

# VOICE OF USERS

Promoting quality of guidance for adults  
IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES





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## Promoting quality of guidance for adults in the Nordic countries

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# OVERVIEW AND KEY CONCLUSIONS

**G**uidance for adults has been gaining ground within the lifelong learning sector in the Nordic countries. These services have grown out of public policy that in turn is responding to an increasing demand for a lifelong and individualised educational and vocational guidance of adults. Previous evaluative research in the Nordic countries has focused on aspects of the guidance service rather than providing data for service development purposes (Vuorinen & Leino, 2009). This is in concordance with research within the OECD countries that has largely focused on theories, tools and methods and less frequently been of direct policy relevance (OECD, 2004b). Another gap that has been identified in the policy making and organisation of guidance services is that users are not involved in policy development or organisation of guidance services (Vuorinen & Leino, 2009). Research on user involvement in guidance is very scarce, if existing at all. The involvement of users in organising and developing guidance services is both an important way of empowering citizens as well as giving valuable information on the guidance experience and thus contributing to the improvement of the guidance services (Plant, H., 2006). The previous report showed that adult guidance services

are an important leverage in reacting to vast societal problems, such as unemployment, underemployment and social inclusion (Vuorinen & Leino, 2009). Adult guidance is also meant to be proactive in enhancing new skills within lifelong learning schemes. This present evaluative research, titled *Voice of users – promoting quality of guidance for adults in the Nordic countries*, examines both the value of adult guidance to its users and their involvement in developing and organising guidance services in adult education.

- The first goal of this study is to describe if and how adult users of guidance have an impact on the services provided, as well as to compare user involvement in adult guidance in the Nordic countries.
- A second goal is to evaluate learning outcomes of guidance for adults in the Nordic countries that seek guidance in adult learning centres.

After presenting the practical and theoretical context of the study, results are first reported for each of the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and then compared. The report concludes with a discussion and recommendations.

## Practical and theoretical context

**Chapter 2** lays the ground for the research questions by outlining the organisational and theoretical context of this research. Adult guidance services have been established by lifelong learning providers in all the Nordic countries. This development is in harmony with the development of lifelong guidance in other European countries. The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) has put forward a framework of quality assurance (QA) system that emphasises citizen and user involvement. This trend of user involvement comes from ideas of citizenship and effective democracy where user involvement means “devolving to individuals and communities the right to play an active role in shaping the services that affect their lives” (Plant, H., 2006, p. 2). The measurements in this evaluative study are both learning outcomes and quality standards of user involvement with the research goals in mind of policy and service improvement, as well as measuring if the adult guidance services are indeed serving the intended purposes. The evaluative criteria for the outcomes of guidance were taken from career development theory and the standards of user involvement from writings on the different levels of citizen involvement or participation (Arnstein, 1969; Plant, H., 2006). Career development theories explain career behaviour across the life span, as well as guiding career counsellors in using interventions that will facilitate certain career behaviours (Whiston & Brecheisen, 2002). The learning outcomes of adult guidance used in this research are based on a threefold classification of career counselling into personal learning outcomes, educational learning outcomes and vocational learning outcomes. Examples of personal learning outcomes are the enhancement of the self-concept or learning about own interests. Examples of educational learning outcomes are learning about educational options or requirements. Examples of vocational learning outcomes are becoming better informed about the

content of occupations and where to look for occupational information.

## Method

**Chapter 3** informs the reader about the **methodology** used in the study. The study consists of two research phases. First, a focus group study was conducted in all five countries among clients, counsellors and managers of adult guidance services. Following the focus group study the second phase of the study was carried out where a web survey was conducted among users of guidance in adult educational institutions in all five countries. The chapter describes the method applied in both the studies, their participants and procedures, measurements and analysis. There are important limitations that need to be noted in terms of the sampling method applied in the study as well as a low number of responses in most of the countries, which has implications both for the interpretation of results nationally and in comparisons across countries.

## Results

National results are presented in chapters 4 to 8. **Chapter 4** provides the study results on adult guidance in **Denmark**. A great majority (82%) of the respondents in Denmark had participated in a face-to-face guidance and 36% had been guided by their teacher. The guidance sessions were most often more than three sessions. The emphasis in guidance is on educational outcomes in guidance, which may be due to the fact that the sample was drawn from Day Folk High schools and Adult Education Centres. A majority of the respondents (67%) say that the counsellor was supportive and understanding and a majority is satisfied with the counselling they received. A majority as well (73%) deemed that they themselves were active in the actual counselling process, such as gathering information and setting goals. Around half of the respondents (49%) had not had a chance to evaluate the counselling service. On average, respondents felt that it was more likely than not

that their feedback would be taken into account (the average rating was 4.6 on a scale from (1) very unlikely to (7) very likely). Most of the respondents had not been involved in developing the guidance service, but saw it as an important factor in the improvement of guidance (the average rating was 5.4 on a scale from (1) not important to (7) very important). The possibilities users see to have their voices heard is mainly through personal contacts with for example counsellor and teacher.

**Chapter 5** provides the study results on adult guidance in **Finland**. A majority (62%) of the respondents in Finland had participated in a face-to-face guidance and as many as 48% had participated in guidance through websites, e-mail or chat-rooms. Group-sessions with a guidance counsellor is the type of guidance that has most often (62%) more than three sessions. The emphasis in guidance is on educational and personal outcomes in guidance. A majority of the respondents (67%) say that the counsellor was supportive and understanding and a majority is satisfied with the counselling they received. A majority as well (77%) deemed that they themselves were active in the actual counselling process, such as gathering information and setting goals. Around a third of the respondents (35%) had not had a chance to evaluate the counselling service and half of them had evaluated the services verbally or via e-mail to the counsellor. On average, respondents felt that it was more likely than not that their feedback would be taken into account (the average rating was 4.7 on a scale from (1) very unlikely to (7) very likely). Most of the respondents had not been involved in developing the guidance service, but saw it as an important factor in the improvement of guidance (the average rating was 5.7 on a scale from (1) not important to (7) very important). The possibilities users see to have their voices heard is mainly through personal contacts with for example counsellor and teacher.

**Chapter 6** provides the study results on adult guidance in **Iceland**. A great majority (76%) of the re-

spondents in Iceland had participated in a face-to-face guidance and a quarter said that guidance was integrated in lessons and teaching activities. The number of guidance sessions is less than three in most cases (73%). The emphasis in guidance is on educational and personal outcomes in guidance. A great majority of the respondents (82%) say that the counsellor encouraged them and a majority is very satisfied with the counselling they received. A majority as well (81%) deemed that they themselves were active in the actual counselling process, such as gathering information and setting goals. Half of the respondents (50%) had not had a chance to evaluate the counselling service. On average, respondents felt that it was more likely than not that their feedback would be taken into account (the average rating was 5.1 on a scale from (1) very unlikely to (7) very likely). Most of the respondents had not been involved in developing the guidance service, but saw it as an important factor in the improvement of guidance (the average rating was 5.8 on a scale from (1) not important to (7) very important). The possibilities users see to have their voices heard is mainly through personal contacts with for example counsellor and teacher, but also through user surveys.

**Chapter 7** provides the study results on adult guidance in **Norway**. A great majority (88%) of the respondents in Norway had participated in a face-to-face guidance. The number of guidance sessions is less than three in most cases (77%). The emphasis in guidance is on educational and personal outcomes in guidance. A majority of the respondents (77%) say that the counsellor was supportive and understanding and a majority is very satisfied with the counselling they received. A great majority (88%) deemed that they themselves were active in the actual counselling process, such as gathering information and setting goals. In Norway, 72% had been given a chance to evaluate the counselling service, especially through online surveys (32%). On average, respondents felt that it was more likely than not that their feedback would be taken into account (the average rating was 4.7 on a scale from (1) very unlikely to (7) very likely). Most of the respondents had not been involved in developing the guidance service, but saw it as an important factor in the improvement of guidance (the average rating was 5.1 on a scale from (1) not important to (7) very important). The possibilities users see to have their voices heard is mainly through contacts with counsellors, but also through user surveys.

**Chapter 8** provides the study results on adult guidance in **Sweden**. A majority (70%) of the respondents in Sweden had participated in a face-to-face guidance. The number of guidance sessions is more often (59%) less than three. The emphasis in guidance is on educational outcomes in guidance. Many respondents (60%) say that the counsellor was supportive and understanding and a majority is satisfied with the counselling they received. A majority (79%) deemed that they themselves were active gathering information about work and educational opportunities. In Sweden, more than half of the respondent (55%) had not had a chance to evaluate the counselling service. On average, respondents felt that it was more

likely than not that their feedback would be taken into account (the average rating was 5.2 on a scale from (1) very unlikely to (7) very likely). Most of the respondents had not been involved in developing the guidance service, but saw it as a very important factor in the improvement of guidance (the average rating was 5.6 on a scale from (1) not important to (7) very important). The possibilities users see to have their voices heard is mainly through personal contacts with counsellors and teachers, but also through user surveys and learner's association.

Results that **compare** the findings in the five Nordic countries are reported in **chapter 9**. The results show that face-to-face interviews are, by far, the most common mode of delivery of guidance. Somewhere between 62-88% of the respondents, depending on which of the countries we look at, had experienced face-to-face interviews with a guidance counsellor in the previous two years. Other modes of delivery were less common (3-25%), such as telephone interviews or group sessions with counsellors, web-based guidance or guidance from teachers. However, web-based guidance and guidance as integrated in lessons and teaching activities was more common in Finland (42-48%) than in the other countries, as well as guidance provided by a teacher in Finland and Denmark (36-39%).

The findings indicate that the benefits or the outcomes of guidance are mainly threefold, i.e. educational, vocational and personal. An example of an educational outcome is to be encouraged to continue one's studies. An example of a personal outcome is to learn something about one's interests. An example of a vocational outcome is to get help in making choices concerning jobs. Overall, respondents rated statements concerning educational outcomes of guidance more strongly as benefits of their guidance than statements that concerned vocational or personal outcomes. Similarly, statements that concerned personal outcomes were rated to a more extent as benefits of the guidance than statements about vocational outcomes. These results can be seen as indicating the focus of guidance provisions in adult education in the Nordic countries, where the main focus is on providing guidance on educational and personal issues but to a lesser extent on vocational issues. Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the guidance they received, and overall they are rather satisfied with the service, since on average their level of satisfaction was well over 5 on a scale of 1 to 7, where higher value indicates more satisfaction. The active involvement of users of guidance can be described at different levels, ranging from involvement at a more individual level, where the user implicates himself in his guidance and gives feedback on his experience, to a more intense participation in shaping services and policymaking (Plant, H., 2006). The results indicate that overall users of guidance are not systematically involved in terms of providing feedback on services nor do they participate in shaping services and policies in career guidance for adults in the Nordic countries. Around half of the respondents (49-55%) in Denmark, Iceland and Sweden reported that they had not been given a chance to evaluate the guidance service and up

to one third (28-35%) in Norway and Finland. Some reported giving informal feedback about services to their counsellor, either verbally or by e-mail (20-49%), whereas others had been given a chance to take part in surveys, either on paper (12-15%), the web (7-32%) or through telephone interviews (1-11%). When asked about involvement in shaping services and policymaking somewhere between 75% and 92% of the respondents, depending on country, said that they had not participated in any decision making and designing of strategies about guidance services. However, results from both focus groups interviews and the web survey show that users of guidance feel that it is important that users of guidance are consulted and are interested in having their voice heard on different aspects of guidance services.

## Discussion

The results of previous chapters are discussed in **chapter 10** with the research questions in mind. It cannot be deduced from the results that listening to users of guidance is a priority in the lifelong learning sector. Adult guidance is often not evaluated, even though users think it would improve guidance practice. On the whole, users are neither involved in the organisation of guidance services nor in policy making. The main channels of user involvement that are mentioned by respondents are discussions with counsellor, teacher, mentor or discussion groups and they stress that their opinions need to be taken seriously. Formal channels of user involvement need to be

created, that secure that user's voices are heard. Examples of such channels are user forums or representatives of users in policy committees.

Delivery of guidance is in a rather traditional form, with an emphasis on face-to-face interviews and the outcomes of guidance are educational and personal, rather than vocational, i.e. in guidance clients learn more how to deal with educational and personal problems, rather than vocational ones. The fact that the sample is drawn from adult education centres might be an influence here, but then this might suggest a weak link between guidance in adult learning centres and the labour market. There are indications that more recent approaches are being used, such as the strong emphasis on information and communication technology in Finland. Users of guidance look at themselves as active participants in the guidance process, something that has been stressed by more recent career counselling approaches. It is clear from these results that clients are satisfied with the adult guidance services, many are content with the counsellor's part in supporting them and they get assistance with a number of issues.

## Recommendations

**Chapter 11** lists recommendations from this research. Quality assurance mechanisms need to be installed with an emphasis on user involvement. Channels of user involvement need to be established and capacity building or training of

both professionals and users is an important precondition of successful user involvement. A good way to start engaging users in policy making would be to establish a consultative user forum. The enhancement of vocational learning outcomes is also recommended, such as career decision making competencies, job readiness, job search skills, etc. Methods of delivery in guidance need to improve in terms of variety and the key to such improvement could be methods within systematic and comprehensive guidance systems. A prerequisite of such systems is an evaluation programme of quality.

This evaluative study on guidance in the five Nordic countries is launched by a Nordic network on effectiveness and quality in guidance for adults and funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the strategic funding of the Advisory Group for Adult Learning (SVL) and the Nordic Network of Adult Learning (NVL). The study was designed and implemented by the team members under the leadership of the Icelandic team of dr. Guðbjörg Vilhjálmsdóttir, Andrea G. Dofradóttir and Guðrún Birna Kjartansdóttir. The team members in Denmark are dr. Peter Plant and Carla Tønder Jessing. The team members in Finland are Minna Koi-vunen and dr. Raimo Vuorinen. The team members in Sweden are dr. Anders Lovén and Tomas Mjörnheden and Norway is represented by Erik Hagaseth Haug.

The research report and annexes are available at  
[www.nordvux.net/page/1143/vagledning.htm](http://www.nordvux.net/page/1143/vagledning.htm)





# INTRODUCTION

Career guidance and counselling is developing quite fast within the adult learning sector in the Nordic countries. The same process is taking place in other Western countries and improved access of adults to guidance has been recommended both by the OECD (2004b) and the Council of the European Union (2004; 2008). Guidance is seen as both a private and public good benefitting individuals and society (Watts, 2005). On the individual level there is a need for guidance with adults that may not have considered participating in any formal or non-formal education for a long time (Hawthorn, Maguire & Haughton, 2002), but are drawn to it both by changes in the work environment and new governmental policies on lifelong learning. Individuals benefit from guidance because they enhance their self knowledge as well as knowledge of educational and occupational opportunities (Watts, 2005; Savickas, 2010). Research has revealed that adults seek guidance in the hope that it will change their job prospects (Hawthorn, Maguire & Haughton, 2002). On the level of society there is a growing fluidity with flexible organisations influencing ever changing careers, in events referred to by Watts (2005) as careerquakes. People need to learn how to adapt to changing labour market needs. As such, guidance benefits both individuals and society. A good

use of human resources is one of crucial elements in developing today's knowledge societies (Watts, 2005).

Lifelong learning policies are inspired by policy documents from the EU Commission and the OECD that "have focused on career guidance and information as key policy areas in terms of lifelong learning, and economic and social development" (ELGPN, 2010, p. 50). The assistance adults receive from the guidance services is a quality issue from their personal perspective, but the quality of guidance is also an issue from the perspective of public policy and especially the policy of lifelong learning (OECD, 2004a). In this context, evaluation is a tool in measuring what guidance services are contributing to the goal of lifelong learning. One way to assure quality is to involve users not only in evaluation, but also in the development of the service and policy making. Degrees of user involvement can be standards of good practice of this kind, and user involvement is in fact defined by the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (2010) as a reference point of quality assurance in guidance. This trend of user involvement comes from ideas of citizenship and effective democracy where user involvement means "devolving to individuals and communities the right to play an active role in shaping the services that affect their lives" (Plant, H., 2006, p. 1).

The twofold emphasis of this research is first to what extent the users of the services are actively involved in shaping policies and strategies of the services. A second emphasis of the research is the efficiency or value of the adult guidance services, i.e. what are its outcomes in terms of client learning and coping with new tasks.

## 2.1. Origins of this research

The origins of this research lie in policies of lifelong guidance that have been prominent in educational policies in the international arena for the last decade. The concept of lifelong guidance is relatively new and offering guidance to adults outside academia and labour offices is quite recent.

Lifelong guidance has been defined by the OECD. In the context of lifelong learning,

“guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used” (OECD, 2004a, p. 67).

Examples of such activities include information and advice giving, counselling, competence assessment, mentoring, advocacy, teaching decision-making and career management skills.

This lifelong approach to defining guidance has also been the basis of the Council of the European Union Resolution from the year 2004 on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe.

Recent reviews (OECD, 2004b) of lifelong guidance policies have concluded that effective career information and development systems are essential to support lifelong learning

and active employment policies as tools of economic growth and social equity and that all citizens need opportunities to develop the skills to manage their careers (OECD, 2004a; 2004b). This puts pressure on the providers of guidance services to evaluate what they do and demonstrate benefits of investment in guidance. The policymakers want evidence about the expected outcomes of guidance and the impacts of different service delivery modes. But apparently evaluation studies are often limited in scope. According to Sultana (2003) most policy-makers rely on a very limited evidence base when evaluating the inputs, processes and outputs of career guidance services. And Hughes and Gratton (2006) note that there is evidence collected by many guidance providers but the focus is often on short term outcomes or on progression rates to employment, education and training. According to the Cedefop study (2008) on the implementation of the 2004 Resolution priorities there are few mechanisms to ensure effective co-ordination between agencies and between ministries, and this makes coherent monitoring of approaches to QA in guidance difficult (p. 8). Similar results were found in a Nordic research on expected outcomes of guidance services for adults in the Nordic countries (Vuorinen & Leino, 2009).

Two different policy organisations have put evaluation of guidance on their agenda, one being the Nordic network for adult learning (NVL) and the other the European Lifelong guidance policy network. The evaluative work in these two organisations is described in the following chapters. First the Nordic policy context is presented as well as the adult continuing education centres that provide guidance to adults. The European policy context is then described.

## 2.2. Nordic policy context

A relatively recent analysis on guidance research in the Nordic countries (Plant, P. et al., 2007) high-

lights that "few quality control mechanisms are in place to sustain and develop quality in guidance" (p. 99). The authors point to the fact that no central guidelines, blueprints, benchmarking systems, or other quality assurance systems are in place on a national level. Moreover, the few existing quality assurance projects are local or regional rather than a nationally based enterprise. The main emphasis in Nordic policy documents is on the importance of lifelong learning, study skills as well as placement in further education or in the labour market (Plant, P. et al., 2007).

A recent evaluative research, conducted by a group of Nordic researchers within the Nordic Network of Adult Learning (NVL: Nordiskt nätverk för vuxnas lärande) on a project initiated and financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Vuorinen & Leino, 2009), gave interesting results that are being followed up in this current research. The expected outcomes identified in the national policy documents were in congruence with the key European Union educational and labour market policy documents. There were no major differences in the policy documents between the Nordic countries. There seems to be a consensus on the importance of lifelong guidance as an important vehicle in promoting lifelong learning, labour force development as well as social equity. The expected outcomes on the individual level are related to learning skills and placement in further education or in the labour market. The outcomes related to career management skills are not explicitly identified (p. 53).

However, the study discovered that in the Nordic countries there seems to be a gap in existing research on the evidence base for guidance practice and policy development. A similar gap in evaluative research was identified by OECD (2004b). The existing research has focused on aspects of the guidance service rather than providing data for service development purposes and is therefore of limited help to policy makers. An explicit gap in the research and national quality frameworks seems

to be in the lack of user involvement in the design and evaluation of the guidance services.

## 2.3. Nordic organisational context

The Nordic countries have all established a system of educational and vocational guidance for adults. Four main types of institutions that address career needs of adults have been identified (OECD, 2004b): (1) Public employment services, (2) services within adult education, (3) community based services, (4) employment based services. These different types of services are all found in

the Nordic countries, although the organisational context varies from one country to the next. An example is that Iceland has little tradition of folk high schools and liberal adult education as do the other Nordic countries (Carlsen, 2010).

The description of what follows gives an overview of the providers of adult guidance in the Nordic countries and the guidance provision for each country. It is not a complete description of Nordic adult guidance providers since it is limited to a description of the organisations that were involved in this study.

### 2.3.1. DENMARK

A number of different institutions provide lifelong learning and guidance in relations to adult education in Denmark. They can be divided into institutions that provide formal adult education and institutions that provide non-formal adult educational activities.

Institutions providing formal adult education and training for non-skilled or low-skilled adults are: (1) General Adult Education (AVU) offered by Adult Education Centres (VUC), (2) Labour Market Education and Training Centres (AMU)

and (3) business and technical colleges running adult training and guidance courses.

The types of lifelong learning institutions in Denmark within non-formal adult education consist of forms of teaching and education that are linked to, but not part of, the formal public educational system. Non-formal learning activities are frequently based on private initiatives by non governmental organisations (NGOs). Non-formal adult education comprises independent non-formal educational activity in

the form of a) evening schools and voluntary activity in associations, b) university extension courses and c) day folk high schools and private independent boarding schools (folk high schools, home economics schools, arts and crafts schools, and continuation schools). No particular school or professional qualifications are required for participating in non-formal adult education. The sample in Denmark was drawn from Day Folk High schools and Adult Education Centres.

### 2.3.2. FINLAND

Educational establishments arrange education and training intended for adults at all levels of the education system in 800 institutions in Finland; some of them are specialised adult education providers. The adult education system has three main branches, liberal adult education, general adult education and vocational education and training for adults. Adult education is available within the official education system and in liberal adult education in adult education centres, folk high schools and summer universities. Liberal adult education does not lead to a qualification but the studies completed in liberal adult education may be taken into account in preparatory training for competence-based qualification and when making an individual plan for completing competence-based quali-

fications. In general upper secondary education for adults it is possible to complete the whole syllabus or parts of it according to individual study plans.

Vocational education and training is intended both for those in employment and the unemployed and is available at all levels. Mature students can also attain a vocational qualification through competence-based qualification which includes practical work assignments and written or oral assignments. Adult education also includes staff-development and other training provided or purchased by employers. Labour market training is financed by the labour administration and mainly intended for unemployed persons and those aged 20 or over who are threatened by unemployment.

The objective of adult education in Finland is to support lifelong learning among the citizens, to develop society's coherence and equality and to enhance the knowledge and skills of the adult population. Efforts have been made to make the provision as flexible as possible in order to enable adults to study alongside work.

With the exception of further and specialist vocational qualifications, adult education and training leading to qualifications is provided free of charge. The government also subsidises other forms of education and training intended for adults in order to keep student fees at a reasonable level. An unemployed person can apply to do full-time study also in other than labour market training without losing one's unemployment benefit if the training is increas-

ing the job seeker's employability (Cimo, 2009).

In Finland careers information, guidance and counselling services are provided mainly by two established public systems: schools and public employment services (PES). There is a clear division of labour as well as long co-operation between these two systems.

The guidance service in adult education institutes varies in quality and quantity. However, the legislation on adult education includes student entitlements for support in individual study plans and recognition of prior learning.

Within the adult education institutes all the staff members are in charge of the guidance provision, some institutes have established vacancies for guidance practitioners to support the students and consult the other staff members. In

PES settings guidance provision is divided into employment services (for job-seeking clients and labour-seeking employers) and "vocational development services". The second type of services includes vocational guidance and career planning, educational and vocational information services and vocational rehabilitation. The services offered at employment and the economy offices comprise a broad range of services for various client groups, job seekers being the main target group (Cimo, 2009).

In the public employment services the information and guidance services are provided by vocational guidance psychologists, educational advisers and employment counsellors specialised either in special needs clients or in job clubs. All staff provide information; employment counsellors, education and training advisers and vocational

guidance psychologists all provide advice, but only vocational guidance psychologists provide guidance and counselling. The vocational guidance psychologists focus on career-choice issues, but within a whole-life context. The citizens can access their services directly or they can be referred to them by other staff members or from school counsellors.

In order to promote the labour force development and effectiveness of the Finnish labour market the government is implementing a national development programme for adult guidance under the European Social Fund period 2007-2013. The emphasis is on developing new coherent regional cross-sectoral service delivery modes with a telephone helpline in connection with a new national portal for guidance services.

### 2.3.3. ICELAND

Adult education in Iceland has two main sectors. One within the formal school system, in colleges of further education with mature student departments and lifelong learning centres in universities as well as in municipal adult education centres (Carlsen, 2010). The other sector has been run by the Education and Training Service Centre. It targets low skilled people and provides adult education and guidance. The Education and Training Service Centre was established in December 2002 by the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA) and is since 2010 also owned by the Federation of State and Municipal Employees, the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland and the Ministry of Finance.

The role of the Centre is to be a collaborative forum of the founding parties for adult education and vocational training in cooperation with other educational bodies operating under the auspices of the member associations. The Centre operates in accordance with its articles of association and a service agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

The Centre targets those who have not completed the upper secondary level of education. This target group comprises about 1/3 of people in the labour market, although the ratio varies between years and regions. The objective is to enable individuals who have not graduated from the upper secondary level to obtain an education and improve their position in the labour market.

The Centre has agreements with 12 Lifelong Learning providers distributed around the country (municipalities) about educational pathways, validation of competences and the delivery of guidance services to the target group. Guidance is delivered by guidance counsellors at the Lifelong learning centres and through outreach activities in companies and through services for the unemployed based on a contract with the Directorate of Labour since November 2009. The number of guidance interviews has increased considerably between years; 3.954 in 2008, 6.767 in 2009 and 10.799 in 2010. Outreach activities are conducted in cooperation with various stakeholders such as trade unions and educational funds.

### 2.3.4. NORWAY

Access to proper guidance concerning education and work is important for adults at various stages of life. To meet this demand regional partnerships for career guidance have been established in all counties in Norway. These partnerships cooperate to provide and coordinate career guidance schemes between the county councils, the municipalities, schools, universities, university colleges and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, as well as involving the trade unions, employers' organisations and local industry.

As a result of the partnerships, many counties have established career centres, with a special focus on giving independent information and guidance for adults. There are 19 counties in Norway, and the numbers of career centres differ, often depending on the size of the county. In sum, there are about 30 regional career centres in Norway. These centres are often financed by the part-

ners in the regional partnerships, and their services are free of charge for the adult population in that particular region. Some of the centres provide upper secondary education for adults as a part of their service. The centres that do not provide formal or non-formal education cooperate closely with centres or web based services that provide formal or non-formal education.

Vocational rehabilitation enterprises and adult education centres are also providers of adult education and guidance. These enterprises are organized as shareholder companies where the main shareholder often is a municipality. The enterprises work under the laws and regulations given by the Ministry of Labour and Administration, and work closely with the Labour market authorities (NAV). Guidance, both individual and group based, is an integrated part of the training programs of these enterprises. Career guidance

is also provided as an independent service. The main focus in these enterprises is to help persons get, and keep a job. For some, more education is needed, and in these cases, the enterprises cooperate closely with centres or web-based services that provide formal or non-formal education.

The adult education centres are mainly developed for persons in need of information concerning complementing their primary, secondary, upper secondary education or some further education. The centres also provide courses in Norwegian language and society and basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The centres can also be a place to start the process of getting Accreditation of Prior Learning (realkompetansevurdering). The centres are owned either by the local municipality or a county.

### 2.3.5 SWEDEN

In Sweden there are two public systems that provide careers information, guidance and counselling services; the public funded educational system and the public employment service.

The public funded municipally-run adult education is based on a regulation that says that each municipality is responsible for providing guidance services. A common way to organize guidance services is either through certain guidance centres or by employing guidance counsellors at the school. Sometimes both systems exist together. The content of guidance services offered to adults varies depending on how it is organized, e.g. guidance centres or a guidance counsellors at a schools. The funding and resources varies from municipality to municipality. There are only general goals from national authorities that regulate the services.

There are two national public services for web-based guidance, [www.amv.se](http://www.amv.se) and [www.utbildningsinfo.se](http://www.utbildningsinfo.se).

The available services contain a combination of pedagogical guides and interactive tools, such as interest tests, mapping of skills and interest and exploration of personal expressions, such as goal setting and learning style. There are several web-based sources, national, regional and local that offer wide range of information, such as about educational courses and programmes, but also information about professions and labour market.

The public funded adult education system comprises municipally-run adult education which consists of basic adult education and upper secondary adult education (komvux), adult education for the intellectually disabled (sär vux) and Swedish for immigrants (sfi).

Basic adult education is equivalent to 9-year compulsory school and is to provide adults with the knowledge and skills to participate

in social and professional life. It is also a platform for future studies or a career. The studies are to lead to a leaving certificate when the student has achieved at least a pass in the four core subjects: Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, mathematics and social science.

The aim of upper secondary adult education is to provide adults with skills and knowledge at the same level as upper secondary school does for young people. Municipal adult education is provided either in the form of single courses in various subjects, or as a package of courses within a certain field and/or direction. The syllabi and grading criteria are the same as those in upper secondary for young people, with the exception of specialized sports.

Public funded municipally-run adult education is free, non-compulsory schooling. It is available to adults aged 20 and above or to adults who want to supplement their educa-

tion, or perhaps change their career. The public funded adult education follows the national curriculum for non-compulsory education (Lpf 94, 1994). In the year 2009 a total of 187,135 students were studying in the public funded municipally-run adult education system (National Educational Agency, 2011).

## 2.4. European policy context

The European Union, highlights the importance of lifelong guidance as an integral part of lifelong learning policies, as can be seen in two resolutions of the Council of the European Union, from 2004 and 2008. The quality of guidance is an issue, as can be seen from the 2004 resolution: “High quality guidance provision throughout life is a key component of education, training and employability strategies to attain the strategic goal of Europe becoming the world’s most dynamic knowledge based society by 2010” (The Council of the European Union, 2004, p. 3). According to the Cedefop study (2008) on the implementation of the 2004 Resolution priorities only few countries, if any, have introduced comprehensive QA (quality assurance) mechanisms in guidance services, and most QA practices that are in place are in fact restricted. The QA approaches in the guidance field are restricted because they tend to be confined to a single or small range of sectors within a country – they rarely if ever apply across both the education and employment sector. There are few mechanisms to ensure effective co-ordination between agencies and between ministries, and this makes coherent monitoring of approaches to QA in guidance difficult (p. 8).

The European Lifelong Guidance policy Network (ELGPN) aims to assist 27 European countries and the European Commission in developing European co-operation on lifelong guidance in both the education and the employment sectors. “Its purpose is to promote co-operation and systems development at Member State level in implementing the priorities identified in the EU reso-

lutions on Lifelong Guidance (2004; 2008)” (ELGPN, 2010, p. 9).

The EU Common reference tools on lifelong guidance, as well as the ELGPN report (2010) stress the importance of giving citizens a voice in the articulation and development of indicators, in the analysis of the data generated, as well as in the importance of developing evaluation frameworks that recognise the multi-faceted nature of guidance including the development of career management skills (p. 54).

ELGPN is organized around four work packages; one of them is labelled *Quality assurance and evidence base for policy and systems development*. This work package of the ELGPN network has put forward an outline of a quality assurance network that comprises five reference points:

1. Citizen and user involvement
2. Practitioner competence
3. Service improvement
4. Coherence (including coverage of sectors)
5. Outcomes (impact of learning outcomes, economic outcomes and social inclusion outcomes).

The first, third and fifth reference points are of interest to this research. The first point is of relevance because it stresses the importance of customer participation, such as customer reaction systems, their operation and use. The third, because it sets standards for the guidance services and the fifth because learning outcomes of guidance were defined for this research.

## 2.5. Evaluation

The theoretical background of this study comes from a broad range of evaluative research and career counselling theories. Improvement of a guidance service is the main goal of evaluation as well as assuring that it serves the purpose for which it was originally intended. Evaluation is

divided into summative evaluation, formative evaluation and evaluation of quality through the use of standards (Killeen, 2004). Summative or product evaluation in guidance requires that data exists on clients before the intervention takes place and similar data about clients after the career intervention effort. This is necessary so that changes can be measured (Herr, Cramer and Niles, 2004). Formative or process evaluation provides feedback whilst an intervention is under development or an organisation finds ways to achieve its goals. Evaluation of quality through the use of standards examines if an intervention meets good practice criteria (Killeen, 2004). Degrees of user involvement can be standards of good practice of this kind, and user involvement is in fact defined by the European Lifelong Quality Network (ELGPN, 2010) as a reference point of quality assurance in guidance. This trend of user involvement comes from ideas of citizenship and effective democracy where user involvement means “devolving to individuals and communities the right to play an active role in shaping the services that affects their lives” (Plant, H., 2006, p. 1).

When we are evaluating guidance we are in fact forming judgments about its value (Killeen, 1996). What is its value for those who seek guidance and what is its value for those who provide it or for policy makers? The three perspectives might give different answers. Based on the findings of evaluative research we can ask how guidance can be improved i.e. how we can increase its value or moreover its efficiency in terms of functional improvement of guidance provision and increase the flexibility of its organisation?

The study presented here is partly a formative evaluation of the guidance programmes provided by selected adult learning institutions and partly it uses the levels of user involvement as quality standards. The focus of the study is on both user involvement and learning outcomes. The three different perspectives of users, providers and policy makers of guidance services are prominent in

the study with an emphasis on a special aspect of policy making which is bringing the voices of users to the forefront in organising guidance services by using different degrees of user involvement in organisation and policy making of guidance services. With user involvement people using a particular service are given the active civil role of shaping the services that are of importance in their lives.

The evaluative criteria for the outcomes of guidance were taken from career counselling theory and the standards of user involvement from writings on the different levels of citizen involvement or participation (Arnstein, 1969; Plant, H., 2006). The evaluative criteria concentrate on two different types of outcome measures: client satisfaction and learning outcomes. To ask users of guidance if they are satisfied with particular aspects of the service or their level of involvement is quite straightforward and gives an idea of whether clients liked the process or its outcomes (Watts & Dent, 2006). Learning outcomes measure to what extent goals of guidance activities were met (Killeen & Kidd, 1991; Watts & Dent, 2006).

## 2.6. Theories of counselling and career development

Conditions of help and ways of helping others through counselling are the main phenomena of interest in counselling theories. They aim for a desired change in feeling, thinking or behaviour (Sharf, 2010). Traditional counselling theories take individual differences into account. People seek assistance for different reasons. They have different needs and the professional guidance services have the task of adapting their services to users (Hiebert, 2009) and hence the importance of individual counselling.

Career counselling theories in particular focus on ways of helping people manage or solve career problems and face career tasks, such as career decision making. They explain career behaviour across the life span, as well as guiding career counsellors in using interventions that will facilitate certain career behaviours (Whiston & Brecheisen, 2002). Career counselling theories originate in a scientific model put forward by Frank Parsons in 1909 and is still used in career counselling today. It is as follows: "In the wise choice of vocation, there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes, (2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts" (Parsons, 1909, p. 5). Although this three-part theory, sometimes called the "parsonian model", was put forward over a 100 years ago, it still governs most guidance practice (Krumboltz, 1994) and is the most widely used approach to career guidance and counselling today (Savickas, 1997). A more recent study on the effectiveness of guidance indi-

cates that career practitioners are "still heavily reliant on this particular approach" (Bimrose, Barnes & Hughes, 2008, p. 87). New approaches in career development theory are the constructivist theories that put forward the more subjective experience of careers and that the individual actively construes their careers, "by imposing meaning on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). Therefore new methods in guidance are aimed at actively engaging individuals in construing their careers and taking responsibility for it (Amundson, 2003).

The most common goals of career guidance are the selection of an occupation or educational path leading to it and the adjustment to an education or occupation (Sharf, 2010). The client is therefore in need of educational and occupational information, but he or she also needs to enhance his self-knowledge. Therefore career guidance always involves personal issues (Sharf, 2010). A recent qualitative study on effectiveness of guidance revealed that clients perceive guidance as being useful when it "provides access to specialist information, including local labour market information, details of courses, training and employment opportunities; provides insights, focus and clarification; motivates (e.g. progress ideas, try something new or explore options); increases self-confidence and self-awareness; and/ or structures opportunities for reflection and discussion" (Bimrose, Barnes & Hughes, 2008, p. 95).

This emphasis on the personal, educational and vocational aspects of guidance is stressed in the 2008 resolution of the European Union Council: "From resolution 2008: "Guidance plays a decisive role in the major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In this respect, it can contribute to empowering individuals to manage their own career paths in a more secure way in the context of today's labour market, and to achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives" (p. 2).

The learning outcomes of adult guidance used in this research are based on a threefold classification of career counselling into personal learning outcomes, educational learning outcomes and vocational learning outcomes. Examples of personal learning outcomes are the enhancement of the self-concept or learn about own interests. Examples of educational learning outcomes are learning about educational options or requirements. Examples of vocational learning outcomes would be become better informed about the content of occupations and where to look for occupational information.

## 2.7. User involvement

Policy making has been the arena of politicians, administrators, social partners and specialists, to name but a few. Recently, the point has been made that users themselves are an important factor, not only in quality assurance, but also in organising guidance services and furthermore in policy making (Plant, H., 2006; Bimrose, Barnes & Hughes, 2008). This trend is due to many in-

fluences, one being the self determination of the people concerned with the policy in question. This can be seen for example with the motto of the disability movement: “Nothing about us, without us”. The motto mirrors a fundamental shift in perspective towards a principle of participation persons with disabilities in decision making at all levels of society (“Nothing about us without us”, 2004).

A second wave of influence on the involvement of users is that of democratisation: in many cases, guidance happens to people, rather than with people. This means that the ownership of guidance processes and results often lie with the institutions rather than with the individual. Apart from the lack of democratically based active citizenship and ownership in these cases, this approach is a waste of resources, as the personal motivation of users is crucial to reaping the benefits, economically and otherwise, of guidance interventions and activities. The EU, in its Flagship 2020 initiatives, has identified three aspects of growth: (1) smart, (2) sustainable and (3) inclusive growth. Career guidance can be an important part of this strategy - if users are actively involved, not just as passive clients, but as active citizens.

A third wave of influence on this trend of user involvement is the consumer’s point of view. Services must both meet the needs of users and be delivered at a cost and in a way that is broadly acceptable to the public. It is anticipated that enabling communities to help shape decisions about policies and services will make services more responsive to user need, support civil renewal and strengthen the legitimacy of institutions of government. Without “active citizen involvement the danger is that services may be developed that do not reflect people’s real needs or do not have the public benefit as their main objective, and therefore neither represent value for money nor enjoy public confidence and support” (Plant, H., 2006, p. 2).

Even though user involvement has been underlined as being an important part of quality assurance of guidance services in recent reports (OECD, 2004; ELGPN, 2010), not much research has been made that looks into this question; i.e. are users involved, would they like to be involved etc. The qualitative study of Bimrose, Barnes and Hughes (2008) gave valuable results regarding the users’ views of the benefits of guidance and strongly suggests that harnessing the voices of users has a significant potential for the improve-

ment of guidance. The current study is the first to examine the issue of user involvement in guidance.

Figure 2.1 shows taxonomy of level of user involvement in career guidance as described by Helen Plant (2006). The engagement of users may take place on five different levels, depending on its particular purpose and scope within a given context. At the first two levels the involvement can be described at an individual level where users are involved in shaping their own experiences of using the service. At the third level users are involved in shaping the services, such as suggesting how to improve operation of service, set priorities, identify gaps, address unmet needs etc., whereas at the fourth and fifth level they are involved in a more strategic capacity, in which participation and consultation involve planning, developing as well as reviewing services (Plant, H., 2006).

LEVEL	TYPE OF INFORMATION	EXAMPLE OF INVOLVEMENT	LEVEL
LEVEL 1	Information gathering	Being told what is available	Individual
LEVEL 2	Sharing of information	Telling services what it is like to use them	Individual
LEVEL 3	Forums of debate	Workshops, focus groups, consultations	Service
LEVEL 4	Participation	Involved in shaping policies and strategies	Strategic
LEVEL 5	Partnership	Deciding with others what policies and strategies need reshaping	Strategic

FIGURE 2.1  
A model for understanding types and purposes of user involvement<sup>1</sup>

## 2.8. Research questions

This evaluative study asks five main questions:

1. Do we listen to the voices of adult users of guidance?
2. Are they involved in policy development and design of the guidance services?
3. What are the guidance delivery modes in adult education?
4. How satisfied are adults with the guidance services?
5. What are the outcomes of guidance for its adult users?

<sup>1</sup> The model is published from the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) (2005) and published in Helen Plant (2006). Involving the users of guidance services in policy development. The Guidance Council.





# METHOD

**T**his study consists of two research phases. First, a focus group study was conducted in all five countries among clients, counsellors and managers of adult guidance services. Following the focus group study the second phase of the study was carried out where a web survey was conducted among users of guidance in adult educational institutions in all five countries.

## 3.1. Focus group study

In the former phrase of the study several focus group interviews were conducted in each of the five countries. Because of lack of prior research in this area, it was decided to start with carrying out the focus group study in order to gain better insights into the subject matter. On the basis of discussions and results from the focus groups the survey questionnaire was developed.

The focus group interviews took place in the spring and summer of 2010 in all five countries. Between 6 and 8 focus group interviews were conducted in each of the countries among groups of clients, counsellors, as well as managers of adult guidance services in rural and urban setting. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the focus groups; number of participants, number of groups conducted, the institutions which were represented by participants and the location of focus group interviews. As the table

The research report and annexes are available at [www.nordvux.net/page/1143/vagledning.htm](http://www.nordvux.net/page/1143/vagledning.htm)

shows, the total number of participants in the focus group study ranges from 26 to 34, depending on which country we look at.

The focus group interviews were semi-structured in that interviewers followed a framework of questions but leaving discussions to develop within each theme of the framework of questions (see focus group question framework in annex 1). The framework was developed in order to enable comparability of results across groups of participants and countries. It was originally developed in English and then translated into the five different Nordic languages. The framework was formed on the basis on the taxonomy of user involvement, emphasising the five levels of user involvement (see table 2.1 in Introduction).

Each interview was audiotaped and/or videotaped and lasted about 1.5 hours. The interviews were then transcribed and thematically analysed, and each partner country submitted a report on the national findings (see focus group reports in annex 2).

TABLE 3.1

An overview of participants in the focus group study

	DENMARK	FINLAND	ICELAND	NORWAY	SWEDEN
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	26	29	32	31	34
Clients	9	10	12	11	11
Counsellors	10	10	11	10	14
Managers	7	9	9	10	9
TOTAL NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUPS	6	6	6	6	8
INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED	Day folk high schools. Folk high school. Regional guidance centre. Private actor running short guidance programs for unemployed adults. Secretariat for adult education centres.	Educational institutions that are part of the Jyväskylä Educational Consortium, one of the largest institutions of vocational education in Finland. Public employment services.	The Education and Training Service Centre. Lifelong learning centres. Directorate of Labour. Keilir - academic institution.	Regional career centres. Vocational rehabilitation enterprises. Adult Education centres.	Adult education authorities with guidance centres. University with guidance centre.
LOCATION OF INTERVIEWS	Aarhus & Copenhagen	Jyväskylä & Jämsä	Reykjavik & Keflavik	Gjøvik region & Akershus	Göteborg, Malmö & Luleå

### 3.2. Survey

In the second phase of the study a web survey was conducted among users of guidance in adult educational institutions in all five countries. The survey data was collected via the survey system of the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Iceland.

#### PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Due to limitations and restrictions in the different countries in collecting e-mail addresses of users of guidance services within adult education, mainly two different procedures of sampling of participants was used. In Iceland and Sweden, a sample of users of guidance was selected from guidance services in adult education and the survey sent directly to their e-mail addresses (researchers → participants). In Denmark, Finland and Norway, however, this direct method of distribution was not possible. Therefore, a more indirect method was used in which research partners in the respective countries contacted organisations and educational institutions within adult education (and in some cases public employment

services) that provide guidance services and made an agreement with them to forward the survey link directly to students (users of guidance) or to respective schools and guidance providers, which were then to forward it to students (researchers → associations → schools → participants). This lack of direct contact to participants may be the major cause for the low number of responses in Denmark, Finland and Norway.

The survey was submitted in the fall of year 2010 and prolonged to the beginning of 2011 due to lack of participation. In order to increase participation, several initiatives were taken in each of the countries. In Iceland and Sweden, a total of three reminders were sent to motivate participation. In Denmark, Finland and Norway several initiatives were also made in terms of contacting managers and representatives of respective organisations and institutions to make an agreement with them to ensure that the link would be distributed to their students and guidance users.

The group of participants and procedure is further described in the following for each country.

#### *Denmark*

In Denmark the survey data was collected from two types of organizations providing adult education and adult career guidance: Day Folk High Schools and Adult Education Centres. The day folk high schools represent non-formal adult education, and adult education centres represent the formal adult education.

The questionnaire was distributed to the schools from the two associations representing the schools, and not directly from researchers due to restrictions in sharing private data information.

The number of participants in day folk high schools was approximately a total of 16,000 participants in 2006 at 52 day folk high schools – equivalent of about 6,000 full time participants<sup>2</sup>. The number of participants in Adult Education Centres institutions and in General Adult Education courses (AVU) were a total of 90,919 in the school year of 2009-2010<sup>3</sup>. The exact number of schools and participants are difficult to find as the statistical information is scarce and the numbers differ in various sources. Additionally

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved May 7 2010 from <http://eng.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Adult%20Education%20and%20Continuing%20Training/Non%20formal%20adult%20education.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from the website of Danmarks Statistik: <http://www.dst.dk/pukora/epub/Nyt/2011/NR024.pdf>

the information is not updated to the present date. In Denmark a total 159 users of guidance responded to the study.

#### *Finland*

In Finland the survey data was primarily collected from organizations providing adult education but due to limited number of respondents the questionnaire was also sent to other providers of information, advice and guidance services.

In the field of education, the Opin Ovi National Coordination Project<sup>4</sup> passed on the survey to 34 project managers and coordinators of the local and national Opin Ovi (Läroport) projects. The project managers and coordinators for their part sent the survey to counsellors and teachers of 104 organizations of both vocational and general adult education<sup>5</sup>. The educational organizations reached through Opin Ovi projects were adult education centres and institutes, vocational colleges, apprenticeship training centres, physical education centres, folk high schools, general upper secondary schools for adults, open universities, summer universities and universities of applied science.

The clients of guidance were also able to participate in the survey on Facebook and Twitter pages of Opin ovi projects. Two other projects, Intermediate Labour Market Project in Central Finland and Career Bar Project in Helsinki, passed on the survey to their clients and networks. The survey was also available on the homepage of the Jyväskylä Open University and more than 2000 students of the Helsinki Open University received the survey link by e-mail.

Within public employment services, the survey was sent to 687 clients of the vocational guidance and career planning services of the Employment and Economic Development Office in Jyväskylä. Moreover, the survey link was sent to 128 counsellors of Youth Outreach Programme through Ministry of Education and Culture and to 9 local coordinators of the National Workshop Association. A private training and consultancy company that provides training for adults with limited formal education also distributed the survey link to their students. In Finland a total 194 users of guidance took part in the survey.

#### *Iceland*

In Iceland, email addresses were collected from users of guidance through the cooperation with the Education and Training Service Centre and the 12 lifelong learning centres that are networking with the service centre and their guidance counsellors. The guidance counsellors were asked to contact their clients in the previous two years and ask for permission to send their e-mail address to the Social Science Research Institute at the University

of Iceland, which was responsible for collecting the survey data. The e-mail addresses of a total of 1,838 users of guidance were collected and a total of 561 responded. The response rate in the Icelandic sample is therefore 31%.

#### *Norway*

In Norway the survey data was collected from three types of organizations providing adult education and adult career guidance: Adult Education Centres, Regional Career Centres and Vocational Rehabilitation Enterprises.

The questionnaire was distributed to the centres from the County administrations (owners of Adult Education Centres), from the association for Vocational Rehabilitation Centres and directly from the national project manager to the managers of the regional Career Centres.

In accordance to national statistics from SSB the potential number of respondents should be about 30,000 persons. This is including all persons in upper secondary school for adults (from the age of 25) and persons registered as users in a vocational rehabilitation centre. In Norway, there are no laws that ensure adults the legal rights to receive guidance regarding their career choices. In Norway a total 214 users of guidance responded to the study.

#### *Sweden*

In Sweden the survey data was collected among students who were in their studies in the public municipally-run adult education (komvux) in Sweden. Three different local adult education authorities, Stockholm, Göteborg and Luleå, were selected to deliver a representative basis of students for the survey. The numbers of selected students who also had an e-mail address was 6,774. A total of 450 users of guidance responded to the study in Sweden.

Table 3.2 shows the distribution of participants in each of the five countries in terms of different demographical variables. As the table shows, respondents vary considerably across countries in terms of gender, age, educational level, residence and native language. In all countries the majority of respondents are women but the distribution according to gender is more uneven in some of the countries than others. In Finland only on fifth of participants is male, whereas 43% of the respondents in Denmark are male.

There are also considerable differences in the distribution of age. For example, 42-63% of respondents in Denmark and Sweden are under the age of thirty whereas the same goes for 16-28% of the respondents in the other countries. Around one fourth of the respondents in Finland and Iceland are 50 years or older compared to

<sup>4</sup> The Opin Ovi National Coordination Project supports and guides the development of career guidance and counselling for adults. It is responsible for the coordination, follow-up and dissemination of the Opin Ovi National Action Programme, which is a part of the European Social Fund development programme "Usefulness and needs as the basis in adult guidance, using a development programme on information, guidance and counselling services".

<sup>5</sup> General adult education in Finland includes general upper secondary schools for adults and non-formal adult education institutions.

TABLE 3.2  
Background of respondents

	DENMARK	FINLAND	ICELAND	NORWAY	SWEDEN
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	43%	20%	36%	25%	31%
Female	57%	80%	64%	76%	69%
<b>AGE</b>					
29 years old or younger	63%	27%	16%	28%	42%
30-39 years old	13%	20%	25%	33%	32%
40-49 years old	12%	28%	31%	28%	21%
50 years or older	12%	24%	27%	10%	6%
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>					
Compulsory education or less	53%	10%	45%	18%	25%
Upper secondary education (gymnasium)	13%	18%	16%	14%	24%
Vocational education (upper secondary level)	14%	21%	27%	27%	20%
Post secondary- or tertiary education	21%	51%	12%	41%	32%
<b>RESIDENCE</b>					
In a city/municipality over 30 000 inhabitants	64%	73%	49%	33%	93%
In a city/municipality under 30 000 inhabitants	36%	27%	51%	67%	7%
<b>LANGUAGE</b>					
Official language	89%	98%	97%	84%	38%
Else	11%	2%	3%	16%	62%

6-12% in the other countries.

The distribution of respondents according to their educational background does also vary considerably. Whereas up to half of respondents (45-53%) in Denmark and Iceland have not finished an education beyond compulsory school, the same goes for only 10-25% of respondents in Finland, Norway and Sweden. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who have finished post secondary education or tertiary education varies between countries.

It is also important to note that majority of respondents in Sweden do not have Swedish as a native language but only 2-16% of the respondents in the other country do not have the language of the respective country as a native language.

The method of sampling of participants and low number of responses is of special concern in this study. As described above, it was not possible to select a nationally representative random sample of guidance users, except in Iceland. Therefore an indirect method was used in Denmark, Fin-

land and Norway in which research partners in the respective countries contacted organisations and educational institutions within adult education which then forwarded the survey link to students (users of guidance). In Sweden, a sample of users of guidance was selected in adult educational institutions of certain areas and cities. This raises questions about the representativeness of respondents in these countries.

One way to evaluate if respondents are representative for their populations would be to compare the composition of the group of respondents to the population (users of guidance in adult education), on demographical variables, such as gender, age, education etc. However, the up to date information about demographical composition of the population of guidance users within adult education is not available in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Therefore, it is not possible to infer about the representativeness of respondents in these countries. This has to be interpreted as a major limitation of the study and inferences based on the results should be made with care.

In Iceland, however, all users of guidance in adult education within the previous two years were invited to take part in the study. Furthermore, information on the composition of users of guidance within adult education is available. Table 3.3 shows the composition of respondents in Iceland and the population of users of guidance within adult education in 2009 and 2010. As the table shows, the group of respondents in Iceland deviates somewhat from the population of guidance users in demographics. For example, men, young people and people with compulsory education or less seem to be somewhat underrepresented among respondents in the study, whereas women and older age groups are somewhat overrepresented. This should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

The limitations of the sampling method applied in the study as well as low number of responses in most of the countries has implications both for the interpretation of results nationally and in comparisons across countries.

TABLE 3.3

Comparison of respondents and population of users of guidance within adult education in Iceland in 2009-2010

	RESPONDENTS	POPULATION
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	561	17,566
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	36%	55%
Female	64%	45%
<b>AGE</b>		
29 years old or younger	16%	30%
30-39 years old	25%	28%
40-49 years old	31%	22%
50 years or older	27%	20%
<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>		
Compulsory education or less	45%	62%
Upper secondary education (gymnasium)	16%	6%
Vocational education (upper secondary level)	27%	27%
Post secondary - or tertiary education	12%	5%
<b>RESIDENCE</b>		
In a city/municipality over 30 000 inhabitants	49%	45%
In a city/municipality under 30 000 inhabitants	51%	55%
<b>LANGUAGE</b>		
Official language	97%	92%
Else	3%	8%

## MEASUREMENT AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The survey questionnaire was developed with reference to the taxonomy of user involvement described earlier (Plant, H. 2006) as well as on the basis of the results of the focus group study. The questionnaire is presented in annex 3 in all five Nordic languages as well as in English. It was developed in English and then translated into the five different Nordic languages.

In order to select out those who had not experienced guidance within the last two years the first question asked if one had participated in educational and vocational guidance within the last two years. Only those who answered yes to this question were asked to answer following questions (see annex 3). As well as measuring different levels of user involvement, the questionnaire contained questions concerning what kind of guidance respondents participated in (modes of delivery), from whom they learned about the guidance services, satisfaction with the guidance and perceived outcomes of guidance.

The questionnaire contained 14 statements about perceived outcomes of guidance. The results of the responses to these statements were factor analysed (a statistical procedure named Factor analysis was conducted) in order to find their common constructs. The factor analysis indicated three constructs (factors), measuring three different outcomes of guidance; educational outcome, vocational outcome and personal outcome. On the basis of these factors three different scales were computed indicating the average score for the respective statements on each factor. Reliability analysis, measuring the internal con-

sistency (Cronbach's alpha) indicated sufficient or good reliability of the scales (Cronbach's alpha for the scale of educational outcome was .75, for vocational outcome .82 and .92 for personal outcome).

The major part of the questionnaire contained questions about user involvement according to the different levels of involvement (see annex 3). In this part of the questionnaire respondents were asked questions concerning active involvement in their own guidance, the guidance counsellor, if they had been given a chance to evaluate services or been consulted and taken part in policy making and designing of strategies regarding guidance services. Furthermore, respondents were asked questions regarding the importance of involving users in decision- and policymaking and about effective ways of having their voices heard.

The results of the questionnaire survey are presented in tables and figures showing relevant statistics. A statistical difference between groups is indicated in tables and figures by attaching a star-symbol (\*) to respective item, indicating a statistical difference significant at the 95% level ( $\alpha=.05$ ). The statistical tests used were the *Chi-square test*, *T-test* or *Oneway Anova*, depending on the scale of measurement of respective questions (variables). In the figures/tables showing means, confidence intervals of the means are also presented, either in parentheses following respective means or as error bars in bar graphs. By adding the *confidence interval* to the mean or subtracting it from the mean an interval is found in which the mean of the respective population is likely to fall (with 95% confidence).





# RESULTS IN DENMARK

## 4.1. Participation in guidance – modes of delivery

The users of guidance were first asked about what kind of guidance they had participated in and as table 4.1 shows most of them had participated in a face-to-face interviews with a guidance counsellor, or about four of every five of them (82%). About one third had experienced guidance from a teacher (36%), one of every four had experienced guidance in group-sessions with a guidance counsellor (25%), and the same number had experienced telephone interviews with a guidance counsellor (24%), whereas guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities or from a project or program leader was less common (14% and 6%). 16% of users had been guided through the internet, such as through websites, e-mail or chat-rooms. In day folk high schools and adult education centres guidance counsellors also function as teachers – this might be the reason for the relatively high percentage of received guidance from a teacher.

Respondents were also asked about the number of sessions of the type of guidance they had (see table 4.2).

Most of the users had been in three or more sessions of the type of guidance they had experienced. Among those who had experienced a face-to-face session with a guidance counsellor two of every three had experienced three or more sessions (62%), whereas about one of every three had one or two sessions (38%). Among those who had experienced guidance in group-sessions, around two of every three (64%) had had three or more sessions, and about two thirds (59%) of those who had experienced guidance from a teacher had three or more sessions. The relatively few respondents who had experienced guidance from a project-/program leader (6%) or through web based medias (16%) about half of them had had three or more sessions (50 and 52%).

The users learned about the guidance services through diverse channels (see table 4.3). Most of them (48%) learned about it either as a part of some educational program, through the employment offices (33%) or through acquaintances (28%).

TABLE 4.1

What kind of educational and vocational guidance did you participate in?

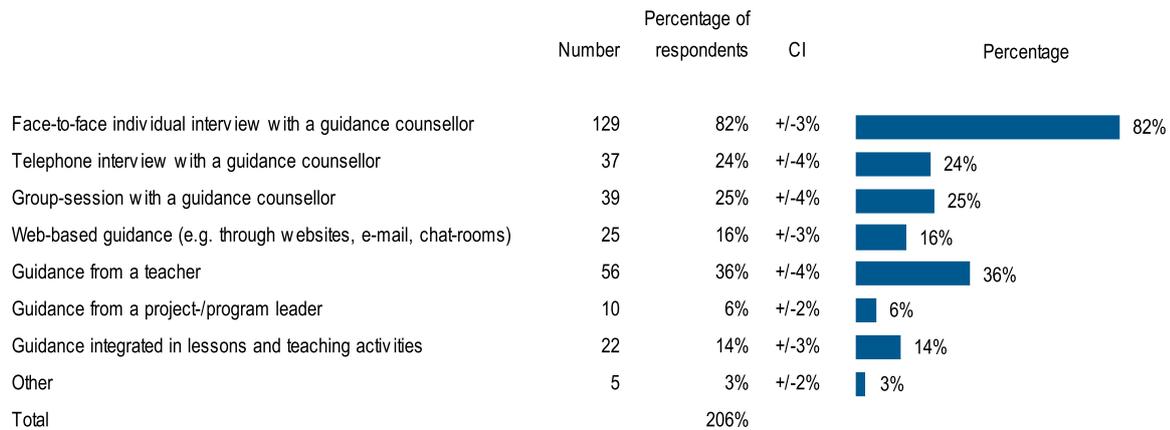


TABLE 4.2

How many sessions did you have?

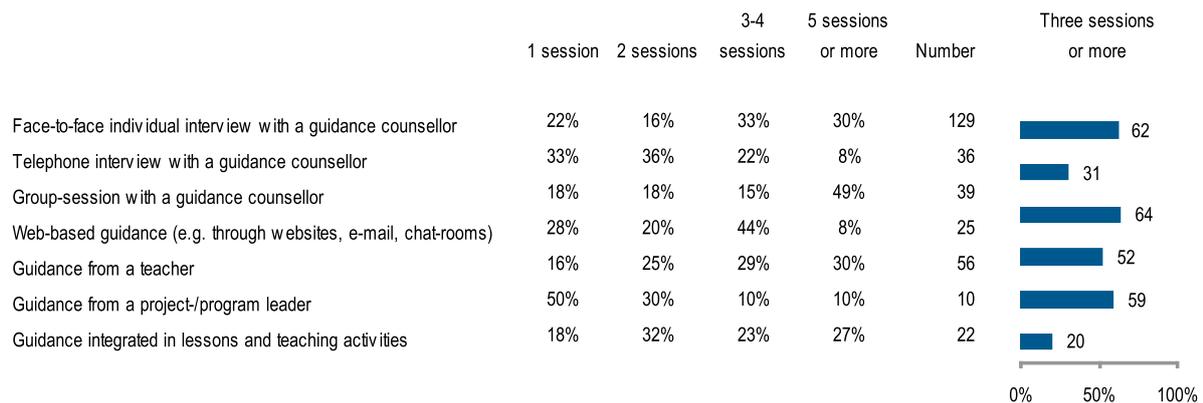
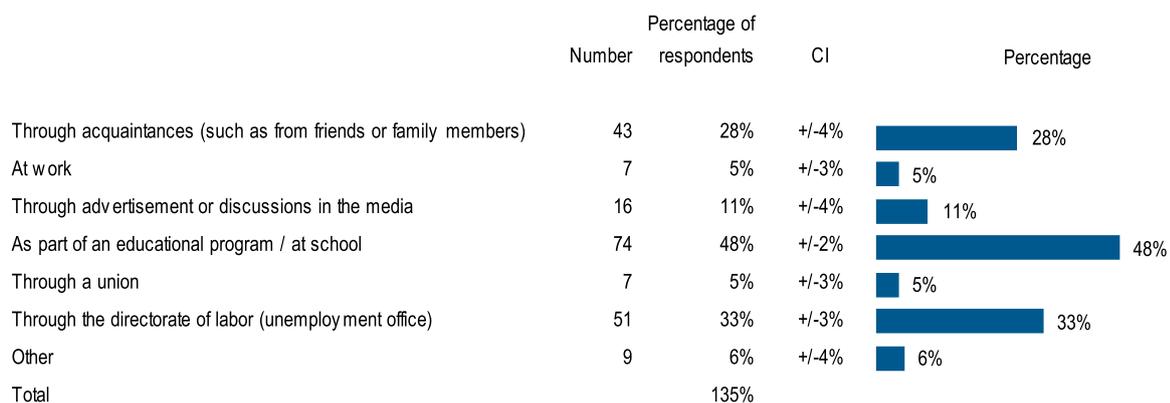


TABLE 4.3

Where did you learn about the educational and vocational guidance services?



## 4.2. Outcomes of guidance and perceived role of counsellor

Respondents were presented with 14 different statements about possible outcome of educational and vocational guidance. On the basis of a factor analysis procedure, three factors were constructed from the 14 statements, one measuring educational outcome, another vocational outcome and the third personal outcome (see table 4.4).

The main rating of respondents towards the educational outcome of their guidance was the most positive of the three factors. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 indicates less educational outcome and 5 more educational outcome, the average rating for educational outcome was 3.58, whereas it was considerably lower on the factor measuring vocational outcome (3.01) and somewhat lower on the factor measuring personal outcome (3.12). This indicates that users of guidance within the lifelong learning centres in Denmark feel that the outcome of guidance is particularly of an educational and personal nature, but to a lesser extent focused directly on vocational matters.

The results in table 4.4 show that responses towards different statements vary. Somewhere between 53 and 57% agreed with the statements that *guidance had encouraged them to continue their studies* and *make choices concerning their education*, it had *enhanced their self-confidence* (46%) and *taught them something about their abilities and interests* (45%). On the other hand, only around 18% felt that guidance had *helped them with job search* and *helped them acquire skills in searching for job or educational opportunities*.

The respondents were asked to rate the guidance counsellor according to different statements. As table 4.5 shows most of the respondents rated their counsellor positively. Between 67% and 58% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their counsellor was supportive and understanding, encouraged them, and helped them setting goals. A lower proportion, or 41-42%, felt that their counsellor had helped them enhance their self-confidence and had stressed their active involvement and participation in the guidance process. The supportiveness and understanding of the guidance counsellors was also stressed very much in the focus group interviews.

The results presented in table 4.5 are very much in line with the results of the focus group study, where users of guidance explained their experience with guidance in terms of support, understanding and encouragement. For many of them, previous negative experiences of youth guidance or guidance in job centres, or negative experiences of schooling had affected their attitude to education and their self confidence in participating in education, and as a result of the guidance their attitude started to change. Especially the day folk high school participants were expressing great satisfaction with the help and support over a longer period from their guidance counsellors, and the guidance counsellors on their side explained how they worked on a step-for-step opportunity exploration and planning with the participants.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the guidance on a seven point scale where 1 meant very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly satisfied nor

TABLE 4.4

Mean ratings on scales of educational-, vocational- and personal outcomes and responses to their respective statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
<b>EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.58 (+/-0.14)</b>							
Guidance encouraged me to continue my studies	5 %	3 %	35 %	38 %	19 %	134	57
Guidance helped me make choices concerning my education	4 %	8 %	35 %	38 %	15 %	138	53
<b>VOCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.01 (+/-0.14)</b>							
Guidance helped me make other life choices	9 %	17 %	33 %	28 %	13 %	135	41
Guidance resulted in new educational or job contacts	7 %	12 %	48 %	26 %	8 %	130	34
Guidance helped me with my job search	14 %	21 %	47 %	13 %	5 %	127	18
Guidance helped me make choices concerning jobs	15 %	18 %	44 %	18 %	5 %	131	23
<b>PERSONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.12 (+/-0.14)</b>							
Guidance enhanced my self-confidence	8 %	11 %	36 %	31 %	14 %	132	46
I learned new ways of learning as a result of guidance	7 %	20 %	42 %	26 %	5 %	129	31
I learned to make career plans as a result of guidance	7 %	17 %	46 %	24 %	6 %	125	30
I learned something about my abilities as a result of guidance	9 %	12 %	34 %	38 %	7 %	129	45
I learned something about my interests as a result of guidance	6 %	12 %	42 %	33 %	7 %	128	40
I acquired skills in searching for job or educational opportunities as a result of guidance	10 %	20 %	52 %	13 %	5 %	128	18
I acquired skills to further develop my career	9 %	17 %	46 %	21 %	7 %	127	28
I acquired decision making skills as a result of guidance	8 %	13 %	44 %	28 %	8 %	128	36

0% 50% 100%

dissatisfied. Figure 4.1 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users were rather satisfied with their guidance experience and rated their satisfaction on average 5.2 out of 7. There were no

statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, residence nor educational level, but more mature persons were more satisfied (40-49 old: 6.3) than younger persons (29 or younger: 5.2), and women were on average a

little more satisfied (5.3) than men (5.2). Respondents with the lowest and the highest level of education are more satisfied than respondents with mid-levels.

TABLE 4.5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about the guidance counsellor that worked with you?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The counsellor emphasized my active involvement in the different phases of the process	5%	6%	46%	34%	8%	111	42
The counsellor stressed my active participation in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	3%	12%	40%	36%	10%	112	46
The counsellor helped me set goals	5%	9%	28%	46%	13%	112	58
The counsellor helped me work on enhancing my self-confidence	9%	17%	32%	32%	10%	111	41
The counsellor gave me the opportunity to discuss my strengths and weaknesses	4%	7%	31%	44%	13%	113	58
The counsellor was supportive and understanding	3%	5%	26%	41%	26%	117	67
The counsellor encouraged me	6%	6%	27%	40%	21%	115	61

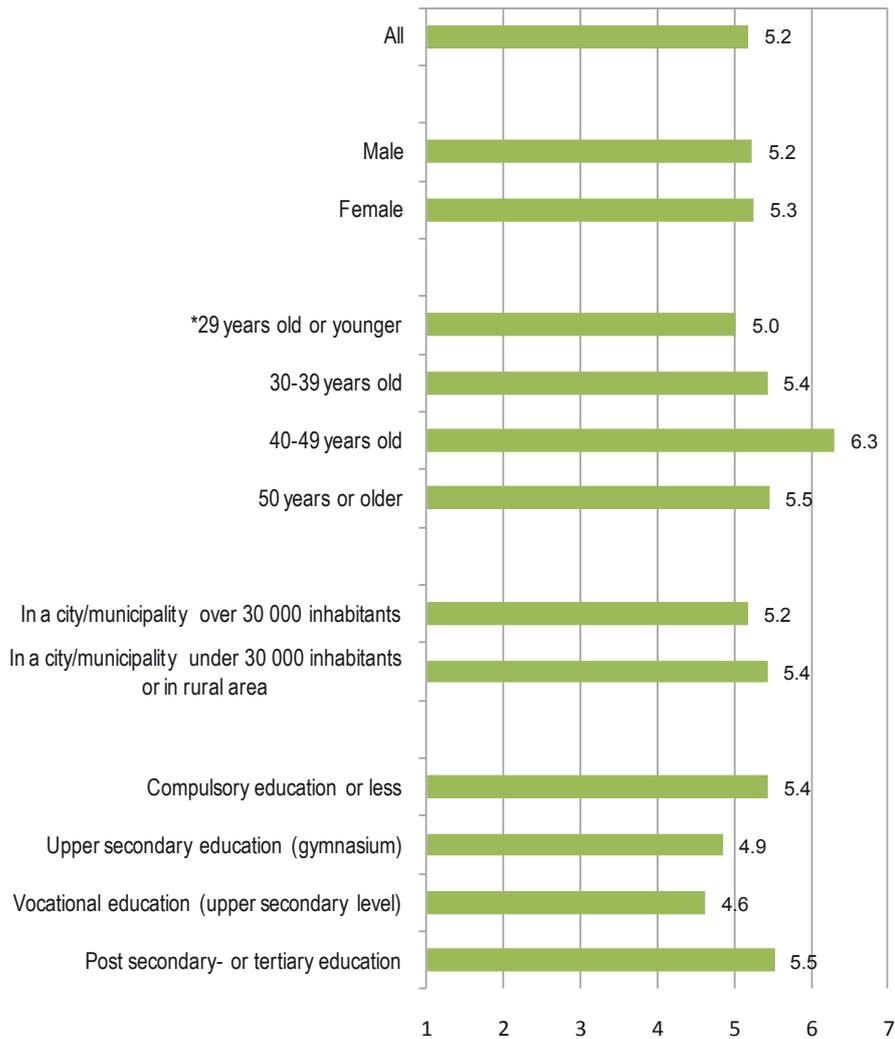


FIGURE 4.1

Satisfaction with guidance on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

### 4.3. Involvement in the guidance process – information gathering (level 1)

When asked to rate different statements concerning how actively involved they were in their guidance (see table, 4.6), most of the users felt that they had been overall active (73%), active in making plans and setting goals (70%), in gathering information about work or educational opportunities (64%) and in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions (62%). A similar proportion felt that they had discussed

their strengths and weaknesses (61%) whereas somewhat fewer agreed that they had, during guidance sessions, discussed how they could learn more about themselves (39%). These responses are in accordance with table 4.4 and 4.5 and with figure 4.1 and supported by the focus group interview results.

Respondents rated their perceived involvement in the guidance process on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very passive and 7 very active. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly passive nor active. Figure 4.2 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the us-

TABLE 4.6

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about your participation in the guidance?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Does not apply	Number	Agree or strongly agree
In general, I participated very actively in the guidance process	1%	4%	19%	48%	25%	3%	129	73
I was active in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	1%	3%	30%	40%	23%	2%	124	64
I was active in making plans and setting goals	2%	6%	19%	43%	27%	3%	125	70
I was active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions	1%	5%	28%	38%	25%	4%	125	62
During the guidance sessions I discussed my strengths and weaknesses	5%	5%	21%	34%	27%	9%	128	61
During the guidance sessions we discussed how I can learn more about my self	6%	15%	31%	24%	15%	9%	123	39

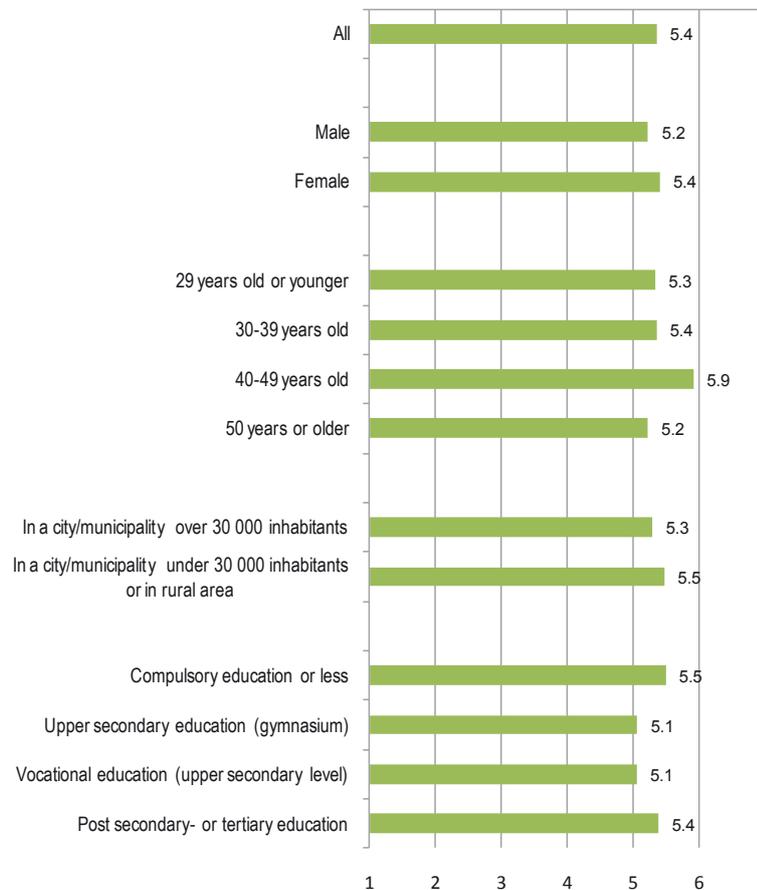


FIGURE 4.2

Perceived involvement in guidance process on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means that the respondent was very passive and 7 very active. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

ers felt that they participated rather actively in their guidance process and rated their participation on average as 5.4 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age or residence, but women perceived themselves as being a little more active participants (5.4) than men did (5.2) and the 40-49 olds rated themselves on average as more actively involved in their guidance (5.9) than the other age groups (5.2, 5.3 and 5.4).

In the focus group interviews practitioners discussed the age and gender differences in the activeness of the clients. They all pointed at the fact

that their clients represent a variety of ages and backgrounds – some of them have no ICT-skills at all for example. The young adults are used to seek information via internet which makes it easy to involve them in information seeking and to give them tasks in that field, which they cannot give some of the mature adults. Another difference pointed out is a gender difference: women's willingness to discuss their situation in groups and in general they judge individual or group guidance as helpful, whereas men are more reluctant or sceptical unless guidance is more information based and concretely related to employment.

#### 4.4. Evaluation of guidance – sharing of information (level 2)

Approximately half of respondents had not had a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the service they were provided with: 49% (see table 4.7). One of every four had been asked to rate the service in a paper/pencil questionnaire (25%), and 28% had given verbal feedback to the counsellor, whereas phone or online surveys were rare (3-12%).

According to the guidance counsellors and managers that took part

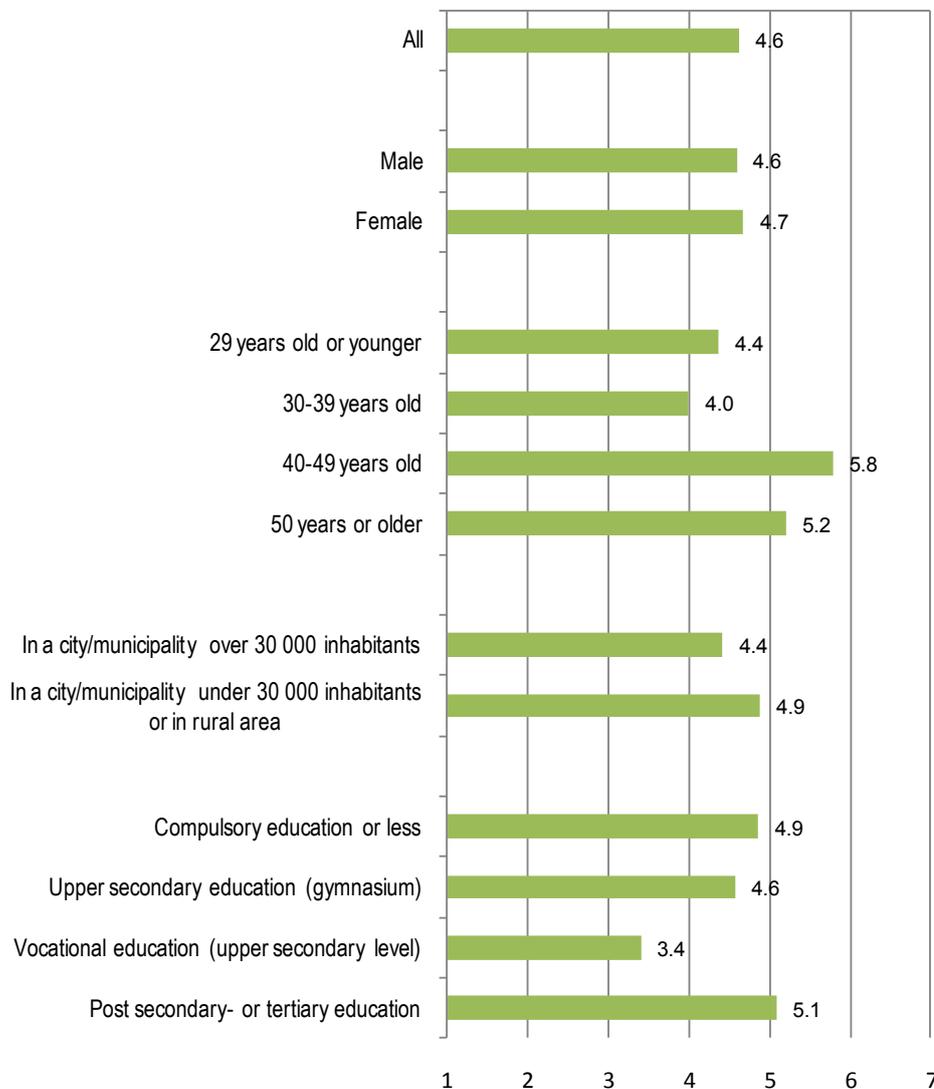


FIGURE 4.3

Do you think that your feedback on guidance is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

in the focus group study, clients usually do not have a chance to evaluate the guidance service formally. In some day folk high schools evaluation participants fill out a written evaluation report at the end of the course and meetings are held where participants get to state their opinion on the course and other services provided, including guidance, but guidance is not evaluated separately.

Those users who had been offered a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the service were asked whether they thought it would be likely that their feedback would result in improvements in the guidance service (see figure 4.3). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unlikely and 7 very likely. As the figure shows, the users on average felt that it was somewhat likely that their feedback would have a positive impact

on service improvements (mean=4.6). There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, residence or education, but 40-49 year olds were more positive towards the possible impact of their feedback (5.8) than the younger ones were (4.4 and 4.0).

When asked about the importance of having the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on received guidance (table 4.8) two out of three consider it important. In the focus group study it was mainly considered important to give oral feedback on the face-to-face guidance, whereas table 5.8 shows a high interest in giving feedback also on organisation, access and delivery.

TABLE 4.7

Did you have a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance you received by using any of the following?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Paper/pencil questionnaire	30	25%	+/-4%	25%
Phone survey	4	3%	+/-2%	3%
Online survey	14	12%	+/-3%	12%
Verbally or by e-mail to the counsellor	34	28%	+/-4%	28%
Verbally or by e-mail to the supervisor(s) of the service	13	11%	+/-3%	11%
Other	3	3%	+/-1%	3%
<i>I did not have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance</i>	59	49%	+/-5%	49%
Total		130%		

TABLE 4.8

Do you think that it is important or unimportant that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on the following?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The guidance process	2%	6%	26%	43%	23%	123	66
The organization of guidance work	3%	3%	29%	41%	25%	120	66
Access to guidance	3%	2%	29%	41%	26%	121	67
The way guidance is delivered	3%	2%	30%	40%	26%	119	66

## 4.5. Evaluation of guidance – forums of debate (level 3)

Most of the respondents had not been involved at the level 3 of user involvement – forums of debate (see table 4.9). Around 73% of respondents had not participated in meetings or discussion groups about the guidance services. However, 6-15% answered that they had been consulted on the

operation of service, identification of gaps in services, as well as on setting priorities in service and accessing unmet needs.

Respondents were further asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users were consulted. The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. As the figure 4.4 shows,

the users on average felt that it was considerably important that users were consulted, and rated the importance on average as 5.4 out of 7. Persons with upper secondary education (gymnasium) as highest educational level found it more important than other educational groups (6.1 versus 5.2-5.4), and women were a little more positive towards the importance of consulting users (5.5) than men were (5.2), but there were no statisti-

TABLE 4.9

Have you as a user of guidance been consulted (participated in meetings or discussion groups) on the following concerning guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	16	15%	+/-3%	15%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	8	7%	+/-2%	7%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	14	13%	+/-3%	13%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	7	6%	+/-2%	6%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	8	7%	+/-2%	7%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	6	6%	+/-2%	6%
Other	3	3%	+/-1%	3%
No, I have not participated in meetings or discussion groups about guidance services	80	73%	+/-4%	73%
Total		129%		

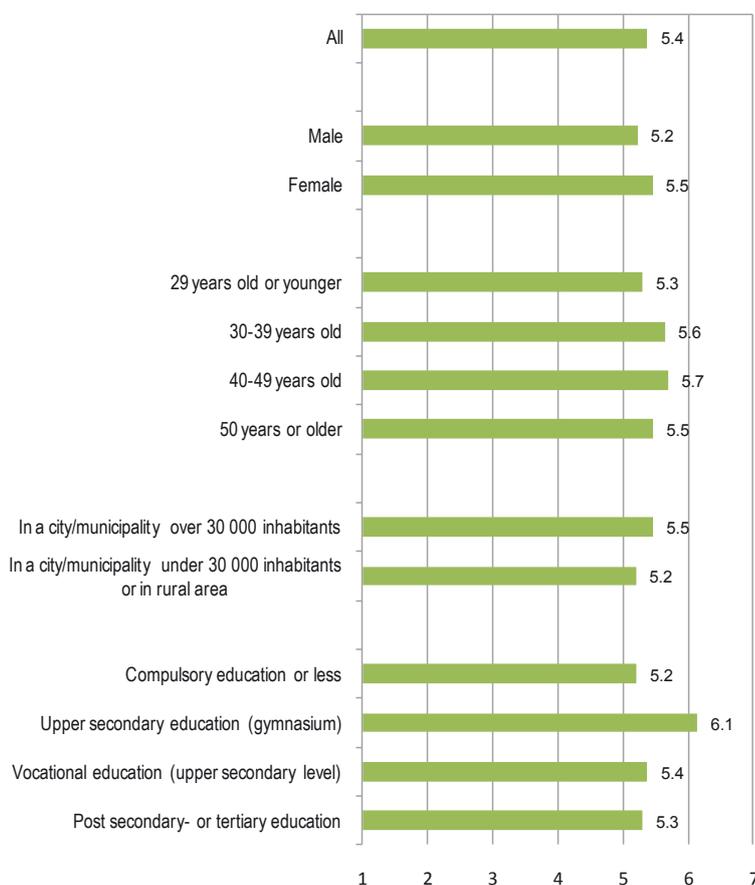


FIGURE 4.4

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

cally significant differences in the average ratings among different age groups or in respect to residence or educational level.

Clients, guidance counsellors and managers that took part in the focus group study, all saw potential in future involvement of users. The clients felt that their participation in focus groups would contribute with experience of clients' needs and outcome. The guidance counsellors also saw focus groups as a method to get users of guidance more involved in the development of guidance services as well as a way to evaluate existing service. All

three groups considered the idea of user involvement ideal and something worth developing further, but they also expressed concern about which clients would have resources and confidence to do it – depending on the approach and level of involvement.

## 4.6. Evaluation of guidance – participation (level 4)

Most of the respondents had not been involved at the level 4 of user involvement – participation. Table 4.10 shows that 75 % of respondents had not participated

TABLE 4.10

Have you as a user of guidance participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance? Participation in designing of strategies refers to deciding how guidance should be operated and the amount of guidance each should get.

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	15	14%	+/-3%	14%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	10	9%	+/-3%	9%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	9	9%	+/-3%	9%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	7	7%	+/-2%	7%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	10	9%	+/-3%	9%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	3	3%	+/-2%	3%
Other	0	0%	+/-0%	0%
No, I have not participated in decision making and designing of strategies about guidance services	79	75%	+/-4%	75%
Total		126%		

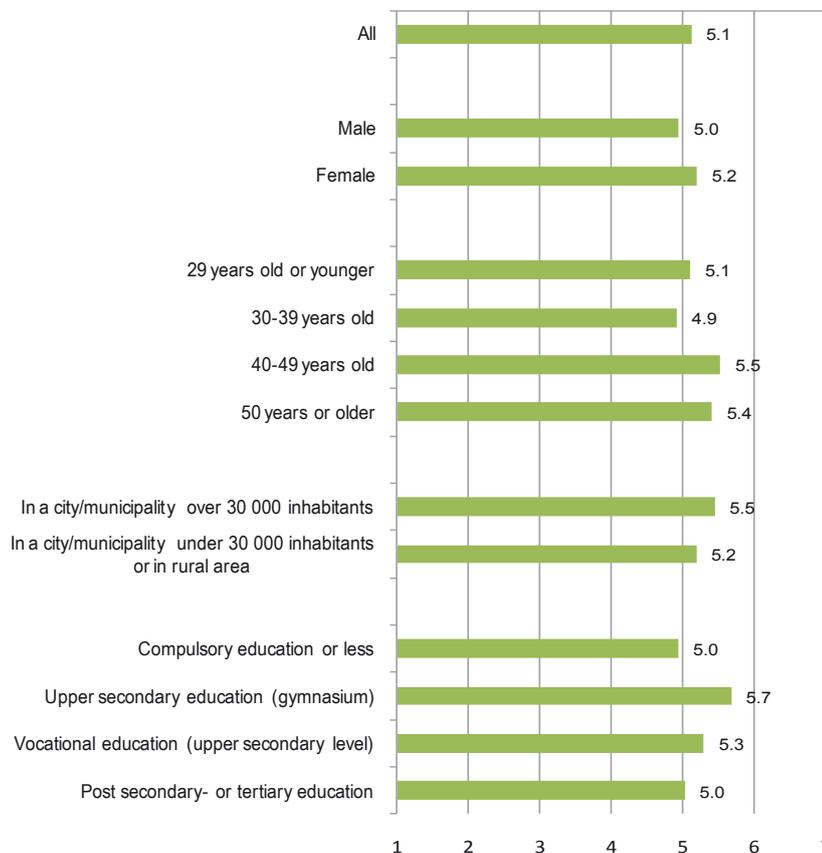
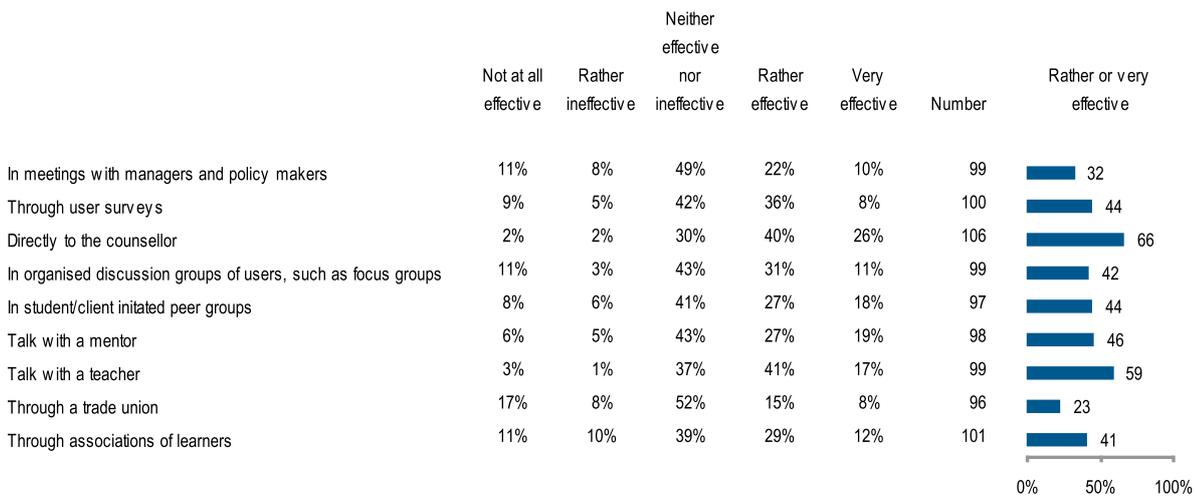


FIGURE 4.5

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level.

TABLE 4.11

What would be an effective way for you as a user of guidance to have your voice heard on the delivery of guidance?



in decision making and designing of strategies. 9-14 % indicates that they have participated in some form of decision making and designing strategies. This could be due to an understanding of participation in giving feedback and not in actual decision making concerning services.

Respondents were further asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users participated in decision making and designing of guidance services (see figure 4.5). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important.

The users on average felt that it was somewhat important that users were participated in the designing of services, and rated the importance on average as 5.1 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings of men and women and among different age or educational groups, nor concerning residence, but persons with upper secondary education (gymnasium) as highest educational level found it more important than other educational groups (5.7 versus 5.2-5.4).

Respondents were asked what would be an effective way for them as users

of guidance to have their voice heard on different aspects of the delivery of guidance (see table 4.11). Two out of three of the respondents felt that it would be effective to contact the guidance counsellor or teacher directly (66 and 59%). A smaller proportion – a little less than half the respondents – believed that talk with a mentor, user surveys, organized discussion groups of users, learner associations, as well as student initiated peer groups would be effective in having the voices of users heard (42-46%). And a few believed in talks with managers and policy makers or trade unions (32 and 23%).





# RESULTS IN FINLAND

## 5.1. Participation in guidance – modes of delivery

Table 5.1 shows that about three out of every five (62%) respondents in Finland had participated in a face-to-face interview with a guidance counsellor and as many as half of the respondents had used web-based guidance, such as through websites, e-mail or chat-rooms (48%). About two out of five (42%) had participated in guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities or guidance from a teacher (39%). About one out of four had experienced guidance in group-sessions with a counsellor (22%) as well as a telephone interview with a guidance counsellor (19%) or guidance from a project- or program leader (18%).

A relatively high percentage of those who had experienced guidance with a teacher or guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities can be explained by the fact that guidance and teaching are closely intertwined in Finland. As one of the practitioners in a focus group discussion said:

“In my experience, it is an indistinct line, in daily life, what guidance is, what teaching is. That [guidance] is what every teacher does on the side, in corridor discussions and so on and naturally during the lessons as well.”

Finnish adult students are also obliged to make personal study plans together with a teacher or a counsellor resulting face-to-face discussions during the studies. Therefore, the respondents might have understood the statements “face-to-face individual interview with a counsellor” and “guidance with a teacher” as the same thing.

The amount of the respondents who had used web-based guidance was considerably higher in Finland than in other Nordic countries. The reason for this might be that the Finns are accustomed to use the web-based services when it comes to education, as the following

TABLE 5.1

What kind of educational and vocational guidance did you participate in?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	Percentage
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	120	62%	62%
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	36	19%	19%
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	42	22%	22%
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	93	48%	48%
Guidance from a teacher	75	39%	39%
Guidance from a project-/program leader	34	18%	18%
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	81	42%	42%
Other	9	5%	5%
Total		253%	

TABLE 5.2

How many sessions did you have?

	1 session	2 sessions	3-4 sessions	5 sessions or more	Number	Three sessions or more
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	34%	32%	22%	13%	119	34
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	44%	21%	24%	12%	34	35
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	19%	19%	37%	26%	43	63
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	26%	29%	29%	17%	90	46
Guidance from a teacher	26%	25%	37%	12%	73	49
Guidance from a project-/program leader	22%	23%	26%	29%	77	55

0% 50% 100%

TABLE 5.3

Where did you learn about the educational and vocational guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	Percentage
Through acquaintances (such as from friends or family members)	17	10%	10%
At work	23	13%	13%
Through advertisement or discussions in the media	12	7%	7%
As part of an educational program / at school	106	60%	60%
Through a union	0	0%	0%
Through the directorate of labor (unemployment office)	52	30%	30%
Other	16	9%	9%
Total		128%	

facts illustrate: First, many educational institutions offer web-based learning environments and activities. Second, there has been a national portal of learning opportunities in use since 2002 in Finland. Third, the web-based national joint application system has been used by the Finnish universities since 2009.

Most of the respondents had only had one or two sessions of the type of guidance they had experienced, except that more than three out of five (63%) of those who had participated in group-sessions and more than half (55%) of those who had had guidance from a project- or program leader had participated in three or more sessions (see table 5.2). The highest amount of participants who had used only one or two sessions were among those who had experienced face-to-face individual interview (66%) or telephone interview (63%) with a guidance counsellor. Two out of five (44%) of those participants who had experienced telephone interview had only had one session.

Most of the users (60%) learned about the guidance services at school or as a part of some educational program (see table 5.3). A third (30%) of the respondents heard about the guidance services through the unemployment office. Some also learned about the services at work (13%), through acquaintances (10%) or through advertisements or discussion in the media (7%).

## 5.2. Outcomes of guidance and perceived role of counsellor

Respondents were presented with 14 different state-

ments about possible outcome of educational and vocational guidance. On the basis of a factor analysis procedure, three factors were constructed from these 14 statements, one measuring educational outcome, another vocational outcome and the third personal outcome (see table 5.4). The mean rating of respondents towards the educational outcome of their guidance was the most positive of the three factors. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 indicates less educational outcome and 5 more educational outcome, the average rating for educational outcome was 3.45, whereas it was considerably lower on the factor measuring vocational outcome (2.93) and somewhat lower on the factor measuring personal outcome (3.30). This indicates that the respondents in Finland feel that the outcome of guidance is particularly of an educational and personal nature, but to a lesser extent focused directly on vocational matters. The fact the educational and personal outcomes of guidance are prevalent is not surprising because the survey was primarily targeted to adult students of educational institutions.

As the results in table 5.4 shows, responses towards different statements vary. Approximately three out of every five (57-63%) of the respondents agreed with the statements that guidance had encouraged them to continue their studies, it had taught them something about their abilities and interests, and enhanced their self-confidence. On the other hand, only 18 to 20 percent of the users felt that guidance had helped them with job search or that it had helped them make choices concerning jobs.

Those who participated in the face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor were asked to rate

TABLE 5.4

Mean ratings on scales of educational-, vocational- and personal outcomes and responses to their respective statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
<b>EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.45 (+/-0.14)</b>							
Guidance encouraged me to continue my studies	5 %	10 %	23 %	46 %	17 %	156	63
Guidance helped me make choices concerning my education	7 %	10 %	38 %	40 %	6 %	154	45
<b>VOCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 2.93 (+/-0.13)</b>							
Guidance helped me make other life choices	7 %	17 %	39 %	32 %	5 %	155	37
Guidance resulted in new educational or job contacts	9 %	16 %	28 %	42 %	6 %	153	48
Guidance helped me with my job search	19 %	21 %	41 %	13 %	7 %	150	20
Guidance helped me make choices concerning jobs	19 %	18 %	45 %	13 %	5 %	152	18
<b>PERSONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.30 (+/-0.12)</b>							
Guidance enhanced my self-confidence	5 %	14 %	25 %	46 %	11 %	154	57
I learned new ways of learning as a result of guidance	11 %	15 %	32 %	36 %	6 %	146	42
I learned to make career plans as a result of guidance	7 %	14 %	44 %	32 %	4 %	146	36
I learned something about my abilities as a result of guidance	6 %	8 %	24 %	53 %	9 %	146	62
I learned something about my interests as a result of guidance	5 %	11 %	24 %	52 %	8 %	147	60
I acquired skills in searching for job or educational opportunities as a result of guidance	8 %	19 %	37 %	30 %	6 %	145	36
I acquired skills to further develop my career	8 %	18 %	39 %	28 %	7 %	143	35
I acquired decision making skills as a result of guidance	7 %	10 %	39 %	37 %	7 %	148	44

TABLE 5.5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about the guidance counsellor that worked with you?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The counsellor emphasized my active involvement in the different phases of the process	5%	6%	46%	34%	8%	111	42
The counsellor stressed my active participation in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	3%	12%	40%	36%	10%	112	46
The counsellor helped me set goals	5%	9%	28%	46%	13%	112	58
The counsellor helped me work on enhancing my self-confidence	9%	17%	32%	32%	10%	111	41
The counsellor gave me the opportunity to discuss my strengths and weaknesses	4%	7%	31%	44%	13%	113	58
The counsellor was supportive and understanding	3%	5%	26%	41%	26%	117	67
The counsellor encouraged me	6%	6%	27%	40%	21%	115	61

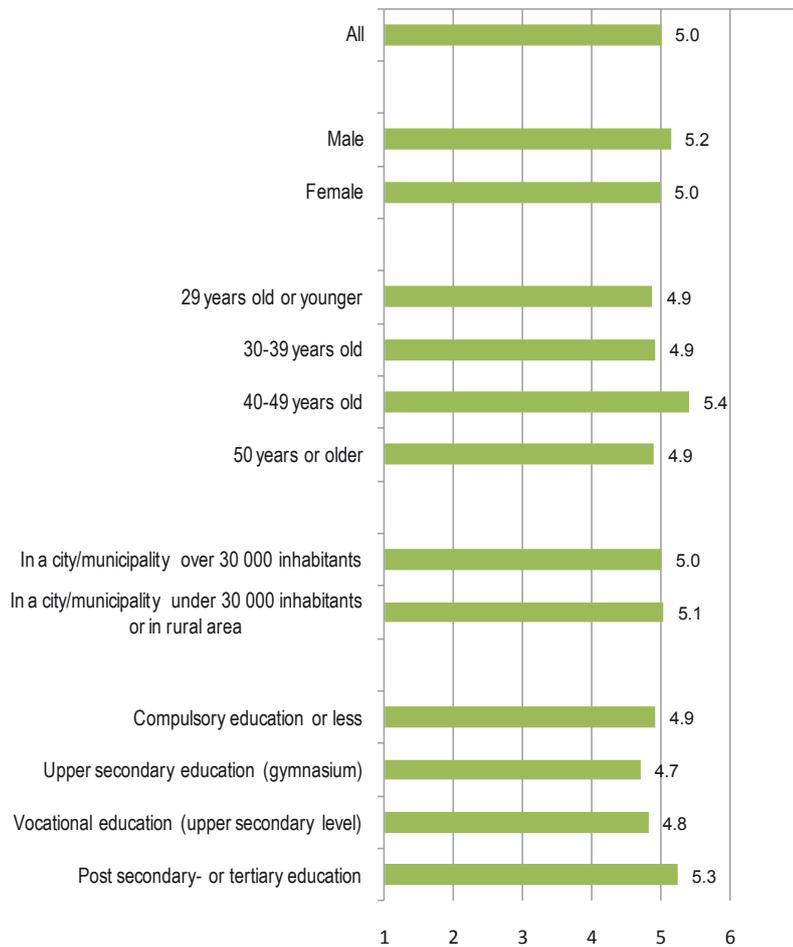


FIGURE 5.1

Satisfaction with guidance on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

the counsellor according to different statements. As table 5.5 shows most of the respondents in Finland rated their counsellor positively. About three out of five (56-62%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their counsellor had stressed their active involvement and participation in the guidance

process and in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities, had helped them set goals and enhanced their self-confidence, as well as had given them the chance to discuss their strengths and weaknesses. An even higher proportion, 68%, felt that the counsellor had been encouraging as well as

supportive and understanding. Only 7% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements about the supportiveness and understanding of the counsellor, whereas with other statements there were 9-17% of those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

TABLE 5.6

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about your participation in the guidance?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Does not apply	Number	Agree or strongly agree
In general, I participated very actively in the guidance process	0%	4%	16%	45%	32%	4%	140	77
I was active in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	1%	11%	19%	42%	23%	4%	139	65
I was active in making plans and setting goals	1%	4%	20%	48%	25%	4%	139	72
I was active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions	1%	15%	35%	30%	12%	7%	139	42
During the guidance sessions I discussed my strengths and weaknesses	1%	5%	15%	49%	28%	5%	140	74
During the guidance sessions we discussed how I can learn more about myself	1%	11%	31%	37%	14%	6%	140	51

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the guidance on a seven point scale where 1 meant very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly satisfied nor dissatisfied. Figure 5.1 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users were rather satisfied with their guidance experience and rated their satisfaction on average 5.0 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, gender, residence nor educational level.

In light of the focus group discussions it is important to note that the users of guidance in adult education seem to think about their study experiences as a whole instead of just guidance experiences. Therefore, as guidance in educational institutions is so strongly integrated in teaching in Finland, students might actually be thinking about teachers and classroom experiences when being asked to evaluate counsellors and experiences of guidance.

The adult students that participated in the focus groups reported both positive and negative encounters with counsellors. Some students had experienced strong support and others indifference by the counsellor/teacher, for example, when making personal study plans. The students were well aware of their contradicting experiences and thought that the quality and the contents of guidance varied too much depending on the person the students discussed with.

It must be noted, however, that the focus group participants were all studying in labour market training programmes and therefore represented a specific group of clients. The respondents of the survey, for their part, consisted of adult students from various institutions and programmes and also of clients of the vocational guidance and career planning services at the employment office.

### 5.3. Involvement in the guidance process – information gathering (level 1)

When asked to rate different statements concerning how actively involved they were in their guidance process (see table 5.6), most of the users felt that they had been overall active (77%). Many had discussed their strengths and weaknesses during sessions (74%) and felt that they had been active in setting their goals (72%) and gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities (65%). As many as 51% of the respondents had discussed how they could learn more about themselves. Considerably fewer felt that they had been active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions (42%).

Most of the managers and the practitioners in the focus group discussions stressed the importance of a client's activity in the guidance process. The adult students, who participated in the focus groups of clients, shared the view that they had to be very active and independent especially when seeking guidance. In the guidance process, they felt that they had to know beforehand what to ask to be able to get what they needed from guidance. The students also expressed frustration with the teachers and counsellors because they sometimes viewed the adult students as needing less guidance than they actually needed and wanted. As one client pointed out:

“And then they [teachers and counsellors] take it for granted that since you're an adult you have to know certain things because you have experience. It's sometimes a bit annoying.”

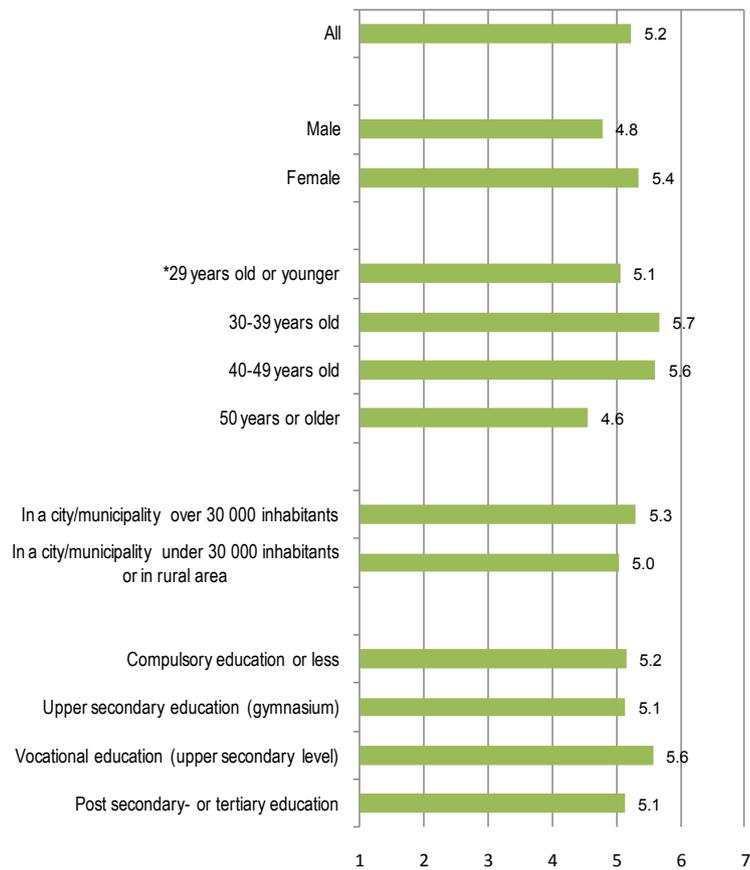


FIGURE 5.2

Perceived involvement in guidance process on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means that the respondent was very passive and 7 very active. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

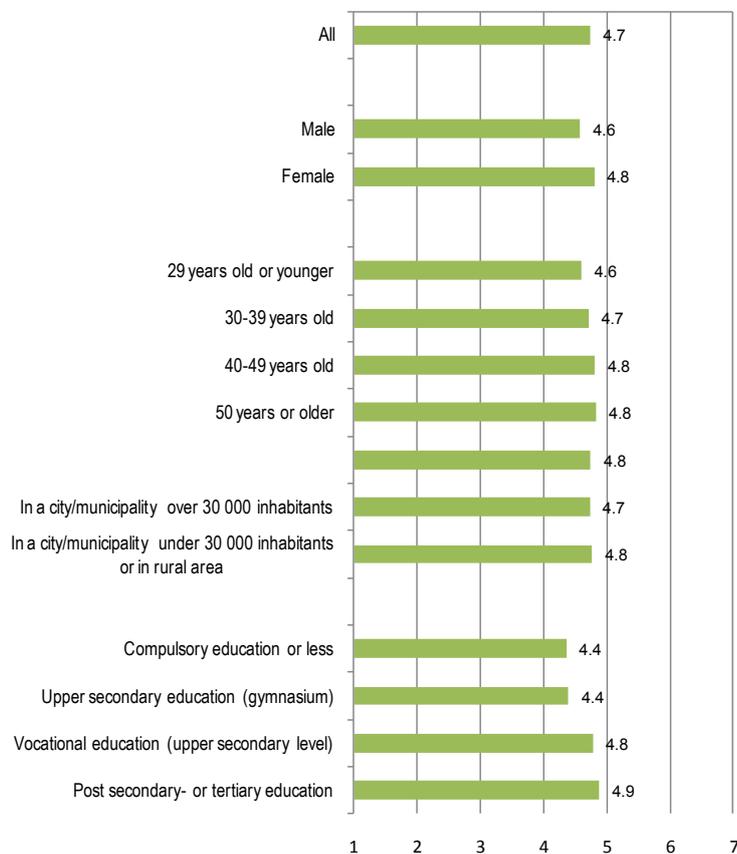


FIGURE 5.3

Do you think that your feedback on guidance is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

TABLE 5.7

Did you have a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance you received by using any of the following?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	Percentage
Paper/pencil questionnaire	25	18%	18%
Phone survey	3	2%	2%
Online survey	39	28%	28%
Verbally or by e-mail to the counsellor	68	49%	49%
Verbally or by e-mail to the supervisor(s) of the service	5	4%	4%
Other	6	4%	4%
<i>I did not have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance</i>	48	35%	35%
Total		141%	

In some cases the teachers had not taken into account the fact, that some of the mature students had a long break between their previous experiences in education before entering their current programmes.

Respondents rated their perceived involvement in the guidance process on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very passive and 7 very active. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly passive nor active. Figure 5.2 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users felt that they participated rather actively in their guidance process and rated their participation on average as 5.2 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age or residence, but women perceived themselves as being more active participants (5.4) than men did (4.8) and those who had finished vocational education (upper secondary level) rated themselves on average as more actively involved in their guidance (5.6) than those who had other levels of education (5.1-5.2). There were differences between age groups as well, both the oldest (4.6) and the youngest (5.1) age groups felt that they were less active than other age groups (5.6-5.7).

#### 5.4. Evaluation of guidance – sharing of information (level 2)

Approximately half (49%) of the respondents had been asked to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance they had participated in verbally or by e-mail to the counsellor (see table 5.7). One-third (28%) had been given the chance to rate the service by online survey and one out of five (18%) had been asked to fill in a paper/pencil

questionnaire. Phone surveys and feedback or evaluation given verbally or by e-mail to the supervisor(s) of the service were rare (3-5%). More than one-third (35%) of the respondents had not had a chance to evaluate or give feedback at all.

According to the managers, practitioners and clients in the focus group discussions, clients usually have a chance to evaluate the guidance service formally. The evaluation is carried out e.g. through web-based questionnaires or paper-and-pencil surveys by the education providers or the labour administration. The clients and practitioners reported that the clients also had the opportunity to give feedback informally and directly to the counsellor/teacher. The focus group discussions, therefore, are not in line with the relatively high percentage of the respondents who did not have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance.

Those users who had been offered a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the service were asked if they thought it would be likely that their feedback would result in improvements in the guidance service (see figure 5.3). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unlikely and 7 very likely. As the figure shows, the users on average felt that it was somewhat likely that their feedback would have a positive impact on service improvements (mean=4.7). There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, residence or education, but those who had post-secondary or tertiary education (4.9) or vocational education (4.8) were more positive towards the possible impact of their feedback than those of lower level of education (4.4).

Overall, users of guidance seem to hold the opinion that it is important for them to have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on services. As table 5.8 shows, as much as 82-85% of respondents feel that it is important the users have the chance to evaluate the guidance process, access to guidance and the way guidance is delivered. Most of the respondents (72%) also think it is important or very important that they have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the organisation of guidance work.

The focus group discussions support the survey results by stressing the importance of inviting the clients to evaluate or to give feedback on guid-

ance services. The adult students who took part in the focus groups, however, were rather sceptic about the impact of their participation, especially if the feedback was gathered through surveys. The students were more confident of making a difference when the feedback was given directly to a counsellor/teacher:

"When you give feedback to a teacher, you see that it works. If you give it [feedback] to a big system, you don't know where it goes."

"You don't know where it [feedback] goes, when the

results will be seen and to whom it goes, if it has an effect on anyone at all."

The practitioners stated that it usually takes too much time to react to feedback and change the service.

### 5.5. Evaluation of guidance – forums of debate (level 3)

Majority of the respondents had not been involved at the level 3 of user involvement – forums of debate (see table 5.9). Approximately 84% of respondents had not participated in meetings or discussion groups about

TABLE 5.8

Do you think that it is important or unimportant that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on the following?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The guidance process	1%	1%	14%	49%	35%	136	85
The organization of guidance work	0%	3%	25%	46%	27%	136	72
Access to guidance	1%	1%	17%	49%	32%	136	82
The way guidance is delivered	1%	0%	14%	50%	35%	136	85

TABLE 5.9

Have you as a user of guidance been consulted (participated in meetings or discussion groups) on the following concerning guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	11	8%	8%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	8	6%	6%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	10	8%	8%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	6	5%	5%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	9	7%	7%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	6	5%	5%
Other	2	2%	2%
No, I have not participated in meetings or discussion groups about guidance services	112	84%	84%
Total		122%	

the guidance services. However, 6-8% said that they had been consulted on the improvement of service, identification of gaps and setting priorities in services, as well as on accessing unmet needs.

Respondents were further asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users were consulted. The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. As the figure 5.4 shows, the users on average felt that it was considerably important that users were consulted, and rated the importance on average as 5.7 out of 7. Those with compulsory education or less were less positive towards the importance of consulting (5.1) than those with higher education (5.5-5.9). Of all age groups, the 40-49 year olds were the most convinced of the importance of consulting (6.2), especially compared to the youngest respondents, 29 years or less, (5.4). Women were also more positive towards the importance of user consulting (5.8) than men were (5.3). However, there were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings among different age groups or in respect to resi-

dence or educational level.

Managers and practitioners that took part in the focus group discussions saw that client involvement would have positive impact on service development. Together with clients they shared the view that the future involvement could and in most cases should be more than giving feedback. The managers reflected on their own experiences of forums, trainings and project meetings where clients of guidance had been in the focus but not present. They concluded that the activities of the organisation they represented were too often organisation-centred.

Both managers and practitioners thought that consulting users of guidance would help, e.g. in allocating resources of guidance more efficiently. Practitioners also pointed out that client participation and therefore learning of their needs more precisely might emphasize the importance of guidance and make the issue more visible also to decision makers. They also thought that involving clients would develop guidance services towards

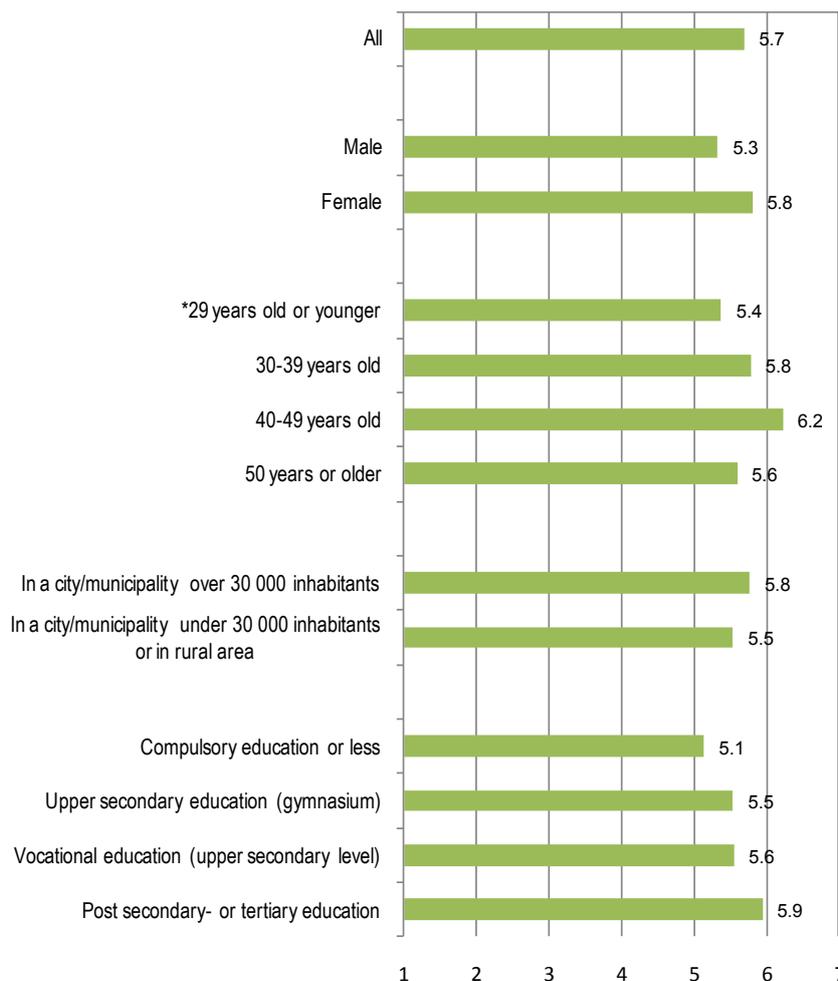


FIGURE 5.4

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

TABLE 5.10

Have you as a user of guidance participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance?  
Participation in designing of strategies refers to deciding how guidance should be operated and the amount of guidance each should get.

	Number	Percentage of respondents	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	11	8%	8%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	7	5%	5%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	5	4%	4%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	4	3%	3%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	6	4%	4%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	8	6%	6%
Other	1	1%	1%
No, I have not participated in decision making and designing of strategies about guidance services	115	85%	85%
Total		116%	

TABLE 5.11

What would be an effective way for you as a user of guidance to have your voice heard on the delivery of guidance?

	Neither effective					Number	Rather or very effective
	Not at all effective	Rather ineffective	nor ineffective	Rather effective	Very effective		
In meetings with managers and policy makers	8%	17%	32%	33%	10%	133	43
Through user surveys	3%	9%	15%	57%	16%	133	73
Directly to the counsellor	2%	3%	10%	57%	29%	133	86
In organised discussion groups of users, such as focus groups	3%	9%	41%	39%	8%	129	47
In student/client initiated peer groups	4%	10%	44%	37%	5%	131	43
Talk with a mentor	2%	5%	17%	61%	15%	132	76
Talk with a teacher	2%	5%	15%	61%	17%	132	78
Through a trade union	3%	22%	39%	26%	11%	133	36
Through associations of learners	3%	19%	39%	30%	9%	132	39

more proactive role instead of concentrating on solving problems.

### 5.6. Evaluation of guidance – participation (level 4)

Most of the respondents had not been involved at the level 4 of user involvement – participation by far. Table 5.10 shows that 85% of respondents had not participated in

decision making and designing of strategies. However, 6-8% had had a chance to participate in designing strategies and in decision making on the improvement of operation of services and on the development of new guidance services.

Respondents were further asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users participated in decision making and designing of guidance services (see figure 5.5). The question

was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. The users on average felt that it was somewhat important that users were participated in the designing of services, and rated the importance on average as 5.3 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings of men and women and among different age- or educational groups, nor among people living in the capital versus the more rural areas.

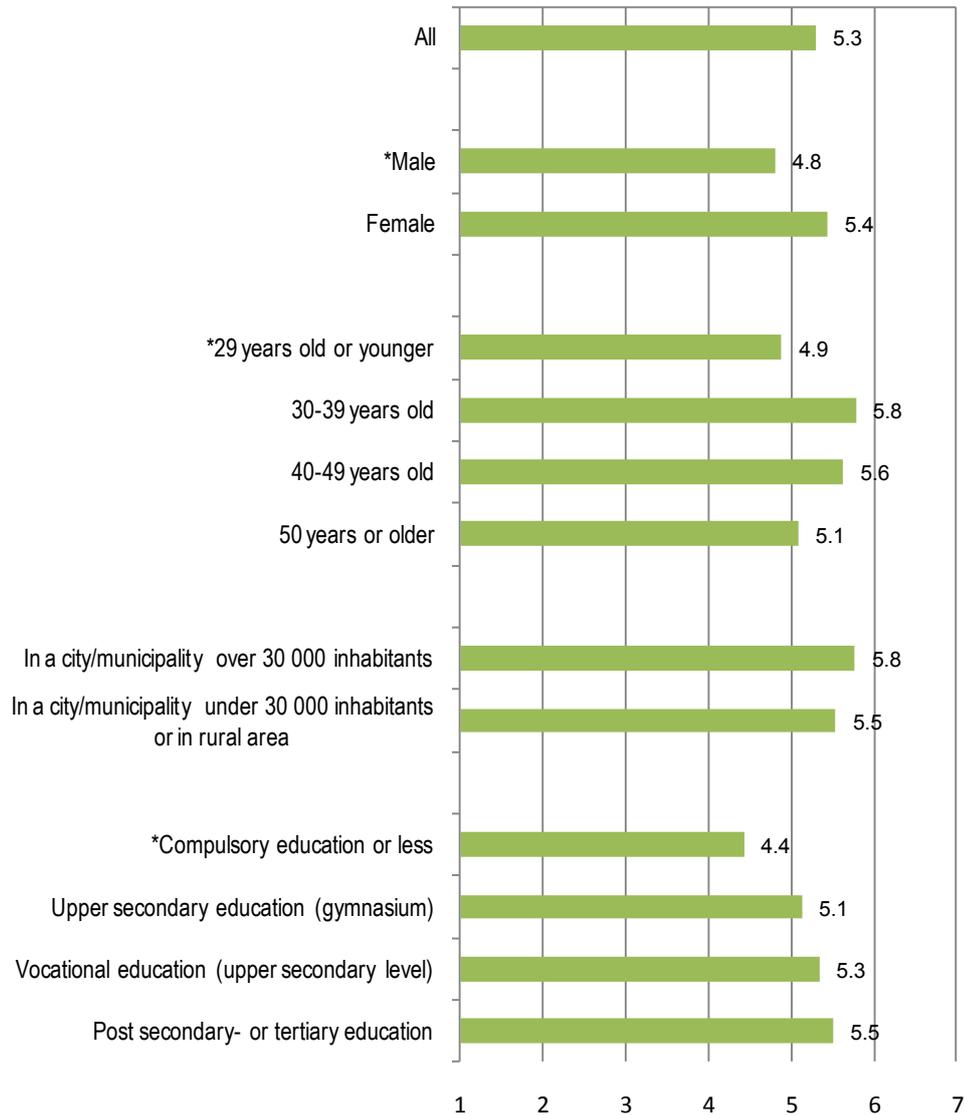


FIGURE 5.5

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

Respondents were asked what would be an effective way for them as users of guidance to have their voice heard on different aspects of the delivery of guidance (see table 5.11). Most of the respondents felt that it would be rather or very effective to contact a counsellor directly (86%) or talk with a teacher or a mentor (76-78%). Only 5-7% thought these contacts would be rather ineffective or not at all effective. A considerable amount of respondents (73%) believed that user surveys were effective in having the voices of users heard, whereas substantially fewer believed that meetings with managers and policy makers, organized discussion groups of users or student initiated peer groups would be effective (43-

47%). Even less (36-39%) thought that trade unions or associations of learners would be effective ways to bring out one's views as a user of guidance services.

The results presented in the table 5.11 are in line with the results of the focus group discussions in the sense that all face-to-face channels for having one's voice heard had been rated rather or very effective by the highest amount of respondents. Contrary to the focus group results, however, user surveys were also regarded effective by a considerable amount of the respondents in the survey.





# RESULTS IN ICELAND

## 6.1. Participation in guidance – modes of delivery

The users of guidance were first asked about what kind of guidance they had participated in and as table 6.1 shows most of them had participated in a face-to-face interviews with a guidance counsellor, or about three of every four of them (76%). About one of every four had experienced guidance as integrated in their lessons and teaching activities or in group-sessions with a counsellor (23-24%), whereas guidance from a teacher or a project- or program leader was less common (13-14%). Only 7% of users had been guided through the internet, such as through websites, e-mail or chat-rooms.

Respondents were also asked about the number of sessions of the type of guidance they had (see table 6.2). Most of the users had only been to one or two sessions of the type of guidance they had experienced. Among those who had experienced a face-to-face session with

a guidance counsellor two of every five had experienced only one session (43%), whereas about one of every three had two sessions (31%) and one of every four had been to three or more sessions (27%). Among those who had experienced guidance in group-sessions, around three of every four (72%) had either had one or two sessions and about two thirds (67%) of those who had experience guidance as integrated in lessons or teaching activities.

The users learned about the guidance services through diverse channels (see table 6.3). Most of them (30-32%) learned about it either through the unemployment offices or at school or as a part of some educational program. Many of the users also heard about the guidance services through acquaintances or at work (18-19%), or through the media or their trade union.

TABLE 6.1

What kind of educational and vocational guidance did you participate in?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	423	76%	+/-4%	76%
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	52	9%	+/-3%	9%
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	129	23%	+/-4%	23%
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	38	7%	+/-2%	7%
Guidance from a teacher	76	14%	+/-3%	14%
Guidance from a project-/program leader	72	13%	+/-3%	13%
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	134	24%	+/-4%	24%
Other	33	6%	+/-2%	6%
Total		171%		

TABLE 6.2

How many sessions did you have?

	1 session	2 sessions	3-4 sessions	5 sessions or more	Number	Three sessions or more
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	43%	31%	21%	6%	423	27
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	31%	45%	22%	2%	51	24
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	47%	25%	16%	12%	129	28
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	46%	26%	20%	9%	35	29
Guidance from a teacher	40%	22%	17%	21%	76	38
Guidance from a project-/program leader	44%	30%	17%	9%	70	26
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	44%	23%	14%	19%	128	26

TABLE 6.3

Where did you learn about the educational and vocational guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Through acquaintances (such as from friends or family members)	99	18%	+/-4%	18%
At work	105	19%	+/-3%	19%
Through advertisement or discussions in the media	82	15%	+/-4%	15%
As part of an educational program / at school	175	32%	+/-2%	32%
Through a union	83	15%	+/-3%	15%
Through the directorate of labor (unemployment office)	164	30%	+/-3%	30%
Other	41	7%	+/-4%	7%
Total		135%		

## 6.2. Outcomes of guidance and perceived role of counsellor

Respondents were presented with 14 different statements about possible outcome of educational and vocational guidance. On the basis of a factor analysis procedure, three factors were constructed from these 14 statements, one measuring educational outcome, another vocational outcome and the third personal outcome (see table 6.4). The mean rating of respondents towards the educational outcome of their guidance was the most positive of the three factors. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 indicates less educational outcome and 5 more educational outcome, the average rating for educational outcome was 3.73, whereas it was considerably lower on the factor measuring vocational outcome (3.15) and somewhat lower on the factor measuring personal outcome (3.47). This indicates that users of guidance within the lifelong learning centres in Iceland feel that the outcome of guidance is particularly of an educational and personal nature, but to a lesser extent focused directly on vocational matters.

The results in table 6.4 show that responses towards different statements vary. Somewhere between 60 and 68% agreed with the statements that guidance had encouraged them to continue their studies, it had taught them something about their abilities and interests, and enhanced their self-confidence. On the other hand, only around 24-35% felt that guidance had helped them with job search, to make choices concerning jobs, or that it had taught them new ways of learning.

Those who were guided by an educational and vocational counsellor in some way were asked to rate the counsellor according to different statements. As table 6.5 shows most of the respondents rated their counsellor positively. Between 60%-69% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their counsellor had stressed their active involvement and participation in the guidance process, helped them set goals and enhance their self-confidence, as well as give them the chance to discuss their strengths and weaknesses. An even higher proportion, or 79-82%, felt that the counsellor had been encouraging and supportive and understanding. Only 5-9% of respondents disagreed with these statements.

TABLE 6.4

Mean ratings on scales of educational-, vocational- and personal outcomes and responses to their respective statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
<b>EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.73 (+/-0.08)</b>							
Guidance encouraged me to continue my studies	4 %	5 %	23 %	43 %	25 %	502	68
Guidance helped me make choices concerning my education	4 %	7 %	31 %	38 %	20 %	494	58
<b>VOCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.15 (+/-0.08)</b>							
Guidance helped me make other life choices	5 %	12 %	38 %	34 %	11 %	486	45
Guidance resulted in new educational or job contacts	8 %	13 %	40 %	28 %	11 %	476	39
Guidance helped me with my job search	15 %	15 %	46 %	17 %	7 %	469	24
Guidance helped me make choices concerning jobs	11 %	14 %	42 %	25 %	8 %	475	33
<b>PERSONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.47 (+/-0.07)</b>							
Guidance enhanced my self-confidence	6 %	7 %	26 %	44 %	18 %	496	62
I learned new ways of learning as a result of guidance	8 %	16 %	40 %	26 %	9 %	462	35
I learned to make career plans as a result of guidance	7 %	12 %	34 %	36 %	12 %	468	48
I learned something about my abilities as a result of guidance	4 %	8 %	25 %	47 %	16 %	481	63
I learned something about my interests as a result of guidance	4 %	9 %	27 %	44 %	16 %	476	60
I acquired skills in searching for job or educational opportunities as a result of guidance	4 %	9 %	38 %	39 %	9 %	468	49
I acquired skills to further develop my career	4 %	12 %	43 %	34 %	8 %	462	42
I acquired decision making skills as a result of guidance	4 %	10 %	35 %	41 %	10 %	477	51

0% 50% 100%

TABLE 6.5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about the guidance counsellor that worked with you?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The counsellor emphasized my active involvement in the different phases of the process	2%	5%	33%	49%	11%	481	60
The counsellor stressed my active participation in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	2%	5%	26%	53%	14%	474	67
The counsellor helped me set goals	3%	6%	30%	46%	15%	466	61
The counsellor helped me work on enhancing my self-confidence	3%	6%	29%	46%	16%	480	61
The counsellor gave me the opportunity to discuss my strengths and weaknesses	3%	5%	24%	50%	18%	480	69
The counsellor was supportive and understanding	2%	3%	16%	49%	30%	480	79
The counsellor encouraged me	3%	2%	13%	55%	27%	480	82

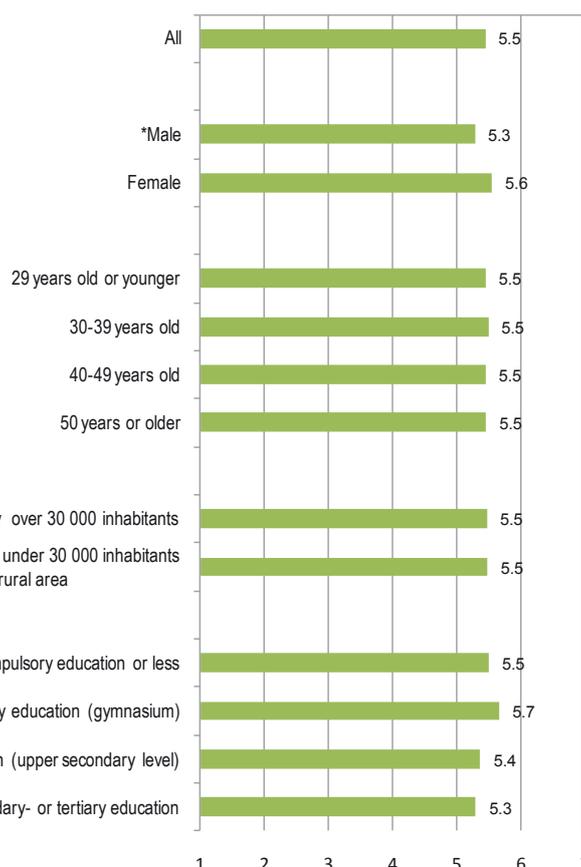


FIGURE 6.1

Satisfaction with guidance on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

The results presented in table 6.5 are very much in line with the results of the focus group study, where users of guidance explained their experience with guidance in terms of “endless support” and encouragement. For many of them, previous negative experiences of schooling had affected their views towards education and themselves as students and as a result of the guidance their views started to change. In this respect one of the clients said that “[he] would not [have been] in this

class and would not be heading for another course but because of the guidance and all that”. Similarly, counsellors in the focus group study spoke about the importance of encouraging the clients, even to a degree that it was the most important part of their job as counsellors.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the guidance on a seven point scale where 1 meant very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The value 4 indicates a neutral

opinion, neither being particularly satisfied nor dissatisfied. Figure 6.1 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users were rather satisfied with their guidance experience and rated their satisfaction on average 5.5 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, residence nor educational level, but women were on average more satisfied (5.6) than men (5.3).

TABLE 6.6

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about your participation in the guidance?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Does not apply	Number	Agree or strongly agree
In general, I participated very actively in the guidance process	1%	2%	15%	50%	31%	1%	481	81
I was active in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	2%	4%	26%	38%	22%	6%	474	61
I was active in making plans and setting goals	2%	6%	34%	36%	18%	4%	475	54
I was active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions	2%	7%	29%	36%	20%	6%	466	55
During the guidance sessions I discussed my strengths and weaknesses	4%	5%	16%	45%	27%	4%	480	72
During the guidance sessions we discussed how I can learn more about myself	6%	12%	30%	31%	15%	7%	468	45

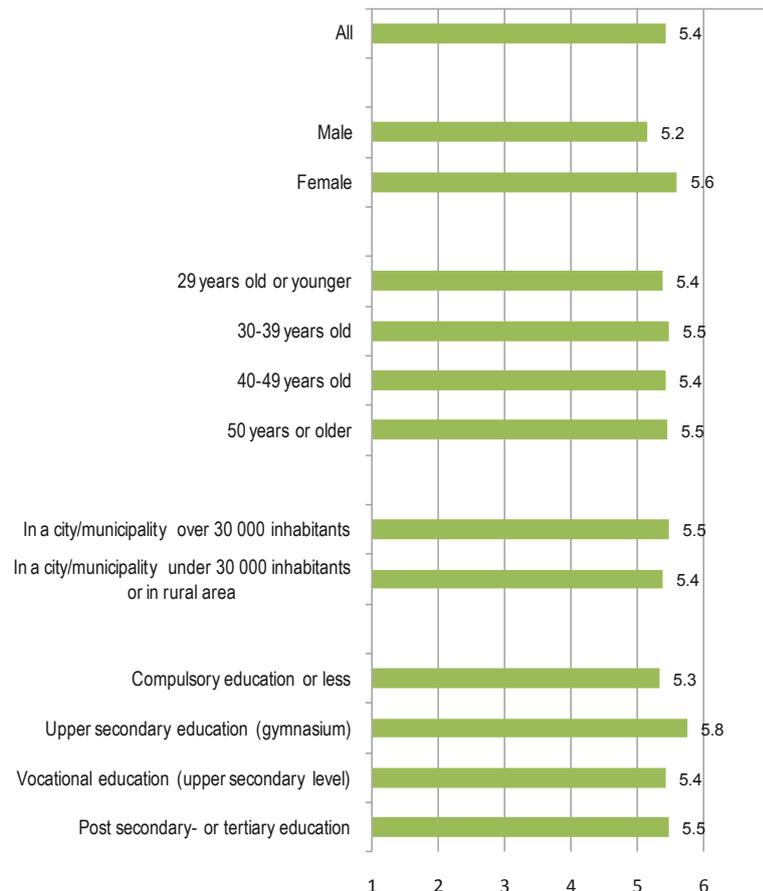


FIGURE 6.2

Perceived involvement in guidance process on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means that the respondent was very passive and 7 very active. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

### 6.3. Involvement in the guidance process – information gathering (level 1)

When asked to rate different statements concerning how actively involved they were in their guidance (see table, 6.6), most of the users felt that they had been overall active (81%) and discussed their strengths and weaknesses during guidance sessions (72%). Somewhat fewer felt that they were active in gathering information about work- or educational opportunities (61%) and a little over half (54-55%) were active in self-exploration and information seeking and in making plans and setting

goals. Less than half (45%) felt that they had discussed how they could learn more about themselves during guidance sessions.

Respondents rated their perceived involvement in the guidance process on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very passive and 7 very active. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly passive nor active. Figure 6.2 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users felt that they participated rather actively in their guidance process and rated their participation on average as 5.5 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age

TABLE 6.7

Did you have a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance you received by using any of the following?

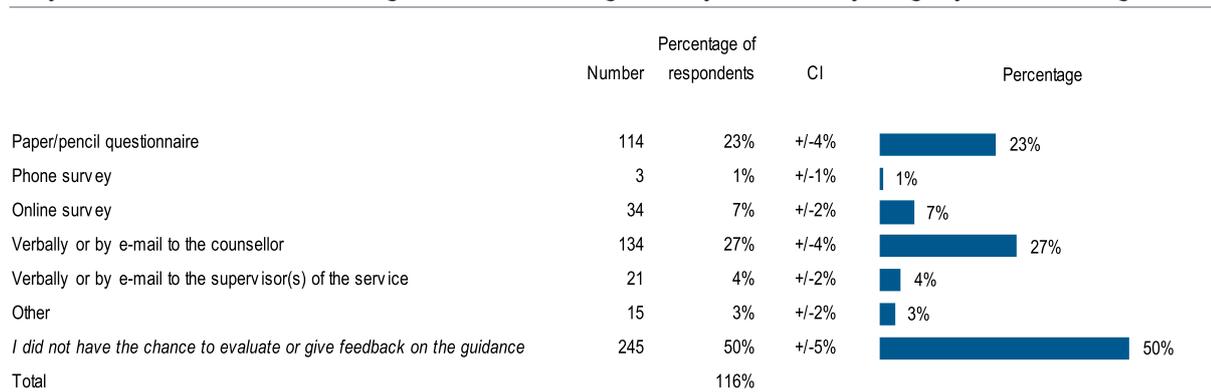
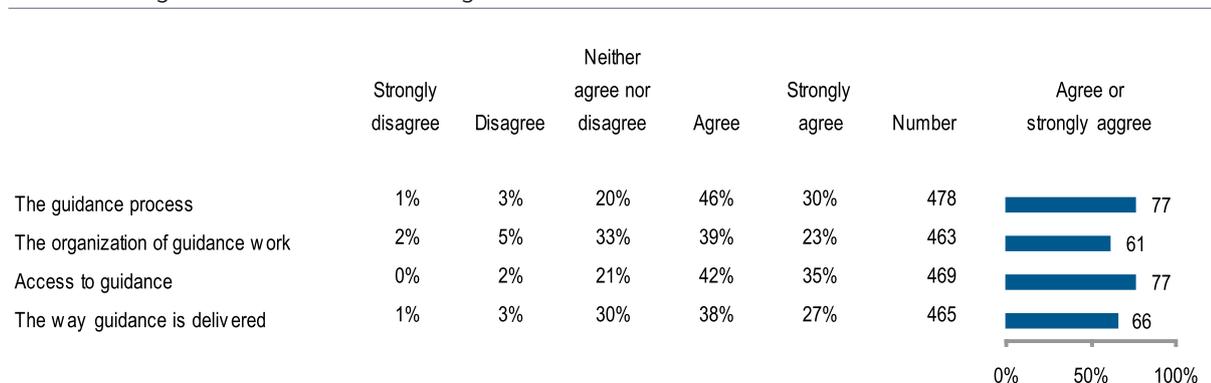


TABLE 6.8

Do you think that it is important or unimportant that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on the following?



or residence, but women perceived themselves as being more active (5.6) than men did (5.2) and those who had finished upper secondary education rated themselves on average as more actively involved in their guidance (5.8) than those who only had compulsory education (5.3).

In the focus group interviews practitioners discussed the gender differences in the activeness of the clients. According to them, it is important to approach men and women differently in order to get them active and motivated in their guidance. As one of the counsellors put it: "... a 45 year old woman and a 45 year old man, the man wants to talk about his job, it is fun there and that is how you get him to talk, you know... to get him to be more active."

As opposed to that, the counsellor

said it could be more effective to ask the 45 year old woman about her family and personal issues.

In the interviews with the counsellors, the problem of computer literacy in adult education was also addressed. According to the counsellors it is a huge issue for some of the clients. In that respect one of the counsellors said:

"That is why it is so understandable what a great challenge this is for people and they need a lot of encouragement. This is a world you do not know, you are afraid of, but all of a sudden it is the main source of information and the place where you are supposed to sign up for things."

A part of the counselling process is therefore to teach people how to

seek information online and how to sign up for courses and jobs online. Sometimes the first course they sign up for is a beginner course in IT. One counsellor added that being active for some of the clients in this situation simply meant "turning on the computer".

### 6.4. Involvement in guidance – sharing of information (level 2)

Approximately half of the respondents had not had a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance service (see table 6.7). Around one of every four had been asked to rate the service in a paper/pencil questionnaire (23%), whereas phone- or online surveys were rare (1-7%). About out one forth had had a chance to give feedback verbally or by e-mail to their counsellors.

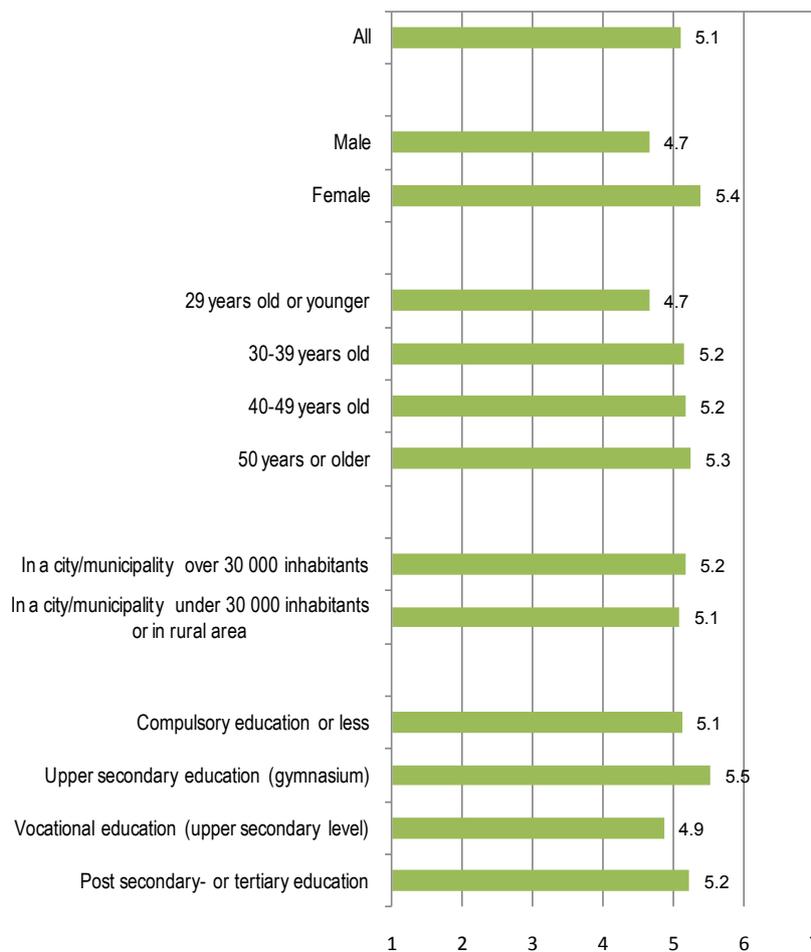


FIGURE 6.3

Do you think that your feedback on guidance is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

According to the counsellors and managers that took part in the focus group study, clients usually do not have a chance to evaluate the guidance service formally. In some educational institutions evaluation meetings are held where students get to state their opinion on the course and other services provided, such as guidance. In the LLL centres guidance counsellors are evaluated in relations to their teaching but not for their guidance work.

Those users who had been offered a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the service were asked if they thought it would be likely that their feedback would result in improvements in the guidance service (see figure 6.3). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unlikely and 7 very likely. As the figure shows, the users on average felt that it was somewhat likely that their feedback would have a positive impact on service improvements (mean=5.1). There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, residence or education, but women were more positive towards the possible impact of their feedback (5.4) than men were (4.7).

Overall, users of guidance seem to hold the opinion that it is important for them to have the opportunity to

evaluate or give feedback on services. As table 6.8 shows, roughly three of every four respondents (77%) feel that it is important the users have the chance to evaluate the guidance process as well as access to guidance.

Some of the counsellors that took part in the focus groups were somewhat sceptic of a formal questionnaire surveys following the guidance. In their opinion, questionnaire surveys would possibly not give helpful feedback as the experiences of clients are very subjective. Instead they mentioned the informal feedback by various means, such as when a client send them positive e-mails or when clients come to them because they were recommended by former clients. Also, the increase in interviews and demand was, according to counsellors, a positive feedback.

The managers of the LLL centres who took part in the focus group study noted that each counsellor at the centres submits annually a qualitative report on their work during the prior year. Also, data is collected on the composition of the client group, such as number of participants, age, gender etc. Furthermore, they emphasised the importance of doing research in this field and mentioned prior research that had been helpful in their work.

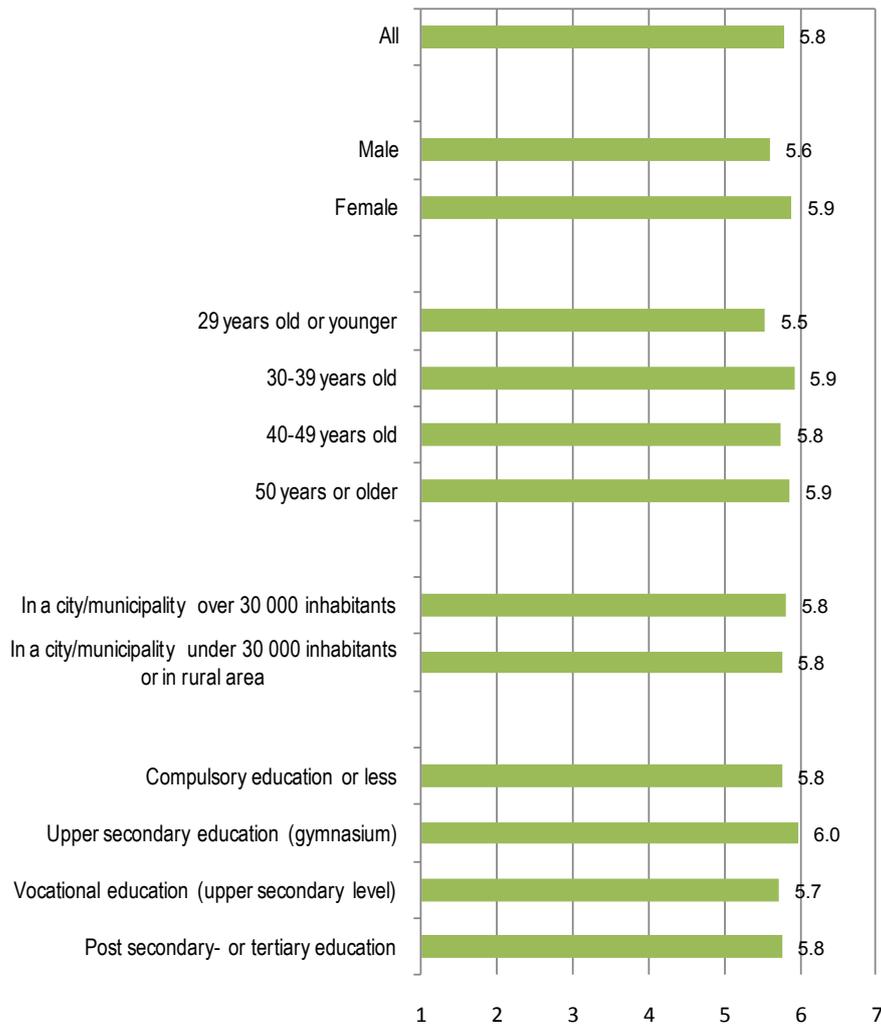


FIGURE 6.4

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

TABLE 6.9

Have you as a user of guidance been consulted (participated in meetings or discussion groups) on the following concerning guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	39	8%	+/-3%	8%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	26	6%	+/-2%	6%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	31	7%	+/-2%	7%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	12	3%	+/-1%	3%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	29	6%	+/-2%	6%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	14	3%	+/-2%	3%
Other	8	2%	+/-1%	2%
No, I have not participated in meetings or discussion groups about guidance services	410	86%	+/-3%	86%
Total		120%		

## 6.5. Involvement in guidance – forums of debate (level 3)

Most of the respondents had not been involved at the level 3 of user involvement – forums of debate (see table 6.9). Approximately 86% of respondents had not participated in meetings or discussion groups about the guidance services. However, 6-8% said that they had been consulted on the operation of service, identification of gaps in services, as well as on setting priorities in service and accessing unmet needs.

Respondents were further asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users were consulted. The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. As the figure 6.4 shows, the users on average felt that it was considerably important that users were consulted, and rated the importance on average as 5.8 out of 7. Women were more positive towards the importance of consulting users (5.9) than men were (5.6), but there were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings among different age groups or in respect to residence or educational level.

Clients, counsellors and managers that took part in the focus group study, all saw potential in future involvement of users. The clients felt that their participation in the focus groups was a good example of how that could be done effectively. The counsellors also saw focus groups as a form to get users of guidance more involved

with the development of guidance services as well as a way to evaluate existing service. They also had ideas of a peer group method where users could share their experience with new participants in APEL.

The managers that took part in the focus group study all expressed an interest in trying new ways to get the user more involved in design of new services and the development of the existing ones. In one group a manager spoke of the service design and how the guidance itself can be “a way of listening to the user’s voice “.

“... we are always trying to pick up clues about what is happening... we listen to the employers if we become aware of some specific employer is showing an interest in our service we try to find out the reason why. We ask them to write an article in our newsletter or give a talk at a presentation and all this information is positive.”

## 6.6. Involvement in guidance – participation (level 4)

By far, most of the respondents had not been involved at the level 4 of user involvement – participation. Table 6.10 shows that 92% of respondents had not participated in decision making and designing of strategies.

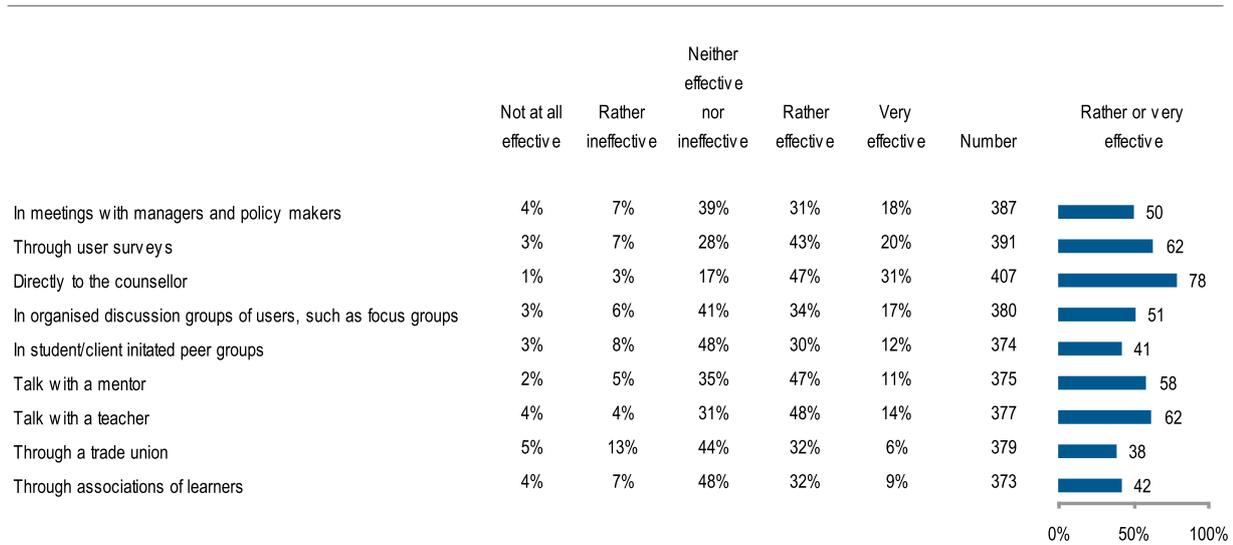
TABLE 6.10

Have you as a user of guidance participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance? Participation in designing of strategies refers to deciding how guidance should be operated and the amount of guidance each should get.

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	24	5%	+/-2%	5%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	13	3%	+/-1%	3%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	17	4%	+/-2%	4%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	7	2%	+/-1%	2%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	19	4%	+/-2%	4%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	12	3%	+/-1%	3%
Other	3	1%	+/-1%	1%
No, I have not participated in decision making and designing of strategies about guidance services	436	92%	+/-2%	92%
Total		112%		

TABLE 6.11

What would be an effective way for you as a user of guidance to have your voice heard on the delivery of guidance?



Respondents were further asked if the thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users participated in decision making and designing of guidance services (see figure 6.5). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. The users on average felt that it was somewhat important that users were participated in the designing of services, and rated the importance on

average as 5.1 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings of men and women and among different age- or educational groups, nor among people living in the capital versus the more rural areas.

Respondents were asked what would be an effective way for them as users of guidance to have their voice heard on different aspects of the delivery of guidance (see table 6.11).

Most of the respondents felt that it would be effective to contact the counsellor directly (78%) or the teacher or the mentor (58-62%). A similar proportion (62%) believed that user surveys were effective in having the voices of users heard, whereas considerably fewer believed that organized discussion groups of users, the associations of learners and trade unions, as well as student initiated peer groups would be effective (41-51%).

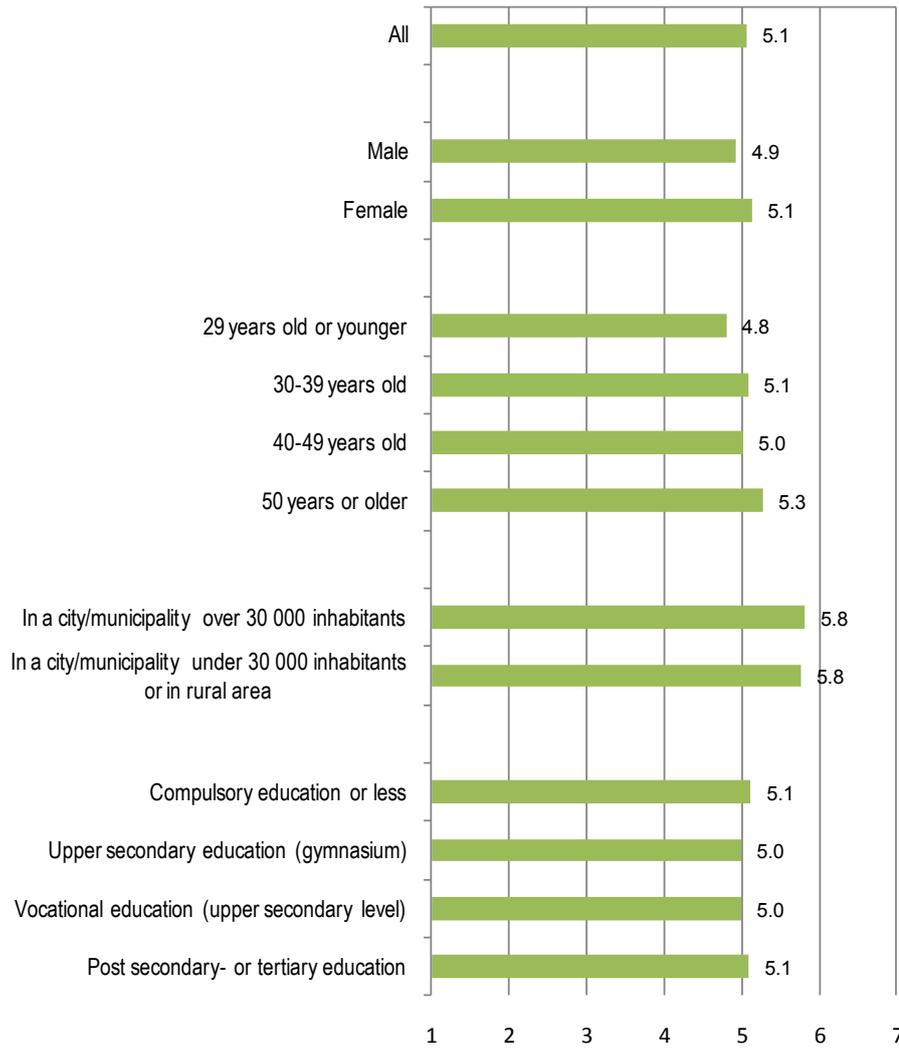


FIGURE 6.5

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level





# RESULTS IN NORWAY

## 7.1. Participation in guidance – modes of delivery

The users of guidance were first asked about what kind of guidance they had participated in. As table 7.1 shows most of them had participated in face-to-face interviews with a guidance counsellor (88%). About one of every four had experienced telephone interview (22%). As table 7.1 shows, other forms of guidance are less common among adult users of guidance in Norway (11-15%).

Respondents were also asked about the number of sessions of the type of guidance they had participated in (see table 7.2). Among those who had experienced a face-to-face session with a guidance counsellor 44% had experienced only one session, whereas about one of every three had two sessions (33%), and one of every four had been to three or more sessions (23%). About half of the respondents who experienced group sessions had one or two sessions. Half of the group of respondents (53%) who received web based guidance had only one session. An interpretation of this is that these “sessions” often are based on concrete questions, not an interactive web guidance process. It is interesting to note that when

guidance is integrated into teaching, it can extend into a longer period of 5 sessions or more for 38% of the respondents.

About one of every three (40%) had three sessions or more with guidance from a teacher, and 37% had had three sessions or more with a program- or project leader. Only about one out of five had participated in three or more sessions of guidance integrated as a part of teaching activities (18%) or telephone interview with a counsellor (21%). These patterns correspond with the findings in the focus group interviews in Norway.

The users learned about the guidance services through diverse means (see table 7.3). Most of them (43%) learned about it through the unemployment offices. Many of the users also heard about the guidance services through acquaintances (22%). Some of the users learned about it as a part of an educational program (14%), at work (12%), or through the media (11%). Only one person had heard about it through the union.

TABLE 7.1

What kind of educational and vocational guidance did you participate in?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	188	88%	+/-3%	88%
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	47	22%	+/-4%	22%
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	24	11%	+/-3%	11%
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	30	14%	+/-3%	14%
Guidance from a teacher	32	15%	+/-3%	15%
Guidance from a project-/program leader	23	11%	+/-3%	11%
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	25	12%	+/-3%	12%
Other	4	2%	+/-1%	2%
Total		174%		

TABLE 7.2

How many sessions did you have?

	1 session	2 sessions	3-4 sessions	5 sessions or more	Number	Three sessions or more
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	44%	33%	17%	7%	186	23
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	43%	36%	15%	6%	47	21
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	44%	17%	13%	26%	23	39
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	53%	7%	30%	10%	30	40
Guidance from a teacher	37%	27%	10%	27%	30	37
Guidance from a project-/program leader	73%	9%	14%	5%	22	18
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	42%	8%	13%	38%	24	

TABLE 7.3

Where did you learn about the educational and vocational guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Through acquaintances (such as from friends or family members)	47	22%	+/-4%	22%
At work	26	12%	+/-3%	12%
Through advertisement or discussions in the media	23	11%	+/-4%	11%
As part of an educational program / at school	30	14%	+/-2%	14%
Through a union	1	1%	+/-3%	1%
Through the directorate of labor (unemployment office)	90	43%	+/-3%	43%
Other	43	21%	+/-4%	21%
Total		124%		

## 7.2. Outcomes of guidance and perceived role of counsellor

Respondents were presented with 14 different statements about possible outcome of educational and vocational guidance. On the basis of a factor analysis procedure, three factors were constructed from these 14 statements, one measuring educational outcome, another vocational outcome and the third personal outcome (see table 7.4). The mean rating of respondents towards the educational outcome of their guidance was the most positive of the three factors. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 indicates less educational outcome and 5 more educational outcome, the average rating was 3.63, whereas it was considerably lower on the factor measuring vocational outcome (2.99) and somewhat lower on the factor measuring personal outcome (3.38). The proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement I learned new ways of learning as a result of guidance was somewhat lower than for the other statements measuring personal outcome. As a preliminary conclusion of

the factor analysis this indicates that users of guidance within the lifelong learning and guidance centres in Norway feel that the outcome of guidance is particularly of an educational nature, but to a lesser extent focused directly on vocational and personal matters.

The results in table 7.4 show that responses towards different statements vary. About 65% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that guidance had encouraged them to continue their studies. Also, 58% said that the guidance had helped them enhance their self-confidence. One half (49%) agreed that the guidance had helped them make choices concerning jobs. Only 21% agree or strongly agree that the guidance resulted in new educational or job contacts. As a preliminary interpretation of this, one might say that the centres in Norway have some potential in helping people learn how to get work and educational related contacts.

TABLE 7.4

Mean ratings on scales of educational-, vocational- and personal outcomes and responses to their respective statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
<b>EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.63 (+/-0.14)</b>							
Guidance encouraged me to continue my studies	4 %	3 %	28 %	40 %	25 %	189	65
Guidance helped me make choices concerning my education	8 %	11 %	30 %	30 %	21 %	184	51
<b>VOCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 2.99 (+/-0.14)</b>							
Guidance helped me make other life choices	13 %	15 %	36 %	28 %	9 %	185	36
Guidance resulted in new educational or job contacts	26 %	22 %	32 %	16 %	5 %	180	21
Guidance helped me with my job search	18 %	17 %	33 %	19 %	13 %	187	32
Guidance helped me make choices concerning jobs	11 %	11 %	29 %	33 %	16 %	189	49
<b>PERSONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.38 (+/-0.13)</b>							
Guidance enhanced my self-confidence	7 %	9 %	27 %	38 %	20 %	189	58
I learned new ways of learning as a result of guidance	14 %	15 %	35 %	30 %	6 %	180	36
I learned to make career plans as a result of guidance	8 %	9 %	25 %	47 %	11 %	182	58
I learned something about my abilities as a result of guidance	8 %	9 %	28 %	38 %	17 %	181	55
I learned something about my interests as a result of guidance	9 %	10 %	29 %	37 %	16 %	179	53
I acquired skills in searching for job or educational opportunities as a result of guidance	11 %	13 %	27 %	34 %	16 %	181	50
I acquired skills to further develop my career	9 %	8 %	29 %	39 %	14 %	181	53
I acquired decision making skills as a result of guidance	9 %	10 %	31 %	36 %	14 %	180	51

0% 50% 100%

TABLE 7.5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about the guidance counsellor that worked with you?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The counsellor emphasized my active involvement in the different phases of the process	6%	6%	27%	39%	22%	165	61
The counsellor stressed my active participation in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	3%	10%	24%	41%	22%	164	63
The counsellor helped me set goals	6%	10%	28%	36%	20%	163	56
The counsellor helped me work on enhancing my self-confidence	8%	13%	36%	30%	14%	166	44
The counsellor gave me the opportunity to discuss my strengths and weaknesses	6%	9%	26%	38%	22%	163	60
The counsellor was supportive and understanding	5%	1%	18%	39%	38%	166	77
The counsellor encouraged me	7%	2%	16%	45%	31%	166	76

TABLE 7.6

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about your participation in the guidance?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Does not apply	Number	Agree or strongly agree
In general, I participated very actively in the guidance process	2%	2%	6%	40%	48%	3%	181	88
I was active in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	1%	2%	15%	45%	28%	9%	180	73
I was active in making plans and setting goals	2%	8%	14%	37%	33%	7%	181	70
I was active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions	2%	2%	15%	40%	32%	11%	179	72
During the guidance sessions I discussed my strengths and weaknesses	6%	7%	14%	30%	39%	4%	184	69
During the guidance sessions we discussed how I can learn more about myself	11%	17%	27%	19%	19%	7%	181	38

Those who were guided by a educational and vocational counsellor in some way were asked to rate the counsellor according to different statements. As table 7.5 shows most of the respondents rated their counsellor positively. Between 56%-63% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their counsellor had stressed their active involvement and participation in the guidance and information gathering process, an helped them to set goals and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. An even higher proportion, or 76% and 77%, felt that the counsellor had been encouraging, supportive and understanding. Only 6-9% of respondents disagreed with these statements. The propor-

tion who agreed that the counsellor had helped work on enhancing their self-confidence was considerable lower than for the other statements, where only 44% agreed or strongly agreed. If looking at the numbers in table 7.4 and 7.5 in comparison, one might ask if the counsellor focuses more on being a good listener and information provider on educational matters, than on the personal and vocational matters. If we look back at the focus group interviews, especially the practitioners, stressed the importance of “not being a therapist”, and this might be a part of the explanation for the lower experienced focus on personal matters among users. However, this does not explain the lower mean score on the

scale of vocational outcomes.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the guidance on a seven point scale where 1 meant very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly satisfied nor dissatisfied. Figure 7.1 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users were rather satisfied with their guidance experience and rated their satisfaction on average as 5.4 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to gender, age, residence nor educational level.

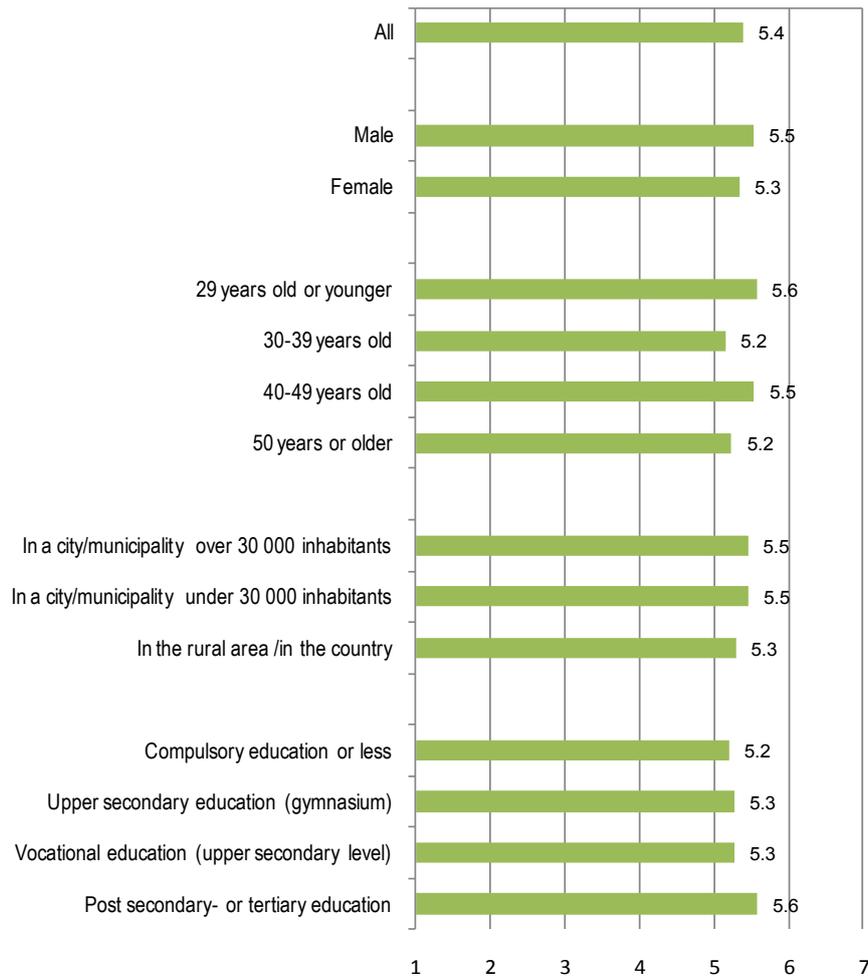


FIGURE 7.1

Satisfaction with guidance on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

### 7.3. Involvement in the guidance process – information gathering (level 1)

When asked to rate different statements concerning how actively involved they were in their guidance (see table 7.6), most of the users felt that they had been overall active (88%). This corresponds with the numbers in table 7.5 and the focus group interviews. In the interviews, the principle of gratuitousness was raised from all groups as the main way to activation. This puts the responsibility of actions on the client. Between 69 and 73% felt that they were active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions, information gathering in general, making plans and discussing their strengths and weaknesses. Only 38% agreed or strongly agreed that they had, during guidance sessions, discussed how they could learn more about themselves.

Respondents rated their perceived involvement in the guidance process on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very passive and 7 very active. The value 4 indicates a neutral opinion, neither being particularly passive nor active. Figure 7.2 shows the mean rating of respondents in relations to their demographics. As the figure shows, the users felt that they participated rather actively in their guidance process and rated their participation on average as 5.6 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect to age, gender or residence.

The largest difference is seen in the average ratings related to educational level. Those with completed compulsory education or less scored on average 5.1 out of 7, and those with post-secondary or tertiary education scored 5.9 out of 7.

TABLE 7.7

Did you have a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance you received by using any of the following?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Paper/pencil questionnaire	26	15%	+/-3%	15%
Phone survey	19	11%	+/-3%	11%
Online survey	56	32%	+/-4%	32%
Verbally or by e-mail to the counsellor	35	20%	+/-4%	20%
Verbally or by e-mail to the supervisor(s) of the service	12	7%	+/-2%	7%
Other	6	4%	+/-2%	4%
<i>I did not have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance</i>	48	28%	+/-4%	28%
Total		117%		

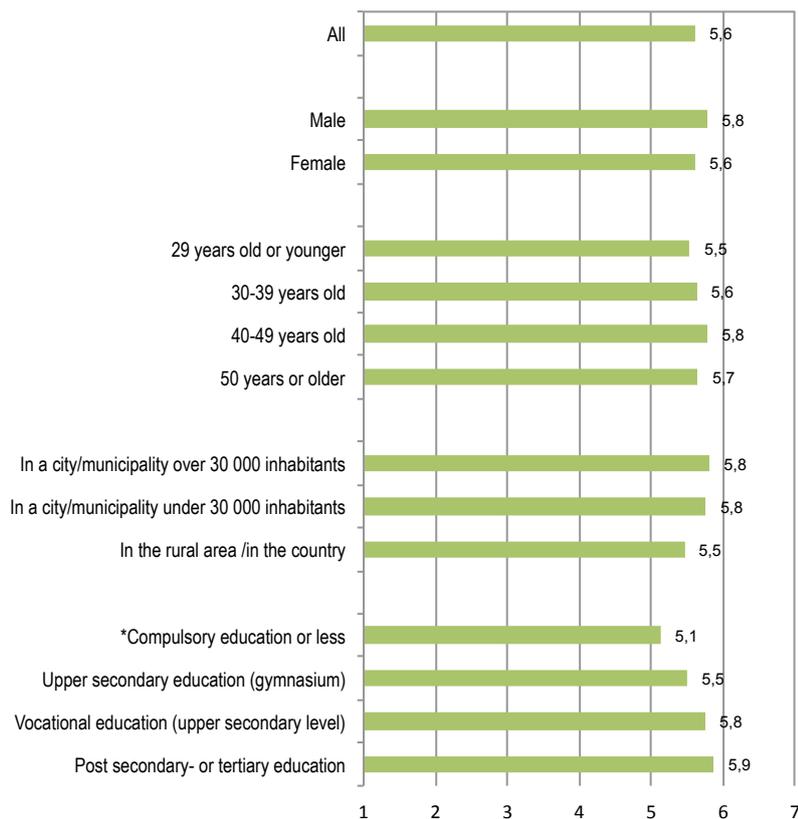


FIGURE 7.2

Perceived involvement in guidance process on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means that the respondent was very passive and 7 very active. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

## 7.4. Evaluation of guidance – sharing of information (level 2)

Approximately one of every four (28%) of respondents had not had a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the service they were provided with (see table 7.7). Compared with the information given by the managers in the focus group interviews, the number is low. This might be explained by an interpretation that the willingness to do systematic evaluation is more on an intentional than an actual basis in Norway. When given the opportunity to evaluate, online surveys are the main source. This corresponds with the information given in the focus group interviews. Around one of every three had been asked to rate the service through an online survey (32%), whereas phone- or paper/pencil surveys were used by 11 and 15%. One out of five (20%) had had a chance to give feedback verbally or by e-mail to their counsellors. Only 7% had been given a chance to give feedback to the supervisors of the service.

Those users who had been offered a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the service were asked whether they thought it would be likely that their feedback would result in improvements in the guidance service (see figure 7.3). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unlikely and 7 very likely. As the figure shows, the users on average felt that it was unlikely that their feedback would have a positive impact on service improvements (mean=4.7). This corresponds somewhat with the focus group interviews. In the interviews, both clients and some of the practitioners expressed a fear that the value of participating in evaluation for further development of the guidance was low. All centres get high score on the question about satisfaction with the service. The managers asked themselves if this gives them something to use in developing the guidance service. Another problem they meet is that only 50% give feedback through the questionnaire system. All centres say they try to involve clients in developing the guidance service, but since most of the centres get good feedback, they feel it is difficult to know what to change.

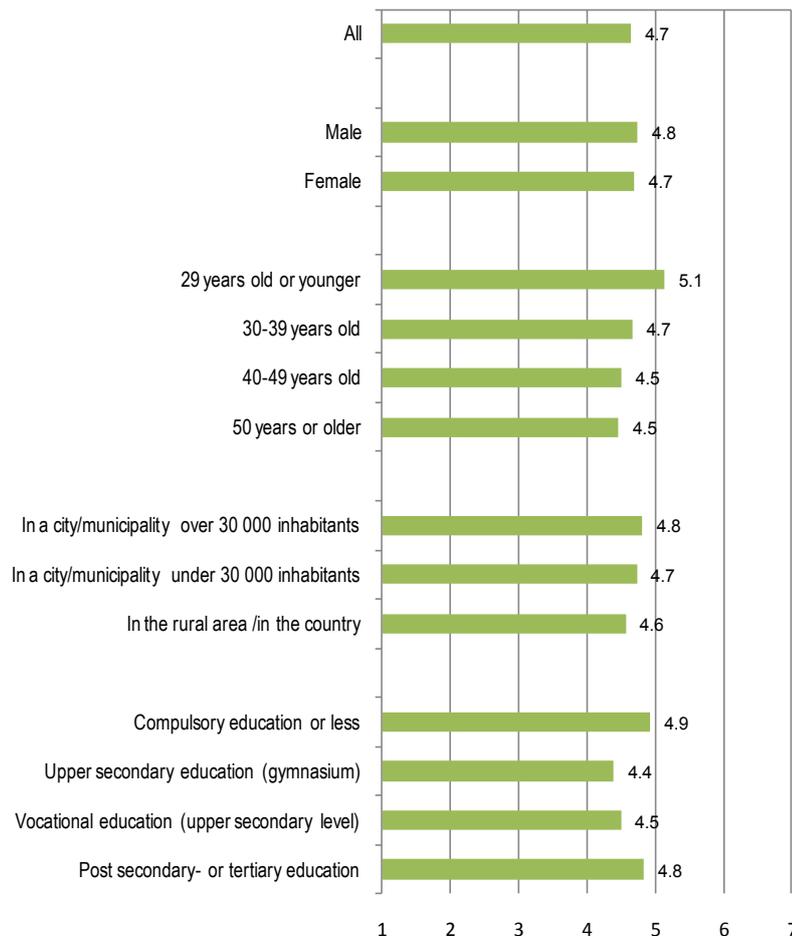


FIGURE 7.3

Do you think that your feedback on guidance is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

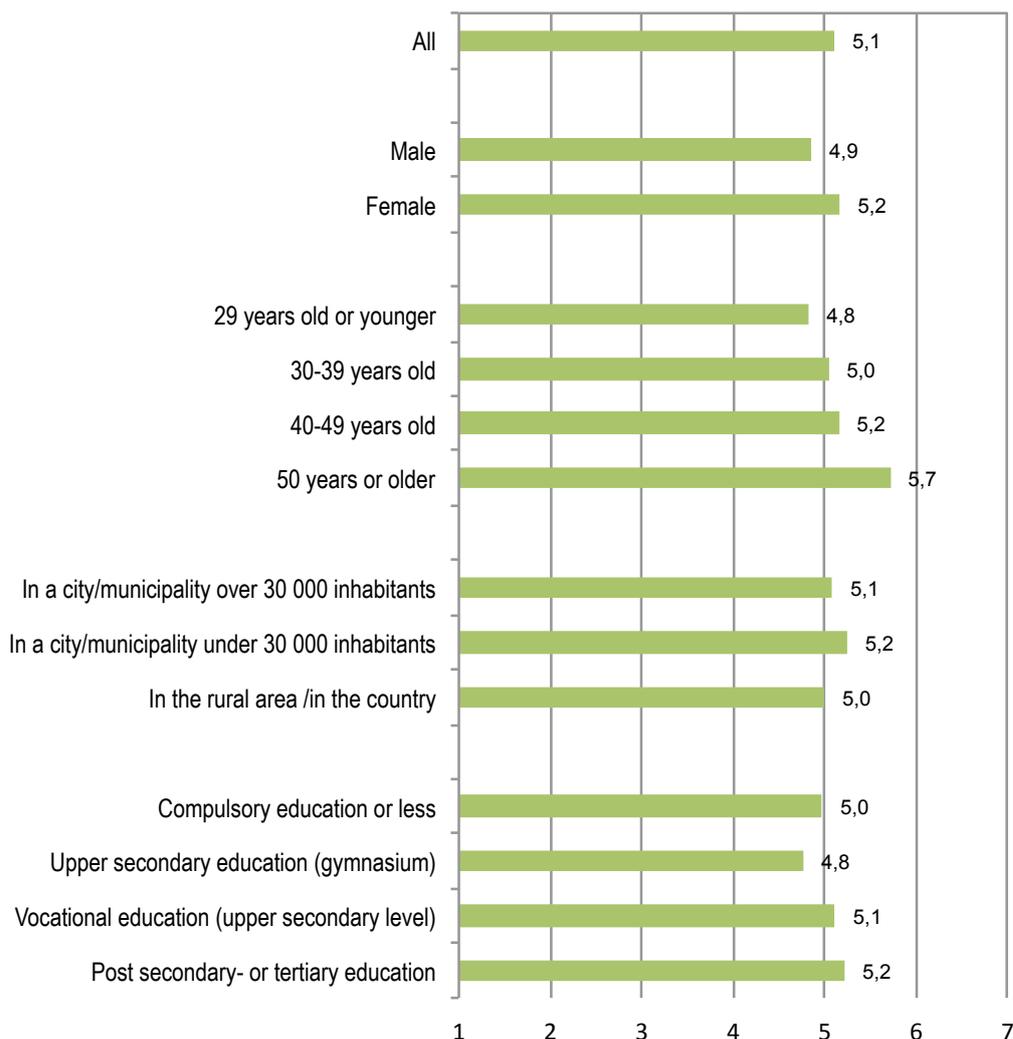


FIGURE 7.4

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

TABLE 7.8

Do you think that it is important or unimportant that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on the following?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The guidance process	0%	1%	8%	46%	45%	171	91
The organization of guidance work	0%	0%	19%	44%	37%	170	81
Access to guidance	0%	0%	14%	44%	42%	170	86
The way guidance is delivered	0%	1%	10%	39%	51%	170	89

0% 50% 100%

TABLE 7.9

Have you as a user of guidance been consulted (participated in meetings or discussion groups) on the following concerning guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	9	5%	+/-2%	5%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	7	4%	+/-2%	4%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	8	5%	+/-2%	5%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	4	2%	+/-1%	2%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	6	4%	+/-2%	4%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	7	4%	+/-2%	4%
Other	2	1%	+/-1%	1%
No, I have not participated in meetings or discussion groups about guidance services	149	89%	+/-3%	89%
Total		115%		

Every third month one centre goes through questionnaire reports, but there is not much concrete feedback from the clients beside phrases like “I’m pleased with the service”. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings with respect gender, age, residence or education.

Although the developmental consequences of giving feedback are questioned, users of guidance seem to hold the opinion that it is important for them to have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on services. As table 7.8 shows, nine out of every ten (89% and 91%) feel that it is important the users have the chance to evaluate the guidance process and the way guidance is delivered. A slightly lower proportion (81% and 86%) is concerned about the opportunity to evaluate the organisation of, and access to guidance. Seen in comparison with the results from the focus group interviews, the high scores in table 7.8 might seem like a contradiction. A possible interpretation of this is that there is a “reflex” in the population to answer yes on the question “do you think that the voice of users is important”.

## 7.5. Evaluation of guidance – forums of debate (level 3)

As we have seen in the former chapters, the users feel that they are involved in their personal guidance process (level 1). When it comes to giving feedback on their experience of guidance (level 2) there seem to be a gap between the intentional level at the centres and the client’s experience of it. Here, 28% of the clients say they have not had the chance to evaluate the service. As seen in the focus group interviews, both users and some of the practitioners also fear that the developmental value of the evaluation is low. In the previous chapter we saw a discrepancy between the expressed opinion of managers in the focus groups and the actual experience of the users/clients. Managers say that all centres try to involve clients in the evaluation, but 28% of users/clients say that they were never given a chance to give feedback on the guidance service. As table 7.9 shows, only 11% of respondents say that they have been consulted, i.e. participated in meetings and discussion groups about guidance services.

Respondents were also asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that were consulted (see figure 7.5). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. The users on average felt that it was somewhat important that users were consulted, and rated the importance on average as 5.1 out of 7. The gap mention on level 2 is even bigger if one compares the numbers in figure 7.4 and the focus group interviews with clients. In the interviews, the clients said that their voices should be heard more in the future. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings of men and women, different age groups nor in terms of their residence, or education.

## 7.6. Evaluation of guidance – participation (level 4)

By far, most of the respondents had not been involved at the level 4 of user involvement – participation. Table 7.10 shows that 90% of respondents had not participated in decision making and designing of strategies.

Respondents were further asked if they thought it was important for the improvement of guidance that users participated in decision making and designing of guidance services (see figure 7.5). The question was asked on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unimportant and 7 very important. The users on average felt that it was somewhat important that users participated in the designing of services, and rated the importance on average

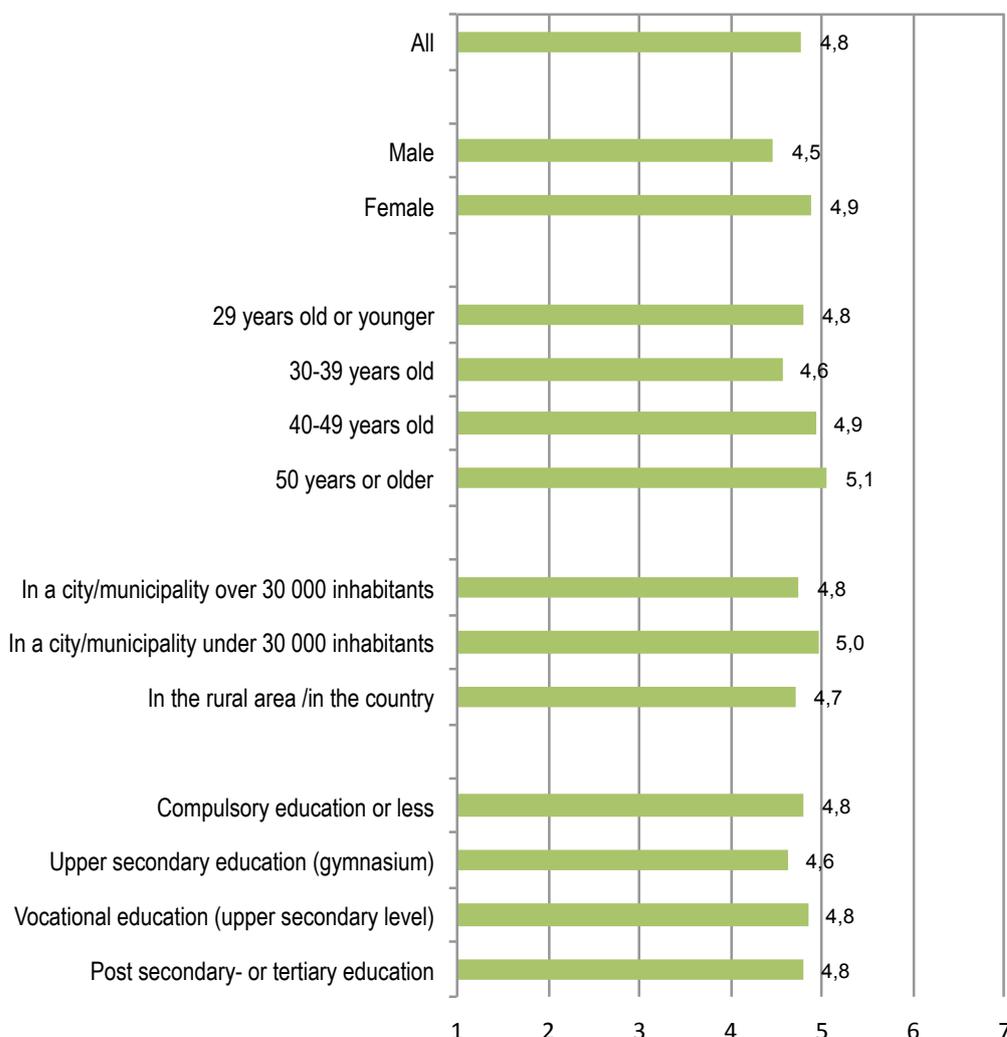


FIGURE 7.5

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

as 4.8 out of 7. There were no statistically significant differences in the average ratings of men and women and among different age- or educational groups, nor among people living in the capital versus the more rural areas.

Finally, respondents were asked what would be an effective way for them as users of guidance to have their voice heard on different aspects of the delivery of guidance (see table 7.11). Most of the respondents felt that it would be effective to contact the counsellor directly (88%), being part of organized discussion groups (69%), or through user surveys (72%). Around 60% believed that an effective way of being heard was to participate in meetings with managers and policy makers (59%), or talk with the teacher or the mentor (60-63%). Considerably fewer believed that the associations

of learners and trade unions, as well as student initiated peer groups would be effective (34-43%). This corresponds with the focus group interviews of users. In the interviews, they commented that questionnaire and other forms to be filled out are not necessarily the best way to involve users. They see focus groups as a great opportunity to contribute in both strategic planning of the guidance service they have had, but also in the personal development for the counsellor. They like the idea of being invited to the board rooms where the decisions are made, but stress the importance of “felt involvement”, not just “said involvement”, meaning that they want to have a real chance to contribute in developing good systems for systematic career guidance for adults in their region. As a part of this, they said that they needed a more formal and systematic invitation to take part in the shaping of future guidance services.

TABLE 7.10

Have you as a user of guidance participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance? Participation in designing of strategies refers to deciding how guidance should be operated and the amount of guidance each should get.

	Percentage of		CI	Percentage
	Number	respondents		
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	7	4%	+/-2%	4%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	6	4%	+/-2%	4%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	8	5%	+/-2%	5%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	5	3%	+/-2%	3%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	7	4%	+/-2%	4%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	6	4%	+/-2%	4%
Other	2	1%	+/-1%	1%
No, I have not participated in decision making and designing of strategies about guidance services	148	90%	+/-3%	90%
Total		115%		

TABLE 7.11

What would be an effective way for you as a user of guidance to have your voice heard on the delivery of guidance?

	Neither effective					Number	Rather or very effective
	Not at all effective	Rather ineffective	neither effective nor ineffective	Rather effective	Very effective		
In meetings with managers and policy makers	2%	8%	31%	35%	24%	147	59
Through user surveys	4%	7%	17%	44%	28%	153	72
Directly to the counsellor	1%	2%	10%	30%	57%	155	88
In organised discussion groups of users, such as focus groups	5%	3%	23%	34%	35%	152	69
In student/client initiated peer groups	5%	7%	45%	29%	14%	139	43
Talk with a mentor	3%	3%	32%	38%	25%	145	63
Talk with a teacher	3%	6%	32%	40%	20%	145	60
Through a trade union	9%	8%	46%	30%	7%	143	37
Through associations of learners	8%	8%	51%	28%	6%	144	34







# RESULTS IN SWEDEN

## 8.1. Participation in guidance – modes of delivery

The great majority (70%) of the users answered that individual interviews face-to face is the most common way to receive guidance (see table 8.1). Four other interventions, web-based guidance, telephone interviews, guidance from teachers and guidance integrated in teaching had an answer frequency around 15%. Only a small group of users had participated in group guidance. The high percentage of individual interviews is in line with other studies made in Sweden (Dresch & Lovén, 2010). Teachers' part in guidance has always been low in Swedish tradition (Skolverket, 1997; Lovén, 2000; Dresch & Lovén, 2010). The reason is that most guidance counsellors are situated in schools and easy available for the students. The concept of guidance can also be connected to the guidance counsellor although teachers<sup>6</sup> have to make action- or study plans together with the students.

Many users have more than one session regardless of

the kind of guidance they have participated in (see table 8.2). There can be many reasons for this result. One explanation is that the individual interview has started a process over time which gives an opportunity for the user to reflect more over his/her situation. Another interpretation is that the first session results in a need for more information which has to be searched for/retrieved and/or clarified on several occasions. The high percentage for web based guidance can be read to support this interpretation plus an awareness of the service and the easiness in access to information at whatever time or location. It is worth noting that there is a need for more sessions and there is also a possibility to get this service.

The majority of the users have learned about the services through school (see table 8.3). This is rather natural since most guidance counsellors are situated in schools. The second information source is family and friends.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. at the adult education in Göteborg where it is a requirement that the teachers has to establish a study plan together with the student.

TABLE 8.1

What kind of educational and vocational guidance did you participate in?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	311	70%	+/-4%	70%
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	67	15%	+/-3%	15%
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	39	9%	+/-3%	9%
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	78	17%	+/-3%	17%
Guidance from a teacher	75	17%	+/-3%	17%
Guidance from a project-/program leader	12	3%	+/-1%	3%
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	69	15%	+/-3%	15%
Other	21	5%	+/-2%	5%
Total		150%		

TABLE 8.2

How many sessions did you have?

	1 session	2 sessions	3-4 sessions	5 sessions or more	Number	Three sessions or more
Face-to-face individual interview with a guidance counsellor	31%	29%	26%	15%	311	41
Telephone interview with a guidance counsellor	48%	25%	15%	12%	67	27
Group-session with a guidance counsellor	26%	33%	21%	21%	39	41
Web-based guidance (e.g. through websites, e-mail, chat-rooms)	28%	17%	30%	25%	79	56
Guidance from a teacher	34%	28%	15%	24%	76	38
Guidance from a project-/program leader	50%	17%	17%	17%	12	33
Guidance integrated in lessons and teaching activities	56%	12%	23%	9%	66	

0% 50% 100%

TABLE 8.3

Where did you learn about the educational and vocational guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Through acquaintances (such as from friends or family members)	100	23%	+/-4%	23%
At work	19	4%	+/-3%	4%
Through advertisement or discussions in the media	61	14%	+/-4%	14%
As part of an educational program / at school	213	50%	+/-2%	50%
Through a union	6	1%	+/-3%	1%
Through the directorate of labor (unemployment office)	60	14%	+/-3%	14%
Other	71	17%	+/-4%	17%
Total		123%		

This is similar to other research where parents have been found to be an important part in teenager's educational choice (Lovén, 2000; Dresch & Lovén, 2010). For adults the family is still an important part but probably then connected to partners and/or spouses. Likewise the personal network of friends and acquaintances is important for gathering information about guidance services. Traditionally the unions have no part in guidance. Instead the employment offices are for some adults an important institution for guidance and/or information. But the growing adult education and the emphasis on lifelong learning has caused a transformation from vocational guidance to more educational guidance.

## 8.2. Outcomes of guidance and perceived role of counsellor

The respondents answered 14 about the outcomes of their guidance experiences. Broadly these statements can be divided in three areas; one measuring educational outcomes, one measuring personal outcomes and one measuring vocational/job outcomes. The results are shown in table 8.4. Users indicated that they got most help and encouragement concerning educational studies. On the scale measuring educational outcome they scored on average 3.71 compared to 2.78 for vocational outcome and 3.26 for personal outcome. This is in line with previous results in this study. Guidance is situated in schools and at guidance centres and is in many ways directed to educational guidance, e.g. discussing adult education and university studies and making study plans.

The statements connected to more personal outcomes were for example "Guidance enhanced my self-confidence" or "I learned to make career plans as a result of

guidance". About half of the users responded that they received this help. This is in contrast with earlier studies directed towards students in upper secondary schools. They had a significant lower rate for outcomes regarding self-confidence or self-knowledge (Skolverket, 1997; Lovén, 2000). One possible explanation for the different results of these studies can be that adult users have a more complex life situation than teenagers and have to reflect over their personal situation from many perspectives. It has to be underlined that more than one fourth of the users disagreed that they had learned more about their interests or abilities. Both of these are important in making future choices.

Statements concerning job search and job plans (vocational outcomes) had a lower rate of agreement than statements concerning educational and personal outcomes.

The importance of an individual study plan is underlined in a study from Gothenburg where the importance of their studies were measured in relation to three different areas (become employed, further studies and more faith in themselves). The results were significantly higher for students with a study plan than for students with no such plan (Göteborgs Stad Vuxenutbildningen, 2010).

Table 8.4 shows the responses to statements about the guidance counsellor. These statements can be divided into two parts, one considering more relational aspects, such as "The guidance counsellor was supportive and understanding" and "The guidance counsellor encouraged me" and another part concerning tools to understand themselves or move forward towards a goal. The guidance counsellors were especially high rated on the relational part. The answers on the other part were

TABLE 8.4

Mean ratings on scales of educational-, vocational- and personal outcomes and responses to their respective statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
<b>EDUCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.71 (+/-0.10)</b>							
Guidance encouraged me to continue my studies	5 %	3 %	24 %	42 %	26 %	389	68
Guidance helped me make choices concerning my education	8 %	10 %	21 %	38 %	24 %	385	62
<b>VOCATIONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 2.78 (+/-0.11)</b>							
Guidance helped me make other life choices	20 %	15 %	36 %	19 %	10 %	368	29
Guidance resulted in new educational or job contacts	16 %	14 %	33 %	27 %	11 %	368	37
Guidance helped me with my job search	29 %	18 %	34 %	15 %	5 %	369	20
Guidance helped me make choices concerning jobs	27 %	15 %	33 %	17 %	7 %	365	25
<b>PERSONAL OUTCOME - MEAN = 3.26 (+/-0.10)</b>							
Guidance enhanced my self-confidence	13 %	8 %	33 %	30 %	16 %	370	46
I learned new ways of learning as a result of guidance	11 %	13 %	30 %	32 %	14 %	354	46
I learned to make career plans as a result of guidance	11 %	12 %	30 %	33 %	14 %	350	47
I learned something about my abilities as a result of guidance	13 %	15 %	32 %	30 %	10 %	344	40
I learned something about my interests as a result of guidance	13 %	14 %	32 %	29 %	13 %	349	42
I acquired skills in searching for job or educational opportunities as a result of guidance	12 %	11 %	30 %	35 %	13 %	346	48
I acquired skills to further develop my career	13 %	14 %	34 %	27 %	12 %	343	39
I acquired decision making skills as a result of guidance	11 %	9 %	33 %	33 %	14 %	342	47

vaguer. In contrast to questions connected to relational aspects the answers to “the counsellor worked on enhancing my self-confidence” got a lower rate of agreement. Even the question about strengths and weaknesses had a lower rate of agreement. This is in line with a newly published study describing students moving from high school to upper secondary school. In this study only 21% of the respondents said that they, in the guidance interviews, got

help to identify their strengths and weaknesses (Dresch & Lovén, 2010). One conclusion from these results is that guidance counsellors have to continue working with relational aspects but at the same time develop and strengthen the use more future oriented and self-directed tools.

Figure 8.1 summarizes the users’ satisfaction of guidance and the result on a scale from 1 to 7 is just below five. Note that the answers from rural areas are very few.

### 8.3. Involvement in the guidance process – information gathering (level 1)

Most of the users answered that they participated actively in the guidance process. The responses of participants to the statements about their participation in the guidance are presented in table 8.6. The users were especially active in working

TABLE 8.5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about the guidance counsellor that worked with you?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The counsellor emphasized my active involvement in the different phases of the process	10%	14%	34%	29%	14%	481	42
The counsellor stressed my active participation in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	12%	12%	31%	31%	14%	474	45
The counsellor helped me set goals	14%	11%	28%	34%	13%	466	46
The counsellor helped me work on enhancing my self-confidence	20%	16%	39%	18%	8%	480	26
The counsellor gave me the opportunity to discuss my strengths and weaknesses	17%	17%	33%	24%	10%	480	33
The counsellor was supportive and understanding	9%	7%	24%	35%	25%	480	60
The counsellor encouraged me	13%	7%	27%	33%	20%	480	53

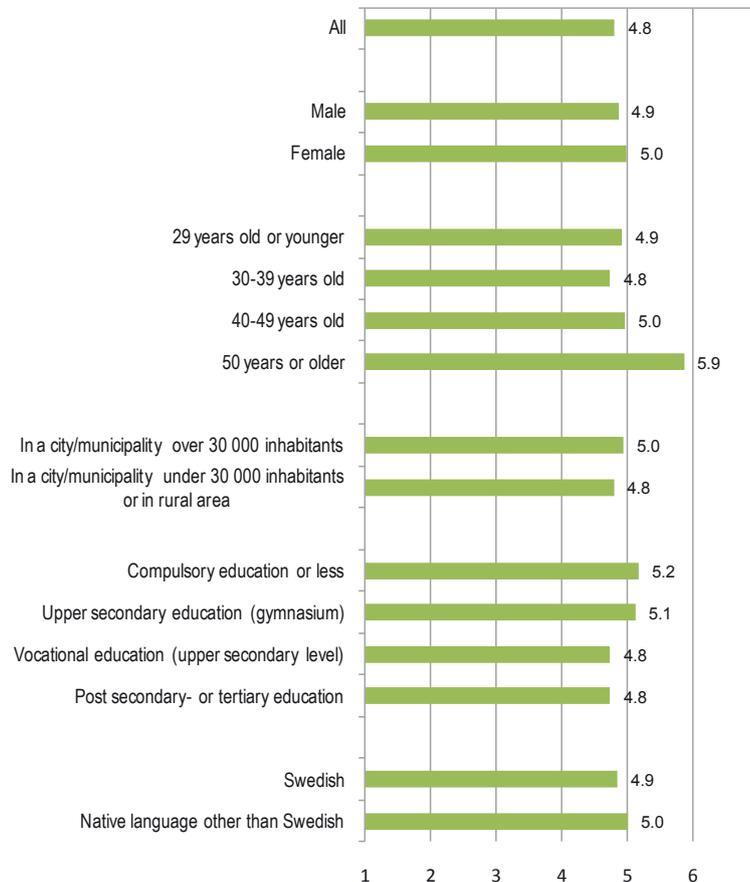


FIGURE 8.1

Satisfaction with guidance on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

with gathering information. This is in line with other Swedish research (Dresch & Lovén, 2003; 2010).

Figure 8.2 summarizes the perceived involvement in the guidance process. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means very passive and 7 very active, the average score was 5.4, which is higher than for the satisfaction with the guidance presented in figure 8.1. It is clear that a majority of the users are actively involved but probably more in information gathering than in discussing more personal issues like for example “strengths and weaknesses” or “learn more about [themselves]”.

## 8.4. Evaluation of guidance – sharing of information (level 2)

The majority of the users did not have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance they received (see table 8.7). Most common is giving feedback verbally to the guidance counsellor (25%) and filling in surveys on paper (12%) or online (13%). It is evident that there are no routines for evaluation or feedback. The same result is described in the focus group interviews and it seems like the counsellors trust their own feeling for what happened in the interviews. This is also

TABLE 8.6

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about your participation in the guidance?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Does not apply	Number	Agree or strongly agree
In general, I participated very actively in the guidance process	3%	5%	22%	38%	29%	4%	331	67
I was active in gathering information about work- and/or educational opportunities	2%	2%	14%	41%	38%	3%	331	79
I was active in making plans and setting goals	6%	7%	24%	33%	23%	8%	332	56
I was active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions	2%	4%	21%	34%	30%	9%	326	65
During the guidance sessions I discussed my strengths and weaknesses	14%	16%	21%	26%	16%	8%	329	41
During the guidance sessions we discussed how I can learn more about myself	19%	16%	24%	17%	13%	11%	329	30

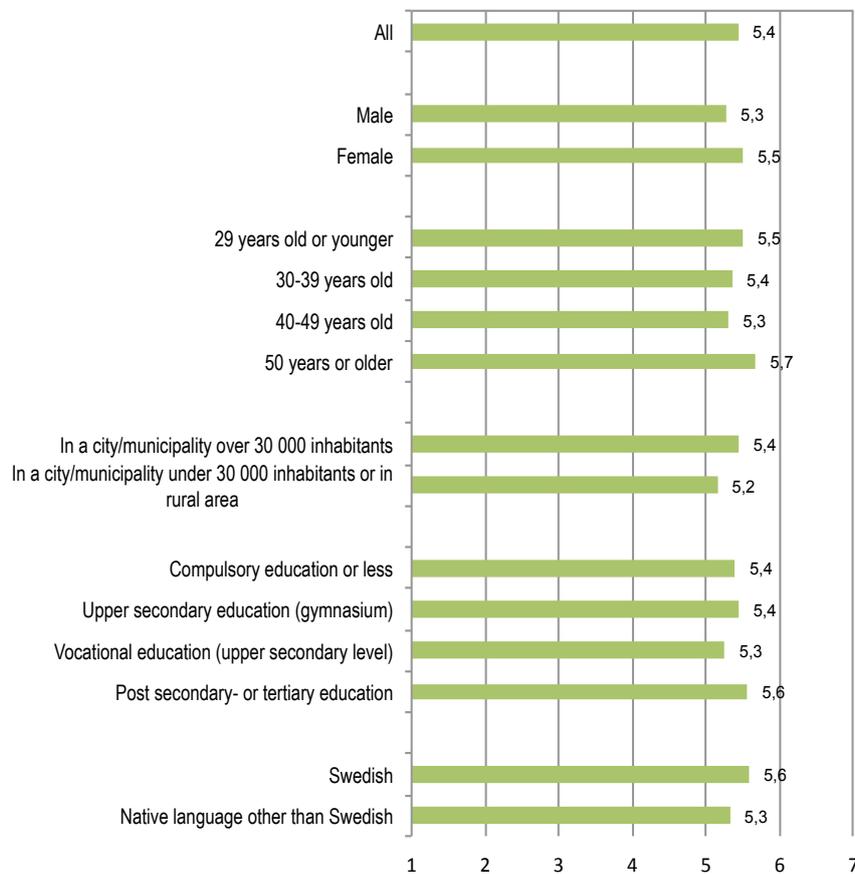


FIGURE 8.2

Perceived involvement in guidance process on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means that the respondent was very passive and 7 very active. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

TABLE 8.7

Did you have a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance you received by using any of the following?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Paper/pencil questionnaire	39	12%	+/-3%	12%
Phone survey	14	4%	+/-2%	4%
Online survey	42	13%	+/-3%	13%
Verbally or by e-mail to the counsellor	81	25%	+/-4%	25%
Verbally or by e-mail to the supervisor(s) of the service	10	3%	+/-2%	3%
Other	4	1%	+/-1%	1%
<i>I did not have the chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance</i>	181	55%	+/-5%	55%
Total		113%		

TABLE 8.8

Do you think that it is important or unimportant that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on the following?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Number	Agree or strongly agree
The guidance process	4%	6%	16%	42%	33%	309	75
The organization of guidance work	3%	4%	25%	41%	28%	299	69
Access to guidance	3%	2%	18%	43%	35%	299	78
The way guidance is delivered	3%	2%	14%	38%	43%	301	81

0% 50% 100%

TABLE 8.9

Have you as a user of guidance been consulted (participated in meetings or discussion groups) on the following concerning guidance services?

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	49	16%	+/-3%	16%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	26	9%	+/-3%	9%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	24	8%	+/-2%	8%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	28	9%	+/-3%	9%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	18	6%	+/-2%	6%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	19	6%	+/-2%	6%
Other	2	1%	+/-1%	1%
<i>No, I have not participated in meetings or discussion groups about guidance services</i>	223	73%	+/-4%	73%
Total		128%		

expressed by one of the counsellors in the focus group interview:

“I’m trying to end the interview by asking the client if it was a meaningful interview, if they feel that they have got something new with them.”

From both a research and managers perspective it is important that counsellors develop more established and valid routines for evaluation and feedback about their services.

Figure 8.3 concerns the users’ opinion on if their feedback is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service. The result shows that there is a rather strong confidence that feedback can develop and improve guidance. On average respondent scored 5.2 on the scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely.

Table 8.8 shows responses towards statements concern-

ing the importance of users evaluating guidance services. This is a question where a large majority of the respondents agreed that it is important that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate different aspects of the service. It’s hard to draw specific conclusions. The guidance process, for example, has probably several meanings for respondents. The main conclusion is that users think it’s important to give their opinions about the guidance situation from many different perspectives.

### 8.5. Evaluation of guidance – forums of debate (level 3)

Respondents were asked if they had been consulted, i.e. participated in meetings or discussion groups concerning the guidance services (see table 8.9). Once again the answers indicate that users have not been consulted concerning for example guidance delivery, content in guidance and/or deficits and gaps. It is obviously not a

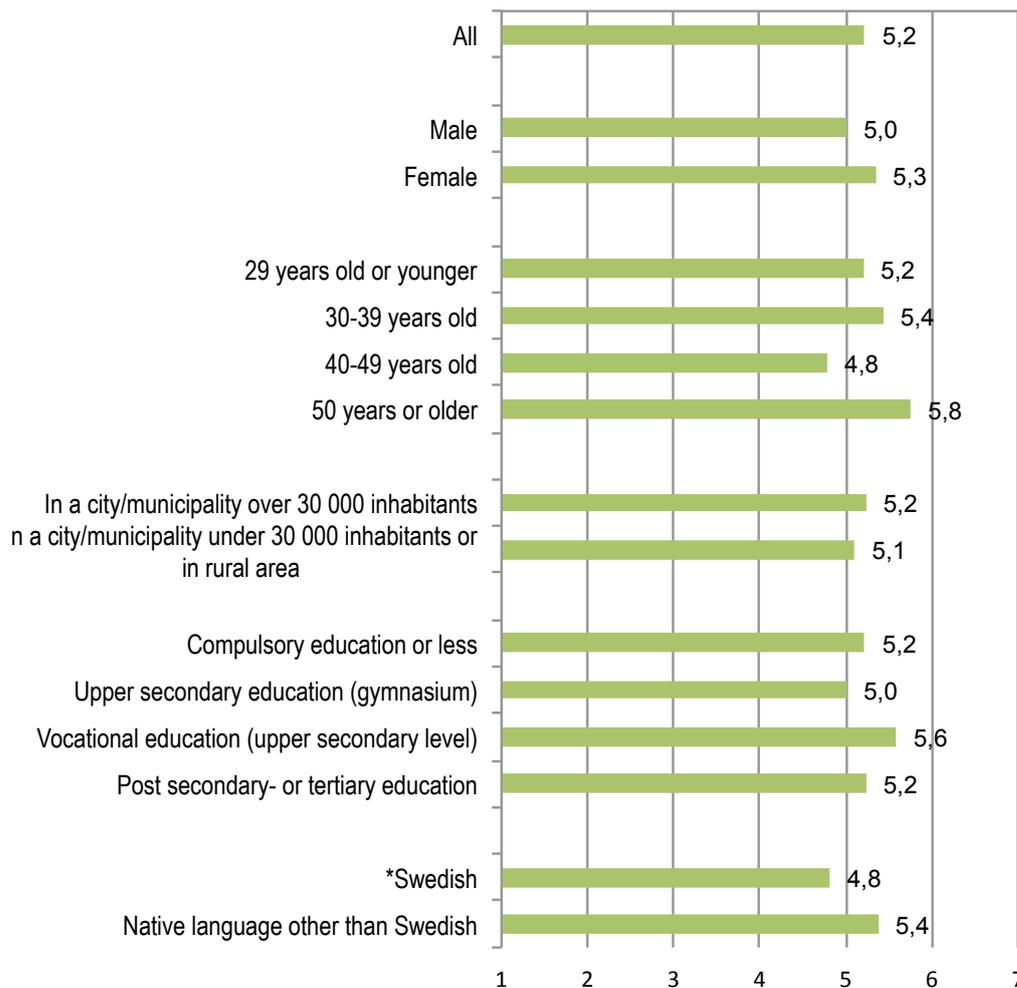


FIGURE 8.3

Do you think that your feedback on guidance is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

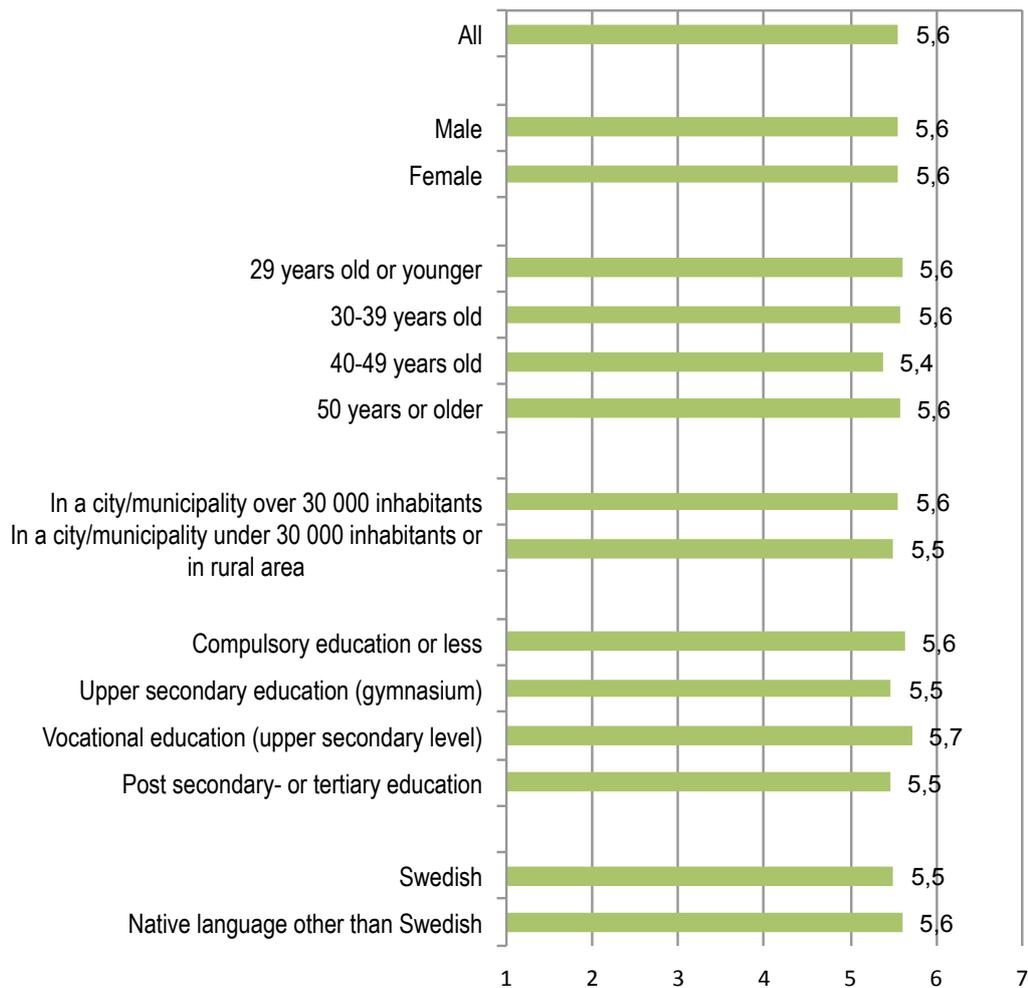


FIGURE 8.4

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level

tradition or established practice to consult the opinions of the users. In some adult education there are advisory boards where discussions around these questions can be made.

Figure 8.4 underlines the importance of consulting the users. According to the results of this question users seem to think it is important that they are consulted for guidance services to be improved. On a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important the average rating was 5.6.

## 8.6. Evaluation of guidance – participation (level 4)

The results shown in table 8.10 are in line with former questions. Most of the users have not participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance. In order to involve guidance users at this level new tools of users' participation need to be developed, such as fo-

cus groups and advisory boards. According to the results from the focus groups this has not been high on the agenda. As two counsellors pointed out:

“Most evaluation is done ad hoc and with the idea that I can feel as a counsellor if something is wrong.”

“One of the obstacles to reach a more proactive client is the expectations and behaviours of the clients. Several of them are used to a passive pattern and come to counselling with an open mouth waiting for someone to feed them.”

Lundahl & Nilsson (2010) describe a situation, in their research, where lack of directions, leadership and quality assessment including evaluations is frequent in the Swedish communities. One consequence of these deficits is a lack of interest for developing evaluation models.

TABLE 8.10

Have you as a user of guidance participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance? Participation in designing of strategies refers to deciding how guidance should be operated and the amount of guidance each should get.

	Number	Percentage of respondents	CI	Percentage
Improving operation of service (such as on the user-friendliness of web-sites, opening hours, slow service etc.)	41	14%	+/-3%	14%
Setting priorities in guidance services (such as giving new groups the opportunity to participate in guidance etc.)	25	9%	+/-3%	9%
Identifying gaps in service (such as work search work-shops, services to meet your special needs, etc.)	24	8%	+/-2%	8%
Identifying gaps in quality of service (such as breaches in confidentiality, misinformation, etc.)	17	6%	+/-2%	6%
Addressing unmet needs (such as those of school dropouts, immigrants, single mothers etc.)	21	7%	+/-2%	7%
Developing new guidance services (such as telephone counseling)	16	5%	+/-2%	5%
Other	4	1%	+/-1%	1%
No, I have not participated in decision making and designing of strategies about guidance services	228	77%	+/-4%	77%
Total		128%		

TABLE 8.11

What would be an effective way for you as a user of guidance to have your voice heard on the delivery of guidance?

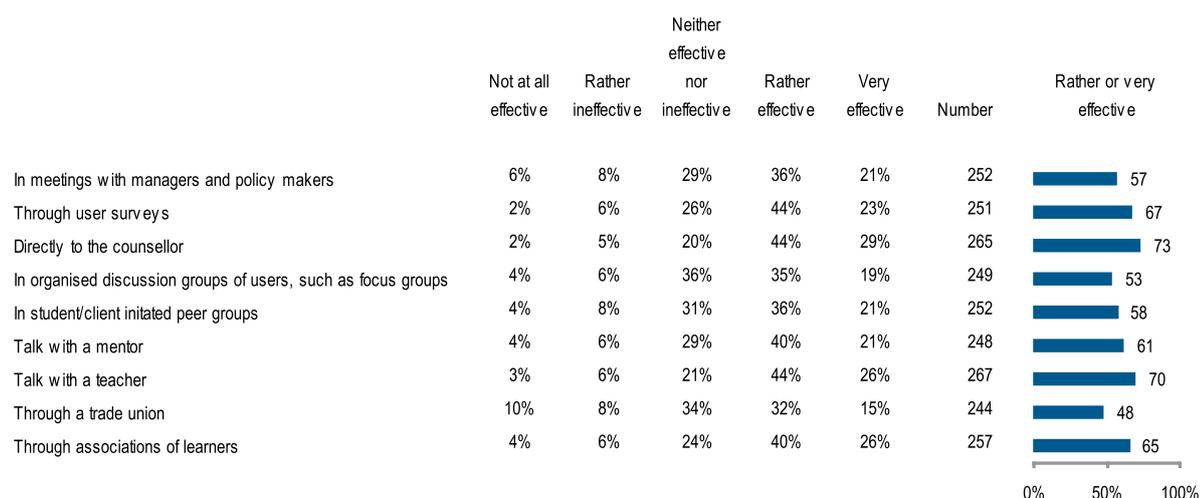


Figure 8.5 confirms that it is important for users to take part in the improvement of guidance and participate in decision making and designing of guidance services.

Most users think that the most effective way to make their voice heard is by giving feedback directly to the counsellor (see table 8.11). Around three of every four of the respondents agreed that this would be

an effective way to have their voice heard on the delivery of guidance. But both user surveys and talking to a teacher are also, according to the users, effective ways to make their voices heard. The high proportion of respondents who feel that “talk with a teacher” would be effective (70%) can probably be explained with the fact that teachers have both interviews about the educational progress with students and course surveys

evaluating the study courses the users have passed.

Based on the results from this question users seem to feel that there are several ways to get their voices heard. Altogether this underlines a situation where, in the future, counsellors have to use much more channels to be able to hear the voices of the users.

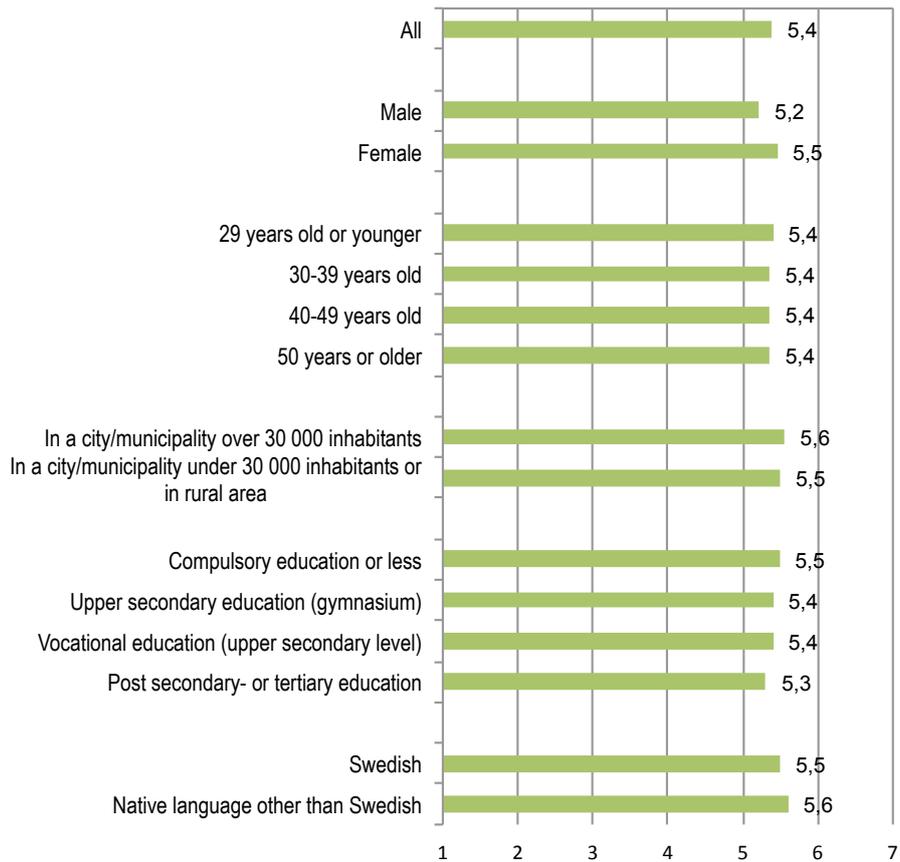
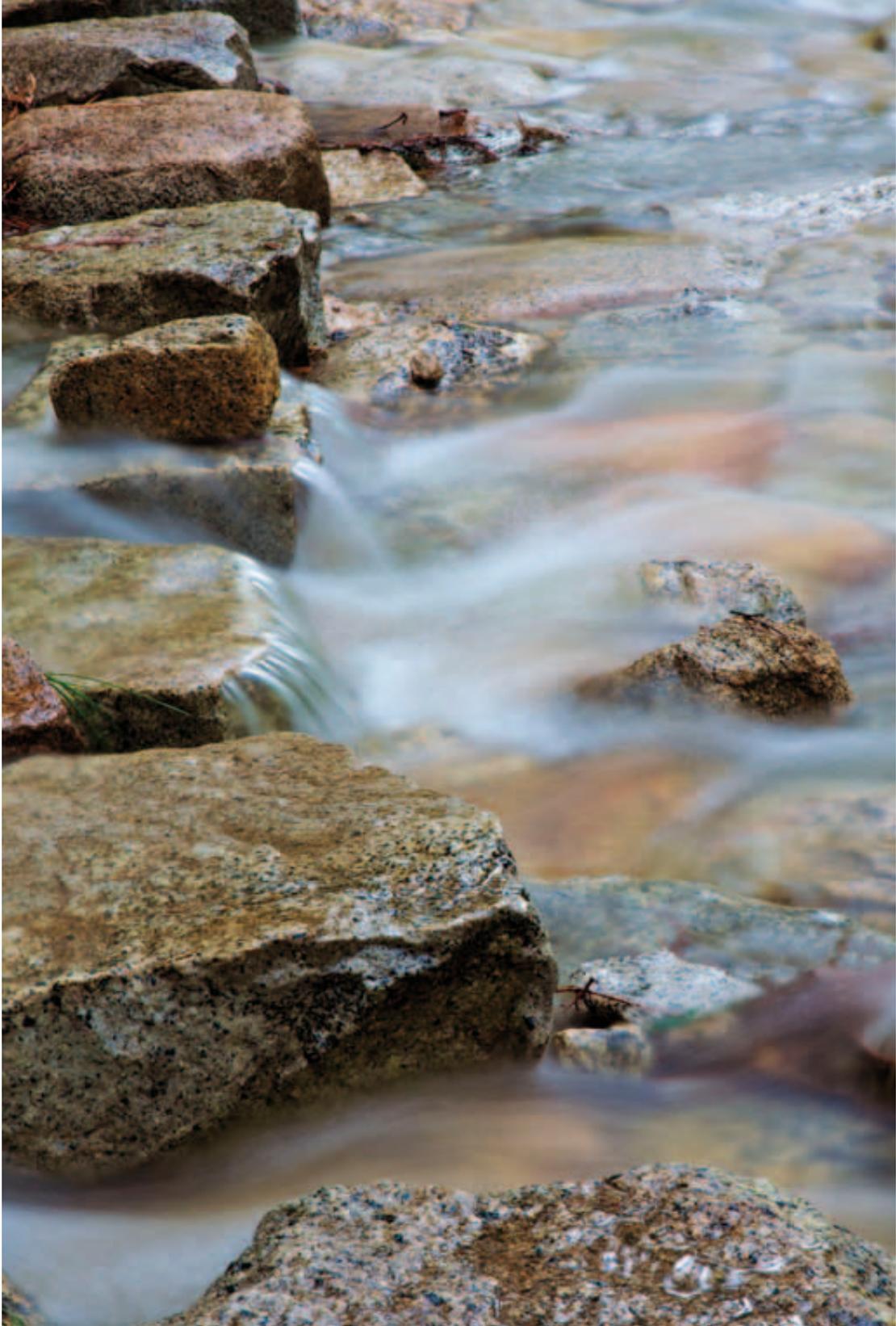


FIGURE 8.5

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important. The figure shows results by gender, age, residence and educational level





# COMPARISON OF RESULTS ACROSS COUNTRIES

## 9.1. Participation in guidance – modes of delivery

The results show that there are some important differences between the countries in the type of guidance respondents participated in (see figure 9.1). Although face-to-face individual interview with guidance counsellor was by far the most frequent form of guidance in all the countries, the proportion of those who had experienced such guidance was somewhat lower in some of the countries, especially in Finland (62%). The proportion of those who had experienced face-to-face guidance was on the other hand highest in Norway (88%) and Denmark (82%).

As figure 9.1 shows, telephone interviews with guidance counsellors were somewhat more frequent in Denmark, Norway and Finland (19-24%) than in Iceland and Sweden (9-15%), whereas higher proportion of respondents had experienced group sessions with guidance counsellors in Denmark, Iceland and Finland (22-25%) than in Sweden and Norway (9-11%).

Web-based guidance was by far most frequently used in Finland of the five countries. About half of the respondents in Finland had experienced guidance through the

internet (48%), whereas somewhere between 7 and 17% of the respondents in the other countries had been guided through the internet.

There were also some clear differences in the use of guidance from teachers. In Finland and Denmark 36-39% of respondents had been guided by a teacher whereas 14-17% had been guided by a teacher in Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

In Finland, guidance seems not only to be different from the other countries in terms of more frequent use of the web as a delivery mode of educational and vocational guidance. Guidance is also more often an integrated part of lessons and teaching activities in Finland. Roughly two thirds (42%) of the Finnish respondents said that they had experienced guidance as integrated in lessons and about one fourth of the Icelandic respondents, whereas this was the case among 12-15% of the respondents in Norway, Denmark and Sweden. The reason for this difference lies in the organisation of teaching and guidance in the institutions of the Finnish sample.

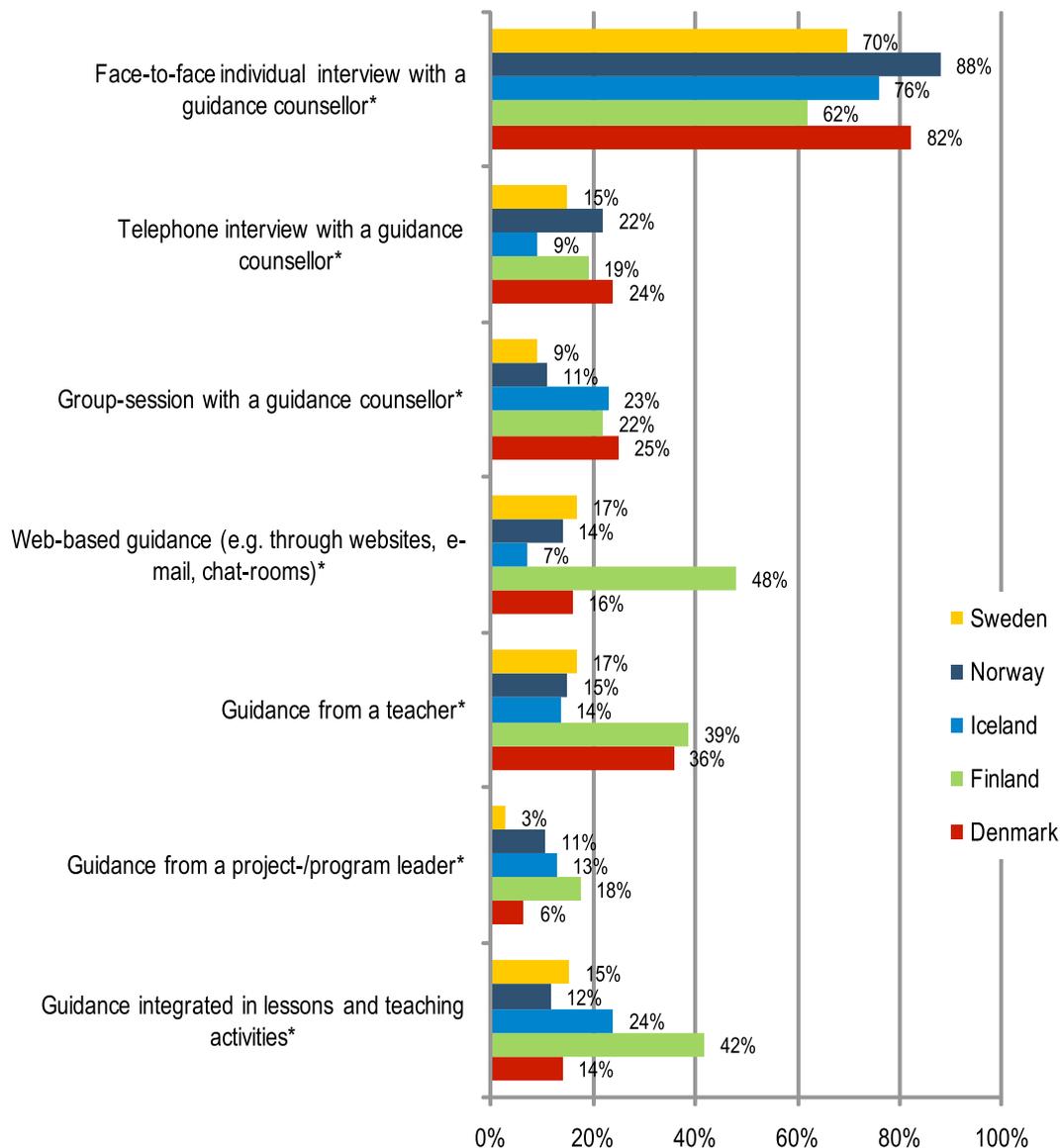


FIGURE 9.1

What kind of educational and vocational guidance did you participate in?

Respondents were asked about how many sessions they had experienced of the types of guidance they mentioned. Results, presented in figure 9.2, show that for some of the types of guidance there are differences across countries in the number of sessions respondents experience. For example, for those who had experienced face-to-face interviews with a guidance counsellor, the proportion who had experienced three or more sessions was higher in Denmark (62%) than in Sweden (41%) or in Finland, Iceland and Norway (23-34%). Similarly, the proportion

of respondents from Denmark and Finland who had experienced group sessions with a guidance counsellor three times or more often was higher (63-64%) than in the rest of the countries (28-41%). It is interesting to note that the number of sessions experienced seems to be overall among the lowest for the Icelandic users of guidance, across different modes of delivery.

Respondents were asked where they learned about the educational and vocational guidance services. Results are shown in figure 9.3. Most of the respondents from Finland, Sweden

and Denmark had learned about the guidance services as a part of an educational program they were attending or at school (48-60%), whereas most of the Norwegian participants had learned about it through the directorate of labour (43%). In Iceland, most of the participants had learned about the services either as a part of an educational program (32%) or through the directorate of labour (30%). A similar percentage had learned about it through the directorate of labour in Finland and Denmark (30-33%). It is interesting to note that up to one fifth of the

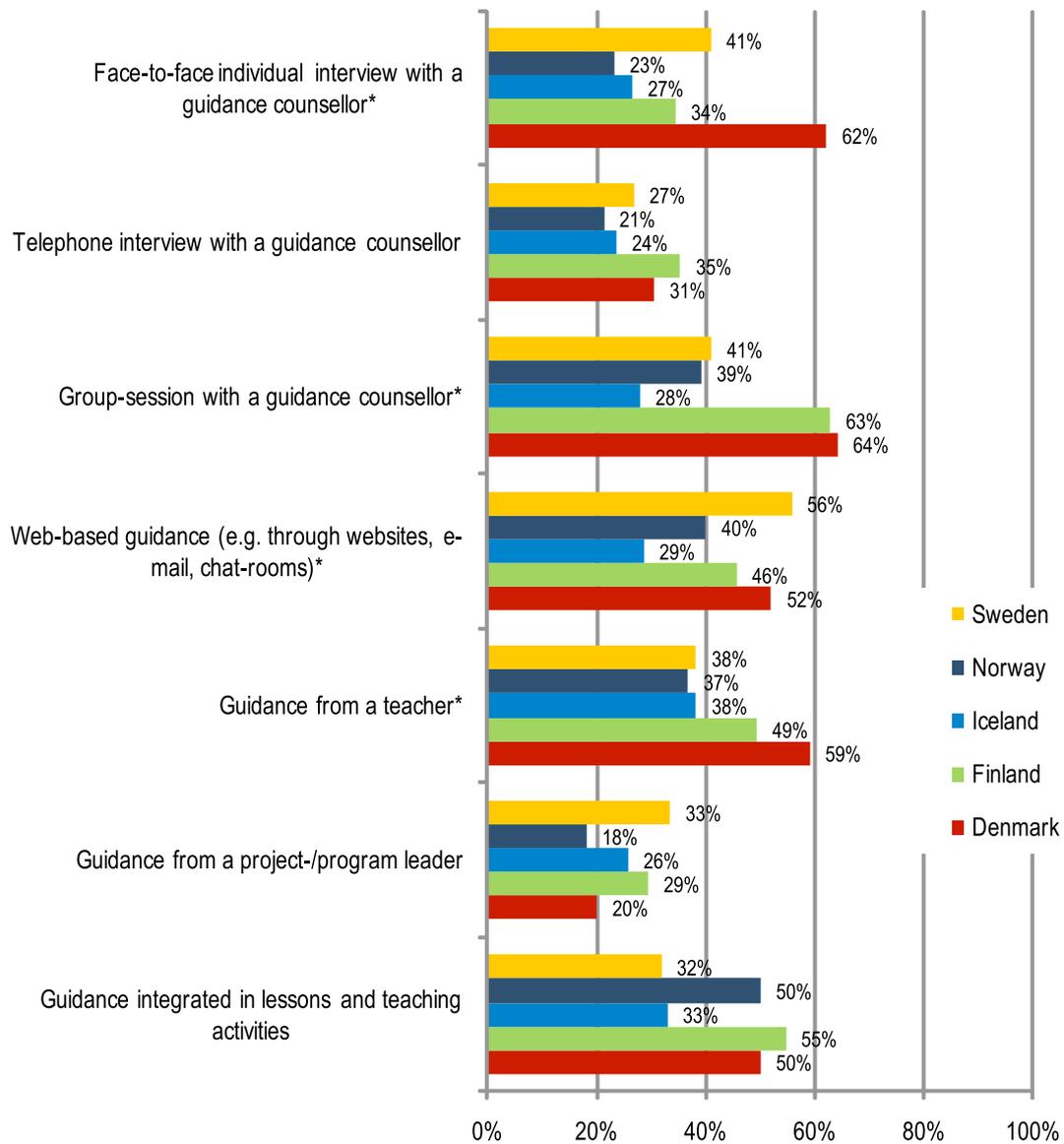


FIGURE 9.2

How many sessions did you have? Proportion of respondents who had experienced three or more sessions of the respective mode of delivery

respondents in Iceland had learned about the services at work, or about 19%, which is somewhat higher than in the other countries. The reason for this may be that the guidance services of the LLL centres in Iceland are partly organised as outreach activity, i.e. where counsellors visit workplaces in order to introduce their services. It is also noteworthy that around 15% of the Icelandic respondents said that they had first learned about the services through their union. As unions are stakeholders in the Education and Training Centre, which again regulates the LLL centres in Iceland they may be serving as important figures in marketing the services the LLL centres provide.

## 9.2. Outcomes of guidance and perceived role of counsellor

On the grounds of the 14 statements, about possible outcome of educational and vocational guidance, a factor analysis resulted in three factors, one measuring educational outcome, another vocational outcome and the third personal outcome. The results on the three factors and the underlying items (statements) across countries are presented in figures 9.4-9.7.

The mean rating of respondents towards the educational outcome of their guidance was the most positive of the three factors in all the countries. On a scale of 1-5 where a higher value indicates more educational outcome, the average rating for educational outcome was 3.4-3.7,

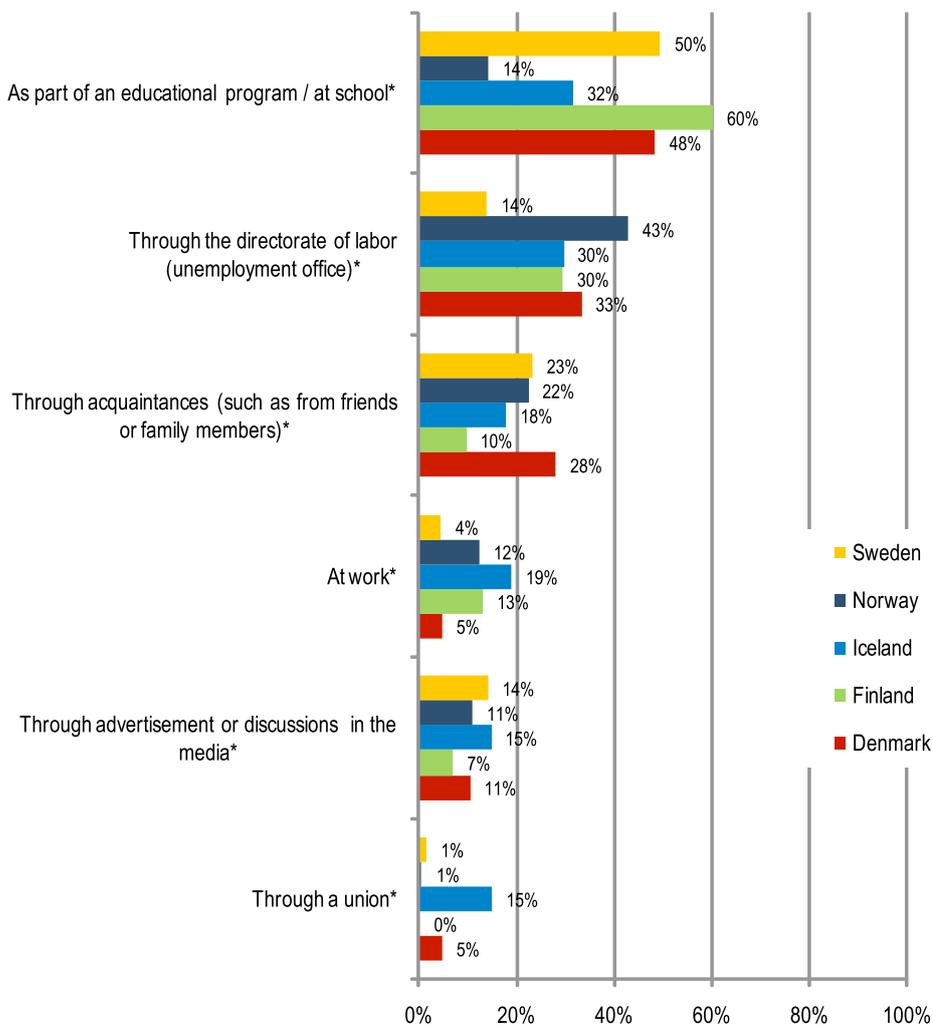


FIGURE 9.3

Where did you learn about the educational and vocational guidance services?

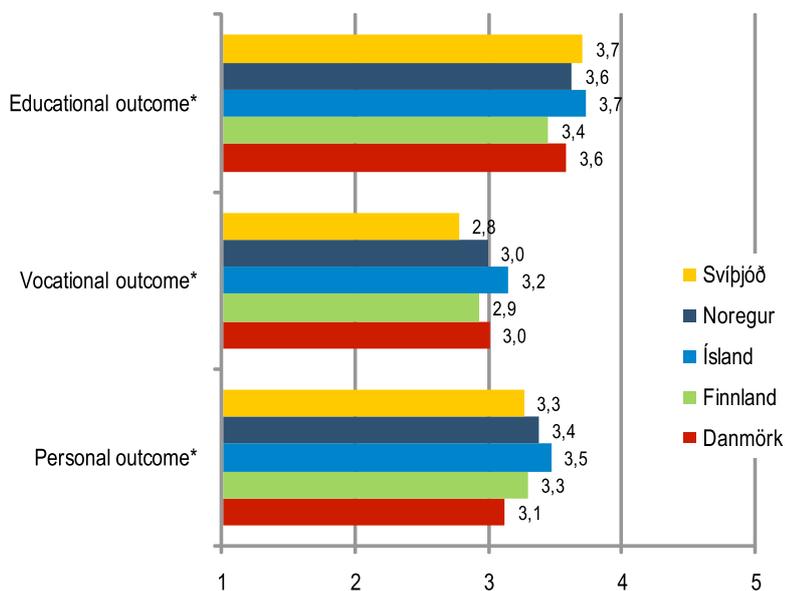


FIGURE 9.4

Mean ratings of educational outcomes, career outcomes and personal outcomes

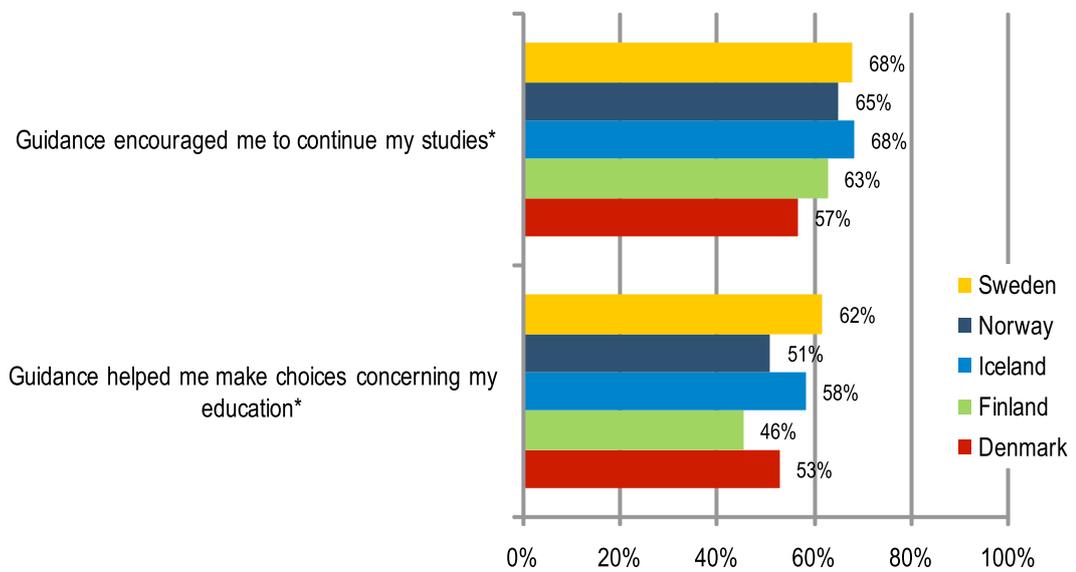


FIGURE 9.5

The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with these statements in terms of the outcomes of their guidance experience? Educational outcomes

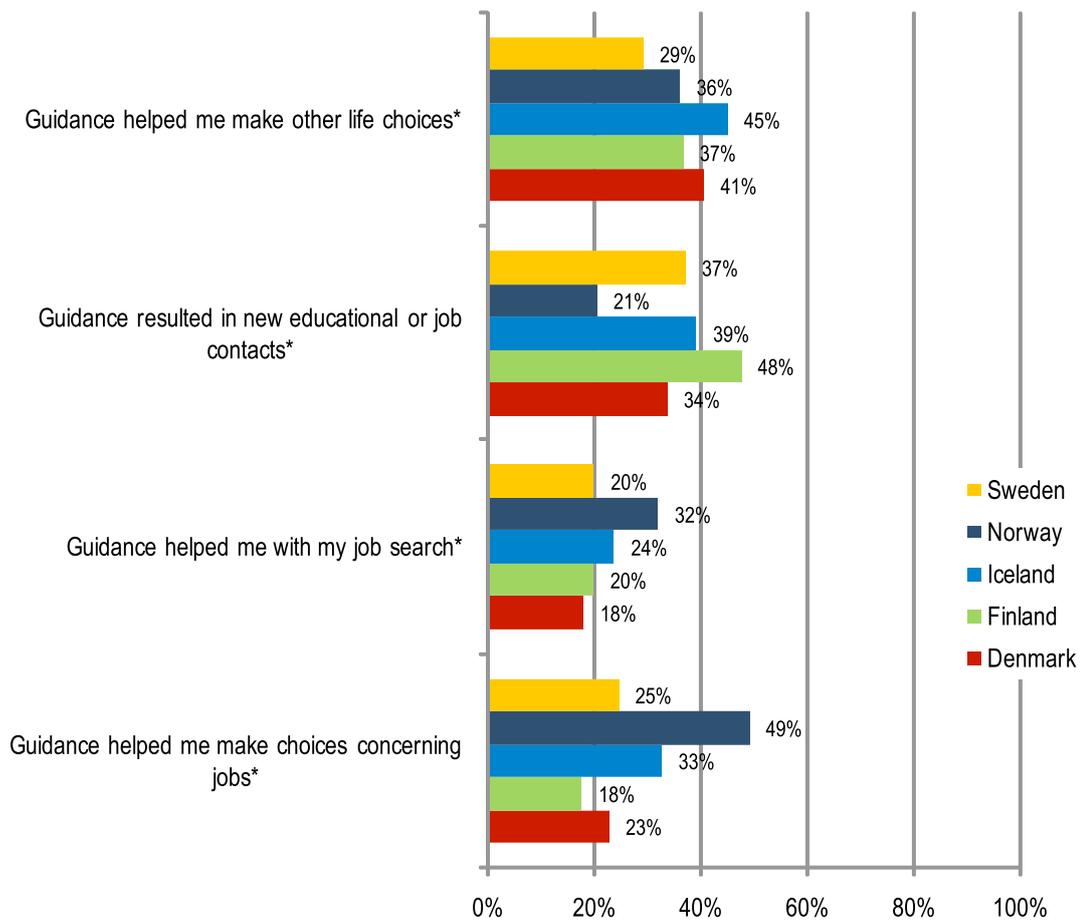


FIGURE 9.6

The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with these statements in terms of the outcomes of their guidance experience? Career outcomes

whereas it was considerably lower on the factor measuring vocational outcome (2.8-3.2) and somewhat lower on the factor measuring personal outcome (3.1-3.5). The trend seems to be in concordance across countries: Users of guidance in adult education seem to feel that the outcome of their guidance is particularly of an educational and personal nature, but to a less extent focused directly on vocational matters.

Figures 9.5-9.7 show the results on each of the statements of respective three factors. It is interesting to note the certain difference in the responses across countries in these figures, especially in figure 9.7 on the personal outcomes of guidance. Overall, the Danish participants seem to be some-

what the least in agreement with the outcome of guidance as presented in these statements, whereas the Icelandic and the Norwegian participants seem to be among those who are in most agreement with these being the outcome of their guidance.

The respondents who had been guided by a guidance counsellor were asked to rate the counsellor according to different statements regarding their experience of him/her (see figure 9.8). As the figure shows, responses across country varied considerably towards some of the statements. Overall, the respondents from Iceland and Norway, and to some extent Finland, were those who were in most agreement with these statements about the counsel-

lor, whereas the respondents from Sweden and Denmark were less in agreement with these. For example, a higher proportion of respondents in Iceland and Norway felt that the counsellor had been supportive and understanding as well as encouraging than in the other countries and the respondents in Iceland, Norway and Finland were also to a more extent in agreement with statements about the counsellor encouraging active participation and involvement of the client.

Overall, respondents were rather satisfied with their guidance (see figure 9.9). On a scale of 1-7 where a higher value indicates more satisfaction, the mean ratings were between 4.8 and 5.5.

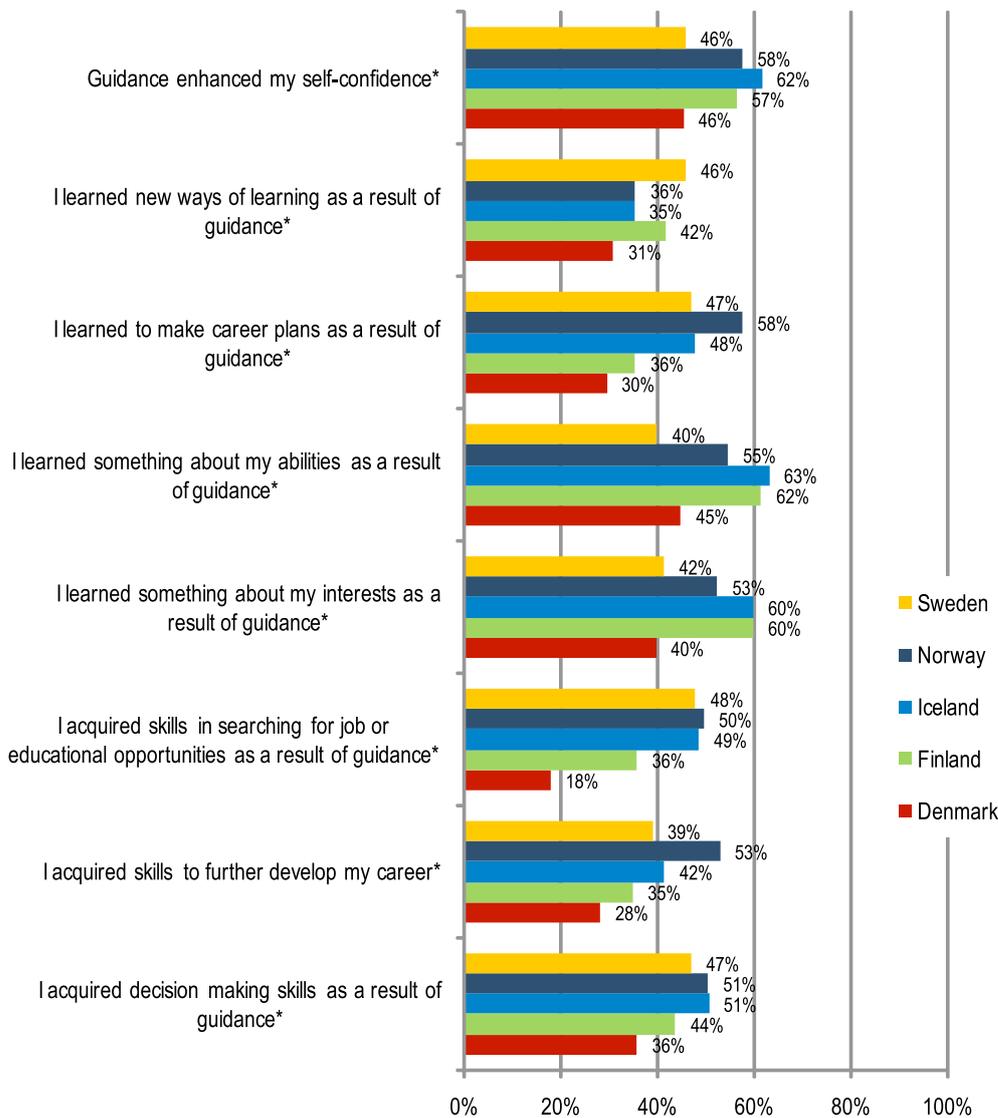


FIGURE 9.7

The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with these statements in terms of the outcomes of their guidance experience? Personal outcomes

### The guidance counsellor...

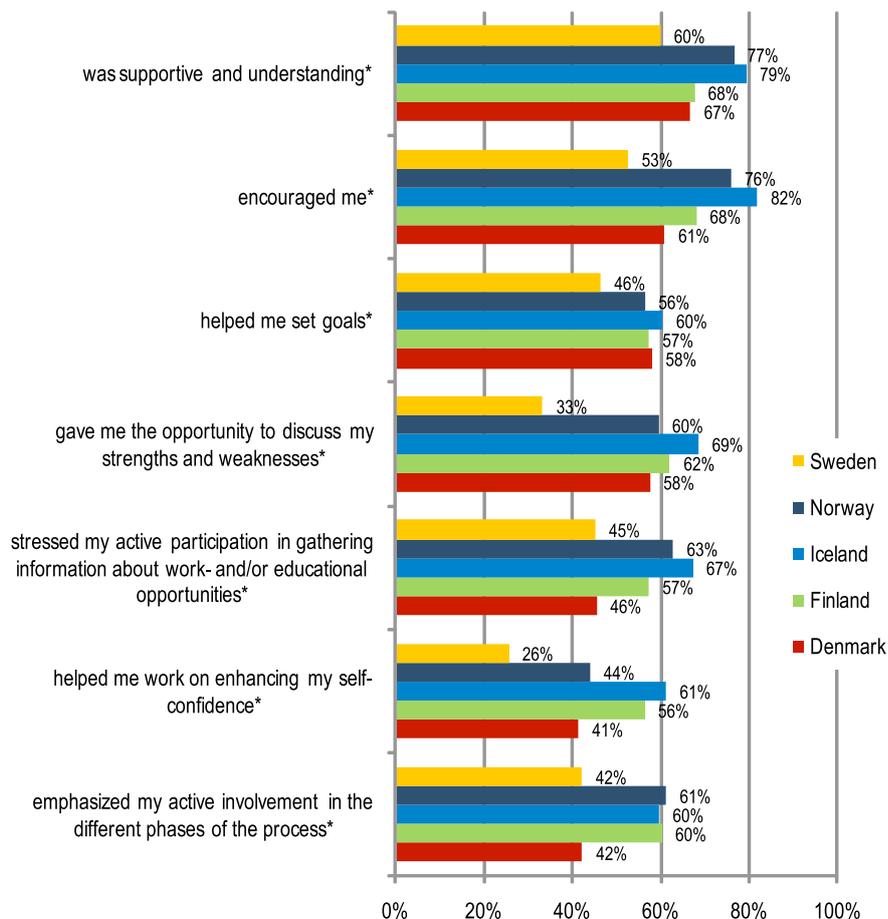


FIGURE 9.8

The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with these statements about the guidance counsellor that worked with them

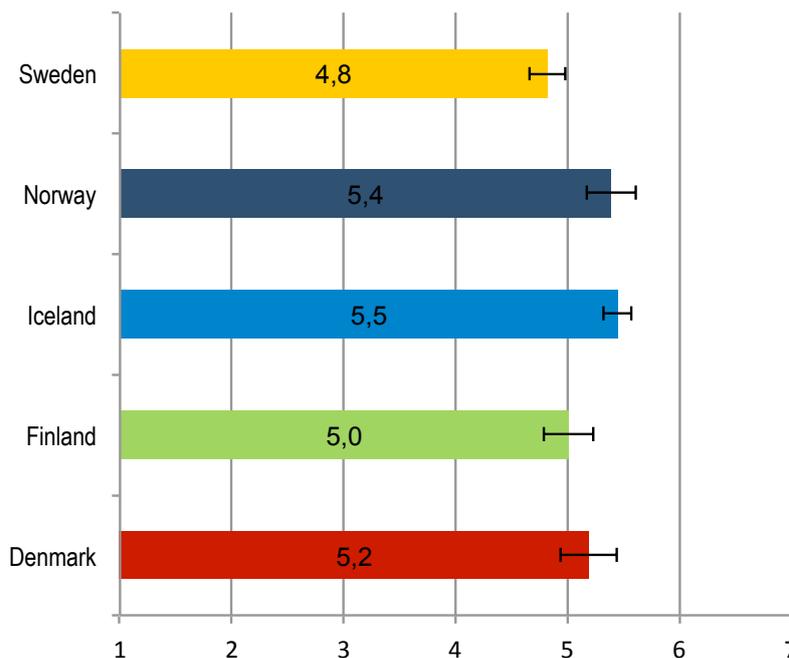


FIGURE 9.9

Satisfaction with guidance on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very dissatisfied and 7 very satisfied.

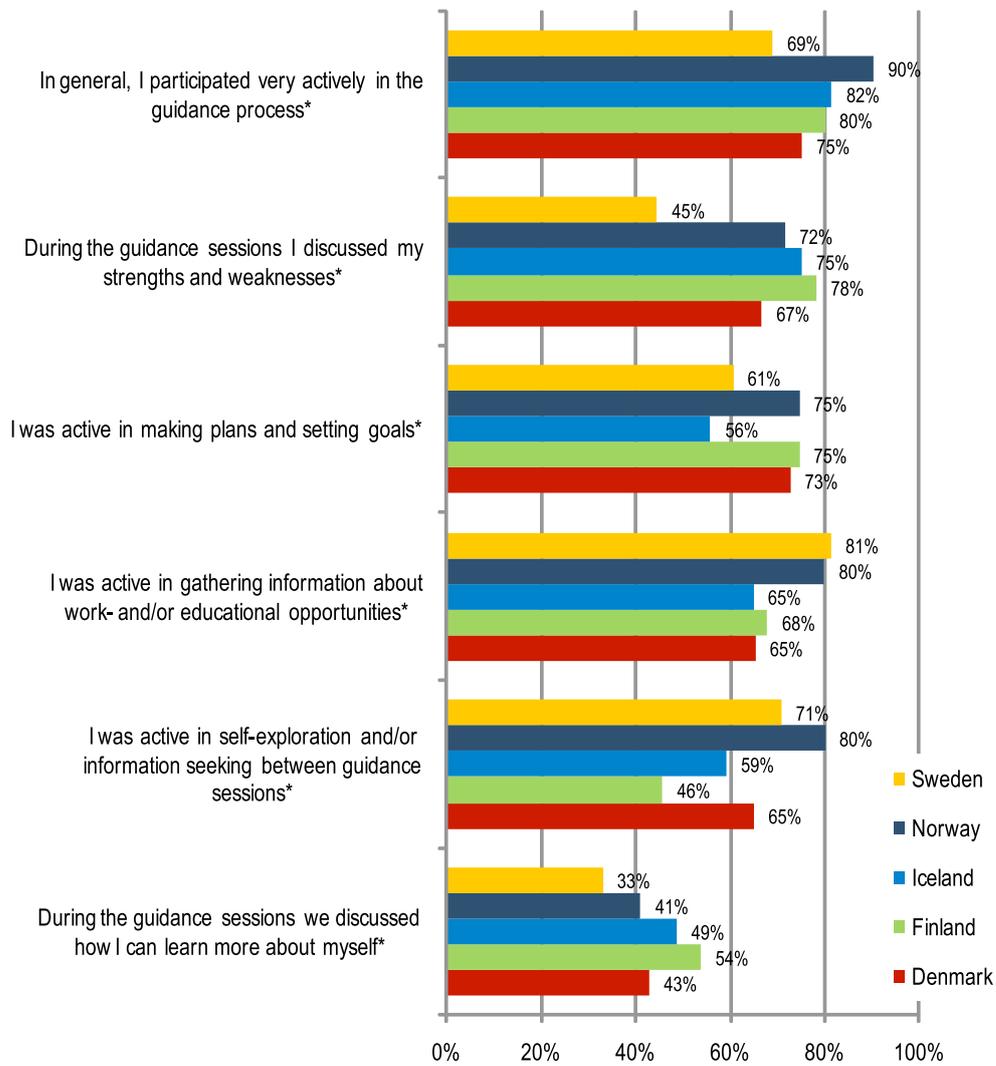


FIGURE 9.10

The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree with statements these about their participation in the guidance?

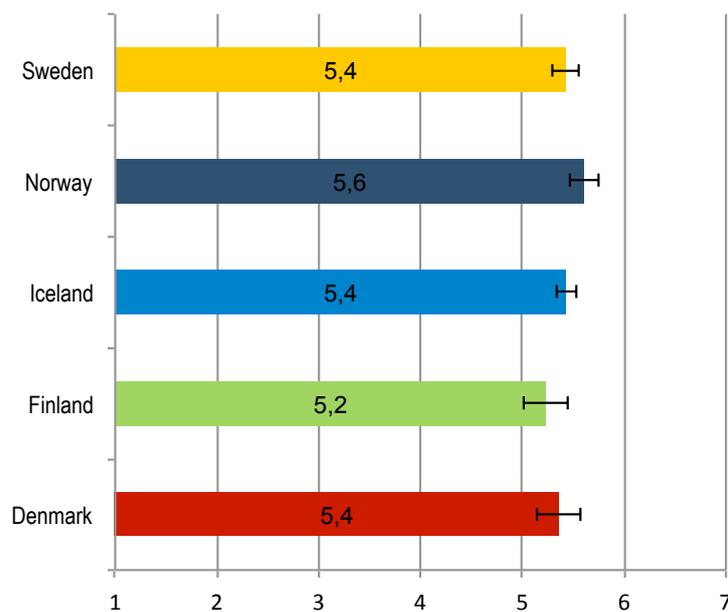


FIGURE 9.11

Perceived involvement in guidance process on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means that the respondent was very passive and 7 very active.

### 9.3. Involvement in the guidance process – information gathering (level 1)

The participants in the survey were asked to rate how active they were themselves in their guidance on different statements. The results in figure 9.10 show the proportion of respondents in each of the countries that agreed with the respective statement. The figure shows that, for most of the statements, the majority of respondents feel that they were active during their guidance. However, there are clear differences in responses across countries towards some of the statements. For example, only 45% of the respondents in Sweden feel that they discussed their strengths and weaknesses during guidance sessions compared to 67-78% of the respondents in the other countries. The respondents in Sweden and Iceland were also less likely to agree with the statement that they were active in making plans and setting goals. The Finnish participants were on the other hand less likely to feel that they had been active in self-exploration and/or information seeking between guidance sessions (46%) compared to the respondents from the other countries (59-80%).

Participants rated their involvement in the guidance process on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very passive and 7 meant very active. The mean ratings of respondents in each of the countries are presented in figure 9.11. As the figure shows, respondents rated themselves as having been rather active during the guidance process in all the countries, or on average somewhere between 5.2 and 5.6.

### 9.4. Evaluation of guidance – sharing of information (level 2)

The results indicate that overall users of guidance are not systematically involved in terms of evaluating and providing feedback on services. Figure 9.12 shows the results on the question about if respondents had been given a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance services. Around half of the respondents (49-55%) in Denmark, Iceland and Sweden reported that they had not been given a chance to evaluate the services and up to one third (28-35%) in Norway and Finland. Some reported giving informal feedback about services to their counsellor, either verbally or by e-mail (20-49%),

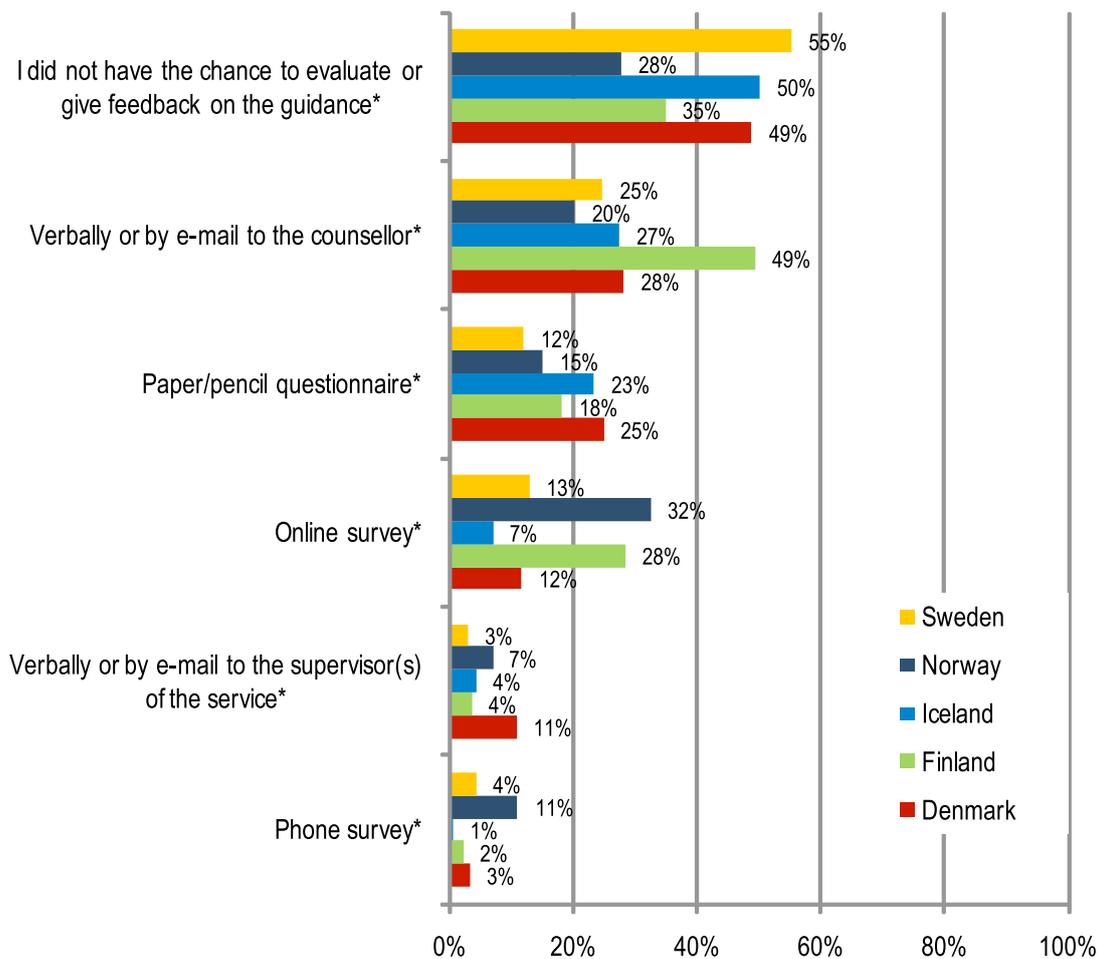


FIGURE 9.12

Did you have a chance to evaluate or give feedback on the guidance you received by using any of the following?

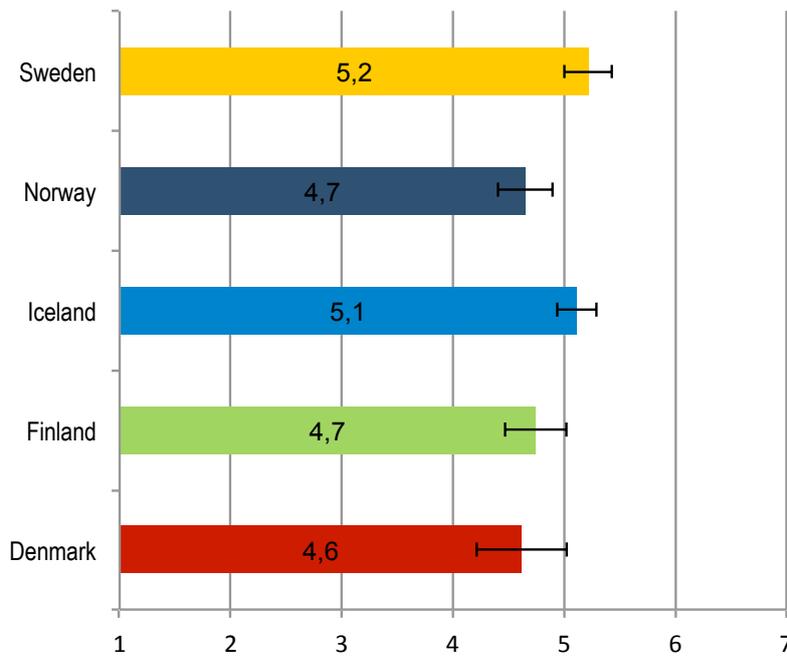


FIGURE 9.13

Do you think that your feedback on guidance is likely or unlikely to result in improvements in the guidance service? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unlikely and 7 very likely.

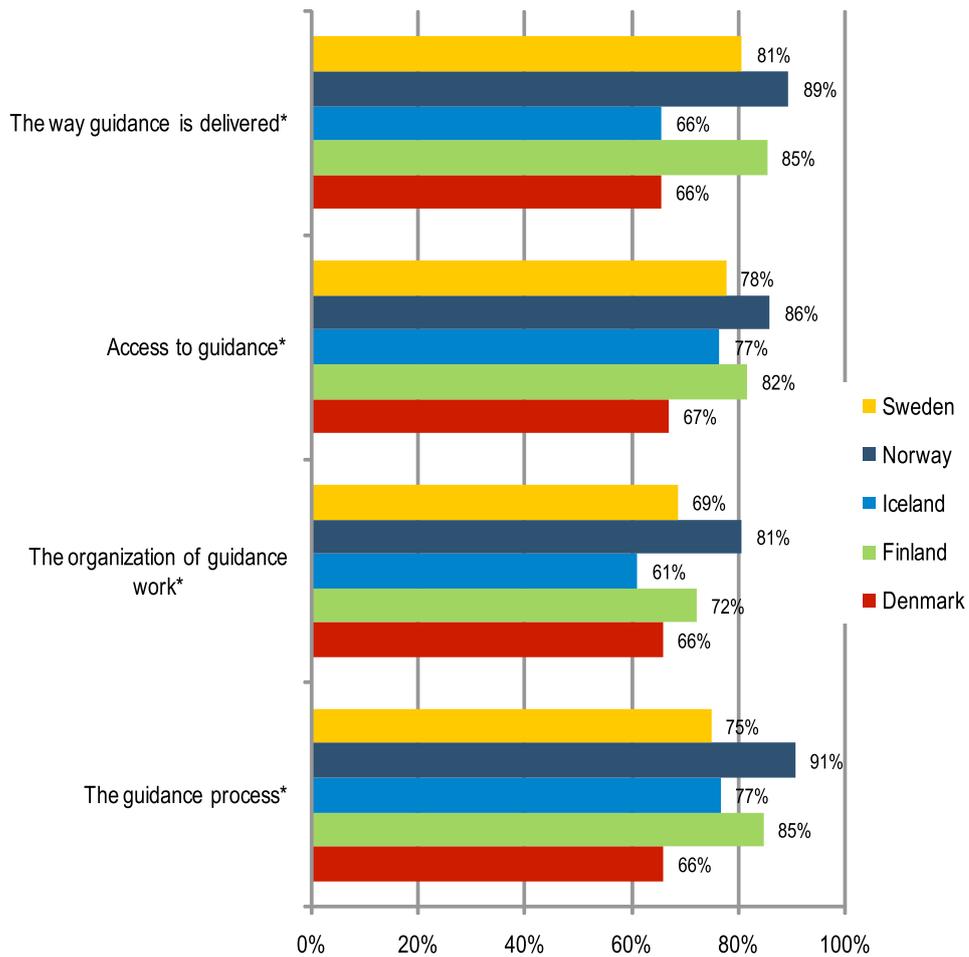


FIGURE 9.14

The proportion of respondents who agree or strongly agree that it is important that users of guidance have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on the following

whereas others had been given a chance to take part in surveys, either on paper (12-25%), the web (7-32%) or through telephone interviews (1-11%).

The participants who reported having had a chance to evaluate the guidance services were further asked if they thought it would be likely that their feedback would result in improvement in the guidance services on a scale of 1-7 where 1 meant very unlikely and 7 very likely (see figure 9.13). As the figure shows, participants rated it as somewhat likely that their feedback would result in improvements in the guidance services, or on average between 4.6 and 5.2 depending on country. Given that the neutral value is 4 on average respondents were more than less positive towards the effect of their feedback.

Overall, users of guidance seem to hold the opinion that it is important for them to have the opportunity to evaluate or give feedback on services. As table 9.14 shows, most of the respondents, or between 66 and 91%, feel

that it is important the users have the chance to evaluate different aspects of guidance services. Overall, the Norwegian participants seem to be the ones most positive towards the importance of user evaluation of services whereas the Danish participants are the most critical in this respect.

## 9.5. Evaluation of guidance – forums of debate (level 3)

The participants in the survey were addressed about their involvement in guidance at level 3 which is called Forums of debate, in terms of if they had been consulted, i.e. participated in meetings and discussion groups, about different aspects of guidance services (see figure 9.15). By far, most of the respondents reported that they had not participated in meetings and discussion groups about guidance services, or between 73 and 89%. The

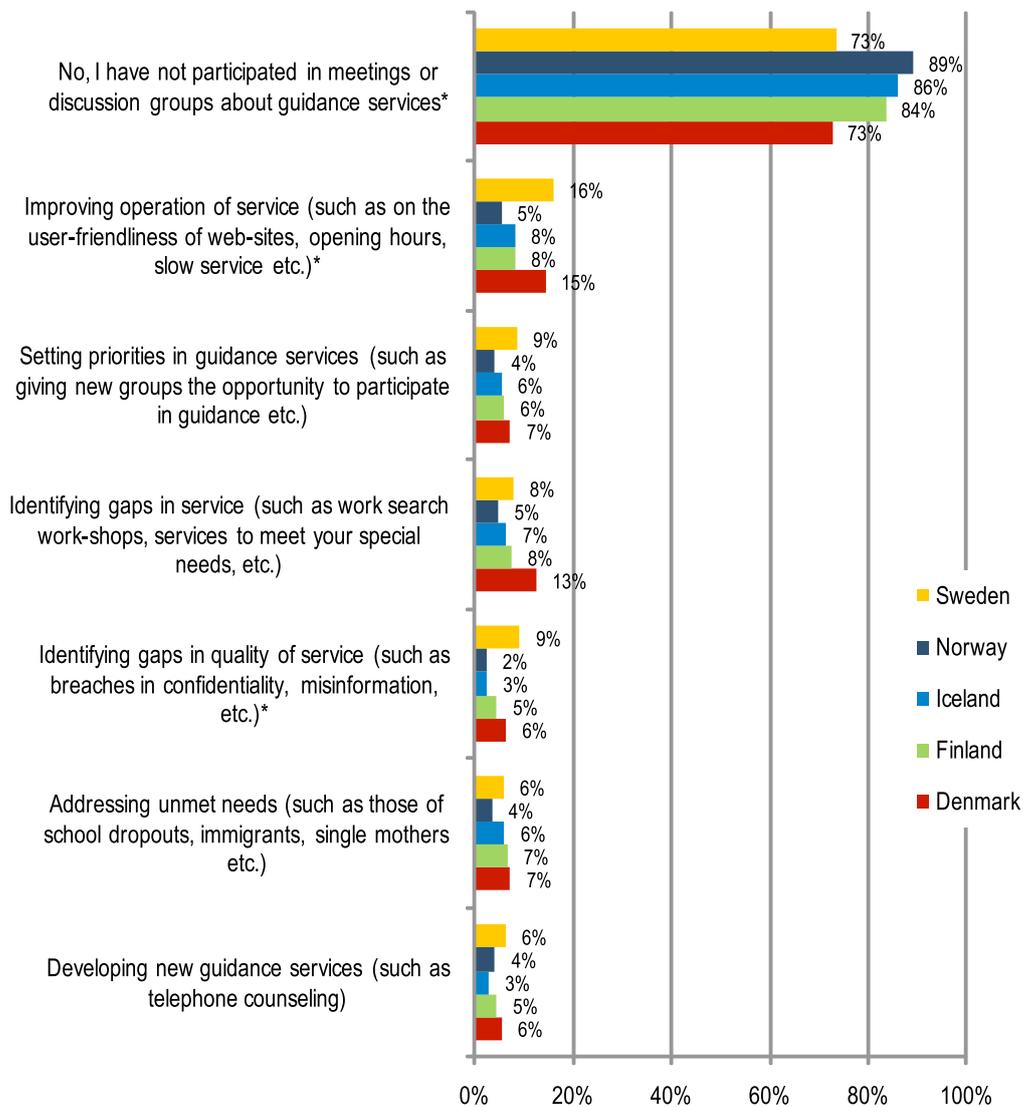


FIGURE 9.15

Have you as a user of guidance been consulted (participated in meetings or discussion groups) on the following concerning guidance services?

Danish and the Swedish participants were, however, somewhat more likely to have been consulted on improving the operation of service (15-16%) and 13% of the Danish respondents had been consulted regarding identifying gaps in services, but overall only a small proportion had been consulted in this way.

Figure 9.16 shows the results regarding the question whether it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted. As the figure shows, participants reported it as rather important for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted and marked on average 5.1-5.7 out

of seven. It is interesting to note that the Norwegian respondents were somewhat less positive towards the importance of users being consulted than the other respondents, especially those in Iceland, Finland and Sweden.

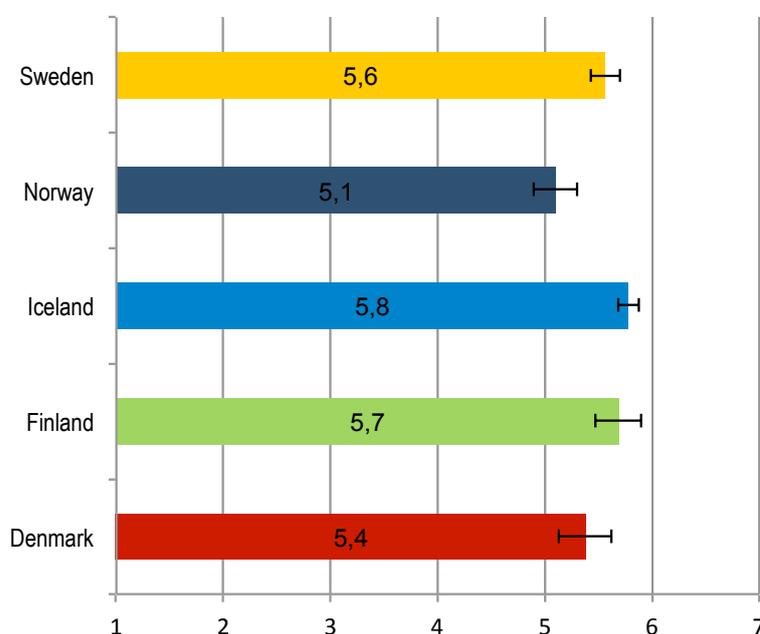


FIGURE 9.16

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users are consulted? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important.

## 9.6. Evaluation of guidance – participation (level 4)

The participants in the survey were further addressed about their involvement in guidance at level 4, Participation. Respondents were asked whether they had participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance (see figure 9.17). As in the involvement at level 4, by far most of the respondents reported not having participated in decision making and designing of

strategies in guidance, or between 75 and 92%. Again, the Danish and the Swedish participants were, however, somewhat more likely than the participants from the other countries to have been involved in improving the operation of service (14%). Overall, only a small proportion had been involved at this level.

As at the lower levels of involvement, respondents felt that it was rather important that users participated in decision making and designing of strategies regarding guidance services.

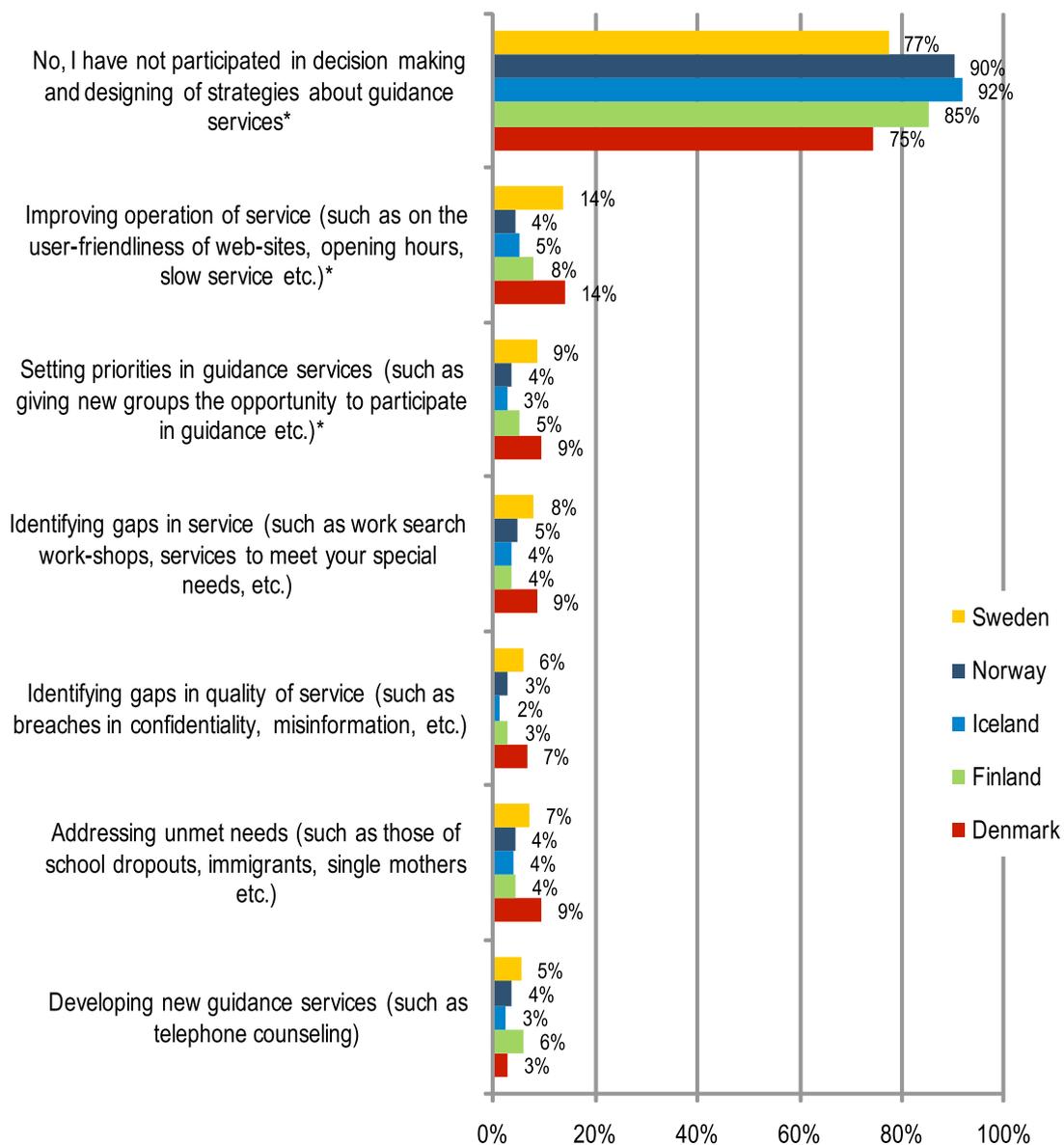


FIGURE 9.17

Have you as a user of guidance participated in decision making and designing of strategies in guidance? Participation in designing of strategies refers to deciding how guidance should be operated and the amount of guidance each should get.

Figure 9.18 shows the results regarding the question whether it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services. As the figure shows, participants reported it as rather important for the in improvement of guidance that

users are consulted and marked on average 4.8-5.4 out of seven. Again, the Norwegian respondents were somewhat less positive towards the importance of user involvement at this level, at least when compared to the ones in Sweden.

The participants were finally ad-

ressed with a question concerning what they thought would be an effective way for them as users of guidance to have their voices heard on the delivery of guidance. Results on this question are reported in figure 9.19. As the figure shows, most of the respondents felt that addressing the counsellor directly would be

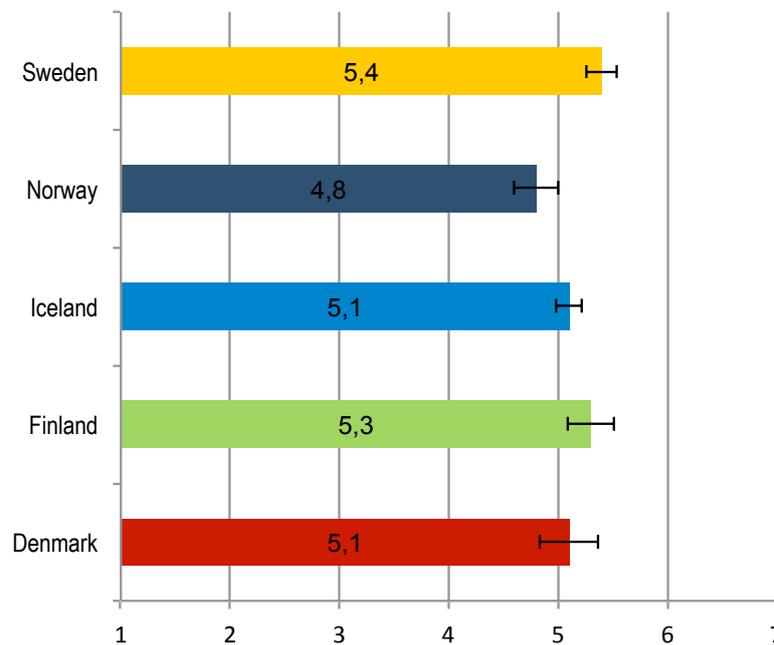


FIGURE 9.18

Do you think that it is important or unimportant for the improvement of guidance that users participate in decision making and designing of guidance services? Participants answered on the scale of 1-7 where 1 means very unimportant and 7 very important.

an effective way to have their voices heard (66-88%). Also, a high proportion of respondents across countries reported the teacher, a mentor, user surveys and organised discussion groups as an effective platform for giving feedback. It is worth noting that the proportion of respondents in Denmark who marked these as effective agents in having their voices heard was lower than among the respondents in the other countries. Also, the proportion who mentioned the teacher and a mentor

was especially high in Finland and the proportion who mentioned organised discussion groups was higher in Norway than in the other countries. Finally, it is interesting to note that the Swedish participants were more positive that the participants in the other countries towards the effectiveness of associations of learners, student peer groups and trade unions in having the voices of users of guidance heard.

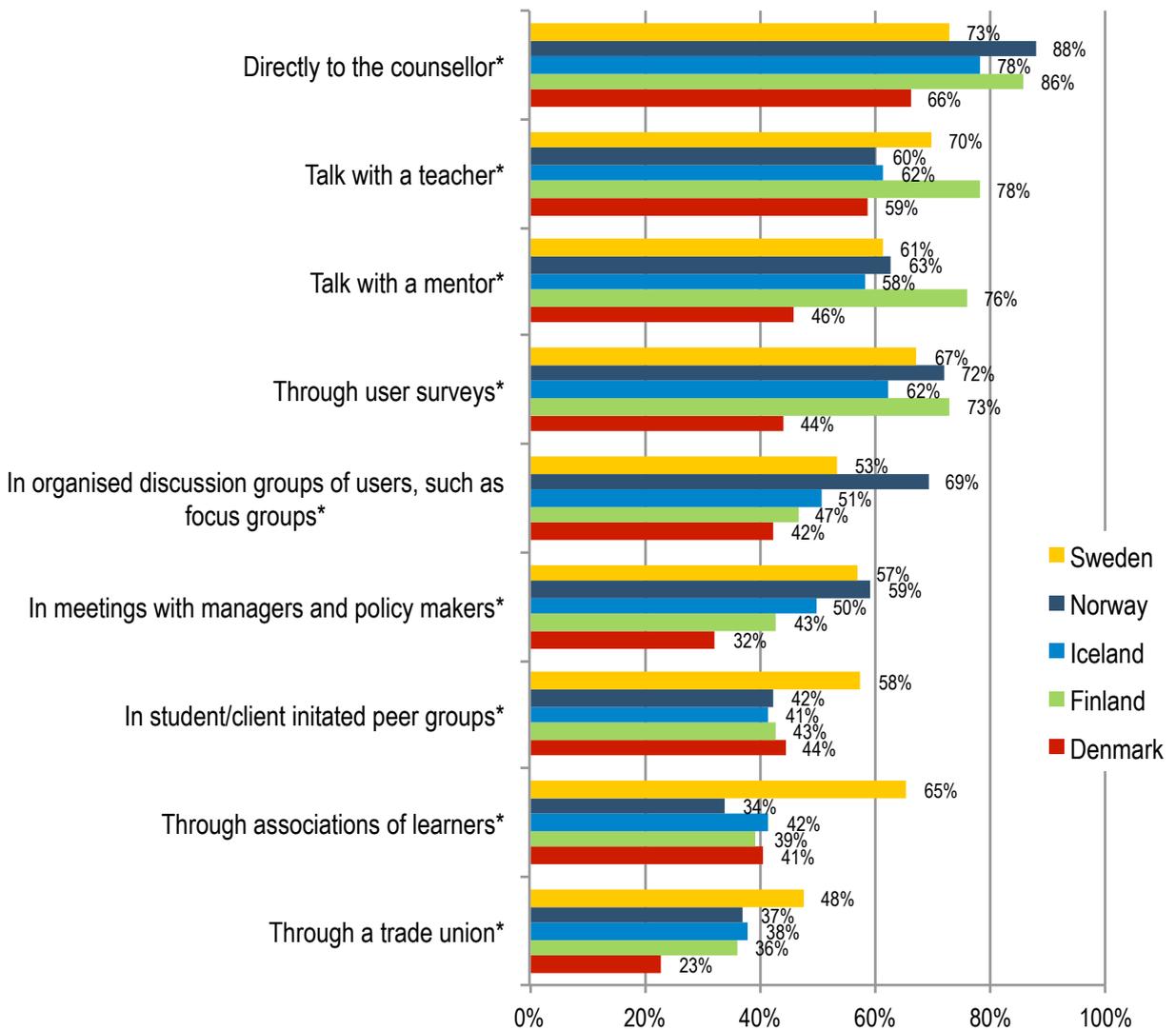


FIGURE 9.19

The proportion who reported that the following way would be rather or very effective in having their voices heard as users of guidance on the delivery of guidance?





# DISCUSSION

**T**his research gives valuable information on the provision of guidance services as well as on the current approach of users to policy making and organisation of services. The information gathered in the study is valuable to policy makers of guidance services that can refer to an outline of learning outcomes in guidance, delivery modes of guidance and client satisfaction of adult guidance. The results also reveal that evaluation of guidance is too scarce and user involvement is an under-utilised resource in design and policy making in adult guidance.

The research questions are:

1. Do we listen to the voices of adult users of guidance?
2. Are they involved in policy development and design of the guidance services?
3. What are the guidance delivery modes in adult education?
4. How satisfied are adults with the guidance services?
5. What are the outcomes of guidance for its adult users?

## Adult guidance is often not evaluated

The question whether we listen to the voices of adult users of guidance gives us rather negative results. One third to half of the respondents have never been asked to evaluate the guidance service, although they think their feedback would improve the services. Respondents think that giving feedback on the way guidance is delivered is important, both on access to guidance and on the organisation of guidance work as well as on the guidance process. It is clear that users see the purpose in giving feedback, but for some reason evaluation does not take place in a considerable number of adult guidance services in the Nordic countries. In the focus group interviews some managers were sceptical about the feedback process, since they felt that they gave little information, as nearly everyone had given positive feedback and therefore it didn't lead to any results or changes in the services. Some users said they were unsure about the impact of user surveys or even didn't trust that anyone would read them. Users were more confident that it would be of use to talk things over with a counsellor. A reason might be that the evaluation programmes are of low quality.

## User involvement is rarely practiced

The answer to the question of user involvement in policy development and design in the guidance services is rather clear cut. On the whole users are not participating in forums of debate or other kind of participation on policy or design of guidance services. However, they are very eager to be involved. This is without doubt a very important finding of this research and gives an optimistic view on possible ways of developing guidance policies. The policy makers have until now been representatives of ministries, social partners and professional bodies, each putting forward their point of view. The voice of users has been missing, but the present study shows us that they want their opinions to be heard. This, as well as the emphasis put on the involvement of users in a quality assurance system of guidance in the recent ELGPN report (2010), supports that policy makers of adult guidance in the Nordic countries should seriously consider the inclusion of users in evaluation mechanisms, in forums of debate and other policy making instances.

A minority of the respondents in the questionnaire survey said that they had been involved in organisation and policy making. It is of interest to map in a further research, what kind of involvement is taking place and in what form.

## Channels of user involvement need to be created

When asked about methods or channels of possible involvement, most of the respondents talk about discussions with the counsellor, teacher, mentor or discussion groups. They also see user surveys and meetings with managers as channels of involvement. The users see themselves as consultants on the functioning and policy of the guidance services, but in fact they are not being consulted. It might be a hindrance here that no formal channels of consultation exist. An

example of such a channel might be a user forum or representatives of users in policy committees, but these channels have not been created within the lifelong learning sector. Managers in focus groups were convinced that resources in guidance would be used more efficiently if users acted as consultants. And more than one focus group made it clear that users want to be seriously involved, for example users in a Norwegian focus group who liked the idea of being invited to the board rooms where the decisions are made, but stressed the importance of “felt involvement”, not just “said involvement”, meaning that they want to have a real chance to contribute in developing good adult career guidance systems in their region. In short, they need a more formal and systematic invitation to participate in the shaping of future guidance services. We can therefore conclude that if users are to be involved in policy making and organization of services it has to be done in a systematic and serious way, not only on the surface.

## Traditional model of guidance

The present study gives interesting information about the delivery modes of guidance. There are indications that adult guidance is based on a traditional model of guidance, most of it takes place in face-to-face interviews and new technologies are slowly being adopted, with the exception of Finland, where use of ICT in guidance is more developed than in the other four countries. ICT technologies have a great potential within guidance and can increase access to guidance. This research tells us that Finland is using this channel of guidance to a greater extent than the other countries. A coherent ICT system is inexistent in Iceland and can explain the fact that very few respondents say that it is used in guidance. But in the other three countries ICT is not used very much either, which tells us that even though sophisticated ICT guidance systems are available, this does not guarantee their use in guidance. An

explanation for this might be found in lack of training, in policy making or in management of guidance services. The use of ICT in guidance needs a closer look and much can be learned from the Finnish experience. Finland and Denmark differ from the other countries in the teacher participating in the guidance work, something that might be due to the institutions from which the sample was drawn. All the same it might be interesting to explore in a further research the guidance provided by teachers and compare it with guidance provided by professionals.

The number of guidance sessions varies between countries, which is difficult to interpret without further research. It also varies where users of guidance learn about the services, which tells us that the marketing strategies can be altered. It is very probable that the different way users are introduced to guidance services is linked to different organisational structures. In Iceland, for example, the providers of adult guidance are strongly linked to social partners and therefore users hear about the guidance services in their workplaces or through their union to a greater extent than users in the other four Nordic countries. In Norway most of the users learn about the guidance services through unemployment offices, which is due to the fact that career centres cooperate closely with the Norwegian Labour and Welfare administration. This feature of the career services also seems to result in the fact that participants in Norway differed from participants in the other four Nordic countries in having more pronounced vocational outcomes, such as in learning to make career plans as a result of guidance and acquiring skills to further develop their careers. Career development theories teach us that a client in counselling is in need of educational and occupational information, but that he also needs to enhance his self knowledge. A comparison of the five countries shows that they work with these three aspects in a somewhat different manner, Sweden emphasising the informational aspects and participants in Iceland and Finland learn more

about their interests which is a very traditional aspect of personal guidance.

## Users are active participants in their own guidance process

One of the positive results of the study is that clients are actively involved in their own guidance process, which demonstrates that theories of active engagement and the necessity of ownership of the guidance process have been integrated into practices. This means that although the delivery modes are somewhat traditional and the threefold “parsonian” model is prevalent, it is evident that new methods of engaging clients into the guidance process have been adopted in Nordic adult guidance services.

## Client satisfaction - outcomes of guidance more educational and personal, than vocational

Guidance professionals and organisers of guidance services can be happy about the fact that users are satisfied with the guidance they receive and in general they find the counsellor supportive and understanding. This is a very important finding and tells us that users are getting assistance in their educational and vocational careers. But what kind of guidance are they receiving? First and foremost, it is an important finding that clients of adult guidance are being helped in many ways. Very many of them say that in guidance they are encouraged to continue their studies; they get help in making educational choices, their self confidence is enhanced, they learn about their abilities and so forth. The findings on outcomes tell us that the emphasis in adult guidance in adult learning centres is first and foremost on educational outcomes, but also on personal outcomes. To a much lesser extent users receive guidance on vocational outcomes. The reason why users get less help with vocational issues might be that guidance takes place in learning institutions and not public employment agencies or workplaces, with the exception of Norwegian career centres working in close contact with public employment agencies. On one hand it is possible that clients that seek counselling in adult learning centres are searching for help with their education and educational goals. On the other hand these results can be seen as an indication of a weak link between the adult guidance services and the labour market. In any case these results need to be researched further.

Still another conclusion from the results on less emphasis on vocational outcomes is that guidance counsellors have to continue working on relational and educational aspects but at the same time develop and strengthen more future oriented vocational guidance and self directed tools intended to help clients explore vocational issues. This is a matter of concern and could be related to the inadequate knowledge of guidance counsellors of up to date information on the labour market that has been identified in a previous Nordic study (Ring-

ström et al., 2008). This is an issue that has its origin, no doubt, in counsellor training, but could be dealt with through the setting of standards of competencies for guidance counsellors that are met by each and every guidance provider through a series of in-service training initiatives. The low emphasis on vocational issues is a result of this study that needs to be taken seriously and a possible reaction is a common policy between educational, social and employment ministries.

On the whole it is clear, that respondents in this study regard the process of guidance as helpful in many ways, and this is in concordance with previous studies that have shown that guidance is effective (Brown & Ryan, 2000). The goal of guidance is to help people “manage their career paths” (OECD, 2004b, p. 2) and “to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used”. (OECD, 2004a, p. 67). The results of the present study can tell us whether adult guidance in the Nordic countries is serving its purposes. Clients are satisfied and are being helped with personal and educational issues, less on vocational aspects of careers, which indicates that guidance is effective. The study also gives us valuable information on how guidance services can be improved. There are indications that performance in some areas is better in some countries than in others (at least in the institutions that were compared), such as satisfaction with counsellors or in teaching clients proactive skills. And we now know that a valuable group of consultants, namely the users, are very willing to participate in further development of adult guidance services.

## Limitations

An important limitation of this study concerns the method of sampling of participants and low number of responses. As it was not possible to select a nationally representative random sample of guidance users, except in Iceland, an indirect method was used in Denmark, Finland and Norway in which research partners in the respective countries contacted organisations and educational institutions within adult education which then forwarded the survey link to students (users of guidance). In Sweden, a sample of users of guidance was selected in adult educational institutions of certain areas and cities. This raises questions about the representativeness of respondents in these countries. As information about the demographical composition of the population of guidance users within adult education is not available in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden it is not possible to infer about the representativeness of respondents in these countries. In Iceland, however, a comparison of respondents and the population of guidance users shows that the group of respondents deviates somewhat from the population of guidance users in terms of distribution of gender, age and education.

The limitations of the sampling method applied in the study as well as low number of responses in most of the countries has implications both for the interpretation of results nationally and in comparisons across countries.

## Outlines of practice - implications

Adult guidance in the Nordic countries will with no doubt continue to grow in the years to come, but there are indicators in this research that it is rather single-tracked, i.e. it is mostly face-to-face, in one to three sessions and emphasises educational and personal issues, less vocational ones. Moreover, guidance is too seldom evaluated, apparently more for the sake of it than anything else. Teachers will no doubt continue to be involved in guidance, as well as professional guidance workers and from these results we can deduce

that guidance will not be particularly proactive; unless policy makers decide to use these results as a turning point.

The outlines of practice seen in these results can be compared to definitions of guidance in OECD and EU documents that are as follows: In the context of lifelong learning, “guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used”. (OECD, 2004a, p. 67). The 2008 EU resolution says: “Guidance plays a decisive role in the major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In this respect, it can contribute to empowering individuals to man-

age their own career paths in a more secure way in the context of today’s labour market and to achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives”. This research tells us that adult guidance services in the Nordic countries are certainly addressing some of the issues of lifelong guidance, such as personal and educational aspects. We know however that the guidance approach is rather traditional, and that vocational issues could be addressed more. We also know that quality assurance issues, such as evaluation and feedback are too scarce and that users are as a rule not involved in forums of debate or policy making. The experience of users is not being used, which is why they are often not asked to give feedback and they are not involved in decision making at policy levels. These results can have implications for further research, practice, training and policy making.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Policy

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance mechanisms need to be improved, so that evaluation results from both formative and summative evaluation provide information of substance that can be a basis for improvement. Practitioners and users need to be assured that the effort put into evaluation will be of benefit to the guidance services. The evaluation programme has to be of quality, it has to be systematic and participation needs to be compulsory. The results need to be documented and shared with stakeholders (users included).

### USER INVOLVEMENT

Users are willing to have a say in the organisation of guidance services and policy making, and they want to be listened to. This is an opportunity that has to be seized by installing user involvement mechanisms. First of all users need to be informed about their rights and services, they need to participate (and be encouraged to participate) in customer reaction systems and results of customer satisfaction surveys published (ELGPN, 2010).

Clearly, users want to use counsellors and teachers as channels for their involvement and this should be made possible. They should also be able to transmit their views to others that work closely with them, such as learner representatives, trade union representatives, professional associations and others. Other ways of giving feedback and presenting ideas are service users' forums, consumer forums and so on (Plant, H., 2006). Other groups, than direct users might also be consulted, such as voluntary associations of people with special needs. Experiments in user involvement are being made in public services and they need to be adopted by policy makers in adult guidance.

Some respondents said that they were being involved as users which means that some measures are being taken to involve clients which suggests that mapping is needed of what is already in place. Some users might have good capacities in user involvement, which could be of use in further capacity building.

A good way to start engaging users in policy making would be to establish a consultative user forum. It needs to have a clear purpose, it needs to build on what is already in place in terms of user involvement, participation needs to be encouraged (with remuneration for example), it needs to be coordinated with competent

facilitators and be funded, as well as evaluated regularly. A consultation body of this kind would make communication between policy makers, service users, providers, practitioners, employers and other stakeholders, more effective. Experiments in user involvement are being made in public services and they need to be adopted by policy makers in adult guidance.

It is important to bear in mind the distinction between involvement on the micro, meso and macro level. Obviously users need to and want to be involved in the guidance process on a personal, micro level. This is in line with both a person/client centred approach and a democratic right of the citizen. Guidance must never be a social control measure. On the institutional meso level, user involvement can take many forms, among which are focus group discussions and evaluation and peer guidance activities. On the societal macro level, users need to be involved in National Fora on Career Guidance as representatives on equal footing with other stakeholders.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Vocational learning outcomes of guidance need to be enhanced, such as career decision making competen-

cies, job readiness, job search skills, etc. A common policy between educational, social and employment ministries on vocational guidance is recommended.

## Practice

There are indications that adult guidance is not very proactive, rather reacting to demands of clients. There are also indications that face-to-face interviews are an over-used method of delivery in adult guidance and more cost-effective methods should be explored, such as web guidance, group guidance or telephone guidance. This also indicates that a screening system should be installed so that time and other resources are better used. This calls for a comprehensive guidance programme, based on declared goals and organized steps in reaching those goals. Regular evaluation of the service is a vital part of installing a comprehensive guidance system based on varied client needs.

### TRAINING

Guidance counsellors need to be trained in proactive guidance methods. They also need to be trained in evaluation and in training clients in user involvement. Accountability of guidance services need to be higher on the agenda of counsellor training (Hiebert et al., 2002). It also is a matter of concern that vocational

issues seem to be less in focus in counsellor work, than educational and personal issues. Training in assisting clients with vocational aspects of life needs to be enhanced.

## Research

This study suggests several leads of further research on both content and framework of guidance services such as:

- Ways of marketing guidance
- Vocational issues in the guidance process
- Guidance provided by teachers
- The user involvement that is already in place in a minority of adult guidance services
- Reasons for mistrust in user surveys
- Comparative studies between and within the Nordic countries, such as recent career guidance methods versus traditional ones, variation in number of guidance sessions, different delivery modes, etc.
- Comparison of regular adult guidance services with comprehensive and systematic guidance programmes





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