out in accordance with the qualification requirements through theoretical examinations and practical skills' demonstrations.

In the 2014 country report, it was proposed that the national criteria and guidelines include a description of the validation processes in Sweden. It is an outcome-based approach where the performing of validation varies according to the goals and background of the individual, but it encompasses 'competence mapping' and 'competence assessment'. The validation result that best supports the goals of the individual needs to be quality assured according to the level of formal recognition, i.e. a statement of competence mapping does not acquire the same proof and assessors' qualifications as a competence certification (full qualification).

In adult education, the guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education have another approach. First, a general competence mapping aims to describe in general the student's knowledge and competences in order for the student to identify which possibilities are available to him/her in adult education. The adult learner has a central role in the validation process and his/her interests guide the direction of the process. The general validation process can be carried out together with a guidance or career counsellor and tools and methods such as discussions, self-assessment, portfolio or similar can be used.

After the general mapping of competences, an in-depth mapping of competences can be carried out. It is also possible to go straight to this process, without first carrying out a general competence mapping, if the student already has a clear goal. In-depth mapping is more focused than the general one and aims to describe the student's knowledge and competence in specific areas. The in-depth validation process can be carried out together with guidance or career counsellors and a subject or vocational teacher. The validation is implemented using the curricula as a standard.

A summarised assessment is made after the mapping of the learner's competences has been completed. A learner who gets his/her competences validated is able to get the assessment in writing in the form of a certificate (*'intyg'*), but not a formal grade, as in the case of formal adult education. In 2016 not much has changed. However, in the Ministry report that is now being circulated for formal consultation (Ds 2016:24), changes in the legislation concerning adult education is proposed, aiming at an alignment of the validation processes in adult education to the approach described in the national criteria and guidelines for validation.

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate	X	X	x
Declarative methods	X	X	x
Interview	X	X	x
Observation	X	X	x

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Portfolio method	X	X	x
Presentation	X	X	x
Simulation and evidence extracted from work	X	X	x

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11.2 Websites

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11.3 Sources

Division for Upper Secondary and Adult Education and Training, Ministry of Education and Research

Principal Secretary to the National Delegation for Validation

National coordinator for validation, The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education.



Country report Sweden

2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 Council recommendation on validation encourages Member States to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018. These arrangements will enable individuals to increase the visibility and value of their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home or in voluntary activities.

This country report is one of 36 that, together with a synthesis report and thematic reports, constitute the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The inventory is a regularly updated overview of validation practices and arrangements in all Member States, EFTA countries and Turkey. It is a reference point for information on validation in Europe. It is organised around the principles defined in the 2012 Council Recommendation that were further elaborated in the European guidelines for validation. This is its sixth update (2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2016).



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