



# City of Copenhagen

## Intercultural Profile

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### Background<sup>1</sup>

Copenhagen is the capital and by far the largest city of Denmark. The city proper (which is the subject of this report) has a population of 539,542 (2011) and is within a wider metropolitan area of 1.2 million people. Although increasingly it is now coming to be seen as the heart of the transnational Øresund region, taking in parts of southern Sweden and with a population in excess of 3.6 million.

### National Context

Whilst Denmark has hosted small groups of foreign-born throughout its modern history, it has not been a traditional country of immigration, but of emigration, and only achieved a position of positive net migration in 1965<sup>2</sup>. It was only in the mid-1980s that the rate started to rise quite sharply from less than 10,000 per annum, peaking at 73,000 in 2000, and then declining to 30,000 in 2010. Although the growth was partly attributable to labour market demand, it also reflects the high degree of commitment the social democratic government of the period gave to accommodating asylum seekers and refugees, and towards the reunification of families. This ended in 2001 when the Liberals (Venstre) under Anders Fogh Rasmussen swept to power in a right wing coalition backed by the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti). Almost immediately a radically different line was taken on migration and diversity.

Whilst the trend within many western European countries over recent years has been towards greater restrictions upon immigration and a more prescriptive attitude to integration, Denmark has stood out both as the most out-spoken, and the country most prepared to translate words into policy. For example, on 5 July 2011 the government attracted the criticism of neighbouring countries by reintroducing customs checks at its land borders for the first time since it entered the Schengen Agreement. And, shortly before our visit to Copenhagen, the Minister for Integration Søren Pind stated in an interview with Jyllands-Posten that he believed that the concept of integration was now out-dated and that the policy Denmark needed for the future was one of assimilation.

Denmark is often portrayed as typical of the Nordic model of small, prosperous, ethnically homogeneous and socially egalitarian welfare state societies. In most regards there are indeed many similarities between Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark but in regards to cultural diversity the Danes stand out on a limb from their Nordic cousins. For example, the Migration Policy Index (MIPEX) considers all the Nordic countries as amongst the most favourable in the world on a number of criteria, with the exception of Denmark which lies much lower in the list. It is judged to be comparatively poor in particular on the granting of family reunion rights, long term security of residence and

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<sup>1</sup> This report is based upon the visit of the CoE inspection team on 21 & 22 June 2011, comprising Irena Guidikova and Phil Wood.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2011

on the political participation of migrants, although it is considered strong on anti-discrimination policy and enforcement<sup>3</sup>.

Denmark, as an entrepreneurial trading nation, has evidently benefitted greatly from the open markets and free flow of commerce brought by globalization but it seems to have been highly selective about which other aspects of the modern world it wishes to come to terms with. One commentator sees the Danish state engaging in increasingly unrealistic contortions to balance economic flexibility with cultural conservatism. This hybrid Danish model “comes across as a strange marriage of interest-based pragmatism and identity nationalism.”

*The consequence is the attempt to manage migration by setting up two opposite migration regimes concurrently, regimes intended to operate independently of each other and based on contradictory logics. One regime is based on control, exclusion and cultural purification... another regime aims at inviting foreigners to fill vacancies in an economy. Whether or not the maintenance of this dual migration structure is a doable and manageable undertaking, only time can tell – but the signs are that the attempt to avoid mutual ‘contamination’ between them is facing grave challenges and the openness characterizing the regime of pragmatism is already affecting the regime of nationalist stricture.<sup>4</sup>*

Perhaps another example of Danish exceptionalism lies in religion. Denmark has historically been an international leader in granting the rights of all faiths to practice their religion with freedom and equality; yet in the political structures of religion the Lutheran National Church of Denmark holds enormous powers and privileges above all other faiths. These include the right to levy tax and the obligation that Danes of all faiths must register new-born children through it, rather than through a state institution. However religion barely figures at all in policy terms. There are no formal consultative channels between government and faith organisations nor any expectation that interfaith relations should be institutionalised within the policy arena.

The question of why Denmark has appeared to stand out from the crowd remains a question of on-going debate and sensitivity. Suffice it to say that between the date of our visit and the completion of this report the country has held a General Election, leading to a change in Government and indications that policies towards migration and cultural diversity are going to be subject to a thorough review.

### Local Context

Whatever has been said above about the generalities of Danish society is less true of Copenhagen than anywhere else in the country. Indeed, in certain terms Copenhagen and Denmark were beginning to feel and behave like two different countries in recent years.

During the 1990s and early part of this decade the city council adopted policies and practices which might easily be portrayed as integrationist, with occasional but fading multicultural flavours. Policies were rooted in a human rights and anti-discrimination agenda and, in the early days, there was recognition of group rights too through the inclusion of places for ethnic minority representative groups on the city’s Advisory Integration Council.

In the 1990s the Danish National Government was under a right wing nationalist coalition and the city council remained under left liberal control. Both, however had a

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mipex.eu/denmark>

<sup>4</sup> Hedetoft, Ulf (2009) ‘Denmark versus multiculturalism’, in Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European discourses, policies and practices*. Abingdon: Routledge, p. 120.

growing focus on the responsibility of the migrant individual to adapt themselves to Danish norms and labour market requirements; and a privileging of the city council and state institutions over civil society as agents of integration. There was also a shared concern to prevent the emergence of ethnic 'ghettos' based on an assumption that public housing, above-average concentrations of ethnic minority occupants and socio-economic deprivation were intimately linked<sup>5</sup>; and also a shared prescription of the solution which would primarily be through structural integration of the migrant into the labour market.

However, in recent years as the national government has driven ever harder down a road towards assimilation, the city council of Copenhagen seems to have headed off with equal vigour in the opposite direction. This can be exemplified by two major policy initiatives of recent times: *VI KBH'R* and *Engage in the City*. Uneasy with the increasingly nationalistic and xenophobic tone in the country, but anxious to acknowledge the power of identity in building common purpose, the city council set out to make Copenhagen itself into a brand which all of its citizens could opt into, regardless of their ethnicity, legal status or attitude towards Danishness. 'We Are Copenhageners' was created, adapted from the successful 'Wij Amsterdammers' campaign in the Netherlands, acknowledging it is easier to become a Copenhagenener than a Dane. It started in 2008 with the twin aims of strengthening inclusion and dialogue between citizens of the city; and highlighting and celebrating the city's diversity. Its website describes VI KBH'R' as working:

*"towards engagement in Copenhagen and establishing more trust and a feeling of unity amongst Copenhageners. VI KBH'R' acknowledges cultural, religious and national diversity in the city. VI KBH'R' believe that the more you learn about differences and similarities between you and others, the better you will be able to understand, respect and trust others and feel included in the community of the city. We are all united. We are all Copenhageners"*

This set a new tone, suggesting that alongside the more functional concerns of employment and housing, the city recognised the need for two-way intercultural contact, learning and adaptation between Danish and minority citizens. Aside from a widespread promotional campaign the initiative was to achieve tangible form through symbolically important events such as the annual International Day, and the establishment of a specific budget to support others to initiate supporting activities.

VI KBH'R' was implemented during the first Integration Policy of the city, covering the period 2006-10. The vision of the policy was that:

*"Copenhagen will be an integrated city in which citizens are able to live together safely and securely, sharing a respect for diversity and common basic values such as freedom of speech, democracy and gender equality. Integration is a mutual process in which all citizens irrespective of ethnic origin, create and form their society.*

*The integration policy is designed to promote equal opportunity for all".*

Based on the three principles:

- Integration is a joint responsibility;
- Integration requires diversity; and,
- Integration must be attractive;

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<sup>5</sup> See the section 'Heading towards ghettos' in the City Council's *Integration Policy* of 2006; and the Danish Government's integration plan *A New Chance for Everyone* (2005) which sets itself the task of addressing 'the ghettoisation problem'.

the policy set out ambitious goals in the five areas of employment, education, housing, safety, culture and leisure activities, and health and care services.

Policy goals were monitored by an Integration Barometer, which is published online and publicly accessible. Its aim is to act as data warehouse and reporting web-tool for the monitoring system and to make this information available to the public. The Barometer works by giving six key themes (employment; education; housing; safety; culture and leisure; and health) a 'traffic light rating' based on data from surveys and existing statistics and breaks the results down by neighbourhood. This process has been influenced by the Results-Based Accountability philosophy.

This was followed in even more substantive terms by a new city integration policy *Engage in the City 2011-2014* and, within this a detailed strategy for the years 2011 to 2013 entitled *Programme of Engage in CPH*<sup>6</sup>. The policy has an even stronger profile on inclusion, setting out a vision that:

*Copenhagen is the place where you feel at home, trust the neighbours and the institutions and play an active role through local democracy – for example, on the school board or in the sports club. You can get an education and a job and if you are religious, pray freely in your church, synagogue or mosque, following your faith.*

And the ambitious goal that:

*Copenhagen is the most inclusive major city in Europe in 2015.*

The Policy sets itself 8 objectives:

1. More young people benefitting from education
2. People at work
3. A more diverse leadership and workforce in the municipality
4. Increase the number of beneficiaries of municipal service
5. A safer Copenhagen for all groups
6. More must have their voices heard in Copenhagen
7. Reducing the feeling of exclusion through poverty
8. Fewer to experiencing discrimination

The Inclusion Barometer<sup>7</sup> is monitoring progress through key indicators corresponding to the eight goals.

The Inclusion policy 2011-14 emerged from a wide-ranging consultation process of think tanks and hearings and 38 different working papers. This is not the first time a target-based approach has been employed but it is now felt to be more realistic – among others indicators have been reduced. The council is determined the process should be value-driven and not simply based upon economic or quantitative factors.

*Engage in the City* identifies a much more important role for civil society than have previous policies.

A Diversity Board is established with top representatives from business, culture, civil society, minority communities, city representatives etc. to promote diversity and facilitate the engagement of stakeholders. The members of the Diversity Board have signed the Copenhagen Charter for Diversity, and the Charter will in the coming years be

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/79053748/PROGRAMME-FOR-ENGAGE-IN-CPH-2011-2013-PROGRAMME-FOR-ENGAGE-IN-CPH>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.kk.dk/integrationsbarometer>

promoted for other stakeholders and citizens to sign. In 2011 the work of Engage in the City has been focused on four theme areas, city life, work, education and dialogue. When carrying out concrete initiatives, a broad range of stakeholders have been invited to join and promote diversity in a cooperation across city, the private sector and civil society. The 2012 action plan is presently under development.

Also inspired by the new mayor for integration and employment Anna Mee Allerslev there is encouragement of the use of internet and social media (Facebook)<sup>8</sup> as means of spreading information and debate – which has required the city bureaucracy to operate in a more flexible and relaxed way.

## Neighbourhoods

We visited the neighbourhood of Nørrebro to the north west of the city centre. It is a traditional location of lower rent housing and has been popular with both counter-cultural and migrant groups. Some would see it as the most dynamic quarter of the city whilst some in central government might portray it as a ghetto. It is a complex area, with recent gentrification creating some of the most expensive property in the city (around Elmegade), as well as having some of the least desirable (around Mjølnerparken or Tingbjerg). However, nowhere in Copenhagen is considered to be a 'no-go area'. The district has a population of 72,000 with significant numbers of Arabs, Turks, Pakistanis, Bosnians, Somalis and Albanians.

There is a high degree of devolution of power within Copenhagen and Nørrebro has an elected neighbourhood council. Unlike the city council it is non-party political and representatives are drawn from local civil society but elected as individuals. Public services are also given extensive scope to adapt their work to the distinctive flavour and needs of a district.

We visited 2200Kultur which combines a civic centre, library, culture house and sports arena under the Commission for Culture and Leisure Life. The manager is given great autonomy by the central administration to manage the complex in accordance with the wishes of local people rather than according to central plans. He has to present an annual plan and is then devolved the responsibility and budgets to manage flexibly. A users' board represents the interests of different constituencies and there is an on-going process of responding to local ideas for new services. This includes an exercise in participatory budgeting so users can directly determine how some of the funds are spent.

The manager himself is paid as a civil servant. A small part of the annual result bonus, is tied to pointing to two mistakes from which he has learned important lessons. Underlying this is a philosophy that we learn the most from our mistakes and failures and that if we never fail in anything it is probably because we were behaving in too limited or conservative a way – so 'intelligent failure' is encouraged.

Although the users of the complex are ethnically very diverse, Kultur2200 does not describe itself as a centre for integration and does not treat people according to their ethnicity. However, users and professionals are encouraged to override and interact across whatever boundaries may exist, and these are as likely as not to be between sport and the arts, or across generations, as between different ethnic groups. A Kurd himself, the manager is unsympathetic of people who accentuate their status as victims of prejudice to give themselves an identity and a way into public subsidy.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/#!/blanddigibyen>

Nørrebro also contains the Centre for Art and Interculture<sup>9</sup>, an NGO which acts as a beacon for cross-cultural work in the arts and creative industries. Nearby is KUBUK - the World Culture Centre<sup>10</sup> which is a municipally-owned culture house with a special interest in and focus on ethnic minorities, providing a creative platform for various cultural, social and political activities. It houses approximately 250 ethnic associations, clubs and organizations who all, in different ways, aim to create dialogue, movement, and commitment. Many of the larger organizations and associations have permanent office space in the building while the smaller ones use other facilities provided by the house and have their postal address there.

### **Intercultural competence and intelligence**

From 2006-2010, the city council convened an 'Integration Council' which it used as a sounding board and a source of information and news from minority communities. This was appointed from candidates who stood for democratic elections in which all minority citizens could vote. However, turnout at the election was only to 13% of the electorate – partly because many people of migrant origin didn't want to be labelled as such. In 2010 it was decided to abolish the Integration Council: The background was an external evaluation pointing to obstacles in the functioning of the Council. Further there a wish to mainstream minority issues into the institutionalised policy fora and decision making spaces rather than set up parallel fora for minority issues.

In 2010 an Expert Think Tank on Integration was established. It comprises five independent academics and professionals and seven city council officials. Its work began with holding public hearings which led to the establishment of Engage in the City. Subsequently its role is to scrutinise the policies and practices of the city council in an independent and non-partisan way, and to recommend future courses of action. It will do this by selecting major themes, one at a time, and subjecting them to detailed investigation. The mayor and other politicians keep a distance from the Think Tank to maintain its independence. Its most recent enquiry has been into education. Future topics have yet to be set but achieving greater inclusion in the city council's recruitment practices is seen as a topic in need of attention.

### **Education**

Schooling is felt to be a topic of priority and of some anxiety in Copenhagen. Denmark has traditionally seen itself (and been seen by others) to have a highly effective educational system, but with the publication of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) outcomes over the last decade it has been seen to be performing rather poorly and on a downward trend (averaging 23<sup>rd</sup> position across maths, science and reading). The suspicion is that many pupils of migrant origin may be lagging even further behind, which is why education was made the top priority for investigation by the Think Tank.

The Danish education system allows great autonomy to schools and widespread choice to parents. There is a non-state sector which embraces 20 % of pupils in Copenhagen and app. 10-15 % on a national basis.. There is also evidence of 'white flight' from schools in areas of high ethnic minority settlement, and an early attempt to address this through bussing was a failure. Schools have control over their curriculum, and there is no general requirement for them to teach awareness of other cultures or religions, so very few do. Indeed the Danish People's Party would be likely to protest were more school time to be given over to these subjects. There is a low level of investment in the training of teachers in Denmark and this reflects upon their level of cultural competence. A recent survey found that 80% of teachers felt themselves incompetent to teach in a

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.dcai.dk/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://kubik.kk.dk/verdenskulturcentret/>

multi-ethnic environment. There is no research into the ethnic origin of school teachers but everyone assumes the number of teachers of migrant background to be tiny.

Set against this national picture, the city of Copenhagen is making efforts to offer a more intercultural education system. The city has had a policy to encourage this since 2007 and through the Think Tank has been seeking out good practice from abroad to assist it. There is some evidence that girls of migrant background may be doing rather well and even above the average for indigenous whites. However because the city has little control over the training and recruitment of teachers it does not expect to see a change in staffing profiles in the near future. The Think Tank has delivered nine recommendations to the political committees working on education and/or integration within the City of Copenhagen (Including the Employment and Integration Committee). The recommendations fall within four themes:

1. Ensure public schools operate as agents of social and cultural cohesion by enhancing co-operation between the school and local actors including the parents.
2. Establish goals preventing pupils of migrant origin from lagging behind and conduct systematic evaluation measuring the effectiveness of these initiatives.
3. Ensure that diversity and bilingualism is regarded as a resource by ensuring that teachers have the appropriate skills and aptitudes to teach in an intercultural environment.
4. Create equality by ensuring that teachers have high expectations of all pupils regardless of origin; and by focusing particularly on how teachers address demotivated boys with an immigrant background.

### **Governance and citizenship**

Anna Mee Allerslev has been Mayor of Employment and Integration since January 2010, and she intends to maintain and expand upon the spirit which created Engage in the City and VI KBH'R'. She is particularly interested in opening up the channels of communication between citizens and public institutions and extending the discussion on cultural diversity in Copenhagen. She believes she has to lead by example, and her active use of the internet and social media is indicative of this. She is particularly strong on the idea that Denmark needs to make best use of its human capital and talent if it is to prosper and that by shunning or attempting to assimilate its minorities it is wasting a lot of talent and energy.

She wishes to be an active player in the ICC network, and is planning to host a seminar for Mayors and politicians from ICC cities on the topic of how politicians involve and communicate with citizens in an intercultural city.

The Mayor believes that the media finds it a challenge to maintain a high quality of information and debate about cultural diversity. She would like to engage in a closer relationship with the city-based media to ensure that they receive and publish accurate information and take a greater responsibility for their influence on public opinion.

### **Discrimination**

The issue of discrimination arose throughout our visit and we received several different and sometimes conflicting messages. Many like the manager of Kultur2200 argued that this was an issue of diminishing importance and that the regular mentioning of it would only serve to inhibit integration. Nevertheless recent research suggests that almost a quarter of ethnic minorities in Denmark experience have directly experienced discrimination whilst 80% believe it to be a factor of Danish society. The city council has an office for tracking and responding to hate crime and deals with over 400 cases per year. The city also has an independent ombudsman with a discrimination 'hotline', with supporting advice from nine NGOs.

The general view of experts is there is a pervasive atmosphere of low level discrimination in parts of the labour market and in social life (such as who is given access to which night clubs and bars) and this is given succour by the current climate of anti-immigrant and 'anti-political correctness' discourse which is accepted in the media and the Danish political class. However, the city is satisfied that hate crime and other more serious forms of discrimination are not becoming a major problem, and remain well below levels in the UK and Sweden.

The council is also engaged in a campaign in partnership with The Danish Institute for Human Rights and 9 institutions within the municipality to tackle more insidious and institutional forms of discrimination in employment and service delivery in the public sector.

## Conclusions

With its 2011-2014 Integration Policy and the Engage in the City Strategy, Copenhagen has set itself a very clear sense of direction towards its aim of being an inclusive city. Despite an unsympathetic and even contradictory mood at the national level, the city appears to have the political and the competence to pursue its own line, although it may not always have the resources it requires

We were particularly impressed with the way the city is asking itself difficult questions and working alongside other partners to find the answers. This section from the programme for *Engage in the City*, explaining the four focus areas, expresses this very well:

*1 Engage in working life: Covers everything in Copenhagensers' voluntary as well as their wage-earning working lives. Relevant questions could be: 'How can diversity, as a part of a business strategy, contribute to growth in a business?' 'How can employees' differing competences and backgrounds be benefitted from to the full?'*

*2 Engage in education: Covers both schools, further and higher education and training, and teaching and learning environments. Relevant questions could be: 'How can you attract and hold students coming from an ethnic minority background in educational institutions, especially the men?' Or, 'How can you ensure a constructive home-school cooperation at primary/secondary level?'*

*3 Engage in city life: Deals with the way in which Copenhagensers live, how they relate to each other and how they feel a part of the city's community across cultural and social divides. Relevant questions could be: 'How can Copenhagen get a wider range of cultural and street-level events?' Or, 'How can a stronger bond be forged with poor and exposed families?'*

*4 Engage in dialogue: Deals with how attitudes, beliefs and opinion formation among Copenhagensers and the media represent all Copenhagensers. Relevant questions could be: 'What is media coverage of ethnic minorities like, and what significance does it have for the way opinions are formed?' Or, 'How is religion portrayed in the media? 'Is there a need in the media*

For us the great area of concern is one which the city has only partial control of – schooling. It is worrying that through poor investment in teacher training and restrictive curriculum policies and growing segregation, many of the current generation of pupils may be missing out on the opportunity for a good education and a broad intercultural understanding. The city council is to be encouraged in whatever it can do to intervene in the local school system to turn back the wilful trend toward narrow-mindedness.



Given that Copenhagen has a global reputation for good design and urbanistics, the team was surprised not to have heard more on this topic, especially about whether this expertise is being used to develop a more intercultural approach to city planning and architecture. Perhaps this might be a topic for the future.

Until quite recently in Copenhagen there was strong focus on 'structural' aspects of integration, in particular the importance of employment as the principal routeway to becoming a Dane; and intervention in the allocation of housing to prevent the perceived threat of the emergence of 'ghettos'. But over the last two years the council has reviewed its position and has responded to widespread scepticism that structural factors alone can achieve integration. It has noted that some migrant groups face a range of barriers to entering the labour market, acknowledged the social and cultural aspects of integration, and recognised the inadequacies of the education system. It has also acknowledged that integration is not the sole responsibility of the newcomer but also of the host and has begun to introduce measures which are truly intercultural. It is also investing in highly competent staff to implement the new policies and a range of independent expertise and advanced methodologies to review its progress.

This is a refreshing alternative to the dominant narrative emerging from the last Danish government. If the city of Copenhagen can create an effective model of intercultural integration within this national climate of cultural insularity, political intransigence and economic uncertainty its achievement will be all the more impressive. The ICC should do all it can to support the city through this challenge.