



# SHARE

Building a resettlement network for European municipalities, cities and regions [www.resettlement.eu](http://www.resettlement.eu)

## THE SHARE PROJECT

Being an integral part of the wider European Resettlement Network, the SHARE project offers opportunities for structured dialogue, exchange of practices and networking between cities, regional actors and NGO partners, and between experienced resettlement countries and countries planning or considering resettlement.

With a worldwide membership, staff and operations and working with migrants and refugees in more than 40 countries, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) serves and protects uprooted people – refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants – regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality.

Since its creation in 1951, ICMC has identified and accompanied one million refugees for resettlement and provides expertise through the ICMC-UNHCR Resettlement Deployment Scheme.

## SHARE Project Country Profile: DENMARK

### 1. Governance

Denmark is a unitary state governed by a national Parliament (*'Folketing'*), elected at least every 4 years using a proportional representation system. The most recent parliamentary elections took place in September 2011, and resulted in the formation of a minority coalition government. Denmark is divided into 5 regions (*'regioner'*) and 98 municipalities (*'kommuner'*). Municipal council (*'borgerrepræsentation'*) and regional council (*'regionsråd'* – 41 members) elections are held together, at least every 4 years.



Municipal council members appoint an executive commission responsible for local administration, and elect a mayor to head the council and local administration. Regional council members elect a regional council president, and an executive committee of 11-19 members responsible for overall regional administration. Municipalities raise local taxes, whilst regional councils are financed by contributions from the state and municipalities within the region. The interest groups for Danish municipalities and regions – Local Government Denmark (LGDK) and Danish Regions, respectively - negotiate with central government on behalf of each.

Additionally, there are 5 state administrations (*'statsforvaltning'*) with jurisdictions following regional boundaries. Based within regions, state administration offices are direct representations of the state at regional level, responsible for supervising the work of regions and municipalities and administering state processes such as citizenship and marriage.

#### • 2007 reform & current competencies

In January 2007, the Danish government implemented a significant reform of municipal, regional and central government, known as the '2007 local government reform'. The programme aimed to reduce costs by creating economies of scale in the public sector, improving accountability and the delineation of responsibility across the different tiers of government, and concentrating responsibility for 'citizen-related' tasks at the municipal level. The number of municipalities was reduced from 270 to the current 98, the 16 former counties abolished and 5 new regions established. New municipalities were required to have a minimum population of 20,000, and those that did not were required to merge with one or more neighbouring municipalities to form a new municipal area.

The reform programme both centralised and decentralised public sector tasks and functions, with the overall effect of weakening the county/regional level of government. Many former county functions were transferred to municipalities, and the new regions - unlike the former counties – are unable to raise taxes. Broadly, the current functions and responsibilities of municipalities and regions are as follows:

#### **Municipalities:**

- Social services (including social assistance)
- Childcare, pre-school & primary education
- 'Special needs' education (children & adults)



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- Employment (activation services & projects via jobcentres – joint responsibility with central government)
- Integration & language education for migrants
- Primary healthcare, health promotion & rehabilitation
- 'Citizen service centres' (information & advice)

### Regions:

- Healthcare (hospitals, mental health)
- Regional economic development
- Transport

Central government is responsible for upper secondary education, the joint operation of jobcentres and associated activation projects with municipalities, and setting policy and procedural frameworks for municipal and state functions.

Social housing in Denmark consists of housing owned by approximately 760 non-profit housing associations. These organisations are independent of municipalities and regions, and housing is allocated solely on the basis of waiting time without reference to income or needs-based criteria. Municipalities own a small amount of housing stock, generally used for short-term emergency housing.

## 2. Migration – an overview

During 2013, a total of 64,494 residence permits or registration cards were granted to foreign nationals in Denmark, an increase of 15% from 2012. Residence permits are granted to all foreign nationals for the purposes of work, study, joining family or being granted refugee status/humanitarian protection in Denmark, including EU/EEA citizens but excluding Nordic citizens, who can travel, reside and work in Denmark without any permit.

Approximately 50% of all residence permits in 2013 were granted to EU/EEA nationals. The majority of these were to Polish migrants, who constituted the largest non-Nordic migratory group to Denmark during 2010 with 8% of all permit grants. Within the EU/EEA migrant group, the proportion of permits granted for the purpose of study increased whilst those granted for work decreased, the latter potentially attributable to a slight decrease in registrations by Polish citizens from 2009 levels.

The most common migrant nationalities outside of Polish were American (6%), Indian (5.6%), German (5.5%) and Chinese (5.3%). 9% of all residence permits in 2010 were granted to highly skilled migrants from non-EU/EEA countries, an increase of just less than 50% from 2009, and 6% to non-EU/EEA students, an increase of 45% from the previous year. Migration for the purposes of family reunification increased slightly from 2009 to around 8% of all permits granted - the largest nationality groups granted residence via this route were from Thailand, the Philippines and Turkey.

There were 7,170 applications for asylum in Denmark during 2013. The largest nationality groups amongst asylum claimants were Syrians(23%), Russian (13%), Somali (13%), Serbia (7%) and Afghanistan (6%). The recognition rate for asylum cases during 2013 was 18%, a sharp decrease from the 38% rate during 2010 and the 44% rate during 2009, and a total of 7870 individuals were recognised as refugees during 2013.

During 2013, Denmark resettled 516 refugees via its quota programme, constituting just less than 1% of all non-Nordic immigration to the country during this period.



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### 3. Policy – Asylum, Integration & Citizenship

In October 2011, the new Danish government published 'Denmark United: A Government Platform'. The document set out the new government's broad plans and intentions in a range of different policy areas, including citizenship, immigration, asylum and integration. Whilst it is not yet wholly clear how the provisions laid out in the document will finally be enacted, relevant information from the document is included alongside the summary of current arrangements set out below.

- **Asylum**

The Danish Immigration Service (DIS) is responsible for refugee status determination in Denmark. Asylum seekers are unable to take up employment in Denmark, and the vast majority are required to reside in an asylum accommodation centre during the period in which their claim is being processed. The DIS contracts the Danish Red Cross and 2 municipalities (Jammerbugt and Thisetd) to operate a network of asylum accommodation centres, including dedicated facilities for and unaccompanied young people and families with children. 2 accommodation centres are also used as secure departure facilities for those whose asylum claims have been refused.

Adult asylum seekers residing in accommodation centres are required to attend educational courses and activities - including language tuition (Danish and English), vocational training and an introduction to Danish society - and to complete daily cleaning tasks. They are required to sign an agreement with the accommodation centre detailing the activities and tasks they will participate in and be responsible for, and can also volunteer to assist with tasks that support the running of the centre such as administration and maintenance ('internal activation'). Those whose claims have been adjudged to be the responsibility of the Danish government can take up unpaid work placements outside of the centre ('external activation'). Children are educated within the centres or at local schools, dependent on capacity, and costs relating to education are resourced by the DIS.

The DIS provides asylum seekers residing in accommodation centres with a cash allowance, the level of which is dependent on both the stage and status of the asylum claim and the claimant's family composition. Should an individual asylum seeker not fulfil their agreement with the centre in terms of completing tasks and participating in activities, the DIS can significantly reduce or remove the cash allowance. The DIS covers health and dental expenses for all asylum seekers, generally by employing specialist staff based within the centres.

The new government intends to allow asylum seekers to live and work outside of accommodation centres whilst their claim is being processed. Similarly, those whose claim has been refused and who are cooperating with return arrangements will be permitted to live and work outside of the centres if their return has not been effected within 6 months of the refusal decision.

- **Resettlement**

Denmark has operated a quota refugee resettlement programme since 1978. A legislative basis for resettlement was created in 1983, and until 2005 specified an annual quota of 500 resettlement places. In mid-2005, Denmark switched to a 3-year flexible quota programme of 1500 refugees (approximately 500 per year), within which unused quota places can be carried over to subsequent years in the same quota period. On arrival, resettled refugees are given a 6-month temporary residence permit, which is automatically extended for further 6-month periods for up to 5 years from the



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date of entry. After 5 years, refugees must apply for further extension of their temporary residence permit.

Since 2005, legislation relating to resettlement has specified consideration of 'integration potential' - or the capacity of individual refugees to take advantage of the opportunities presented by resettlement to Denmark –

- **Integration**

Danish integration policy is set out in the 2009 Act on Integration, which aims to give municipalities responsibility and offer a tailored integration programme (lasting 3 years) for newly arrived refugees and family reunified migrants. The municipality is responsible for providing housing, which comprises a mixture of social and private housing. All newly-arrived refugees and any family members arriving via family reunification must participate in a 3-year mandatory introduction programme. The municipality organises all phases of the programme although it often contracts NGOs or other private organisations to implement activities. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Danish Red Cross and KIT are the principal NGOs assisting refugees in the integration process. The DRC is particularly involved in resettlement via government contracts at both a national and municipal level, in addition to coordinating a national network of volunteers assisting refugees.

Integration assistance in Denmark begins with the creation of an Integration contract based on an assessment of the person's particular skills. The integration programme includes a minimum of 30 hours of activities a week comprising 15-18 hours per week Danish language classes, courses on Danish society and employment advice. Refugees are placed in one of three language classes depending on their language ability and educational background.

Denmark was the first European country to introduce criteria related to integration into the resettlement selection process. It states that selection of refugees should attach importance to language skills, education, working experience, family relations, social network and motivation. Integration criteria are not applied to emergency, urgent and medical cases, or those resettled under strategic resettlement operations. Integration criteria are applied to families as a whole - each individual within a family is not required to meet the criteria.

After a loss for the right in the Danish parliamentary elections of 2011, the new government announced plans to abolish the integration criteria for resettlement, and has recently submitted a draft Bill comprising new criteria for the selection of quota refugees to Denmark.

The new amendments change the focus to the humanitarian aspects in relation to resettlement and emphasises the purpose of resettlement to Denmark i.e. to take part in the global responsibility towards refugees and help vulnerable groups among refugees. According to the draft Bill, Denmark will still have specific selection criteria which constitute an order of priority in selection process, however, the new criteria for selection focus on the need of the refugee and the individual expectations compared to conditions offered by Denmark.

- **Citizenship**

Any foreigner legally resident of Denmark for a continuous period of 9 years and who fulfil certain conditions, including good conduct, language competency (B2), successful completion of a citizenship test and isn't reliant on the state for financial support can apply for citizenship. Those recognised as refugees or stateless persons can apply for permanent residence after 5 years legal residence



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in the country. Applicants for permanent residence must not have received certain types of public benefits for a period of 3 years prior to submitting the application, have submitted a signed declaration of integration and active citizenship, have passed a Danish language test level 1 or higher and have held regular full-time employment or have been involved in an education programme in Denmark for at least 3 of the 5 years residency. Refugees may be exempted from general requirements after 8 years of residency in Denmark.

Denmark requires the longest period of residency in the EU - 8 years - before an application for citizenship is permitted. Citizenship applicants are required to pass level 2 of the national Danish language test.



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