

Alliance of Civilizations
National Plan of Denmark

The UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) has encouraged member states of the Group of Friends of the AoC to develop national plans to promote the objectives of the Alliance in the fields of education, youth, migration and media.

Support for and participation in the work of AoC is a central part of Danish commitment to dialogue, cooperation and promotion of mutual understanding. Denmark is an active member of the Group of Friends and plays an active role in its work and its meetings at all levels. Recently, Denmark participated at ministerial level at the 2nd Forum in Istanbul and has made a new Danish pledge of USD 200.000 to the Voluntary Trust Fund.

The Danish Government has far-reaching and comprehensive policies, initiatives and activities that are relevant to the efforts of AoC and its objectives, such as our educational, integration, equality policies and the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme. In this paper we present an overview of government strategies and action plans with contributions from the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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1. Equal treatment in a diverse society

Initiatives to promote equal treatment, safeguard diversity and combat racism

The Danish government finds all kinds of discrimination and hate crimes unacceptable and has taken a number of initiatives to combat these practices.

The government has previously strengthened Denmark's already significant anti-discrimination legislation by passing a law ordering the establishment of a new Equal Treatment Board, which began its activities on 1 January 2009. The Board is competent to handle discrimination complaints from within as well as outside the labour market. Furthermore, it can decide cases and award compensation if any discrimination rules are violated. Thus, it has become easier to file complaints about discrimination.

In the penal law the Danish Government has – in addition to earlier legislation penalizing racism and other hate crimes - made it an aggravating circumstance if a crime in general is committed based on the victim's ethnicity, beliefs, sexual orientation, legitimate expressions or similar.

Furthermore, a great number of activities in order to promote mutual respect, regardless of gender and colour etc. have been implemented. An important example is the campaign 'Give Racism the Red Card', which is being implemented in Denmark and other countries.

Finally, the Government has begun work on a new overall action plan to promote equal treatment and respect for the individual, whereby the protection against discrimination will be further strengthened.

The new action plan will be a follow-up to 'Action Plan to Promote Equal Treatment and Diversity and Combat Racism', issued in November 2003. This previous action plan comprised initiatives aimed at furthering dialogue and debate in civic society, to promote equal treatment and diversity, and to combat racism and build mutual understanding through improving perceptions of and communication between citizens regardless of ethnicity.

Other initiatives in the action plan includes support to local - often cultural – events promoting tolerance and diversity and initiatives strengthening political participation of ethnic minorities – e.g. through support to the local integration councils. Most of the initiatives under the action plan have now been implemented.

The new and revised action plan is tabled to be ready at the end of 2009 and is – among a range of other initiatives - expected to incorporate the following:

- Better information on access to justice, so that no one subjected to discrimination will have any doubts as to their rights or where to turn for information or to lodge a complaint.
- Activities targeting discrimination in the night-life including repercussions for alcohol license holders such as discotheques etc. that discriminate in the nightlife.
- Anti-discrimination efforts in the context of allocation of vocational traineeships.

Link to an English version of the Action Plan from 2003:

www.nyidanmark.dk/bibliotek/publikationer/regeringsinitiativer/uk/handlingsplan_ligebeh_gb/index.htm

The new and revised Action Plan will also be translated into English when it is published.

2. Active inclusion

Integration efforts and the ‘We Need All Youngsters’ program

Demark pursues a broad policy for inclusion and integration of newcomers and others with another ethnical background than Danish. For example, comprehensive programmes to introduce newcomers to the Danish language and society and to promote labour market participation and diversity at the work place.

For detailed information on integration policy in general visit www.newtodenmark.dk.

In this context the Danish government has also launched the ongoing program, ‘We Need All Youngsters’ in 2003. The program focuses on the inclusion of all youngsters in education, the job market and as active citizens.

Statistics have shown that up to twice as many young people with bi-cultural background drop out of youth education programs compared to other youngsters. The highest dropout rate is seen in the vocational training programs, from which approximately 60% of young people with bi-cultural background drop out. The high dropout rate is among other things caused by a lack of knowledge about the educational system and the opportunities that it provides. Another reason is that many youngsters with bi-cultural background finish secondary schooling with limited skills in the Danish language and math.

The main objective of the program is to ensure that a greater number of young people in Denmark with a bi-cultural background enroll for and complete a youth education program.

The main activities of the campaign are:

- Teams of role models where youngsters and parents of primarily bi-cultural background engage in dialogue about education and integration with the youth, their parents and teachers, on the basis of self-lived experiences.
- Volunteer driven school homework support, including the recently launched online-help for homework.
- A Task Force approach towards selected educational institutions in order to engage them in an integrated process to improve the rate of youngsters with bi-cultural background that enroll and complete a youth education. This part is carried out in cooperation between the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs and the Ministry of Education.

The campaign has built up an extensive network of partners within the educational system, among labour market partners and within voluntary associations.

For more information contact: info@brugforalleunge.dk

3. Prevention of Extremism

In January 2009 the Danish Government issued ‘A Common and Safe Future. An Action Plan to Prevent Extremist Views and Radicalization Among Young People’.

Link: www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/58D048E7-0482-4AE8-99EB-928753EFC1F8/0/a_common_and_safe_future_danish_action_plan_to_prevent_extremism.pdf

The main objective of the action plan is to prevent extremism, which may bring individuals or groups to use violent or undemocratic methods as a tool to reaching a specific political objective, to undermine the democratic social order, make threats or carry out demeaning harassment against groups of people based on e.g. their skin colour, sexuality or beliefs.

To this end, the action plan aims to ensure that Danish society is prepared to identify and address specific problems related to extremism in a timely manner, whether it be extremism on the left or right wing of the political spectrum, militant Islamism or other.

Extremist propaganda will be met with factual information and alternative offers for the young people. An early, multi-stringed and co-ordinated preventive effort should counter the processes and influences that make certain young people turn their backs on society or be recruited into radical and extremist groups. Furthermore, Denmark will continue contributing to the prevention of extremism in the surrounding world in the context of various kinds of international cooperation.

At the same time, the Government wishes to maintain and further develop Denmark as a democratic society with freedom, responsibility, equality and opportunities for each individual. Primarily, because it holds an independent value for society as well as for the individual, but also in order to weaken the growth basis for radicalisation of young people and to strengthen society's alternatives and resilience to extremism.

4. Openness to the global labour market

Promoting international recruitment to Denmark

As part of Denmark's comprehensive policies on migration issues, which include protection of refugees, opportunities for family reunification and the above mentioned policies on integration, inclusion etc., Denmark also actively seeks to attract people from all over the world, who are willing, under certain conditions, to contribute to our society.

In February 2008 the government signed a political agreement regarding highly skilled migrants. One of the main goals of the agreement is to simplify and make the recruitment of migrants more flexible and to enhance the importance of retaining the migrants and their families. The changes needed in the legislation regulating entry and stay for migrants, was implemented by 1 July 2008.

The rules regarding skilled migrants are as follows:

- 1) The Green Card Scheme enables foreigners to enter and stay in Denmark without a specific job offer. It is thus possible to obtain a residence and work permit granted solely on the basis of qualifications. A residence and work permit under the Green Card Scheme is granted following an individual evaluation based on a point system, mainly awarded according to five criteria:
 - Educational level,
 - language skills,
 - work experience,
 - adaptability, and
 - age.

- 2) The Positive List enables foreigners to work in one of the areas that is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified labour, e.g. as a doctor, IT specialist, engineer, lab technician, etc. Due to the amendments in the legislation the Positive List has been widened with a large number of specific jobs and now also includes educations on bachelor level as well as medium long educations, which enables foreigners to work in one of the areas that is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified labour.

Jobs that are included on the Positive List justify granting of residence and work permit, restricted only with the requirement that the pay and contract of employment correspond to Danish Standards. The Positive List charts 123 different descriptions of such jobs. The positive list is revised two times a year.

- 3) The Pay Limit Scheme includes the granting of residence permit to foreigners who have a job offer with an annual income of minimum 375,000 Danish kroner. The amount is equivalent to approximately 50,000 EUR.
- 4) The Corporate Sheme makes it possible for employees in a company outside Denmark to be stationed in the company's Danish subsidiary, parent or sister company or similar for a period of time. Wages and terms of employment must be comparable to those earned by a Danish employee in the same position.

The Pay Limit Scheme and jobs included on the Positive List presupposes a specific job offer whereas the Green Card Scheme does not.

Furthermore, the public administration, including several ministries, is working intensively on solutions for breaking down barriers regarding recruitment and maintaining of highly skilled labour and their families. This is done in cooperation with the private actors in the labour market.

More information:

http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/work/work.htm

A Danish version of the governments' plan on international recruitment can be seen by following this link:

http://www.bm.dk/graphics/Dokumenter/Udgivelser/Danske%20udgivelser/2007/international_rekruttering/International_rekruttering.pdf

5. Education

The Danish strategy for pursuing the benefits of globalisation and coping with its challenges 'Progress, Innovation and Cohesion' represents 350 proposals, where 187 of them are in the area of education. The strategy is complemented by the Danish Government's welfare reform proposals, which is focused on getting young people to complete their education and on improving the integration of Danes with a bi-cultural background.

Links:

<http://www.globalisering.dk/page.dsp?area=52>

http://www.globalisering.dk/multimedia/Pixi_UK_web_endelig1.pdf

Inclusion is the keyword for these initiatives that promote the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom. The aim of many of the initiatives is to promote equal educational and employment opportunities for bilingual and ethnic Danish citizens.

In the provisions of the Primary and Secondary School Act it is specified that schools are responsible for *“preparing the pupils for participation, sharing responsibility and their rights and obligations in a society based on freedom and democracy”*. One of the primary learning goals is to create an understanding of other countries and cultures and pupils must learn, for example, *”to reflect on the importance of their own and other persons’ rights and obligations in a democratic society”* and *”reflect on the implications of their own and other persons’ stereotypical views of various groups”*.

The curriculum in primary and secondary schools includes many different aspects of teaching the pupils about other cultures, the values of different religions, norms and ways of life. Further, the pupils learn about human rights and democracy, including the importance of legal systems.

The pupils learn to explain different religious and political views and to discuss their own and others values, including Muslim and Western values such as religion, honor, ideology, family, human rights and democracy. The discussions teach the pupils to listen to and understand other views and thereby qualify and moderate their own arguments. The pupils become able to orientate and act with reflection in a global society with different cultural values and they become able to interact in the integration process in the country they live in.

A committee appointed by the Government has published a 'Democracy Canon' covering 35 central events, philosophical ideas and political texts that have been important for the development of democracy in Denmark. The list includes the evolution of the ideas of individual rights and international collaboration and binding human rights. The publication is designed to serve as inspiration to teaching at all relevant levels of education, secondary education in particular.

Link to the publication in English: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2008/democracycanon/>

5.a. Initiatives at primary school level

To strengthen children's capacity to become responsible citizens able to take active part in a democratic society and promote respect for human rights, the Ministry of Education has published 'Teaching Democracy: Inspiration for Primary Schools and Youth Education Programmes', which is intended to give teachers and youth leaders ideas for working with democracy in a teaching context. The publication contains a catalogue of examples from primary and lower secondary schools, vocationally oriented youth education programmes and upper secondary programmes.

Link to the publication in English: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2008/learningdemocracy/>

In addition, the new binding attainment targets and optional curriculum have a stronger focus on different aspects of democracy, both the historical aspects of the development of democracy and different dimensions of democracy and citizenship in contemporary societies - in particular active citizenship and living by the democratic principles.

The Ministry of Education has carried out a comprehensive project: 'This Works at Our School!', which aims to identify and disseminate good practice at schools with a large bilingual student population. The project is expected to provide ideas for helping bilingual students learn Danish and thus improve their overall academic performance.

Building on some of the results of this project, the Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs and the Ministry of Education have recently given financial support to a research project called 'Signs of Language' with a total budget of DKK 24 million, which aims at exploring the nature of the challenges facing bilingual pupils in the Danish primary and lower secondary schools and develop pedagogical knowledge and approaches addressing these challenges.

Initiatives have been taken to strengthen cooperation with parents of bilingual students as a vital step for development and learning processes among pupils in this group. The initiatives include outreach parental advisors and learning courses for bilingual parents. Information materials will also be developed in different languages explaining how parents can support their children's development and education.

5.b. Youth initiatives

One of the aims of the Vocational Training Act is to contribute to the development of young people's interest for and ability to active participation in a democratic society.

A government target for 2015 is to see 95 % of all young people complete a program of upper secondary education.

As a follow-up to the globalization strategy and the welfare agreement of 2006 several changes to the Vocational Training Act have been implemented and adopted to streamline and simplify the overall system of vocational youth training programs.

Project 'A Better School Environment' focuses on improving the school environment in order to reduce student drop-outs. Among other things, the vocational colleges have established 'homework cafes', where students can receive assistance and support. The vocational colleges have received money for this initiative.

Another project launched in 2007 was the 'Mentor Scheme for Young People' following the basic courses of vocational training. The scheme is an attempt to increase the percentage of young people completing these programs by giving potential dropout students better opportunities for finishing their education. The mentor scheme uses students with extra resources as role models for other young people. A new campaign has just started to supply these initiatives to reduce the drop-out rate.

5.c. Education of teachers

Danish municipalities, schools and teachers have great autonomy in the choice of curriculum, teaching materials and teaching methods and can take into consideration the culturally mixed composition of children in each school and the requirements of children with extra needs. The Danish government is aware of the need to continually strengthen the competencies of teachers in this area, which is why the teacher education is constantly reviewed and the field of intercultural competencies has been strengthened.

The pedagogical subjects of the teacher training programme have been amended to better qualify teachers to work with children with bi-cultural background. Student teachers must develop skills for teaching in culturally diverse primary and lower secondary schools. Students work with theories of multicultural background, social integration, cultural encounters and intercultural education.

Teacher students can, during their teacher training, elect to qualify in teaching bilingual pupils. The purpose of the subject 'Danish as a Second Language' is to qualify teachers to support bilingual pupils in developing their language skills.

An example of an attempt to assist teachers in their efforts to create an inclusive learning environment, is the publication 'Room for Diversity' (Plads til forskellighed, 2008), which contains practical suggestions for planning teaching modules concerning culture, tolerance, diversity and conflict resolution.

Link to the publication in Danish: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2008/forskellighed/print/plads.pdf>

In collaboration with, amongst other, Local Government Denmark (LGDK) and the Danish Union of Teachers, the Ministry of Education has initiated a series of campaigns such as 'Watch Out for Bullying' and 'Together against bullying'. The campaigns contain a wide range of initiatives, including confidence ambassadors, telephone counselling, information and inspirational materials, education of pupils to stop bullying and other initiatives to ensure that children and young persons do not become victims of bullying at their place of education.

Link in Danish to 'Together Against Bullying':
<http://www.sammenmodmobning.dk/sammenmodmobning>

In the Bachelor of Social Education Act it is stated that the aim of the education programme is to qualify students to communicate societal goals and values to every person regardless of language and cultural background. It is also stated that the education programme must contribute to promote the students' ability to actively engage in a democratic society. In the subjects 'Danish, Culture and Communication' and 'Pedagogy' one of the objectives is that the students acquire an understanding of democracy in relation to pedagogical work, intercultural affairs and cultural diversity.

Furthermore, the Government has in its plan of action to prevent extremism and radicalization among young people (see also pages 3-4) taken the initiative to make a catalogue of ideas specifically addressed to students in the bachelor of social education programme. The purpose of the catalogue is to give students knowledge about societal goals and values in a democratic society and to provide inspiration as to how these goals and values can be communicated in pedagogical work with children and young people.

6. Danish participation in and support for dialogue and cooperation with Arab and Muslim countries

The Danish Government takes active part in dialogue and cooperation with Arab and Muslim countries in bilateral as well as multilateral forums.

The Danish Government recently hosted the 'Copenhagen Conference: Education for Dialogue and Intercultural Understanding' on October 21-22, 2008. One of the themes of the conference was how to combat stereotypes about religions and beliefs in our educational systems. The conference was organized and sponsored by a large group of international and national organizations: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), The Council of Europe, the Anna-Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, the Danish Centre for Culture and Development and UN Alliance of Civilizations.

For more information: <http://cc2008.dk/cc.nsf>

6.a. Danish-Arab Partnership Programme

The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme was launched in 2003 by the Danish Government with the objective to establish a basis for improved dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Denmark and the Arab region and to support existing local reform processes in the Middle East and North Africa. Today, more than 120 Danish civil society organisations and public institutions are engaged in professional partnerships with an even greater number of Arab partners. The main focus is on people-to-people contacts. It is expected that the professional and personal contacts now being developed will last for long. Both in Denmark and in the Arab region there is great interest in participating in the initiative. Thus, Danish partners have been invited to cooperate on a number of reform processes that may contribute to significant long-term reforms. The world is diverse but people in Denmark and the Arab region share the same aspirations towards peace, justice and prosperity. It is exactly through strong people-to-people partnerships that we can overcome stereotypes and build bridges in a joint effort towards this common goal.

What is the programme about?

Journalists from Denmark and their Arab partners are discussing modern media challenges and standards, are working at each other's newspapers and have set up new innovative institutions to foster investigative journalism and monitoring of the media. Political parties' youth organisations from Denmark and the Arab region are meeting and discussing important political topics – across traditional political and cultural divides. Women's organisations are creating networks, listening to narratives of shared experience and debating the sensitive issues of women's rights, family laws and inclusion of women in society - and artists are developing new innovative ways of expression. The list of activities is long. The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme is building bridges and creating strong personal networks in favour of reforms across the Mediterranean.

The Partnership Programme builds on the following fundamental principles:

- The programme is demand driven. Activities within the programme are reflections of demands for cooperation on reform initiatives formulated by Arab governments and non-governmental organisations. All activities are identified, designed and implemented in close collaboration between Arab and Danish partners based on equal partnerships – with particular focus on professional cooperation, exchange of knowledge and sharing of experience. The aim is to support professional and strategic networks – to the mutual benefit of Arab and Danish partners.
- Based on the three key challenges for development, which have been identified by the UNDP Arab Human Development Reports, all activities fall within one of the three thematic focal and reform areas:
 1. Fundamental freedoms and good governance;
 2. The development of knowledge-based societies;
 3. The promotion of gender equality and women's participation in social, political and economic life.
- To build genuine partnerships and mutual trust takes time. Hence the Partnership Programme is establishing partnerships with a perspective of long-term cooperation.
- “No-size-fits-all”: Reform processes by necessity follow their own path according to the specific societal and political circumstances of the country.

- Societal reform processes are only sustainable if they have a broad base and build on all segments of society engaged in reform and democratic changes. Activities encompass partners with an interest in reform and dialogue at both governmental and non-governmental level. The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme supports activities for a total annual grant of approximately 14 million EURO (DKK 100 million) annually. To strengthen the relations with the region, Denmark in September 2007 opened new embassies in Rabat, Amman and Beirut.

The programme has both a bilateral and a multilateral track:

The bilateral track consists of country specific and regional programmes. Country specific programmes have been established between Denmark and Morocco, Jordan and Yemen. In each of the three countries a technical unit has been established to support and facilitate the cooperation.

In Egypt, a Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute has been established. The Dialogue Institute engages actively in a number of exchange and dialogue initiatives between Denmark and Egypt and the Arab region in general. The regional programmes fall within the three thematic focal areas and are developed and driven entirely by civil society and other non-governmental institutions from Denmark and their partners in the region.

The multilateral track aims at strengthening the efforts made by international and multilateral bodies, especially the EU, to support reform processes in the Arab region. Within the multilateral track, Denmark has given particular priority to the development of the EU's Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, including the Barcelona Process, now Union for the Mediterranean. Furthermore, Denmark is engaged in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and the G8's Forum for the Future.

For further information on the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute: www.dedi.org.eg

For further information regarding the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme:
<http://www.um.dk/en/menu/DevelopmentPolicy/WiderMiddleEastInitiative/>

Danish-Arab Partnership Programme leaflet:
http://www.um.dk/NR/rdonlyres/4A5DCC5A-62BF-4537-B04F-FDF59EE7A723/0/ArabiskInitiativ_GB_www.pdf