

Democracy and power in Denmark - Summary

In 1997, the Danish Parliament decided to launch a study, officially *An Analysis of Democracy and Power in Denmark*. A steering committee consisting of five independent researchers was assigned responsibility for the project. The Steering Committee gathered the overall conclusions from the numerous projects in the study, and published them as *Power and Democracy in Denmark: Conclusions* in October 2003.

The main focus is the state of democracy in Denmark at the dawn of the 21st century. How has democracy fared, has the development made things better or worse, and to which extent does contemporary democracy live up to our democratic ideals? The answer is that in many ways democracy is doing better than we might have expected, considering the intense pressure on the nation state and the democratic institutions in the postwar period. The Danish population is still full of democratic life, and the political institutions show considerable democratic robustness. However, not everything has gone or is going well. There are still pronounced social divisions in Danish society, although their nature has changed somewhat. The ideal of an informed public debate does not always enjoy the best conditions. The mass media have become a controlling element in political communication; many politicians feel compelled to act on single issues and make knee-jerk political decisions. Other decisions carry the mark of opaque influence by strong private interests. Finally, the transfer of competences to the EU has created a democratic deficit in a growing number of political decisions.