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Danish Immigration and Employment Policy

Goals and principles:

- There is a strong correlation between immigration and integration policy
- Respecting international conventions as to human rights, refugees etc.
- Limiting the influx of new foreigners coming to Denmark
- By limiting the number of refugees and migrants immigrating to Denmark, time and resources are being released for the efforts to improve integration of ethnic minority groups already living in Denmark.
- According to the Integration Act newly arrived aliens are given the possibility of using their abilities and resources to become involved and contributing citizens on an equal footing with other citizens of society.
- The aim is to assist newcomers in being self-supporting as quickly as possible through employment.

Integration of newcomers:

The Integration Act (1999) – the introduction programme:

- Councils and local authorities are responsible for the introduction programme targeted newly arrived refugees and migrants due to family re-unification
- Three years of duration (normally)
- Consisting Danish language education and job training
- Focus on active training and if possible job and language training on enterprises
- Language training from day one
- Danish language education is free and contains up to 2000 hours of training
- Individual contracts matching qualifications and the exact content of the programme

The local authorities are also responsible for providing housing – and after the introduction programme - for the most essential initiatives with respect to integration.

The migrants are obliged to:

- Follow the introduction programme in order to receive introduction subsidy

- Participate actively in job training programmes and apply for employment in order to receive social welfare subsidy

Integration of migrants with a longer stay in Denmark and descendants:

Danish society still faces huge challenges when it comes to integration of migrants – and their children – who have stayed a longer period in Denmark:

- Only 46 percent of migrants and descendants from non-western countries are employed
- In some urban areas – especially deprived urban areas – there is a very high concentration of unemployed migrants; up to more than 90 percent of the population in some areas
- Approximately 50 percent of children with migrant background leaves primary school without the necessary qualifications for further education
- The drop-out rate for young people with a migrant background enrolled in the vocational education system is 60 percent

Initiatives to promote employment and integration in the labour market:

The action plan 'Toward a new integration policy' from March 2002 was followed by an agreement - called the '4 Part Agreement' - on integration between the Government, the local authorities and labour market representatives which was signed in May 2002.

With the '4 Part Agreement' as a basis the Government has created a better framework for integration initiatives. Reforms within the integration and labour market fields were introduced in 2002 and 2003 that make it possible for local authorities and businesses to combine a range of tools to promote the integration of immigrants on the labour market.

The strategy is to ensure that new immigrants get a quick start and obtain employment as quickly as possible. The reform of the general employment policy 'More people into employment' from 2002 has led to parallel rules for employment schemes to unemployed persons under the Integration Act and the Act on an Active Employment Policy.

Some of the elements of the reforms are:

- A flexible system for teaching of the Danish language
- Simplification of activation schemes in the form of guidance and upgrading of skills, practical work experience and wage subsidies
- Requirements for active job search activities and registration with the Public Employment Service for foreigners who are ready to take up a job.
- Furthermore a possibility to obtain permanent residence permit more quickly was introduced for the benefit of well-integrated foreigners.
- Increased the economic incentives for the municipalities to give labour market oriented offers.

The social partners take active part in strengthening the integration measures. An important initiative is “Project Enterprise-targeted Integration” where the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions and the Danish Employers’ Confederation, (DA) and National Associations of Local Authorities in Denmark (KL) co-operates in 3 regions on a joint development project from May 2003 to May 2006. The project follows the ‘4 Part Agreement’ and is supported financially by the Ministry of Integration.

The Government’s strategy against ghettoisation which was presented in May 2004 contributes to ensuring that residential areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities becomes positive platforms for labour market integration of immigrants and refugees. Job Shops are set up in disadvantaged neighbourhood areas. There will furthermore be a stronger focus on measures in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the annual measurements of the effects of the municipalities’ integration measures.

’A new chance for everyone’:

In June 2005 the Government concluded a political agreement on ‘A new chance for everyone’.

Foreigners granted residency in Denmark must sign a special integration contract. This clearly states their obligations, including:

- to learn Danish,
- to make an effort to find a job,
- to uphold the basic values of society,
- to work for the integration of their own children – not least to ensure school attendance,
- to acknowledge that discrimination against, scorning and threatening other people because of their sex, skin colour, ethnic origins, beliefs or sexual preferences is illegal,
- to acknowledge that the Danish society rejects terrorism and that every citizen is obliged to combat terrorism, by such means as assisting the authorities in prevention and detection,
- to respect the freedom and personal integrity of the individual, along with sexual equality,
- to be aware of the conditions for their temporary residency permit, and for subsequently obtaining an unlimited residency permit.

The extent to which the contract has been observed will be important for the decision on whether or not the migrant should be granted permanent residence permission.

Initiatives on employment and education in ’A new chance for everyone’:

- School and education
 - Bilingual children will be offered language stimulation, and their Danish language skills tested regularly

- They will be offered homework coaches, and the career counselling efforts made in the primary school sector will be strengthened.
- It will be compulsory for young people aged 18-25 who receive cash assistance to commence a relevant job-qualifying course. Otherwise their cash assistance payments must be stopped.
- Employment
 - The refund rates for cash assistance and starting assistance will be adjusted so that local authorities contributing actively to integration will have a larger proportion of their expenses refunded.
 - Local authorities will be obliged to provide offers for all recipients of cash assistance – also people who have passively received maintenance for several years.
 - As to married couples who both receive cash assistance, the cash assistance to one of the spouses will be repealed if that spouse has not had ordinary paid work for 300 hours in the preceding two-year period.
- Neighbourhood ghettoisation
 - Allocation of financial resources – DKK 600 million - for continued renovation of deprived urban areas will be allocated
 - Boosting the sale of non-profit housing in deprived urban areas
 - Local authorities can subsidise the removal expenses of residents with limited resources, who wish to leave such neighbourhoods.
 - Allocation of funds to social and preventive initiatives as well as initiatives that will further integration and employment in these neighbourhoods.

Other initiatives in order to promote integration

Equal treatment:

- In November 2003 the Danish government submitted an action plan to promote equal treatment and diversity and combat racism.
- Contains initiatives intended to help secure equality of treatment for everyone regardless of race, ethnic origin and similar grounds of discrimination.
- In 2006 the Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration Affairs will initiate a diversity programme in cooperation with 10 to 15 companies. The establishment of the programme is part of the political agreement from June 2005 'A new chance for everyone'. In recent years a number of companies and employers have chosen to work systematically with diversity management – and thus seeing diversity in the workplace as a benefit for the company. It is expected that the experiences from the coming diversity programme and the expansion of diversity management will contribute to bring more immigrants into employment.

We need all youngsters-campaign:

The Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs has launched the campaign 'We Need All Youngsters' running in the period 2003 – 2009.

- Help more young immigrants to start and complete a study or a training programme so they can subsequently find employment.
- Provides young people and their parents with information and advice about the opportunities open to them in the Danish educational system and job market.
- The campaign has employed six consultants who develop and launch initiatives concerning information and advice for young people and their parents:
 - Planning and implementation of role model visits at schools etc.
 - Cooperation with school careers teachers and club employees
 - Implementation of voluntary homework assistance schemes, obtaining trainee placements and jobs (A 100 Trainee Placements in 100 Days campaign)
 - Targeted campaigns for specific training areas – for example within the police, armed forces, emergency services and security services.
- A team of role models has been appointed consisting of young people with another ethnic background than Danish who have done well in the Danish educational and vocational training system:
 - The role model team is visiting schools, youth clubs and ethnic associations to talk about their personal experiences in choosing and completing an education.
 - Until now, the role models have talked with more than 6.000 youngsters with another ethnic background than Danish.

Integration Service:

In order to further the dissemination of good examples on integration a team of consultants – 'The Integration Service' – was set up in the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs in 2005.

- The consultants have a specific knowledge of integration – especially with respect to education and employment.
- The primary goal is to make the efforts to integrate immigrants and descendants in the educational system and at the labour market even more efficient.
- The consultants are supposed to disseminate good – and practical – experiences from municipalities, educational institutions and enterprises.

- Since May 2005 the Integration Service has been co-operating with 45 municipalities.