1. Introduction
This report consists of descriptions of policies and practice in relation to employment, unemployment, adult guidance and competence development for low skilled and unemployed in Denmark.

In chapter 2 we describe the situation of unemployed people including challenges, obligations, level of support and security, and their rights and options. The facts and legislation concerning unemployment is stated in chapter 4. Various implications of current policy are discussed critically in chapter 3. We have chosen to give the issue of Recognition of Prior Learning a special focus in this chapter. In chapter 5 and 6 (compiled) we discuss the role of the third sector, and in chapter 7 we describe and discuss the state of guidance and counseling in Denmark in relation to unemployed and adults, and in relation to and qualification of guidance counselors.

2. Situation of the unemployed and challenges
The situation of unemployment in Denmark (Summer 2011):
Unemployment rate: 7.4 % of the work force – in numbers 215.000 persons. Unemployment has increased – from 90.000 persons in 2008 to 215.000 persons in 2011. The percentage and numbers are based on ILO definitions of unemployment.

Underlying these numbers are the following unemployment rates: ¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
<th>January-April 2011</th>
<th>April-July 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All (average)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24 years old</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29 years old</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years old</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 years old</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 years old</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-66 years old</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total number of unemployed about 22% are long term unemployed (ultimo 2010) – which means unemployed for more than 12 months. The rate was 11% in 2009. European average in 2010 was 42% and 35% in 2009. In Denmark there is no gender difference in long term unemployment. Of the whole work force 1.7% was long term unemployed ultimo 2010.  

Compared to the situation a few years ago unemployment and long term unemployment is an increasing problem in Denmark although rates and numbers are lower than the rest of Europe. 

The time period unemployed are entitled to receive unemployment benefit has recently been reduced from four to two years. At present there is a political debate going on whether to reinstall a four year period as up to 35,000 unemployed are considered losing their unemployment benefit rights in the summer of 2012. 

Labor policy in general has changed from a concept of ‘human capital’ to a concept of ‘job first’, from a focus on resources spent on training and competence development of unemployed and low qualified adults to a gradual change to a high level of control and focus on employment as quickly as possible (for an elaboration on this change in politics, see section 3). This policy change has been followed by initiatives like these:

- Local authorities’ outsourcing of activation and guidance courses from public job centres to private enterprises (‘other actors’)
- An increasing number of rules and regulations that unemployed must act according to not to lose their unemployment benefit: Confirm to their local job centre every week that he or she is actively searching for jobs; document sending a number of job applications per week; upload and update their CV on the ministry’s web portal (JobNet); meetings at the local job centre as a minimum every three months; participate in activation and job search courses chosen by the local job centre – typically for 6 weeks; a general obligation for unemployed persons to continuously prove that he or she is available for the job market; setting up a job plan

Job centres must validate the unemployed persons’ skills, qualifications, personal abilities and readiness for work, categorize them in one of five categories (“match groups”), and make decisions on actions according to this match. ‘Other actors’ are mainly interested in running courses and guidance activities for the highest ranked match groups as they are much easier to help into employment (‘creaming’). ‘Other actors’ are paid according to the number of clients that get employment.

The effects of this policy on employment are scarce due to the economic crisis and the decrease in jobs, plus outsourcing of low skilled jobs to Eastern European countries or the far East. Another effect is unemployed persons’ feeling of being ‘hunted’ and mistrusted. And a third effect is employers’ public protests against receiving a great number of unwanted applications.

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Job centres also are entitled to offer unemployed these opportunities if suitable:

1) Guidance and qualification upgrade
2) Practice placement at an enterprise
3) Employment with a wage subsidy for the employer

Labor facilitators and adult guidance practitioners in general are well qualified. They are usually qualified at level 5 or 6 according to EQF with short cycle or mid cycle educations, often with an additional diploma supplement course. But there is no compulsory and standardized training or qualifying course for the large variety of practitioners working in adult career guidance or activation courses/initiatives for unemployed.

A challenge for low skilled and/or unemployed is the fact that over qualified persons get jobs that could be relevant for others with lower qualifications, the so called ‘cuckoo in the nest-effect’. Another challenge is the increasing demand for formal education and competence development which is a great hurdle for many low skilled persons.

In Denmark adults’ participation in lifelong learning traditionally is high – this is the case concerning both evening school courses, labor market courses and adult education at higher levels. From 2008-09 to 2009-10 there was an increase in participation of 17 % to 1,525,000 participants (= 617,000 persons out of a population of 5 mill.). The number covers part time courses of various lengths.  

3. Background and Policies for employment assistance and for counseling the jobless

The Danish Flexicurity model is a welfare state model with a proactive labor market policy. The term refers to the combination of labor market flexibility in a dynamic economy and security for workers. The model consists of three elements:

1. Flexible rules for firing staff
2. Relatively high unemployment benefits, social security
3. An active labor market policy with rights and obligations for the unemployed

The flexible rules for firing staff make it possible for Danish companies to adjust the amount of workers to the current production without big economic costs. The relatively high (compared to other European countries) unemployment benefits and social security means that the individual economic risk of the unemployed is reduced. This is a main reason for the unions’ support of the model. The purpose of the active labor market policy is on the one hand to upgrade the qualifications of the unemployed to make it possible to regain a position on the labor market, and on the other hand to secure availability of the workforce on the labor market.

The term ‘flexicurity’ was first used by the social democratic government in the 90’s and the model has since been praised by EU and OECD and has been part of the European employment policy and lifelong learning strategy since 2007.

Denmark’s strategy for lifelong learning

The cornerstone of the flexicurity model is a belief in qualification of the workforce to secure flexibility and mobility. Lifelong learning strategies such as construction of an adult flexible educational system, recurrent education, recognition of prior learning are all strategies that support the flexicurity model and an active labor market policy. In the following section we focus on one part of the lifelong learning strategy, namely recognition of prior learning.

The aim is to create better opportunities for individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences assessed and recognized within adult education and continuing training, regardless of where they are acquired. This is meant to promote the participation by adults in adult education and continuing training and to improve their opportunities in the labor market. It was promoted through implementation of legislation on increased recognition of prior learning in adult education and continuing training, from general adult education to diploma level, which was enforced in 2007-2008.

The Danish Ministry of Education launched a number of initiatives to improve the knowledge of prior learning assessment and to promote its use. It includes: A partnership agreement with the social partners regarding recognition of prior learning is running from August 2007 until August 2009, and a national information and networking campaign focusing on prior learning. The network campaign includes: An online skills portfolio (www.minkompetencemappe.dk) that can be used to document skills when seeking prior learning assessments; a handbook of prior learning to be used by adults and continuing education institutions; establishment of a National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning (NVR); establishment of a guidance web portal that provides general information about prior learning (www.ug.dk) and a TV campaign aired on Danish National TV, conferences, seminars and meetings etc.

A number of policy initiatives have been taken with a focus on lifelong learning and with special attention to the validation of non-formal and informal learning aimed at all citizens (often with a special focus on low-qualified people). An important paper is the Danish strategy for lifelong learning ‘Education and lifelong skills upgrading for all’ a report compiled for the European Commission in April 2007 (Report to the European Commission, 2007). This report states that the Government’s aim is to create better opportunities for individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences assessed and recognized within the adult education and continuing training sectors, regardless of where and how they are acquired. It promotes adults’

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5 http://pub.uvm.dk/2007/livslanglaering/
6 The following text is based on a paper on the Danish Qualification Framework written by Benedikte Maul Andersen, Ministry of Education and Kirsten Aagaard, National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning
participation in adult education and continuing training and it intends to improve opportunities for adults in the labor market.\textsuperscript{7}

\textbf{From an active labor market policy to employment policy}\textsuperscript{8}

The active labor market policy has been the dominant policy until 2003–2004, and the flexibility model has been seen as the main reason for the relatively high employment rates in Denmark until 2008.

With a liberal/conservative government from 2001 there has been some major changes in the labor market policy. It is no longer called a labor market policy but an employment policy. This is not only a change of terms but an actual change of policy: From a welfare policy to a workfare policy, from a human resource policy to a work first policy. The policy tends to view unemployment not as a structural problem but as an individual problem. So the social security and flexibility thinking is gradually turning into a deficiency thinking and social disciplining. The shortest way to employment, the ‘work first’ strategy, is now the focus point. The competence development of the unemployed and the qualitative aspects of employability and lifelong learning are put aside and replaced by economic incentives and sanctions.

Several reforms and political initiatives have supported this change of focus:

- Actions to increase control of the unemployed
- Job plans instead of individual career plans
- Reductions in education and training for unemployed
- Employment without salary for job testing
- Increasing standardization of guidance and counseling through a new system of visitation, a so called match system (5 match groups estimated according to employability)
- Reduced resources for competence development and further education for guidance counselors
- Increased use of ‘other actors’ – mainly private companies – for guidance and counseling. These ‘actors’ are paid by the number of successful employments
- Reduction of the social partners’ strategic influence
- Special rates of unemployment benefits and social security benefits for groups of refugees and immigrants. Integration policy tends to be included in employment policy

The discourse of the ‘work first’ strategy portrays unemployed people as ‘inactive’ or potentially lazy. They basically have themselves to thank for their unemployment. These citizens

\textsuperscript{7} For an elaborated paper on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Denmark, see country report http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory.aspx

\textsuperscript{8} This section is mainly based on research and analysis done by Carma, Centre for Labour Market Research at Aalborg University http://www.epa.aau.dk/forskningsenheder/carma-english/
must be motivated to become active and responsible for their own employability, and the motivation is mainly presented as rules and regulations and economic sanctions.

The use of economic incentives and sanctions tend to individualize the risk of being fired. It is stated that a healthy labor market ethic is ‘make work pay’, so the unemployed suffer from low work ethics and they must be brought to understand, that any work is better than no work. The unemployment rates are thus seen as an individual rather than a structural problem. Political problems are transformed into individual motivation problems.

The discourse of the ‘work first’ strategy may affect attitudes towards unemployed among professionals working with guidance and counseling. On the other hand, there seems to be a strong tradition in Denmark for the basic idea of inclusion, equality and solidarity. This means that professionals working with unemployed will tend to ‘soften’ the administration of the legislation.

The shift from an active labor market policy to an employment policy can be summarized as follows:
A shift from a human resource based active labor market policy to a ‘work first’ inspired activation policy, from qualification of the unemployed to motivation of the unemployed, from a qualitative employment focus to a quantitative increase of the supply of workforce.

4. Formal structures for employment assistance and for counseling the jobless offered by the state

**Unemployment insurance**

Unemployment insurance is a voluntary scheme administered by the unemployment insurance funds. The Danish system thus differentiates between the situation of insured unemployed persons and uninsured unemployed persons.

The unemployment insurance funds are private associations of employees or self-employed persons organized for the sole purpose of securing economic support in the event of unemployment. Unemployment benefits are, however, largely financed by the state.

If a person is a member of an unemployment insurance fund and become unemployed, she must register as unemployed at the Public Employment Service on her first day as unemployed and contact the Unemployment Insurance Fund. In case a person becomes unemployed and is not a member of an unemployment fund, she may be entitled to receive social benefits. The social benefits are administered by the municipalities. Therefore, if a person wants to receive
social benefits she must contact her local municipality office.⁹ One can receive unemployment benefit for a total length of 2 years.

**Rights and obligations**
To receive unemployment benefit the unemployed must be available for the labor market. This means, that the unemployed should be able to manage a job, should be actively job seeking and meet the demands of the job centre, e.g. answer inquiries and meet for interviews and counseling. The unemployed also is obliged to seek and accept jobs allocated by the job centre within the field of his or her profession.

There is a number of ways of getting help to get back into work and there are a number of duties connected to unemployment:

- Unemployed are obliged to draw up and update an electronic CV
- Unemployed with literacy problems will receive special offers of training courses

**Activation options**
Unemployed have the opportunity to participate in self-chosen training or education for up to 6 weeks within the first 9 months of the unemployment period. Options of training depends on the person’s prior training and education. It is possible to participate in education at primary and secondary level (general adult education), higher education and adult vocational and continuing training.

**On-the-job-experience** or internship in a public or private company is an offer that can be used to clarify the unemployed persons’ goals for future employment. The internship can last up to 4 weeks, and the unemployed will receive benefits during activation.

The unemployed have the opportunity to be employed with a wage subsidy at a public or private employer. The main objective is to train the skills for a future permanent employment. Wage subsidies can be given up to one year.

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⁹ From the Danish Ministry of Employment. [http://uk.bm.dk/](http://uk.bm.dk/)
• Labor unions, which play a formal and informal role in the structure of the unemployment system (see section 4 and section 7)
• The Danish ‘Folkeoplysning’ (Folk Enlightenment Movement)
• Non formal associations, clubs, sports associations, voluntary associations
• Religious organizations do not play a significant role

Concerning 3rd sector – formal, non formal and informal structures supporting unemployed in Denmark – it is relevant to mention the Danish ‘Folkeoplysning’ (folk enlightenment) and connected to this tradition some voluntary activities in associations and their role in adult education and lifelong learning.

Non formal adult education comprises:
- Independent non formal educational activity: Evening schools and voluntary activity in associations
- Day folk high schools
- Private independent boarding schools (folk high schools, home economics schools, arts and crafts schools, and continuation schools)

The non formal adult educational institutions are making an effort to help its participants to clarify and document the competences developed in a wide variety of activities in this non formal sector. In 2007 the Ministry of Education launched a set of three e-tools addressing non formal adult education, associations and voluntary work. Questionnaires on generic competences were developed on the basis of input from a wide range of stakeholders. The tools are an integrated part of the national CV-format ”My competence folder” 10, with a more specific tool for the clarification of general/personal competences developed in the third sector, e.g. non formal education, participation in all kinds of associations, involvement in sports organizations, voluntary work, etc. The tools can be used for self-evaluation, but it is recommended that a facilitator also be used in order to improve the quality of the documentation. The national umbrella organizations of the sector provide courses for local facilitators. 11

Association work is offered by associations in such fields as sports, politics and religious activity, other philosophically related and socially engaged work with children and young people, and youth clubs, which, within the framework laid down in or pursuant to law, themselves make decisions regarding how they will make use of grants and organize their activity. In 2005 approximately 1.8 million people took part in association activity. 12

10 http://www.minkompetencemappe.dk/
12 http://eng.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Adult%20Education%20and%20Continuing%20Training.aspx
The objective of voluntary non formal adult learning in associations is, taking a starting point in the activity and the binding fellowship, to strengthen non formal adult learning and thus the members’ skill and wish to take a responsibility for their own lives and to play an active and engaged part in society.

The 3rd sector is becoming more aware of the possibilities of working with clarification and documentation of competences. A number of projects on validation have resulted in a number of alternative tools such as interviews, portfolios and practical methods, tailored for specific target groups among the providers of non formal education. However the formal educational institutions are not making use of the documentation from third sector activities.

There is a need to strengthen knowledge sharing between different bodies with different tasks and to combine the whole process to improve validation of prior learning for individuals. 13

7. The situation of Counselors and their Education
The formal educational demand for guidance counselors varies quite a lot in Denmark.

The Danish guidance system is divided according to age of the target group and level of the educational system – like this:

- Youth guidance centres: Students in compulsory/basic schools, mainly of age up to 16/17 years, and guidance aiming at choice of youth education (gymnasium/upper secondary education and vocational education)
- Regional guidance centres: Students in youth education, age from 16/17 to 25 years, and guidance aiming at choice of further education

These institutions are a result of the Danish guidance reform in 2003. The guidance reform did not include adult career guidance.

1. The Danish educational system

For adults there is a variety of different guidance actors and institutions – and no coherent, unified guidance system. These actors include:

- Job centres
- Centres for information about higher education (Ivu*C)
- Cross sector ‘guidance houses’
- Labor market training centres (AMU)
- General adult education centres (VUC)
- Vocational colleges
- Higher education institutions
- Folk high schools
- Day folk high schools
- Trade unions
- ‘Other actors’/private actors

For guidance practitioners working in Youth Guidance Centres and Regional Guidance Centres there is a compulsory qualification demand at diploma supplement level (matching a professional bachelor degree).

For guidance practitioners working in institutions offering adult guidance there are no formal educational demands – the staff will generally be educated at short cycle educational level or
at mid cycle educational level, but may not be qualified or trained in adult guidance. Some
guidance practitioners from these institutions voluntarily qualify at diploma supplement level
through the diploma programs offered by university colleges.

There is another option for qualifying as a guidance counselor too: Master programs in career
guidance offered at one of the universities. And as a third option, experienced guidance practi-
tioners might get their competences recognized through a validation of prior learning at one of
the university colleges.

**Description of the Diploma supplement program: Educational, Vocational & Career Guid-
ance (60 ECTS)**

**Admission Requirements:**

- Completed short or mid cycle further education (ex. teacher, social worker, nurse or
  corresponding adult education)
- 2 years of relevant practical experience

**Structure of the Diploma:**

3 compulsory Modules:

- Guidance and the guidance practitioner (10 ECTS)
- Guidance and the individual (10 ECTS)
- Guidance and society (10 ECTS)

**Final diploma paper (15 ECTS) - compulsory**

1-3 modules of own choice, ex:

- Career choice and choice processes (10 ECTS)
- Guidance of adults (5 ECTS)

**Range of modules of own choice:**

- Career choice and choice processes – theories and practice (10 ECTS)
- Guidance in educational institutions (10 ECTS)
- Special guidance needs (10 ECTS)
- Innovation and quality in guidance environments (10 ECTS)
- Career guidance of adults (5 ECTS)
- Transitional guidance in primary school (5 ECTS)
- Intercultural guidance and counseling (5 ECTS)
- Mentoring and mentor arrangements (5 ECTS)

In general guidance counselors have a positive attitude towards clients, whether employed or
unemployed, and towards their own “mission in society”. There is a long humanistic tradition
within guidance and education in Denmark, including a basic assumption that humans are try-
ing to pursuit and develop competences, social inclusion and good citizenship. But on the oth-
er hand ten years of official throwing suspicion on unemployed people are influencing guid-
ance practitioners too.
Organizations for guidance counselors have agreed on a national ethical code for guidance which includes: 

1. Respect
2. Fairness and equality
3. Welfare
4. Independence
5. Openness
6. Confidence
7. Professional responsibility

Referring to the missing adult guidance reform we must conclude, that there is an absence of a coherent legislative framework for adult career guidance, and a lack of a national strategy on developing an integrated system with efficient career guidance and counseling structures. In addition there is no systematic quality assurance and evaluation of adult guidance and counseling.

8. Summary and Outlook
The number of unemployed people in Denmark has increased during the last three years, from 90.000 to 215.000. The present unemployment rate is 7,4 %, and even though it is one of the lowest rates in Europe, at present it is considered one of the most urgent political problems in Denmark.

Although Denmark still has a relatively high level of security and support for the unemployed, there has been a number of regulations and cut downs. The Danish ‘flexicurity’ model is under pressure from the change in politics, from an active labor market policy to an employment policy, ‘work first’. Rules, regulations and control activities aimed at unemployed people have gained priority over a resource approach with focus on educational options for unemployed.

Danish Lifelong Learning Strategies such as construction of an adult flexible educational system, recurrent education, recognition of prior learning have received quite a lot of attention from the late 90’ies until 2008. There seems to be a shift of attention from adults to youths in the latest educational political initiatives and legislation. There is a strong focus on problems with young people and their completion of an education.

An active policy and connected initiatives concerning recognition of prior learning has been initiated recently. Legislation on this was passed in 2007. It gives all citizens the right to get

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their competences validated at different levels related to the educational system, to receive recognition for non formal and informal learning. The distribution of these activities still seems to be rather scattered due to lack of knowledge among citizens and lack of experience and knowledge – and perhaps even reluctance – in the educational institutions.

In Denmark we have a large and relatively well educated number of actors in adult guidance and counseling, but there is a lack of transparency in the systems. The individual adult, whether with or without employment, might find it difficult to find the relevant guidance provider.

We have just had an election for the Danish Parliament and a new government led by the Social Democratic Party is under construction. This might lead to changes in policy concerning unemployment, adult guidance and education.