

Danish Ministry of Refugee,
Immigration and Integration Affairs

PRESS RELEASE

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Denmark makes a great effort to tackle major integration task, says the OECD

OECD is mapping the integration efforts of a number of OECD countries and today releases the report *The Labour Market Integration of Immigrants in Denmark*.

According to the report, Denmark is facing a big challenge: there is a large gap between the labour market position of immigrants and native Danes, and the children of immigrants perform less well than other young people in terms of education and employment. This overall picture is partly attributable to the fact that immigration to Denmark in the 1980s and 1990s was dominated by refugees and family reunified with weak labour market outcomes.

According to the OECD, Denmark is taking active steps to improve the integration. Integration in the labour market is a key issue on the Danish Government's agenda, and there is a developed integration programme for newly arrived immigrants with a unique emphasis on labour market integration. The report highlights a number of initiatives and best practices, including the "We Need All Youngsters" campaign, the early language stimulation of immigrant children, the nationwide KVINFO mentorship programme, the integration via football clubs in the "From the Bench to the Pitch" project, the benchmarking of municipalities, and the efforts to promote employment of immigrants in the public sector. According to the report, there is a need for continued integration efforts, including efforts to combat discrimination.

The OECD report on Denmark is part of a series of country reports about labour market integration, and in June 2007, the OECD will publish a book comparing the results of the evaluation of integration in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Australia. The OECD is currently also conducting reviews of integration in France, Belgium and Portugal.

Rikke Hvilshøj, the Danish Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, states:

"I am pleased that the OECD is now focusing on labour market integration, and I welcome their analysis of the integration in Denmark. This review confirms that integration efforts in the 1980s and 1990s have not been sufficient, and that we now face a major challenge, which we are working hard to overcome.

The Danish Government has taken important steps to improve the labour market integration with the programme “A New Chance for Everyone” and last year’s welfare reform. From 2001 to 2005, 20 000 additional immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries found employment, and unemployment data show a continued positive development since 2005. Meanwhile, an increased share of the young ethnic minorities is either employed or undertaking education, and more of the young people now find apprenticeships.

The government has also taken active steps to promote equal treatment and combat discrimination. The legal protection against discrimination at the labour market has been enforced. We have recently launched the campaign “Give Racism the Red Card” and a Diversity Programme – both to promote tolerance and diversity at the working places. Fortunately, statistics show that the ethnic minorities in Denmark now feel less discriminated.

So there are signs of an improving situation. Furthermore, it is gratifying to see that the government’s early employment strategy for newly arrived immigrants appears to be yielding visible results, according to OECD. Integration takes time, but I believe we can generate a faster and more positive development by making use of the most effective efforts.

It is important to get an international perspective on the efforts and look at best practices, so I look forward to the OECD’s future comparative studies on integration.”

The labour market integration of immigrants in Denmark can be found on the OECD’s homepage www.oecd.org/els/migration/integration/countryreview and at the homepage of the Ministry of Integration www.nyidanmark.dk

A press meeting on the report will take place today at 11-12 am at the Danish Ministry of Integration, Holbergsgade 6 in Copenhagen. The Danish Minister of Integration, Rikke Hvilshøj, will attend along with staff members from the OECD.

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