



## **WORKSHOP 5 Public policies for the promotion of volunteering**

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**The framework which is provided to support volunteering in Denmark.  
Ole Madsen.**

### **Background/history**

In Denmark, there is a long tradition of forming associations, and the freedom of association is of such great importance, that there has never been any laws in order to define or regulate third sector organisations and associations. On the contrary the freedom of association is secured by § 78 of *Grundloven* (the Danish Constitution from 1849).

Historically, the welfare society was developed to an extent in a relationship between the public and the voluntary sector, and despite the tendency to see each other as a contrast (the voluntary sector as the watchdog of society), the opposite was the fact. However, the state has played the main role, and today the relationship is characterised mostly by collaboration.

The infrastructure of the voluntary sector has no long history – it was not until the early 1980's that supporting initiatives, infrastructure, was introduced from the Government. The infrastructure - understood as the framework provided to support volunteering: i.e. support centres, laws and regulations, public programmes and funding schemes etc.

### **Juridical framework**

There is no actual single act governing associations in Denmark, i.e. laws that place specific requirements on an association before it can be declared legal or eligible to receive public sector funding etc.

However, there are some laws and regulations that affect the third sector organisations in different ways. E.g. there are no demands for organisations and associations to register in official state records, but if the organisation wants to receive money from the public, the organisation must have a CVR-nummer (a registration number for all kinds of businesses) and a NemKonto, which is an account all citizens, companies and associations are obliged to have, and which public authorities use for various financial transactions and payouts.

Organisations or associations employing paid staff or volunteers who will be in contact with children under the age of 15 are obliged to get a 'Børneattest' (child certification) from the person concerned. A child certification is a specific type of criminal record which specifies whether a person is convicted for any sexual crimes in relation to children.



In the Social Service Act, the relationship between the public and the voluntary sector on a local level is determined by article 18 which states that local authorities must provide financial support to local voluntary work – for which they receive a block grant – and cooperate with voluntary organisations. During the past 10 years (the act was implemented in 1998) the relationship has developed, and in 2007 two out of three municipalities had a formalised cooperation e.g. a contract, a working forum, a volunteer council etc.

The Danish Act on Popular Education obliges likewise local authorities to support voluntary organisations within the education field. It is a framework law and many decisions are placed on either the local council or on the ‘popular education committee’. Besides the obligation to supply popular education activities with premises, the individual municipality decides which activities to support and the amount – it is determined typically through local act subsidies.

### **Volunteering support centres**

There is no single public body responsible for volunteering in Denmark. The responsibility is split between different ministries according to the area volunteering refers to: culture, sport, social and health issues etc. I.e. the Danish Act on Popular Education is implemented by The Ministry for Education and The Social Service Act is implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for volunteering within the sport sector.

### **The National Knowledge & Development Centre of Volunteering in Denmark**

In 1992 the Ministry of Social Affairs established (CFSA) “Center for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde” (The National Knowledge & Development Centre of Volunteering in Denmark). The background and the idea for the establishment came from the former Danish minister Palle Simonsen. In dialogue with representatives of voluntary organizations in the social sector, he took initiative to establish the center. It was preceded by special considerations, which also now has a decision affect the center's self-understanding and integrity. Palle Simonsen had during a formal visit to Israel asked the then Prime Minister Golda Meir of the nation's biggest challenge? The answer from the Prime Minister was clear “It is a crucial prerequisite for the nation's success, there is a functioning civil society and good cooperation between state and civil society” “And it is important to take initiatives that contributed to the strengthening of civil society and its cooperation with the government.”

Palle Simonsen has explained how the conversation with Golda Meir sharpened his awareness of civil society as being essential for the Danish democracy and the welfare state. At this background, CFSA was established as a national

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knowledge and development centre to support professional services to civil society in Denmark. The choice of the independent organization - even though with government anchoring - gives the center special opportunities to support and promote the capacity of civil society, but also the best opportunities to support the promotion of cooperation between community sectors.

The Centre's status as an "independent" institution - its professional focus and neutrality in relation to political and organizational interests - a special position among other things, allows the center to network and dialogue across the structural, organizational and political boundaries.

The funding of the centre comes from Government's grants and only a small percentage comes from services provided. The main activities are: 1) Consultancy. 2) Training and education. 3) Development of organisations and networks. 4) Conferences. 5) Knowledge of the voluntary sector – national and international. 6) Implanting (and develop) new government initiatives. 7) Support the public authorities.

The Centre works for an independent and diverse voluntary sector, which contributes to the development of the welfare society, in interaction with public authorities and private companies.

### **Frivilligrådet (The Volunteer Council)**

The volunteer council was set up by the Minister of Welfare in 2008 – it replaced the Council for Volunteer Social Action which was established in 2004. The council advises The Ministry and Parliament on the role that voluntary organisations can play in addressing social problems. Furthermore, the council contributes to the public debate on the role of volunteering, among these the interaction between the public sector, the private and the voluntary sector. The council has the status of a government agency and is funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### **Funding**

Compared to other countries, Denmark is privileged because there are both local and national funding, all though funding is mostly provided from government grants – partly as basic grants, partly as project grants. Basic grants are grants assigned to an organisation without being earmarked for a specific activity or specific project. Instead, they are assigned on basis of objective criteria such as purpose, turnover and own collected funds. Basic grants are assigned through the so-called Danish Pools and Lotto Funds, and more than 200 million Euros are distributed to all kinds of purposes in (civil) society, all though voluntary social work receives about 18 million Euros. Project grants are awarded directly to specific projects and activities.

In 2009, the municipalities supported voluntary social work financially with 19 million Euros, and received 18.9 million Euros in block grants. In 2007 they



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supported the organisations with 17 million Euros, but received in block grants 17.7 million Euros.

### **Public initiatives for valuing and promoting volunteering**

In October 2010 the government published a national strategy for civil society. The government's ambition is to strengthen a more systematic involvement of civil society and voluntary organisations in the social work. The strategy focuses on four areas: 1) to strengthen innovation and development in the social work; 2) to encourage active citizenship and a volunteer culture; 3) to strengthen the work of voluntary organisations; 4) to strengthen the cooperation between municipalities, companies and voluntary organisations.

The Government wants to increase young people's knowledge of volunteering, and in February 2010 an initiative called *Projekt Frivillig* (volunteer project) was launched. Projekt Frivillig is a nation-wide initiative which gives students at youth educations the opportunity to participate in a program with voluntary work. By participating in the program the students will receive an official diploma which verifies that they have participated in voluntary work. It is expected that the initiative will increase young people's knowledge of the voluntary sector and that more young people will participate in volunteering.

In 2005 the Government granted 6,5 million Euros to support and develop Voluntary Centres and their work. The aim was partly to make volunteering more accessible to the citizens by making VCs more visible; partly to create new and more activities; and partly to improve local cooperation. The project ended in 2008 and based on three evaluation reports the Government made it permanent. Another kind of development strategy is taken by the Danish Ministry of Education. During 2009 the government committee on public and adult education will discuss how public education and voluntary work may contribute to a stronger and more coherent society, to strengthen democracy and active citizenship as well as education, integrations, health etc.

In 2010 the Government decided to make an annual report describing the volunteering area and in the future follow the developments in the voluntary sector. The goal is to monitor the situation and make the voluntary effort more visible, but also to be able to qualify the public support for the voluntary area. The first report verified that 43% of the Danish population (+16) have been involved in volunteer work within the last 12 months.