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**Parallel Session 7B**

**National Qualification  
Frameworks, Recognition of  
Prior Learning  
and Competences**

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**Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes  
in Norway**

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**Working Document  
DRAFT**

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# 1 ABSTRACT

The present report presents the Norwegian system for validation of qualifications of individuals obtained through non-formal and informal learning, i.e. outside the formal education system. This is particularly relevant to adults that have participated actively in the world of work over long periods but never had or took the opportunity to attend formal education and training. Formalization of their qualifications means competitive advantages to themselves in the labor market. To employers the formalization brings advantages in the recruitment process.

The document describes the system as it is today and gives a brief introduction to the development process. It summarizes major experiences, challenges and lessons and points to some important principles and issues that should be taken into account by other countries considering to develop similar systems.

## 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Validation of learning outcomes is the confirmation by a competent body that knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification.

Validation and general recognition of all kind of learning has been on the Norwegian adult learning policy agenda since 1999 as a part of the national life long learning strategy. The first step in building a system for validation was to establish the national Validation Project. The aims of this project were to develop methods and tools for documentation and validation of competences and skills from all learning arenas.

Today there is in place a framework of rights and opportunities for individuals. More than 60 000 adults has gained formal qualifications at upper secondary level which take account of their non-formal and informal learning outcomes and allow a shortened period of formal training before testing. More than 10 000 adults lacking formal qualifications have been offered admission to a study program in higher education based on documented prior learning.

Different methods and tools for mapping, assessing and documenting competences and skills have been developed for utilization in the educational sector, the working life and the third sector. Effort has been made to build bridges between the different learning arenas, and to promote a better understanding of the concept of “equivalent competence”. Despite this effort there is still a challenge to find documentation methods that have full credibility and legitimacy in both the world of work and the education system.

As a result of recent reforms the standards in the education system are stated in national curricula and study plans are learning outcome oriented. The shift of focus from learning input to learning outcomes makes it less complicated to assess learning gained outside the formal education system as “equivalent” to the requirements stipulated in the formal education system.

The cooperation between government, the social partners and other stakeholders has formed a shared responsibility and helped to build a strong alliance in policy and implementation, supporting the Norwegian validation system. This is essential in the further development and implementation of an improved national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

### 3 TWO EXAMPLES

#### **Example one: Qualified for a craft certificate in his own attic**

Bjørnar has worked as a carpenter nearly all his adult life. He started working as a 15-year-old. After years as an employee in a company he wanted to start his own business. Then he realized he needed documentation of his skills and competences to get orders. Going back to school was out of the question. Then he heard about the possibilities for validation of prior learning and decided to try it. «I answered as honestly as I could on several forms where I was to describe what I knew. The upper secondary school followed up with some oral questions. »

His prior learning made him qualified to take the final examination for getting the certificate. The final examination involved fitting out Bjørnar's own attic. «I had to make drawings, order materials and set up a schedule before I started the actual carpentry work.» Bjørnar passed the examination and got his craftsman certificate without further training. «It feels good to see my skills documented.»



#### **Example two: Attending college without an upper secondary school diploma**

«Are you mad?» said Merethe when a girlfriend said she could now complete nurse training in a university college without having the formal qualifications from upper secondary education. Merethe had worked as an unskilled nursing assistant for 25 years. Her dream was to qualify as a skilled nurse, but she didn't want to start taking the necessary subjects at upper secondary level to be formally qualified.

She then heard about the possibilities for seeking for admission to higher education on the basis of her prior learning. She sent her application form to the University College with a description of her experiences and employers' testimonials.

Merethe couldn't believe her own eyes when she received the acceptance letter. During the study, she and the other students benefited from her experiences and what she had learned at work.

## 4 FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS FOR QUALIFICATIONS

All Norwegians has a legal right to upper secondary education, including vocational education and training. Upper secondary education shall lead to qualification for higher education, vocational qualifications or a lower level of competence.

The official documentation is a) Upper secondary Diploma (general subjects), b) A craftsman/Journeyman's certificate (VET) or c) a proof of competence.

There are several ways to get these qualification documentations without going the traditional way through the formal education and training system and which take account of individuals' prior learning and allow for a condensed period of study:

- It is possible to sit a trade or journeyman's examination on the basis of sufficiently broad working experience of a trade of duration 25 per cent longer than the stipulated apprenticeship period. The County authority as represented by the county vocational training board decides whether the working experience stated by the applicant can be approved, and may in special cases approve periods of experience shorter than indicated above. The examination is equivalent to that taken by students in the vocational track of upper secondary education. The scheme is successful, with almost one third of all craft certificates achieved each year being obtained through this so-called 'practice candidate' route.
- Adults who have completed primary and lower secondary education or the equivalent but who have not completed upper secondary education have the right to take upper secondary education.. Education for adults shall be adapted to individual needs. Adults entitled to upper secondary education have a right to assessment of prior learning and to a certificate of competence.
- It is also possible for external candidates to sit for final exams without participating in education courses or training.
- New fast-track routes for adults into higher education have been opened up which are beginning to challenge traditional notions of knowledge, learning and pedagogy within these institutions.



## **5 THE NORWEGIAN VALIDATION SYSTEM**

Even though Norway has a high level of educational attainment, it may be insufficient to satisfy the shifts in the demand for labor force in the future. Updated and new knowledge, competences and skills is necessary to improve competitiveness and increase flexibility in a changing working life. Both public authorities and the social partners have been preoccupied for a number of years with the risks of labor and skills shortages and mismatches; as a result the Norwegian Life Long Learning strategy was launched as the Competence Reform in 1998.

The Competence Reform was a result of the national wage negotiations between the state and the social partners and was based on acknowledgment of the fact that a well-educated population is the most important resource a country can have for the creation of new jobs, ensuring quality of life and preventing new class distinctions. The main objective of the reform has been to help meet the needs of individuals, society and the workplace in terms of skills and knowledge and give adult opportunities to acquire education and training to improve their qualifications. Thanks mainly to the Competence Reform, the idea that people acquire skills and knowledge in a wide range of learning contexts outside the formal education system is now firmly rooted within Norwegian lifelong learning policy.

### **5.1 The national Validation Project (1999-2002) Realkompetanseprosjektet**

According to the Plan of Action for the Competence Reform, one of its principal objectives was to establish a national system for documenting and validating informal and non-formal learning outcomes. This includes learning attained through paid and unpaid work, organizational involvement, and organized training.

In order to accomplish this, the national Validation Project was formed in 1999. The aim of the project was based on an agreement between the Ministry of Education and Research and the social partners. It was further based on the Storting (Parliament) resolution in connection with parliamentary discussions of White Paper no. 42 (1997–98) relating to the Competence Reform:

“The Storting asks the Government to establish a system that gives adults the right to document their non-formal and informal learning without having to undergo traditional forms of testing.”

The priority areas for development in the project were as follows:

- Documentation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the workplace
- Documentation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the third sector

- Development of methods and tools for assessment and formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, in respect of upper secondary education
- Development of arrangements of admission to universities and colleges for students who lack formal qualifications
- Adjustments and possible amendments of existing laws, regulations and agreements on the basis of experiences drawn from the project

The Ministry of Education and Research had the overall responsibility for the project. Vox, the Norwegian Institute for Adult learning, had the operational and professional responsibility in cooperation with the project board composed of members from the social partners, the educational system and the civil society.

During the three years 50 local development projects were funded. Different methods and tools for validation of non-formal and informal learning were developed in three sectors; educational, working life and third sector. Based on qualitative and quantitative data from these development projects and other surveys a new legal framework related to the individual rights for validation and accreditation in respect to upper secondary and higher education was set.

One of the results of the Validation Project was a circular from the Ministry of Education and Research with information on the implementation and further development of a national system for documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

## 5.2 A system

After years of development, testing and implementation it is likely to say that the Norwegian approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes can be characterized by<sup>1</sup>:

- The outcome of the validation process needs to be beneficial to the individual
- The validation system is based on respect for diversity
- Competence development is contextual

The first bullet point addresses the issue about providing individuals that have fallen off the education wagon a second chance and give credits for their learning in the workplace, the home or any other activities. The second bullet point is an acknowledgement of the fact that not one assessment method will suit all people

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<sup>1</sup> McHenry, Joyce Hartog and Torild Nilsen Mohn (2003): *Transfine – National Study Norway*, Oslo:Vox.

and that the assessor has to be sensitive to the needs of the individual. Respect for diversity is also demonstrated in the acknowledgement of many different learning arenas with different requirements to the documentation and validation of learning outcomes. The third bullet point indicates the importance in treating a person's competences and skills as something that is seen as more than objective measurable. There has been a general understanding that competence and skills is created in relation with other people in a particular context and cannot be assessed in simple quantitative ways. It is not a "one size fits all" system.

Based on the experimentation and the above mentioned key characteristics, the Norwegian framework for the documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes has reached a certain consensus. It contains:

- Shared laws, rules and agreements to ensure the rights of the individual. The shared laws include The Education Act, the Working Environment Act and the University and College Act.

- Shared procedure for various forms of documentary proof and validation. This includes decisions on: who is responsible; what is the documentation based on, possibility for complaints, the process of documentation and validation; and where the process takes place.

The shared procedure comprises the following steps:

1. Information and guidance
2. Identification and systemization of competences
3. Assessment
4. Documentation

- Various assessment methods, tools and documentary proof, which are suitable in relation to the requirements of the educational sector, the workplace or the third sector.

Table 1 summarizes the four steps in the procedure for recognizing and validation of learning outcomes in relation to the working life requirements, the third sector and the educational systems requirements<sup>2</sup>. Please note that the steps in relation to working life and the third sector are recommended, whereas the steps in relation to the curriculum in educational sector are required.

**Table 5.1: Steps in the national procedure for recognition of informal and non-formal learning outcomes**

<b>Steps National procedure</b>	<b>Documentation in relation to the requirements of the working life</b>	<b>Documentation in the third sector</b>	<b>Documentation in relation to requirements of upper secondary education</b>	<b>Documentation in relation to requirements of higher education</b>
<b>1 Information and guidance</b>	Information by: Employers Trade unions Branch org. Employment offices	Information by: Voluntary umbrella organizations, local org. inform their members	Information and guidance by county council centers and upper secondary schools	Information by: Higher education institutions NOKUT UCAS
<b>2 Systemizing and Identification</b>	Creation of CV by Individuals	Creation of CV by Individuals	Creation of portfolio by Individuals and Counselors	Creation of portfolio by Individuals
<b>3 Assessment</b>	Self –assessment of actual work activities  Verified by current employer/ client	Self-assessment of experiences / voluntary activities  Self-declaration	Assessment in relation to national curriculum Certified by secondary/ vocational schools in cooperation with counselors in county council centre	Assessment in relation to requirements of each higher education institution. Certified by higher education institution / NOKUT
<b>4 Documentary proof</b>	Verified document	Self-declared document	Proof of competence Trade or journeyman certificate Diploma	Right of admission

<sup>2</sup> McHenry, Joyce Hartog and Torild Nilsen Mohn (2003): *Transfine – National Study Norway*, Oslo:Vox.

## **6 VALIDATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR**

### **6.1 Purpose**

The strategies for lifelong learning in Norway cover all levels of education and “access to learning for all” has long been a watchword of Norwegian education policies.

Until 2001 there was a demand for formal entrance qualification to get admittance to higher education. For adults with relevant prior learning but not sufficient formal education this was an obstacle for getting formal qualifications on higher education level.

### **6.2 Laws and regulations**

Following an amendment to the 2001 Act relating to universities and university colleges, adults aged 25 and over can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed in order to gain admittance to a specific study program. The Act also allows for candidates to be exempted from exams or courses on the basis of their non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

### **6.3 Technical arrangements, responsibilities**

In higher education, applications for admission based on non-formal and informal learning outcomes are assessed by the individual university or university college. The qualifications of applicants have to be assessed in relation to the subjects or the programs they wish to study. Each institution has the power to assess what kind of knowledge and skills they consider to be necessary and decide on the appropriate course of action for carrying out this assessment.

The application form is sent to the current university or university college. It is the committee at each university/college who decides whether the applicant’s documented prior learning fulfils the course entrance requirements. The application form is sent to the current university or University College. It is the committee at each university/college who decides whether the applicant’s documentation of prior learning fulfil the course entrance requirements. Applicants seeking admission on the basis of their non-formal and informal learning outcomes are ranked in relation to applicants with general admission requirements on the basis of a rough appraisal; it is not possible to have the study points calculated since the learning outcomes described is seldom graded.

### **6.4 Methods and tools**

In higher education applicants seeking admission to specific courses will be assessed if they on the basis of their prior learning hold the necessary qualifications for the courses. The assessment emphasises both the specialist content of the course and the teaching arrangements offered to students. Informal and non-formal

learning outcomes will be assessed mostly through written documents like self-declarations and portfolios. Interviews and tests are rarely used.

Information on criteria and assessment methods can be acquired from individual universities or university colleges. Assessments related to admission will vary from institution to institution as discretion will be exercised to a greater extent than in the case of regular admissions. Also the complaint procedure will be specific to each individual.

## **6.5 Costs and numbers**

Validation and recognition of prior learning related to the higher education system is a procedure that is free for the individual applicant. The costs must be covered by the budget of the university or university college.

The number of prior learning applicants seeking for admission to a study program was 6,000 in 2001 (the first year this was possible). The number of applicants decreased in the following years to 2,700 in 2006. It was expected that the number of applicants would be high when the possibility was opened up and that this would decrease somewhat over time. Approximately half the applicants want health and social studies and 1/5 want educational studies, mostly bachelor studies at university colleges<sup>3</sup>.

Annually from 2001 to 2006, 50 % - 70 % of these applicants were found qualified for the study program they want. In competition with other applicants, annually 45 % - 50 % of the applicants with validated and recognized formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes were admitted to the study program they want.

The number of these new students has decreased annually to some extent, from 2,100 to 1,300 in the period 2001-2006. However, this is still an important scheme for adult lacking formal study competence to get access to higher education.

# **7 VALIDATION IN UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION**

## **7.1 Purpose**

The purposes of recognizing non-formal and informal learning outcomes in upper secondary education are:

- to match the learning to formal qualifications set in the national curricula and shorten the study period
- to give possibilities for a more streamlined and tailor-made study programme for each individual

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<sup>3</sup> Helland, H. & Opheim, V. (2004): *Kartlegging av realkompetansereformen*. Oslo: NIFU. Skriftserie 6/2004

- to provide the individual with an accredited certificate or diploma (Proof of Competence) to gain promotion or career improvement, find a new job or increase mobility in the working life.

Validation “has made me believe that I can get the education I want to take” was agreed by 55 per cent of the candidates that had gone through validation of non-formal and informal learning at county assessment centers in 2001-2002; it was considered the most important effect by 30 per cent of the candidates.

Validation “has made me more aware of my resources” was agreed by 60 per cent of the candidates, it was considered the most important effect by 20 per cent of the candidates<sup>4</sup>. There is no doubt that the validation process strengthens the ambition of the participants as their “hidden” knowledge is made visible and recognized.

## 7.2 Laws and regulations

During the development of the national system for validation and as a result of the implementation there have been changes in the legalization leading to individual rights for adults.

*The Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education (Education Act)* covers both primary and secondary education. Chapter 4A concerns education and training organized especially for adults. Adults who need primary and lower secondary education have a statutory right to such education from August 2002. This education must be adapted to the individual’s needs and life situation, such as when and where the education is to be provided and the rate of progression. The municipal authorities are responsible for providing this education.

Section 4A-3 specifies the following regarding the right to upper secondary education for adults:

- Adults who have completed primary and lower secondary education or the equivalent but who have not completed upper secondary education have the right to take upper secondary education. The first sentence applies to adults born prior to January 1, 1978. Education for adults shall be adapted to individual needs. This right may, among other ways, be met by means of distance education facilities. The Ministry may issue further regulations concerning issues such as the question of who shall be entitled to this right, admissions, ranking and preferential rights.
- Adults admitted to upper secondary education have the right to complete the full course. This applies even if they do not have the right to upper secondary education pursuant to the first paragraph.
- In the case of subjects where the syllabus requires a period of instruction longer than three years, adults admitted to upper secondary education have the right to education in accordance with the period of instruction laid down in the subject syllabus.

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<sup>4</sup> Agenda (2003): *Evaluering av Realkompetanseprosjektet. Hva mener ”brukerne”?* Vedlegg til sluttrapport. Sandvika: Agenda Utredning & Utvikling AS.

- No charge shall be made for tuition. The county authority may require adults attending upper secondary education to pay for the teaching materials and equipment normally required for their own use in connection with the course. The county authority may require payment to cover the cost of copying such materials. The Ministry of Education and Research may issue further regulations.

### **7.3 Technical arrangements, responsibilities**

The Norwegian parliament (the Storting) and the Government define the goals and decide the budgetary frameworks for education. The Ministry of Education and Research is Norway's highest public administrative agency for educational matters, and is responsible for implementing national educational policy. A common standard is ensured through legislation and through national curricula. The national curricula at upper secondary level are developed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training in close cooperation with the social partners. The Directorate is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. In this capacity the Directorate has the overall responsibility for supervising education and the governance of the education sector, as well as the implementation of Acts of Parliament and regulations.

In recent years considerable responsibility and decision-making authority has been delegated from the central government to county authorities. County authorities have responsibility for upper secondary education, including vocational education and training.

As a part of the national Validation Project, every county authority received funding for building up an organization of a validation and formal recognition system. Most regional authorities organize this work by means of one or more "assessment centers". Adults can acquire information, guidance and help with

the validation process in relation to upper secondary education from supervisors at these centers. The centers are also responsible for quality assurance of the assessment procedure.

### **7.4 Methods and tools**

During the national Validation Project the following methods have been developed for validation of non-formal and informal learning in respect to the requirements stipulated in the national curricula:

- Dialogue-based method: The dialogue-based method is based on discussions between assessor/specialist and the adult. The specialist focuses on the knowledge and experience of each individual and attends to specific problems and queries in the curriculum. The assessor/specialist can use a computerised or manual tool based on the curriculum in question.

This method requires individual preparation and a one-to-one meeting. The dialogue-based method can be combined with port-portfolio assessment, self assessment and testing. It has been tested out on a large number of candidates. The conclusion is that the method fits in with both vocational and general subjects. Yet, the



degree of testing has to vary from person to person. A dialogue-based method covers tacit knowledge, and seems to be good for adults who have difficulties with reading, writing and mathematics.

- Assessment of portfolio: Assessment on the basis of a portfolio is a method based on written documentation, photos, etc. The candidate sends a “charting” form to a “service centre” together with certificates and reports. Modules and subjects are approved on the basis of the documentation submitted, and additional education is offered so that individuals can acquire the desired certificates. This method demands good written documentation of individuals’ own skills and does not require one-to-one meetings. Undocumented and tacit knowledge is difficult to reveal. After admission to upper secondary education, a discussion takes place in order to arrange the course according to actual knowledge and skills.

- Vocational “testing” starts off with an interview, where the background, training, work experience, language skills and objective of the adult are charted. After the first general interview a professional specialist interviews the individual in the particular subject, after which the individual shows the abilities in practice, so that both the theoretical and the practical side of the trade is assessed. Working on the basis of this practice, the adult may be offered either additional education to bring him or her up to a journeyman/trade certificate level or public certificate useful for job seeking. This method complements other methods in that the assessment of non-formal learning is also possible, and where required, parts or all of the practical side of the vocational subjects can be approved. Vocational “testing” provides adults – irrespective of their ethnic origins – with every opportunity to show what they can actually do in their own

fields. This method picks up knowledge and experiences which are not documented and works well irrespective of learning and language difficulties. Vocational testing, on the other hand, requires inter-departmental co-operation between the education system, the employment service and possibly also the insurance office and social security office.

Both manual and computerised tools have been developed and tested in vocational and general subjects. The tools are used in different ways in the different methods dependent on the needs of the individual. Sometimes the assessor supplements the existing tools with locally developed tools.

## **7.5 Costs and numbers**

The county authorities are responsible for adult education at upper secondary level and receive financial support as a part of national funding.

The validation procedure related to formal recognition in the upper secondary educational system is to a certain extent related to individual legal rights, and for the individual the procedure is for free. Some examples:

- If you are born before 1978 and do not have a general or vocational certificate from upper secondary level, the validation procedure (guidance, assessment and documentation) is for free. The costs are included in the county councils “adult learning budget”. The size of this budget is decided locally in each county.
- If you are disabled to work, the social security office can pay for the validation procedure.
- If you are unemployed, the employment office can pay for the validation procedure
- If you do not fill the criteria for getting the recognition for free, you have to pay yourself.

The county councils in Norway charge more or less the same prices. The prices vary from €120 to €300 for an academic/general subject, €300 for a vocational subject and €1,800 for vocational testing. From 2000 to 2005 approximately 60 000 persons went through a formal recognition procedure in relation to upper secondary level<sup>5</sup>. Approximately 80% of the recognition has been done in vocational subjects, most related to health and care sector.

## 8 BEST PRACTICE AND SOME GUIDELINES

During these years of developing and implementing a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning we have seen three central challenges: first, to develop tools/methods for documenting competence obtained outside the formal education system; second, to ensure that such documentation has credibility and legitimacy both in the workplace and the education system and is transferable across both sectors; and third, to recognise non-formal and informal learning so as to allow individuals to obtain partial credit towards educational requirements in upper secondary and higher education<sup>6</sup>. To meet these challenges requires procedures for documentation and evaluation to be reliable, transparent and conducted in accordance with consistent assessment criteria and clear standards, together with a process of translating competencies gained outside of the formal education system into the requirements stipulated in national curricula and university study programmes so that they may be judged ‘equivalent’.

We have established a system for formal recognition of learning irrespective of where that learning occurs. The results of the validation is useful for individuals both in the labour market and when seeking entry into formal education. The efforts done on many areas has helped to forge a strong consensus in support of Norway’s recognition system; the involvement of stakeholders, to establish a central cooperation and to build

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<sup>5</sup> [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)

<sup>6</sup>OECD (2007): *Recognition of non-formal and informal learning: Country note for Norway*. Paris:OECD

a framework of individual legal rights.

## **8.1 Stakeholder cooperation**

Tripartite involvement in policy-making on lifelong learning in Norway has been important for the success of many of the different actions in the Competence Reform and the follow up of this reform. The validation system in Norway is grounded in a framework of legal rights achieved on the basis of tripartite cooperation between the state, social partners and other stakeholders in the field of adult education. This is a strength of the Norwegian policy process and this provides a good platform for the further progress and the continued development of the validation system.

The national Validation Project had central steered bottom up approach, the overall responsibility lied with the Ministry of Education and Research and all the stakeholders were involved in the board and in the development projects. This formed a shared responsibility and a common ownership to the results of the project.

## **8.2 Central coordination**

Vox has the responsibility for the implementation and further development in close cooperation with the Ministry and the stakeholders. To establish a national approach built on shared laws and common principles in parallel with a high degree on local autonomy has been one of the success factors.

This has been possible because networks have been created that have enabled representatives from the counties to work together and share experiences. Vox has also organized conferences and seminars for education officers and assessors. In addition to the different projects themselves these activities have provided important arenas for debate and learning.

## **8.3 The individual at the centre**

Adults who want upper secondary education will benefit greatly from the assessment of non-formal and informal learning. They will be able to see that their knowledge and skills from all learning arenas other than the education system are validated. This will provide them with the motivation to start and carry on with further learning. The assessment of non-formal learning will be economical in terms of both finance and time as adults will require education involving knowledge and skills they did not acquire previously.

Interviews with candidates' shows that the most important consequences are that the validation process has made them believe that they can get the education they want, and that this has made it possible for them to take part in upper secondary/higher education.

An important purpose is to match the learning to formal qualification and shorten the study period, as well as

a more streamlined and tailor-made study programme for each individual can be provided. The accredited certificate or diploma provided after validation process will help individuals to gain promotion or career improvement, find a new job or increase mobility in the working life.

## **8.4 Some guidelines**

On European level a set of guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning is now being developed on the widening experience of this field. There are two main reasons for developing the guidelines; to support quality improvement in validation processes and to enhance the compatibility and comparability of validation processes across institutional, regional and national borders.

As a result of the Norwegian experiences and the input from European experts we will finalize this short report with some statements/guidelines for development and implementation of national validation systems:

- Develop policies that clarify the operation of validation processes and the role of stakeholders, what is the purpose and division of responsibilities
- Develop validation arrangements that respect the complexity of learning taking place outside formal education and training systems
- Include stakeholders both at the policy level and at the operational level in the development and implementation
- The procedure must be transparent and understandable; guidance is an important part of the procedure
- Summative validation needs to have clearly defined criteria/standards
- The target beneficiary for validation process should be the individual

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Updated statistics in English on the web: Statistics Norway: [www.ssb.no/english/](http://www.ssb.no/english/)