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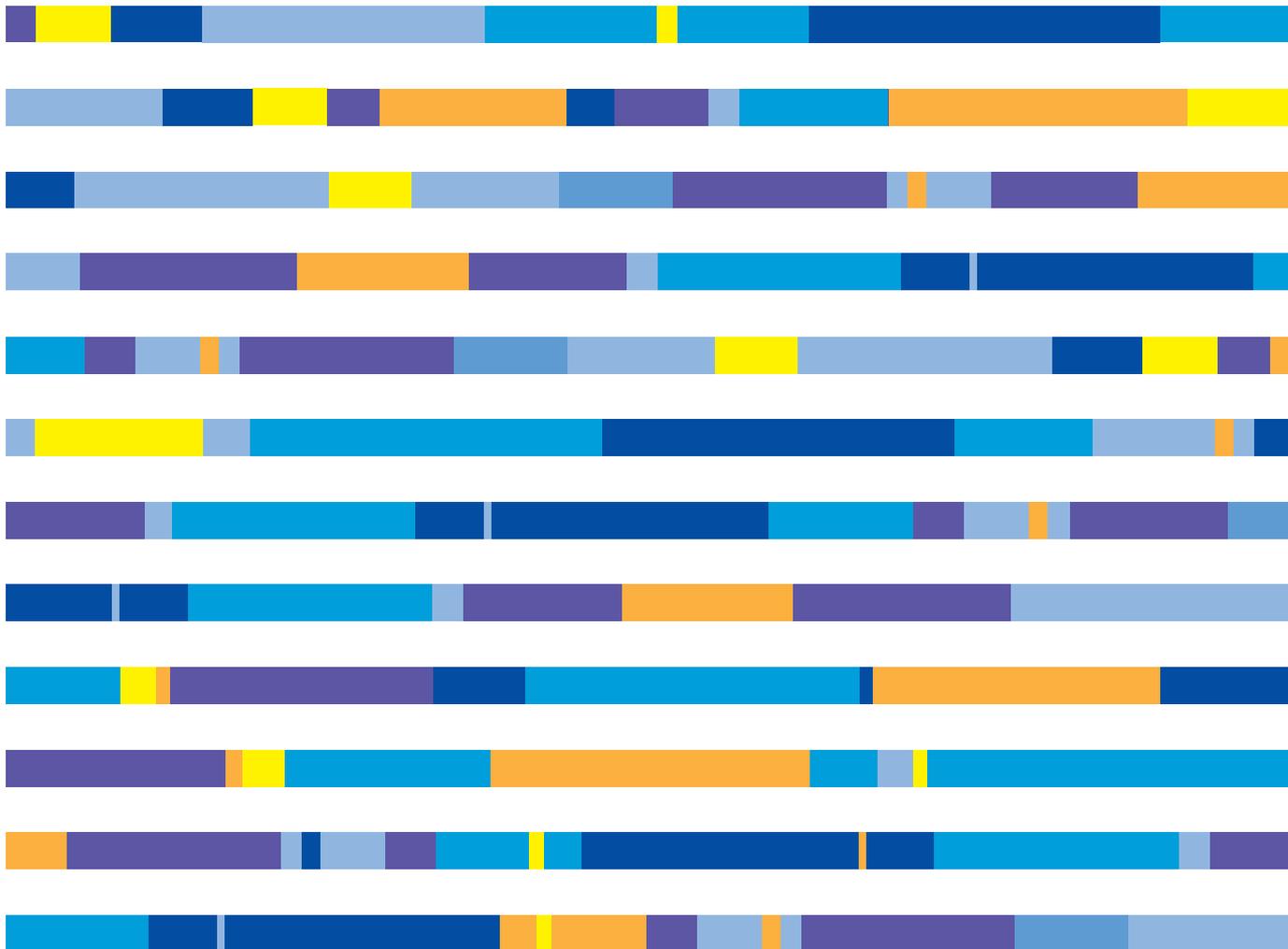
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update

COUNTRY REPORT: **DENMARK**

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1 Introduction

Since the 2016 Inventory update, the main changes for validation of prior learning (VPL) in Denmark are identified in relation to adult education – both general adult education (AVU) and adult vocational education and training (AMU), vocational education and training (VET) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET)

In 2015, a VET reform with a separate programme for adults (Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training for persons over the age of 25 years - EUV) was implemented. Due to the law, a mandatory VPL for the candidate prior to the education is carried out, leading to an individual shortening of the VET period. Due to the legislation, the assessment for shortening is determined according to principles for both a standardized and an individual part of the VPL, with the criteria for the standardized part of the validation determined by the Vocational Training Committees for each branch.

Based on an evaluation of the EUV (carried out by The Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, 2017), which clearly showed that shortening – as much as possible – is not a primary motivation for the adult learners, the criteria for the individual part of VPL was revised. VPL no longer leads to a compulsory shortening of the EUV. Instead, this is optional with the individual learner being able to choose whether they would like to make use of it or not.

Additional to this, adult learners, who do not prefer an individual shortening must be offered teaching at a higher level, or alternatively other relevant vocational teaching. This adjustment, among others, was brought into effect by 1 January 2018.

The Three-partite agreement for Adult Vocational Education and CVET (2018-2021) addresses the PIAAC results, 2013, with a high priority for the upskilling of general basic skills (general adult education - AVU, Preparatory Adult Education - FVU, Dyslexia education - OBU and vocational skills – AMU and VET. This priority in the agreement is specifically supported by a targeted effort to motivate employees and enterprises for more systematic work on raising employees' basic and vocational skills.

A fund of EUR 53.7 million (DKR 400 million) is earmarked for the transformation and further development of skills and competences according to comprehensive labour market changes.

For adult education and CVET, the use of VPL is prioritized with various means and incentives. For the AMU there will be a higher taximeter to the VET providers, including also for the VPL. Besides, the wage compensation is raised from 80% to 100% of the unemployment benefit. For both users, employers and educational institutions, these financial incentives are expected to motivate employers for more adult vocational education and CVET for employees.

In VPL, there is a focus on the VPL steps of declaration and documentation of competences, though not in terms of standardized methods and tools. This corresponds with the legal framework, which leaves the implementation of VPL arrangements to the VPL providers, the education institutions in charge of the specific education. Development of methods and tools for the declaration and documentation of prior learning has a high priority at regional and sectoral level.

According to the progress in relation to the Council Recommendation on Validation, since the 2016 Inventory, these concern the main changes described above.

In the 2016 Inventory, it was stated that:

- *Resources could be more earmarked to the VPL activity, instead of full dependency on taximeters.*

This has not been changed. However, the taximeter as well as employers' wage compensation for employees' absence has been raised. These elements are expected to motivate the VPL providers as well as employers to enhance the VPL activity.

- *The need to link the VPL-activity for individuals to the development of job-profiles. This means involving the employers at workplace level in a more responsible way for showing the job-perspectives to employees, potentially having a VPL.*

It is still the situation that VPL is carried out only by the educational institutions in relation to the specific education or training. However, there are project based results of cooperation across stakeholders, among these also enterprises, with the aim of initiating a more systematic work on VPL activities at workplace level. The Interreg project, Yggdrasil, focuses on the development of a Life-CV for continuing documentation of the individual's informal and non-formal learning in all sectors.

- *In many ways, Denmark has a well -functioning education system giving good conditions for VPL. However, there could be a call for more commitment to VPL, from the employers at the firm level, from the social partners and from the responsible actors in the education system.*

The situation is the same in 2018.

According to progress in relation to the 2012 Council Recommendation the situation in Denmark is as follows:

Since 2007, the legal framework (law no 556) has ensured individuals' legal right to have their prior learning validated.

This includes the possibilities of obtaining a full or a part qualification (recommendation, 1.a + 1.b)

The recommended VPL-arrangement basically includes the four phases, identification, documentation, assessment and recognition (2.a -2.d).

The results of a VPL is guaranteed in terms of the linkage to national qualification frameworks – also in line with European Qualifications Framework. (3.a).

The VPL providers (the educational institutions) are obliged to provide information and guidance to the individuals and organisations. (3.b)

Some critical remarks are expressed in relation to this principle as individuals as well as workplaces sometimes experience this not to be satisfying. This refers especially to information about the practical arrangements, the use of methods and tools – and not least: how to prepare the documentation of prior learning.

Disadvantaged groups – and long termed unemployed people have the same legal right to have their prior learning assessed – but as the VPL is only carried out by educational providers, the barrier could be that the individuals from these groups need to decide about the choice of education before being able to have the VPL. (3.c)

The assessed and if possible the recognised competences are based on transparent quality assurance measures. The VPL providers are responsible for QA and the assessment is based on common standards and criteria. The branch committees are responsible for setting the standards and criteria for recognition. Hence the reliability and trust of VPL outcomes is high across sectors. (3.f)

As for the competence requirements of VPL professionals, there seems to be a need for a more specific competence development. The typical VPL staff are teachers and

trainers – and guidance counsellors. But there is not a specific teaching or competence development programme for VPL in DK. And there are no specific formal competence requirements. (3.h).

As the responsibility of VPL is in the hands of the educational institutions, the cross sectoral cooperation among stakeholders could be improved in Denmark. Especially the third sector is very much engaged in the development of VPL methods, approach, tools and competence development for the sector. In enterprises, there is not a specific focus on VPL at the workplace. The legal framework clearly states that informal and non-formal learning – acquired no matter where and how – must be included in the overall validation and so it is. However, there is no doubt, that a more coordinated cooperation among sectors and stakeholders could further improve the common understanding of learning acquired in all settings and how to more systematically work out the documentation.

The barriers for some individuals concerning the documentation of their learning clearly demonstrates that resources from all sectors could help the individual better understand how to prepare for the VPL.

Interviews carried out with individuals show that important documentation of experience is sometimes missing from the documentation because the individual lacks sufficient support for this. (4.a)

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Though not directly addressed as 'upskilling pathways', the legal framework for validation of prior learning (in Danish RKV) serves as key instruments for upskilling pathways within the Adult Education (AVU) and the Adult Vocational Education and Training (AMU) programmes together with the new VET Programme for Adults (EUV).

The VPL procedure is known in Danish as the (individual) 'assessment of real competences' *realkompetencevurdering* (RKV) or *individuel kompetencevurdering* (IKV)¹.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has been on the policy agenda in Denmark for about 20 years and is regarded a key element to promote lifelong learning in Denmark. In practice, validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark broadly speaking provides individuals with the following opportunities:

- to be granted access to formal education and training programmes if they do not meet the formal entry requirements,
- to get exemptions for parts of a formal education and training programme and/ or to have an individual tailored education and training programme,

¹ Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science recommend the following use of the terms: "When prior learning assessment systems are referred to in general and in relation to the educational institutions' overall task of assessment and validation of prior learning, the term RKV is used. In the case of prior learning assessments within the individual programmes both IKV and RKV are used, as the term IKV is used within all educational areas, with the exception of the further education system for adults, where RKV is used" (RKV Working Group Report, Annex 1, Ministry of Children and Education, November 2011). Source: <http://www.viauc.dk/viden-om-realkompetence/rkv-hvad-og-hvorfor/hvad-er-realkompetence/Sider/begreberne-rkv-og-ikv.aspx>

- to acquire a 'certificate of competence' leading to access/ exemptions in adult education and training programmes.
- to obtain 'education certificates' for parts of/or a whole education programme on the basis of validation of prior learning.

Competence assessment and possible outcomes in terms of access, exemption and acquiring certificates varies between the different education and training sectors e.g. VET, HE and adult education and training. For almost all formal adult education and training, a legal framework for VPL based on common principles has been in place since 2007. VET programmes for adults are targeted at adults 25 years and above but in the other sectors there are no age regulations.

Within this framework, it is a legal right for individuals to request an assessment of their prior learning in relation to the standards of a given education and training programme no matter where and how competences have been acquired.

Validation has been developed in Denmark from both a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. The legislation and the formal framework have been set nationally, but the implementation is decentralized at the provider level. Financial constraints still pose obstacles to implementation and great differences still remain between the educational institutions with regards to their level of activity. However, the Three-partite agreement (2018-2021) include financial incentives for both education providers and for enterprises in order to remove former financial constraints for more participation in Adult Vocational Education.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has also been an important focal point for many years in the non-formal sector especially among organisations and institutions engaged in liberal education. Tools for documenting knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education etc. have been developed.

In the field of adult learning, in 2010 – 2011, the Ministry of Education carried out an evaluation of the implementation of the 2007 Act no. 556 (Danish Evaluation Institute, 2010b) which provides the legal basis for VPL within adult education and training programmes. The evaluation concluded that VPL within the adult education and training programmes receives broad support from relevant stakeholders (including social partners) and is recognised as a very important instrument to promote participation in adult and continuing education and training. However, there is still considerable potential for development and improvement concerning information/awareness raising, standardization, quality assurance and cooperation between stakeholders (educational institutions, job centres, unemployment funds, trade unions, third sector, etc.).

In February 2013 the government launched an ambitious plan for growth in Denmark ("Væktsplan.dk) including the strengthening of quality in public adult education and training and a reform of vocational education and training. A renewed legal framework for vocational education and training also including further promotion and development of VPL especially for adults.

In 2018, due to the renewed three-partite agreement about CVET (2018-2021), a new national initiative has been launched with an institution-neutral unit for providing information, advice and guidance (IAG) to employees and enterprises to motivate participation in more CVET. The social partners' share the responsibility for IAG models to be developed and implemented. The PIAAC, 2013, in Denmark pointed out the fact of inadequate level of basic skills in reading and writing for about 600 000 adults; and similarly inadequate ICT skills for simple problem-solving counting for one million adults. This initiative mentioned above addresses the issue of upskilling pathways.

In 2015, a three-partite agreement for labour market inclusion of refugees was made by the Government and social partners; and also a bipartite agreement between the state and the municipalities in Denmark. A new programme for basic vocational education and training, 'Integration basic education' (IGU) was established. A skills audit is an integral part of the IGU.

In Denmark, the VPL is regulated by laws and agreements as follows:

- The legislation for upper general education including executive order BEK nr 130 of 21/02/2011 entitles students to get credit transfers for prior learning on the basis of an individual assessment
- The legislation for VET² (2015) for adults aged 25 and above (EUV) includes a general principle of a mandatory individual competence assessment as a basis for preparation of a personal education plan. The personal education plan is based on an assessment of the students' competences and outlines an individual pathway through the VET system. Changes were made in 2017 (see below).
- Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007³, entitled 'Development of the VPL in adult education and continuing training', effective from August 2007 gives each individual the right to have his/her prior learning experiences validated in relation to specific goals of adult education and continuing training programmes⁴. Citizens from other EU countries are granted the same rights to undergo validation processes. Act no. 556 includes the following six educational fields as part of adult education:
 - Single course subjects in general adult education (AVU);
 - Single course subjects in general upper secondary education;
 - Vocational training programme (AMU);
 - VET programme for adults, 25 +⁵
 - Short-cycle post-secondary adult education (VVU); and
 - Medium-cycle post-secondary adult education ('Diploma' programme).

According to Danish law, the assessment must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes.

Since 2007, legislation⁶ allows individuals to gain access to short-cycle and medium-cycle Higher Education (Bachelor-level degrees) based on an individual competence assessment. The educational institutions are responsible for information, guidance and assessment of the individual. The Ministry of Education⁷ and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science⁸ are responsible for the legislative framework for the assessment of prior learning and for taking national initiatives for implementing the

² www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=164802

³ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/r0710.aspx?id=25349>

⁴ In 2001 the further education system for adults was established as a parallel system to the ordinary education system. It consists of Basic Adult Education (GVU) up to Master's level programmes and aims to award certificates of competences to adults, and to offer further learning and education. In 2015, the Basic Adult Education (GVU) has been replaced by the VET programme for adults (EUV), aged 25.

<http://uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/Om%20uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne.aspx>

⁵ There is a standardised and an individual part of the validation which takes place before the student starts at the EUV. The criteria for the standardised part of the validation – with the aim of shortening the VET period is settled by the Vocational Training Committees for each branch. Based on an evaluation of the EUV (carried out by The Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, 2017), the criteria for the individual part of VPL, prior to the EUV, were revised. This means that VPL will not lead to a compulsory shortening of the learning trajectory any more. Instead, this will be optional with the individual learner being able to choose whether they would like to make use of it or not.

⁶ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=145524>

⁷ <http://eng.uvm.dk/>

⁸ http://fivu.dk/en?set_language=en&cl=en

legislation. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects with the aim of developing tools, methods and procedures.

In 2016, the Danish Ministry of Defence initiated a review of the Danish Veteran Policy for Army Personnel. The Ministry of Higher Education & Science and The Ministry of Education participated in the review in order to help improve validation processes and access to education/training for veterans, including the promotion of greater awareness of existing opportunities in the field of education/training.

Based on the review, a new initiative, 2017, means an increased focus on veterans' competences to be included in the assessment of study competences and potential exemptions for relevant education and work experience, when they apply for access within the formal education system, e.g. by admission with 'other admission criteria' (Kvote 2).⁹

2.2 Validation in education and training

The legal framework for VPL is set nationally by Act no 556 (2007). The implementation of the legislation is decentralized. The legislation provides a framework that outlines how the educational institutions must act to promote quality assurance and to ensure evaluation with a view to developing quality systems, methods, etc.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education made a national action plan on VPL with four initiatives taking place across all relevant adult educational areas:

- Mapping out the key players in guidance and counselling,
- Examining the possibilities of applying a broader perspective in the VPL in the adult educational system, including a vocational as well as employment perspective,
- Quality assurance with a special focus on developing a code of conduct VPL,
- An emphasis on improving information to support a broader implementation of VPL in all adult educational areas.

Educational institutions are responsible for information, counselling and guidance, and for assessing and approving validation within their educational and training programmes. Educational institutions also have the responsibility for quality assurance, review and evaluation.

Other stakeholders act as guidance institutions, e.g. Job centres (PES), trade unions, unemployment security funds and the third sector.

The validation model (Figure 2.1.) from 2011, still illustrates (2018) the recommended process for VPL in an educational perspective in the context of Denmark.¹⁰

⁹ <http://esdhweb.ucl.dk/1162199.Hyrdebrev%20vedr.%20veteraners%20muligheder%20for%20optagelse.pdf>

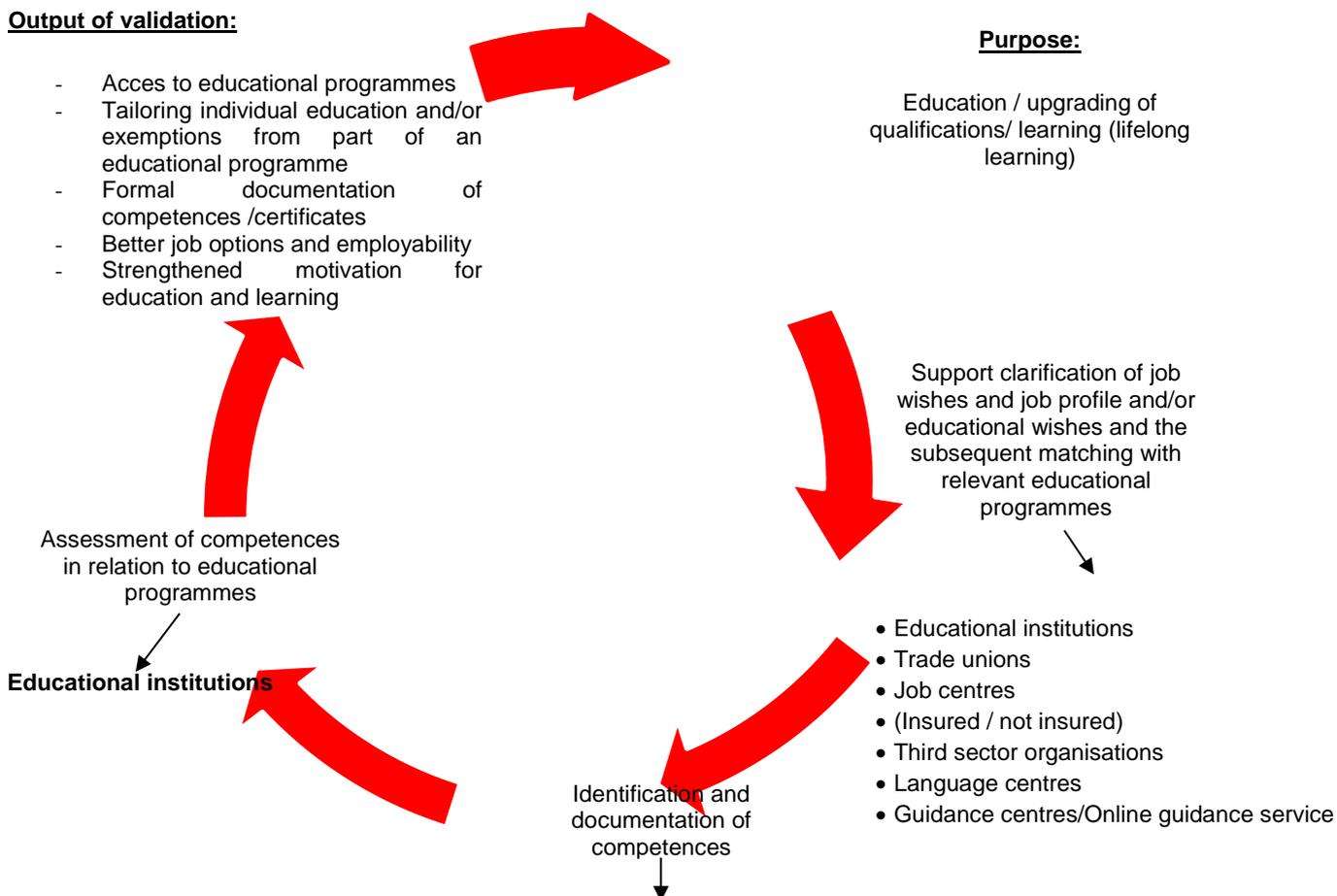
¹⁰ Committee's proposal for VPL model; preparation of Action plan, 2011.

Output of validation:

- Acces to educational programmes
- Tailoring individual education and/or exemptions from part of an educational programme
- Formal documentation of competences /certificates
- Better job options and employability
- Strengthened motivation for education and learning

Purpose:

Education / upgrading of qualifications/ learning (lifelong learning)



The model describes a coherent process of four stages including identification, documentation, assessment and certification.

For a detailed description of the model and for each validation stage, please refer to the Danish country report, 2016.

The three-partite agreement on CVET, 2018-2021 provides changes for development of VPL according to the following elements:

- The former 13 VEU-centres, which since 2010, have provided a unified gateway to general adult education and vocational adult education and CVET, will be closed down by the end of 2018. A new initiative of development is being launched to make the social partners responsible for providing institutional neutral IAG to motivate employees and private and public enterprises with a specific focus on the upskilling of short skilled and skilled employees' basic and vocational skills.
- A working group, established by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science will focus on support elements for an increased use of VPL. This includes development of common sector instruments to be used for VPL at academy and diploma levels.
- Funding is raised for adult vocational education to motivate for more use of adult vocational education and CVET, which has been declining since 2010. This is

done in terms of a raised taximeter to the educational institutions and in terms of a higher wage compensation to employers.

There is no national, coordinated concept for the VPL at the Vocational Academies. The institutions are free to build up their own concept within the legislation. In 2016-2017 a research & development project is carried out, aiming to provide recommendations for a national concept regarding VPL for the Academy professional programmes and Diploma programmes. The project has developed a model for a national VPL concept for the sector and it has formulated a number of recommendations for a coordinated structure for the VPL arrangement (2017).

2.3 Validation and the labour market

Various bodies, at regional level, can be in charge of information, identification, guidance and counselling, in a broader perspective, in the phase leading up to the assessment process ('the pre-phase'). These include, among others, trade unions, employers' associations, job centres (PES), unemployment insurance funds, civic education institutions, study committees and 'eVejledning' ('e-Guidance' online guidance service), who can all take responsibility for this part of the process, often in collaboration with the educational institution.

An urgent perspective for the future use of VPL is foreseen in terms of comprehensive labour market changes – with robot technology and digitalization, the so-called 4th Technological Revolution, which emphasize the requirements for new professional competences.

In the area of adult vocational education and training, there is a tradition for collaboration between enterprises and formal educational institutions concerning competence development of employees including validation. The social partners have an important role in strengthening this collaboration. As part of the three-partite agreement, (2018-2021), the Government has launched an initiative for the social partners' responsibility of providing IAG about basic and vocational upskilling of low skilled and skilled employees at both private and public enterprises. The Danish PIAAC results, 2016, demonstrate inadequate basic skills in reading and writing for about 600 000 adults; and similar lack of competences in IT for problem solving for about 1 million adults. Hence, adult education for raising basic skills is highly prioritized in the three-partite agreement.

In VET for adults, 25 + (EUV), VPL / RKV is carried out prior to the VET programme and an individual VET plan is developed for the student based on the VPL results. The RKV is mandatory.

For the implementation of the three-partite agreement for CVET, The Ministry of Higher Education and Science has established a VPL (RKV) working group with representatives from the social partners and the CVET institutions, Vocational Academies and Profession High schools. The working group develop recommendations to the government concerning a more flexible and transparent use of VPL for the CVET at academy and diploma levels.

All prior learning, irrespective of where and how it is acquired, can be included in the clarification and documentation for validation.

Traditionally – and unchanged – the social partners are highly committed to and involved in the development of VPL. Please refer to a detailed description in the 2016 Country report.

2.3.1 Skills audits

In Denmark, it should be noticed, that procedures for the VPL could also be interpreted as a kind of competence identification and documentation or skills audit, though not following exactly the three-step process, as per European Council's Recommendations. Identification and documentation provides the systematic sample of the individuals' competences to be assessed and when adequate, recognized in the two following steps. The assessment and the recognition often includes development of a personalized education plan for the remaining part of the education and / or training.

A number of tools have been developed for the documentation of competences. They facilitate a written, systematic mapping of competences divided into different categories.

In Denmark, a distinction is often made between general and specific types of competence assessment:

- A general or divergent assessment aims to identify all competences mastered by the individual. The focus of the process is for the person to clarify and describe all of his/her prior learning in order to identify future choices of job and education. Often, the process will follow a formative learning approach. Example of approaches include My Competence Portfolio: www.minkompetencemappe.dk and the tool for documentation of and dialogue about personal competences: <http://www.realkompetence-folkeoplysning.dk/> . My Competence Portfolio has been updated and the new version was launched in 2017, by the Ministry of Education¹¹.
- A specific or convergent assessment aims to identify which of the individuals' competences are relevant in relation to the standards of a specific qualification. The specific, convergent assessment can be carried out after a broad assessment. An example of an approach for technical professions and qualifications is the Misc. IT test tools, i.e. <http://www.knowentia.com/> or www.IU.dk

While the educational institutions are responsible for the assessment and possible recognition, including also the IAG, it is a reality that a more divergent mapping and documentation of skills is not part of this responsibility. Due to the legal framework for VPL, it is the responsibility of the individual to prepare the documentation background for the assessment.

A tool combined with guiding materials for identification and documentation of competences is currently under development in the Interreg project, (2015-2018) Yggdrasil¹². For the clarification and the documentation of prior learning, general work-life competences are focused in the identification and the documentation (the 21st Century skills). The tool and approach target a coherent cross-sectoral and cross-institutional cooperation for the individual's documentation of competences.

However, skills audits in terms of identification, documentation and orientation of interests is provided by other institutions, and/ or stakeholders. These can be PES, Third sector and Trade Unions. Tools for this are not standardized.

¹¹ <https://www.ug.dk/videnscenter/vcnyheder/uddannelsesogerhvervsvejledning/ny-udgave-af-min-kompetencemappe>

¹² The Yggdrasil project is carried within the Interreg partner countries, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The Central Denmark Region is project leader.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

The third-sector stakeholders¹³, including actors in the field of non-formal education, fulfil two tasks related to VPL. They:

- provide information and guidance about the available options for VPL,
- support participants in clarifying, describing and documenting their prior learning.

For the folk high schools and the production schools¹⁴, the work related to clarifying and documenting the participants' prior learning has become mainstreamed. It is now mandatory by law and funded for the production schools to issue certificates of professional competence to the participants.¹⁵

Many institutions in the non-formal learning area, as folk high schools, day folk high-schools, independent vocational schools and *efterskoler* (continuation schools) focus on clarifying the students' personal and social competences together with their professional profile.

DAEA, the Danish Adult Education Association¹⁶ uses the *Realkompetenceforum* (Forum for real competences - an informal network) as a meeting point for the exchange of updates and experiences in a professional context amongst stakeholders within non-formal education. The forum convenes once a year.

The Governments' Civil Society Strategy, 2017¹⁷, including 12 goals – brings a strong focus on inclusion in voluntary work, also for citizens outside labour market and education. Due to revision of unemployment regulations (2017), unemployed citizens are allowed to carry out voluntary work up to 15 hours per week, without reduction of unemployment benefit.

These initiatives might support a further use of VPL while also voluntary work is included in the Danish VPL legal framework for validation of learning acquired in all areas of informal and non-formal learning.

3 Links to national qualification systems

There is a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) in place in Denmark, covering all types and levels of qualification awarded and which is quality assured by public authorities. The proposal for the eight-level framework was adopted in 2009 and the NQF was referenced to the EQF in May 2011. Most qualifications in the Danish NQF are accessible /can be acquired on the basis of validation.

It has been considered that the framework may be opened up to qualifications and certificates in the private and non-formal sector, in a second stage of development and/or implementation (Cedefop, 2013). This has not yet been further developed.

In HE, standards used are the NQF and the educational standards in use by HE education.

¹³ <http://www.daea.dk>

¹⁴ The Danish folk high schools offer non-formal adult education. Most students are between 18 and 24 years old and the length of a typical stay is 4 months. Schools of production are open to youth under the age of 25, who have not yet completed youth education or find it difficult to see a way forward in further education or a job.

¹⁵ Section 2, sub section 8: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=141721>

¹⁶ <http://www.daea.dk/>

¹⁷ <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/civilsamfundsstrategi/>

Certificates awarded by VPL do not differ from the certificates generally issued for the modules or the entire education of the study programme in question.

4 Standards

As noted in previous Inventory country reports for Denmark, there is a credit transfer system in general upper secondary education, which is based on an assessment of an individual's prior learning. Students can get transfer (not credit based as ECTS) for previously completed studies, periods of study abroad, etc., and can be granted admission to subjects at a higher level, to extra optional subjects, or a reduced advanced level course load (where the credit transfer is particularly substantial). Assessment is made after entry.

In HE, ECTS is in use and the modularized structure supports the validation process. Individuals can be awarded competence certificates on the basis of VPL.

In Denmark, qualification standards and general procedures and executive orders are used as the basis for validation in public funded programmes.

The standards used for VPL for Adult Vocational Training (AMU) are based on the specific educational objectives under the Common Occupational Standards (Fælles Kompetence Beskrivelser, FKB).

In HE, standards used are the NQF and the educational standards in use by Higher Education.

The certificates issued as a result of the VPL are the same as obtained for the formal educational or VET programme.

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

The Ministry of Education¹⁸ and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science¹⁹, are responsible for the legislative framework for assessment of prior learning and for taking national initiatives for implementing the legislation. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects with the aim of developing tools, methods and procedures.

The implementation of the legislation is decentralized to a high degree. As mentioned above, the tradition in Denmark is that legislation provides a framework that outlines how the educational institutions have to act in order to provide quality assurance and sound evaluation with a view to developing quality systems, methods, etc.

Educational institutions are responsible for information, advisory and guidance (IAG), and for assessing and approving validation within their educational and training programmes. Educational institutions also have the responsibility for quality assurance, review and evaluation.

For more details please refer to the description in the 2016 country report, which remains unchanged since 2016.

In 2018, The Ministry of Higher Education and Science has established a RKV working group as part of the implementation of the Three-partite agreement for Adult Continuing Education and CVET (2018-2021). Social partners together with HE

¹⁸ <http://eng.uvm.dk/>

¹⁹ http://fivu.dk/en?set_language=en&cl=en

institutions' representatives for the Academy and Diploma programme providers will develop recommendations to the Government concerning needs and requirements for revision of RKV legislation and regulations.

In order to strengthen validation work in some sectors of higher education in Denmark, the Danish Ministry for Science, Innovation and Higher Education initiated a Knowledge Platform for validation in University Colleges and Vocational Academies. The knowledge centre NVR (www.nvr.nu) ensures the coordination of the platform.

As stated above the VPL is carried out by the educational institutions providing the relevant study or VET programme. All documented prior learning is included in the background for the assessment and when adequate, the recognition. Competence assessment in enterprises does not have an independent currency in the assessment of the employees' VPL, but is an important part of the individual's entire documentation of competences.

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising

The Ministry of Education provides extensive information about VPL on its website²⁰. The educational institutions that offer VPL also have the duty to provide information on their websites. Guidance bodies, such as Job Centres and Study Guidance Centres and social partners, also provide information on VPL.

While educational institutions are required to inform the public about VPL, based on experiences from practitioners in the field, there is still an insufficient level of information about the existing validation procedures in Denmark and too many potential users are not aware of the validation opportunities available for them.

As mentioned above in this report, the VEU-centres will be closed down by the end of 2018, due to the Three-partite agreement (2018-2021). To substitute the responsibility of the former VEU-centres to provide a unified gateway to IAG of Adult Continuing Education and CVET, the Government has launched an initiative for the social partners' responsibility of providing IAG about basic and vocational upskilling of low skilled and skilled employees at both private and public enterprises. IAG on VPL forms an important and integral part of this new initiative for the social partners.

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

A counselling web portal provides general information about validation of prior learning (www.uq.dk). Stakeholders, including study committees, job-centres, trade unions and others, provide general information and support for documentation concerning the validation process, and they also provide guidance to the individual about their choice of further learning and career options.

By the end of 2018, the VEU Centres will be closed down, due to the renewed Three-partite agreement for 2018-2021. This means that, hereafter, the VPL information, advisory and guidance based on a unified gateway, will be organized by other means, structure and share of responsibility. The social partners are expected to play a major

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<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Tvaergaende%20omraader/Temaer/Realkompetence/Om%20Realkompetence.aspx>

role in the new organisation of information and guidance to employees and employers at private and public enterprises.

As for IAG on adult education and adult vocational education for unemployed people, a revised model for Regional Labour Market Councils will be responsible for the cooperation with Job-centres.

Among various new initiatives, a national platform for providing one-entrance to information about Adult Continuing Education and CVET, the 'Data Warehouse,' is developed. The platform is available from the end of 2019.

IAG is free of charge. For RKV to academy and diploma programmes, a fee is charged for the RKV processes aimed at recognition of prior learning for access, competence certificate or a full education diploma.

Guidance, such as one-to-one support and group support, with regards to the specific VPL-programmes, is provided by educational institutions and the Adult and Continuing Training Centres. Job centres, trade unions and non-formal adult education providers also offer guidance on VPL. However, guidance is not currently coordinated between these different bodies and stakeholders.

'eVejledning' ('eGuidance') is an online guidance service that also provides information and guidance regarding VPL. The platform is further developed as part of the Three-partite agreement, (2018-2021).

In June 2016 The Danish Ministry of Education published a digital self-directed instrument for VET (EUV) applicants to have a guiding calculation for the duration of the education and training period. The instrument, '*Mine Realkompetencer*' (*My Real Competences*) forms a guiding competence clarification and helps the EUV applicant to register his or her prior learning for the calculation.

Box 6.1 My Real Competences

In June 2016 The Danish Ministry of Education published a digital self-directed instrument for VET (EUV) applicants to provide a guiding calculation of the duration of the education and training period. The instrument, '*Mine Realkompetencer*' (*My Real Competences*) forms a guiding competence clarification and helps the adult VET (EUV) applicant to register his or her prior learning for the calculation.

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

'Validation practitioners' in Denmark include counsellors/advisors, assessors, teachers, administrative staff and staff from guidance organisations (i.e. job centres /PES). The main practitioners involved in the VPL are counsellors/advisors and assessors. Validation assessors are usually teachers and counsellors from the concerned educational institutions.

7.2 Qualification requirements

There is no mandatory qualification requirements for the advisors and counsellors involved in the VPL.

The Danish legislation stipulates that the qualification requirements for the validation assessors are the same as for those required for teaching in the formal education system. Educational institutions are responsible for ensuring that assessors possess the appropriate qualifications and skills to assess VPL applications; educational institutions also provide the necessary courses and training for the assessors.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

A number of different initiatives have been undertaken to support practitioners' professional development.

The national umbrella organisation DAEA, the Danish Adult Education Association, developed in 2007 a training programme for teachers and guidance counsellors acting as 'prior learning guides. The objective of the course is to help participants from the field of non-formal adult education and the third sector:

- To work with guidance and counselling in relation to the process of clarification and documentation of prior learning based on the latest research;
- To use tools for clarification and documentation of prior learning, including the tools developed by the Ministry of Education; and,
- To train and support others in working in a professional way as a 'prior learning guide' "(sparring partner)".

The course material is available at the DAEA website.²¹ Apart from the new initiatives, listed below, please refer to the 2016 Country report for more details.

DAEA has contributed to a Nordic working group, which resulted in the report *Folkbildning* and validation of key competences (in English), focusing on and discussing which competences can be validated through participation in non-formal adult education.²²

This report has been an inspiration among others for the overview: *Understand prior learning* – knowledge and inspiration for practice, aiming to support a broad perspective: 'It is all about making prior learning visible and helpful to the individual and the society'. A group of guidance counsellors, representing a wide range of sectors, has developed the *Overview*.

The Danish version from the project was introduced in September 2017, with the title: *Forstå Realkompetencer – Viden og inspiration til praksis*²³

Box 7.1 Overview; Understand prior learning – knowledge and inspiration for practice

²¹ <https://www.daea.dk/themes/prior-learning/>

²² <http://nvl.org/Content/Folkbildning-key-competences-and-validation>

²³ https://www.masterpiece.dk/UploadetFiles/11521/36/Onlineh%C3%A5ndbog_VEU_18-08-2017.pdf

The overview is aiming to support a broad perspective: '*It is all about making prior learning visible and helpful to the individual and the society*'. A group of guidance counsellors, representing a wide range of sectors, has developed the *Overview*. Initiator was the VEU-center of the capital area.

The material addresses a need for supporting and widening the knowledge about VPL in Denmark among professionals who do not directly themselves carry out VPL but are in contact with people who could benefit from VPL. Hence the target group for the material is guidance counsellors, teachers at adult learning institutions and institutions within the Third Sector.

The Danish version of the project was introduced in September 2017 with the title: 'Forstå Realkompetencer – Viden og inspiration til praksis'

There are plans for translating into English.

https://www.masterpiece.dk/UploadetFiles/11521/36/Onlineh%C3%A5ndbog_VEU_18-08-2017.pdf

As part of the Interreg project, *Yggdrasil*, with the Danish project partner, VIA UC, a training model has been developed for the clarification and documentation of competences, prior to RKV / IKV or to be used for job seeking or education. The training model has a cross-sector and -institutional dimension and is targeted at guides and counsellors at Job Centres (PES), trade unions, unemployment insurance funds and education institutions. The training model provides training for the guides and counsellors, who support the individual in the clarification and documentation process with the systemization of prior learning into the categories, *knowledge, skills and competences*.²⁴ The final results of the *Yggdrasil* project will be available by the end of 2018.

8 Quality assurance

The VPL is always based on the objectives and admission requirements of a given educational programme. Educational institutions are responsible for quality assurance. The Ministry of Education has set out some principles for assessment and quality assurance, which state that the methods used must ensure a reliable assessment, inspiring confidence in the outcomes, and that institutions are required to have an evaluation system. Educational institutions must ensure transparency and quality in the process of VPL.

Box 8.1 Quality Assurance Guide

In 2017, The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) published a self-evaluation tool for the VET institutions' continuing quality assurance of VPL (RKV) for VET for Adults +25 (EUV).

The self-evaluation tool guides the VET institutions on how to strengthen the organisational platform for the continuous development of VPL practice in order to secure a uniform and high quality VPL for the applicants, irrespective of which VET institution they apply for.

The tool is targeted at RKV practitioners, guidance and counsellors, assessors and VET institution managers.

²⁴ <http://www.yggdrasil-oks.eu/>

Denmark has been involved in the development of a quality model in relation to the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the Nordic Countries (May 2013)²⁵. The Nordic Expert network²⁶ for Validation outlined quality as a key issue in the VPL. Experts from five Nordic countries – Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark - cooperated as part of a Nordplus project (led by the NVR) with the aim of developing a common model for quality assurance. In 2015, a Nordic research project was established to examine and develop the use of the model for improving quality in validation. The project targets VET institutions in their quality assurance of RKV. The researchers conclude that the Quality Model is very suitable for the identification of strategic important parts and phases in the validation process seen from a QA perspective. The project was finalized in 2017 and the report, Quality in VPL was published, April 2018.²⁷

In 2017, The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) published a self-evaluation tool for the VET institutions' continuing quality assurance of RKV.²⁸

For more details about Quality Assurance please refer to the 2016, country report for the QA requirements and practice.

Box 8.2 Good examples of VPL (RKV) to VET for Adults (EUV, 2016)

Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, The Danish Institute of Evaluation (EVA) has developed a material for inspiration for the VET institutions about how to work with Validation of Prior Learning (RKV) for adults, 25+. The material addresses the VET institutions QA work with VPL.

The material provides inspiration for four RKV Themes:

- 1) Frames, guidance and organisation of RKV
- 2) Tools for RKV
- 3) RKV as a learning process
- 4) Real competences in teaching.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

The Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education & Science financially supports VPL. Public funding covers assessment at educational institutions, but does not cover the information, or clarification with respect to the process about the individual's application. Educational institutions can charge a fee for the assessment of prior learning with regard to the VPL-programmes covering higher education.

²⁵ <http://www.viauc.dk/projekter/NVR/aktiviteter/Documents/QAmodel%20UK%20June13.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.nordvux.net/page/601/>

²⁷ <https://nvl.org/Content/Quality-in-Validation-of-Prior-Learning-Validation>

²⁸ <https://www.eva.dk/voksen-efteruddannelse/styrk-realkompetencevurderinger-guide-selvevaluering>

Job-centres (PES) can fund the clarification and documentation phases for unemployed people. This is typically done by contracting other providers of guidance courses for unemployed people.

As part of the three-partite agreement on CVET (2018-2021), the VEU-allowance financed by the State (*VEU-godtgørelse*), is raised from 80% of the maximum unemployment insurance benefit to 100%. This allowance covers also the VPL for the VPL applicant. As most VPL participants are employed and receive full salary during the validation period, this allowance is primarily paid to employers as partial wage reimbursement.

For the Adult Vocational institutions (AMU), the taximeter is raised too. Together, these funding improvements are expected to form incentives for both employers and AMU institutions to increase the activity of Adult Vocational Education and CVET, including VPL – which activity has decreased during the period since 2010.

9.2 Distribution of costs

As there are no other changes since the 2016, Inventory update. Please refer to the country report, 2016.

Within the Adult Vocational Education programme (AMU), VPL participants are entitled to a fixed VEU-allowance financed by the State (*VEU-godtgørelse*). The VEU-allowance has been raised to 100% of the maximum unemployment insurance benefit rate. This is part of the Three-partite Agreement (2018-2021). As most participants are employed and receive full salary during the validation period, this allowance is primarily paid to employers as partial wage reimbursement. As with education and training within AMU, expenditure for the allowances is covered by the employers' reimbursement scheme (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag, AUB*) to which all employers contribute a fixed amount regardless of levels of participation in adult education and continuing training activities, as well as State financing.

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

There is no evidence so far of the benefits of validation arrangements to individuals in Denmark, according to the stakeholders interviewed.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

Current statistical information has not been found.

There are no significant changes in the use of VPL for access to HE at Vocational Academy and Diploma level. The three-partite agreement for CVET has a strong focus on development and incentives of frames and conditions for VPL in order to raise the number of applicants to this education. A working-group with representatives for the HE providers together with social partner representatives, is set down by the Ministry of HE and Science. The group works from 2018-2021 with analyses of the VPL system, legal framework, frames and practices with the aim of examining needs and possibilities for changes in order to increase the flexibility of the VPL and hence to encourage more CVET.

The level of VPL for Adult Vocational Education & Training (AMU) is – since 2012 – decreased, as also the general use of AMU has been decreasing. Again, the three-

partite agreement includes initiatives and financial incentives with the aim of motivating an increased use.

The new VET for adults +25 (EUV) is expected to raise the number of applicants in order to help change the situation for the less qualified workforce. VPL is a compulsory part of VET for adults. In the first years of the VET reform (from 2014), a minor number of applicants than expected applied for the Education. Evaluations of the EUV²⁹ stressed several malfunctions in the legal framework for the VPL. Following these conclusions, adjustments were made, among others the principle of shortening the VET duration as much as possible. The evaluation clearly proved that this was not regarded as desirable for the adults as expected.

New statistical data will provide the evidence of the effect of these adjustments.

9.4.2 Validation users

This information is not available.

9.4.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

The follow up on a review in 2016 for the target group of veterans emphasizes an increased focus on veterans' competences to be included in the assessment of study competences and potential exemptions for relevant education and work experience, when applying for access to education or training.³⁰

Please also refer to this report, 2.1.

10 Validation methods

New detailed data about validation methods has not been found which means that information for this chapter has to refer back to the 2016 Inventory report.

This showed that for all levels of Adult Vocational Education, the primary method used in the VPL process is the interview, followed by tests and exams. Likewise, documentation in terms of CV and portfolio are main tools as the documentation of prior learning is the responsibility of the applicant. With major differences among the VET and CVET levels, methods such as self-assessment, cases and simulation is used to various degrees.

11 The position of validation in society: visibility and trust

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has been on the policy agenda in Denmark for about 20 years. It is still regarded as a key element to promote lifelong learning in Denmark. Competence assessment and the possible outcomes in terms of access, exemption or acquisition of certificates varies among the education and training sectors (VET, higher education and adult education sectors). A legal framework for VPL based on common principles in the adult education and training sector (CVET) has been in place since 2007. In Denmark, the VPL is regulated by law. According to Danish law, the assessment of the validation application must be

²⁹ The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), 2017 (see also References

³⁰ <http://esdhweb.ucl.dk/1162199.Hyrdebrev%20vedr.%20veteraners%20muligheder%20for%20optagelse.pdf>

conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes. Other bodies can be in charge of information, identification, guidance and counselling, in a broader perspective, in the phase leading up to the assessment process ('the pre-phase'). These bodies include, among others, trade unions, employers' associations, job-centres, unemployment insurance funds, civic education institutions, study committees and 'eVejledning' (online guidance service) that can be involved in the pre-phase and often collaborate with the educational institution in the validation process. The implementation of the legislation is decentralized in Denmark.

Since 2016 the situation in relation to the VPL has not significantly changed. The legislation has remained the same in most sectors of education. However, the legislation in the VET system on Vocational Education and Training programmes was changed as from August 2015 to include new VET programmes for adults 25 years+ (EUV), building on a mandatory initial validation of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning and work experience. Based on this, a personal education plan is developed.

Since 2016, the following initiatives are being continued or have been initiated:

- By spring 2016, the government launched a number of new initiatives targeting refugees. These initiatives promoted the use of validation and recognition of refugees' skills and competences, which also included a new web portal of measures and tools on the basis of a tripartite agreement with the social partners and a bipartite agreement with the municipalities in Denmark. One of these initiatives is the *Integration Vocational Education* (IGU) for refugees. The IGU of maximum 2 years' duration includes VPL with possible recognition according to basic adult education. Having started quite slowly over the year 2016, the number of registered IGU's, as at April 2018 is 1 440.
- The Three-partite agreement on Adults Continuing Education and CVET (2018-2021), includes a number of initiatives for the increase of motivation for adult education, adult vocational education and CVET among employees and companies, both private and public.
- One of these initiatives involves the social partners in a model for an institution-neutral providence of information, advisory and guidance for participation in adult vocational education and training and for general adult education. IAG for VPL will be part of this campaign.
- Another Three-partite agreement's initiative for motivating the VPL – together with the Adult Vocational Education and CVET is the improved incentives' structures in terms of employers' higher wage compensation during the training and education course (VEU-godtgørelse) and – to the VET institutions, a similar increase of the taximeter. These factors have been addressed as critical for the activity of Adult Vocational Education and CVET as well as VPL since 2010.
- The Three-partite agreement on CVET for Academy- and Diploma levels gives priority to efforts to ensure more and better use of VPL (RKV).

In Denmark, it is set by law, Act 556, June 2007, that it is a legal right for individuals to request an assessment of their prior learning in relation to the standards of a given education and training programme no matter where and how competences have been acquired.

Detailed information and guidance for VPL, related to each educational level and area is provided on the Web-site of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of HE and Science.

Similarly, the educational institutions are responsible for information, advisory and guidance with respect to the VPL arrangements and conditions and requirements according to the study programmes provided.

Information on VPL for Adult Education and Adult Vocational Education and CVET is available at <http://uudanmark.dk/2014/06/digital-vejledning/>

IAG of VPL for the Academy and Diploma programmes is available at the Knowledge platform, provided by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (hosted by VIA University College, Faculty of Continuing Higher Education; <https://viden-om-realkompetence.via.dk/>). The platform is targeted professionals working with RKV on these study programmes.

The Parity Principle, of the social partners' equal representation at all levels of the education system is a key principle for securing relevance, quality, commitment and trust in the education system with respect to results and outcomes. The Branch committees are deeply involved in surveillance and development of the education. This counts similarly for the VPL, the Danish programmes for RKV and IKV. The Branch Committees set the standards for the assessment of prior learning for adult vocational education and training. Assessment standards for CVET and Higher Education are the Education objectives together with the NQF.

This means that VPL results in terms of access, exemption and / or acquisition of certificates are highly trusted by employers, educational institutions and in society. The certificates issued by VPL do not differ from the ones obtained as a result of full study.

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