



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
AND INTEGRATION



# INTEGRATION IN DENMARK





## INTEGRATION TODAY

As of January 2012, the total population of Denmark was 5,580,516 including a total of 580,461 migrants and descendants (10,4 % of the total population). The group of citizens with foreign background comes from all over the world and has come to Denmark for very different reasons.

It is a very diverse group which includes researchers and specialists recruited by Danish companies, people who have arrived due to family reunification, migrant workers who came in the 1960s, refugees who have been granted asylum because of persecution and conflicts, young descendants of migrants and many others. They all contribute to the picture of everyday Denmark: in day-care institutions and in schools, on campuses and in workplaces, in associations and in society as a whole.

The Government's integration policy is a matter of ensuring that migrants are aware of the rights and responsibilities they have so that migration contributes to the positive development of Danish society.



### Background and challenges

Denmark launched the world's first Act on Integration in 1999. This was among other things a response to the fact that Danish society was characterized by some fundamental problems, including the fact that social cohesion had been challenged by the lack of integration of migrants.



One reason for this was a lack of information and formal measures of integration during the first major wave of immigration in the 1960's and 1970's. At that time Denmark attracted a lot of migrants from countries such as Turkey and Yugoslavia who received working permits. The idea was that the migrants would reside in Denmark temporarily. However, eventually the major part of the migrants stayed in Denmark - many of whom with a rather limited knowledge of the surrounding society.

Another problem was related to the dilemma of the Danish welfare state. High social benefits – and hence little incentive to work – had a tendency to turn a lot of migrants – especially women – into passive citizens with little or no contact to the surrounding society.

At the same time, the demand for unskilled labour has decreased a lot since the 1970's. Furthermore, integration problems increased further since the flow of newcomers



in the 1980's and 90's was not properly controlled and managed.

By the end of the 1990's many urban communities all over Denmark reported massive integration problems. These issues were a deciding factor when the Act on Integration was launched in 1999.



**The purpose of The Act on Integration is, inter alia, that:**

- Municipalities take responsibility and offer a tailored integration programme (lasting 3 years) for newly arrived refugees and family reunified migrants. Free language training and job training are seen as key measures to ensure integration.
- Appropriate housing for refugees is arranged within few months after arrival in Denmark.
- Refugees are settled all over Denmark – all municipalities have quotas depending on the number of migrants residing in the municipality.
- The costs of the Integration Programme are more or less paid by the state (in form of reimbursements and grants when results are delivered).

#### Policy measures

In Denmark there have been three main interlinked policy responses to the challenges concerning integration.

The first policy response was to ensure that migration is managed both fairly and efficiently, so that migration is at a level which can be managed by society so that everyone can benefit from it.





The second policy response concerned the development of a holistic integration policy; legislation, economic incentives and local structures. In the case of Denmark this especially involves the structures of the municipalities, so that they implement programmes which are aimed to introduce newcomers to society and to facilitate the participation of newcomers on an equal footing with fellow citizens.



The third policy response concerned the general promotion of democratic values and the activation of civil society, volunteers, private associations and so forth. This is necessary when the aim is to obtain a society with togetherness and mutual understanding and responsibility.

### Migration management

Managing migration is about many things: for instance, facilitating migration on a global labour market, protecting refugees both in Denmark and near conflicts worldwide, and facilitating repatriation of refugees when the situation allows it, and so on.



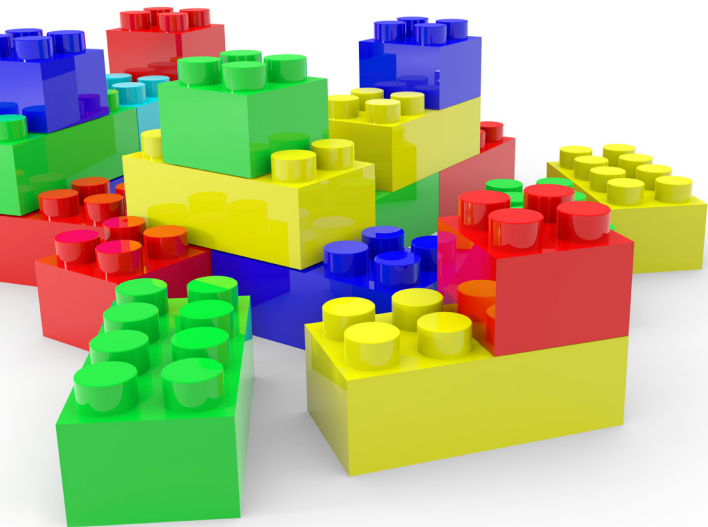


For Denmark, managing migration is – figuratively speaking – about tightening and loosening vaults in the system in order to have a level of migration which is balanced and compatible with the aim of successful integration and social cohesion – as well as with the rights of the individuals and the needs of society for instance with regard to attracting skilled workers.

The Danish legislation has been – and is still being – amended to ensure that family reunifications and the granting of residencies for third country nationals happen in a way which is compatible with a successful integration process.

#### **Institutional structures for integration**

The Integration Act provides a series of measures to introduce newcomers to the labour market: counselling,



vocational traineeships in enterprises, and the possibility of employment subsidised by the public authorities (for a limited period).

In combination, these initiatives form the Integration Programme. It is a continuous endeavour of the Danish Government to render the Integration Programme as efficient and flexible as possible.

While integration in practice primarily takes place at the local level, the national government has created incentives

for the municipalities in order to make sure that newcomers are able to work and learn the language, all at the same time. Thus, municipalities have clear incentives to optimize their efforts to get newcomers into ordinary jobs or passing Danish language exams.

Newcomers must in return for receiving social benefits conduct active job search, participate in language and vocational training, and so on. If they do not fulfil these requirements they may be subject to sanctions so far as deductions can be made in their social benefits. Also the possibility of obtaining a permanent residence permit in

return for making an effort – getting a job, learning Danish – constitutes an incentive for the newcomers.

An integration contract is signed both by the newcomer and by the local government. The contract can be amended over time and can also be seen as a practical planning tool outlining the integration activities which the newcomer will benefit from participating in. As a part of the integration contract, a declaration of integration and active citizenship must be signed by the newcomer. The declaration provides information regarding the rights and responsibilities as a resident in Denmark.





The role of civil society in integration

Integration in Denmark is by far not solely a matter of governmental and public sector initiatives. Civil society – inter alia in the form of associations and businesses – plays a key role in advancing the integration of migrants in society. Some of the key initiatives which the Government initiates in cooperation with the civil society are as follows:

- Establishing teams of role models who encourage especially young migrants and descendants to take on education and to strive for jobs in sectors with promising career opportunities.
- Strengthening networks and social capital of migrants – for example by promoting participation in local associations and by setting up mentoring schemes.
- Creating strategic partnerships with businesses to strengthen integration and to promote diversity management.
- Supporting migrant advisory activities at community centres where volunteers assist with home-work, translation of letters from public authorities, introducing migrants to cultural or social activities in the community, and so on.
- Setting up local and national dialogue platforms such as municipal integration councils, the National Council for Ethnic Minorities as well as the Diversity Youth Council.



Government vision 2012: “An improved integration policy”

The total numbers of migrants arriving in Denmark and the granting of residence permits are high and have increased over the last decade. The number of residence permits granted in 2001 was 36,354 in total, while the number was 57,787 in 2011. However, migration patterns have changed. While the number of asylum seekers has decreased over the decade, the number of migrants who comes to work or to study has increased. The largest number of residence permits in 2011 was granted to migrants arriving from Poland, USA, Romania, Germany and China – primarily in order to work or study in Denmark. With regard to asylum seekers, the highest number of people arrived from Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Russia and Serbia.

What all newcomers have in common is the need to efficiently gain knowledge of Danish society and the Danish language. And even though tailored integration measures are offered to all migrants, integration remains to be an on-going challenge, and policy responses need accordingly to be fine-tuned to ensure successful integration.

In November 2012 the Government launched its new vision for integration. The overall aim of the Governments’ vision on integration is to create a holistic and inclusive approach to integration based on the needs of migrants as well as the needs of society and furthermore to ensure that integration policies truly stimulate inclusion and equal participation of all migrants in Danish society. The vision deals with seven main areas of concern:

- Management and monitoring of the integration effort (including the launch of a National Integration Barometer with indicators for successful integration)
- Reception and integration of newly arrived refugees and migrants
- Ensuring a higher rate of employment of migrants and descendants
- Furthering education – focusing on better achievements of migrants and descendants in schools and in the educational system
- Strengthening active citizenship and social inclusion, equal opportunities and gender equality among migrants and descendants
- Ensuring a more comprehensive integration effort in deprived housing areas
- Preventing of marginalization and crime with regard to migrants and descendants

These are key areas where positive developments have to be ensured in order for Denmark to cope with current challenges of integration and to remain a cohesive yet diverse society.





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Please refer to [www.sm.dk](http://www.sm.dk) for further information on integration in Denmark.