Digital Leadership in the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

During the last few years, the MFA has devoted enormous effort to using digitisation to reorganise and streamline operations within the MFA. We have made considerable progress and are now ready to move on to the next phase, which involves introducing Digital Leadership to the MFA. Five commandments have been formulated to define what we understand by good Digital Leadership in the MFA:

The Five Commandments for Digital Leadership in the MFA

> **1. As an MFA head of department or ambassador, you are a role model for your staff with regard to using IT.** You must therefore personally use the digital tools available and abide by the IT security requirements.
>
> **2. As an MFA head of department or ambassador, you use the Intranet daily for sharing knowledge and communicating.** This applies both in relation to sharing your own and your unit's knowledge and to learning from others.
>
> **3. As an MFA head of department or ambassador, you seek out best practice for using IT both inside and outside the MFA.** You must therefore keep yourself abreast of new opportunities for using IT to streamline and develop the business operations of your unit.
>
> **4. As an MFA head of department or ambassador, you are responsible for ensuring that your staff has the necessary IT competences.** This applies in relation to both the day-to-day performance of tasks and the continuing digital development within your unit.
>
> **5. As an MFA head of department or ambassador, you are familiar with the content of the MFA's E-Government Strategy and contribute wherever possible to realising its objectives**.

The experiences of both the MFA and other organisations show that digitisation will be so sweeping and radical and incorporate so many opportunities and implications that it will be absolutely vital in the future that all managers at all levels participate actively in the continuing development within the area.

Digitisation is no longer something we do on the side or afterwards or something we can leave to the IT people alone. On the contrary, it is something that is already – and will become even more so in the future – an absolutely fundamental element of the way we organise ourselves and plan how to perform tasks and duties.

The determination, ability and desire to take on the digital leadership will now become an integral part of the head of department's and the ambassador's role in the MFA. Such leadership will, among other things, be reflected in management appraisals and in some cases be incorporated in performance contracts.

There will, however, be considerable difference in how digital leadership will be implemented, for example, at a small Embassy and in a large department in the home service. Consequently, there are no very detailed rules and instructions drawn up, but rather – in keeping with value-based management – some "digital leadership values", which can be developed within the individual areas.

The focus on digital leadership stems from the fact that in just a few years IT has developed from being a tool for the individual employee to being the focal point of the core business processes in knowledge-intensive organisations such as the MFA. This is something we have seen, for example, during the modernisation process, where the majority of proposals for improving efficiency contain an IT component.

There are several reasons why we wish to sharpen focus on digital leadership in the MFA:

Firstly, we believe that an enhanced and effective digital support of the task performance process can contribute to further improving efficiency.

Secondly, we believe that the ability to combine and integrate management and digitisation will be an important and sought-after competence in the MFA in the years ahead.

Thirdly, our IT Strategy 2004-2007 sets out a goal for the MFA to become the most active contributor to digital development within the public sector of Denmark:

> *"The heads of departments and the ambassadors must lead the way and acquire for itself the knowledge necessary for being able to practise digital leadership.….One objective will be that the ability to practise digital leadership is reflected in management appraisals and in some cases in performance contracts, and that the IT competences of staff are evaluated and acknowledged so they can be incorporated as relevant criteria in the new pay system."*

Fourthly, the outside world has certain expectations to digitisation in the MFA. The Cabinet has drawn up a strategy for digitising the public sector between now and 2007, *"The Public Sector's Strategy for E-Government 2004-2006*". The strategy comprises a vision and five mileposts, within which very clear and measurable performance requirements to the public authorities are set out. Milepost 5 is very specific in its requirement that:

> *"Public sector managers must lead the way and ensure that their own organisations are capable of realising the vision."*

Consequently, not only will clear goals be set, but also responsibility placed – i.e. with the managers. Naturally, MFA managers must be able to fully shoulder this responsibility.

Administration & Services Secretariat, 2 August 2004