Working with the elderly, the sick and the disabled

Information for foreigners about living and working in Denmark
WORKING WITH THE ELDERLY, THE SICK AND THE DISABLED

WORKING IN DENMARK
– information for foreigners about living and working in Denmark.

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## CONTENTS

Welcome to the Social and Health Services Sector ............... 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denmark – A Welfare State</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Who can work and live in Denmark</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Finding a job in Denmark</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Part of a Trade Organisation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pay and Working Conditions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unemployment Insurance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A Healthy Working Environment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Denmark – A Country of Educational Opportunity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Training for a Career in the Sector</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Living in Denmark</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Meet the Danes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome to the Social and Health Services Sector

The work of caring for the elderly, sick and disabled members of society and others who need help is a cornerstone of the Danish welfare society.

Some people need a little help in their own home while others require 24-hour care and attention. However, whatever the need, help is always based on the individual's personal resources, and the end-goal is the highest possible quality of life.

Regardless of whether you are considering finding a job in Denmark or already preparing for one, this booklet will give you useful information about the society and the job market you will be joining.

You can read about employment opportunities, collective agreements, unemployment funds and education. You can also find practical information to help you, and perhaps your family, settle into a regular daily routine in a new country regardless of how long you expect to stay here.

Need for manpower from abroad

The population trend means that in future, Denmark will have not only a relatively larger elderly population but also a higher number of very old residents. At the same time the number of people available for active employment will fall. There is thus special focus on recruiting people for the elderly care sector, and many local authorities, private employers and temping agencies in the area are hiring workers from other countries.

For many years, Denmark has relied on highly qualified foreign employees to meet the need for nurses and doctors or to work in the construction and knowledge technology industries, for example.

The recruitment of people for the occupational areas covered by FOA, the Care and Service Union, is a relatively new departure, but interest in the area is increasing.

So far, the new employees come largely from Denmark’s neighbours, Sweden and Germany, but EU citizens from the eastern European countries are increasingly finding jobs in Denmark, particularly in elderly care.

Working across borders

Nordic workers have always been able to move freely between the Nordic countries. For EU citizens it has
also become easier in recent years to get a residence and work permit in Denmark if they have been promised a job here.

In addition, Danish immigration legislation for non-EU citizens has been eased, thus increasing your opportunities for living and working in Denmark if you come from a country outside the Nordic region and the EU.

This booklet gives you a better basis for deciding whether a future in the Danish job market is an option for you. If you already have a job in Denmark, the booklet can help to avoid misunderstandings and prepare you for life in a new country.

Log on to www.foa-international.dk

If you need more information or details about some of the topics dealt with in this publication, log on to www.foa-international.dk. The website is targeted at foreign nationals working in the public sector.
1 Denmark – a Welfare State

The Danish welfare system is rooted in a longstanding tradition of solidarity with the weakest members of society. This safety net is financed by a tax system based on the principle that those who earn most contribute most to the common cause.

In principle a welfare system gives everyone equal access to a social system that entitles all members of society to such services as childcare, education and a state pension as well as a health care system that provides free hospital treatment, medical assistance and elderly care.

Safety net
However, equal access to social help and health care is not an absolute given. As with every other aspect of our modern individualised world, the Danish welfare model is undergoing change. This trend is reflected, for instance, in the increasing number of private alternatives to government-financed home care and hospital treatment for people who can afford to pay and are willing to do so.

Both private individuals who want fast, effective medical treatment and public- and private-sector enterprises seeking to reduce costly absenteeism caused by long waiting lists for treatment have an interest in strengthening society’s safety net through self-paid health insurance.

However, the principle that everyone who needs help is afforded assistance remains the pillar of the Danish welfare society. And with a residence permit,
Working With the Elderly, the Sick and the Disabled

Working with the elderly, the sick and the disabled requires a medical certificate. A civil registration number (CPR) and a tax card, you contribute to the Danish welfare society and are thus entitled to its services.

**A labour market managed by agreements**
The Danish labour market also reflects this solidarity in what is referred to as 'the Danish model.' This model, which forms the functional basis for the labour market, is unique to Denmark and means that working conditions and salaries are regulated through voluntary agreements between employer and employee organisations.

**Healthy workplaces**
In Denmark the working environment is traditionally organised according to the needs of employees and not vice-versa. Employers are responsible for providing a healthy, stimulating working environment, and as an employee, you work jointly with your employer to establish policies to this end.

Occupational health and safety deals with psychological and physical well-being as well as with preventing violence and stress and having access to high-quality technical aids to prevent accidents at work and ill health or injury due to heavy lifting.

**Lifelong learning**
Denmark’s educational traditions include the goal of offering all its residents opportunities and inspiration for lifelong learning. The education system is structured to give children and young people free, basic education and to offer adults opportunities to continue enhancing their skills throughout their life according to their needs and abilities, regardless of their financial means.

**Integration**
As a newcomer to Denmark, you also become a member of Danish society. Integration in a foreign country is always daunting. Danish workplaces and trade unions work to help employees from abroad to settle and to encourage them to stay in Denmark. But you will get the most out of Danish society and feel at home faster if you take personal responsibility, learn about the culture and, in particular, quickly gain a working knowledge of the Danish language.
2 | Who can work and live in Denmark

The criteria that determine whether you can obtain a residence and work permit for Denmark depend on your country of origin. This chapter outlines the requirements for obtaining a residence and work permit, but you can also get more information and advice from your local FOA branch.

The rules are laid down in EU and Danish legislation. Foreigners seeking work can be divided into three groups:

- **Nordic citizens**, who are free to live and work in Denmark.

- **EU citizens**, who are free to live in Denmark for three months and to stay here to seek work for up to six months. The following special conditions apply to EU citizens:
  1. If you want to stay in Denmark for more than three months, you must apply for a registration certificate at the latest three months after entering the country. To qualify for a registration certificate, you must be able to document that you are self-employed in Denmark, or can prove, for example, by a contract of employment, that you have paid employment in Denmark.
  2. If you lose your job, you also lose the right to live here unless you find other employment, your unemployment is temporary or you have lost your job through no fault of your own.
  3. If you have been in the Danish labour market for 12 consecutive months or have registered with a job centre as a job seeker within the first 12 months of arriving, you can stay in Denmark for up to six months.

- **Other foreign nationals** must have a residence and work permit in order to live and work in Denmark. If you come from a country outside the Nordic region or the EU, there are various ways of applying for a residence and work permit.

4. The positive list is a list of occupational categories in which Denmark needs qualified employees. If your trade or educational background matches an occupation on the list and you have been offered a job in Denmark in the relevant category, you will qualify for a residence and work permit.

5. The pay limit scheme means that all foreigners who have received a job offer with a specified salary can obtain a residence and work permit for Denmark, regardless of the general employment situation. Under the pay limit scheme a person’s minimum annual pay to qualify for a residence permit is currently DKK 375,000.

6. The corporate residence permit means that foreign employees with special skills or qualifications who are employed periodically by a pre-approved company can obtain a residence permit for three years.

7. Ordinary entry may be granted in special cases if no workers are available here, in the EU or in the other Nordic countries. Salary and employment conditions must comply with Danish collective agreements.

8. The Green Card scheme allows foreign nationals with special qualifications to obtain a residence permit for up to three years in order to seek work in Denmark.
Bringing your family
If you have work in Denmark and come from an EU or a Nordic country, you are free to bring your family to Denmark provided you live together and can support yourselves. Your accompanying partner will also be granted a residence and work permit.

The same conditions apply if you come from a country outside the EU and have been granted a residence permit according to the positive list or the pay limit scheme. You do not have the same entitlement if you have entered Denmark under the ordinary entry rules unless you have employment for three years or more, or your employment is extended for a corresponding length of time.

Duration of stay
If you come from a Nordic country or another EU country, in principle you can stay in Denmark for as long as you have work.

If you have entered Denmark from a country outside the EU under ordinary entry rules, you will normally be granted a residence permit for one year at a time.

If you have entered Denmark via the positive list or the pay limit scheme, you will initially be granted a residence permit for a maximum of three years, with the possibility of an extension.
3 Finding a job in Denmark

There are several ways of finding work in Denmark.

- **You can seek work** among the job ads placed by employers in local newspapers or via a job portal such as www.workindenmark.dk.

- **You can advertise.** On job portals such as www.workindenmark.dk you can also advertise for work and upload information about your educational background and previous jobs (CV).

- **You can contact a recruitment agency.** Recruitment companies in Denmark and your home country can help people find jobs with Danish municipal employers.

- **You can attend job fairs.** Some municipal employers also participate in job fairs that you may attend and use to make contacts.

- **Unsolicited application.** You can always send an unsolicited application to an employer in an area of Denmark where you would like to work.

- **Recommendation.** You may know someone who already works in Denmark and could put you in touch with their employer.

**Employers**

There are various ways of being hired for work in the public sector. You can be employed by:

- A municipal employer
- A private employer
- A temping agency – either in Denmark or in your home country.

Most jobs will be encompassed by a collective agreement that regulates pay and working conditions in your occupational area in the Danish labour market. However, when you accept a job with a private employer, you must check the content of your contract of employment. As a FOA member you can ask your local FOA branch to help check that your contract meets the requirements.

**Job application**

A job application should be short and concise and fill no more than one A4 sheet. It should contain a description of who you are, your experience and education, and explain why you want to work in your chosen field.

You should enclose your CV as well as relevant exam certificates and recommendations from former employers.

**Danish skills**

Contact with members of the public is central to working in the public sector, and proficiency in Danish is therefore essential. As a prerequisite for working with people, you must complete an intensive Danish course when you are hired for a position in Denmark.

Different employers tackle this task in very different ways. As mentioned earlier, you will generally be offered a Danish course. If you come to Denmark on your own initiative and are granted a residence and work permit, you are entitled to receive free Danish lessons in your local authority district of residence. **You can read more about Danish lessons in Chapter 8.**

**Vocational background**

Education is important in Denmark, and the aim is for everyone working with people, for example, in elderly care, to have received qualifying training.
But you do not need to be a skilled worker to get a job in the public sector in Denmark. When you are hired – whether through a recruitment agency or direct by a Danish employer – you should be offered an introduction programme which, together with Danish lessons, will prepare you for your new job and introduce you to the work involved. During your employment you will have regular access to training courses and may get the opportunity to take a basic programme of formal qualification.

**Have your qualifications assessed**
You can have your educational qualifications and work experience assessed by the Danish Agency for International Education, which can also identify the occupational area to which they correspond in Denmark.

In Denmark some social and health sector jobs require professional authorisation. If you come from an EU country, you may be able to transfer your authorisation, but this is not an option for non-EU citizens.

**About the Agency for International Education**
The Agency for International Education is an authority within the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation whose tasks include promoting mobility and global educational cooperation. The Agency provides advice, guidance and support to individuals, institutions, organisations and businesses.

The Agency assesses non-Danish degrees, diplomas and certificates and provides information about the international recognition of qualifications.

As an EU citizen you can have your qualifications for working in Denmark assessed free of charge. You will have to pay for any translations needed, however.

**Download an application form from [www.iu.dk](http://www.iu.dk)**
Contract of employment
Regardless of whether a collective agreement has been made, employers in Denmark are legally required to offer you a contract of employment when you are hired or by the latest one month after you have started in your job.

As a minimum the contract of employment must include:

- The name and address of employer and employee
- The location of the workplace. If there is no permanent place of work or location where the work is generally carried out, the contract must specify that the employee will work in different locations and state the company headquarters or employer’s address
- A job description or the employee's job title, rank, position or job category
- The employment commencement date
- Expected duration of employment when the position is not for an indefinite period of time
- The employee's right to paid holiday, including whether salary will be paid during holidays
- Periods of notice for employee and employer or applicable rules
- The current agreed pay to which the employee is entitled on the date of commencement, plus any allowances and other salary elements not included in the basic pay such as pension contributions or meals and accommodation. Salary payment dates must also be specified
- Normal daily or weekly working hours
- Specification of the collective agreements or other regulatory agreements that govern the employment. If agreements have been made with parties outside the company, the names of these parties must be stated.
Part of a Trade Organisation

The Danish labour market differs from that of other EU countries in that it is largely regulated by voluntary agreements between employer and employee organisations. The state does not interfere with the agreements made by the two sides of industry in the various occupational areas as long as they do not undermine the rights embodied by legislation.

The agreements
While specific pay and working conditions are determined through collective bargaining and set out in collective agreements, the framework for cooperation between both sides of industry is laid out in what is known as the general agreement. Any disputes arising from collective agreements must be settled by an industrial tribunal, also known as industrial arbitration, or by the Industrial Court.

This entire structure, also called 'the Danish model', means that the Danish labour market is extremely well regulated and that both employees and employers have significant influence on pay and working conditions.

Organisation
The reason the Danish model is so effective is that all the parties involved are organised in some way. Most employers belong to an employers’ association that handles negotiations for them and provides advice on a daily basis, while about 80% of Danish employees are members of a trade union that safeguards their rights and interests.
Trade union membership is entirely voluntary, and employees also have the choice of different trade unions. However, unlike workers in many other countries, Danish workers are organised by trade and occupational area rather than by sector.

**FOA, The Care and Service Union**

FOA will often be a natural choice of trade union for you when you get a job in the Danish public-sector job market.

**FOA is divided into four sectors**

- Social and Health Services Sector
- Childcare and Social Education Services Sector
- Catering and Cleaning Services Sector
- Technical and Maintenance Services Sector

The large majority of the union’s 200,000 members are engaged in delivering public services such as:

- caring for children
- caring for patients in hospitals and nursing homes
- manning emergency services, firefighting, for example
- providing help and services to elderly and disabled people
- driving buses
- cleaning and catering in hospitals, elderly centres, schools and barracks
- inspecting and maintaining buildings

**What the trade union does**

**FOA provides four main services to its members:**

- Making agreements with employer organisations regarding pay and employment conditions
- Organising and training union representatives, who are the link between the trade union and its members in the workplace
- Representing members’ interests relative to the political system
- Advising members on issues related to the workplace and members’ personal working life and representing its members in legal disputes with employers.

**Your local FOA branch**

FOA consists of 43 local branches and when you join the trade union, you become part of a trade organisation that not only protects your general interests in work and pay negotiations but also plays a role in your daily working life.

Every day your local trade union branch deals with questions about the workplace; mediates if conflicts arise; advises members on employment funds, edu-
cation and other issues; and handles local negotiations with your employer if you have been hired via a private temping agency rather than direct by a local authority.

Your local branch is also ready to help you with practical issues that you might encounter as a foreigner new to Denmark. You can discuss and get advice on private issues such as finding accommodation and settling into your local community.

**Union representative (TR)**

A union representative is elected from among employees organised under the union to protect colleagues' interests in local negotiations and if problems arise in the workplace.

Once a workplace has five employees, the employees are entitled to elect a union representative who can take care of their interests vis-à-vis the employer and who enjoys special employment protection. The union representative is also the link to the trade union, which is in charge of training the person elected for the task.

If your employer is a private temping agency with more than five employees and you have not yet elected a union representative, you may contact your local branch. Temporary or hourly paid workers who work more than eight hours a week are also included in the number of employees required for electing a union representative.

**Health and safety representative (SR)**

It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that the work does not cause employees to fall ill or feel their wellbeing is impaired. But employees also share this responsibility, and workplaces with more than 10 people on the payroll are required to set up an internal safety organisation where management and staff work together to ensure a good, healthy working environment. You can read more about health and safety work in Chapter 7.

**Your influence on the workplace**

MED is an acronym for the Danish terms for workers' co-determination and participation. Management and staff members of the MED committee make agreements about matters relevant to conditions in the workplace, eg:

- Personnel policy
- Health and safety policy
- Equality policy
- Skills development policy
- Outsourcing policy
- Social chapter
- Citizen service policy
5 Pay and Working Conditions

Pay and working conditions in the Danish job market are regulated partly by legislation and partly by agreements made between employer and employee organisations as outlined in the previous chapter.

The collective agreement is the agreement that lays down the general terms and conditions of your employment.

Although FOA makes most of its agreements with Local Government Denmark (LGDK) and Danish Regions, it also makes agreements with private employers, temping agencies for example, particularly when they recruit employees from abroad.

The collective agreement sets out:
- Pay rates and agreed pay increases
- Pension conditions
- Hours of work, overtime and payment of allowances
- Training and courses

Joint agreements
In addition to the collective agreement itself, general agreements are made between the respective cooper-
Working with the elderly, the sick and the disabled

These agreements contain provisions on topics common to many collective agreements, for example:

- **Holiday agreements**
- **Agreements regarding absence for family reasons** (such as maternity leave)
- **Agreements regarding union representatives**

**Recognition agreements**
Most of the employers in FOA’s area are public employers. However, as already mentioned, there are also a substantial number of private employers. Recognition agreements are occasionally made with individual private employers as required. They usually follow the collective agreement in the relevant occupational area. This will be clear from the recognition agreement made with the private employer. The agreement may also cover other elements such as accommodation, hours of work and so on, but whatever conditions are agreed, they may not compromise the rights guaranteed by the collective agreement.

**Mandatory terms and conditions**
Finally, some employment conditions are determined by laws and regulations passed either by the EU or by the Folketing, the Danish parliament. For example:

- **The Holidays with Pay Act**
- **The Danish Working Environment Act**

**Everything is negotiable**
In principle, any working condition can be negotiated through collective bargaining. However, as a general rule, an agreement cannot be made that puts employees in a worse position than that prescribed by legislation.

An example is the Holidays with Pay Act, which gives all employees the right to five weeks’ holiday. The organisations have made a holiday agreement for regional and local authority employees entitling them to six weeks’ holiday.
Unemployment Insurance

As a general rule you should be able to support yourself and your family while working and living in Denmark. However, as the national of another country you can also insure against unemployment and receive financial support if you are made redundant. You can also transfer seniority from the unemployment insurance fund in your home country to your new Danish unemployment fund (a-kasse).

In most EU countries, unemployment insurance is linked to your employment and is compulsory. In Denmark unemployment insurance is voluntary, and to qualify for unemployment benefit you must register as a member of an unemployment fund (a-kasse).

Free choice of unemployment insurance fund
Like other trade unions in Denmark, FOA, the trade union for the employee groups to which you belong, has an affiliated unemployment insurance fund. But this does not mean you have to choose this fund. The unemployment fund and the trade union are independent of each other, and it is up to you to decide which unemployment fund to join.

The advantages of choosing FOA’s unemployment fund are that its staff have specialist knowledge about your precise field of work, and that it is located in the same building as the union’s local branch, which allows the two to coordinate their efforts if problems arise during your employment.

Unemployment benefit
The unemployment benefit system in Denmark has a long history that started over a century ago when widespread unemployment caused the trade union movement to set up relief funds. Unemployed members would turn up every day, have their card stamped and receive unemployment benefit. Since 1907, when the first unemployment benefit act was passed, the state has taken over responsibility for laying down the conditions for the right to unemployment benefit.

Transferring earned benefit rights
If you come from an EU country where you have been a member of an unemployment fund, your can transfer your earned benefit rights to Denmark.

However, you should be aware that your employment in Denmark must start at the latest eight weeks after you have left your employment fund in your home country. If not, you will lose the right to transfer rights. If and when you return home, you can transfer benefit rights in the same way from your Danish employment fund to your home country.

If you lose your job
If you lose your job, you are entitled to receive benefits once you have been a member of an unemployment fund for a year and have been in full-time employment for at least 52 weeks within the past three years.

If you have a part-time job, it will take you correspondingly longer to ‘accumulate’ the equivalent full-time employment requirement that will qualify you for unemployment benefit.

To receive unemployment benefit, a person must be unemployed and willing and able to accept another job. This means you must actively seek work.

The exact definition of this concept is currently the subject of debate in Denmark, but if you lose your job you can always get help from your unemployment fund.
Becoming unemployed during a training period

If you become unemployed during a training period, for example, after failing a practical training course because of cultural differences or insufficient Danish skills, you can receive unemployment benefit – provided you meet the general requirements – for an interim period of up to three months until you can perhaps re-take the practical training course and continue your training programme.

Early retirement benefit

Early retirement benefit is a voluntary scheme for unemployment fund members that offers the opportunity to withdraw partly or wholly from the labour market after the age of 60.

Early retirement benefit may not be an option for you, because one of the scheme’s requirements is 30 years of membership of an unemployment fund.

However, if you are not yet 30 and plan to settle down and grow old in Denmark, your unemployment fund can tell you more about how to register for this scheme.
Denmark has a longstanding tradition of promoting a good, healthy working environment. A series of laws and provisions focusing on workers’ rights makes it the duty of employers to provide a good working environment that ensures the psychological and physical wellbeing of employees and enables them to do their work without being exposed to the risk of accidents or deteriorating health.

**Legislation and collective agreements**
Through the Danish Working Environment Authority, the Danish state administers the rules on how employers must provide good preventive working environments.

The legislation describes the minimum requirements for health and safety at work, but the two sides of industry can negotiate better health and safety conditions through the collective bargaining process.

An example of an improvement achieved through collective bargaining is the intensified efforts to prevent stress at work by requiring workplaces to formulate an anti-stress policy. During the collective bargaining sessions in 2008 these initiatives were expanded to include bullying and violence by third
parties (users), whereas EU legislation only addresses violence between two parties.

**Health and safety representative (SR)**
The health and safety representative is the person employees elect to promote health and safety in the workplace. A representative must be elected in workplaces with more than ten employees. If a representative is not elected, the supervisor must take on the role. It is always a good idea to elect a health and safety representative because this is the simplest way to represent employees’ interests.

**Do you have problems with health and safety in your workplace?**
If you discover occupational health and safety problems in your workplace, either physical or psychological, you may contact your health and safety representative. You may feel reluctant to point out the problems or be afraid of losing your job, but it is important to know that you have a legally protected right to work in a healthy working environment.

If your workplace has not elected a health and safety representative, or if you get unsatisfactory answers, you can contact the Danish Working Environment Authority. Your case will be treated with discretion, and your name will not be disclosed to your employer. After being contacted, the authority will send a representative to make an unannounced visit to check conditions in your workplace. If you are a FOA member, you can always contact your local branch if you have problems.

**Checking health and safety at your workplace**
It is your employer’s duty to ensure that your working environment meets the agreed standards. The tool used to assess this is called a workplace risk assessment (WRA). This assessment, which is required by law and has to be repeated if changes are made to the workplace, is based on your and your colleagues’ assessment of the workplace. Your employer needs your opinions in order to properly monitor your occupational health and safety.

**Four priority areas**
Health and safety at work falls into two categories: physical and psychological working environments. The national action plan adopted by the Danish government for the period 2010-2020 includes four priority improvement areas for occupational health and safety:

- **Reducing accidents**
- **Noise** – reducing noise that impairs hearing as well as noise that causes nuisance
- **Psychological occupational health** – to reduce absenteeism due to sickness, for example
- **Muscle and bone strain** – preventing ill health by focusing on correct lifting techniques, working positions and aids.
One of the aims of the Danish education system is to inspire and provide opportunities for lifelong learning for all residents in Denmark.

Together with the government, both sides of industry have made a commitment to continuously develop new educational opportunities for working people.

The development of the welfare state is contingent on a well-educated population, and the education that is always relevant is one that matches the individual’s abilities and interests and combines them with society’s need for skilled, qualified people.

A common EU goal
This development will be further reinforced in the years ahead and not only in Denmark. The internationalisation of education and training is a high-profile focus area throughout Europe. The primary aim of the EU’s work in the education field is to create a coordinated European educational platform. Although higher education is currently the main focus, efforts are also being made to eliminate national barriers to non-academic qualifications such as teaching and health care training programmes. In this respect, one of the focus areas of the European Commission is an action plan for ‘lifelong learning’ to lessen the difficulties of qualification accreditation between the different countries.

Have your qualifications assessed
The EU has not managed to coordinate and create transparency among international education and training programmes in the public sector job market. Denmark offers a number of training programmes not found elsewhere in the EU.

As mentioned earlier, you can have your educational qualifications and work experience assessed by the government authority CIRIUS. If you have difficulty documenting your skills and knowledge, you may also have them assessed by vocational training institutions and most adult education organisations.

Danish – a work essential
You must be able to communicate in Danish if you want to work in the public sector, where close contact with users and other members of the public is a key part of the job. Speaking and understanding the language will also make it much easier to get in touch with Danes and settle in your new country.

Employers who recruit people from abroad normally plan a course of Danish lessons as part of the job introduction programme. Courses are held in a wide variety of ways. Some recruitment agencies offer to teach you Danish in your home country before
you leave for Denmark, while others organise intensive courses for you after arrival. Lessons can be given as a single, consecutive course or in combination with job-related practical training periods.

You are entitled to Danish lessons
If you come to Denmark on your own initiative, various options for learning Danish will also be available to you. Under Danish legislation, foreign employees who have arrived and live legally in Denmark are entitled to an offer of Danish lessons from their local authority of residence at the latest one month after contacting the authority, or at the latest one month after the issue of their civil registration number.

Depending on your proficiency, you will be offered one of three Danish courses. Each course corresponds to 1.2 years’ full-time education and can be completed in three years at a school or in a workplace.

A number of other educational options are also available but they require a certain advance knowledge of Danish. These include vocationally oriented Danish courses offered by adult vocational training institutions (AMU), which have no restrictions on student intake.

As a foreigner coming to Denmark to work, in addition to the basic vocational training programmes, you have a range of options for upgrading your skills.

### THE DANISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Ordinary Education</th>
<th>Continuing Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KVU</td>
<td>MVU</td>
<td>Academic master</td>
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<td>--- LVU ---</td>
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Abbreviations:
- KVU: Short further education
- MVU: Short higher education
- LVU: Long higher education
- EUD: Vocational training programme
- VVU: Further adult education
- GVU: Basic adult education programme
- AMU: Adult vocational training
- HF: Higher Preparatory Certificate
- AVU: General adult education
- FVU: Preparatory adult education

Lifelong learning is a general aim of educational policy in Denmark. Nine years of schooling is compulsory, after which the education system consists of a series of options that individuals can combine in various ways to suit their abilities and interests.
The two options that will probably be most relevant are described below.

**Adult vocational training**
Adult vocational training courses (AMU) consist of short courses that lead to a formal qualification and are targeted at skilled and unskilled employees alike. The courses include practical and theoretical instruction and can be planned as either full- or part-time programmes.

Most AMU courses are free, but a small fee is charged for some, for example those in the educational and social and health care sectors.

**Adult education**
Ordinary adult education is a supplement to the standard education system and intended for working adults. The courses range from a few hours a week over a short period to part-time programmes over a longer period of time. Courses are structured to take into account the adult students’ work and life experience.

**Financial support**
There are various ways of getting financial support while you are taking education or training. Depending on the level of the programme, you can apply for financial compensation.

- You are entitled to trainee pay while taking a basic vocational training course. If you are over 25, you will normally be paid adult trainee pay.
- If you take an adult vocational training course and have a job, your salary will be paid during the training course.
- You can also take an adult vocational training course if you are unemployed. In that case you will receive compensation corresponding to the current unemployment benefit.

If you take a course of higher education, you may be entitled to a state education grant (SU).

*You can find more detailed information about work and education options in your particular field in Chapter 9.*
9 | Training for a Career in the Sector

Social and health carers and social and health care assistants
When caring for the elderly, sick and disabled, the aim is always to adopt a holistic view of every individual, and care is based on an assessment of the individual’s own personal needs and resources.

This means that people who need help can get various forms of assistance, from cleaning in their own home to 24-hour care in a nursing home.

The care offered is based on respect for the person who needs help and support, and the aim is to qualify carers to a high professional standard.

You can find more information about social care and training at www.foa-international.dk.

Working in the social and health services sector
Working in the elderly care sector will bring you in close contact with people who depend on your help to achieve the highest possible quality of life. Together with the people in your care, it is your job to identify and plan the best solutions for them, a task that places high demands on your professional qualifications and requires a broad understanding of health promotion, care, nutrition, exercise and illness. You must also be able to plan your work so you do not put your own health at risk, for example, by lifting wrongly.

Working as a social and health carer
Social and health carers typically work in the home
care service, in nursing homes, sheltered housing facilities or elderly centres.

The type of work depends on the institution, but the job is highly independent, with tasks ranging from practical help with cleaning, shopping and personal hygiene to motivating elderly, sick and disabled people to become more active.

**Working as a social and healthcare assistant**
You need an authorisation to work as a social and health care assistant in Denmark. If you come from an EU country and have a qualification from your home country corresponding to the social and health care assistant programme, nursing or similar, your authorisation can be transferred to Denmark. Your application for Danish authorisation should be sent to the Danish National Board of Health.

Social and health care assistants typically work in hospitals, the mental health care service, elderly care and institutions for people with mental and physical disabilities.

The work depends on the institution, but the job is highly independent and all-embracing. The tasks range broadly from nursing care to cooperating and coordinating with other professional groups, and motivating the elderly, sick and people with mental and physical disabilities to become more active.

**Social and health care training**
Many native Danes start on a career in the care sector as unskilled workers, but the aim to provide a highly professional service means that people who work with the elderly and similar groups enjoy a range of continuing education opportunities. Unskilled workers arriving in Denmark can also take a social and health care qualification. If you are unskilled and over 25, you can also take an adult vocational training course (AMU) during which you will continue to receive your normal salary.

**Introduction programme for people from abroad**
As described elsewhere, when you start a job in the social and health care sector with a local authority, private employer or private temping agency providing local authority services, you will always go through an introduction programme. These programmes can be structured in very different ways, but should ideally be arranged jointly by your local FOA branch, employer and an accredited relevant educational institution.

Your job introduction will be combined with intensive Danish lessons, as described in Chapter 8.

**The social and health carer training programme**
The goal for all people working in the social care sector is ensuring that they have taken a basic qualification programme.

You are entitled to apply for a programme of education in Denmark. However, you cannot complete a basic programme unless you have a reasonable command of oral and written Danish. The formal admission requirement for the basic social care programme is a command of Danish corresponding to level 3, or level 2 Danish supplemented with six months of relevant work experience.

Many basic health care colleges around Denmark offer training programmes for social and health carers. You can apply direct to the college or get a job with a local authority, which will get you started on the programme.

If you have work experience or another qualification, it may be possible to shorten your training programme.

The social and health carer programme lasts one year and seven months, including a 20-week basic course.

The remainder of the programme is a mix of practical training periods and school study, for example:

- Three school study periods, a total of 24 weeks
- Two practical training periods, a total of 31 weeks

**Training agreement**
At the latest round of collective bargaining for social and health care staff, an agreement was made to give all non-qualified employees the right to take a social care worker training programme, provided they meet certain requirements.

You must be offered the training programme at the latest after three years of uninterrupted employment, and you are under no obligation to accept the offer. You will be granted leave of absence from work to attend the programme and receive financial
compensation corresponding to adult trainee pay grade 11.

**Continuing education opportunities**
The training programme for social and health carers may be a step on the road to qualifying as a social and health care assistant. However, you can also continue your training through a wide range of relevant adult vocational training courses (AMU), which lead to nationally recognised qualifications and can also earn you credits for other basic vocational training courses.

For example, you can take an AMU course in dementia if this aspect of elderly care is your special area of interest or work.

**Training to become a social and health care assistant**
As mentioned earlier, if you want to work as a social and health care assistant in Denmark you must come from a Nordic country or be an EU citizen and have a corresponding qualification from your home country that can make you eligible for authorisation.

The social and health care assistant qualification is level two of the social and health care training programme. If you are a qualified social and health carer, this may give you direct admission to level two, and if you have work experience or another qualification, it may be possible to shorten your training programme.

You can apply direct to the college or take the programme in connection with a job in a local authority.

The social and health care assistant programme lasts one year and eight months and is a mix of practical training periods and school study, for example:

- Four school study periods lasting a total of about 32 weeks
- Three practical training periods lasting a total of about 48 weeks

**Further and continuing education**
Successful completion of the social and health care assistant programme qualifies you for admission to a wide range of medium-cycle further education programmes such as nurse, social worker and social educationist.

Social and health care assistants can also upgrade their skills through adult vocational training courses (AMU), which lead to nationally recognised qualifications and can also earn credits for basic vocational training courses. If you have worked as a social and health care assistant for two years and are over 25, you can take a programme of further education in health practice, which leads to a diploma-level qualification.

| Salary level – Social and Health Care Services Sector |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Full-time employment, weekly number of hours: 37    |                                                     |
| Social and health carer                               | DKK 18,353                                        |
| (without formal qualifications):                     |                                                   |
| Social and health carer                               | DKK 20,650                                        |
| (with formal qualifications):                         |                                                   |
| As at 1 April 2010. Local allowances may be added. The figures are the basic pay rates for the categories. Contact your local FOA branch for more details. | |
Working With the Elderly, the Sick and the Disabled

10 | Living in Denmark

Once you have arrived in Denmark and obtained your residence and work permit, a number of practical matters must be attended to before you can get on with your daily life.

First and foremost you need a roof over your head – for practical reasons, obviously, but also because accommodation is required for the issue of your ticket to the Danish welfare state: a civil registration number (CPR) and with it, a medical card and a tax card.

Housing
Finding reasonably priced rented accommodation in Denmark can be difficult, and prices vary greatly from region to region.

If you work for a municipal employer, you may be able to rent one of its council housing units. However, even as employers, local authorities are not generally obliged to offer accommodation to residents who have work and can support themselves financially.

Private employers can also offer accommodation, and some may already have made housing arrangements for you before you come to Denmark. You should pay special attention to the cost of accommodation offered by a private employer. There have been unfortunate examples of people being overcharged for the accommodation offered by a private company. If you are a member of FOA and suspect that the accommodation offered is too expensive or sub-standard, you can take up these issues with your local branch.
If you find accommodation through a private landlord you should be aware of the many potential pitfalls. You may find it perfectly natural to have to pay to be allowed to rent accommodation, because this is common practice in other countries, Germany, for example. In Denmark landlords may demand a deposit, but it is illegal to charge a ‘reward’ or an ‘under-the-table’ payment when renting out property.

**Civil registration number (CPR)**

As mentioned, to obtain a civil registration number you must have a permanent residential address and make a personal visit to your local authority, bringing your residence and work permit, passport, marriage certificate and your children’s birth certificates where applicable. A residence permit or registration certificate is a requirement for the grant of a civil registration number.

- Newcomers from a Nordic country or the EU must have a civil registration number to stay in Denmark for more than six months.
- If you come from a country outside the EU you must have a civil registration number if your stay lasts more than three months.
- The Danish tax authorities are also authorised to allocate a tax registration number to persons not satisfying the conditions for the grant of a civil registration number if they have a tax case pending in Denmark.
Paying tax
A civil registration number is your ticket to a tax card. Anyone resident or living in Denmark for at least six months is liable to pay tax regardless of whether they are legally in the country.

You can get a tax card in three ways:

1. By a personal visit to the citizen service centre of your local authority.
2. By a tax authority official visiting your workplace, or by your employer arranging a meeting for you with the tax authority.
3. Your employer can also submit information and documentation on your behalf.

The issue of a tax card does not depend on your having a work permit. However, if you cannot produce a work permit, the tax authority will report this to the Danish Immigration Service, which will check whether your employment is legal.

Tax allowances
As a foreign national, you may be eligible for various tax allowances. You can read about them in the following sections. However, as your tax liability will always be based on an individual assessment, you should contact your local tax authority office.

Tax and transfrontier workers
Transfrontier workers from other countries such as Sweden and Germany have limited tax liability in Denmark. This means that as a cross-border commuter you will be subject to full tax liability in your home country. However, the tax authorities there can reduce the tax payable on the portion of your income that is subject to tax in Denmark.

If your taxable income in Denmark amounts to more than 75% of your total income, you can opt to obtain deductions for personal and family-related expenses on a par with residents subject to full tax liability in Denmark.

Travel and transport allowance
If you incur travel expenses in connection with carrying out your work, you can be compensated either through a tax-free allowance paid by your employer or by deducting the actual costs from your taxable income.

The amount deductible is determined by the number of trips home during your employment and is based on a joint assessment by you and the tax authorities.

Tax-deductible contributions to social security schemes in your home country
Transfrontier workers working in both Denmark and their home country may be eligible in Denmark for tax-deductibility of their contributions to social security schemes in their home country. Your Danish employer must report the deductibles to the authorities in your home country. Alternatively, your Danish employer will be required to pay about 30% of your gross income as an employers’ contribution.

Banks
You need to open a current account into which your salary can be paid. As a foreign national you can open an account in a Danish bank, and to do so you need to present your passport or ID card and proof of your address in Denmark. It is an advantage if your current account is also your NemKonto (Easy Account). NemKonto is a public payment system that enables public authorities to make payments such as tax refunds or social contributions to you.
You can also have your pay transferred from a Danish bank to a bank account abroad. Most banks can set up netbanking facilities in English for you.

**Driving in Denmark**
If you come from another Nordic country you can use your driving licence in Denmark with no problem. EU citizens have to exchange their licence for a Danish one. If you come from a non-EU country (with the exception of Japan, South Korea, Switzerland and Russia), you are required to take a check-up theory test and a practical test before being allowed to drive in Denmark.

If you have brought your own car from your home country, it has to be registered with Danish number plates if you have been in Denmark:
- For one year or
- Have been in Denmark for a total of 365 days within the past 24 months.

The tax authorities will decide whether you need to register your car and will issue the new number plates.

**Schools**
If you bring your children to Denmark, you are entitled to childcare and schooling for them provided you satisfy certain conditions.
- If you intend to stay in Denmark for more than six months, children aged seven and over are subject to compulsory education in Denmark and have the right to attend a local authority school.
- In addition, your children may be offered lessons in Danish as a second language. In practical terms this means they will start school in a reception class along with other children from abroad, refugees, for instance.

**Mother-tongue teaching**
If a group of 12 pupils with a qualified teacher can be assembled, children of parents from an EU country are also entitled to mother-tongue lessons. If your
local authority cannot provide this service, it must refer your children to another nearby local authority.

**Private schools**
The international private, fee-paying schools found in many parts of Denmark are an alternative to local authority schools.

**Childcare**
As a foreign national, you have the same right to childcare and after-school facilities for your children as Danish parents. Childcare is not free in Denmark. Various childcare subsidies are available, depending on your marital status, and if you have more than one child you will be eligible for a sibling discount. You can find out more about the various childcare options and prices in your local authority’s citizen service centre.

**Social security and social benefits**
If you are legally in Denmark, you will essentially have the same right to social security as everyone else. However, you should be aware that foreign nationals are not entitled to cash benefits or start help until they have been in Denmark for a total of seven of the eight preceding years.

**Health care benefits**
Your civil registration number also entitles you to the health services provided by GPs, specialists, children’s dentists, home care and hospitals. If you have a civil registration number, you have free access to these health services just like any other resident in this country.

Commuters can also use the Danish health system even if they do not live in Denmark. If you are a commuter you can be issued with a special medical card, which must be renewed annually. The card is available on request from the local authority where your employer is located, and the application must be submitted through the health authorities in your home country.

A number of health services are not free. For example, you are required to pay for physiotherapist, chiropractic and dental treatment.

**Social benefits**
If you are legally in Denmark, you have the same right to social benefits as everyone else. If you fall ill or lose your job and have no insurance, you should contact the citizen service centre in your local authority. If you are a member of FOA, your union representative or local FOA branch can also advise you.

**Family allowance**
As a foreign national with children living in Denmark and liable to pay Danish tax, you are entitled to family allowance. If the family allowance paid in your home country – another EU country – exceeds the allowance payable in Denmark, you can continue to receive family allowance from your home country. To qualify for Danish family allowance, you must have a civil registration number and a NemKonto, and your children must also be resident in Denmark.

If your children do not live in Denmark but in your home country, it is up to the local authority to make a concrete assessment of whether to pay family allowance.

**Housing benefits**
If you live all year round in rented accommodation with a kitchen, you have the same entitlement to rent allowance as everyone else.

**Sickness benefit**
If you are legally resident in Denmark, you are entitled to sickness benefit according to the same rules as everyone else, and your local authority or job centre has a duty to follow up on your sick note.

**Maternity**
As a foreign national, you must satisfy a number of conditions to qualify for maternity leave and benefit.

You must have been in the job market for a continuous period of 13 weeks before your absence starts, and during this period you must have been in employment for at least 120 hours. You are not entitled to Danish benefits if you have a right to benefits under the legislation of another country.
11  Meet the Danes

When we ask foreigners who come here to work what they think about Denmark and the Danes, they are generally enthusiastic about the Danish job market. Working conditions are excellent and the pay is good.

However, many also find it hard settling in Denmark. Danes are considered a reserved nation, and getting to know them can be a little difficult.

**Special attention**

We all need to feel that our life has meaning and quality and that we belong to a community. However, good pay and working conditions alone are not enough: we also need a sense of daily security.

Local authority employees with past experience of recruiting employees from outside Denmark are well aware of the problems that can arise if new staff and their families do not get firmly established in the local community.

Many workplaces therefore invest a great deal of time and effort in involving and preparing the local residents and colleagues with whom you will be in daily contact so they are aware of the need to be particularly supportive and attentive in helping you to settle in.

One approach you might encounter is that your employer assigns a mentor to you as a new employee. A mentor is a colleague who has received instruction in and knows about your background and abilities and can help to introduce you both to your new work and to the local community.

**Sense of fellowship**

You will also find a natural sense of fellowship within your trade union. FOA works generally for the integration of foreigners on many different fronts, one method being extensive information campaigns on international recruitment. This booklet is part of one such campaign. The goal of integration work is
to build greater understanding of the obstacles that may prevent you and your family finding a foothold in Denmark and to eliminate them so you can pursue a normal family life.

Your local FOA branch is not only geared to tackling work-related issues but also ready to advise and help with the more personal aspects of your employment.

Denmark boasts a wide range of associations and societies. Many Danes spend their free time on sport, culture, social activities and other recreational pursuits. Meeting people who share your interests and hobbies is always a good way of making friends. So a word of advice to you and your children is to join one of the organisations that you are sure to find locally.

**Dialogue**

No matter how intensive an effort your surroundings make to help you feel comfortable at work and in general, there is unfortunately no sure-fire recipe for success.

Integration in a new society will always pose a personal challenge, and meeting it successfully also depends on your personality and culture. Openness and a healthy curiosity about everything that is new and different will always open doors.

And the most important thing you can do to become part of Danish society is to start learning Danish as soon as you arrive.

Dialogue promotes understanding. Talking to other people is the key to forming a sense of fellowship with them.
HVIS DU SØGER JOB I DANMARK INDEN FOR OMRÅDERNE
- ældre, syge og handicapped
- børn og unge
- kultur og service
- teknik- og servicesektoren

så er FOA – Tag og Arbejde din fælles organisation.

UDFORDRINGEN

Dialog og samarbejde så tidligt som muligt i rekrutteringsprocessen er den bedste måde at undgå utilgængeligt problemer på.

Job i Danmark er en spændende udfordring
- men husk sikkerhedsnettet!

For du skal finde og godt i job i din land og i job i Danmark bør du bemærke, at du 

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