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b-solutions-

## **Annex I.a: FINAL REPORT BY THE EXPERT<sup>1</sup>**

**Part of the report is also the information sheet on the advice case to be compiled by the advised entity to be submitted to the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) attached to the report.**

**Advice case title:** Cross-border vocational quality education

**Full official name of the advised entity:** County Administrative Board of Dalarna

**Name of the expert contracted for the advice case:** Kjell Nilsson, Nilsson Landscape AB

**Date:** 2021-06-30, revised 2021-07-16

### **Table of content:**

- I. Description of the obstacle
- II. Indication of the legal/administrative dispositions causing the obstacle
- III. Description of a possible solution
- IV. Pre-assessment of whether the case could be solved with the ECBM
- V. Other relevant aspects to this case
- VI. References and Appendix/Appendices if any

### **I. Description of the legal or administrative obstacle in the specific context**

The current border obstacle has been reported by the County Administrative Board in Dalarna, which together with the Dalarna Region, Innlandet County Municipality, the State Administrator in Innlandet runs the Cross-border Committee Innlandet-Dalarna (CCID), which is a cooperation body for regional and municipal authorities in the two border regions Innlandet of Norway and Dalarna of Sweden. The Border Committee's most important tasks are working for open borders for both people and companies, vibrant local communities in the border areas, green transition and cooperation on social security and preparedness. CCID is partly financed by its members and partly by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

#### *Demographic challenges*

Both Innlandet and Dalarna are sparsely populated areas. Innlandet, which is Norway's second largest county in terms of area, has a population density of 8.7 people per square kilometer while Dalarna is also relatively sparsely populated with 10.2 inhabitants per square kilometer (Dahlén, Penje & Grunfelder 2019). However, the degree of urbanization is significantly higher in Dalarna, where 82.5 per cent of the population lives in urban areas compared with Innlandet, whose corresponding figure is only 58.3 per cent.

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The population curves of the two regions followed each other until the mid-1990s, then followed a 20-year period of declining population in Dalarna while the population in Innlandet continued to grow. In recent years, the population in Dalarna has started to grow again, mainly due to immigration. During the last ten years, the population in Innlandet-Dalarna has increased by 24,000 inhabitants or 3.7 percentage points (Dahlén, Penje & Grunfelder 2019). However, population change is unevenly distributed. At the same time as there is strong population growth in the urbanised areas, the population in rural areas is declining. This applies not least to the border municipalities; Engerdal, Trysil, Malung and Älvdalen, all of which have had population declines over the past ten years.

In terms of age distribution, Innlandet-Dalarna has the typical features of rural regions, but without being extremely vulnerable (Wang et al. 2019). The proportion of children (0-14 years) is, with the exception of five municipalities, lower than the national averages. It is noteworthy that only one municipality - Hamar - has a higher proportion in the age group 25-64 years than the national average. When it comes to the proportion 65 years and older, the relationship is the opposite, i.e. only one municipality - Borlänge - is below the national average (Dahlén, Penje & Grunfelder 2019). On the other hand, the balance between the proportion of women and men in different age groups is relatively good.

Both regions have a relatively good labor market with an employment rate that is two percentage points lower than the national average (Dahlén, Penje & Grunfelder 2019). Unemployment among younger people, 16-24 years, is not a big problem either, at least not if you compare with the national averages. In Innlandet, the primary sector is twice as large as in the country as a whole, while in Dalarna it is the industrial sector that is overrepresented. Ski tourism, with its 9 million hotel nights before the pandemic, also creates many jobs. A serious threat to regional development is the risk of labor shortages in the future due to a shrinking working-age population (Grunfelder et al. 2020).

#### *Lack of skilled labour*

At the same time as it is sparsely populated, the border region houses many specialized and successful companies, not least in the tourism industry, where the Sälen / Trysil area with its 2.5 million visitors annually is Scandinavia's largest ski resort. In addition, a growing number of specialized companies in wellness, wood processing and house production have been established in recent years. However, the development in these activities as well as in health care and elderly care is limited by the lack of qualified labor. The demand for qualified labor in professions such as technical staff for the operation of ski resorts, chefs and bakers, as well as healthcare staff will be further accentuated by large retirements in the coming years.

According to both companies and municipal authorities, there is a great need for specialized vocational training in the future. However, previous initiatives to start educations tailored to the needs of companies or municipalities in the region have had limited success due to too few students. Educations have even had to be closed, such as the restaurant and food education at *Trysil Videregående Skole*. The core problem is that there is too little critical mass on either side of the national border to be able to provide specialized vocational training with students. If, on the other hand, it was possible to recruit students from both sides of the border, it should be easier to reach a critical mass.

The project aims to investigate the possibilities of meeting the need for qualified vocational training that companies and the public sector have in the border region. A secondary goal is that more young people choose to stay in the region because there is both education and jobs as a draw. In addition to creating educations that can be taken by both Norwegian and

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Swedish students, special attention should be paid to the opportunities for distance education that have developed during the corona pandemic thanks to digitalisation.

### *Different education systems*

A serious obstacle to finding common solutions is that the Norwegian and Swedish vocational educations at high school level are structured in completely different ways. In Sweden, a coherent three-year education follows with elements of internship and for which the municipalities are responsible. In Norway, on the other hand, the school education itself, for which the county municipalities are responsible, normally accounts for 50% of the education time, while the rest consists of **apprenticeship work that is administered and financed by the state**. It is thus obvious that you operate with two systems that are very different and that regardless of whether you choose one of them or a combination, you have to clarify:

1. If there are administrative or legal obstacles for Swedish students to participate in Norwegian vocational education and vice versa. And, in addition if there are legal or administrative obstacles to distance learning.
2. If there are administrative or legal obstacles for Swedish or Norwegian students to participate in vocational training in the neighboring country and complete an internship or apprenticeship in the home country.
3. What the financial conditions are for the students and for the schools in connection with vocational training in the neighboring country.
4. The rules that apply to the validation of vocational training between the two countries.
5. What qualifications do the vocational educations in each country give to higher education at universities and colleges.

### *Mobility prioritised in the most integrated region in the world*

The Nordic prime ministers have jointly adopted a vision that by 2030 the Nordic Region will be the world's most sustainable and integrated region. To realize the vision, three strategic priorities have been identified: a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region and a socially sustainable Nordic Region. The associated action plan for the years 2021-2024 is a central theme to promote mobility in the Nordic Region, and this work also includes efforts to ensure that the Nordic countries' educational and professional qualifications are valid throughout the whole region as far as possible.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has in 2014 set up a special council, the Freedom of Movement Council, with the task of combating border barriers in order to create jobs and growth in the Nordic region (Nordiska ministerrådet 2020). Within the field of education, border obstacles have been identified in connection with internship<sup>2</sup> and apprenticeship<sup>3</sup>, as well as in connection with the recognition of professional qualifications<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the Freedom of Movement Council has been given a mandate to focus on broader qualitative areas. Recognition of professional qualifications in the Nordic Region has been prioritized as one of six such thematic areas.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.norden.org/da/node/36419>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.norden.org/sv/border-database/elever-pa-danska-larlingsutbildningar-kan-inte-ansoka-om-praktikplats-i-sverige>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.norden.org/sv/border-database/erkannande-av-yrkeskvalifikationer>

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## II. Indication of the legal dispositions causing the obstacle

Even if there should be no obvious legal obstacles, a fundamental problem is that the conditions for upper secondary vocational education in Sweden and Norway differ in a principled way. While Sweden has a cohesive education with built-in internships, Norway has an alternating education between schooling with built-in internships and an apprenticeship. Taking these differences of principle into account, it is difficult to imagine a possible harmonization of the rules in a foreseeable future. I therefore suggest that you either invest in existing educations within each country, and, if you intend to develop a new education, choose to place it in either a Norwegian or a Swedish school and follow that country's rules fully.

### *No legal obstacles*

Upper secondary education in Norway is regulated in the Education Act (LOV-1998-07-17-61), chapters 3 and 4. The education can be either vocational or pre-university. There are five study preparation and 10 vocational programs. The education is either three years or four years, of which two years are normally completed as apprenticeships in a company. It is the county municipalities' responsibility to ensure that the young people are offered high-quality upper secondary education. In special cases the state or a municipality may run upper secondary schools. In such cases, municipalities must receive the approval of the Ministry of Education and Research.

In Sweden, upper secondary school is regulated in Chapters 15-17 of the Education Act (SFS 2020:800). The three-year education can be either vocational or pre-university. There are 12 vocational and six college preparatory programs. In addition, there are four introductory programs, five nationally recruiting educations and a further education in the form of a fourth technical year. The education is mainly school-based, but distance learning and upper secondary apprenticeship can also occur. It is the municipalities' responsibility to ensure that the young people are offered high-quality upper secondary education, but a municipality can, by agreement, transfer responsibility for an education program to the regional authority.

There are no legal obstacles in each country's school legislation for the exchange of students between Norway and Sweden. On the contrary, it is something that is encouraged by the responsible Nordic ministers. When the main problem is too little basis for recruiting young people in sparsely populated border regions, it is instead important to make it as attractive as possible for them to take their education at the school that has the best conditions to create a long-term sustainable education in the field regardless of which side of the border it is located. A step in that direction is Nordic co-operation to increase Nordic integration and mobility.

### *Nordic agreement on exchange of students*

Since 1971, the ambition in the Nordic Region has been to increase the opportunities for students to be able to study and graduate in another Nordic country and to strive for mutual recognition of each other's degrees and performance requirements. In November 2004, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden agreed on an educational community at upper secondary level that includes both general upper secondary education and vocational

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education (Utrikesdepartementet 2008<sup>5</sup>). In this, the countries undertake to give students from neighboring countries access to its educations on the same terms as the country's own young people. An exception, however, is the educations that are based on employment in private or public enterprises, including the apprenticeship-based youth educations in Norway.

### III. Roadmap towards a possible solution of the obstacle with indication of the entities to be involved in the possible solution

Border obstacles are a priority area within the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council. Facilitating exchanges between neighboring countries is central to both growth in business and efficiency in public services. Historically, workers have been in focus for border obstacle work, but since a few years ago the Freedom of Movement Council has been given an increased mandate by the Nordic governments to also focus on educational problems from a cross-border perspective.

#### *Economic compensation*

According to Article 2 of the agreement on the Nordic education community at upper secondary school level (Utrikesdepartementet 2008), co-operation is based on the free principle. This means that the school authorities refrain from demanding compensation from each other for the teaching given to education seekers from other Nordic countries and who follow a legally regulated upper secondary education. However, this does not preclude voluntary bilateral payment agreements, including agreements between educational institutions or school authorities, as long as these do not constitute an actual obstacle to the free movement of students at upper secondary level.

The main rule in the Nordic countries is that it is the home country that must pay student aid, i.e. *Lånekassen* in Norway and CSN in Sweden. However, the legislation in Finland, Norway and Sweden requires that the person has lived in at least two of the last five years in the home country to receive student aid. In Denmark, the corresponding requirement is a continuous stay in the home country for at least two of the last ten years. The problems arise when a person first moves from their home country to work in another country and then moves on to a third country to study. After both in Sweden and Norway the regulations have been changed and the residence requirement has been replaced by a connection requirement, e.g. in the form of citizenship, family ties, schooling or work, the Freedom of Movement Council has made the assessment that the problem is significantly reduced<sup>6</sup>.

#### *Internship & apprenticeship*

The Norwegian apprenticeship is an agreement where the student alternates theory with practice and is paid for all or part of the education time, while the Swedish vocational education at upper secondary school level is mainly school-based and unpaid. Norwegian

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<https://www.regeringen.se/49c82f/contentassets/980371fe02264c3b9102a4232cd811f1/avtal-med-danmark-finland-island-och-norge-om-nordisk-utbildningsgemenskap-pa-gymnasieniva-teoretiska-och-yrkesinriktade-utbildningar>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.norden.org/sv/border-database/ingen-ratt-till-studiestod-efter-arbete-utomlands>



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companies that employ apprentices receive a subsidy for this from the Norwegian state. However, it is unclear whether this applies even if the apprentices are employed by Swedish companies. The differences between the education systems may mean that Norwegian students may have difficulty finding apprenticeships in Sweden because Swedish employers usually do not pay salaries to students who carry out workplace-based learning. Students in Swedish vocational education can complete their internship in both Norway and Sweden. However, it is the Swedish school that is responsible for finding suitable workplaces in Norway and ensuring that there is an approved supervisor at the workplace.

Work practice in adult education has been identified by the Freedom of Movement Council as a problem because the national labor market legislation is based on the practice being carried out in the home country. Another reason for the restrictions in Norway and Sweden is that the insurance cover is not adapted to apply to internships abroad. In Sweden, however, the rules are designed so that the work practice can be carried out in another country, provided that the organizer is a Swedish legal person or in Sweden's immediate area if there are special reasons (Nordiska ministerrådet 2012). Neighboring area refers to countries bordering Sweden and the countries around the Baltic Sea. According to director Leif Lahti, the internship at *Utbildning Nord's* educations can be carried out in each country.

#### Digitalisation

Teaching at Nordic upper secondary schools is in principle based on the obligation for students to attend. At the same time, vocational education has a habit of teaching in the workplace. During the corona pandemic, in order to reduce the spread of infection, distance learning has been forced to a greater or lesser degree. The experiences from the pandemic are therefore valuable before a possible establishment of a new education with the ambition of attracting students from a larger catchment area. A general attitude on the part of the schools is that online teaching is not a perfect alternative to physical presence due to the students being distracted by or engaging in other things than concentrating on teaching. But there are also positive experiences. Teachers' digital knowledge has definitely increased and it has been discovered that there is a lot of literature and other pedagogical tools that are suitable for distance learning. In addition, there are examples where the contact between teachers and students has even improved when teaching individually or in small groups via Teams or similar programs compared to in classrooms. An intermediate thing between class room and distance education is to locate parts of the teaching to the campuses for higher education that were established in 2012/13 in both Trysil and Sälen.

#### Validation

A survey conducted in 2013 shows that the number of state-regulated professions varies greatly between the Nordic countries (Damvad 2013). Most have Iceland with 171 state-regulated professions, followed by Norway with 165 and Denmark with 162, while Sweden with 91 and Finland with 74 have significantly fewer. In particular, the differences between Norway and Sweden are evident in the care professions, where for example ambulance staff, pharmacy technicians, assistant nurses and medical secretaries are regulated in Norway while in Sweden no professions at this level are regulated, and among electricians and machine operators where the industry sets qualification requirements in Sweden. they are state regulated in Norway (Norpå n.a.). On behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Rambøll has carried out a comprehensive survey of the recognition of foreign education and professional qualifications in order to help remove barriers and increase mobility in the Nordic Region (Rambøll 2017a, Rambøll 2017b).

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The study also showed that the professions that are state-regulated give rise to fewer problems with border obstacles than those that are industry-specifically regulated (Damvad 2013). The work is closely linked to the EU Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications 2005/36/EU, subsequently amended by Directive 2013/55/EU. The basic idea is that those who have a certain professional qualification in one Member State should have the same opportunity to practice their profession as domestic nationals in another Member State. In addition, there are specific agreements between the Nordic countries to promote mobility, primarily concerning the teaching profession and for health care professionals, e.g. the Arjeplog agreement.

#### Access to higher education

The vocational upper secondary education does not in either Norway or Sweden automatically qualify for higher education at universities and colleges. In Norway, one needs to add one year of study to achieve these qualifications, while in Sweden it is possible to achieve such qualifications within the regular study period through the free choice of courses. In Sweden, these courses used to be compulsory, but this compulsion was abolished a few years ago.

#### The way forward

My assessment is that the conditions are good for an exchange of students between Sweden and Norway, primarily due to the agreement reached between the Nordic countries on 3 November 2004 (Utrikesdepartementet 2008). The most difficult question is the one concerning internships or apprenticeships in other countries, but in the cases where this has been relevant, practical solutions to the problem have been found, e.g. if a Norwegian student performs his apprenticeship with a Swedish employer, this has been solved by enrolling at a Norwegian school that issues the required certificates. An example of this is *Utbildning Nord* in Övertorneå, which has 60 school places in labor market training for Norwegian students and where a collaboration has been entered into with *Ishavsbyens videregående skole*, which issues the competence certificates for the Norwegian students.

With regard to the main issue of recruiting qualified labor for the operation of ski resorts, hotels and restaurants as well as for health care and social service, this can be done either through basic education of young people and retraining or import of labor. Since a secondary goal is to hold on to more young people so that they remain residents in the region, I concentrate on educational issues. With regard to upper secondary education, there are existing vocational programs at upper secondary schools in both Norway and Sweden that meet the needs of the hotel and restaurant industry as well as health care and social service. The problem here is rather the lack of attractiveness of the educations for the prevailing student base in each country. On the other hand, when it comes to the operation of ski resorts with specialist expertise in piste bashers, lift facilities and snow cannons, there exists no relevant upper secondary education.

#### Who should be involved?

In order to handle the issue of vocational training in a good way, the involvement of several parties is required. Industry organizations, i.e. companies and trade unions play a particularly important role, as these are vocational training courses which in most cases are not regulated by agreements within, for example, the EU. Next, national authorities such as the National Agency for Education in Sweden and the Directorate of Education in Norway are central because they must approve a potential new education. Furthermore, regional and municipal authorities that are the principals of the educations are important. Finally, the schools that are relevant for various initiatives are of course central stakeholders. To start a new education for

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snow technicians, four schools have been identified as possible candidates two Norwegian (Trysil and Elverum) and three Swedish (Torsby and Älvdalen).

**Trysil videregående skole**<sup>7</sup> is a combined school that offers the educational programs building and construction technology, health and upbringing subjects, sports subjects and study specialization. The school has 200 student places and 60 employees. Interesting in view of the desire to develop the opportunities for distance education is that the school is a county-wide center for online education in health subjects. On the line for construction and civil engineering, you can, among other things, train as a construction machine operator. Principal Solveig Ljødahl states that the school's biggest challenge is to get applicants for the educations because the student base in Innlandet is too small. Among other things, this has led to the need to close the educational program in restaurants and food subjects.

**Elverum videregående skole**<sup>8</sup> is a large high school by Norwegian standards with 1150 students and 185 employees. The school, which was built in 1974 and completely renovated in 2016-19, has a wide range of courses with six different vocational educations in electronics and computer technology, building and construction technology, technology and industrial production, service and tourism as well as health and upbringing. In addition, it is the only school in the county that has an International Baccalaureate and it has a center for adult studies.

**Stjerneskolan**<sup>9</sup> in Torsby is one of Värmland's largest upper secondary schools with 500 students, 200 adult students and 80 employees. The school has eight of the national programs available in Sweden, including vocational training in construction, vehicles and transport, industrial technology, and health and care. But it is best known as a national sports high school for cross-country skiing and biathlon. The school cooperates closely with Karlstad University and has according to high school principal Marcus Lech good and extensive experiences of receiving Norwegian students. In addition, investments have been made in simulators in the vehicle program and routines for certification of special skills, e.g. for truck-drivers, are in place.

**Älvdalens utbildningscentrum**<sup>10</sup> is an independent upper secondary school with 350 students and 70 employees. The school is owned by Region Dalarna and Älvdalen Municipality together with several forest companies, including Stora Enso and Bergvik. It provides vocational training in nature management (nature and adventure tourism, forestry, game management, hunting and fishing), construction and civil engineering, as well as vehicles and transport. Like Stjerneskolan, they have invested in simulators for forwarders, harvesters, trucks and construction machinery. According to school principal Anneli Gunnars, there is an ongoing dialogue with Idre Fjäll about starting a pilot project in the training of piste machine drivers. Currently they have no adult education but could easily undertake it because they have had it before.

Of the Norwegian schools, Elverum is the school with the most relevant profile, but at the same time shows a fairly cool interest in entering into the development of a new education. Another argument for choosing a Swedish school is that apprenticeships are not covered by

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.trysil.vgs.no/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.elverum.vgs.no/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.stjerneskolan.se/startside.83.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.alvdalen.com/>



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the Nordic agreement on educational community in upper secondary school. Of the Swedish schools, both Torsby and Älvdalen have the "right" profile. Torsby has the advantage of having extensive experience of receiving Norwegian students, while Älvdalen has the advantage of already being on track with a similar education.

### A roadmap towards common solutions

I choose to divide the effort into three work packages (WPs) where the first; development of a new upper secondary education, as well as the other; on retraining and education of adults, both refers to the need for skilled workers at northern Europe's largest ski resort, while the third deals with the problem of recruiting skilled labor to other sectors.

#### WP1: Snow technician education

For the development of a bilateral upper secondary education of snow technicians, I propose that five task forces be set up in the following areas:

**Task 1:** Establishment of a stakeholder group incl. choosing school

**Task 2:** Application for development of a new education programme

**Task 3:** Needs assessment

**Task 4:** Development of a new curriculum incl. digitalisation

**Task 5:** Marketing plan incl. practical guidance on how to deal with border obstacles

The first task is to gather the stakeholders who have an interest in the new education, including Skistar, which owns the alpine resorts in Sälen, Trysil, Åre, Vemdalen, Hemsedal and Hammarby, and Idre Fjäll Inc. This can conveniently be done through the Cross-border Committee Innlandet-Dalarna. An important task is to decide which school you want to invest in. Here are the five alternatives presented above and which may be needed to study in more detail before such a decision. My assessment is that *Älvdalens utbildningscenter* has the best conditions, partly because it has a committed management that already has similar ideas about starting a new education, and partly because, unlike *Stjerneskolan*, which is judged to have equivalent positive conditions, it is within the same border region, Innlandet-Dalarna. One can, of course, consider involving the Värmland-Østfold Cross-border Region as well, which has the advantage that the catchment area will be larger, but at the same time means that there will be more parties to take into account.

Starting a new upper secondary education is something that must be approved by the responsible national authorities, DIKU in Norway and the National Agency for Education in Sweden, as well as the county municipality in Norway and the municipality in Sweden. To get such an education approved, a solid preparatory work is required. As it is unlikely that the schools concerned will have the capacity to do this within existing resources, I suggest starting with a project application either for the EU Interreg program or for the Erasmus program. An Interreg application can advantageously be coordinated by the Innlandet-Dalarna Border Committee, while an application for the Erasmus program must be led by the school that is intended to complete the education.

A needs assessment is a central part of an application as well as a tentative curriculum for the new education. An issue that should be given special attention, as the new education should be seen as a motivation for young people to stay in their home area, is the opportunities for distance learning that the increased digitalization entails. In principle, compulsory attendance applies to all upper secondary education. Therefore, it is particularly interesting to learn from the experiences of distance education that arose during the pandemic. Many schools with vocational education, including *Älvdalens utbildningscenter*, offer the opportunity for students

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to live in boarding schools and it is probably an attitude on the part of the schools that students should stay at the school as much as possible. On the other hand, it should be possible to have forms where joint schooling at the place of education is interspersed with coherent periods of internship and distance education when the students are staying at their place of residence.

A sufficient number of applicants for the new education is crucial for a success. Therefore, priority should be given to marketing aimed at young people on both the Norwegian and Swedish sides of the border. An important part of marketing is practical information on how to deal with any problems that may arise during studies in the neighboring country.

#### *WP2: Retraining and adult education*

The youth education of snow technicians should be supplemented with the corresponding education for adults which is shorter and more efficient (1 – 1.5 year). According to Jan Lindstad, operations manager for Skistar in Trysil, today parts of their labor needs are met locally through seasonal employees who, during the warmer times of the year, engage in agriculture and forestry. For these and for other jobseekers, e.g. those who become unemployed when companies close, there is a need for training opportunities. It would therefore be natural for the school that is given the responsibility to build up a youth education at the same time to develop a concept suitable for adult education.

In Sweden, adult education is conducted either by KomVux or as labor market training for the unemployed (AMU). In this case the AMU program is the most relevant. Experiences of receiving Norwegian AMU students in Sweden can be found at *Utbildning Nord*<sup>11</sup> in Övertorneå, which also accepts Finnish students. Utbildning Nord has a long history and experience of co-operation between the Nordic countries. The basic idea is to offer adult students from Finland, Norway and Sweden joint education in all three languages and with the opportunity to work in all three countries. The school, which started in 1970, is owned by a foundation formed by the governments of the three countries in 1991. It receives 500 Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish students in about 30 different vocational educations, including automation technicians, vehicle mechanics and refrigeration fitters.

#### *WP3: Recruitment of young people to educations within healthcare and care*

An increasing elderly population, especially in rural, sparsely populated areas such as in the border areas between Dalarna and Innlandet, entails an increasing need for qualified staff in health care and care, especially in elderly care. Today, there is nursing and care education at upper secondary school level at *Trysil videregående skole* on the Norwegian side and in Falun, Borlänge, Mora, Avesta, Leksand and Ludvika in Dalarna.

Another pronounced increasing need for labor in the future is due to the large hospitality industry in the region the need for chefs and other restaurant staff. Today, there is upper secondary education within the restaurant and food program in Mora, while the corresponding education at *Trysil videregående skole* has been forced to close due to too few applicants.

A common challenge for these educations is the recruitment of students. Despite the media attention, not least through all the cooking programs on TV and the heroic status of the care professions during the corona pandemic, the educations are not as popular. Damvad (2013) presents in a report to the Nordic Council of Ministers the results of projections that show a

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.utbnord.se/>

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shortage of trained labor in the healthcare sector by 2030 of between 35,000 and 52,000 people in Norway and approx. 150,000 in Sweden.

The popularity of these educations varies with time. It is also cyclically sensitive, during periods of high unemployment and weak economic development, it is easier to recruit young people to educations that lead to jobs where there is great demand. The attractiveness of the educations is closely linked to the attractiveness of the professions. Here, many young people experience that work in the care sector or the restaurant industry is stressful and poorly paid.

I therefore propose that a task force being set up under the direction of the Cross-border Committee Innlandet-Dalarna with representatives from the schools concerned, as well as the region's relevant companies and the trade unions to set up a common strategy to increase interest in these educations.

#### **IV. Pre-assessment of whether the case could be solved with the European Cross-Border Mechanism**

The so-called European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) is a legal tool to enhance cooperation along the internal borders of the EU proposed by the European Commission in 2018. The proposal sets up a mechanism to allow for the application in one Member State, with regard to a cross-border region, of the legal provisions from another Member State, where the application of the legal provisions of the former would constitute a legal obstacle hampering the implementation of a joint project.

The application of the ECBM might be beneficial in the case the proposed strategy concerning the establishment of a new vocational education of snow technicians at upper secondary school level is implemented. However, at this stage, for the obstacle identified by the applicant, the tool would not be of any help as the hurdle is not of a legal nature.

#### **V. Other relevant aspects to this case**

None

#### **VI. References and Appendix/Appendices if any**

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