

# Continuing Professional Development as viewed by Nordic Engineers

Policy recommendations



# Background

Continuing Professional Development, CPD during the career path is not a luxury invention. Everyone should have the right to a sound educational background and CPD in order to maintain and acquire skills to remain in the employment and manage the transitions in the labour market. Regardless of the fact that the Nordic region scores high in terms of innovation and new technology, the talent shortage is becoming a sad reality. And even though the engineers are in high demand, they also need to remain competitive and continue to learn.

In the recent years, the discussions on CPD were also intensified by the observed tendency to prioritize the low-skilled workers assuming that the highly educated professionals would find their ways to succeed. In ANE we strongly believe that everyone should have the right to professional development op-

portunities, and the dependence thereof upon categories and competence levels will only create a bigger divide.

In order to investigate on engineers' general opinion on CPD perspectives and to identify barriers hindering access to the CPD opportunities, the Association of Nordic Engineers, ANE has conducted a survey in the first half of 2018. The results of this survey are summarised in the report and are listed as policy recommendations, which we are glad to hereby present.

The recommendations accentuate the need for more investment in CPD. Education and productivity go hand in hand, and the professional development should not depend on professional categories and skill levels. We must invest in everyone's professional growth. When you invest in engineers, they invest in you!

The findings further call for the enhancement of the role the Higher Education institutions must play in securing the provision of the CPD courses. Universities are the holders of the unique and specific technical knowledge, and therefore they should be supported to become the reliable providers of professional development courses.

Moreover, the recommendations point also to the need for a long-term strategy of CPD at work places, built on a dialogue between an employer and an employee. CPD should be regarded as a habit, not as an occasional event. It is a great tool for employee devel-

opment and a strategy for companies to remain relevant while adapting to changing market conditions.

Furthermore, there is a requirement for mapping the existing provision of CPD courses to establish a comprehensive overview both at national and regional levels.

It takes time and a great effort to develop a whole new learning concept. We need to do it together! We need to build new alliances and invest in new solutions to support one another in this quest for personal and professional growth!



Trond Markussen  
President



Inese Podgaiska  
Secretary General

# Policy Recommendations

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1

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### **The authorities must investigate the alternative CPD funding mechanisms**

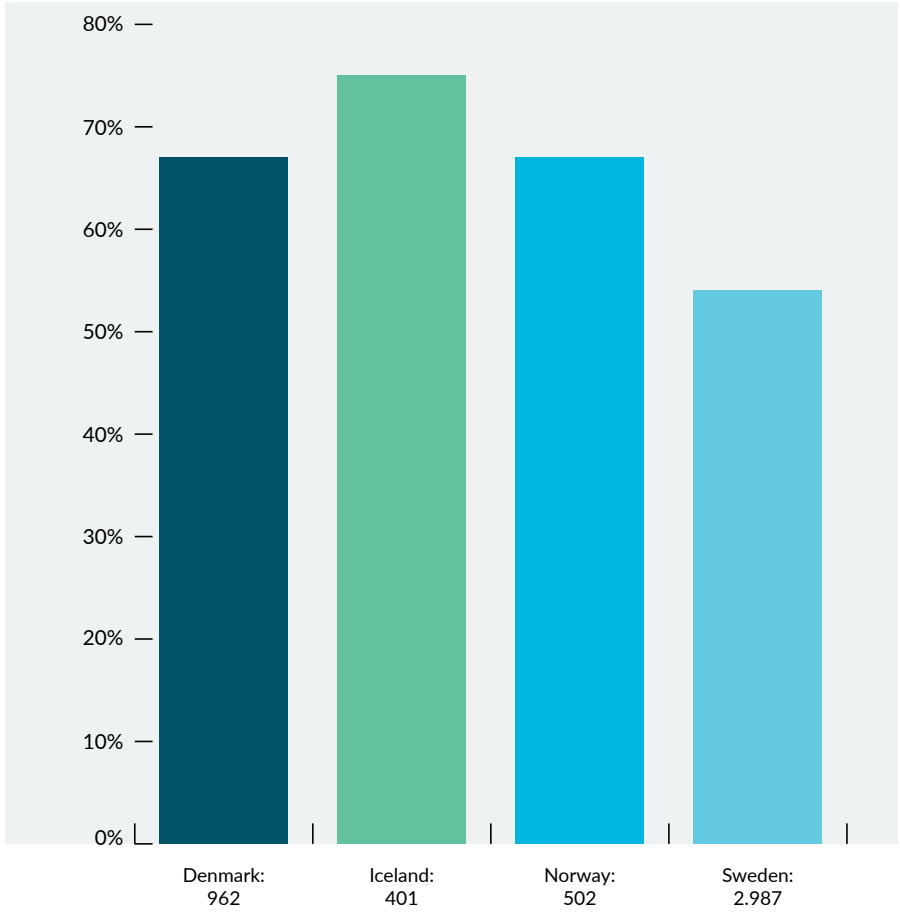
Education and productivity go hand in hand, and therefore investing in everyone's professional growth should be given without distinction to professional categories and skills levels. Different funding mechanisms could be envisaged. For example, and as a source of inspiration could be an initiative – education funds as a cooperation between trade unions and employers operated in Iceland. Employees can either apply for partial or full repayment of course fees they have already paid or be given free admission to courses arranged by their employers or trade unions and funded through grants. Or another example could be the use of study loans and grants as practiced in Sweden.

According to the ANE survey, a majority of the respondents in all four countries see a need for more opportunities or other type of professional development.

This is illustrated in the Graph 1 on the opposite page →



**Graph 1. Wish for more opportunities or other type of CPD**



Source: ANE professional development survey 2018

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2

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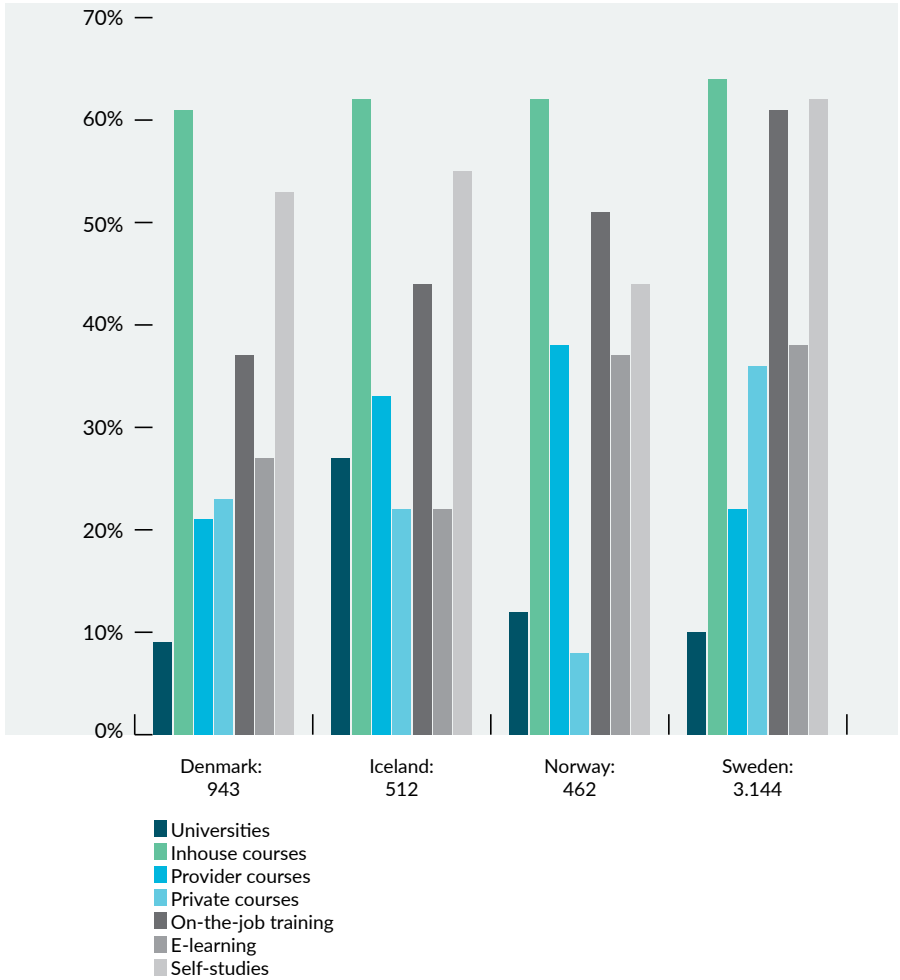
### **Higher Education institutions must provide more CPD courses for engineers**

Universities are the holders of unique and specific know-how in high-quality STEM skills, and therefore they should be supported and incentivized to become the reliable providers of CPD courses. This support can be provided through specific funding mechanisms, multi-stakeholder alliances and strong policy regulations. CPD courses and programmes should be developed in close cooperation between employers' organisations and Higher Education institutions. A certain master's degree programmes could be opened for the professionals already in the employment as a part of the professional development cycle.

According to the ANE survey, only 1 out of 10 respondents participated in CPD courses provided by Higher Education institutions.

This is shown in the Graph 2 on the opposite page →

**Graph 2. Participating in a certain type of CPD**



Source: ANE professional development survey 2018

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3

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### **Authorities must map the existing provision of CPD courses at regional and national levels**

The acquisition of new competences is dependent on a provision, which in the survey is identified as a shortcoming. To better match the demand for STEM competences with the available provision, there is a need for mapping the existing provision of CPD courses both at national and regional levels. This mapping exercise would allow establishing a database or a digital platform, including information on providers, content, duration and fees of CPD courses.

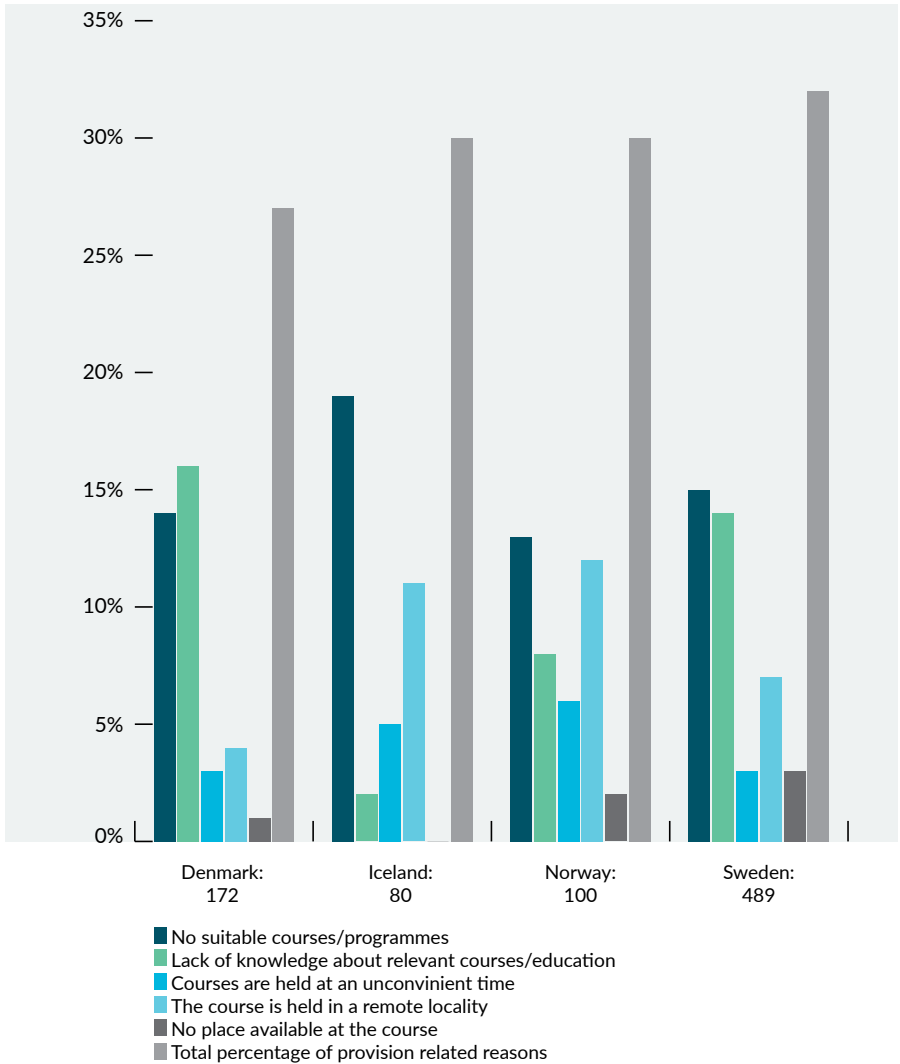
In line with the ANE survey results, 30% of the respondents indicated the provision reasons as the main barrier to the participation in the CPD activities. Lack of knowledge about relevant courses/education is the reason given why the respondents are not adequately participating.

This is revealed in the Graph 3 on the opposite page →





**Graph 3. Provision related reasons for not participating adequately in CPD**



Source: ANE professional development survey 2018

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4

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### **All employers must provide CPD plans and long-term strategies for professional development for all employees**

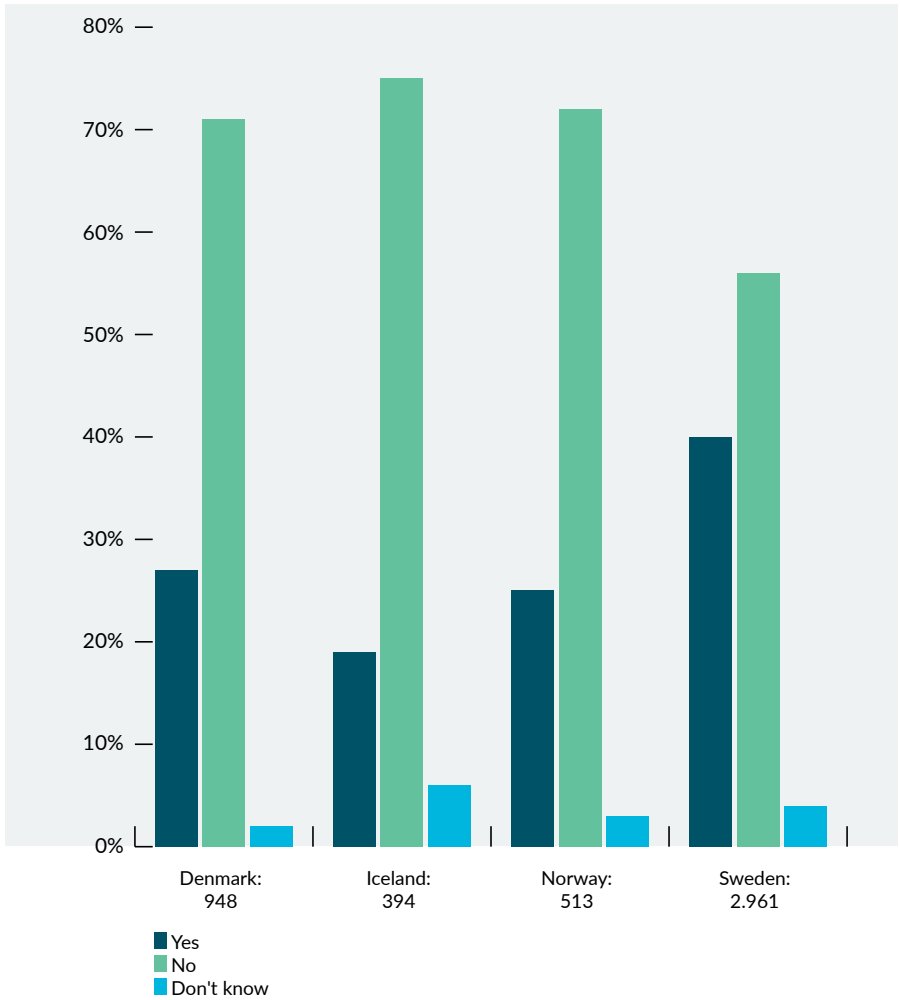
Learning is becoming a new earning, and therefore there is a need for a long-term strategy and concrete CPD plans implemented at work places built on a dialogue between the employer and the employee. The right to receive professional development should be an integral part of the collective bargaining included also in the employment contracts. Employers should provide spaces and time for employees to develop their competencies. And the employee should have a right and an obligation to proactively seek opportunities for the professional development.

As reported in the ANE survey, it is not that common to have an educational plan or equivalent, which describes what type of professional development is planned for the forthcoming period.

This is demonstrated in the Graph 4 on the opposite page →



**Graph 4. Do you have an educational plan or equivalent?**



Source: ANE professional development survey 2018

## BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

The survey was a joint effort of the ANE affiliates. The questionnaires were sent to engineers in employment both in public and private sectors – members of the Norwegian Society of Engineers and Technologists, NITO, the Danish Society of Engineers IDA, the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, Sveriges Ingenjörer and the Icelandic Association of Chartered Engineers, VFÍ.

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