

# Validation of prior learning in Iceland

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# IDAN

## Vocational Education and Training Center

..purpose is to **enhance the skill level** of employees in the “branches” that comprise IDAN by:

- **supporting and offering** continuing education, re-education, and master’s level study,
- participating in **research and development** related to industrial skill and education, and
- **leading communications** with government authorities concerning education issues in the sectors.
- offering **guidance, counseling and validation** of prior learning.

The “branches”; construction, metal, automotive, hotel and food, graphic media and hairdressers.

# Owners

- **Unions of Icelandic skilled Workers**
  - Union of Icelandic Graphic Workers (FBM)
  - Union of Icelandic Hotel, culinary and Food workers (MATVÍS)
  - Federation of Skilled Construction and Industrial Workers (Samidn)
  - The Icelandic Union of Marine Engineers and Metal Technicians (VM)
- **Federations of Icelandic Industries**
  - Federation of Icelandic Industries (SI)
  - Icelandic Travel Industry Association (SAF)
  - The Icelandic federation for motor trades and repair (BGS)

# What helps Iceland succeed in VPL

- Funding, both the validation and counseling
- ETSC, station for the validation, one contact point.
- Cooperation.
- Same understanding of the process and language.
- Counseling before, during and after.

# Co-operation with ETSC

Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) is the developer of a national strategy for validation in Iceland.

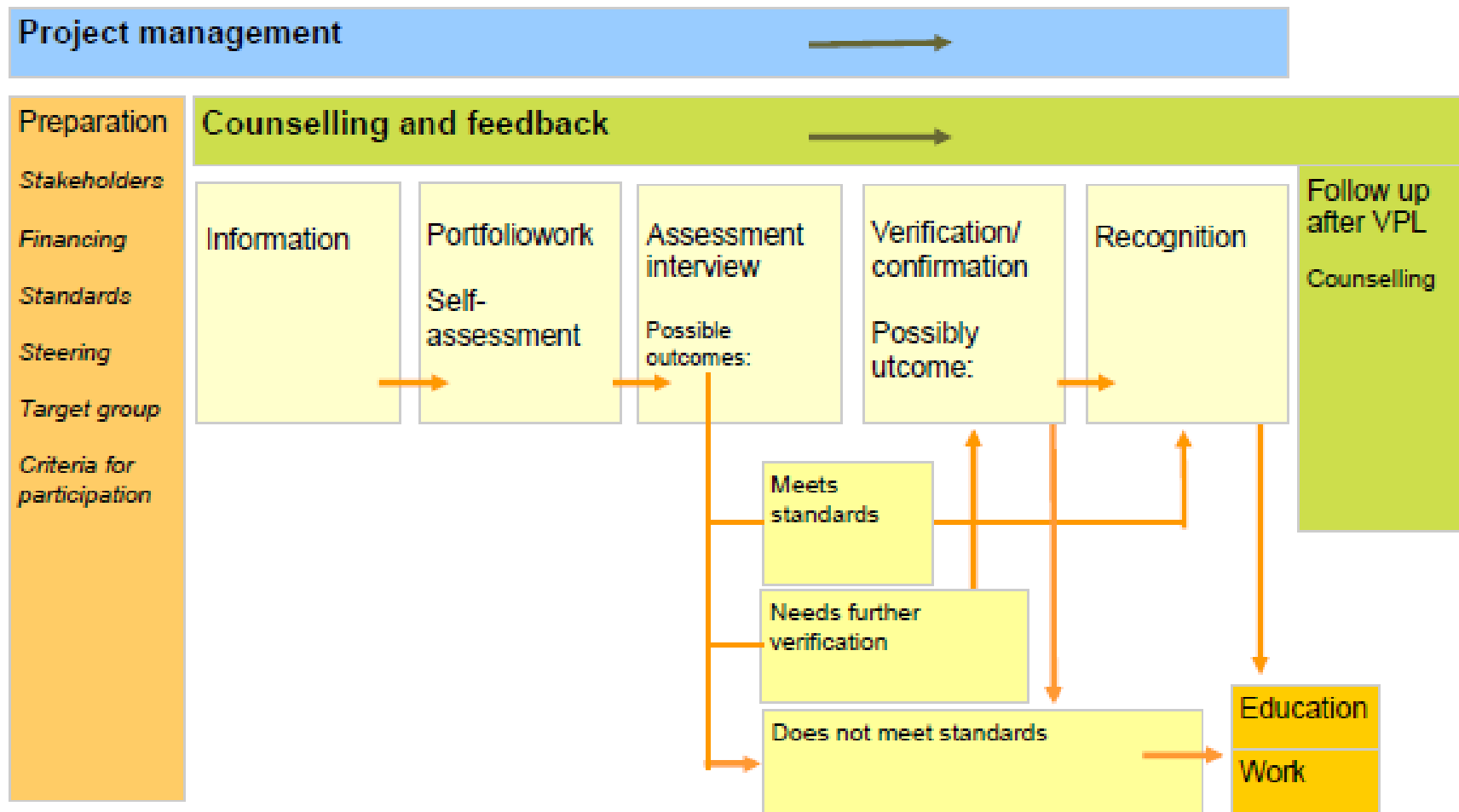
- The validation is funded through ETSC
- The counseling is funded through ETSC.
- Leads professional communication between the LLL centers in the country.

IDAN's contract with ETSC involves:

- Working on validating prior learning of experienced workers all over the country.
- Offer counseling for people at the workplace and unemployed.
- Work with ETSC on developing the validation and counseling.



# Validation process



The entire country works according to the validation process that ETSC developed ([www.frae.is](http://www.frae.is)).

# Preperation

- It makes all the difference that the stakeholders, government, formal school system etc. are informed and have a positive view of the validation.
  - same understanding and approves the results.
  - funding.
- ETSC has the formal material.
  - information, checklists, portfolios etc.
- What does the participant expect – goals.
- Counselors, professionalism.

# Guidance

- Professionalism, training and education.
- What criteria does a counselor need to have?
- Counselors needs to know the content of the curriculum of each branch.
- Private information, ethics, integrity etc.
- What learning opportunities are there for the participant. Bridge the gap between him and e.g. the formal schoolsystem.



# Voice of our users

- 2007 - inquiries after each project.
- 2009 - a qualitative study.
- 2011 - Internet survey and focus group.
- 2012 - Internet survey.

# Why haven't participants finished their degree?

## Learning disabilities.

- Bad prior experience at school, endless defeats.

## Lack of confident.

- No believe, alot of difficulties and easier to give up, hopeless, low self-esteem

## Lack of support and guidance.

- Low tolerance, no guidance in their choice of studies, don't seek help.

# Participants say:

- “Counseling wasn’t offered – didn’t know it existed.”
- “I’m a man, not the type that asks for help.”
- “My parents never mentioned school.”
- “My teacher had us read out loud and he said: Stop reading you don’t know how.”
- “I got A in all the core subjects but failed the general subjects numerous times. I’m hopeless!”

# Different after the validation

- They still feared school, mistakes, failure etc.

**BUT**

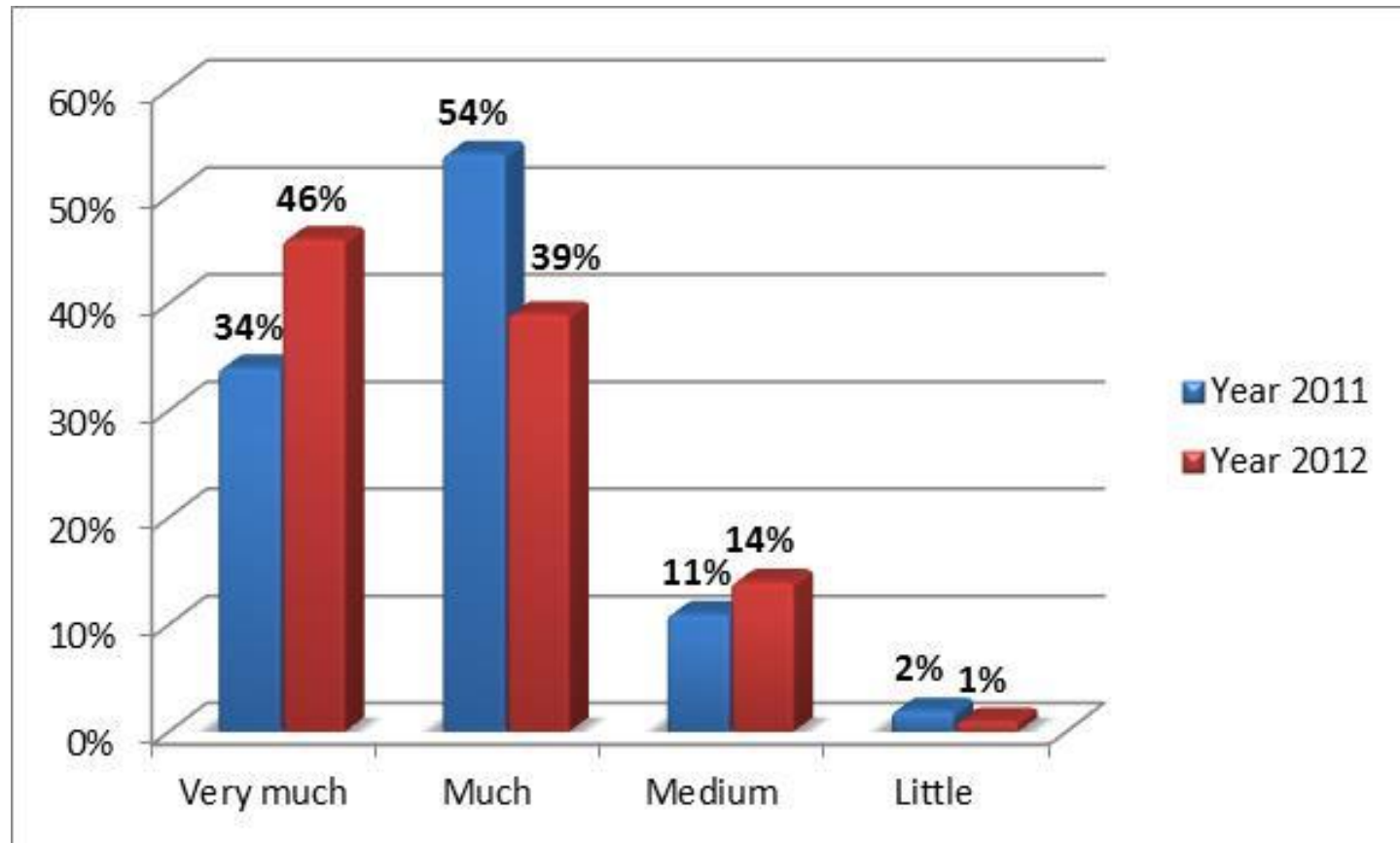
- They found support from the group.
- They learned to ask for help and support.
- They knew the feeling of being worth.

They are **NOT** alone. They have someone on their side, support and encouragement.

# The participants say: "The counselor

- ..was always there for me, and she sent me e-mails, text, called and helped me every step of the way."
- ..seemed to have nothing else on her mind than the group. We couldn't get more support than he gave, he was 100%."
- ..helped me take the first step in to the school. There was no one there I could trust. He knows my past and what is difficult for me."

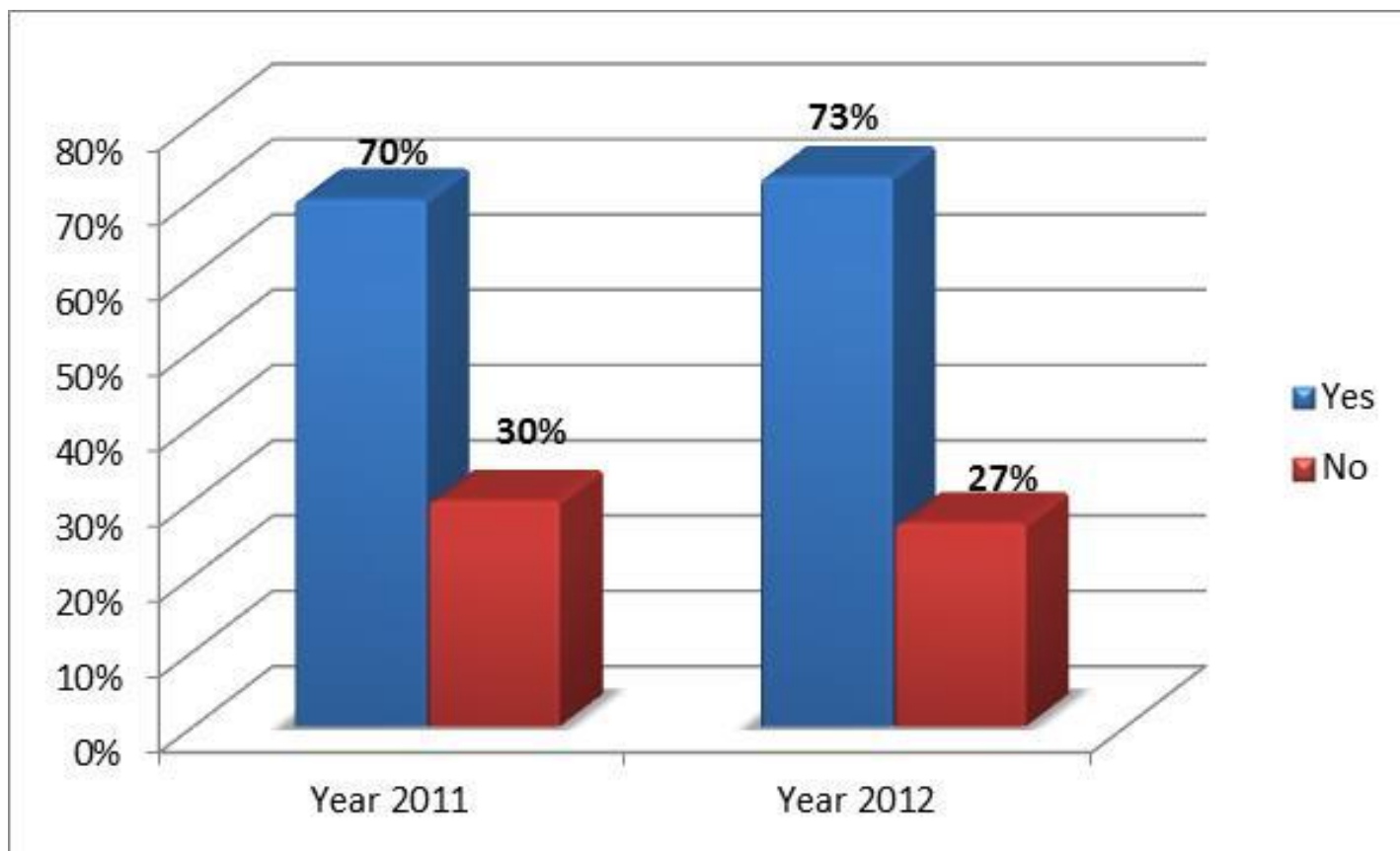
# How much need is there for counseling in the validation?



# Follow up

- Who is responsible? Counselor?
- What kind of follow up?
  - offer visits to schools and workplaces.
  - connect participants with the right personal.
- Make a plan for next steps. Set goals?
- Feedback after the results, a week after, a month, 6 months, a year, 2 years.

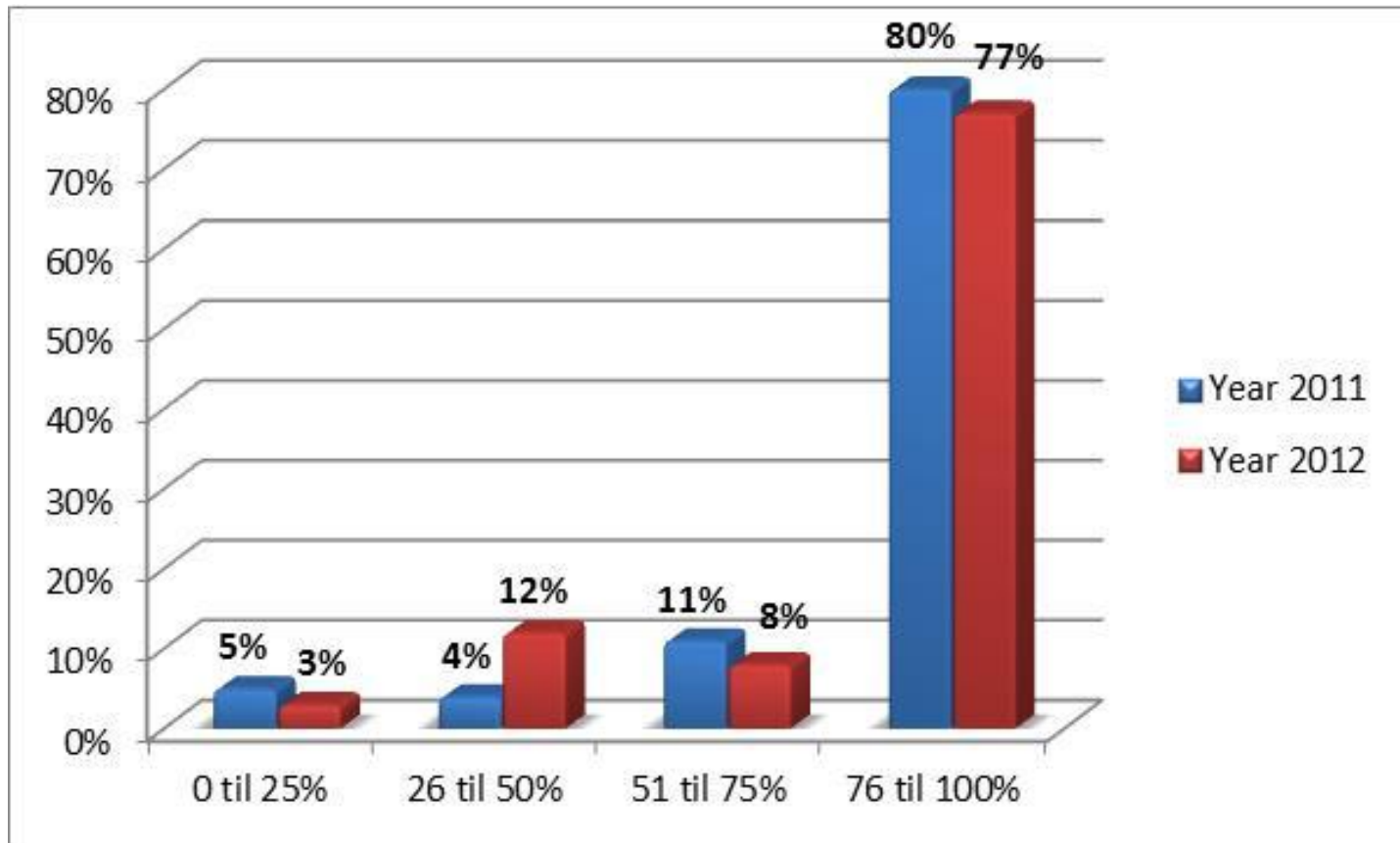
# Are you in school?



"Difficult to attend the courses you need, also difficult to attend school during the day". "Time is the biggest obstacle".



# What are the chances of you finish your degree?



# Remarks from participants

- “Obviously a lot of things have changed since I was in school. For example I didn’t know what a great work counselors do”.
- “I would never have gone back to school if there hadn’t been a group for me to join. It gave me a lot of strength to know that I wasn’t alone”.

How are things done differently  
in your area?  
And are they successful?