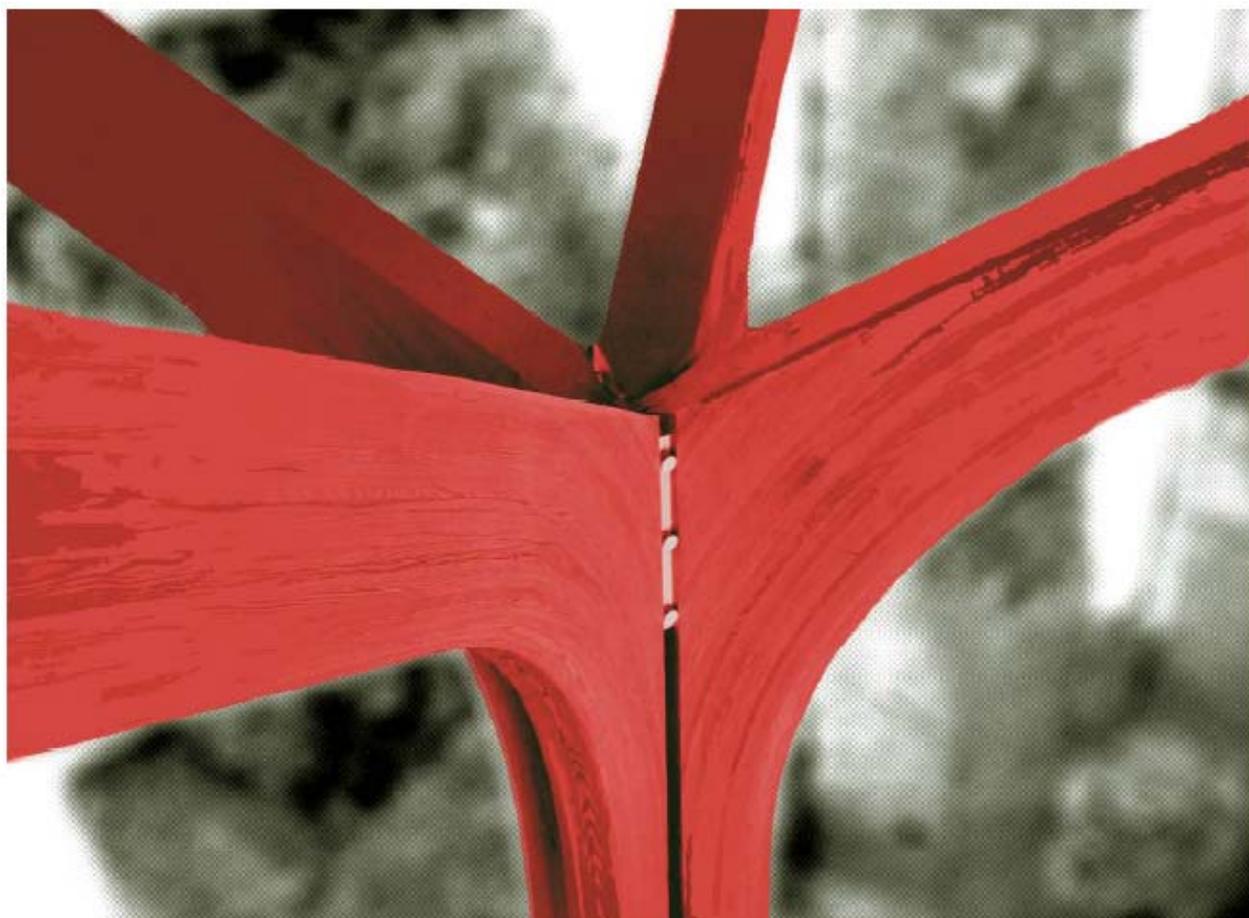


# COMPETENCE CENTRES IN LEARNING REGIONS IN DENMARK

- Summary of the final evaluation



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May 2008  
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# **Competence Centres in Learning Regions**

*Summary of the final  
evaluation*

## Foreword

This publication presents a summary of the final evaluation of a large-scale initiative in Denmark, "Competence Centres in Learning Regions." This initiative aimed at bringing about systemic innovation in outreach mechanisms, methods, and modes of organisation to address skilling needs in SMEs, in particular regarding the group of low-skilled. The development project for competence centres in learning regions was carried out in 2006-2007 by the Ministry of Education, supported by the European Social Fund. Danish Technological Institute has functioned as external project secretariat. The complete evaluation (Danish only) can be found at the project home page, <http://www.kompetencecentre.dk>. Short fact sheets in English and English publications can be found at the home page of the Danish Ministry of Education, <http://www.eng.uvm.dk>

### *Policy context*

In April 2005, the Government set up a Globalisation Council<sup>1</sup> comprising

stakeholders from all parts of society. Its task was to advise the Government on a proactive and forward looking strategy for Denmark in the global economy. The Government sat on the Council together with stakeholders across traditional divides: employers, trade unions, and representatives of the major educational and research institutions and enterprises. In April 2006 the Danish Government published the Globalisation Strategy, with 350 specific initiatives which together entail extensive reforms of education and training programmes and research and entrepreneurship, and substantial improvements in the framework conditions for growth, innovation, and social cohesion in all areas of society. Almost parallel to this process, the Government formed a Tripartite Committee on Adult Education and Training. The committee was to review and propose methods of improving active involvement of particularly SMEs and low-skilled in a lifelong learning agenda. The Committee was established in a context where Denmark compared to other OECD countries already was at the very top with regard to adult participation in training and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.globalisering.dk/page.dsp?page=294>

competence development.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Denmark has for several decades followed a strategy of a high-wage high-skilled economy. Statistical projections foresee a continued decline in demand for persons with only lower secondary qualifications; their employment share with unchanged relative pay rates has been projected to fall to 20-22% in 2010 and to 13-17% in 2020.<sup>3</sup>

A broad inter-party political agreement, the Welfare Accord (June 2006), stated that the adult education and training effort therefore must be reinforced and that individual persons, enterprises, and the social partners, all share the responsibility for carrying this out. A strengthened adult education and training effort must especially be aimed at low-skilled and other disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

The accord comprises a number of concrete initiatives, among others better opportunities for the recognition of prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal channels, better educational offers for

immigrants (non-Danish mother tongue), and better guidance and counselling for employees and enterprises.<sup>4</sup>

The Competence Centres in Learning Regions project is directly informed by and embedded in this policy context.

### ***Start-up***

An open call for tender targeted public providers of adult education and training, and targeted private and public organisations that could undertake the secretariat function and administration of the whole initiative on behalf of the Ministry of Education. In spring 2006 the Ministry then granted subsidy to 15 regional competence centre pilot projects and to the secretariat and administrative function managed by Danish Technological Institute. Furthermore, Aalborg University received a grant to carry out action-based research to support the implementation of the initiative. The 15 regional competence centres were to demonstrate how outreach mechanisms and training measures could be adapted so as to contribute to workforce development and

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Finance, February 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Recognition of informal and nonformal learning in Denmark. Background report to the OECD. Shapiro, Hanne, Technological Institute, Denmark.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: internal cross-ministerial working paper on reform initiatives in DK (Oct 2006)

lifelong learning as an enterprise strategy aimed particularly at semi-skilled and skilled employees. Furthermore, the programme design aimed at creating a national one-stop infrastructure for workforce development, with the objective of testing whether a collaborative model could lead to a more transparent and easily accessible entryway for the Danish enterprise base, which is comprised of a large number of SMEs.

The particular goals were to:

- Collaborate with enterprises on systematic competence development and education planning
- Analyse the needs for competence development and establish networks with relevant actors.
- Try out new methods for counselling and assessment and recognition of prior learning.
- Develop and implement new praxis-oriented methods for training and competence development relevant to the priority target groups.
- Strengthen the competence base and collaboration within the Competence Centre model through internal

organisational training and capacity building.

### ***Objectives of the final evaluation***

The project developed and tested a range of new methods for collaboration with enterprises: methods to analyse qualification needs at an individual employee level and sector-wide, methods of early identification of changing skills patterns (for example as a result of sector convergence), and methods to identify, assess, and recognise prior learning (which were also tested and integrated into counselling of adults). A number of initiatives were launched to strengthen collaboration between the education and training institutions that form each competence centre network, and between competence centres, in order to ensure a seamless access for user groups and more efficient outreach mechanisms. These initiatives included training-of-trainer activities to enhance the functions of process consultants and advisors to companies, and to develop a demand-oriented spirit within the competence centres. Many of these training initiatives were facilitated by the secretariat. Since the project explored new territory which could constitute a significant

systemic innovation in light of recent policy intentions, evaluation mechanisms were central in all phases; prior to implementation to assess the point of departure for the specific centres, during the initiative as a means to learn and have a dynamic and evidence-based implementation process, mid-term to monitor progress, and for the final evaluation process.

The main objective of the final evaluation has been to assess to what extent the regional competence centres and the overall programme have attained their objectives, and to use the evidence base to draw out best practices and policy lessons with a view to improved future practices and policies in the field of adult and continuing education and training and lifelong learning.

The evaluation covered some of the following topics:

*Has the initiative resulted in a comprehensive one-stop infrastructure for demand-driven adult continuing education and training that is accessible also for SMEs and their employees?*

The evaluation has analysed different partnership models for the competence centres, how they have evolved during the initiative, their underlying rationale, and their role in the wider regional public knowledge system.

*What outreach mechanisms have been developed to expand the uptake of adult continuing education and training among the target groups??*

The evaluation has in particular addressed what type of outreach mechanisms and models that have been used, especially targeting those with low levels of education attainment, and targeting small- and medium-sized enterprises. The purpose has been to identify evidence of measures that seem to contribute to further development of adult and continuing education practices and policies.

*Has the project led to sustainability and change?*

The final evaluation has analysed to what extent the pilot initiative has had an impact on the overall institutional mechanisms, models, and methods for designing and delivering adult vocational training (AMU). Due to several institutional mergers in recent

years, AMU programmes are offered by vocational education and training institutions which do not have AMU as their core activity in terms of the overall volume of activities. It has therefore been of policy interest to analyse if the recent mergers have had unintended policy consequences in terms of AMU becoming a marginalised activity within the overall specific institutional strategies. The evaluation has therefore analysed whether the project has led to an increased level of priority and scale of AMU at the involved institutions.

*Has the project met its quantitative goals?*

The final evaluation has assessed project results in relation to its quantitative goals for the number of enterprises, employees, competence centre middle managers, and teachers and trainers, who have participated in competence development and continuing education. The project goals were

- Participation by 450 enterprises, especially small enterprises with fewer than 20 employees.
- Participation in competence development and continuing education and training by 3,750 employees. The target group includes skilled and unskilled workers in

private- and public sector enterprises, including employees with a low or insufficient qualifications level.

- Participation in competence development etc. by 375 education and training institution middle management, teachers and trainers, and other staff members, for example counsellors or administrators.

***The final evaluation design***

Data collection and evaluation have taken place on an ongoing basis throughout the project so as to build in learning cycles as support to the implementation process. The final evaluation has therefore been prepared on the basis of previous data and new evaluation data collected in February-March 2008 after the project had formally ended. The final evaluation was prepared on the basis of the following data:

- *Review of the competence centres' complete range of self-evaluations.* Each competence centre has in the course of the project conducted 5 self-evaluations based on a common framework that give insight into planned and implemented in the respective focus areas and the accompanying results and experiences. The centres' self-evaluations provide an

evidence base of the challenges met by the centres and the necessary changes to the original implementation plans.

- *Telephone survey of enterprises that have made use of the centres' offers.* The telephone survey included approximately 350 enterprises.
- *Sample telephone survey of 25 enterprises that have declined the centres' offer.* These enterprises were asked what their reasons were for declining the centres' offers and what alternatives could make the centres' continuing education and training and other services more attractive and targeted to their needs.
- *Qualitative telephone interview with the competence centres.* The follow-up qualitative telephone interviews were carried out in February-March 2008.
- *Centrally registered monitoring data* were supplemented by statistics from a special query provided by UNI-C and Statistics Denmark on the course participants' qualification profiles and levels prior to participation.

## Conclusions

### *Conceptual basis*

The evaluation results demonstrate that the competence centre model has strengthened and ensured a more demand-oriented and efficient collaboration with enterprises, in particular SMEs. The competence centre model has for example led to better and more streamlined and effective course and training provision across regions, where previous outreach resources and thereby education and training provision have been dispersed among individual institutions' more narrow professional environments. The collaborative approach has led to stronger outreach and service to the regions' small vocational branches that are often constituted by micro-enterprises. The competence centre design has also promoted a more seamless and demand-oriented provision of a total solution model, because the competence centres in several instances have developed a complementary internal resource base as the networked institutions learned more about each other's key competence areas.

Moreover, the evaluation data provide some indications that the design of the competence centre heightens education institutions' impact as actors in regional economic development and innovation. The competence centre model's internal resource basis is more comprehensive and has been able to address broader issues of strategic concern to the enterprise base – for example challenges for sub-suppliers in relation to global specialisation. Institutional collaboration within the competence centre model has also made the competence centres - and thus the individual education and training centres - more visible as actors in the regional knowledge centres and *vis-à-vis* other actors such as regional business centres, tertiary professional colleges, universities, and providers of technological service.

### *Outreach to target groups*

The institutions in the competence centres have created outreach mechanisms relevant to the target group of small- and medium-sized enterprises that often have limited internal capacity to engage in education and training of their workforce in a more systemic manner, particularly targeting those with lower levels of education attainment.

This conclusion is based on the following results:

First, the competence centres have succeeded in getting many "new" enterprises to participate, i.e. enterprises that have previously to a limited degree made use of public provision of continuing education and training. The survey of enterprises shows that 40% of the participating enterprises had not in the 3 years prior to the project made use of public provision of vocationally oriented adult and continuing education and labour market training. Similarly, 35% of the participating enterprises had not previously collaborated with adult education and training providers prior to the project start (June 2006).

Second, the evaluation shows that the competence centres have increased the enterprises' expectations about the need for future competence development as a prerequisite to productivity, innovation, and employee retention. A substantial proportion (60%) of the participating enterprises expect to increase competence development and continuing education and training activities for their employees. Only 5% expect a decrease in these activities.

Third, a substantial number of the 9,314 course participants in the project were low-skilled with low levels of formal education attainment. Almost one third (32%) had compulsory school as their highest completed education programme, while 5% had a general upper secondary qualification and 48% an upper secondary vocational qualification as highest completed education programme. Participant statistics for all adult vocational training (AMU) programmes for 2006 and 2007 show 28% with compulsory school as the highest level of educational attainment and 49% with an upper secondary vocational qualification. In other words, there was a greater share of project participants with a low level of education attainment than the national average in ordinary adult vocation training provision.

Unskilled workers made up 44% of the project participants, while skilled workers or middle management made up 34%. The great majority of the participants (88%) considered the programme to have prepared them better for new labour market demands; 55% indicate somewhat better, and 23% indicate much better.

### ***The quantitative goals have been surpassed***

The competence centres' institutions have overperformed in a number of dimensions compared to the original targets:

- Compared to the target of participation by 450 enterprises, the competence centres' contact statistics show that over 900 enterprises agreed to participate in activities.
- Compared to the participation target of 3,750 employees in competence development and adult education and training, the collected statistics show that over 9,000 participated in education and training and practice-based competence development. A substantial proportion of those participants had low levels of education attainment.
- Compared to the target of participation by 375 education and training institution middle management, teachers and trainers, and staff, in in-house capacity building and competence development, project statistics from the self-evaluations show that a total of 584 competence centre employees, middle management, and teachers and trainers

participated in internal development activities.

### ***From supply- to demand-led***

As a result of the project, the competence centre institutions have become more customer-oriented and demand-driven. Previously, provision was in most instances characterised by institutions that drew up catalogues with prearranged courses of instruction, class sizes, and dates, all without involving enterprises. The project has promoted a demand-oriented approach characterised by a greater degree of *outreach contact activities with enterprises*. Visits to enterprises are no longer merely for the purpose of mediating information on course provision, but are also an occasion for consultations to learn about the enterprises' current issues and problems, and how the competence centre institutions can provide overall solutions which can improve the enterprises' overall competitive base.

The competence centre institutions have developed thorough methods to identify, assess and recognise prior learning at the enterprise level and at the employee level. The evaluation indicates overall that because of these methods, the competence centre

institutions have qualified and extended their dialogue with enterprises so that their education planning and competence development has gained a more long-term and holistic perspective. A rather large number (24%) of the enterprises that participated in competence centre activities indicated that they will subsequently implement systematic education and training planning for individual employees or groups of employees.

Another element to the increased degree of demand-orientation is *more flexible training and competence development* supply that takes into account the operational environment in the enterprises and the difficulties in taking employees out of their particular job responsibilities for longer periods of time - particularly in a situation where many Danish companies have been short of employees at all levels of qualification. One of the measures has been the establishment of open, flexible workshops where there are no fixed number of participants starting at fixed times, but where employees can start on a rolling basis when it fits into enterprise schedules. Competence centre institutions emphasised that the current busy boom economy is

resulting in enterprises having relatively narrow competence demands that have to be met quite quickly. Competence centre institutions have therefore had to be in a daily updated state of alert regarding current demands. Training taking place outside normal working hours, for example in the evening or on weekends, is becoming increasingly common.

***Flexibility and responsiveness to demand - key to success, but also a challenge.***

The evaluation data show that the majority (82%) of the enterprises have been satisfied with their initial return on competence centre activities, on the grounds that there has been a greater degree of tailoring to enterprises' needs, including flexibility in the planning and preparation of training activities, and greater opportunities for integrating training and competence development into the enterprises' daily operations.

A substantial number (38%) of enterprises assessed the competence centres' training offers to have changed and become renewed compared to previously. The renewal that enterprises especially experienced is the fact

that institutions plan training activities in collaboration with enterprises, taking a point of departure in actual enterprise needs. Another positive element is the fact that there are professional counsellors ready to assist in competence assessment of the employee base. Competence centres thus become collaborative partners that can provide total solutions in relation to enterprises' competence needs.

### ***Responsiveness is also a challenge***

Although the competence centres have succeeded in satisfying the enterprises with more flexible and demand-driven provision, the competence centres have had difficulties in defining new economically sustainable business models. Several institutions emphasised that the goal of demand-driven provision contains a schism: the more tailoring, individualisation, and flexibility, the less economic sustainability. The establishment of economically sustainable open courses and workshops, short courses, and enterprise-located training, was perceived to be a challenge in relation to small-scale enterprises with consequent limited volume, unless there are models can develop provision for more than one

enterprise at a time. Several competence centres stated that it in that sense is easier to approach larger enterprises with tailored solutions simply because of the potential scale of the activities.

In addition, the establishment of flexible training is demanding in terms of outreach activities to establish enterprise contact and other preparatory activities, none of which are covered by charges or the value-added principle of "taximeter" subsidy.<sup>5</sup> Since such preparatory activities are not very visible in the training institutions' operating economy, it is difficult to calculate how many resources are allocated to enterprise-tailored activities and what the return is. The evaluation thus indicates that the economically sustainable demand-driven establishment of services is not solely a matter of institutions' efforts, but is also

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<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive financing system based on per capita grants (cash per student) to institutions. The grants are calculated primarily on the recorded pupil/student activity measured as their participation in courses/examinations. The taximeter rate varies according to subject field and level of education. Source: [http://www.ciriusonline.dk/Admin/Public/DWSDownload.aspx?File=%2FFiles%2FFiler%2FPublikationer%2F2006%2FThe\\_Danish\\_Education\\_System\\_-\\_2006\\_Second\\_edition.pdf](http://www.ciriusonline.dk/Admin/Public/DWSDownload.aspx?File=%2FFiles%2FFiler%2FPublikationer%2F2006%2FThe_Danish_Education_System_-_2006_Second_edition.pdf)

affected by subsidy legislation and requirements.<sup>6</sup>

### ***What competence centre models are workable?***

As mentioned, the evaluation shows that the competence centre design is a valid model that can enhance interaction between education and training institutions and enterprises, because they work together as one body based on a one-stop access model. There remains the question of the advantages and disadvantages of the different models of competence centre organisation.

The participating institutions have had a great degree of methodological freedom in defining how the competence centres should be organised. In applying for grants, individual adult education and training

institutions across the country could freely establish collaborative relations with other institutions offering adult and continuing education and training, as well as with other relevant actors within a given region.

Competence centres have thus had a very free framework regarding how many and which institutions and other actors to collaborate with, and which organisational form to use.

Given the great degree of methodological freedom in the competence centres' choice of organisational form, the final evaluation has focused on extracting the institutions' experiences with the organisational process, and on the advantages and disadvantages of the various organisational models.

### ***Three organisation models - from pyramid to flat***

The evaluation shows that three distinct main organisation models for competence centres have emerged:

*The Pyramid*, where a single education institution functions as manager of the

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<sup>6</sup> The government and social partner agreement of October 12, 2007 on Significant Strengthening of Adult and Continuing Education and Training has given AMU (adult vocational training) providers improved framework conditions for offering and implementing programmes. An extra one billion DKK has been allocated to vocationally-oriented adult and continuing education programmes targeting persons with low levels of education attainment. The temporary DKK 30 million in increased charges from 2007 has been carried on to 2008-2011 in the Finance Act of 2008. An additional DKK 80 million in increased charges will also be applied to 2008-2010. There is also agreement on initiatives promoting more flexible education programme implementation.

competence centre and involves other education institutions in the region to collaborate on specific tasks, without including these institutions in any formalised role in managing the centre.

*Centrally managed collaboration*, where the leading institution coordinates work, but where participating institutions have a more formalised representation in a joint body such as an advisory forum or steering committee.

*Flat structure*, where all the concerned institutions are equally represented in the competence centre management. One institution is in charge of administration, but all share responsibility for the competence centre's tasks and responsibilities.

Only a few competence centres can be characterised as being "pyramid" or "flat". Most of the centres are run as centrally managed collaboration, though with varying ways of linking the participating institutions to centre management.

### ***Each model has advantages and disadvantages***

The evaluation shows that each of the three models has its advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of "pyramid" and "centrally managed collaboration" is that the project manager institution has operational freedom. This is partly because the project manager institution can concentrate on collaborating with the institutions that *ad hoc* can contribute particular resources, and partly because it is free to choose from the ideas and advice that are presented by the comprehensive advisory organs where other education and training institutions and regional actors are represented.

Another advantage, related to the Social Fund's documentation requirements, is that project management and administration are carried out by the same institution, which can increase clarity and efficiency. Since certain institutions have limited experience with the Social Fund's documentation requirements, it would be extremely resource demanding to build up this administrative competence in each institution.

On the other hand, the centrally managed model has a weakness in that it can be more difficult for the project management institution to engage management and staff in those institutions that are more loosely connected. This has been the case for a number of competence centre institutions.

The "flat structure" model has its strength in that education institutions are committed to egalitarian collaboration, which in turn contributes to cross-institutional collaborative relationships that continue after formal project termination. One of the adult vocational training institutions, *AMU-Fyn*, is an example of this. Midway through the project, this competence centre took steps to establish a strategy to assure the competence centre's continuation after project termination. *AMU-Fyn* expects to initiate additional cross-institutional offers together with the other education and training institutions.

On the other hand, the challenge of the "flat structure" is that it demands a great deal of effort for coordination and consensus creation. The dispersion of task and economic responsibility over several

geographically separated institutions increases the demands of coordination.

### ***Research findings from Aalborg University - CARMA***

One of the 15 competence centres, the Adult Vocational Training Institution in North Jutland (*AMU Nordjylland*), has during the pilot period associated CARMA (Centre for Labour Market Research at Aalborg University) to support the implementation of research activities, in particular to analyse experiences in establishing collaboration and partnerships in continuing education.

The research has found some of the same pros and cons to different organisational models for the competence centres as the final evaluation conducted by Technological Institute. A major challenge for the education and training institutions is to mutually come to an agreement on how binding the collaboration shall be, including whether it should be a relatively loosely coupled network collaboration or a more binding partnership collaboration that requires each institution to compromise with regard to its own special interests.

CARMA's research and its results are not included in the final evaluation of the competence centre project, but publications which have been written as part of the grant to CARMA can be found on its website.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Outreach mechanisms***

It is an ongoing challenge to get small- and medium-sized enterprises to find the time to collaborate with education and training institutions on workforce development matters in a long-term and strategic perspective. The boom economy during the project period from 2006-2007 has been a contributing factor, because low unemployment rates and high activity rates led enterprises to typically concentrate on short-term and narrow competence development of employees, for example in particular areas of specific technology deployment. The evaluation shows that the following methods are useful in motivating small- and medium-sized enterprises to participate:

*Establishing a flexible and individualised training offer* has as described above been a widespread and effective strategy for getting

enterprises to participate. This strategy, however, requires a lot of preparatory work, and it can make it difficult to establish economically sustainable services because of the small group sizes.

*Practice-oriented competence development:* The competence centres have throughout the project developed enterprise-tailored measures which take their point of departure in the occupational practice of employees and which are developed in close cooperation with enterprises. The enterprises are in general satisfied with these forms of programs and the flexibility that they offer. When training occurs on-the-job, it takes into account the pressures of enterprise operations and the difficulties in releasing employees to participate in training off-the-job. Even though the pilot period is over, the competence centre institutions are initiating and testing new practice-oriented offers to enterprises. The ongoing and continuing testing of new learning models indicates that the project has advanced a systemic experimental and innovation capacity in the participating institutions which has now become a more permanent feature of how they engage with companies.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.carma.aau.dk](http://www.carma.aau.dk)

*Establishing enterprise networks* has been a widespread strategy among competence centres, and has proven itself a suitable method of creating dialogue with new target groups. One advantage of enterprise networks is that they can make enterprise involvement activities more effective by creating volume. However, the establishment and operation of networks demands a great deal of process capacity, especially for the definition in advance of problem typologies that are suitable for collective processing and learning among a network of enterprises.

*More in-depth methods for recognition of prior learning:*

During the project the competence centre institutions have developed a range of methods for the recognition of prior learning; these have been embedded in counselling measures which target enterprises as part of their resource planning, as well as individual employees. The evaluation points out that in general, the competence centre institutions have qualified and expanded the scope of their dialogue with enterprises, so that enterprises' education planning and competence development has gained a more long-term and holistic perspective.

***Large-scale outreach campaigns have limited effect***

A number of competence centres have carried out large-scale outreach campaigns and needs assessment, typically by using call centres to book meetings with interested enterprises. This method can make enterprise contact more efficient by facilitating contact with a large number of enterprises in a short time, thus assuring sufficient volume for follow-ups. This can present a challenge to competence centre consultants who must visit a large number of enterprises within a short time period. There are examples of competence centres that had to downplay these outreach programmes because the consultants could not manage all the visits. The evaluation statistics on competence centres' enterprise contact show that large-scale campaigns have had a limited effect. Those competence centres that contacted a large number of enterprises (over 500) achieved a relatively lower number of participants. This indicates that large-scale outreach campaigns are far from sufficient in themselves, but need comprehensive follow-up measures.

***Strengthened strategic focus on Adult Vocational Training (AMU), but still quite a way to go***

Several project managers from competence centre institutions assessed that the project has strengthened the focus among training institutions that do not have AMU and Adult Education and Continuing Training (VEU) as their core activities. The project has led these education institutions to increase their outreach activities towards small- and medium-sized enterprises, where focus previously was on large-size enterprises in order to secure volume, or on other education sectors- either tertiary education or upper secondary vocational education and training - that in terms of volume form a large component of their overall activities. These institutions - for example technical colleges and commercial colleges – have begun to realise that they have to prioritise adult vocational training (AMU) and the role it plays in their overall provision. They are for example more conscious of the fact that a recently graduated apprentice with a qualification as a skilled bricklayer may one day return in need of continuing training in a particular topic, and this can be a selling point in institutions' contacts with

enterprises; institutions can thus demonstrate that they focus on enterprise needs at many different levels and at different stages in the development of an individual's occupational profile. The evaluations shows, however, that there is still quite a way to go in giving strategic priority to VEU and AMU activities, where these at present only represent a limited share of turnover.

One of the central challenges seems to be that of bridge-building between varying cultural and pedagogical approaches to adult vocational training and vocational youth education. The field of vocational youth education and training has a pedagogical tradition for building learning relationships to students over a period of several years. In the field of adult vocational training programmes are shorter and there is more emphasis on rapid transferability of what is learned to occupational tasks in a particular job context.

***Internal capacity building***

That a number of education and training institutions declare themselves to be part of a centre is not the same as actually functioning as a unified competence centre. Competence centres' organisation of work processes and

competence creation and intra- and inter-organisational capacity building were extensive processes that lasted throughout the project period. The competence centre institutions have carried out a range of internal development activities that throughout the project period involved an increasing number of staff. Many of the competence centres' internal competence development activities have involved the training of staff members to work as consultants, and outreach contact efforts targeting enterprises, the goal being to convey the change from a supply-driven to demand-driven provision. Consultants must therefore be able to plan, carry out, and evaluate outreach activities and competence development within the particular enterprise and sector context.

The competence centres' self-evaluations indicate that internal competence development has contributed to the creation of a common platform for the involved staff members, which in some cases has levelled out the cultural differences among collaboration partners in the competence centres.

During the project period there was increased formalisation of coordination and development activities between the competence centres institutions, for example regular project status meetings to coordinate customer contact activities, marketing, and documentation, thereby also creating improved efficiency in the outreach mechanisms.

### *Collaboration continues*

Evaluation data indicate that the competence centre design and the financial resources supplied have led to more permanent collaborative relations than would otherwise be the case. In general, the competence centre institutions have concrete plans for continued collaboration with partner institutions, and some have plans for extended collaboration involving larger and different groups of providers than previously. Institutions are continuing their collaborative relations in the framework of new regional programmes and adult counselling networks.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> On the basis of the political accord of July 19, 2007 on "Better counselling and advisory services to the employed and to enterprises", 22 adult counselling networks have been established. These are made up of education institutions that offer adult and continuing education. The networks will operate through 2009,

Competence centre institutions assess that they have been in a steep learning curve that has provided a solid reference point for future workforce development initiatives. Lessons learned concern how to establish VEU (adult education and continuing training) and AMU (adult vocational training) activities in a more demand-driven way in relation to enterprises, and experience in organising mutual collaboration among providers of workforce development.

### ***Added Value***

The initiative has demonstrated an added value along a number of dimensions closely aligned to broader policy objectives and current debates. First, the initiative has promoted the policy objective of creating outreach mechanisms to motivate small- and medium-sized enterprises to participate in vocational adult education and training, in that a substantial share (40%) of the participating enterprises had not in the 3 years prior to the project made use of public adult education and training. The enterprises

have seen the competence centre institutions' provision as innovative, with new and more flexible offers organised in an expanded dialog with the enterprises.

Second, the project's approach contains innovations compared to previous publicly financed adult and continuing education and training provision. The design of the competence centre - the creation of networks between institutions - has resulted in more efficient ways to offer enterprises total solutions that build on the core competences of each institution, whereas professional resources previously had been dispersed among individual institutions and with no or limited coordination efforts. The "gathering of forces" has permitted a strengthened effort targeting small vocational branches in the regions. The design of the competence centre has also promoted more systematic collaboration between providers, who obtain a greater knowledge base about each other's particular strengths.

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strengthening counselling and advisory services for enterprises and individual employees, for which DKK 100 million has been allocated.

## The 15 competence centres

### **Kompetencecenter v/AMU Nordjylland**

[www.komp-nord.dk](http://www.komp-nord.dk)

Project manager Anette Mikaelson

### **Kompetencecenter Vestsjælland**

[www.real-kompetencer.dk](http://www.real-kompetencer.dk)

Project manager John Vinsbøl

### **Kompetenceforum – for dig og virksomheden**

[www.videre.nu](http://www.videre.nu)

Project manager Leif Vinther Christensen

### **Kompetencecenter AMU SYD**

[www.amusyd.dk](http://www.amusyd.dk)

Project manager Lone Jacobsen

### **ØCEK – Østjysk Center for Erhvervskompetence**

[www.ats.dk](http://www.ats.dk)

Project manager Aage Krogsdahl

### **Kompetencecenter Midt**

[www.kompetencecentermidt.dk](http://www.kompetencecentermidt.dk)

Project manager Eva Møller Jensen

### **Kompetencecenter Esbjerg**

[www.amuglove.dk](http://www.amuglove.dk)

Project manager Torben Pedersen

### **Kompetencecenter Fyn**

[www.kompetencecenterfyn.dk](http://www.kompetencecenterfyn.dk)

Project manager Birgitte Ullerup

### **Kompetencecenter Bornholm**

[www.bornholmserhvervsskole.dk](http://www.bornholmserhvervsskole.dk)

Project manager Tina Munck-Kure

### **Kompetencecenter Niels Brock**

[www.brock.dk](http://www.brock.dk)

Project manager Jette Elkjær

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### **Competence centres in learning regions**

The development programme "Competence centres in learning regions" has been carried out by the Ministry of Education with co-financing from the European Social Fund.

Fifteen competence centres participated in the development programme. They were physically located at education institutions spread throughout the country. Most of the competence centres had participants from several education institutions.

The development programme focused on relation collaboration on adult and continuing education, especially of employees with low levels of education attainment working in small- and medium sized enterprises. During the development programme, 6 pamphlets were published to document the process and collect knowledge and experiences. This seventh pamphlet, which presents the results of the programme evaluation, is the last of the publications produced for the project.

Pamphlets and other material can be downloaded at [www.kompetencecentre.dk](http://www.kompetencecentre.dk)  
Danish Technological Institute, Business Development, has functioned as project secretariat and editor of the pamphlets