

COUNTRY REPORT: DENMARK

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Denmark has a relatively recent history of immigration. Until the mid-twentieth century, the country experienced more emigration than immigration, and most immigrants came from neighbouring Nordic and European countries. From the late 1950s until 1973, there was a limited but steady inflow of immigrants through labour migration (so-called ‘guest worker’ programmes) and subsequent family reunification, mainly from Turkey, Yugoslavia and Pakistan. But immigration remained a marginal phenomenon, with immigrants accounting for less than 3 per cent of the population until the mid-1980s (Liebig, 2007 in Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010).

Immigration only accelerated in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. The majority of the Danish immigrant population are thus relatively recent arrivals. Over the past two decades, immigration has been strongly dominated by family reunification and humanitarian immigration. Despite rapid growth, Denmark still has one of the smallest immigrant populations in Western Europe. According to Statistics Denmark (2010), immigrants and their descendants comprised 9.8 per cent of the Danish population – about 7.5 per cent were foreign born and 2.3 per cent were descendants of immigrants. The immigrant population in Denmark is made up of groups coming from about 200 different countries.

Immigrants are at higher risk of experiencing poverty and/or unemployment than other groups, because they are on a lower socio-economic level than the majority of the population. In recent years, the Danish government has favoured more restrictive entry policies for some immigrant groups. Asylum politics since the early 2000s has been an important issue in political and public debate, and increasingly restrictive immigration has been a political priority (Vitus & Lidén, 2010). For instance, a right-wing party (Dansk Folkeparti) favouring strict immigration politics was part of the Danish government until the last election (fall 2011).

Furthermore, the incident of the so-called Mohammed cartoons, published in the *Jyllandsposten* newspaper exposed Denmark’s migration politics to the scrutiny of an international audience and gave rise to debates about Danish xenophobia, especially among Muslims in the Middle East.

The rules for family reunification in Denmark are now among the most restrictive in the OECD. At the same time, Denmark seeks to respond to labour shortages by increasing labour migration and attracting highly skilled immigrants. There has been a decline in residence permits granted for family reunification, because of the tougher restrictions, and humanitarian migration since 2001, and a parallel increase in work and study permits. In April 2011, a new policy for reunification of migrant families was launched, requiring a high level of knowledge of the Danish language, i.e. ninth grade level proficiency in a foreign language, before they can obtain a residence permit and be reunited with their family members. This rule makes it extremely difficult for most families to be united. The aim of the rule is to prioritize skilled and well educated professionals and make it more difficult for unskilled individuals to be granted residence permit.¹

1. METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

The present country report mainly relies on desk research, in the first place reports from public institutions affiliated with the Danish Government such as, Integrationsministeriet²/Nyidanmark (an information website addressed to migrants and attached to the Ministry of Integration), Børnerådet (The National Council for Children) and national databases from Statistics Denmark as well as the Ministry of Education.

¹ Interview with Professor Lars Dencik, Roskilde University, Denmark in the programme P 4 Extra, Swedish Radio on April 20, 2011.

² This department was shut down after the election, in the end of 2011. Note: Some official institutions that are mentioned in this report might have changed names or have changed their missions after the last election.

Additional sources include a recent review from the OECD on migrant education in the Nordic countries, the Denmark Report, as well as a country report from the Nordic Network for Research on Refugee Children: ‘Reception of asylum seeking and refugee children in the Nordic countries: the Danish report’ (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010). The present report, in turn, is based on several official documents as well as a comprehensive research report based on a number of interviews with experts (psychiatrists, teachers, social workers) conducted during 2009 – 2010 (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010). Furthermore, reports from international organizations such as Save the Children and the Red Cross have been used. We also base the present report on relevant academic research.

Information has also been provided through e-mail exchanges or telephone interviews with key persons selected through our own networks (personal contacts with relevant research departments in the Scandinavian countries), as well as with other experts through the process of reviewing documents.

2. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: GENERAL BACKGROUND

The level of immigration in Denmark is relatively low compared to immigration statistics for countries such as Sweden. Denmark is, however, considerably smaller than Sweden, both in geographical size and

population. In January 2010, of the total population of 5.4 million, almost 10 per cent (see previous section) had a migrant background and in this group about half were immigrants and descendants originating from another European country.

2.1. Migration statistics

Immigration is often thought of as immigration of foreign citizens, but Danes also immigrate. In 2009, 33 per cent of all immigrants were Danish citizens who were returning after a shorter or longer period abroad. Previously, foreign citizens who migrated to Denmark came mainly from the other Nordic countries, the EU countries or the United States and to some extent from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. During the 1980s and 1990s, a large proportion of immigrants continued to come from these countries. However, a new trend has since emerged, with an increase in immigration from Middle Eastern countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria as well as African countries such as Somalia and Ethiopia. These groups consist mainly of refugees (and their families) who have been granted Danish residence permits.

In Table 1, below, the total number of children of immigrants and their descendants are presented. It appears that most migrants and their descendants are from non-Western countries. Looking at just the category ‘immigrant’, the number of children from Western countries has increased, whereas the number of “immigrant” children from non-Western countries has decreased over the period 2006-2010. On the other

Table 1. Total number of children of immigrants and children of descendants in Denmark

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Immigrants from Western* countries	6,084	6,413	7,127	8,640	9,753
Immigrants from non-Western* countries	25,780	23,571	21,842	20,314	18,400
Total	31,864	29,984	28,969	28,954	28,153
Descendants from Western countries	6,958	7,197	7,379	7,900	9,063
Descendants from non-Western countries	79,588	80,975	82,583	83,874	85,082
Total	86,546	88,172	89,962	91,774	94,145

* The distinction of Western and non-Western countries is based on the 25 countries, from which Denmark has the highest number of immigrants. Western countries refer to countries in Europe and the USA. Non-Western countries refer to countries mainly in Africa and Asia as well as former Yugoslavia.

Source: Adapted from Jessen & Montgomery, 2010.

Table 2. Five main citizenships of asylum applicants in the Nordic countries in 2010³

Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
Afghanistan	1 465	Somalia	520	Eritrea	1,710	Serbia	6,255
Syria	815	Iraq	515	Somalia	1,395	Somalia	5,630
Iran	655	Russia	395	Afghanistan	980	Afghanistan	2,400
Russia	400	Afghanistan	240	Russia	630	Iraq	1,995
Serbia	265	Serbia	155	Ethiopia	505	Kosovo	1,715
Other	1,470	Other	1,265	Other	4,805	Other	13,880
Total	5,070		3,090		10,025		31,875

Table 3. Number of asylum requests and granted applications from 1990 – 2009 in Denmark, Norway and Sweden

Persons requesting asylum	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
1990	5,292	-	29,420
2000	10,347	10,843	16,303
2005	1,283	5,402	17,530
2008	951	14,431	24,353
2009	2,022	17,226	-
Persons granted asylum			
1990	-	-	-
2000	5,156	-	7,221
2005	1,147	-	5,358
2008	1,453	3,051	8,276
2009	1,376	4,508	-

Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2010.

hand, the number of children of descendants from non-Western countries has increased.

2.2. Asylum

In Table 2, one can see the number of asylum applicants in the Nordic countries in 2010.

Sweden stands out from the other countries (Denmark, Finland and Norway), having received considerably more applicants. Denmark's largest number of

applicants are received from Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

In Table 3, one can chart the development during the period 1990 – 2009 in Denmark, Norway and Sweden in terms of the number of asylum requests compared to the number of cases granted asylum. However, it is important to note that the year in which one applies for asylum is not necessarily the same year the application is granted or denied. The general pattern is that most applications are refused in all countries. The most restrictive policy seems to be the one pursued in

³ Eurostat, Population and social conditions, 5/2011.

Table 4. Reasons for asylum and residence permits granted in 2009 for selected groups

	Afghanistan	Iran	Iraq	Syria	Total
Refugee status A	234	164	166	135	1,279
– Geneva Convention	10	132	66	122	414
– B–status*	203	15	83	13	413
– Quota refugees	21	17	17	0	452
Other status B	19	3	24	2	97
– Humanitarian	6	1	17	1	55
– Exceptional reasons	13	2	1	1	42
– Return not possible	0	0	2	1	6
Total (A+B)	253	167	190	137	1,376

* Even if the asylum seeker does not fulfil the criteria of the Geneva Convention, he or she can be given protection status. This type of B status can be given in cases where the asylum seeker risks, for example, the death penalty in his/her homeland.

Source: www.nyidanmark.dk

Denmark, where the number of granted applications reduced considerably between 2000 and 2005.

Table 4 illustrates the grounds for granting asylum and residence permits in Denmark. The total number of residence permits granted was 1,376 in 2009. This can be compared to the figure for the total number of asylum applications 2,022, indicating that just over 60 per cent were granted.

In order to be granted asylum in Denmark, an applicant must meet the conditions listed in the *United Nations Refugee Convention*, or the conditions for Protected Status as defined in *Section 7 of the Danish Aliens Act* (www.nyidanmark.dk). According to the *United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951*, a refugee is more narrowly defined (in Article 1A) as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.⁴

In addition, Denmark grants protection in cases where, as a state, it is obliged to do so in order to comply with the international conventions it has ratified. For example, residence permits are granted to asylum seekers who risk the death penalty, torture, inhumane

or degrading treatment or punishment if they return to their country of origin. When a ‘spontaneous asylum seeker’ enters Denmark, he/she must contact the police. It is the responsibility of the National Aliens Division to establish the nationality and identity of the asylum seeker. The National Aliens Division will fingerprint and photograph the asylum seeker, and record an official statement from him/her, including a description of how he/she travelled to (www.nyidanmark.dk).

According to the *Dublin Regulation*, an asylum application can be processed in one EU country only. If an asylum seeker has been in contact with authorities in another EU country before coming to Denmark, his/her asylum application may not be processed in Denmark. Instead, the asylum seeker will be sent to the country of first registration, where his/her application will be processed. During the processing of an asylum case, the asylum seeker is normally assigned to an accommodation centre. Accommodation centres are spread throughout Denmark. Most are operated by the Danish Red Cross. In some cases, asylum seekers may be allowed private accommodation (www.nyidanmark.dk).

2.2.1. Processing an application for asylum

If the Immigration Service (IS) decides that an asylum application can be processed in Denmark, they will then determine whether or not asylum can

⁴ Definitions and obligations, UNHCR, June 2010..

be granted. The asylum seeker will be asked to fill out an application form in which he/she can explain in more specific terms the reason why he/she is seeking asylum in Denmark. Thereafter, the IS will interview the applicant, assisted by an interpreter. During the course of the interview, the asylum seeker has the opportunity to further clarify why he/she is applying for asylum in Denmark. Following the interview, the IS will rule in the case, based on a factual and individual assessment of all relevant information pertaining to the case. The IS will consider the statement provided by the asylum seeker, as well as general information about conditions in the asylum seeker's country of origin. In most cases, this will be sufficient to make a ruling in the case. However, there may be cases where the IS requires additional information, e.g. if there is doubt regarding conditions in a specific country (www.nyidanmark.dk).

Vitus and Lidén (2010:70-71) describe and discuss the process of asylum seeking in Denmark. The asylum application process has three phases after registration with the Danish police. The first phase, conducted by the IS, is one of identification and categorization as a legitimate asylum seeker. The second phase involves collecting and evaluating documentation either for or against granting residence. These two phases last between 8-12 months. However, this period can be extended substantially and NGOs working with asylum seekers report that some asylum applications can be pending from 3 to 10 months or from 3 to 6 years. Attorneys have experienced cases where applications have been pending for up to 10 years (adapted from Jessen & Montgomery, 2010:7).

Once the authorities grant asylum according to Danish laws, the applicant (and her/his family) enters the third phase, waiting to be allocated a municipality responsible for housing and enrolling parents in a three-year 'introduction programme'. Children are introduced to day-care centres or public schools or other educational services (adapted from Jessen & Montgomery, 2010:7).

If the asylum seeker's application is rejected ('expulsion phase 3'), he/she must leave Denmark/accept voluntary deportation or apply to the Danish authorities for a humanitarian residence permit. Some asylum seekers refuse deportation on the grounds that their personal security would be threatened if they were to return to the country from which they fled. There are numerous examples of the tragic plight of families during the

handling of asylum applications: for example, in 2009 the Danish government made a bilateral agreement with Iraq to send back asylum seekers who had been living in the Danish Asylum Camps for between 7 and 11 years (adapted from Jessen & Montgomery, 2010:7-8).

The three types of procedures

Most cases are processed according to **normal procedure**. This means that if the application for asylum is rejected, the case is referred to the Refugee Appeals Board, which will make the final ruling in the case (www.nyidanmark.dk).

A minority of cases are considered **manifestly unfounded**. This means that the IS makes the assessment that the applicant is clearly not eligible for asylum. These cases are sent to the Danish Refugee Council (an NGO), which will make a statement on the case. If the Danish Refugee Council agrees with the IS that the application is manifestly unfounded, the application will be rejected without contest. If, on the other hand, the Danish Refugee Council disagrees, the IS will generally uphold its rejection of the application, but will refer the case to the Refugee Appeals Board for a final ruling (www.nyidanmark.dk).

In certain cases, asylum applications are processed according to an expedited version of the manifestly unfounded procedure. This happens when the asylum seeker comes from a country where, according to the most up-to-date information available, it is unlikely that he/she would risk persecution. In these cases, the asylum seeker is not asked to fill out an application form, and he/she is quickly referred for an interview with the IS. The Danish Refugee Council then gives a statement on the case. If this is in accordance with the ruling of the IS, the application is rejected as soon as possible (www.nyidanmark.dk).

If an asylum seeker is granted asylum, he/she will be allowed to stay in Denmark. The IS then decides where in Denmark the refugee is to live.

2.2.2. Asylum seeking children

Asylum seekers are generally placed in asylum centres for accommodation (while seeking asylum) or detention (while waiting to be returned). In 2009, Denmark had eight asylum centres, including three special accommodation centres for unaccompanied children, women and those with mental health problems. All

centres except one are run by the Danish Red Cross. Most centres also run leisure clubs for children aged 6-17 and day nurseries for children aged 2-5 for a number of hours on weekdays (adapted from Vitus & Lidén, 2010).

2.2.3. Unaccompanied minors

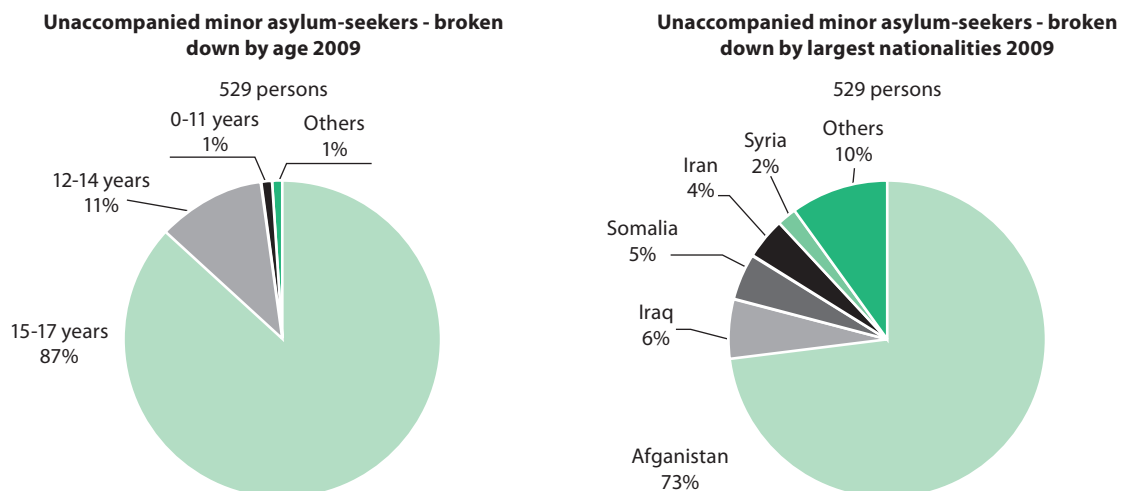
According to information from www.nyidanmark.dk, unaccompanied minors are defined in the following way: “When foreign nationals under the age of 18 come to Denmark and seek asylum without their parents

or other adults who can replace the parents, they are termed ‘unaccompanied minor asylum seekers’. As a general rule, unaccompanied minor asylum seekers must meet the same requirements as other asylum seekers in order to have their application processed in Denmark. However, unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are considered a particularly vulnerable group, and special guidelines have been devised for processing their cases. This means that their applications will be processed quickly, and that they will be housed in special accommodation centres with specially trained staff” (www.nyidanmark.dk)

Table 4. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, 2004 – 2009
(Jessen & Montgomery, 2010)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Afghanistan	22	11	17	39	168	386
Algeria	3	3	3	0	6	8
Iraq	8	7	51	31	67	30
Iran	6	5	5	3	20	22
Somalia	12	7	3	3	5	26
Syria	0	2	1	0	0	11
Others	77	74	27	17	36	46
Total	128	109	107	93	302	529
All asylum seekers	4 %	5%	5%	5%	13%	14%

Figure 1. Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in 2009 broken down by age and nationality (Statistical Overview. Migration and Asylum 2009. Danish Immigration Service and Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs)



In Denmark, the majority of unaccompanied minors come from Afghanistan. This group has increased dramatically over the last few years. In 2004 there were 22 unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, and in 2009 there were 386. This group constitutes a larger share of the total number of asylum-seeking minors in 2009 than before. In 2009 the share was 14 per cent, compared to 4 per cent in 2004 (see Table 4 below).

In a separate analysis of the period 2002 – 2007 based on data at a more detailed level, one could discern how this group is distributed by gender and age. It appears that the largest group is boys ranging from ages 15 to 17. This was a consistent pattern throughout this period (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010).

2.2.4. *The asylum process for unaccompanied minors*⁵

Unaccompanied minors are only required to apply as asylum seekers if they are deemed to be sufficiently mature. If the IS assesses that an unaccompanied minor is not mature enough, he/she can be granted a residence permit without being required to go through the application process. In order to qualify for a residence permit, the unaccompanied minor must not have family or access to public care or similar in his/her country of origin, where the minor would consequently be left to fend for him-/herself. When processing the case, the IS takes into consideration information about the unaccompanied minor's health and special care and assistance he/she may need, as well as the general situation in his/her country of origin (e.g. whether there is war).

Furthermore, in order to qualify for a residence permit, the unaccompanied minor must not have access to a reception or care centre in his/her country of origin. This condition applies to unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who enter Denmark from 01.01.2011 onwards. In such cases, a residence permit will be granted under the *Danish Aliens Act*, section 9c (3) (i).

If an unaccompanied minor receives a residence permit as an unaccompanied minor under the *Danish Aliens Act*, section 9c (3), this is normally granted for one year, depending on the age of the person in question. After this point, the holder can apply for an extension. In order to be granted an extension, the

holder must continue to meet the requirements. This residence permit always expires when the holder turns 18, whereupon the holder normally has to leave Denmark. In exceptional cases, it is possible to grant a residence permit after the unaccompanied minor turns 18. These rules apply to all unaccompanied minors who have entered Denmark from 01.01.2011 onwards.

The role of the personal representative

Every unaccompanied minor is appointed a personal representative to look after his/her interests. Among other things, the representative offers support to the unaccompanied minor during the processing of the case, for example by accompanying the unaccompanied minor during the asylum interview. The representative also supports the unaccompanied minor on a more personal level. The Immigration Service asks the Danish Red Cross to recommend a representative to the Regional State Administration (Statsforvaltningen), which then appoints the representative. The representative must not be affiliated with the immigration authorities, and can be a relative or other private individual.

Legal assistance

If an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker case is processed according to the so called manifestly unfounded procedure, the IS will appoint an attorney to represent the unaccompanied minor during the processing of the case.

If the asylum case is processed according to the normal procedure, and if the application is turned down by the IS, an attorney will be appointed to represent the unaccompanied minor in connection with the Refugee Appeals Board's processing of the appeal case.

Unaccompanied minors whose applications are turned down will still be offered assistance by the appointed attorney. Among other things, the attorney can assist them in applying for a residence permit on other grounds and – if such an application is turned down – in arranging their return to the country of origin.

Reunification with parents

Following the arrival of the unaccompanied minor in Denmark, the IS launches a search for the unaccompanied minor's parents or other relatives, if

⁵ This section is based on extracts from www.nyidanmark.dk

their place of residence is unknown. The search may be carried out in collaboration with an organization approved for this task by the Minister of Integration (or equivalent instances).⁶ A search can normally only be launched if the unaccompanied minor agrees to it. If there are reception or care centres in the unaccompanied minor's country of origin, the IS is not obliged to launch a search for his/her relatives.

Unaccompanied minors who do not agree to launch a search for their relatives, or who come from countries where there are reception or care centres, can use the search service of the International Red Cross. The International Red Cross can help the unaccompanied minor locate parents and other relatives confidentially, that is, without forwarding the result of the search to the authorities.

3. INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP, LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1. National level

Denmark has, in contrast to Sweden and Norway, no Ombudsman for Children.⁷ Instead they have The National Council for Children (Børnerådet), which is organized in close connection to the Danish Ministry for Family and Consumer Affairs.⁸ The organization pays specific attention to children's needs and 'children's voices' and takes its point of departure from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Børnerådet was established in 1994, initially as a trial scheme. In 1997, the Danish Parliament decided to make this council a permanent institution. It was formed in pursuance of Section 88 of *Danish Act No. 453 of 10.06.1997 on the Rule of Law and Administration in Social Areas*. The Ministry of Social Affairs' *executive order no. 2 of 05.01.1998*, describes the remit of Børnerådet/the National Council for Children in greater detail (www.brd.dk). They work to safeguard the rights of children and provide information on conditions for children in society. They offer, for example, advice and consultancy to authorities on issues of concern to children.

However, the CRC in Denmark occupies a weaker position than in Norway and Sweden, and in the Danish political debate on asylum politics, children's needs or rights play a marginal role, according to a study by Vitus and Lidén (2010). While other human rights conventions are incorporated into Danish law, the CRC has only been ratified: a governmental decision in 2001, based on technical juridical reasoning, prevented the incorporation of the CRC into Danish legislation. Thus, neither the main legislative document on the general welfare of children in Denmark – the *Consolidation Act on Social Services* – nor the Danish Aliens Act concerning asylum seekers, mention the CRC.

3.2. Policy and legal framework

"In Denmark, the first Aliens (Consolidation) Act of 1983 formulated the most humanitarian, liberal regulations among Western European States. But the Act has become increasingly restrictive and now constitutes one of the tightest laws in the EU" (Kjaer 2003:19 from Vitus & Lidén, 2010:66).

"After the centre-right victory in 2001, a range of new measures, with the political focus primarily on limiting immigration through not only restrictions on family reunification but also legislation or preventing potential 'misuse' of the Danish asylum system and enforcing security policy in relation to asylum seekers" (Vitus & Lidén, 2010: 66).

Another policy is the government's so-called 'motivation advancement measures', which work on the basis subtle pressure, for example by requiring people to report to the police twice a week. Furthermore, the government reduced monetary allowances which was bound to have a negative effect on living conditions.⁹

In asylum policy (the *Danish Alien Act*) the key unit in Danish law is the family, and the key concern appears to be upholding 'the unity of the family'. Therefore, according to Vitus and Lidén (2010), in Danish asylum policy, children seeking asylum are not considered as individual rights holders, but as rights holders as part of their family unit.

⁶ Since the Danish election in 2011, the organization might have been changed.

⁷ The introduction of a Children's ombudsman is under investigation.

⁸ Or equivalent ministry after the last Danish election in 2011.

⁹ Note: Some of these obligations might have been changed after the last election, fall 2011.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

In Denmark, children of asylum seekers are not given the status of individual rights holders in terms of education (Vitus & Lidén, 2010) and only children up to 17 years of age (not 18) have access to the educational system (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010). The *Danish Aliens (Consolidation) Act* (§42g) of 08.07.2008 states that the government must provide asylum seeking children (of school age) with ‘separately arranged’ schooling or, in certain cases, participation in a local municipal school. Most children are going by buss to an asylum school outside the centre (run by the Danish Red Cross).

4.1. The Danish Educational System

The goals of the Danish Ministry of Education for primary and lower secondary education include that all pupils should have “excellent academic skills and knowledge”. Implicit in these goals of educational quality for all pupils is the ambition to achieve equitable results for different groups of pupils. The Danish education system has traditionally aimed to achieve equity-based and pupil-centred education (Holmen, 2009 in Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010). Rather than segregating children on the basis of ability or social background, schools are seen as the primary institutions in which equality between individuals with different backgrounds can be established. Note, however, that RASC are placed in so-called reception classes for at least two years and thereby separated from their native Danish peers (see more below).

The Danish school system consists of:

1. Pre-School
2. Pre-School class
3. Compulsory Comprehensive School (*Folkeskole*) (primary and lower secondary education)
4. Upper Secondary School
5. Adult Education

4.2. The asylum school

The Danish Red Cross has responsibility for the children in the asylum camps and for their education. Asylum-seeking children aged between 6 – 16 receive their education at one of the Red Cross’ schools. However, it is problematic that there are few of these schools and some children have to travel for two hours a day to reach the school. For example, children in the two asylum camps in the area of Sealand are enrolled in the Red Cross’ Lynge School (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010).

Information¹⁰ from the Red Cross describes teachers at these schools as specially trained for working with asylum-seeking pupils, many of whom are traumatized. The children are grouped in small classes with only 12 pupils in each class. The information points out that mother tongue education is important and that it is available at these schools. The asylum school is described as a preparation for mainstream school, where the children get the time to find both physical and emotional stability in the new situation.

4.3. Lack of additional educational rights connected to the children’s language and origin

Immigrants with asylum constitute a sizeable and growing proportion of the student population in Denmark. Pupils with a non-Danish mother tongue now make up 10 per cent of the student population. The largest groups come from Turkey, the Middle East, Iran, former Yugoslavia and Pakistan (Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010). However, there is a lack of additional educational rights in Denmark concerning pupils’ language and origin.

4.3.1. The lack of study guidance in the pupil’s mother tongue

Research shows that pupils learn best when they can draw on their full linguistic and cognitive repertoire to achieve new objectives (Cummins, 2000 in Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010). Valuing the mother tongue of immigrant children is an essential part of developing a positive and appreciative approach to diversity. It means seeing pupils’ language capacities

¹⁰ Based on information from the Danish Red Cross.

as part of their personal, social and cultural identity and welcoming their mother tongue as a tool for learning and understanding (Holmen, 2009 in Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010). This will help children to bridge the gap between home and school and ensure that their cultural and language background is valued as much as that of the majority (Brind et al., 2007 in Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010).

The OECD report (Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010) on education for migrants and refugees from 2010 is very critical of Denmark’s policies for these groups. Denmark does often not provide mother tongue instruction to immigrant pupils. This policy is developed in view of the financial and practical difficulties of providing mother tongue education in a country where immigrants speak altogether more than 100 languages (in some reports, the number reaches 200). Therefore, children’s proficiency in their mother tongue is not assessed at any point in the education system, and they are not supported or encouraged to maintain or improve their mother tongue. Education authorities even lack information on the language backgrounds of their pupils. Through the complete exclusion of immigrant languages in school life, the education system is missing a chance to acknowledge immigrants’ additional knowledge and cultural and linguistic background in a positive way, as an opportunity and not just a challenge.

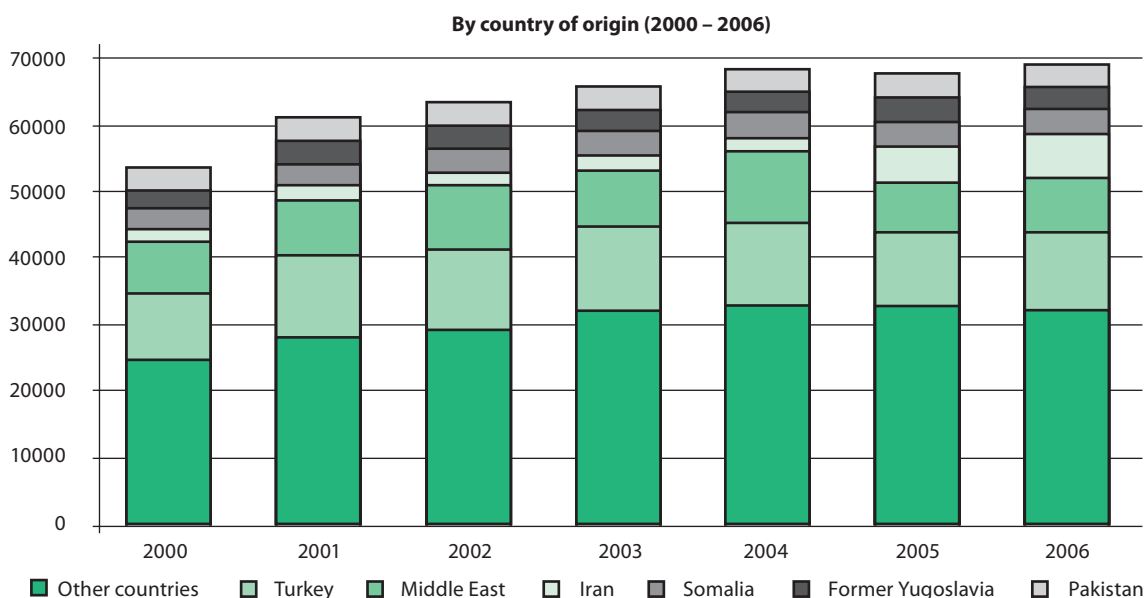
Even in schools with a high proportion of immigrants, different mother tongues are often not seen as a positive and normal aspect of school life; they are seen more as a problem than a resource. Under current practice, pupils are allowed to take their mother tongue as an elective subject in secondary education. However, they rarely do. Schools do not encourage pupils to do this, and it has also been reported by pupils and parents that employers do not value knowledge of non-European languages. In a discussion with a group of 20 VET (Vocational Education and Training) pupils enrolled in an institute outside Copenhagen, one pupil told the OECD review team that he would never mention on his CV the fact that he knew Turkish, and the others agreed (Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010).

Looking at Figure 2, one can trace the increase in bilingual pupils in the Folkskole during the period 2000 – 2006, from just over 50,000 in 2000 to almost 70,000 in 2006. Most bilingual pupils had a Turkish or Middle Eastern background.

4.3.2. Danish as a second language

Danish as a Second Language (DSL) has received increased attention, with the Ministry formally introducing it as a particular subject in the Folkeskole in 1995. Like other subjects, the description of DSL includes

Figure 2. Number of bilingual pupils in the Folkeskole



Source: Danish Ministry of Education, 2008b.

outlines of purpose, aims and teaching guides (Sorensen, 2008 in Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010). The subject is taught to all pupils who are assessed as needing such instruction in order to perform on a par with their native peers in other subjects. There is also increasing focus on the integration of language and content learning. The subject description of DSL states that language development should be integrated into other subjects, such as maths, history or music, when bilingual pupils are present in class. The non-binding guideline part of the syllabus for each subject also states that a second language acquisition perspective should be included in the teaching of the subject – including in the preparation of lessons – when bilingual pupils are present in the class.

Within the VET (Vocational Education and Training) sector, a subject called ‘vocational Danish as a second language’ has been developed for bilingual pupils who need to improve their Danish language proficiency in order to complete a VET programme. The subject is an optional part of the VET programmes. Several VET institutions have hired DSL teachers or made arrangements with local language centres to provide support for immigrant pupils. DSL is provided intensely at the pre-school level, but at the school level it is often limited to basic remedial instruction for beginners. DSL classes concentrate on pupils in the first years of Folkeskole where they develop basic conversational Danish skills. This support is often not followed into the later years of Folkeskole to enable immigrants to enhance their proficiency in academic Danish (Nusche, Wurzburg & Naughton, 2010).

In the general upper secondary sector, a 2006 evaluation report states that while bilingual pupils are familiar with everyday Danish, they do not have a command of the more academic language used in general upper secondary education. In spoken Danish, they lack vocabulary and the necessary accurate and varied usage, and in written Danish they lack skills in grammar, sentence structure and punctuation (Danish Ministry of Education, 2008a).

4.4. Programmes for bilingual children in the municipal schools and day-care centres

The municipal schools and day-care centres organize programmes for bilingual children with an immigrant background. The programmes include only Danish

language studies and no mother tongue education. Schools have no responsibility for mother tongue education. Instead this responsibility lies with the parents. Parents with different language backgrounds have pioneered as teachers of various mother tongues in the schools. However, these types of projects tend to be dissolved sooner or later, due to lack of either public or private sponsorship (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010).

4.4.1. The reception class programme

The reception class programme was launched in the 1980s and aimed at ‘children with a different ethnical background than Danish’. It basically entails a two-year intensive Danish language course for children with different languages, different schooling experiences and of various ages. It includes refugee children as well as other newly arrived immigrant children. The programme consists of a two-year intensive Danish language course for the children before they start in a regular Danish class. Municipal schools with reception classes have guidelines about goals, contents and expected results, but there are no references to the special needs of children from asylum seeking or refugee families. But the municipalities could organize the classes differently when it comes to number of pupils in the class, how many school levels they offer, how many different age levels and schooling experiences the reception class can cope with and which teaching material is relevant in that particular municipality (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010).

Studies show that introduction of children to a regular class after two years in a ‘reception class programme’ is not satisfactory and does not take the child’s needs into account. Jessen and Montgomery write: “Although the reception class program is meant to be a “reception program”, it suspends the child’s education concentrating solely on acquisition of Danish, while other subjects go unattended. For a child 11 or 12 years old, two years of unattended subjects matters a great deal even if they learn to speak, read and write in Danish. Statistics of poor school results and low access to higher educational level for these children are associated among others, with flaws in this program” (Jessen and Montgomery 2010: 26-27).

4.4.2. Stimulation programme in the Danish language

The stimulation programme in the Danish language in municipal schools emphasizes language acquisition exclusively in Danish. The programme provides

more support to bilingual children in language development. Even though this programme promotes better integration of children, it clashes with the municipalities' policies of either scattering or gathering bilingual children (Jessen and Montgomery, 2010). A publication about "language stimulation at the basic school level" shows that half of the municipalities had not organized the programme locally. Not all schools have this programme. Some schools argue they do not have enough bilingual children attending that particular school, whereas other schools lack qualified teachers of DSL. In general terms, most schools are in the process of organizing this programme, but in half of all municipalities, stimulation of Danish language acquisition in schools and day-care centres is short of policies, procedures, qualified personnel and educational material as well as funding (Kommunernas Landsforening).

The stimulation programme in the Danish language at day-care centres starts when a child is 3 years old. Newly arrived children are entitled to receive language stimulation in Danish for 15 hours/week. Children from 3 – 5 years old who do not attend day-care centres, are gathered in 'language stimulation groups' also for 15 hours/week. Day-care centres and language stimulation groups promote the acquisition and development of Danish through play, tours and projects about a chosen theme, as well as through daily routines (Jessen and Montgomery, 2010; <http://www.dettevirker.dk>).

Additionally, there is a need to design techniques and methods for assessing and monitoring bilingual children's readiness, as well as to optimize support for children to balance the learning of a language with the rest of the curriculum. There is also a need to qualify and train staff so they can test bilingual children to determine the nature and range of support a particular child may need.

5. BEST PRACTICES DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This section starts with an overview of previous research and recommendations made within a Danish context concerning RASC. In Denmark, NGOs have a central role in educating RASC, especially the Danish Red Cross, which is featured in this section. Finally, there is a section detailing projects which target children's wellbeing.

5.1. Previous research and recommendations

Most previous research on refugee children and children in asylum-seeking families in Denmark has focused on their mental health. A study by Montgomery and Foldspand (2005) shows that nine out of ten children in asylum-seeking families in Denmark have lived under conditions of war (89 per cent) or in refugee camps (93 per cent) prior to migration. Altogether seven out of ten children have witnessed violence. The study confirms results from several other studies, i.e. that these children not only suffer mentally from exposure to conflict before migration, but also from the process of seeking asylum in the new host country. During their stay in the asylum centres in Denmark, these children experience isolation, sensory overload, crowding and language problems, resulting in a loss of the meaningfulness of life, a feeling of lack of control and family instability, such as parents' mental illness. These distressful experiences, together with the uncertain and stressful situation during the asylum seeking process and traumatic experience from the time before migration, increase the risk of developing mental illnesses (see for example Christensen and Andersen 2006; Fazel and Stein 2002; Lustig et al. 2004; Montgomery 2008; Nielsen et al. 2008). Children who had been in the asylum seeking process for more than one year in Denmark showed an increased risk of mental difficulties (Montgomery & Foldspand 2005). The consequence is that an increased number of asylum-seeking children in Denmark have to undergo psychiatric investigations and treatments. For example, a study by Nielsen et al. (2008) shows that children seeking asylum in Denmark develop psychiatric symptoms as a consequence of their protracted stay at asylum centres and multiple relocations. "Long duration of stay at asylum centres seems to have an adverse effect on the children's mental health. Even though some of the children might be traumatised when they arrive to Denmark, it appears that the time of stay in the asylum system may harm their mental health even more" (Nielsen et al. 2008:8).

Montgomery (2008) has assessed the influence of traumatic experiences prior to emigration, as well as social life after immigration, on the mental health of young Middle Eastern refugees 8-9 years after immigration to Denmark. The results show that aspects of social life in Denmark, including the mother's education and indicators of adaptation, as well as a stressful life context in exile, including discrimination, predicted

psychological problems even 8-9 years after arrival, actually revealing more problems than before arrival. The conclusion is that prevention of psychopathology in young refugees largely depends on the political will to make provisions for necessary changes in the reception and treatment of refugees. According to Jessen and Montgomery, research shows that “the impact of extensive long periods in the asylum camps with burdening settings, lack of social contact with ‘other children’ from the Danish population, relocations in different asylum camps, idle and meaningless life in the camps, their parents’ hardships and psychological distress or disturbances etc. are detrimental to the children’s mental health and are responsible for the children’s mounting difficulties to carry on with their life” (Jessen and Montgomery 2010: 48).

When it comes to studies about the school situation, results show that, compared to native Danish pupils, immigrant pupils achieve a significantly lower level of performance, especially those who speak a language other than Danish at home (see, for example, Nusche et al. 2010). Regarding children in asylum-seeking families, they often go to special schools in asylum centres where they do not study as many subjects as children in ordinary schools. Among the older children, there is a high risk of dropping out of these schools (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010). In the end, these children will not receive any credits or pass any exams. Jessen and Montgomery (2010) also raise the problem that education within the asylum school is not validated as school education in Denmark, and they describe this as ‘lost years’ in the children’s education. They also describe how there is sporadic attendance in the case of older children in the asylum schools and few children are examined according to their class level.

When RASC start in the municipal schools, they are offered education in a ‘reception class’, with fewer hours and subjects than in the ordinary school. Most teaching is in Danish and the pupils cannot receive educational credits or pass exams. Therefore, once they are attending ordinary school, these children often lag behind and are much older than their native Danish schoolmates. After much criticism, the Danish Government changed their policy in 2008 and recommended that as many of these children as possible should be transferred into ordinary Danish schools. However, the vast majority of children in asylum-seeking families still attend asylum schools or reception class. According to Vitus and Lidén

(2010), these children are not considered or treated as having individual rights to education and do not have the same rights as other children in Denmark. “In this sense, while asylum seeking children are considered a part of the family unit, they are not understood as a part of the category children in Denmark” (Vitus & Lidén 2010: 72).

At asylum schools or in reception classes, asylum-seeking children have non or few lessons in their mother tongue. When they enter the ordinary school, they do have DSL, but are often not offered mother tongue education. This policy has been criticized, as research shows that children develop a better understanding of their second language if they also have (or have had) mother tongue education. “It has been observed that bilingual children who do not have a formal education in their mother tongue, do not have the same fluency, abstract comprehension or vocabulary in their mother tongue compared to Danish as their second language. Contrary to expectations, children do not reach mastery of the Danish language through Danish-only strategy” (Jessen & Montgomery 2010: 29).

5.2. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in work with newly arrived children and their families in Denmark. There are NGOs working with asylum seekers and refugees on all the different levels. NGOs play a role in providing volunteer programmes, for example Dansk Folkehjælp, Save the Children Denmark, MS Action Aid Denmark and Kirkernes Integrations Tjeneste (The church’s integration programmes). Among others, the Danish Refugee Council provides a network of volunteers who participate in different volunteer programmes. In total, about 4,000 volunteers take part in an NGO programme, for example by helping children with school homework, helping them to join the local community, take part in leisure activities, language training, assisting with the reception of refugees, etc

The Red Cross,¹¹ which has responsibility for the asylum centers and the asylum schools, is probably the most important NGO in the country. The Danish Red Cross has many different projects involving RASC which serve as examples of good practice. For instance,

¹¹ After contact with Kathrine Vitus, Senior Researcher at a national research centre of welfare.

they organize leisure activities for the children at the asylum camps. There are usually no playgrounds for the small children in the asylum camps, but there are day-care centres and youth clubs for teenagers. As mentioned above, the Red Cross also provides a network of volunteers who arrange activities for these children (Jessen and Montgomery 2010). The volunteers organize activities such as picnics, bicycle tours, film screenings, coffeehouses, sports, etc. They also give children assistance with homework. There is also a voluntary project called 'Help a refugee on the way (into the Danish society)'. The volunteers working at the asylum centres also provide training in, for example, how to ride a bike, assistance with homework or arrange circus projects for the children (<http://www.drk.dk>)

5.2.1. *The STROP-model*

The Danish Red Cross has the responsibility for the children in the asylum camps and for their education. The teachers at the asylum schools, as well as the staff at the asylum centres work with two programmes for children: 'psycho education' and the STROP-pedagogy (STROF in Danish). These programmes have been used in other projects and are developed in other countries. 'Psycho-education' for children is based on age-relevant trauma interventions inspired by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk's Trauma Center, Justice Resource Institute, Boston, USA. The STROP-model has been created by the Swedish paediatrician Lars H Gustafsson (Danish Red Cross, 2011).

A personal contact¹² at the Danish Red Cross confirms that all teachers and staff at the asylum centers and schools are working with the STROP-model. In an internal report about the STROP-model describes how to work with children who have come away from 'chaotic situations' (Danish Red Cross, 2011). The purpose of this model is to create a structure in an asylum seekers' 'chaotic situation'. The model focuses on five central factors: Structure (S), Talking and time (T), Rituals (R), Organised play (O) and Parental support (P). The overall aim is to develop a pleasant environment in which the house rules will become a common daily practice. It is thought to provide a buffer against secondary traumatization and to promote restitution for children (see, for example, Gustafsson, Lindkvist and Böhm 1987).

These kinds of programmes can be seen as models for best practice in Danish work with asylum-seeking and refugee children, but have also been criticized. For example, Jessen and Montgomery (2010) question whether the asylum centres and schools at asylum camps are, on the whole, the most suitable psycho-pedagogical environments for providing protective factors and promoting children's recovery. They write, "There is a structural and organizational problem blocking children's access to effective and timely health benefits linked to assessment procedures. Complaints about extremely long waiting periods for a child to be assessed and treated in local pedagogical psychological units and child psychiatry are commonplace. It is our contention that this time-lapse does not favour children's recovery". (Jessen & Montgomery, 2010:44).

5.3. Projects focusing on integration

As examples of best practice we will present two projects with a focus on integration. The first is a website which offers information for newcomers and can be seen as an important instrument for introducing newcomers to Denmark. This project could probably be adapted and modified to be transferred to any other country. The second project is Trampoline House, a user-driven culture meeting place for asylum seekers and Danes working for a just and humane refugee and asylum policy in Denmark.¹³

5.3.1. *New to Denmark* (<http://www.nyidanmark.dk>)

'New to Denmark' is the name of a website with information for newcomers to Denmark. The homepage, published by the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs,¹⁴ directly addresses newcomers to Denmark. Here one can find information about Danish society and instructions about important systems in different languages. For example there is information about asylum, the EU, laws, studies, visas and work. There are also informative guides for newcomers, such as how the Danish tax system works, how to find a job, information about healthcare and education systems, as well as a breakdown of Danish norms and values. Information specifically for children is not included, but parents can get information about the school system

¹² After contact with Kathrine Vitus, Senior Researcher at a national research centre of welfare.

¹³ After contact with Kathrine Vitus, Senior Researcher at a national research centre of welfare in Denmark.

¹⁴ This department was shut down after the election, in the end of 2011

and other useful information about their children's situation at school.

5.3.2. *The Trampoline House*

The Trampoline House is a non-profit, independent organized, user-driven meeting place, for asylum seekers, underground refugees and Danish citizens. It is described as a meeting point, where people living inside as well as outside Danish asylum centres can cross national, juridical, social, and cultural boundaries by meeting and sharing experiences, and learning from one another on equal terms. The Trampoline House is working for a just and humane refugee and asylum policy in Denmark. The house was established in October 2010 by over 100 volunteering asylum seekers and Danish asylum activists in reaction to Denmark's unjust and inhuman refugee and asylum policies. Located in the centre of Copenhagen, The Trampoline House offers a range of services and activities which include: social and legal counselling, lectures and debates, medical and dental services, film screenings and concerts, Danish classes and IT courses, workshops and art exhibitions, hairdressing and make-up, children's and youth programs, magazine production and guided tours of different Danish asylum centres (www.trampolinehouse.dk).

The project has two aims:

- To break the feeling of isolation which most asylum seekers and underground refugees experience and to provide them with the agency and the necessary tools to improve their social and legal situation;
- To inform the Danish public about the conditions of refugees and asylum seekers in Denmark in an attempt to motivate the public to work to make refugee and asylum policies more just and humane (www.trampolinehouse.dk).

5.4. Projects focusing on empowerment and psychosocial wellbeing

There are several projects focusing on empowerment and psychosocial wellbeing that are directed at children. Often these projects are concerned with all children's wellbeing, but with particular emphasis on vulnerable children, including asylum-seeking and refugee children. Jessen and Montgomery (2010)

in particular referred to the project 'Take care of all the children' ("Hånd om alle børn"). This project was the result of collaboration between The Danish Union of Teachers and the Danish Association of Social Workers and was carried out in 2007 – 2008. The aim was to improve collaboration with a view to supporting vulnerable or marginalized children. The project included, but did not specifically deal with, refugee children (www.alleboern.dk). Another project was originally carried out as a local project in the city of Århus by The Danish Refugee Council (2001 – 2003). These projects aimed to provide information about Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for school children and professional networks. Children were taught about PTSD, as were their teachers, social workers and other professionals involved in child welfare and education. In 2009, the Danish Refugee Council received funding from the Ministry of Integration for a similar project in Copenhagen inspired by the experiences in Århus. Besides teaching about PTSD, the Danish Refugee Council intends to improve cooperation between professionals working with children (Jessen and Montgomery 2010).

There are a number of projects specifically aimed at working with traumatized children. These are normally organized by various psychiatric institutions or in cooperation with several centres of psychiatry. One example is the project KAPPASS ('Kunsten At Passe På Andre og Sig Selv'), which was a collaboration between Psykiatrisk Informationscenter (PsyInfo), Center for Traume- og Torturoverlever (CET) and Børne- og ungdomspsykiatrisk Afdeling i Kolding (BUPA). KAPPASS was a programme for children with an immigrant background living with traumatized parents. Today there are still other programmes for traumatized immigrant children. Berliner (2010) evaluated SYNerGAIA, a project for traumatized refugee children and their families. He described the project as successful,¹⁵ and serves as an example of best practice.

5.4.1. *SYNerGAIA – psykoedukation for traumatiserede flygtninge og deres familier (psycho-education for traumatized refugees and their families)*

SYNerGAIA is an organization dedicated to the pedagogical rehabilitation of traumatized adults and

¹⁵ After contact with Peter Berliner, Denmark's P dagogiske Universitetsskole, Aarhus Universitet.

children. The organization provides a group-oriented environment and has a holistic approach to the individual. It has rehabilitation centres in four cities in Denmark. SYNerGAIA connects a number of existing initiatives focusing on traumatology, neurobiology, and group method, and has conducted a pedagogical rehabilitation continuation training programme for nine years (<http://www.synergai.dk>).

SYNerGAIA Rehabilitation and SYNerGAIA Innovation are two separate units that work closely together in the development of trauma work and pedagogical rehabilitation. SYNerGAIA's rehabilitation programme is designed for refugees and immigrants with problems encompassed by one of the following three categories:

1. **Problems specific to refugees:** Reactions to war, imprisonment, escape, loss of family, persecution or torture. The symptoms may include persistent physical and psychological imbalances expressed as symptoms of PTSD.
2. **Problems related to changing culture and living in exile:** Long-term stress reactions, similar to PTSD, existential problems such as lack of a sense of identity or of self-esteem, feelings of alienation, and nostalgia towards their native country.
3. **Common problems:** The causes here are less obvious, but include a generally diminished ability to function both in the workplace and socially.

Enrolment in SYNerGAIA's programme first requires an interview with the prospective participant followed by a discussion of the individual with their caseworker, who usually has a broader psychosocial knowledge of the candidate. As early as the preadmission assessment phase, the staff discusses with the prospective participant and his/her caseworker whether the institution or SYNerGAIA can go further with their plan of action as well as plan of treatment, if any. Consequently, participation in SYNerGAIA's programme can also play a part in facilitating the individual's continued integration process. The training is based on dialogue and takes as its starting point the needs of the participants. If, for example, an individual needs help to cope with anxiety resulting from trauma, they can refer him/her to a therapist, a doctor, a physiotherapist or a massage therapist. In this way, the training involves multi-disciplinary cooperation and sometimes they also employ such

professionals as teachers within psychosocial subject areas. The pedagogical concept at SYNerGAIA is inspired, among other things, by Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (see Gardner 1983; 1993; 2000), traumatology, and recent neuroscientific research (<http://www.synergai.dk/en/>).

Since its inception, SYNerGAIA Innovation has developed their pedagogical concept, which is currently called 'Pedagogical Rehabilitation'. Even though they have a thoroughly tested and well-functioning concept, they continue to focus on current research at the intersection between traumatology, psychology, neurobiology, and the pedagogy of multiple intelligences. This knowledge is developed and circulated both through the pedagogical rehabilitation and at the courses and continuation training they offer (<http://www.synergai-innovation.dk/en/>).

In the context of the present report, SYNerGAIA's most interesting project is '**Psycho-education for traumatized refugees and their families**'. The project has received financial support from Immigration and Integration Ecclesiastical Affairs so it can run from 2007 until the end of 2012. It offers group activities for adults, but also for children and youth separately, and has created and developed methods to overcome the complications associated with a trauma. According to a presentation of the project, they have involved 104 children and 164 adults from 83 families in the group project (<http://www.psykedu.dk>). According to Berliner (2010), the method focuses on education and on collective education through group processes.

6. AREAS IN NEED OF CHANGE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Most relevant in the case of Denmark is to focus on the specific national context when discussing improvements in policies and recommendations for the integration of RASC. Denmark has a relatively short history of migration. As pointed out, the Danish school system for RASC differs a great deal from that of other Scandinavian countries. In Denmark, they have a tradition of independent schools and NGOs, whereas, for example, Sweden has a tradition of a comprehensive school system as well as a universal welfare system.

6.1. The asylum seeking process

As was also pointed out in the Swedish country report, the asylum seeking process in Denmark is also very complex and difficult for migrants to understand, let alone children. There are a number of policies, laws and regulations to be followed, which are not always clear and easy to understand. It would be valuable if asylum-seeking families could have a personal adviser (preferably one) throughout the entire asylum process who could provide guidance. Furthermore, we have found from research that waiting times can be quite distressing, resulting in deteriorated mental health. We would also like to point out, supported by the research in this review, that asylum seekers in Denmark are often segregated from the rest of society because they are living in asylum centres separated from the community for a very long time, and this appears to have negative effects on both educational integration (see below) and integration into the society at large.

6.2. Access to schooling and other related issues

School is of great importance to RASC as this is a place where they can find peace and security when the family situation is turbulent and unstable, and when parents are sometimes suffering from poor mental health. Therefore, children should have access to schooling as soon as possible (Andersson, Björnberg and Eastmond, 2010). However, in Denmark, RASC often have to go to school at the asylum centre and are not integrated into ordinary Danish schools. Also, the idea of reception classes for learning Danish, where immigrant children are separated from their native Danish peers, promotes segregation and exclusion. This accentuation of ‘difference’ and ‘othering’ may contribute to racism and discrimination. According to an OECD report on integration of the labour market in Denmark, the strong emphasis on immigrants learning Danish separate from native Danes brings about segregation rather than integration.¹⁶

Schooling arranged by the Danish Red Cross for unaccompanied minors or asylum seekers is not compulsory and attendance is sporadic. This type of schooling does not enable pupils to reach a level

sufficient for attending regular school, so it is often the case that the children still have to go to reception classes, sometimes for two years, before they can attend regular school. Furthermore, in the reception classes, children only receive instruction in the Danish language, and often have no other subjects. Thus, RASC require complementary education once they have been granted asylum. These children, therefore, often lag behind in many school subjects when they enter the ordinary school programme.

6.2.1. Mother tongue education

Children do not receive any mother tongue instruction organized by the community (such as the municipality), in spite of the fact that national and international research has shown the importance of educating children in their native language. Instead, on a voluntary basis, parents of migrant children are asked to serve as ‘teachers’ in mother tongue instruction. In order to achieve continuity and routines for such activities, stable funding is needed, but at present no such funding exists. Other countries with many different mother tongues offer this kind of education.¹⁷

6.2.2. Holistic perspective

In general, a more down to earth perspective is preferable, where both asylum-seeking children and their parents’ experiences are taken into consideration by schools. We have found no evidence of this in Danish research and reports, which lead us to suggest that Danish school authorities look more upon these families’ resources and strengths than their weaknesses.

6.2.3. Drop-outs

According to the above mentioned OECD report on labour integration in Denmark from 2007,¹⁸ Denmark has a very high drop-out rate for vocational training programmes. Almost two thirds of the pupils in these programmes drop out, which is twice as much as among ethnic Danes. The consequence is a large gap between employment rates among ethnic Danes and migrants. The OECD report emphasizes the importance of changing attitudes and of engaging the labour market and the labour unions in using more inclusive measures for hiring migrants.

¹⁶ Newsletter by Henrik Emilsson at www.temaasyl.se, 2007.

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_12892_168517401.pdf

¹⁸ Newsletter by Henrik Emilsson at www.temaasyl.se, 2007.

6.3. The asylum centre as a place for segregation rather than integration

As pointed out above, separating children by placing them in asylum centres promotes segregation and alienation. The asylum seeker is seen as a temporary guest rather than a citizen. Ideally, it should be possible to create multicultural meeting places in order to stimulate integration and mutual understanding between children of different origins. On the other hand, if there is a high risk of rejection of an asylum application, asylum seeking children should perhaps not become too rooted into the Danish community, as this can lead to traumatic experiences of separation in case they finally have to leave the country.

6.4. The missing child perspective

In the Danish political debate on asylum politics, children's needs or rights play a marginal role, according to a study by Vitus and Lidén (2010). While other human rights conventions are incorporated into Danish law, the CRC has only been ratified: a governmental decision in 2001, based on technical juridical reasoning, prevented the incorporation of the CRC into Danish legislation. This review confirms that asylum-seeking

children are considered as 'asylum seekers' rather than emphasizing their position as 'children' with children's rights, i.e. explicitly taking a child perspective. Vitus and Lidén (2010:78) claim that "...Denmark recognizes its obligations to the protection of children's rights primarily when it comes to children who have already secured citizenship. Thus in Denmark the discourse about the threat posed by asylum seekers has overruled claims of childhood for asylum seeking children as a universal political position from which to speak".

We have, for example, not found any documents where a children's ombudsman or spokesman has been used in the cause of children's interests.

Having a children's ombudsman or spokesman can be regarded as a 'best practice'. However, such a person is not always consulted in reality, according to findings from the Swedish country report. When the situation for a family is complex and difficult, as it often is, the child's voice is sometimes forgotten. One recommendation is therefore that such support be guaranteed in all cases where children are affected by decisions taken by the official authorities. Children need "negotiators" to give voice to children and to children's rights, particularly for those seeking asylum" (Vitus and Lidén, 2010:78).

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Internet resources

- <http://www.alleboern.dk>
- <http://www.brd.dk>
- <http://www.dettevirker.dk>
- <http://www.drk.dk>
- http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_12892_168517401.pdf
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- <http://www.synergaia.dk>
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- <http://www.synergaia-innovation.dk/en/>
- <http://www.temaasyl.se>
- <http://www.trampolinehouse.dk>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BUPA	– Børne- og ungdomspsykiatrisk Afdeling (Department for child and youth psychiatry)
CET	– Center for Traume- og Torturoverlevende (Centre for survivors of traumas and tortures)
CRC	– Convention on the Rights of the Child
DSL	– Danish as a Second Language
IS	– Immigration Services
KAPPASS	– Kunsten At Passe På Andre og Sig Selv (Project part of CET, see above)
NGO	– Non Governmental Organization
OECD	– Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PsykInfo	– Psykiatrisk Informationscenter
PTSD	– Posttraumatic stress disorder
RASC	– Refugee and asylum seeking children
VET	– Vocational education and training
UN	– United Nations