

European Inventory

on validation of informal and
non-formal learning



Education and Culture DG



European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning DENMARK

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark has been high on the policy agenda since 2001 when initiatives such as the Adult Education Reform (2001), ASEM Lifelong Learning Initiative (2002) and the policy paper 'Recognition of Prior Learning within the Education System' (2004) evolved. These developments were documented in the previous ECOTEC Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning.

Since this time, the 'final report of the Tripartite Committee on Lifelong Learning and Skills Upgrading for all in the Labour Market (2006)' and the 'Accord on the Implementation of the Government's Globalisation Strategy (2006)' have been developed. Both of these documents have an application to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). In addition, Denmark has:

- Relevant legislation to enhance the use of RPL in adult education and continuing training (passed in June 2007, taking effect August 1 2007);
- Further experience of applying RPL in a variety of educational settings, across the public, private and third sectors;
- Continuous experience of using tools, methods and procedures for assessing RPL;
- A network funded by the Ministry of Education for sharing RPL experiences and best practice;
- A National Knowledge Centre on Assessment of Prior Learning (August 2007), funded by the Ministry.
- Substantial financial support from the Ministry, which funds most of the country's RPL;
- A qualification system that has become increasingly modular and outcome or competence based¹, which recognises non-formal and informal learning in terms of 'credit'.

However, it should be noted that there is currently no national approach or methodology for applying RPL across the board. Denmark does not have common methods of assessment, which can be applied / adapted to all educational environments. *It instead has widespread practice carried out in different ways in a variety of settings.* The Ministry is however working on further guidance to support RPL in 2007 and this is likely to change in the future.

The Danish system appears to have evolved through a strong national tradition of RPL, which is currently working to meet the requirements of EU policy.

¹ Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

2.0 PUBLIC SECTOR

‘Anerkendelse af realkompetence(r)’ or, in English, ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ (RPL) has a long tradition in Denmark. The Public sector started to work on policies relevant to RPL in 1997 (adult vocational training programmes) and more generally in 2001 (adult education and continuing training) and the key policy “Recognition of Prior Learning within the Education System” was published already in November 2004.

We start this chapter by outlining the key policy for validation of informal and non-formal learning (Recognition of Prior Learning within the Education System 2004), followed by legislative and policy changes which have taken place since the last Inventory and a list of the key stakeholders involved in validation in Denmark.

We then provide an overview of existing arrangements on recognition of prior learning in the following areas: General upper secondary education, initial vocational education and training (VET), tertiary education, general adult education and vocationally oriented adult education. This information is based on the 2005 Inventory and has been updated in line with other reports which have been published since then.

2.1 The policy for validation of informal and non-formal learning

The policy Recognition of Prior Learning within the Education System (2004) acts as a follow-up to the 2002 Better Education Action Plan and gives RPL a high priority and very specific focus. It recognises that RPL is not a new phenomenon especially in initial-VET, adult education programmes and tertiary education but that more needs to be done to recognise competencies achieved at work, from taking part in liberal adult education etc¹. The policy paper proposes that recognition of non-formal and informal learning be taken into account throughout the entire education system, and that initiatives be taken in adult education and continuing training to improve opportunities for assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.²

The policy is clear that any competence assessment should be carried out within the requirements of the education/training programme and hence entry onto courses or exemption from modules should only occur where equivalence can be clearly demonstrated.

¹ Recognition of Prior Learning within the Education System (November 2004)

² Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

The government has developed the policy along certain principles; these are in accordance with the Bologna and Lisbon declarations:

- The individual citizen should be able to request an assessment of his or her prior learning based on the framework and regulations applicable within the individual areas of education
- The individual has a responsibility for contributing to the documentation of his/her prior learning.
- A user fee may be charged for a competence assessment, with the exception of the low skilled when a personal study plan is prepared for them.
- A competence assessment should always be based on the objectives and admission requirements of the education programme in question.
- The individual's competencies should be recognised irrespective of where and how they were acquired, but without compromising the quality/standard of the education and training programmes.
- The methods used must ensure a reliable assessment, inspiring confidence in the outcome.
- The result of the assessment should be documented by issuing a certificate.

The policy acknowledges that the success of competency assessment or recognition of prior learning depends completely on the methods applied to assess RPL and the quality mechanisms in place to support the process. Each competency assessment needs to include:

- **Guidance and Clarification** i.e. the educational institution providing information on their options, regulations, their obligations in the process etc;
- **Collection of documentation** e.g. documentation from employers, participation in seminars, training activities, liberal adult education activities, voluntary experience etc;
- **Competence assessment** i.e. reviewing the documents, structured interviews, observation, asking the learner to complete a practical task, tests etc.

Recognition of prior learning after competence assessment may result in the following:

- Entrance qualifications for an education/training programme
- A shorter study plan ('credit' in an education programme)
- Documentation of competencies/qualifications in relation to part of an education programme
- Recognition in relation to a full education programme, if possible.

Work to infiltrate the policy into each area of education in Denmark has largely taken place since January 2006. This involved:

- Working with educational institutions to establish methods, principles etc and guaranteeing quality;
- Developing tools to support the documentation of RPL (in conjunction with social partners and other stakeholders);
- Ensuring the work fits in with the Tripartite Committee on lifelong skills enhancement and education and training for all in the labour market;
- Providing information and advice to citizens and businesses through a portal known as the 'Education Guide'.

2.2 Developments 2005-2007

2.2.1 Legislation (2007)

The key change in Denmark recently is the legislative amendment, which has given each individual the right to have their prior learning experiences validated in relation to adult education and continuing training. This legislation was passed on the 6th June 2007 and has been effective from the 1st August 2007 (in one instance August 2008). It is likely to have a major impact on the uptake of RPL. The new policy centres on the needs of the individual and aims to make the process as accessible and flexible as possible. A key aim is to motivate those with little or no education to participate in lifelong learning by making it easier for them to access learning opportunities, through recognition of their prior learning.

According to the new legislation, each education institution can assess, and subsequently recognise prior learning in adult education and continuing training for the purposes of:

- Accessing formal education i.e. using non-formal/informal experiences to meet the admission requirements;
- Preparing a shortened learning programme;
- Awarding a certificate or diploma for part of or a whole programme if the non-formal/informal learning meets the requirements of specific modules within the learning programme;
- Offering the learner, on request, documentation that recognises their prior learning, which does not equate to a specific certificate or diploma.

The proposed amendments aim to implement a number of principles, which *extend* the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in education programmes in adult education and continuing training:

- Individuals can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed on the basis of frameworks and regulations specified in the individual education programme area;

- Individuals contribute to the documentation of their non-formal and informal learning;
- Competence assessment is always based on the goals and admission requirements of the individual education programme (or subject area standards within general adult education and upper secondary subjects for adults);
- An individual's competence is recognised no matter how or where it has been acquired;
- The quality and standards of an education programme must not be lowered, even if the leaving certificate or diploma is based partially or completely on the recognition of prior learning from outside the publicly-maintained education system;
- The results of assessment are documented by issuing a competence certificate or diploma to recognise either a completed programme or completed modules specified in the programme's regulations.

“The development and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in relation to specific education programmes or in relation to subjects in specific programmes is based on a voluntary approach principle, in that it is an offer extended to the individual”¹.

2.2.2 The Welfare Accord (2006)

The accord comprises a number of objectives; one of these is to provide better opportunities for recognition of prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The focus of the Welfare Accord is on the low skilled and other disadvantaged groups within the labour market².

2.2.3 The Globalisation Strategy (2006)

In 2006, Denmark developed a strategy for utilising the benefits of globalisation. Part of this strategy involves the ‘Flexicurity model’, which has an application to informal and non-formal learning.

The Flexicurity model is the term that refers to Denmark’s exceptionally flexible labour market. They accept that globalisation has and will continue to take jobs away from the country but that these will always be replaced by alternative employment options. As such, they endeavour to support the labour market in adapting to these constant changes. The easy hiring and firing (flexibility for the employers) is combined with high benefits for the unemployed (security for the employees when changing jobs). There is an important role for RPL within this since it helps the labour market re-train/adapt to suit different professions by recognising what workers already know.³

¹ OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

² OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

³ <http://presse.uvm.dk/taler/bh/181106.htm?menuid=600510>

2.2.4 The Tripartite Committee (2006)

In March 2006, the Tripartite Committee i.e. comprising social partners and the Danish government agreed their joint responsibility to strengthen adult education and training in Denmark. In August 2006, the government and the social partners completed a joint task focusing on adult education and training efforts. Further tripartite negotiations will continue in 2007 with the implementation of the Welfare Accord and the Globalisation Accord.¹

2.2.5 Strategy for Lifelong Learning (2007)

In the Danish Government Strategy for Lifelong Learning (report July 2007), one of the cross-cutting actions is the Recognition of Prior Learning. Better opportunities for individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences assessed and recognised within adult education and continuing training are to promote participation by adults in adult education and continuing training and to improve their opportunities in the labour market. Four initiatives to promote this aim are mentioned, including implementation of legislation, quality assurance and development of documentation tools.

2.3 Key Stakeholders

In Denmark, there are a number of key stakeholders working together to take RPL policy forward. The key national body is the Ministry of Education, although there has been some input from the Ministry of Science, Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs to the Government Policy Paper (2004).²

The Ministry of Education is ultimately responsible for RPL within its field of responsibility (which does not include universities). It has developed policy guidelines, funded projects looking at developing tools, methods and procedures for RPL, set up a network for sharing best practice in RPL as well as a National Knowledge Centre for Competence Assessment partially funded by the Ministry, and importantly funds RPL in respect to education and training programmes. From 2007, the Ministry will continue to develop guidance for educational institutions in assessing RPL.

¹ OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

² The 2007 legislation applies only to the field of responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Economy and Business Affairs (maritime education/training) are implementing the principles of the policy paper without specific legislation. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation has not developed the RPL further since the 2004 government policy paper.

In the area of Adult Vocational Training, as well as Vocational Education and Training (initial and adult), there is a long-standing tradition of involving the social partners, who have been attributed significant influence in a number of areas defined in the legislation. Thus, the government works closely with social partners. For example, the Council for I-VET (REU), the Council for Adult and Continuing Training (REVE), the Council for Short term further tertiary education (Erhvervsakademirådet) and the Council for Medium Term further education (MVU Council). These organisations advise government on their specific areas of education and training.

The “National Trade Committees” define the content of qualifications and labour market competence frameworks and monitor labour market developments so as to develop suitable VET. There are also trade committees that act at a local level. Vocational Training Committees play a similar role in relation to adult vocational training programmes.

The educational institutions themselves are responsible for assessing and approving RPL for their educational and training programmes.

The individuals themselves have a responsibility to provide educational establishments with the necessary documentation to help enable them to assess their informal and non-formal learning. For example, using ‘*Min Kompetencemappe*’, the documentation tool developed by the Ministry of Education in co-operation with the social partners, or other tools of their own choice.

2.4 Existing practice¹

The assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning currently exists in various forms across the different education sectors. In all programmes, the assessment approaches are converging.² We now consider each education sector in turn.

2.4.1 General upper secondary education: A more flexible credit transfer system

Within general upper secondary education, a new advanced level reform in Denmark (which commenced in 2005) introduced a credit transfer system based on an assessment of the individual student’s prior learning. The objective is to give the students the opportunity to receive credit transfers for previously completed studies, periods of stay abroad, etc. and therefore be granted admission to subjects at a higher level or extra optional subjects or – if the particular credit transfer is very substantial – a reduced advanced level course load. Assessment is made after entry.

¹ Based on the 2005 Inventory written by Annelise Hauch (Danish Ministry of Education), Prof. Erwin Seyfried (FHVR Berlin) and Manuel Souto Otero (ECOTEC Research and Consulting)]. Updates are referenced.

² Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

General upper secondary education is offered as single subject courses for adults. There are moderate user fees for all participation in the education programme in this case – the fees also cover individual assessment.¹

It should be noted that general upper secondary education is regulated by a different legislative act and is subject to different conditions than Vocational Education and Training.

2.4.2 Initial VET: Individual competence assessment as a general principle

Recognition of Prior Learning is mandatory for vocational education and training.

Following the Better Education Action Plan the government amended the Initial VET legislation, taking effect from 1 August 2003, introducing a general principle of individual competence assessments as a basis for preparation of apprentices' personal education plans. In order to manage highly individualised VET programmes, all apprentices have to have a personal education plan drawn up. Together with a contact teacher (tutor), apprentices draw up a personal education plan describing all their learning objectives and how to attain them. The personal education plan is based on an assessment of trainees' competences and outlines an individual pathway through the VET system. When the trainee starts practical training in an enterprise, the latter is also involved in the definition of the overall objectives for the training in cooperation with the apprentice.

Flexible pathways (personal education plans) adapted to the apprentice's actual ('real') competences may shorten education periods (exemptions), but they may also lead to longer education pathways adapted to individual needs, or to additions in order to enable the apprentice to acquire additional qualifications.

The national trade committee for a particular VET programme has the authority to decide on exemptions from programme requirements that exceed four weeks (exemptions of up to four weeks being within the authority of the college). The social partners are equally represented in the bipartite trade committees.

In connection with 2004 amendments of legislation, similar provisions of individual assessment of competences now apply at the institutions of social and health education.

Since 1992, following a Parliament resolution, all ministerial orders on initial VET programmes regulated that in Adult VET, students at least 25 years of age who can document relevant non-formal learning may get credit as part of a VET programme. In

¹ Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

general, these former special arrangements are now being replaced by the general principle of individual competence assessment of trainees in the initial VET system.

Mainstream Tertiary Education: Admission

Within tertiary education, the individual educational institutions may – as previously – grant admission to students on the basis of individual assessments of these applicants' qualifications when the applicants have actual qualifications that are comparable to the general formal admission requirements (exemption from formal requirements). Validation is not possible in relation to shortening education periods in tertiary education (exemptions from modules etc). Exemption is only possible on the basis of credit transfer for formal education elements.

In June 2004, the Government decided to change the restricted admissions system for tertiary education with effect from summer 2007. The quota system under restricted admission up to now has a number of weaknesses, as it has raised many false hopes about attaining a quota II place through an often futile hunt for points. The objective of the new admissions system is, firstly, to encourage and assist young people to complete their studies faster and minimise the time between completing their advanced levels and continuing their studies at tertiary level, and secondly, to strengthen the course-specific qualifications of the successful applicants in order to reduce the drop-out rate. Two quota systems are in place:

- Quota I, which is based on the results from the qualifying examination, will – with minor adjustments – continue to be the main admission route to the studies where admission is restricted.
- Quota II has been changed. Quota II applies to certain selected studies and provides a small group of applicants with a further chance of admission after a reduction in the quotient, including adjustment for any relevant course-specific skills enhancement. For all studies, this quota permits admission of students following individual assessment and entrance examinations or similar.

With respect to the other subgroup, quota II b, the educational institutions are still able to admit students following individual assessments and entrance examinations or similar. There must be room for exemptions, i.e. for applicants who do not meet the general admission requirements in the form of A levels etc. but who have actual qualifications that – following a competence assessment – are considered comparable with A Levels and who also meet specific admission requirements, if any, for the

particular course in question. Thus, quota II b provides opportunities for prior learning assessment of the individual applicants.¹

The new system clearly attaches importance to qualifications for studying but also provides opportunities for prior learning assessment with the aid of examinations, interviews, and other means.

The 2007 legislation (outlined below) proposed that access to individual competence assessment should be introduced in the short-cycle higher education programmes for adults (VUU) and in diploma programmes (continuing professional education at bachelor level) in the higher education system for adults, either as a substitution for formal qualifications necessary for admission, or as an element in shortened programme length.² Until 1 August 2007, applicants to these programmes had to document a relevant education programme and at least two years relevant work experience in order to gain admission.

2.4.3 General Adult Education

On the whole, practice in Preparatory Adult Education (literacy and numeracy courses) and General Adult Education at lower secondary level already live up to the principles of the Government policy paper on Recognition of prior learning, especially through individual competence assessment for placement at suitable level. This has been made explicit in the amended legislation (2007).

In Preparatory Adult Education, an assessment is made to verify whether this is the relevant offer for the student: if not, to refer the student to another more relevant offer. Assessment is made after entry and the education programme, including assessment is free for all students.³

General Adult Education at lower secondary level (single subject courses) run parallel to, not identical with, the initial basic education for the youth group and are offered to all persons 18 years of age or older. An assessment of the individual's knowledge and qualifications in relation to the subject may result in placing the student at a relevant entrance level. There are moderate user fees for all for participation in the education programme. Assessment is made after entry and is thus covered by the fee.⁴

¹ Seyfried, Prof. E., Souto Otero, M., with amendments by Hauch, A. (2006), National overview of methodologies and systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark, taken from the world wide web on 20 August 2007. Available at; <http://www.dfs.dk/inenglish/priorlearning/validation.aspx>

² Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

³ Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

⁴ Ibid

As from August 2008, adult education centres et al. shall offer all citizens who are eligible for their general education courses an individual competence assessment in relation to the educational goals, without simultaneous admission to the education programme, aiming to recognise prior learning for the purpose of issuing a competence certificate for a subject or a well-defined part of a subject (legislative amendment 2007).

2.4.4 Vocationally oriented adult education and training

Recognition of Prior Learning is mandatory for adult vocational education and training.

Adult Vocational Training ('AMU', CVT): Individual Competence Assessment and individual training plan

Since 1997, Adult Vocational Training (CVT) centres and technical and commercial Vocational Education and Training (VET) colleges have been offering individual competence assessment (ICA) for the identification of competences and referral to courses within the adult vocational training programmes (AMU). The goal is twofold: first, to establish individual training plans that identify the individual's prior formal and non-formal learning; second, to offer individual training in accordance with (since 2004) the participant's job competence profile as reference point, and drawing up an individual training plan referring to the adult vocational training courses and VET single subjects listed in a common competence description that match the participant's job/competence profile.

The target group consists of employed workers of all skill levels. The scheme may be used by an individual for further personal or career development or, more typically, by enterprises as part of a Human Resources Development plan. The Public Employment Service may buy adult vocational training courses according to the identified needs of unemployed workers.

In the Adult Vocational Training scheme, ICA may be said to fall into the category of formative assessment approaches in which the validation process helps the student to fill in the knowledge and skills gaps on the way to meeting a job competence profile. The purpose of the assessment is to assess prior learning of the student and link it to institutional learning which results in a personalised study and training period at the adult vocational training institution. However, especially since the 2004 amendment of the Adult Vocational Training concept, which introduced joint competence descriptions for adult vocational training courses and VET single subjects, the ICA may also result in the

recognition of prior learning, giving a right to credit transfer into initial VET, and therefore may be said to be summative in this respect.¹

The ICA operates at two levels. At the individual level, the ICA starting point is the individual's personal ideas and professional and educational aspirations. At the enterprise level, the competence analysis focuses on the qualification needs of the company.

During the ICA the participant's prior learning is assessed by different methods (s. Danish Ministry of Education, 2002):

- Interview, to establish personal ideas and priorities
- Interview, to assess and recognize prior work experience and formal learning relevant to the present situation
- Tests, written and/or oral
- Practical exercises
- Simulation

The training plan based on the assessment of the individuals' prior learning covers technical, general and personal areas.

As a result of the ICA, the individual also receives an education or competence certificate. This certificate can generally be used when applying for an education programme, or together with a job application.

The vocational training committees according to the legislation on Adult Vocational Training, in which the social partners are equally represented, are responsible for dealing with complaints about the professional outcome of an individual competence assessment .

The new legislation introduced in 2007 (outlined below) has given individual competence assessment in adult vocational training a new name and a new orientation: from individual competence clarification (IKA) in previous legislation to individual competence assessment (IKV), which is in accordance with the policy paper principles, and supports a coordination with the similar scheme in Basic Adult Education (GVU), thus facilitating participants changing pathways. Recognition of Prior Learning will still take place on the basis of an (identification and) clarification of the person's competences, (collection of) documentation and assessment. In addition to this, the new legislation stipulates that from August 1, 2007, education and training institutions shall also offer screening of basic skills such as

¹ Seyfried, Prof. E., Souto Otero, M., with amendments by Hauch, A. (2006), National overview of methodologies and systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark, taken from the world wide web on 20 August 2007. Available at; <http://www.dfs.dk/inenglish/priorlearning/validation.aspx>

reading, writing, spelling or mathematics, as well as guidance in connection with this, to all participants in adult vocational training or single subjects, or in individual competence assessment.

Basic Adult Education Scheme: Individual competence assessment, Recognition of prior learning and individual study plan

The Adult Education Reform (2001) introduced the Basic Adult Education Scheme ('GVU'). This scheme aims at introducing a new, flexible way for low skilled adults to have their formal, non-formal and informal learning assessed and recognised with a view to acquiring formal VET qualifications while retaining their work.

VET colleges offer a one-stop individual competence assessment and recognition of the student's prior learning. This forms the starting point for an individual study and training plan which allows for part-time study in a single subject structure qualifying for a VET diploma, without the practical training part and therefore without an apprenticeship contract with an enterprise because exemption can be granted for all practical elements of the training programme. The target group consists of part-time students who want to combine the study with continued employment (s. Danish Ministry of Education 2002). The admission criteria are threefold: 25 years of age, minimum two years of relevant work experience, and qualifications corresponding to compulsory school exit level in relevant subjects.

The Basic Adult Education Scheme is a summative approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning. It enables the student to close the knowledge gaps on the way to mastery (diploma identical to a VET diploma).

The reference points for the individual competence assessment (ICA) are the targets of the corresponding VET programme. These targets are indicated either in an annexe to the regulation of each VET programme or in attached guidelines. Two years of relevant work experience, as well as minimum age limit of 25, are the admission requirements for an individual competence assessment and a GVU individual study and training plan for the desired VET education programme. This work experience should contribute towards exemption for the practical training part. For ICA methods, see above under Adult Vocational Training.

The personal study plan drawn up by one college on the basis of individual competence assessment is binding for other colleges that provide the same programme and is valid for 6 years.

In contrast to initial VET, the national trade committees - in which the social partners are equally represented - do not take part in the individual assessment and recognition of practical competences in a Basic Adult Education programme. The college informs the relevant trade committee on the individual study and training plans that it has drawn up for participants. The trade committee has the right to advise the school on future practice.

The new legislation introduced in 2007 did not affect GVU and as previously, the vocational colleges will offer individual competency assessments as the basis for arranging a basic adult education programme and provide opportunity for abbreviating an education programme or to be moved ahead on the basis of a specific assessment.

Advanced levels of the Adult Education System: Work experience as part of admission requirements, study in interplay with work experience

The Adult Education System as part of the Adult Education Reform (2001) also introduced a new framework for further education at tertiary level.

The reform of the Adult Education System aims at better connecting formal education and non-formal learning at work. This promotes the goal of further education at advanced levels to develop progression in professional competence rather than the progression in study competence, which is dominant in the mainstream tertiary education programmes (s. Danish Ministry of Education, 2002).

The Adult Education Reform (2001) introduced relevant work experience as part of the entrance requirements for the Adult Education System. Although validation of non-formal and informal learning is not recognized as part of the education programme at this level, the (shorter) duration and the organization of the content and teaching methods of the continued education programmes is to a high degree based on the life and work experience of the adults. Especially in connection with the final student's project there is interplay between theory and the adult's prior non-formal and informal learning acquired through work and life experience. In accordance with the Act on Open Education (which governs provision and financing of vocationally oriented adult education and training), the target group of the study programme are individuals that are working.

The admission criteria for this programme are twofold: Relevant educational background and two years of relevant work experience are required. The education institution assesses the relevance of the work experience in two dimensions: relevance in relation to the previous educational background and relevance in relation to the desired further education programme.

The following legal amendments have been introduced in 2007 for the two lower advanced levels of the Adult Education System (short cycle 'VUV' and medium cycle '*diplomuddannelse*'), bringing it in harmony with the principles of the 2004 policy paper:

- The introduction of general access for applicants who do not have the formal qualifications to have their corresponding prior learning assessed and recognized
- The shortening of courses in the ordinary programmes on the basis of recognition of non-formal competences
- The possibility of having certificates or diplomas issued exclusively on the basis of recognition of non-formal competences.
- Assessment and recognition of prior learning in education programmes.¹

2.5 Other methodologies and projects developed by public authorities

Experience from pilot projects undertaken to develop relevant tools, methods and procedures for recognising prior learning, which have been used in a variety of educational contexts and industry sectors, and other experience has been shared through a network called 'The Reference Group of the Ministry of Education regarding Validation', which has been funded by the Ministry. The newly established National Knowledge Centre of Competence Assessment (August 2007) will have as its primary tasks to gather, develop and spread knowledge on assessment of competences for the benefit of a number of stakeholders: educational institutions, professional organisations, third sector organisations, guidance centres, private and public enterprises, and citizens. It is thought that a national and all-encompassing approach to validation is likely in the future.

2.5.1 Projects aimed at developing a national documentation framework

In 2005, the Danish government initiated two parallel projects aimed at developing a national framework and methodology for the identification and documentation of non-formal and informal learning. The more general tool project for documentation of learning was undertaken by the Technological Institute. The sector tool project for assessment and documentation of non-formal and informal learning in liberal adult education and the voluntary sector was carried out by Sydanskt Universitet Knowledge Lab. Both frameworks now exist and have been tested in a number of environments, e.g. the workplace, adult liberal education etc². The general tool project resulted in 'My Competence Folder' described in 2.5.2. The sector tool project resulted in three e-portfolios accessible through My Competence Folder and various links mentioned in 2.5.2.

¹ Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

² OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

2.5.2 The 'My Competence Folder' (e-portfolio)

The competence folder (known nationally as '*Min Kompetencemappe*' ('My Competence Folder')) was launched in September 2007. It is an electronic folder in which a citizen may gather documentation for all competencies irrespective of where those competencies have been achieved. For example, in the workplace, though voluntary experience as well as grades achieved through formal education etc. It is the responsibility of the learner to update their folder and it is up to the learner who sees this file. No other organisation will have access to it. This folder resembles the EU CV. The folder may also be used in the paper version.

Enterprises may also use special facilities in My Competence Folder for identification and documentation of their employees as a basis for competence development. In this workplace context, both the employees and the enterprise have access to the folders.

'My Competence Folder' is also available in English.

The folder is accessible on the Internet (www.minkompetencemappe.dk). It can also be found via the 'national guidance portal'¹ (*UddannelsesGuiden*) at www.ug.dk/realkompetence.

My Competence Folder also has links to the three e-portfolio tools that have been developed by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with liberal adult education associations and other third sector associations mentioned above under 2.5.1, to document in more detail the personal and other competences acquired in various activities in the third sector such as liberal adult education, association life, voluntary organisations etc. They are to be found at:

<http://www.realkompetence-folkeoplysning.dk/>

<http://www.realkompetence-forening.dk/>

<http://www.realkompetence-frivillig.dk/>.

¹ OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

2.5.3 Other E-Portfolios

With respect to migrant policy, the Danish government has undertaken a number of pilot projects looking at developing **e-tools**, offering a database on competence documentation and assessment, a digital competence card and a competence card specifically to be used in industry. The tools developed through these projects are considered to be of a good standard according to an evaluation undertaken in 2006. These pilot projects were undertaken at the five regional knowledge centres, which were established 2004 through 2007 to develop 'documentation and recognition of prior learning for refugees and immigrants'.

The employment services have developed an '**Internet competence portal**'. This ensures that individuals consistently update their electronic CVs in order to collect their unemployment allowance.

At sector level, there are numerous examples of the e-portfolio. One such example is the case of the Danish Union of Electricians. They have developed an Internet tool for qualification assessment. Electricians that are members of the union can input their technical, general and personal qualifications and the system automatically evaluates the member's profile. This system can then recommend relevant adult education courses so that the member's profile better matches industry needs.

The Liberal Association of Adult Education (LOF) and the Network for Non-Formal Education (NETOP) have established a '**competence portal**'. This consists of questionnaire comprising approximately 70 questions, testing seven competencies. These include professional competence, learning competence, self-management competence, democracy and social competence, physical and health competence, creative and innovative competence and communication competence.

The State Centre for Competence and Quality Development has developed an Internet-based game, which enables workers in a given workplace to assess job tasks and competence requirements as a basis for competence development and/or job re-organisation.

It should be noted that a number of public sector organisations have developed an on-line portal to document competence, similar to the tools mentioned above.

2.5.4 Meritlærer

Meritlærer is a programme aimed at primary and lower secondary education teachers. It aims to qualify teachers sooner, and through a special programme, by recognising credit for prior learning. This is to address the lack of qualified teachers in Denmark and support 'non-traditional' groups to access the profession. This is one of the few projects that has already been evaluated. Briefly, the finding indicated a high level of satisfaction on the part of the learner and a positive perception of *Meritlærer* students. The weaknesses appear to be related to the reliable transfer of credit. For example, where credit was awarded it was felt that the students lacked subject knowledge, that the programme was actually too short, that the programme only had two main subjects (which is insufficient) and that the rules relating to credit transfer are problematic. The transfer of credit proved not only to be difficult to manage administratively but also inadequately defined.

2.6 Funding

RPL is financially very well supported by the Ministry of Education, which has developed the following system¹:

- No fees are charged for assessment of reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and mathematics for participants in Preparatory Adult Education or in courses included in the "common competence description";
- Within adult vocational training (GVU and AMU) persons have the right to assessment of their competencies. No user fees are charged for this; the institutions are paid a one-off taximeter funding² for competence assessment and personal study and training plan (GVU), and for competence assessment (AMU), respectively.
- Within general adult education, a distinction should be made between two situations: Competence assessment for entry to programmes continues to be included in the tuition taximeter combined with modest tuition fee. For competence assessment without entry to a programme (from August 2008), where the goal is issuing competence certificates and documentation, no user fees will apply but taximeter funding will be used.
- Within tertiary education, user fees for competence assessment are only applicable for persons with a higher education level than qualifications up to and including upper

¹OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

² The taximeter scheme is where the government pays the educational institution a per capita fee for each student/activity;

secondary level. The educational institutions are paid a one-off taximeter funding if the competence assessment and recognition results in the programme being shortened by 15% or more, or in the issuing of a certificate/diploma;

- It is estimated that RPL will cost the Danish government an additional 20.1million DKK (2.69 million Euros) in 2008, falling to 9 million DKK (1.2 million Euros) per annum once it is fully phased in (2010).¹ Of these figures, 9 million DKK are allocated to screening for basic skills (literacy and numeracy) as a new activity in adult vocational training.

2.7 Monitoring and Take Up

The Educational Institutions record the number of RPL assessments they make and submit these figures to the government. Denmark therefore has figures for uptake of RPL. Existing schemes have been used only to a limited degree, in part because they have been implemented relatively recently.² In 2004, 54,445 Individual Competence Clarifications (ICA) were recorded. This figure declined to 49,995 in 2005 and rose again to 51,411 in 2006³.

For 2007, it is estimated that 50,000 will be assessed annually in 'basic skills' programmes and a further 500 through the taximeter system in general education and general upper secondary. No figures are available for diploma and other tertiary programmes within the adult education system.

2.8 Challenges and Barriers to Take Up

The Danish Adult Education Association identifies that for the educational institutions, the new law means a number of new challenges; both for those with experience with the assessment of prior learning as well as for those for whom the field is entirely new.

The institutions must develop a practice that ensures a great degree of transparency and quality in the process involving the clarification, documentation, assessment and recognition of prior learning. This raises demands in relation to the instruments, methods and procedures involved. Moreover, it raises demands with reference to the skills and competencies of the persons who are to carry out the assessments.

Comprehensive project and development work is necessary. This experience is to be

¹ Source: Economic estimates in Bill presented in Parliament, passed as law 2007

² Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, Denmark OECD Country Report, 2007

³ OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, and Ministry of Education: UNI-C's registers in Statistics Denmark

disseminated both “within the ranks” and across the education reforms and sectors. Widespread confidence must be established both among the educational institutions and the commercial enterprises; people must be able to count on the results of the prior learning assessments. The target audience must be comfortable with the certification of their competencies and education that are issued on the basis of prior learning assessments.

Old habits must also be shaken up in relation to guidance efforts, and there must be greater cooperation between institutions. For this purpose, local, inter-institutional adult guidance counselling networks, regional adult guidance forums and a national Council for Adult Guidance will be established.

The new National Knowledge Centre on Competence Assessment, its role and expectations, is mentioned above.

As a result of a political agreement in the summer of 2007, 20 national networks for outreach and counselling in enterprises targeting those with low educational attainment are to be established in November 2007. A new National Centre on Competence Development (Knowledge centre and evaluation function) is also to be established soon after. The Guidance portal www.ug.dk will be enhanced with an adult guidance portal. Also, a new council on adult guidance and counselling, with the participation of social partners, will be set up.

The recent OECD report recognised a number of barriers to increased take-up of RPL. These include:

- Lack of incentive for institutions because they obtain a greater return from students completing the whole programme (except in institutions that struggle to fill places);
- The taximeter system itself, which governs the whole recognition process, could be a potential barrier;
- Resistance by some institutions to create parity between formal, non-formal and informal learning (especially in the case of tertiary education and regulated professions).

As identified in the previous Inventory, a crucial is the need to look at the use of fiscal tools that can help to regulate the prior learning assessment activity. The Danish Ministry of Education argues that educational institutions must have the proper financial incentives to recognise an applicant’s prior learning, including resulting reduction of study time on an individual basis. The taximeter principle (funding per student activity) works as a negative

incentive in this respect because it encourages the institution to offer 'the whole package'. Existing arrangements operate with funding per individual competence assessment or per personal study plan.

The challenge is to achieve a balance between financial incentives encouraging the institutions to recognise prior learning, including preparing shorter study plans where relevant, and avoiding over-encouragement ('speculation' on the part of the institutions and a negative effect on the quality).

In the new legislation (2007), in connection with the new possibility of RPL in the Adult Education System at two advanced levels (short-cycle and medium-cycle) a taximeter funding is given to the institution, if the RPL results in the reduction of the education programme by 15 per cent or more.

On the whole, the Ministry will ensure that within the public budget available priority is awarded to those with the lowest level of education and training. Graduated user fees for competence assessment are to be introduced, except for the low skilled as their objective is a personal study plan.¹

The new legislation (2007) is consistent with this policy.

2.9 Quality Assurance

As has been mentioned before in this chapter, quality assurance is central to the RPL process since credibility of the educational system is imperative. The government therefore works closely with educational institutions to guarantee the development of tools, methods and procedures, which ensures "*dependability, visibility and documentability*"². Educational Institutions have the responsibility for ensuring that this is achieved.

From 2007, the Ministry of Education will be responsible for establishing further rules for education institutions regarding "goals, frameworks, conditions and information requirements" for carrying out competence assessment. In each part of the education system, it is the educational institution that has responsibility for assessing RPL.

¹ Seyfried, Prof. E., Souto Otero, M., with amendments by Hauch, A. (2006), National overview of methodologies and systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark, taken from the world wide web on 20 August 2007. Available at; <http://www.dfs.dk/inenglish/priorlearning/validation.aspx>

² OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

3.0 PRIVATE SECTOR

There has been a long tradition of RPL in the private sector, with examples of RPL usage dating back to the 1990s. Much of this experience has been related to the recognition of work experience but recently this has extended and unions now support individuals in applying to have their prior learning recognised e.g. HK and KAD¹.

3.1 The Role of Social Partners

There is a strong partnership arrangement between government and social partners in Denmark. The Tripartite Committee, which consists of government and social partners, plays an integral role in implementing VET, including policy formulation and implementation of RPL. Many of the social partners involved in the Tripartite Committee have been involved with developing tools for assessing prior learning.

3.2 Case Studies

3.2.1 The Ramboll Management Study²

The Ramboll Management study included six enterprises that used 'Individual Competence Assessment' (IKA) to develop a corporate culture of lifelong learning. They developed a standard assessment model to systematically assess non-formal and informal learning. This included documentation and certification elements relevant to workforce mobility and opportunities for recognition within the formal education system. There were a number of benefits of the programme reported by both employees and employers.

From the employees' perspective, there was a feeling that the company wanted to develop them, through identifying 'who can do what' the skills and strengths of employees were openly appreciated, which improved employee relations, generally increased self-esteem and enabled employees to feel more valued. The only negative consequence of the project was felt to be that it fully identifies those that are not achieving within the organisation, which can make them vulnerable within the organisation.

From the employers' perspective, they feel that assigning tasks becomes easier on the basis of competencies rather than 'who makes the most noise'. They feel that it allows them to design training specifically according to their employees' needs and because it led

¹ OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

² OECD Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

to a new distribution of job assignments within the company it resulted in less repetitive work for employees.

The employers noted a number of problems with individual competence assessment. These being that the employer must act on the assessment by offering targeted training, or their employees will have a negative impression of the process. That employees can be fearful of competence assessment, which leads to greater hostility between employees and management and that where employees access different job functions, an increased mobility regarding job change.

3.2.2 Other examples

Other examples of the private sector using RPL in Denmark are plentiful. Many examples are not available in English but the following have recently featured in an OECD report and in Framework for Action reports. It should be noted however that these projects have not been evaluated and hence the strengths and weaknesses of RPL methods etc have not been documented:

- All of the programmes under the Ministry of Culture (except architect and librarian) have entry tests of different areas of competence related to a specific qualification. However it should be noted that these are not regulated professions.
- A collaborative project between four pharmaceutical companies and the Transport Training Board of Denmark offered an accelerated training programme for unskilled or semi skilled workers in the transportation field. Participants were allowed to complete the course in 4-12 months and importantly the school based element lasted between 6-9 weeks as opposed to the regular 50 weeks.
- A joint initiative has been undertaken for the mercantile and administrative sector (HACKL), in Metal (ME) and Industry (IAU). This project stipulated that applicants should have either relevant qualifications or two years work experience. The 'continued education programmes' that they worked towards had a large element of life and work experience recognised. This led to access by applicants who did not have the necessary formal qualifications, a shortening of courses in mainstream education, issuing certificates/diplomas on the basis of RPL and assessment/recognition of RPL within the education programmes.
- The Jernvilje project was carried out in Northern Jutland, one of the regions most affected by unemployment in the traditional industries. Here, RPL plays a key role in returning the unemployed back into the labour market. The project involves the Metal Union, Aalborg Technical College and local employment authorities. They use individual competence assessment (IKA) to identify the individual's competencies, which allows them to re-qualify and re-enter the labour market. This is carried out quickly before the

individual becomes unemployed for too long. In total 85% of participants in this project re-entered the labour market.

- The Danish Centre for Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (SCKK) runs a network looking at ways of improving the quality of employees' reviews. They look at issues such as competence development, how to uncover competence needs etc. They have uncovered good practice in a number of workplaces¹.
- An 'intercultural competencies course' has been established within health and social care. It focuses on knowledge and understanding of ethical and cultural values to help non-Danish citizens to integrate into Danish society².
- Social partners within the 'production and service sector' have developed the LEAN philosophy, which has a core element of competence development for skilled and unskilled workers. The aim is to move workers away from basic competencies and to achieve more specialised competencies. Social partners in the 'Electricity and plumbing sector' have instigated a similar focus on specialist competencies³.
- The Danish Construction Association and the Federation of Building, Construction and Woodworkers Union initiated a project entitled "Co-operation and Lifelong Learning within Construction" working with the Danish Association of Construction Architects and Danish Technological Institute. They have created different pathways for people at work to obtain qualifications depending on their very specific competencies and qualifications⁴.

¹ Framework of Actions for Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications (2005)

² Framework of Actions for Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications (2005)

³ Framework of Actions for Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications (2005)

⁴ Framework of Actions for Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications (2006)

4.0 THE THIRD SECTOR

There are a number of interesting initiatives in place in relation to validation of non-formal and informal learning in the third sector in Denmark.

The day high school sector has carried out a project with developing the portfolio method together with the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers. However, no documentation in English or interview partner has been available for further information. It is documented in Danish on <http://www.daghojskoler.dk/> (link: portfolio & realkompetence).

New projects in the third sector are being developed. Seminars with scientific consultants have already taken place. Among the NGOs who have initiated development projects are: NetOp (Netværk for Oplysning) in cooperation with LOF (Liberalt Oplysnings Forbund), both adult education associations, and DUF (Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd), which is the Danish Youth Council. Information in English on these particular projects can be found on the website of the Nordic Network for Adult Learning:

www.nordvux.net/object/5982/validationobject.htm, and
www.nordvux.net/object/5981/validationobject.htm, respectively.

The activities in liberal adult education organisations develop competencies, although these competencies are not formally recognised as education. This makes liberal adult education well prepared to take on the task of developing a wide range of competencies. On the other hand it will be a departure from previous practice for adult education to engage in systematic task of clarification and documentation of real competencies. It will require a coordinated cooperation within the liberal adult education and with other sectors.¹

The "Danish Adult Education Association", which is a non-profit umbrella association for the liberal adult education associations and other associations within the "Folkeoplysning", has also had, for some years now, a "Realkompetenceforum": This is a forum for input, mutual learning and coordinating ongoing work in its member organisations. The Board of the Forum makes, and is responsible for, all political decisions on "Realkompetence" (Prior Learning including Non-formal and Informal) in liberal adult education. Links to ongoing projects are to be found on <http://www.dfs.dk/aktiviteter/realkompetencer/rkprojekterimedlemsorg>. An English description of the Forum itself can be seen on

¹ Prior Learning, What is new?, Taken from the world wide web on 30 August 2007. Available at: <http://www.dfs.dk/inenglish/priorlearning/whatisnew.aspx>

<http://www.nordvux.net/object/5983/validationobject.htm>. The Danish Adult Education Association website is updated on an on-going basis, with policy development and case studies published in English

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Denmark has a long experience in recognising informal and non-formal learning as a way of shortening study programmes or accessing formal education. Denmark sees the benefits of using RPL in a variety of contexts. For example, in supporting disadvantaged groups to access the labour market, helping recently unemployed people to access alternative employment, supporting people in accessing industries where there are shortfalls in staff, supporting the employability of all citizens by recognising their skills and experiences etc. The benefits are seen to be extensive and generally support the lifelong learning opportunities of all Danish citizens. As such, there is a strong national focus on RPL in Denmark within the context of Denmark's Lifelong Learning strategy, and there is currently continuous development in this field, especially with the passing of the new legislation in June 2007.

It is difficult to assess the current efficiency and effectiveness of current initiatives. There have been evaluation studies carried out, which in general have tended to see the value of RPL but have also acknowledged some problems in assessing competency, applying credit values etc. More will be learnt as best practice and lessons learnt are shared and more of the projects on-going in Denmark are evaluated. For now it is clear that there is significant RPL activity occurring in Denmark, examples of which other countries can learn from. However, there is also a need to develop a common methodology, which may help to address problems of how to award credit on the basis of competence assessment etc. A common approach should also help organisations within the public, private and third sectors that have no current experience of RPL, to use RPL more easily and should increase take up nationally. The Ministry will be further developing guidance to support RPL in 2007 and it is thought that this will work towards developing a common national approach to RPL.