

”Career competences are competences for self-understanding and self-development”

The main title is centered within a large, dark red circular graphic. The text is white and reads: "A Nordic perspective on career competences and guidance". The background of the entire page is a scenic landscape featuring a paved road with white dashed lines leading towards snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky. A yellow signpost is visible on the right side of the road.

A Nordic perspective on career competences and guidance

Career choices and career learning

A concept note on career competences prepared for NVL and ELGPN by Rie Thomsen, Aarhus University

There are a number of examples of guidance practices and activities in the Nordic countries, throughout the various stages of life, where the objective is to develop participants' career competences. Whether at school, within higher education, in non-formal education or at the job centre, people take part in activities in order to learn something about themselves and the opportunities which are open to them, and to be proactive in relation to decisions regarding their futures. The cases reflect the far-strong traditions in the Nordic countries for basing guidance activities on a learning paradigm; however they also reflect that this does not always occur systematically, openly and explicitly.

Focusing on how guidance activities can be based on a learning paradigm and con-

tribute to the development of career competences highlights the breadth of career guidance and turns attention away from a focus on the here and now, where the role of guidance professionals is to help young people and adults make choices, towards a focus on learning, where the role of guidance professionals is to organise activities centred on the learning, acquisition and description of competences.

It is recommended that the Nordic partnership continues the work to develop a number of common resources which can lead to a greater focus on the learning dimension of career guidance and support guidance practice in the Nordic countries, as well as providing a tool for improving the quality of career guidance through a focus on participants' learning outcomes.

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Foreword

This Concept Note on Nordic perspectives on career competences and guidance is commissioned by the NVL in co-operation with the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, ELGPN. Since its establishment in 2007 the purpose of the Network has been to promote co-operation and systems development at member-country level in implementing the four priorities identified in EU 2020 strategies and four priorities of the EU Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004; 2008): career management skills; access, including accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL); co-operation and co-ordination mechanisms in guidance policy and systems development; and quality assurance and evidence base for policy and systems development.

While focusing on the four priorities the ELGPN has examined how lifelong guidance contributes to EU policy development in at least six areas: schools, VET, higher education, adult education, employment and social inclusion. The Network has developed tools, such as the ELGPN 2012 Resource Kit, for policy-makers to help policy-makers and other stakeholders to review existing lifelong guidance provision

within their country or region, and to identify issues requiring attention and gaps that need to be filled, drawing from practices in other European countries. The aim of the ELGPN tools is to support policy review and peer learning processes both within and between countries. Other outputs from ELGPN include commissioned concept papers on selected topics, as well as an ELGPN glossary on lifelong guidance policy development.

In a meeting of the Nordic ELGPN delegations in Copenhagen 9 September 2013, the NVL and ELGPN agreed to commission a joint NVL and ELGPN Concept Note to explore in more details the definition and promotion of lifelong Career Management Skills (CMS) in the Nordic countries. The members of the Nordic ELGPN delegations validated the national data used in Concept Note and acted as a reference group for the Concept Note when it was consulted among Nordic countries. The paper draws from the discussions within the Nordic ELGPN delegations but the views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the ELGPN or its member countries, or the European Commission or any person acting on behalf of the Commission.

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Introduction

Career guidance is guidance which takes places in a variety of institutional contexts: educational and vocational guidance in secondary schools, educational guidance in periods of transition, student counselling, trade unions, job and career centres. A shared characteristic of many of these contexts is that they are initiated and financially supported by public funding in accordance with political decisions, or, in the case of trade unions, financed by members.

Such support is not only based on humanitarian considerations, but also has socio-economic motives.

Career competences are competences for self-understanding and self-development; for exploring life and the worlds of learning and work; and for dealing with life, learning and work in periods of change and transition. Career competences involve being aware, not only of what you do, but also what you could do, and of how individuals are formed by their daily activities and their actions while simultaneously affecting their own opportunities for the future.

Career competences are closely aligned with the notion of Career Management Skills, or CMS, commonly found in English language guidance literature. The learning which precedes the development of these competences, meanwhile, is referred to as career learning. While career learning is not a widespread concept within the Nordic countries, it contains considerable potential in light of the longstanding Nordic tradition for combining guidance and learning.

Furthermore, focusing on the development of career competences as the result of career learning is in line with a European trend of describing the outcomes of learning activities in terms of skills and competences as well as knowledge. for example in relation to the European Qualifications Framework.

The cases presented here demonstrate that practitioners, academics and policymakers in the Nordic countries are all working to examine the potential of having greater focus on career learning within various contexts. The interest is in discovering whether this focus can help to ensure better returns from career guidance for the individual citizen, as well as whether the acquisition of career com-

petences and access to career guidance can improve not only personal, but also societal returns from other inputs such as education and active labour market policy.

In tandem with this, in the Nordic countries, as in the rest of Europe, the goal is to make the education system more dynamic and flexible, and thereby provide the individual citizen with the opportunity of knitting to-

gether one's own education and qualifications. This underlines the importance of young people and adults, whether through learning opportunities or the recognition of prior learning, being given the chance to acquire or identify the necessary competences to navigate flexible education systems, workplaces and labour markets, create new employment opportunities, and cope with periods outside the labour market.

Career competences in the spotlight

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For a number of years, ELGPN has focused on Career Management Skills. Under the auspices of ELGPN, the decision has been made not to develop a common competence framework across the European countries. The argument is that epistemology, curricular traditions and guidance approaches differ too greatly among member states. ELGPN instead encourages each member state to develop their own national competence frameworks along the lines of those found in the blueprints.

This concept note reflects an initiative within the Nordic ELGPN group, in partnership with the Nordic network for adult learning (NVL), to investigate the possibilities for collaboration between the Nordic countries in developing a number of joint documents on career competences and/or a competence framework for career learning in the Nordic countries.

The objective for this concept note is to contribute to a shared Nordic frame of understanding for career competences which can be used in the ongoing development of guidance in the Nordic countries.

The intended audience is guidance professionals, teachers, researchers, managers, policymakers and clients. The concept note is comprised of: an introductory section describing the notion of career competences, including a brief outline of blueprint approaches to Career Management Skills; examples from the Nordic countries of practical and political initiatives to develop career learning activities aimed at the acquisition of career competences among various groups, such as students in secondary schools or higher education; and finally, a number of recommendations addressing policy, practice and the training of guidance professionals, as well as research and development work.

What are career competences?

ELGPN's 'Resource Kit' refers to Career Management Skills as *"... a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions"* (ELGPN Resource Kit 2012, p.21).

ELGPN points out that CMS describe the competences and skills which are of value to people in terms of pursuing a life project where work, whether as an employee or self-employed, plays a major role (ibid.).

Language constitutes a cornerstone for the establishment of a shared Nordic frame of understanding which can be used in future policy development. In everyday usage, career is often used to denote some form of hierarchical progression, entailing the acquisition of material or symbolic benefits such as higher wages, new job titles, great-

er influence and autonomy, or higher social status¹. Hence, the term has often been applied to those employed within occupations with an easily identifiable and visible hierarchical structure.

However, a broader understanding of career is increasingly common within guidance research and practice in the Nordic countries and in the international professional community. This approach does not view a career as a process of hierarchical ascendancy, but rather as the individual's path through life, with all the twists and turns this might entail. Hereby, the aim is to help establish a new etymological understanding of the concept of career which, as far as possible, captures the complexity resulting from the fact that people live their lives while at the same time creating the framework structuring their lives (Højdal & Poulsen 2007, p. 13). The term career is used to describe how people live their lives across different contexts and settings, such as education, work,

¹ See for example the definition in Merriam-Webster of career as "a field for or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, professional, or business life"

leisure and family. These contexts create a complexity which requires everyday conduct if it is to be meaningful for the individual. This is called ‘career’ and, within this perspective, a career is no longer the domain of the few, but something which everyone has.

The everyday ‘management’ is underlined in the term Career Management Skills and refers to the practices of investigating, gathering and processing information, prioritising and making decisions, as outlined in the definition from ELGPN: *gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions.*

However, the English language term Career Management Skills presents certain problems when translating into the various Nordic languages. In Danish, for example, the word management can be translated as *håndtere* and skills as *færdigheder* or *kompetencer*. The latter is used in the same sense as the EU’s eight key competences for lifelong learning, where competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context.

These eight key competences are described as the competences every individual requires for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. Meanwhile, among Finnish guidance professionals, the term CMS is often translated as *urasuunnittelutaidot* which refers more to skills related to career planning than career management. This implies

...”competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context.”

that one of the goals of career education in Finland is to develop continuous planning skills and the contents of Finish career education programmes cover the development of CMS as an explicit competence area.

Referring once again to the Danish example, the words career management skills translate directly as *karrierehåndteringsfærdigheder* (and similar in Swedish and Norwegian). Such a word makes little sense in the Nordic languages.

This concept note therefore uses the term career competences. The word career is kept with the aim of drawing attention to the broader understanding of career as outlined above. Experience also shows that the term career has to some extent found favour as a demarcation and specification of the type of guidance on offer; for example, the term career guidance is used by Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, to describe its sphere of activity. In NAV (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) one finds terms such as work-related monitoring of users.

Recently, a guidance platform was developed in order to improve NAV counsellors' competences in relation to the guidance and cooperation which takes place as part of the work-related monitoring of citizens. The term career is also used in relation to the Norwegian county career centres. Ten years ago, there was vocal opposition to the introduction of the term career in Norway. In 2005, discussions resulted in the decision not to introduce the word career within the subject *utdanningsvalg* (educational choices). More recently, it has become more widely accepted that terms such as career guidance and career centres can be a suitable and meaningful designations for a practice which provides information, counselling and guidance regarding jobs and education and the role (presence or absence) of both in the lives of citizens. Furthermore, such terms are more closely aligned with those used in European contexts to describe similar practices.

This concept note; 'A Nordic perspective on career competences and guidance' should also be seen as a contribution to the efforts to define and apply a broad concept of career in the Nordic countries. The examples of practice and policy presented here all highlight the organisation of learning activities centred on the acquisition of personal competences, but understanding, investigating, developing and acting are also important competences which the Nordic

cases focus on. The goal is therefore also to help develop a terminology² which captures the importance/understanding of career learning and career competences. These career competences are at the centre of several blueprints from the USA, Canada, Australia and England.

Blueprints for careers

It is not only European policies which reflect the interest in career competences; this interest is also evident from the so-called blueprints from the USA: National Career Development Guidelines (1989), Canada: *Blueprint for life/work design* (1996), Australia: *Blueprint for Career Development* (2010) and Scotland: *Career Management Skills Framework for Scotland* (2012).

These documents are the result of a number of interlinked political initiatives which underpin career competences with a learning paradigm (Hooley 2013). These blueprints have sought to establish a framework for a broad concept of guidance where career guidance is NOT only a matter of educational and vocational choices, but also involves the promotion and planning of learning regarded as important for people's participation in dynamic and flexible labour markets (ibid.).

The learning paradigms underpinning the four blueprints differ somewhat. The Canadian *Blueprint for life/work design* outlines

² This concept note is available in Danish and English.

”The learning paradigms underpinning the four blueprints differ somewhat.”

a learning taxonomy with the following four stages: acquisition, application, personalization and actualisation. The Scottish document refers to experiential learning and Kolbs learning cycle.

- 1 Concrete experiences**
– personal experience
- 2 Reflective observation**
– what have I learned from this experience
- 3 Theorisation**
– how this learning has changed my view of the world
- 4 Active experimentation**
– putting learning into practice.

Another shared characteristic for the four blueprints is that they consist of multiple documents with references to strategies to enhance lifelong guidance, ethical guidelines for guidance, national competence frameworks, goals in educational policies and career competences. In addition the blueprints include guides for the implementation of the blueprint and suggestions for further use of the resources.

It is important to note that extensive development projects were conducted in conjunction with the creation and introduction of blueprints and frameworks for career guidance and career learning in each of the four countries (LSIS 2011). Subsequently, these development projects act as a resource and a source of inspiration for policymakers, guidance professionals, teachers and managers when implementing the blueprint for careers³.

³ See for instance www.education.gov.au/australian-blueprint-career-development

How are career competences developed?

In 2008, the European Council passed a resolution on lifelong guidance. This resolution outlines the role of lifelong guidance in relation to member states' objectives for lifelong learning. ELGPN suggests that the goal of integrating lifelong guidance systems into lifelong learning systems is to support the citizens to manage their careers and develop their lifelong career competences as an outcome of participation in various guidance activities (ELGPN 2012, p. 21).

However, it is also important to note that not all guidance activities have the explicit objective of developing career competences. The NICE network (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe) has mapped the different roles and functions of guidance professionals, as

presented in the NICE model⁴: career counselling, career information and assessment, career education, career systems development and career service management. The NICE model specifies and describes the various activities which are also mentioned in the definitions of guidance from the EU and OECD. Career learning is just one among a number of activities. The same applies in the Nordic countries, where the focus has primarily been on offering guidance in relation to educational choices rather than on the possibility of organising learning activities within guidance in order to develop the career competences of participants.

The literature on career learning often references Bill Law's DOTS model, but Law's extended DOTS and career learning theory is also worthy of consideration as it adds

⁴ For a presentation of the NICE model, refer to: www.nice-network.eu/fileadmin/erasmus/inhalte/dokumente/NICE_Summit_Canterbury/NICE_Summit_Materials_Onlineversion.pdf

a taxonomic approach to learning to the mix. Law describes the levels of career learning as follows (Law 1999 & 2001):

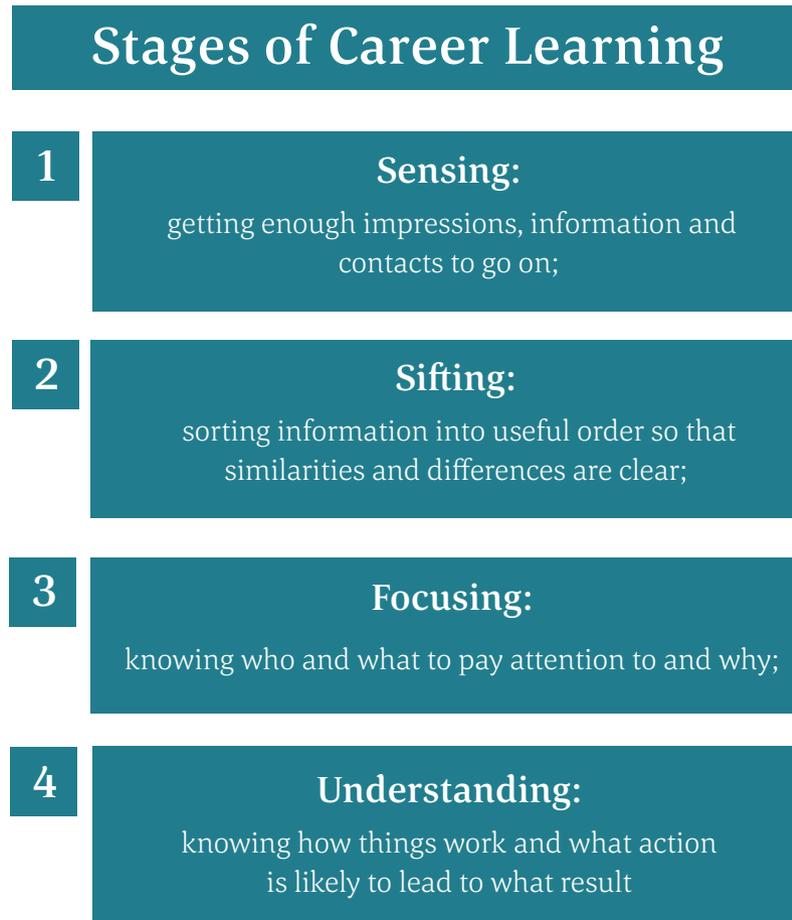


Fig. 1 Stages of Career learning⁵ adapted from (Law 1999 & 2001)

Law's levels are ordered hierarchically, meaning that each level is dependent on the preceding level. The description levels can also be used to analyse how the development and training of different competences is supported by specific guidance

activities. In the Nordic countries, there is a tradition for experience-based guidance activities in the form of work experience, site visits and bridge building at almost all levels of the education system and, to some extent, within public employment services

⁵ It is important to know that Career-learning theory has 4 stages and 8 sub-stages see http://www.derby.ac.uk/files/icegs_new_thinking_for_connexions2001.pdf

(PES). However, the learning offered by many of these activities remains at level 1, offering the opportunity to sense and gain experience. As a result, there may be considerable potential which can be exploited by ensuring that participants in experience-based guidance activities are also provided with opportunities to develop competences at career learning levels 2-4, i.e. sifting, focusing and understanding the meaning of the activities in partnership with guidance professionals and in groups⁶.

OECD's Handbook for policymakers (2004) states that:

‘Too often services fail to develop people’s career management skills, but focus upon immediate decisions’ (p. 3).

The PISA studies from 2012, for example, show that, students both Denmark and Finland have high rates of participation in guidance activities, but, while the Finnish students show career competences which incorporate perspectives on higher education and the labour market Danish students are primarily concerned with their choice of upper secondary education” (Sweet, R., Nissinen, K., and Vuorinen, R., 2014). In Denmark, this issue is in the focus of a number of ongoing projects. In her PhD, Randi Boelskifte Skovhus is examining guidance practice in the final year of lower secondary education. One of the tendencies she has found is a focus on providing young

people with a degree of clarity regarding their choices and the fact that they have to make a choice. There is a distinct lack of focus on organising activities based on career learning and aimed at developing students’ career competences which might provide a foundation not only for their current choices, but for making decisions later in life. The same tendency can be found in a development project conducted by UU-Denmark (the coordinating body for Danish youth guidance services) where a group of teachers, guidance professionals and parents studied foundation and access courses. Once again the focus was on clarification, interests and choices. By working with a change of focus, they drew attention to the learning potential of guidance activities for all students and created greater clarity in terms of the learning objectives for these activities. In Norway there is also interest in how a greater focus on CMS can help develop guidance. A task force appointed by Vox has initially highlighted how greater focus on CMS can help provide clarity regarding the expectations of those using the various guidance services; what they expect to gain from participating in guidance activities (Haug 2014).

In terms of this concept note, there are three important things to remember: firstly, that there is an emerging awareness of the importance of whether choices or learning are in focus when organising guidance activities; secondly, that a focus on learning entails greater focus on participant out-

⁶ Randi Skovhus highlighted this issue in her analysis of career guidance in Key Stage 4.

comes; and thirdly, that guidance activities can contribute to the development of career competences, but do not always do so.

Career competences and non-formal learning

In the Nordic countries, there exists a long tradition for associations and societies, as well as non-formal education – a tradition which has contributed to broad acknowledgement that learning occurs in a wide variety of contexts and locations throughout people’s lives. As such, the Nordic countries have their own practices when it comes to the recognition and validation of prior learning. With this in mind, it is important to consider not only the acquisition of career competences, but how they are made visible in an individual, a collective and a societal perspective.

The tradition for non-formal learning in the Nordic countries also makes it obvious that career competences can be learned within other contexts than career guidance, for example at folk high schools, evening classes etc. Career competences can be learnt through participation in both formal and non-formal learning contexts. Non-formal learning contexts and their importance in relation to personal development, motivation, education, learning and work have long been in focus within NVL, where atten-

Career competences can be learnt through participation in both formal and non-formal learning contexts.

tion is also paid to the ways in which non-formal learning is recognised and validated⁷.

Career guidance also offers the opportunity of recognising career competences developed in non-formal learning contexts, which highlights the part of the guidance process where career competences are mapped and described rather than being the result of actual teaching⁸. This is reflected in the Finnish validation practice which, by focusing on the individual needs, concentrates on identifying any further competences required for the award of a qualification, finding out where and how these competences might be acquired, and whether there are any particular labour market competences required to perform a given job⁹.

⁷ See fx NVL rapporten *Quality in Validation in the Nordic countries*.

www.nordvux.net/content/id/68/quality-in-validation-in-the-nordic-countries

⁸ This is described as caught not taught in *WP ICMS Vilnius, 5-7 May 2009, Reflection Note Ronald G. Sultana*.

⁹ See ‘*Competence-based qualification guide*’ (2013) by the Finnish National Board of Education here: www.oph.fi/download/156393_Competence-based_qualification_guide_2.pdf

Lifelong guidance and career competences

It must be stressed that career competences are understood in a lifelong perspective and that different life situations push different fields of competence up the agenda. For example, it may be important to provide a detailed analysis of the competences ‘I know who I am and what I am good at’ among young people transitioning from higher education to the labour market. Some universities, including the University of Southern Denmark, are experimenting this by offering students various courses related to the development of career competences. The University of Southern Denmark refers to this experiment as the CMS project¹⁰. Similarly, in Finland, work has been carried out for a number of years within the Learning Network for Working Life Competencies in Academic Studies, in which several Finnish universities participate, to implement and document the effect and significance of various interventions in terms developing career competences¹¹.

Another life situation where career competences gain relevance is midlife career change, where professional competences from one type of job are realigned in relation to new vocational aspirations. This turns the focus to information and guidance regarding new possibilities, but also consideration of how these possibilities match

the competences and aspirations of the individual¹².

Public employment services (PES) often play a central role in terms of the possibilities for career reorientation. The Swedish *Arbetsförmedlingen* includes guidance among the basic services it offers, defining guidance as a process which, among other things, should enhance citizens’ self-awareness and their awareness of the labour market. PES in most European countries offer various activities which can contribute to a development of citizens’ career competences, although career learning is often not explicitly mentioned in relation to job clubs or courses for job seekers.

Nevertheless, such activities can contain elements aimed at providing citizens with opportunity to develop the necessary competences to manage their own situations in relation to work and education. For example, the Norwegian ‘Work-oriented monitoring of NAV users’ includes the charting and assessment of individual needs for support and guidance in order to find employment. This profiling and assessment provides the basis for compiling a plan of action and work-oriented measures alongside the citizen. Depending on the citizen’s needs, various measures can be put into practice, some of which might contain elements of CMS.

10 www.sdu.dk/Om_SDU/Organisationen/destuderendeicentrum/Programmer+og+projekter/Stud-l%C3%A6ring/Jobskabelse+og+iv%C3%A6rks%C3%A6tteri (in Danish).

11 See Learning Network for Working Life Competencies in Academic Studies and <https://ktl.jyu.fi/en/tao-english>

12 See Cedefop research paper no. 42 Navigating difficult waters: learning for career and labour market transitions www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5542_en.pdf

”...more experience-based elements are also included..”

Examples of elements within a course for job seekers provided by NAV which can contribute to the development of career competences include: job search methods, job search logbooks, personal pages and CVs on the NAV website. In addition, more experience-based elements are also included such as: active job search and site visits, and insight into one’s own life situation, competences, resources and self-confidence. It is characteristic of PES in all the Nordic countries that, until now, there has been no systematic focus on assessing their own activities from a career competences perspective, while the primary focus in terms of gauging effectiveness has been on documenting citizens’ placements as a result of guidance, e.g. employment or educational enrolment, rather than their learning outcomes.

NVL’s study *Aspects on working life knowledge in Nordic adult counselling* stresses that outreach guidance can be necessary in order to inform certain groups of how guidance can help in developing their career competences, as well as of their opportunities in terms of further education and within the labour market.

NVL concludes:

”... that no one can be held responsible for adult counsellors having adequate and up-dated knowledge on the economy and the labour market, neither in the counselling or guidance institutions nor in other authorities.

It may seem strange considering that there is also considerable political concentration on labour market knowledge and perspectives within the guidance and counselling services in the educational system” (p. 23).

This is a crucial and topical issue which needs addressing as an understanding of career competences requires, among other things, the availability to guidance professionals and citizens of a flow of correct and multi-faceted information regarding the world of work.

Finally, from a societal perspective, it must be considered whether there are areas where it would be beneficial to systematise career competence activities so as to ensure that there are activities on offer, whether mandatory or not, with the objective of providing individuals with opportunities to develop their career competences. One such example is the ‘progress reform’ (*fremdriftsreformen*) of higher education in Denmark. This reform includes various initiatives (primarily of a structural nature) aimed at helping to speed up students’ progress through higher education. At the same time, the reform draws attention to the ways in which institutions of higher education can optimise their support for in this process. A systematic focus on students’ opportunities to acquire career competences during their studies, as well as access to professional career guidance, could assist this process.

A critical view of career competences

Greater focus on career competences requires awareness of a couple of related issues¹³. Firstly, it is important to ensure that focusing on career competences does not result in an individualisation of societal problems.

Developing career competences does not affect the number of available jobs.

Unemployment is therefore not solely the responsibility of the individual, and career guidance can employ advocative measures in tandem with a focus on developing career competences. An advocative approach may be necessary, for example, in order to create structures which can open the labour market to particular groups. Flex jobs, special schemes for university graduates and job rotation schemes are examples of such structures creating new possibilities.

Secondly, guidance activities which seek to develop career competences are a social practice founded on a particular set of values; for example, that work is a central factor in personal identity, that it is possible to take an investigative approach to oneself and one's decision-making processes, that one can become conscious of one's values, and that adapting to the cultures and norms of the labour market increases one's chances of successfully navigating the world of work.

These values are culturally tied and can take different forms for different social groups, for example in terms of ethnicity or class.

Summary

To summarise, the development of career competences is the result of individuals' participation in a multitude of different settings including leisure activities, the family, peer groups, education (formal and non-formal) and guidance and occurs in a lifelong perspective. Individuals are not necessarily conscious of their career competences, but guidance can help to increase their awareness.

However, when this is impossible because such competences are lacking, guidance must assume the task of organising learning activities which provide the individual with an opportunity to acquire career competences. In order to ensure these opportunities are provided to all social groups, career learning activities can be integrated in the curriculum at schools and other educational institutions.

There can be a need for such opportunities within a number of different sectors. For example within PES when employee termination leading to unemployment gives immediacy to the individual's need for knowledge about her own competences, alongside knowledge about the labour market and job opportunities, and, finally, a personal assessment of the opportunities she wants to pursue. Here, guidance can help create better, more meaningful labour market transitions.

¹³ Please consult Sultana (2009) and Hooley et.al.(2013)

Examples from the Nordic countries

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In 2013 the national delegations from the Nordic countries agreed to establish a Nordic cluster within the ELGPN. Members of this group from Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark took part in compiling examples for this concept note. This work was coordinated by Anne Froberg (DK). The Nordic group determined the questions used to structure the examples (see appendix).

The following paragraphs provide a general description and systematization of the cases. The cases are then analysed, focusing on how career competences are interpreted in the Nordic countries. The examples do not represent a mapping of all the different ways in which the Nordic countries work with career competences. Rather, they are utilised in this concept note to consider the argumentation for the cases' focus on career competences and the terminology used to describe the various Nordic initiatives.

Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway have each submitted one case, while Iceland, as agreed with Rie Thomsen, has submitted two separate cases. Overall, the cases can be divided in terms of whether they describe examples drawn from practice or political initiatives concerning career competences. In the descriptions presented below, the cases have been split between practice-based and policy-based examples.

Examples of practice from the Nordic countries

The two cases from Iceland are both examples of practice and reflect the ways in which learning activities can be designed so as to focus on participants' acquisition of career competences. The first example is Treasure Hunt – a course to promote self-esteem for children aged 7-10. The second example is the Kvennaskólinn in Reykjavík, which is a sixth-form college for young people aged 16-20.

Treasure Hunt has been developed by an Icelandic guidance counsellor (Elva Björk

Treasure Hunt has proven appealing to both boys and girls.

Ágústsdóttir). It was originally developed to appeal to boys, as more girls than boys were found to make use of the guidance surveys and a number of materials and methods appealed to girls more than boys. However, Treasure Hunt has proven appealing to both boys and girls.

Treasure Hunt is based around a pirate theme with the children hunting their inner treasures.

The hunt/course takes place with the aid of research-inspired exercises in self-esteem, positive self-image and mental health. It is held over the course of four weeks, with one hour each week and homework between sessions, and is offered to a particular group of students who need to work on their self-esteem and self-image. While the course was developed in a public school guidance setting, it is now provided in private settings. Teachers and guidance professionals are interested in the course and a handbook has therefore been compiled and a course developed for professionals so as to allow the Treasure Hunt method to be applied at the national level.

At the Kvennaskólinn, guidance professionals have developed two courses concerning career competences. The first of these courses (Course 1) takes place at the begin-

ning of the period of study and the aim is to introduce the study environment, the college's expectations of students and various study techniques. The course should develop students' competences in terms of study techniques and time management. The intention is that they find ways of studying which are effective for them as individuals and learn stress and anxiety management techniques.

The second course (Course 2), which takes place as students near the end of their time at Kvennaskólinn, the aim is to support students in making decisions regarding their goals for the future and in taking responsibility for the decisions they make after leaving college. The course employs various group therapy exercises in order to increase students' self-awareness and decision-making competences. In addition, students receive information regarding the opportunities for further education, both in Iceland and internationally. Course 2 was originally optional, but has since been mandatory with the implementation of a new school reform in 2008. The decision to make the course mandatory was based on positive student evaluations during the previous eight years.

Both the Treasure Hunt and Kvennaskólinn work with personal learning and knowledge

...usage of guidance among boys through the development of methods which appeal to them.

in the form of specific teaching, exercises and training in subjects clearly and closely related to career competences. Additionally, Course 2 at Kvennaskólinn explores the links between students' self-knowledge and information concerning the opportunities for further education.

Both cases reflect a teaching-based design of guidance provision focusing on students' acquisition, via the learning on offer, of competences which they will be able to apply going forward in their education and in life in general. Furthermore, both cases reflect a systematic effort to improve access to guidance. Treasure Hunt focuses on increasing access and usage of guidance among boys through the development of methods which appeal to them. At Kvennaskólinn, all students are introduced to guidance services, while the preventative work offered by guidance services, in the form of the development of students' competences with regard to the transitions to

and from the college, are made accessible to all. It is evident from the Kvennaskólinn case that this highly systematic approach to student competence development in terms of guidance and career learning is particular to this college and that the guidance professionals at the college are continuing to work to develop the courses.

Policy examples from the Nordic countries

The cases from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark all outline political initiatives and processes.

The Norwegian case describes the groundwork for the introduction of a CMS¹⁴ perspective in Norway. Using a bottom-up approach, it is examined whether or not the CMS perspective strikes a chord with Norwegian guidance practice. The objective for this process was to clarify and specify the CMS perspective in a Norwegian context and to introduce 'career skills as a concept within the professional field'. At the same time, it is explained in the Norwegian case that there are already numerous activities within the realm of Norwegian guidance provision where participants are meant to learn something and develop competences;

¹⁴ In this work, Norway has retained the term CMS.

As such, this abbreviation will be used in the following case description.

as such. It is open to discussion whether a focus on career competences constitutes the introduction of a new approach or whether there is more talk of a terminology which can help collect, describe and develop existing good practice. This work has been part of the piloting of some of the recommendations from 'Lifelong Guidance Policy Development: A European Resource Kit' (ELGPN 2012) among ELGPN member states during 2013 – 14. As a result of this study, an additional briefing note was produced with the title '*CMS - et felles perspektiv for karriereveiledning i Norge?*' (CMS – a common perspective for career guidance in Norway?) This briefing note was compiled by associate professor Erik Hagasset Haug with the support of a cross-sector group which was tasked, among other things, with examining CMS within the various sectors represented.

The briefing note was not included in the Norwegian case but as a resource in compiling the present concept note alongside other, similar resources. It is evident from the case that Norway uses both terms, CMS and career competences, and that guidance

and Norway has focused more on guidance based on participants' situation in the here and now than on guidance as a learning process focused on developing participants' career competences.

Experiences gleaned from the bottom-up study of the CMS perspective have shown, among other things, that:

The CMS perspective interested practitioners greatly, as well as those with the responsibility for guidance provision at the system level in counties throughout Norway

For many, the CMS perspective constitutes a more coherent and systematic way of thinking about/conducting guidance – and that such a perspective was lacking and sought after

The CMS perspective moves career guidance towards a learning focus and this move was seen as an interesting one.

The Swedish case describes general guidelines for educational and vocational guidance within lower secondary schools, sixth form colleges and adult education. These guidelines, which were adopted in 2013, were presented in a PowerPoint presentation, including a short section regarding CMS¹⁵. Here, it is stated:

“CMS refer to a number of competences which equip people to be able to plan, develop and manage their own choices in a structural manner” (translated from the Swedish).

In order to provide further explanation regarding CMS, an illustration is used which places the student in the middle and draws an arrow connecting students’ self-knowledge and alternatives. This illustration also includes the concept of ‘becoming conscious of oneself’. The Swedish case reflects a general desire to improve guidance provision, and the description of career competences is included as part of these efforts.

There is no evidence of any separate interest in or demand for career competences, merely a greater interest in guidance. Furthermore, the case informs us that, during 2013 and 2014, the Swedish government has decided that the National Agency for Education, PES, the National Agency for Social Insurance and the Hjälpmedelsinstitute (Institute for Assistive Devices) should work together to develop further and continuing

According to the general Swedish guidelines for guidance, CMS include:

Skills in gathering, analysing, compiling and organising educational and vocational information and oneself

Skills in making and implementing decisions

Skills in managing life changes and transitions.

education and training provision for guidance professionals within sixth form colleges, both in general terms and with a particular focus on young people with functional handicaps. This broad approach is reflected in School Act, chapter 2 § 29 where it is stated that *“students in all types of schooling, other than kindergarten and pre-school, should **have access to** personnel with the necessary competences such that their **need for guidance** regarding educational and vocational choices **can be fulfilled**. Individuals planning to begin an education should also have access to guidance”* (translated from the Swedish).

The cases from Denmark and Finland both describe subjects/topics which are expected to be integrated within the curriculum at various educational institutions. The Finnish case describes the legislation and curriculum

¹⁵ This abbreviation is used in the publication and is therefore retained when referring directly to the publication.

”The cases from Sweden and Denmark give cause to note a considerable gulf in terms of guidance funding.”

for guidance in comprehensive education, in upper secondary level general education and in upper secondary level vocational education and training. In this case, CMS are described as an element of guidance provision, with CMS viewed in a broad perspective preparing students for education, work and entrepreneurship. It also outlines how CMS are expected to improve students' awareness in terms of their educational and vocational opportunities. In conjunction with a 2014 reform of the core curricula for primary and lower secondary education, guidance provision will also be reformed.

The Danish case, meanwhile, describes Education and Work (previously Educational, vocational and labour market orientation), which is a mandatory topic in Danish schools. It is expected that this topic will take a more prominent place as part of the 2014 reforms of vocational education and training, including guidance provision, and of primary and lower secondary education. Education and Work should provide students with basic knowledge and skills aimed at qualifying and challenging their educational and vocational choices. It is ex-

pected that the mandatory topic Education and Work should contribute to students' career learning, and the overall task for collective guidance is outlined as building on the learning which takes place within Education and Work, among other places.

The reform, along with changes to guidance provision, restricts access to individual guidance for the majority of young people by focusing efforts on those young people who are classified as not ready for further education during the penultimate year of upper secondary education. In the future, all students will receive collective guidance at key stage four. In Denmark, a process has begun to develop concepts, models and practice within collective guidance, and to develop exemplary courses within the topic Education and Work. The cases from Sweden and Denmark give cause to note a considerable gulf in terms of guidance funding. While Sweden has elected to pursue a general approach, introducing a broad but unified concept of guidance across sectors, Denmark has chosen to focus individual guidance provision on young people classified as not ready for further education.

Summary

The Norwegian case reflects a desire to investigate whether a focus on career competences is useful and strikes a chord within Norwegian guidance practice. A development project has been conducted including the presentation of CMS perspective at conferences etc.

The results showed that this perspective attracted considerable interest and a positive response.

Norway has also produced a briefing note regarding career competences in order to support the ongoing political decision-making process. The case from Sweden also makes explicit mention of the CMS perspective as part of the cross-sector general guidelines for guidance provision. In conjunction with the implementation of these general guidelines, the concept of CMS is explained.

The Danish, Finnish and Norwegian cases all deal with curriculum guidelines for, respectively, the mandatory school topic Educa-

tion and Work (Denmark), educational and vocational guidance in secondary education and vocational education and training (Finland), and the subject Educational Choices in secondary education in Norway. The Icelandic case outlines two examples from practice of learning activities aimed at the development of career competences among participants. The cases describe how the activities received positive evaluations among both participants and guidance professionals.

All the cases reflect the existence of multiple examples of Nordic guidance practices and activities focused on developing participants' career competences. The cases stem primarily from lower secondary education, although a number of other examples are also mentioned¹⁶ from PES and further and higher education where participants are offered the opportunity to develop career competences through various activities. The cases also reflect traditions in the Nordic countries of basing guidance activities upon a learning paradigm, but demonstrate at the same time that this does not always occur systematically, consciously or explicitly.

¹⁶ The examples were collected by the Nordic group within ELGPN, as well as by NVL's thematic group for guidance.

Recommendations

There is a basis for collaboration between the Nordic countries regarding a number of recommendations as the cases clearly reflect a high degree of similarity in terms of how guidance and career competences are understood, and of a shared view that guidance should focus on learning. It is also important to acknowledge that the cases reflect the fact that this process is already well underway in some countries; for example the task force's work regarding the CMS perspective in Norway and the introduction of general guidelines for guidance in Sweden which include a focus on CMS. This work can provide a springboard for further joint efforts, for example under the auspices of the Nordic group in ELGPN and in partnership with NVL's guidance group. Consideration should be given to inviting Greenland and the Faroe Islands, who are currently in the process of professionalising guidance services, to take part in this collaboration.

Overall, it is recommended that the Nordic countries use the term career competences to refer to Career Management Skills and highlight the lifelong perspective and the associated importance of providing structured opportunities for developing career competences, for example by focusing on career guidance and career learning in secondary schools, sixth form colleges, vocational education and training, higher education and at job centres, prisons and in non-formal education. It is recommended that the Nordic countries continue to work together on career competences and that this work should focus on both processes and products, as discussed below. The objective of this Nordic collaboration is not to standardise guidance, but, for example, to provide inspiration for creating a career competence framework, or to share knowledge regarding the organisation of career learning activities in schools. Conducting this work together is resource-efficient.

However, outside of professional guidance circles, CMS is difficult to understand.

At the request of the commissioning body, the recommendations below are divided under the headings:

- 1) the political level,
- 2) education and training of guidance professionals,
- 3) practice and
- 4) research.

It must be underlined that these four levels do not operate independently of one another and that a number of the recommendations require cooperation among different stakeholders if they are to be successfully implemented.

The political level

The abbreviation CMS is used in the Nordic countries alongside related terms such as career learning, career skills and career competences. However, outside of professional guidance circles, CMS is difficult to understand. It is therefore recommended that the following definition be used: Career competences are competences for self-understanding and self-development; exploring life, learning and work; and managing life, learning and work during changes and transitions. Career competences entail awareness of what you do, as well as of what you could do, where individuals are formed by their way of life and their actions while simultaneously affecting their own prospects.

There is need to discuss and study the relationship between career learning, career competences and guidance in practice. It is therefore recommended that the Nordic countries appoint cross-sector task forces, similar to the Norwegian task force on CMS, to work with activities to develop career competences. In close partnership with the fields of practice in the different countries, these task forces should map the work being done in relation to career competences in greater detail than has been possible within the remit of this concept note. The following stages could form a basis for this work:

Clarification of the current situation including the current state of the field of practice in the country in question in terms of career learning and career competences.

Description of a positive scenario for career guidance in the country in question in terms of career competences.

Recommendations to relevant national career guidance fora regarding the possibility of compiling a cross-sector policy for career competences.

There is reason to believe that introducing a focus on how different guidance activities contribute to the development of career competences highlights the breadth of guidance and can help shift attention *from* a focus where guidance professionals help young people and adults to make decisions and choices here and now *towards* a focus on learning, where guidance professionals organise activities concentrated on learning, acquiring and describing competences.

It is recommended that discussions continue regarding which learning paradigm is best able to support guidance practice in the Nordic countries. In Haug 2014, for example, Kolb, Dewey and Vygotsky are singled out as representing relevant paradigms, but Bill Law's work on career learning is also considered relevant. The task of studying learning paradigms could be conducted within the ELGPN Nordic group and/or NVL's guidance group, or a common Nordic PhD may be a possibility.

The cases from Denmark, Finland and Sweden provide examples of initiatives by, respectively, the Danish Ministry of Education, resulting from a political agreement for schools, vocational education and training, and guidance; the Finnish Ministry of Education, in partnership with the National Board of Education in 1970; and the Swedish government. In the latter case, the Swedish National Agency for Education, commissioned by the government, chose to implement the general guidelines for guidance in all relevant settings. It is apparent from the Swedish case that the initiatives are passed on to regional managers and

local authorities. It is apparent from the Danish case that the Ministry of Education to varying degrees has consulted relevant external stakeholders in the work in order to incorporate opinions and input concerning the ongoing process, and that external stakeholders from practice will be consulted in conjunction with the development of exemplary processes. On the contrary none of the three cases make explicit whether guidance organisations, guidance practice and guidance research has been consulted in the process of establishing and implementing the initiatives concerning career competences. Norway, meanwhile, has adopted a bottom-up approach, investigating whether and how the CMS perspective strikes a chord with Norwegian guidance practice. It will be interesting to see whether/how this work will inform Norwegian policy concerning competences, education and the labour market in the future.

In relation to recommendations concerning the development of initiatives which support citizens in their development of career competences, it is important to note that there is no causal relationship between the political adoption of curricula or activities at job centres and the development of career competences among citizens. Analysis of *Uddannelses-, erhvervs- og arbejdsmarkedssorientering* (Educational, vocational and labour market orientation), a compulsory topic in Danish schools, shows, for example, that the framework for career learning is set by the curriculum, but teaching is sporadic and is not a high priority in schools. The implementation of the initiatives and the outcomes for citizens are also dependent on

the available resources, the competences of the professionals involved, needs for competence development, and the allocation of the responsibility for the task. It is clear from the Danish case that realising the intentions found in the legislation is dependent, among other things, on the development of new practices, including changing the school's priorities and improving teachers' competences. These two areas are particularly important as the resources available for guidance at the Youth Guidance Centres are being cut with responsibility shifted to the teachers who (until now) are not familiar with the concept of career competence.

It is recommended that policymakers are involved in the implementation of activities which are intended to aid the development of career competences among citizens and that implementation is made part of the process of preparing legislation in cooperation with the civil service, practice, research and education.

Practice and the education and training of guidance professionals

The two cases from Iceland deal with concrete examples of practice focused on the development of participants' career competences. It is recommended that guidance professionals' work together to examine the guidance activities they already provide within a career competence perspective and

try to substantiate these activities in terms of participants' learning outcomes so as to be able to outline examples of good practice.

Moreover, a focus on career competences can strengthen a culture of evaluation which focuses on assessing participants' (learning) outcomes from concrete guidance activities, rather than only measuring quantifiable targets for guidance provision in the form of statistics concerning participant movements in relation to education, work and unemployment.

It is also recommended to examine the focus on career learning and career competences within national education and training programmes for guidance professionals. This work could be conducted within VALA (a network of career counselling and guidance programmes at higher education institutions in the Nordic and Baltic countries)¹⁷, where it can also be discussed which educational activities help in developing the competences of guidance professionals in relation to organising career learning activities for competence development among participants. The NICE network's (Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe)¹⁸ competence model for guidance professionals can be consulted as a resource, particularly in terms of providing inspiration for training for the role as career educator.

¹⁷ www.peda.net/en/portal/vala

¹⁸ www.nice-network.eu/322.html

An important aspect of guidance professionals' work concerning career learning and career competences is to pass on information about jobs, companies and labour market prognoses. It is therefore also important to consider the quality of the information available to guidance professionals. Is information concerning jobs, companies and the labour market targeted at guidance professionals? Is it up to date? How do guidance professionals obtain this information? And does the information reflect regional, national and global variations and opportunities?

Research

Several of the Nordic countries provide descriptions of various subjects or topics which are integrated within the educational system at different levels. These subjects have varying titles, e.g. education and jobs in Denmark and educational choices in Norway. Learning outcomes and competences which students are to acquire as a result of the lessons are often outlined for these subjects. A survey and comparative study of policy and practice in relation to these subjects could assist in evaluating the degree of similarity among the Nordic countries in terms of learning and competence objectives.

Furthermore, it is recommended that further studies are carried out to describe the extent of guidance activities aimed at

developing career competences and how they are practiced in the Nordic countries across the various sectors where guidance occurs, such as schools, higher education and public employment services. A study of this type can be conducted across sectors within the individual country, after which a comparison of sectors can be performed between the countries. Questions which can be posed related to the Icelandic case are: Are the opportunities for outlining or acquiring career competences mandatory or voluntary? What are the target groups? Who are these opportunities available to? How are the initiatives evaluated in relation to participant outcomes? Are there groups within society for whom the acquisition of career competences is difficult to access? Which stakeholders manage/provide which opportunities?

Finally, it is recommended that the research generated occurs in a close cooperation between researchers, practitioners and policymakers. The results should be presented and discussed in international guidance research circles, for example at the IAEVG conference where a symposium could be arranged focusing on the CMS perspective in the Nordic countries in order to receive feedback and inspiration from other parts of the world. The results could also be presented within the NERA network number 25 *Guidance and counselling* and within ELGPN.

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Method

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Cases were provided by the Nordic group within ELGPN. Questions were compiled by Anne Froberg and were as follows: Here is my suggestion for the case-description:

Give 1 (ONE) example from your country where CMS has been discussed, described or implemented over the last 2 years

Describe the setting (institutional) i.e. school, VET, PE or other

Who took the initiative?

Who participated?

How is your case related to the Work in ELGPN?

What is the outcome?

Are there further plans for CMS in this setting?

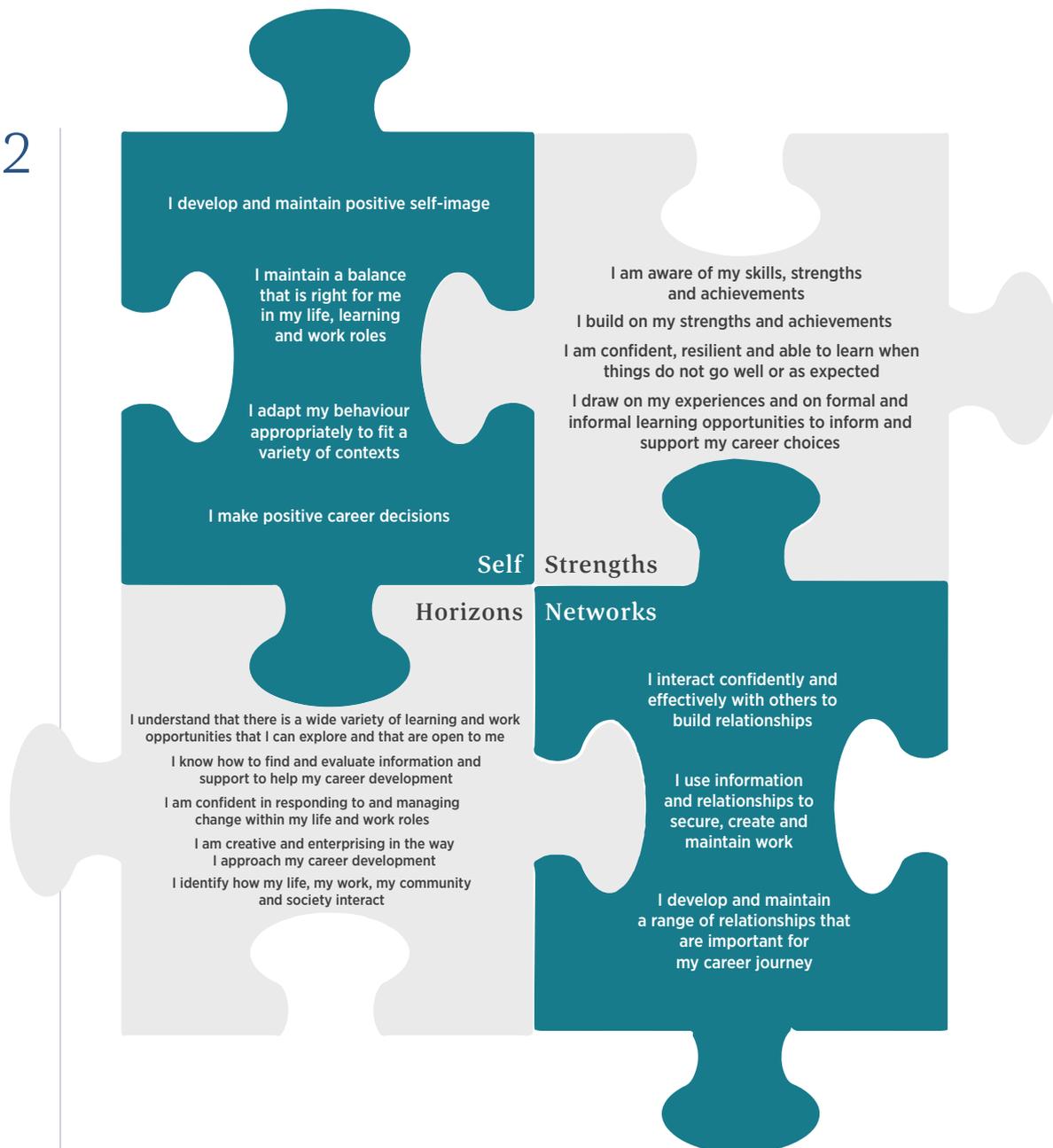
Please remember, that the case should be limited to 1 page. You can write in English or in your own language (except Finnish). Please also send the case to Rie as soon as possible – preferably by the end of April 2014. Rie Thomsen opfordrede desuden til at medsende link til relevante materialer vedr. casen. Casene blev sendt til Rie Thomsen og beskrivelsen af casene findes i dette afsnit.

The cases were analysed, compiled and discussed at a meeting within the Nordic ELGPN group and NVL in Oslo September 25-26. Comments from this meeting have been integrated in this concept note.

Annex

Fig. 1 Visual summary of Career Management Skills, Scotland.

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