

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 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 an 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. In Denmark there are about 100,000 voluntary organisations including local and national associations, self-governing institutions and foundations. [2]

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.

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

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

[2] Reference (page 11):file:///C:/Users/CFSA/Downloads/0618_Frivillighed_og_nonprofit.pdf

- 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 work. [3]

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.

[4]

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

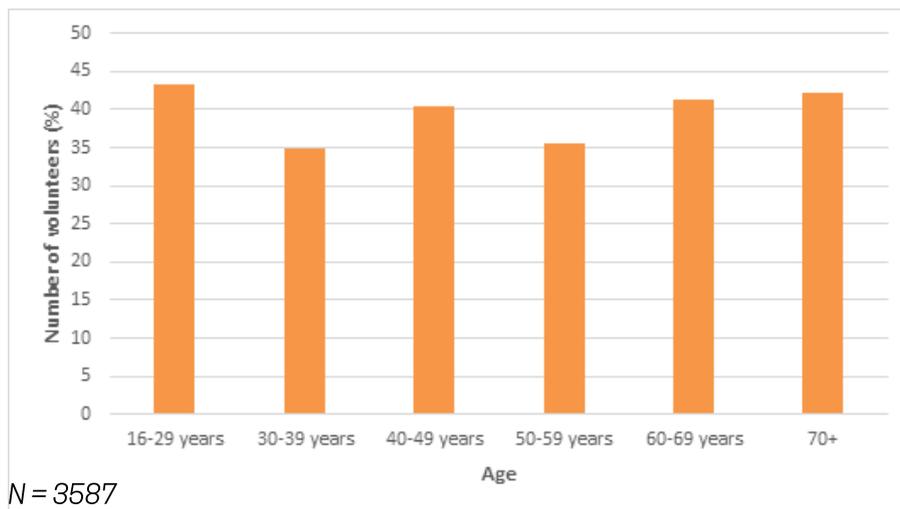
[4] Bjarne Ibsen and Ulla Habermann (2005): "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Denmark". The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, Center for Civil Society Studies.

3. THE DANISH VOLUNTEERS

Since 2010 the Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE, in Danish: “Center for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde”) has conducted reports mapping the voluntary sector in Denmark, focusing on the welfare area. The reports are published every second year and are based on thorough data collections and examinations of the voluntary work among the population, the social and humanitarian associations as well as in municipalities across the country. The reports are to be found at www.frivillighed.dk. Through the 1990’s the volunteer percentage has increased by approximately 10% but has been relatively stable since the mid-2000’s. The recent study conducted by DIVE in 2019, showed that 39% of the Danish population had performed voluntary work within the previous 12 months. Converted to population figure, it corresponds to 2.264 million people between the ages of 16 and 85.

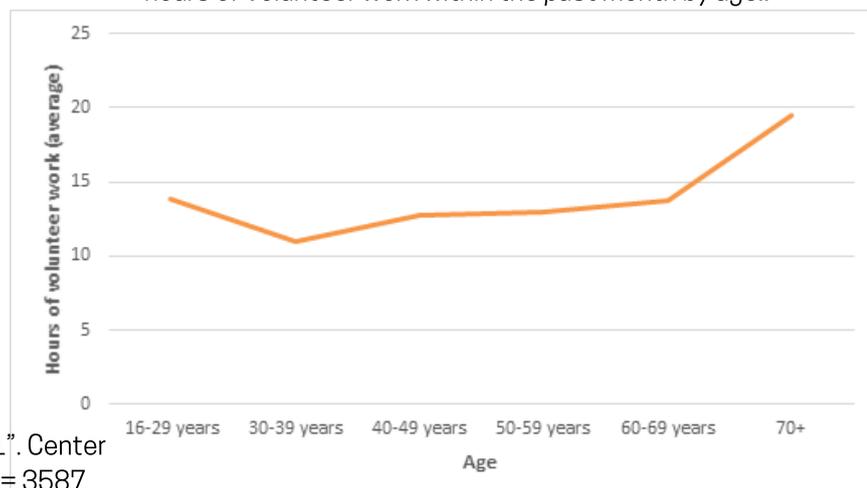
Age and volunteering

Table 1. Percentage of the Danish population reporting volunteering last year by age (2019).



According to this survey, the Danish volunteers spend on average 15 hours per month on their voluntary engagement. In terms of age, it appears that volunteers in the age 16-29 and 60+ are the most active.

Table 2. Number of hours of volunteer work within the past month by age..

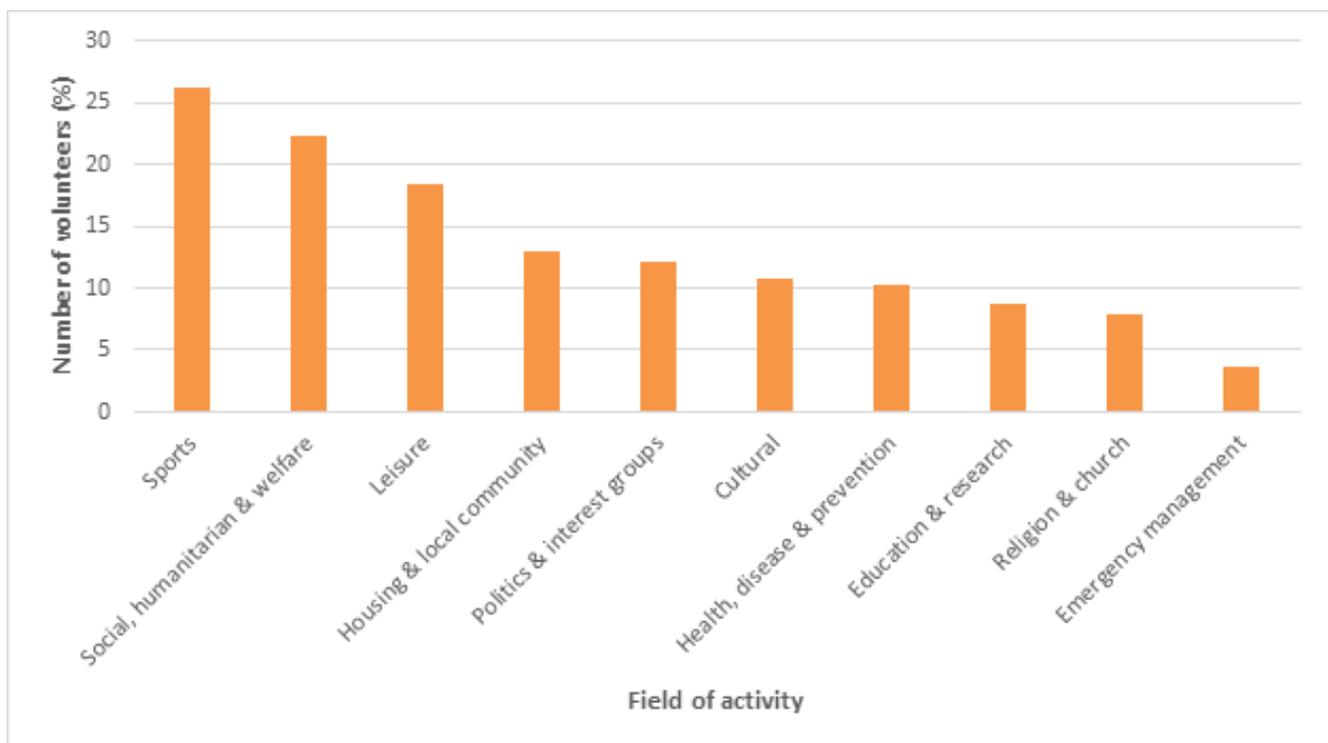


Source: “Frivilligrapporten 2019-2021”. Center for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde 2021. N = 3587

Field of activity

The Danish volunteers are mostly engaged in the sports area which include approximately 26% of the volunteers. Second to this area, is the field of welfare (social and humanitarian work) in which approximately 23% of the volunteers are found.

Table 3. Volunteering (percentage) by field of activity



Source: "Frivilligrapporten 2019-2021". Center for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde 2021. N = 1432

Volunteering in Denmark is being increasingly highly valued, and an ever growing awareness for the potential benefits of volunteering has characterised the past 30 years. For example, as of 2017, Volunteer Centres exist in two out of three municipalities in Denmark, highlighting the expanding institutional support for the volunteer sector. [5]

In particular, governmental policy initiatives have leaned into targeting Volunteers and Volunteer Organisations as strategic partners and supplemental providers of welfare services. [6] However, this attitude of seeing the voluntary sector through the lens of welfare provisions, while within the spirit of volunteerism, runs the risk of narrowing the potential scope of volunteering.

[5] Ane Grubb & Lars Skov Henriksen (2018), "On the Changing Civic Landscape in Denmark and its Consequences for Civic Action", International Society for Third-Sector Research and The Johns Hopkins University. p. 64

[6] Ibid p.63

It is important that the wider value of volunteering in other fields is still recognised, encouraged and respected. Moreover it is important that governments should not treat the voluntary sector as a substitute for welfare services, [7] allowing them to cut the budget of these state-run welfare providers. [8]

A further point to note is that, while volunteering is highly regarded and lauded for enabling civic engagement and strengthening democratic values, attention should be paid to how different forms and organisational structures of volunteering (formal and informal, membership or non-membership based) contribute differently to the civic space.

Not all structures allow/enable civic engagement from volunteers to the same extent, and given the increasing popularity of non-membership based, or hybrid structured, volunteering organisations (from 80% of voluntary activities being done in membership organisations to 70% from 2004 to 2012) [9] this is a topic in need of more research and discussion.

The shift from volunteering for an organisation, to volunteering for a cause, topic, or specific project, can lead to a detachment between volunteers and the organisations they operate within. This runs the risk of limiting the space for civic engagement among volunteers, who in these cases have less of an opportunity to impact the organisation they operate within, limiting the creative, problem solving potential of volunteers who instead are expected to follow the rules set by the organisational hierarchy. [10]

4. 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 that governs associations in Denmark i.e. a law that places specific requirements on an association before it can be declared legal or eligible to receive public-sector funding. Concerning self-governing institutions and foundations, 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 from 1984 has also applied to self-governing institutions. [11]

However, while there are some laws and regulations that do affect the running of third sector organisations in different ways, there is no requirement for organisations and associations to actually register in official state records, thus limiting the scope of regulation in some aspects.

[7] Ibid p.64

[8] Lars Skov Henriksen · Kristin Strømsnes, Lars Svedberg (2019), "Civic Engagement in Scandinavia Volunteering, Informal Help and Giving in Denmark, Norway and Sweden", Nonprofit and Civil Society Studies An International Multidisciplinary Series. p. 74

[9] "On the Changing Civic Landscape in Denmark and its Consequences for Civic Action" p.65

[10] Ibid pp.68-69

[11] 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.

If an organisation has employees, is obliged to pay tax or is receiving money from the public, it 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 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 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.

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 Social Service Act is implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior.

5. 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 we have recently seen the establishment of trade organisations that come together to achieve common goals such as protecting organisation's political, vocational, and professional wishes and needs. Examples includes Selveje Danmark which organizes self-governing, non-profit institutions or Civilsamfundets Brancheforening which organizes social or health related voluntary organisations.

Other national umbrella organisations typically cover a specific area. For example, for youth: Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd (The Danish Youth Council), education; Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd (Danish Adult Education Association) or disabilities e.g. Dansk Handicapforbund. 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 currently (2020) VCs in two thirds of the municipalities 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 municipalities. [12]

The majority of the VC's are members of the national organisation Frivilligcentre og Selvhjælp Danmark (Volunteer Centres and Self-help Denmark) which aims at supporting the VC's as well as representing them in the national social political debate.

In general, VCs are very dependent on public funding and financial support from local and central government.

On average 39% of the VC's income stems from co-funding from the municipality, 32% from a basic financing from the state, and 24% from public funds and grants.[13]

VCs which are not already enlisted for the state basic funding can apply for submission through the National Board of Social Services (Socialstyrelsen).

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.

[12] 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.

[13] Frivilligcentre og Selvhjælp Danmark 2016, Report: "Evaluering af Frivilligcentrene 2016"

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.

6. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Public bodies which support volunteering

Center for frivilligt socialt arbejde, The Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE) is the national, independent centre for development, competences, and knowledge for volunteering in the social welfare sector.

It was established in 1992 to strengthen and develop volunteering, active citizenship, and civil society and to bring together knowledge and experience from practice from stakeholders involved in social volunteering.

The centre provides a range of services to support volunteers and voluntary organisations including consultancy, training and courses, analysis and data, development of organisations and networks, knowledge, models for co-operation and project volunteering. This entity is a self-governing institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior, and employs approximately 20 people.

In 2004, a council for voluntary social efforts (Rådet for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde) was established by the former Minister of Social Affairs to function as a counselling service to the minister and the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) on developments and opportunities within the voluntary sector.

In 2008, this council was replaced by the National Council for Volunteering (Frivilligrådet), which is a government institution financed by the Danish Finance Act.

In addition to the task of acting as counsellor to the Minister and the Danish Parliament, the purpose of the Council is also to contribute to public debate on the voluntary sector's role in the future development of the welfare society, including the sector's cooperation with the public and private sectors.

The current Council was appointed in 2018 for a 4-year period and consists of 12 members. The Minister appoints the chair and one additional member, the association of municipalities and the association of voluntary centres each appoint one member, while the remaining 8 members are chosen through a direct election process.

Private corporations and Government initiatives which support volunteering

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

During the last decades there have been various national strategies for civil society and The Danish government has implemented initiatives to ensure a strong civil society. These include:

- 1) Easier rules for voluntary, unpaid work in unemployment benefits and early retirement pay
- 2) Insurance for volunteers in municipalities and regions
- 3) Volunteering in the municipal task management
- 4) The day care agreement (an initiative on “the open day care”, which means that day care services, as part of the work with the pedagogical curriculum, must consider how the local community in the form of libraries, museums, sports facilities, nursing homes, business and so forth, can be involved in the day care services’ work with a view to stimulate pedagogical learning environments for children)
- 5) New model for allocating distribution funds

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. Today the cooperation has increased even further, and our recent data from 2017 shows that 100 percent of the 98 municipalities in Denmark now have some form of formalised cooperation with volunteer organisations. Likewise, local authorities are obliged to cooperate with voluntary organisations within the field of education, as stated in The Danish Act on Popular Education.

7. 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 “Udlodningsmidler” (Allocation fund), through this fund, a little less than 200 million EUR are distributed yearly in favour of a wide variety of objectives in (civil) society, of which voluntary social work receives about 10%.

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 basis. [14]

[14] 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.

According to the Danish Social Service Law, the municipalities are obliged to cooperate with voluntary organizations on the social and humanitarian area. §18 states that all municipalities make available a pool of funds (known as §18-funds) which can be applied for by the local organizations to cover activities.

In 2014, the municipalities supported voluntary social work financially with 167,3 million DKK but received 158 million DKK from the state via these block grants. This was the third year in a row that the municipalities spent more than they received through the block grant.

Furthermore, 9 out of 10 municipalities was seen supporting voluntary work in the social and humanitarian area in other ways than financial, such as administrative support, advertising and consultancy services.

Voluntary organisations are very dependent on public funding, as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Income in the nonprofit sector (million DKK) 2013

I Mil. DKK	Total 2013
Income transfers from the government	46,328
Sales	43,098
Interest income	2,249
Member subscriptions	26,432
Donations	6,156
Total	124,263

Source: Boje, Thomas P. (2017): "Civilsamfund, medborgerskab og deltagelse". Hans Reitzels Forlag

8. 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.

The survey was repeated in 2012, when a research network (“Forskningsnetværk for civilsamfund og frivillighed” or CiFri) was established within the field of civil society and voluntary work, financed by public funds from the former Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior.

The overall vision of this project was to strengthen and systematize the Danish field of research in this area as well as to strengthen the affiliation and cooperation with international research networks.

A string of research projects were conducted within this period and continued until 2019, looking at both the development of volunteer work in Denmark, the interaction between the actors involved in the field and the economy of the non-profit sector amongst others.

Since 2010 the voluntary social area has been monitored through ‘Frivilligrapporten’ – a report published every second year by the Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort, which investigate the voluntary work performed by the Danes, the voluntary social organisations and the involvement of the municipalities. The report is financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior.

9. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

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

10. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

FrivilligJob.dk [15] is a database for volunteer job opportunities in Denmark. 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.

Furthermore, an overview of local organizations and local volunteer centres can be found on the websites of the majority of municipalities as an attempt to enhance the visibility and accessibility of volunteer work across the country.

In addition to this, local volunteer corps have been established with the intention to strengthen the voluntary effort locally in terms of both culture and social work.

Currently these are to be found in the larger cities with organisations such as ‘Copenhagen Volunteers’ and ‘ReThink Aarhus’.

[15] www.frivilligjob.dk

11.ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

All relevant country specificities have been outlined above.

12.RECOMMENDATIONS

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

RECOURCES

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