



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE



CHAPTER

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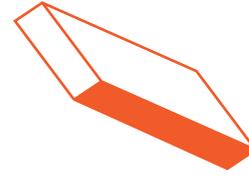
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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE

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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

In Denmark, there is a long tradition of forming associations and volunteering, and volunteering and committing oneself in local matters, has been a part of Danish culture and tradition for centuries. Ever since the adoption of Grundloven (the Danish Constitutional Act) in 1849, citizens have been able to freely join organisations, unions and associations. The Constitutional Act guaranteed citizens' rights, and associations were formed in almost every sphere of society: political party associations, special interest organisations, trade unions, economic associations (savings banks, health insurance societies, co-operatives), philanthropic associations, sports associations, religious associations, etc.¹ The voluntary sector, particularly within the social and health fields, has also played an important role in the formation and development of the welfare state.

Even so, the current infrastructure does not have a long history – it was not until the early 1980's that supporting initiatives, which may be called “infrastructure”, were introduced. In this report, infrastructure is understood as the framework provided to support volunteering: i.e. support centres, laws and regulations, public programmes and funding schemes etc.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Volunteering is a very important part of Danish culture and the way the society is structured. In this regard, it would be more accurate to refer to it as the first sector, rather than the third sector, because the welfare society which is so central to Danish culture developed in close cooperation with, and was inspired by, organisations from civil society. Civil society is found in all sectors and spheres of Danish society.

The voluntary sector in Denmark is quite diverse, not only with regard to its objectives, but also in terms of its structure; it embraces everything from small associations with a few members, almost no money and their “premises” at the chairman's home or office, to large, well-established, professional organisations. The common feature, however, is the “voluntary” aspect. The following section provides definitions of the key terms volunteer, voluntary work, and voluntary organisation.

1. Bjarne Ibsen and Ulla Habermann (2005): “Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Denmark”. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, for Civil Society Studies.

Volunteer is a person who undertakes a voluntary activity meeting the criteria mentioned in the paragraph below.

Voluntary work is the activity or act carried out by a volunteer. Voluntary work comprises of activities that are:

- Voluntary or non-obligatory - i.e. undertaken freely without physical force, legal coercion or financial pressure, with no threats of financial or social sanctions (for instance, the threat of social security benefits being cut or exclusion from a social network) if you no longer wish to continue the work
- Unpaid - this does not, however, rule out reimbursement for expenses the volunteer has incurred while carrying out the activities, such as travelling and telephone expenses, or that the person receives a symbolic amount for the voluntary work
- Carried out for persons other than the volunteer's own family and relatives - this distinguishes voluntary work from ordinary domestic activities and the informal care of family members
- For the benefit of people other than the volunteer and his or her family - this precludes participation in, for example, self-help groups or sports clubs from being considered as voluntary work
- Formally organised – mostly in an association, but this need not be the case. Ordinary helpfulness or spontaneous acts are not voluntary work².

35% of the Danish people aged 16-85 perform voluntary work - roughly 1,5 million persons.



However, volunteering is not only a matter of getting people to work without pay but also a form of development and/or satisfaction for the volunteers themselves. Volunteering is also a way to express oneself, a platform to express opinions and interests and a way of obtaining qualifications in order to improve employment prospects or to further one's education.

Voluntary organisation

In Denmark 'voluntary' is often used to describe organisations that organise voluntary work. This is a way to emphasise that these organisations differ from private companies, as well as from public organisations and institutions. Hence, a voluntary organisation is defined as:

- *An 'institutional reality'* - i.e. having a legal status or an organisational permanency, which, among other things, means that it has ongoing activities, formal objectives, structures and procedures (e.g. written statutes), frequent meetings, an address or meeting place
- *Private and non-governmental* - i.e. the organisation is not part of, or controlled by, the public sector. This does not, however, prevent the organisation from undertaking work on behalf of the public sector, or from receiving public funding
- *Operating on a non-profit basis* - in this context it means that the organisation does not operate with a view to securing investors or individuals for a financial profit. If a profit is yielded, it is invested in the organisation and, therefore, used in compliance with the objectives of the organisation
- *Self-governing* - i.e. an organisation must be in charge of its own affairs and not controlled by any other organisation, be it public, commercial or voluntary
- *Non-compulsory with regards to membership or affiliation, participation and financial contributions*³.

2. Source: Ministry of Social Affairs/The National Volunteer Centre (2001): "The Voluntary Social Sector in Denmark". Ministry of Social Affairs.

3. Bjarne Ibsen and Ulla Habermann (2005): "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Denmark". The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, Center for Civil Society Studies.

The most comprehensive data on volunteering in Denmark stems from the Danish study that formed part of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. According to the population survey section of this study conducted in 2004, 35% of the Danish population perform voluntary work. Converted to population figure, it corresponds to 1.477 million people between the ages of 16 and 85.

Gender and field of activity

Table 1. Percentage of the Danish population reporting volunteering last year by field of activity, 2004 (men, women, and combined).

Field	Men (%)	Women (%)	Combined (%)
Leisure: culture, sports, recreational, hobby	21	15	18
Social services and health	4	7	5,5
Politics: vocational, political parties and international	6	4	5
Teaching and education	3	4	3,5
Housing and local community	8	4	6
Environment, religion and other	5	5	5
Total (%)	38	32	35

Source: Inger Koch-Nielsen, Lars Skov Henriksen, Torben Fridberg og David Rosdahl (2005): "Frivilligt arbejde. Den frivillige indsats i Danmark". København. Socialforskningsinstituttet, rapport 05:20

Age and field of activity

Table 2. Volunteering (percentage) by age group and field of activity

Age	Leisure (%)	Social (%)	Politics (%)	Teaching (%)	Housing (%)	Other (%)	Total volunteering (%)
16 – 29 years	18	4	4	3	1	5	32
30 – 49 years	23	6	6	6	8	5	41
50 – 65 years	15	7	7	1	8	6	35
66 +	10	6	2	1	5	5	23
Total population (%)	18	6	5	3	6	5	35

Source: Inger Koch-Nielsen, Lars Skov Henriksen, Torben Fridberg og David Rosdahl (2005): "Frivilligt arbejde. Den frivillige indsats i Danmark". København. Socialforskningsinstituttet, rapport 05:20

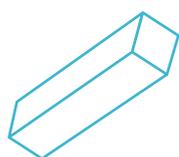
However, a recent population survey has shown an increase in the number of volunteers. According to the 'Annual report' from 2010 the percentage of Danes performing voluntary work has risen to 43 %, equivalent to 1.9 million Danes between the ages of 16 and 85⁴. Although most volunteers still are found within sport and culture, the social field has experienced a considerable increase.

For several decades – with a few exceptions – volunteering has generally been highly acknowledged within Danish society. Today, there is an increasing understanding of the necessity of volunteering and voluntary organisations, as important players in the Danish welfare society. There is also an awareness of volunteering as a means of finding new solutions, especially to problems in social and health areas, and to cope with integration problems and more existential problems, such as loneliness⁵.

Although there is a difference between the image of volunteering when fêted in speeches, and the realities in practice, volunteering is nevertheless acknowledged for its contribution to democratic and social values and its ability to empower and integrate people. In reality, volunteering often has to contend with very different expectations, particularly within the social services field. Volunteering is considered to bring high value, but mainly in terms of its utility to citizens or users, rather than for society or the public in general. Municipalities recognise the positive effect volunteering has on, for example, elderly or underprivileged people, but do not appreciate to the same extent the values and virtues that volunteering brings to society, such as engagement, offering a spokesman's 'voice', and democratic influence.

Volunteering is also regarded as a means of finding new solutions, especially to problems in social and health areas, and to cope with integration problems and more existential problems, such as loneliness.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION



In Denmark, there is a long tradition of forming associations, and freedom of association is of such great importance that there has never been any law that defines or regulates third sector organisations and associations. On the contrary, freedom of association is secured by §78 of Grundloven (the Danish Constitution).

There is no single act governing associations in Denmark, i.e. law that places specific requirements on an association before it can be declared legal or eligible to receive public-sector funding, etc. Concerning self-governing institutions and funds, both organisational forms are covered by the current legislation under the collective name 'fund,' i.e. *Lov om fonde og visse foreninger* (the Danish Act on Foundations and Certain Associations) which

4. "Den frivillige sociale indsats. Årsrapport 2010". Center for Frivilligt socialt Arbejde for The Ministry of Social Affairs, 2011

5. Bjarne Ibsen and Ulla Habermann (2005): "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Denmark". The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, Center for Civil Society Studies.

from 1984 has also applied to self-governing institutions⁶.

However, there are some laws and regulations that do affect the running of third sector organisations in different ways, e.g. there is no requirement for organisations and associations to register in official state records but, if the organisation wants to receive money from the public, the organisation must have a CVR-nummer (a registration number used by all types of businesses) and a NemKonto, which is an account all citizens, companies and associations are obliged to have, and which public authorities use for various financial transactions and pay-outs.

Organisations or associations employing paid staff or volunteers who will be in contact with children under the age of 15, are obliged – although to date only those organisations receiving specific kinds of public funds – to get a ‘Børneattest’ (child certification) for the person concerned. Such a child certification is a specific type of criminal record check which specifies whether a person has ever been convicted for any sexual crimes in relation to children.

Laws, regulations and provisions on participation in volunteering and voluntary organisations

In Denmark there are two laws which aim to support volunteering and voluntary organisations on a local level: Lov om Social Service §18 (Social Services Act) and Folkeoplysningsloven (Danish Act on Popular Education).

The Social Services Act imposes an obligation on local authorities to provide financial support for local voluntary work, and to cooperate with voluntary organisations. The objectives are to improve the interaction between voluntary social work and local authorities, to make voluntary

In order to improve the interaction between voluntary social work and local authorities, to make voluntary work more visible in local communities and to improve the conditions for voluntary social work, authorities annually receive grants of approximately 19 million EUR.

work more visible in local communities and to improve the conditions for voluntary social work. In order to meet these goals, local authorities receive an annual financial compensation from the central government, paid via block grants; in 2009, approximately 19 million EUR.

The Danish Act on Popular Education obliges local authorities to support public education with grants, premises and other support initiatives. The Act provides for two main categories of grant recipient:

1) adult education associations and other groups engaged in teaching and organising study groups or lecture activities; 2) sports and youth associations and clubs. When local authorities are allocating grants, they must earmark at least 5% of their total budget for innovation and development work.

There is no single public body responsible for volunteering in Denmark. Responsibility is split between different ministries according to the area of volunteering referred to: culture, sport, social and health issues, etc. For example, the Danish Act on Popular Education is implemented by the Ministry for Education and The Social Service Act is implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for volunteering within the sport sector.

6. Source: Ibsen, Bjarne and Habermann, Ulla (2005): Defining the Nonprofit sector: Denmark. In Salamon, Lester: Working Papers of The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Civil Society Studies.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING

Unlike countries where the non-profit sector consists mainly of large, professional institutions and organisations with only a fragment of voluntary work (for instance hospitals and universities) volunteering in Denmark is a very essential part of the non-profit sector.

Volunteering is supported by a number of umbrella organisations. Within sports, for example, you find two major organisations: *Dansk Idræts Forbund* (Sports Federation of Denmark) and *Danske Gymnastik og Idrætsforeninger* (Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association) – both with a wide variety of services to their members.



Within the social arena, *Frivilligt Forum* (Volunteer Forum) is a national umbrella organisation that organises and supports voluntary social associations. Other national umbrella organisations typically cover a specific area for youth: *Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd* (The Danish Youth Council) and popular education; *Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd* (Danish Adult Education Association). They offer information and counselling, project development, legal framework, policy work, etc.

In a more local context volunteering is supported by a number of Local Volunteer Centres (VCs). A VC is a local platform for voluntary social work, with the purpose of assisting, inspiring and supporting volunteering in the local community. There are approximately 50 VCs in Denmark, and although they work to fulfil local needs, many have the same activities, structure and funding. Most VCs are independent, autonomous organisations, organised as self-governing institutions or associations with a board, but there are also some VCs that are organised by local municipalities⁷.

In general, VCs are very dependent on public funding and financial support from local and central government – between 25% and 50% of their income comes from local authority grants and the rest from central government grants. The VCs focus on at least one of the following six activities and, more often several activities: 1) Facilitation of voluntary social work, 2) Self-help, 3) Starting up and supervising new projects, 4) Servicing local associations, 5) Networking, 6) Citizen-directed activities.

Local volunteer centres are organised within the national association *Frivilligcentre og Selvhjælp Danmark* (Volunteer Centres and Self-help Denmark) which provides advocacy for its members and seeks to influence the conditions related to volunteering.

Organisations within the voluntary sector generally have a lot of experience in cooperating with each other – on projects as well as in advocacy and special interest representation. They cooperate both with national and international organisations, especially in Nordic and European countries, and often with sister organisations or organisations within the same field.

7. Source: Henriksen, Lars Skov: *Frivilligcentre – knudepunkter i den lokale velfærdsstruktur? Tredje delrapport vedrørende evaluering af puljen til oprettelse af nye og styrkelse af eksisterende frivilligcentre i Danmark*. Aalborg Universitet. 2008.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Public bodies which support volunteering

Center for frivilligt socialt arbejde (The National Knowledge & Development Centre of Volunteering) was established in 1992 to promote and support the development of voluntary social work in Denmark. The centre offers a range of services to support volunteers and voluntary organisations: consultancy, courses, development of organisations and networks, models for co-operation between organisations and public authorities, surveys, documentation and evaluation, projects, information and communication. Additional services are offered to the public authorities and others co-operating with volunteer organisations, and the centre also provides information on issues related to the voluntary sector for the public and the press. The centre is a self-governing institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, and employs approximately 20 people.

Frivilligrådet (The Volunteer Council) was set up by the Ministry of Welfare in 2008 – it replaced the Council for Volunteer Social Action which was established in 2004. The Council gives advice to The Ministry and Parliament on the role that voluntary organisations can play in addressing social problems. The Council also contributes to public debate on the role of volunteering, offering their perspective on the interaction between the public, private and the voluntary sector. The Council has status as a government agency and is funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Many *companies* support voluntary organisations – mostly through sponsorships and financial support. Few are directly involved in volunteering activities, although there is a growing tendency for companies to formulate policies on volunteering, for example “corporate volunteering” or “employee volunteering”, through their general policy on Corporate Social Responsibility.

In October 2010 the Danish government published a national strategy for civil society. The government’s ambitions were to strengthen a more systematic involvement of civil society and voluntary organisations in social work. The strategy focuses on four areas:

- 1) *strengthen innovation and development in social work;*
- 2) *encourage active citizenship and a volunteer culture;*
- 3) *strengthen the work of voluntary organisations;*
- 4) *strengthen the cooperation between municipalities, companies and voluntary organisations.*

Local governments also support local social associations. The cooperation is determined in the above-mentioned Social Service Act, and since its implementation in 1998, the relationship has developed. In 2009, three out of four municipalities had formalised cooperation, e.g. a contract, a working forum, a volunteer council etc. Likewise, local authorities are obliged to cooperate with voluntary organisations within the field of education, as stated in The Danish Act on Popular Education.

The National Knowledge & Development Centre of Volunteering was created to promote and support the development of voluntary social work: consultancy, courses, development of organisations and networks, models for co-operation with public authorities, surveys, documentation and evaluation, information and communication.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

In Denmark both local and national funding are available, although funding is mostly provided through government grants – partly as “basic grants”, and partly as “project grants”. Basic grants are grants assigned to an organisation without being earmarked for a specific activity or project. Instead, they are assigned on the basis of objective criteria such as purpose, turnover and self-collected funds. Basic grants are assigned through the so-called Danish Pools and Lotto Funds, and more than 200 million EUR are distributed in favour of a wide variety of objectives in (civil) society, of which voluntary social work receives about 18 million EUR. Project grants are awarded directly to specific projects and activities.

A third type of grant is a so-called “block grant” which the state distributes to the municipalities in order for them to support volunteering and voluntary social organisations on a local basis⁸. In 2010, the municipalities supported voluntary social work financially with 19 million EUR, but received 19.7 million EUR from the state via these block grants. Although there is a difference between municipalities, they are being criticised for not distributing the full-allocated grant to local volunteering. However, about one-third of the municipalities allocate more money to local volunteering than they receive in block grants.

Voluntary organisations are very dependant on public funding, as shown in table 3.

Table 3. The sources of income of the Danish non-profit sector, by percent of total income

	%
Transfers from local authorities and the State	43.7
Services and production	28.5
Subscriptions, donations, etc.	21.1
Interest, transfers	6.7
Total	100

Source: Ibsen, Bjarne (2006): “Foreningerne og de frivillige organisationer”, in Boje, Fridberg og Ibsen (eds) Den frivillige sektor i Danmark – omfang og betydning. København: Socialforskningsinstituttet, rapport 06:19

8. A block grant is distributed by the state to the local authorities. However, the local authorities are not obliged to spend the grant on the specific cause, but can choose to spend the grant on everything else.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

In 2006 Denmark concluded a three year long research project: *Frivillighedsundersøgelsen* which was the Danish contribution to the Johns Hopkins University-Center for Civil Society Studies Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. The research was divided into three parts: 1) A population survey about formal and informal volunteering and donations to voluntary organisations among 4,200 people aged 16-85; 2) A comprehensive mapping of all local and regional associations, self-governing institutions and foundations in a representative region of Denmark, together with a survey among national voluntary organisations; 3) An estimation of the economic and labour market impact of the voluntary sector, based on figures from the population survey, and on information and data from the Danish National Account database.

This research has given us, for the first time, unique and reliable data on volunteering. In the national strategy for civil society mentioned above, the government recommended that a follow-up study should be completed – in 2012 a new research program will be implemented.

In order to increase young people's knowledge of volunteering the Danish government introduced an initiative which gives students in education the opportunity to participate in a programme of voluntary work and receive an official diploma.

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

There are no ethical codes or quality standards systems applicable to the voluntary sector in Denmark.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

www.frivilligJob.dk is a database for volunteer job opportunities in Denmark⁹. Its two main goals are to: 1) Make it easy for the Danish population to search for and find volunteer job opportunities online; 2) Make it easy for voluntary organisations to recruit online. FrivilligJob.dk is the biggest database for job opportunities in Denmark within the volunteering community, and they announce job opportunities from both local and national organisations, for example, social organisations, sports organisations, children and youth organisations, cultural organisations and organisations working with environmental problems. FrivilligJob.dk also gathers knowledge and develops tools on an ongoing basis. The site is run by *Frivilligcentre og Selvhjælp Danmark* (Volunteer Centres and Self-help Denmark) and has been online since 2005.

The Danish government wants to increase young people's knowledge of volunteering and, in February 2010, they introduced an initiative called *Projekt Frivillig* (volunteer project). *Projekt Frivillig* is a nation-wide initiative which gives students in education the opportunity to participate in a programme of voluntary work. By participating in the programme, the students will receive an official diploma which shows that they have completed voluntary work. It is expected that the initiative will increase young people's knowledge of the voluntary sector and that more young people will participate in volunteering.

9. Source: www.frivilligjob.dk

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

All relevant country specificities have been outlined before.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

No recommendations for the volunteering infrastructure in Denmark at this stage.



Resources

Center for Frivilligt socialt Arbejde for Socialministeriet, 2011. *Den frivillige sociale indsats. Årsrapport 2010*

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