



# **Denmark** Fact Sheet on Social Care & Support Services Sector for Persons with Disabilities

Part of a series of Country Fact Sheets available on the EASPD website

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## SUBSECTORS OF SOCIAL CARE & SUPPORT SERVICES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Denmark ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009 and three principles frame the Danish disability policy: the Equal Treatment Principle, the Compensation Principle, and the Sector Responsibility Principle. These aspects guide the development of policies related to services catering to and rights of persons with disabilities whether by the Ministry for Children and Social Affairs, which has the overall responsibility for coordinating policies regarding persons with disabilities, or other ministries overseeing specific sectors.

The Consolidation Act on Social Services is the main legislative tool regulating social services in Denmark.<sup>1</sup> There are other texts related specifically to persons with disabilities and these are mentioned in the subsections below. The Consolidation Act on Social Services sets the main principles and benefits for social care and support. Social care and support services are implemented at the local level by the municipalities that decide the level of services, the content of and the extent of the support, within the framework of the national legislation.<sup>2</sup> Generally in Denmark, social and welfare services are performed by public employees. Local authorities may decide to employ private companies or to collaborate with non-profit organisations for the provision of a specific type of service. If a municipality decides to outsource one specific service, it is still responsible for the correct implementation of the service and for its financing. By law, local authorities have to cooperate with voluntary social organisations, as well as to financially support social work.<sup>3</sup> This results in differences regarding the actors of social services among the municipalities. Central government also provides basic and project grants to support voluntary organisations. Practically all social services managed by the local authorities are financed by public taxation and are free of charge for the users. Municipalities finance care and social support through grants received from the government, local taxes and equalisation amounts received from other local authorities.<sup>4</sup>

Denmark has five regions and 98 local authorities. The relatively decentralised Danish system where municipalities bear the main responsibility for assessment of needs and implementation of social and care services results in important differences from one municipality to the other. Specific criteria or details on the type and level of services to be provided are usually not defined in national law. In general, the level of service one is entitled to depends on where he/she lives in Denmark. Besides, this system creates difficulty to identify trends in the level of services at the national level. Services providers in each municipality are available on the 'social service' portal (in Danish)<sup>5</sup> where citizens have access to the organisations (public or private) providing social services and care in each region. This portal covers social services in general and is not restricted to services providers for persons with disabilities. Section 15 of the Consolidation Act on Social Services states that 'a scheme of independent consultants shall provide free counselling and guidance in cases concerning persons with impaired physical or mental function'. The Independent Disability Consultancy Scheme (DUKH)<sup>6</sup> is in charge of this service and depends on the Ministry on Social Affairs. This service covers all the subsections below.

A survey of the Danish Center for Social Research (Vive)<sup>7</sup> shows that there are significant delays in the provision of social services for persons with disabilities. Some 69% of interviewees with psychosocial disabilities and 58% with physical disabilities responded that service provision was delayed. About one third of people with a psychosocial disability said that the help they needed was so delayed that it was a problem for them and this was true for 26% of persons with physical disability. However, the data is not detailed enough to know which types of services have more delays than others. No specific reason was identified for the delays but this suggests that access to some services might be difficult.

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<sup>1</sup>The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior (2015), Consolidation Act on Social Services, available at: <http://english.sm.dk/media/14900/consolidation-act-on-social-services.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior (n.d.) Disability Policy, available at: <https://english.sim.dk/responsibilities-of-the-ministry/disability-policy/>

<sup>3</sup>The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), Social Policy in Denmark

<sup>4</sup>This redistribution scheme between municipalities ensures that they are able to offer services on more or less the same economic background.

<sup>5</sup>Social Portal, available at : <https://tilbudsportalen.dk/tilbudssoegning/soegBoernOgUngeTilbud/index>

<sup>6</sup>DUKH, available at: <https://www.dukh.dk/>

<sup>7</sup>Vive (2017), Rapport Personer med handicap, HverdagslivogLevevilkår 2016, available at: <https://www.vive.dk/media/pure/6831/1021212>



## Early Childhood Intervention

In Denmark, the guiding principle regarding children with disabilities is to make sure that they can attend the mainstream early child education and care services. The Ministry for Children and Social Affairs is the national authority responsible for early childhood education and care for children from the age of 6 months to 6 years. Statutory schooling starts at age 6. According to section 5 of the Consolidation Act on Social Services, the funding and organisation of the services falls under the responsibility of the municipal authorities. Services can be age-integrated (all ages together) or separated (0-2 years old and 3-5 years old together).<sup>8</sup> Municipalities can organise services in several ways:

- integration of the child in mainstream day-care facilities, possibly with special support staff or special group sessions with children with disabilities;
- admission of the child in childminding facilities, where the number of children is usually reduced;
- establish municipal day-care facilities exclusively for children with disabilities.

Local authorities have the responsibility to ensure that children with disabilities receive the appropriate support to ideally be integrated in the mainstream system of public schools. Sometimes, children with special needs are placed in a separate group, in which staff-child ratios are higher and with access to specialised support staff. There are considerable differences between municipalities regarding the services they offer for childcare and education. The differences in spending allocated to these areas reflect the differences in the quality and the extent of services. For example, the child/staff ratio, classroom size and the level of education of staff in pre-school varies from one municipality to the other, leading to differences in the pedagogical offer.<sup>9</sup>

The Pedagogical Psychosocial Services available in each municipality has the responsibility to assess and decide the type of care that can be offered to the child. Support is granted after an assessment of the specific needs of the child and the family. Services and options vary from one municipality to the other.

In some cases, the local authority can also provide financial assistance to parents and caregivers: it can cover the extra cost related to care for a child with disability in the home or it can grant assistance to cover lost wages of parents caring for a child with severe physical or cognitive disability.<sup>10</sup>

## Education Support

In Denmark, education is mandatory from the age of 6 to the age of 16. Social services related to education, as is the case for early intervention, are based on the principle of inclusion in mainstream education insofar that this is possible. In 2012, the central government implemented a number of measures to achieve greater inclusion. One of the goals was to raise the share of children with disabilities included in mainstream schools. With the objective of creating greater inclusion, the financial responsibility for special needs education was transferred to the school level, while it was previously financed through common pools in the municipality budget. Schools are now required to transfer funds if they decide to exclude a child with special needs.<sup>11</sup> In recent years emphasis was put on creating an inclusive learning environment in mainstream schools.

There are three main settings for children with disabilities:

- In most cases, the pupil remains in a mainstream school class and receives additional support,<sup>12</sup> usually provided by the head teacher and the school, in one or several subjects as a supplement to the general teaching.

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<sup>8</sup>Schreyer, I. and P. Oberhuemer. 2017. "Denmark – Key Contextual Data". In *Workforce Profiles in Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Available at: [www.seeepro.eu/English/Country\\_Reports.htm](http://www.seeepro.eu/English/Country_Reports.htm)

<sup>9</sup>Jensen, P. (2018). Is the Danish welfare state really universal ?. *Revue française des affaires sociales*, , 211-221. doi:10.3917/rfas.184.0211.

<sup>10</sup>Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), *Social Policy in Denmark*.

<sup>11</sup>OECD (2016) *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Denmark 2016*, available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264262430-5-en.pdf?expires=1574949463&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=77434E36C68A6EF40A200D32E9521ECA>

<sup>12</sup>Additional support can take several forms and depends greatly on the services offered in a specific municipality. Generally, additional support covers: special teaching material or technical aids, personal assistance, separate teaching, special organised activities and psychosocial support.



- The pupil receives special education that replaces mainstream education in one or more subjects. This means that a pupil can attend both mainstream and special classes and schools. Special education means that the pupil needs more than 9 hours (12 lessons) of additional support per week.
- The pupil attends a special school. There are few special schools for children with disabilities and they are run at the regional or at the municipal level and usually cover more than one municipality.<sup>13</sup>

The mainstream school (from age 6 to 16) should provide for all groups children with disabilities including 2.1% of them in special schools and special classes.<sup>14</sup>

The needs for special education are assessed by the Pedagogical Psychosocial Services (PPR) that provide interdisciplinary support for children from 0 to 18 years. PPR is available in all municipalities. The head teacher has the responsibility and right to offer individualised and differentiated support to pupils. Schools also have the obligation to follow up and reassess the arrangements made with the family and the PPR at least once a year.

The Act on Secondary Education for Young People with Special Needs was decided in 2007. This Act provides young persons with disabilities who have not concluded secondary education with the right to a three-year youth education. This scheme called STU is available for people between the ages of 16 and 25 and consists of three years of training in an area that corresponds to the person's interests and possible opportunities for employment. This training can take place in a school (public school, business school, or post-secondary school, depending on what is available in the municipality and in the area of interest or the student) or in the form of professional experiences. The Ministry for Education is the overall coordinator but the municipalities are responsible for the implementation and the costs of the education and special assistance if needed. For the student, the scheme is entirely free and the municipality may decide to provide additional monetary support such as a transport allowance if deemed necessary. This education programme is only available for young persons who are not able to complete any other youth education, even with socio-educational support. Every year, between 1,800 and 2,100 young adults start an STU education programme.<sup>15</sup>

## Employment Support

The Act on Active Employment Measures is related to subsidies for aid, workstation design and layout. The Danish Act on Prohibition against differential treatment on the labour market does not provide any service or subsidy but it protects persons with disabilities against discrimination.

The Act on Compensation for Disabled Persons in Employment consists in three schemes:<sup>16</sup>

- Personal assistance for persons with disabilities in employment: assistance with work-related tasks that a person with disabilities cannot carry out. Assistance can also be provided for training outside working hours in connection with the same job. Personal assistance is not necessarily provided by a municipal employee, even though it is funded by the municipal authority. It can be provided by the helpers the individual employs or the company where that person works. Necessary work place installations and working tools are subsidised by the municipality.
- Wage subsidies on employment of newly educated people: a person who recently completed an educational programme of at least 18 months can be entitled to an unemployment insurance fund and support with respect to employment by a public or private employer. This scheme is valid up to two years after the completion of the educational programme.

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<sup>13</sup>European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (n.d.) Country Information for Denmark – Systems of support and specialist provision. Available at : <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/denmark/systems-of-support-and-specialist-provision>

<sup>14</sup>Niels Egelund et al. (2006) Inclusive Education – Country Report Denmark. Available at: <https://www.european-agency.org/projects/assessment-inclusive-settings/phase-2-case-study-site-denmark>

<sup>15</sup>Ministry for Childhood and Education, STU, available at: <https://www.uvm.dk/statistik/oevrige-ungdomsuddannelser-og-forberedende-forloeb/statistik-om-ungdomsuddannelse-for-unge-med-saerlige-behov>

<sup>16</sup>Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (2018), Measures for placing disabled persons employment. Available at: <https://star.dk/en/active-labour-market-policy-measures/measures-for-placing-disabled-persons-in-employment/>



- Preferential access: public employers have the obligation to give preferential access to a vacant position to a person with disabilities who has difficulty in finding employment. This only applies if the person has the required qualifications for the position.

The Unit for Job and Handicap of the national Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment supports 94 jobcentres administered by the municipality in their initiatives to increase access to employment for persons with a reduced working capacity. The unit proposes seminars, online tools and networking activities.

In Denmark, persons with disabilities can access two related schemes: the flexi-job and the disability pension. Both are administered by the local jobcentres (administered by the municipality). Flexi jobs have been introduced in 1998, and reformed in 2012 in order to increase employment by restricting access to the disability pension and focusing on assistance for education through municipal rehabilitation teams. According the Danish Centre for Social Science Research (Vive), the number of disability pension beneficiaries decreased while the number of persons with disabilities having a flexi-job increased whether or not related to the reform.

The flexi-jobs scheme targets persons under the age of 65 with a permanently reduced capacity to work. The tasks and number of working hours are tailored to the remaining work capacity of the beneficiary. The local job centres are responsible for the assessment of the individual and decide whether they can access the scheme. It is often up to the beneficiary to find an employer, which can constitute a difficulty because of the competitive labour market.<sup>17</sup> Employers receive between half and two third of the contractual pay in the form of subsidies. The level of the subsidy depends on the capacity of the worker and is regularly assessed. A survey from Vive finds that flexi job is the typical form of employment for persons with disabilities and that this form of employment has increased over the past few years.<sup>18</sup>

The municipal rehabilitation teams introduced by the 2012 reform are available at every municipality. They are composed of representatives from the following sectors: employment, health, social affairs, and education. The role of the teams is to assign people to a scheme that meets their own needs (rehabilitation programme, flexi-job, disability pension). Rehabilitation teams target people who are very far from the job market and are unable to maintain or gain employment as a result of a disability or a serious illness. The rehabilitation team decides on a tailored rehabilitation programme that can last from 1 to 5 years. Programmes can take various forms depending on the needs and be more focused on medical rehabilitation or work activities. If the rehabilitation programme consists of an internship, the local job centre will then help the individual to find that internship.

Sheltered employment is organised at the local level and relate to production-oriented tasks such as assembling or packaging. Sheltered employment is only possible for those persons not eligible for a flexi job or a wage subsidy. The only condition is to be able to sustain a working day in the workplace. Sheltered workshops or protected employment is provided by the municipalities and social economic companies that are publicly funded. Access to the latter depends on where one is located in the country. Previously, these social economic companies were funded by 'Satspuljen', an adjustment pool aiming to improve the socio-economic and living conditions of vulnerable populations. This pool was terminated in 2019 but similar funding remains in a different form.<sup>19</sup> The Parliament is responsible for deciding to allocate the subsidies and Ministries and Government Agencies can conduct procurement in order to allocate the subsidies. This funding scheme is centrally regulated.

## Day Care

Sections 103 and 104 of the Consolidation Act on Social Service provide for day-care activities and sheltered employment for persons with disabilities. Municipalities are responsible for the offer of day-care services to persons with disabilities. For example, the municipality of Copenhagen has several day-care services for adults from 18 to 67 years old with a severe and permanent mental or physical disability. Activities in these day-care centres are adapted to the abilities and needs of the

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<sup>17</sup>Interview feedback

<sup>18</sup>Ibid

<sup>19</sup>Modernization Agency of Denmark (2019) available at: <https://modst.dk/oekonomi/finanslov-og-udgiftsopfoelgning/satspuljen/>



persons attending. There are two different types of day-care services available: activities and social activities, and sheltered employment. Sheltered employment is described in the section on Employment.

Looking at the services offer on the services portal,<sup>20</sup> there are 738 centres providing activities as per section 104 of the Consolidation Act on Social Services. However, there is no specific distinction between persons with disabilities and persons with special social problems. These centres are available in all the municipalities.

## Living Support

In Denmark, the emphasis is put on the idea that the type of housing does not define the level of support one is entitled to. Services and facilities are put in place to foster independent living for persons with disabilities.

The Consolidation Act on Social Services foresees several cases in which living support can be provided. The citizen-controlled personal assistance (BPA) scheme was introduced in 2009 and replaces the previous helper scheme. A person is entitled to BPA if he/she needs 20 hours of support per week or more. Basically, the scheme makes the person with disability the employer of his helpers. Helpers can be close relatives or private service providers. It is also possible for that person to enter agreements with a close relative, an association or a private company so that they take on the responsibility of being the employer of the helpers. Since 2017, private companies and associations that take on the employer function must be approved and are subjected to supervision. The scheme depends from the municipality and there have been efforts to harmonise rules, especially regarding the pay and working conditions of helpers because early implementation showed big differences from one municipality to another, resulting in difficulties to recruit and retain the necessary helpers in some regions.<sup>21</sup> Some 1,600 citizens received BPA according to a 2017 publication of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior.<sup>22</sup> The Municipalities Federation (KL) publishes statistics on living services that show that ultimately, the possibilities for living support depend on where you live.<sup>23</sup> Needs for assistance are assessed at the municipality level and municipalities may choose to provide different levels of services, within the frame of the law.

The attendant scheme can provide up to 15 hours of support per week. The Attendant scheme is for people under 65 years old and mainly relates to support in attending activities outside the home. In the BPA system, the person can hire the helper she/he wants and that can also be close relatives while in the attendant scheme, this is rarely accepted.<sup>24</sup> Educational support can also be granted. This can be a person who comes regularly to the home or day-care. Both the BPA and the attendant schemes are relatively similar in the sense that they take the form of subsidies meant to pay for the needed help.

Living support for persons with disabilities also take other forms and there are a couple schemes related to the purchase of a specially adapted car to promote mobility or access to necessary technology. For example, support can be granted to finance the necessary adaptations in the home, or for aids and consumer durables.

Services are provided at the local level by both local authorities and private providers that supply social services. In 2003, local authorities allowed private providers of domestic services to enter the market. In Denmark, the 'free choice' principle means that all recipients of domestic care can chose between several service providers. The offer of service providers is the responsibility of the municipality and it must make sure that there are several providers to choose from. They can be public, private or voluntary organisation providers. They are required to meet quality standards and sometimes price requirements established by municipalities.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Social Portal, available at : <https://tilbudsportalen.dk/tilbudssogning/soegBoernOgUngeTilbud/index>

<sup>21</sup>Steen Bengtsson (2019), Living independently and being included in the community, Country report on Denmark, ANED 2018-19. Available at: <https://www.disability-europe.net/country/denmark>

<sup>23</sup>Steen Bengtsson (2018), Country report on disability assessment – Denmark ANED 2017-18. Available at: <https://www.disability-europe.net/country/denmark>

<sup>24</sup>Steen Bengtsson (2019)

<sup>25</sup>OECD (2011), Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care, Paris. Denmark chapter available at: <http://www.oecd.org/denmark/47877588.pdf>



## Long-term Institutional Care and Respite Care

Since the Social Services reform of 1998, the formal concept of institution was abolished in Denmark and housing and social benefits were separated. The majority of persons with disabilities live independently in the community, supported by individual budgets. There are still institution-like conditions in different ways, even though there is no longer a single package consisting of housing and other services, and the legal situation of the person living in institution-like setting is not affected. A number of residential housing facilities have their own workshops where citizens are offered jobs.<sup>26</sup> There are specialised institutions for persons with a specific handicap if that disability does not allow them to live independently. Responsibility for these facilities is divided between the health regions and the municipalities but there is no uniform system and the specific management agreements between municipalities and regions can differ across the country. The facilities are financed by the municipalities through public taxation and there is no user cost. Most residential facilities are public but there might be some private facilities in some regions. However, the public sector provides for this service free of charge for the user so private facilities are rare.<sup>27</sup>

Depending on the municipality and region where the housing facility is located, there might be assigned staff for all the residents or residents can apply one the helpers scheme and provide for their own helpers within the housing facility. Individuals have rights to the same benefits independently from where they live. In order to foster independent living, staff in residential housing facilities must respect the individual apartments as if they were private apartments. In housing facilities adapted to the needs for persons with disabilities, residents are considered as tenants. However, this is different for social housing facilities created under the Consolidation Act for Social Services. The municipality may also offer temporary stays in residential accommodation for respite care, physical rehabilitation or for preparation to independent living. The municipality is responsible for providing the necessary long-term residential facilities for persons needing extensive help, such as care or treatment and with needs that cannot be covered outside of a permanent residency scheme.

There might be waiting lists for residential housing in some municipalities.<sup>28</sup> The municipality assesses whether the need of the person can wait and if there is no housing facility available in the short-term, the municipality has the obligation to provide for the needed support directly in the home of the individual.<sup>29</sup>

In 2018, there were 24,700 persons with disabilities in residential housing, of which 17,900 due to intellectual disability, 7,100 of them due to mental health problems and 2,800 due to serious social problems, according to the ministry's "Socialpolitikredegørelse 2018".<sup>30</sup>

The local authorities are also responsible for the provision of respite services to close relatives of persons with disabilities. This can take several forms: being employed by the local authority in which your close relative lives to provide care to that person, special care leave provisions, or possible wage subsidies.

## Leisure and Social-Life Support

Section 104 of the Consolidation Act for Social services states that "the municipal council shall provide social and other activities for persons with substantial impairment of physical or mental function or special social problems for the purpose of preserving or improving their personal skills or living conditions." Social activities are considered as day-care and are provided by the municipality and all local councils operate social activities. The law only provides for the obligation to operate some leisure and social activities but does not define their nature.

Most municipalities support voluntary organisations and private actors organising activities for persons with disabilities. For example, the city of Copenhagen provides grants to support social and leisure activities organised by non-public actors.

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<sup>26</sup>Steen Bengtsson (2019)

<sup>27</sup>Interview feedback

<sup>28</sup>Interview feedback

<sup>29</sup>Ibid

<sup>30</sup>Steen Bengtsson (2019)



Most of the actors providing leisure and social life support will be not for profit, NGO type organisations. For example, sports organisations receive grants from the municipality if they provide activities that include persons with disabilities. The Danish Parasport Organisation (Parasport Denmark) counts 470 clubs all over the country and totals 12,300 members. Clubs offer different activities depending on the infrastructure available and cover all types of disabilities. Danish Deaf-Sport is a separate organisation member of Parasport Denmark and offers activities for deaf persons. There are also many patient organisations in Denmark that provide activities for persons with a specific disability.

The attendance scheme mentioned in the section on Living Support was also intended as a means for persons with disabilities to be able to attend activities outside their home.

## FUTURE TRENDS

The government of Denmark is considering conducting a reform in service provision for persons with a mental or psychiatric disability. These services receive significantly less financial support and the objective would be to put a stronger emphasis on these and to provide adequate financing.<sup>31</sup>

## CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

- Anna Amilon, senior researcher, Vive: Danish Center for Social Research
- Thomas Maribo, Head of department; Public Health and Rehabilitation Research, DEFACTUM, Central Denmark Region
- Lina Farci, Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment
- Written feedback received from Danske Hancicaporganisationer (Freddy Nielsen and Linda Kilskou Bendix)

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<sup>31</sup>Interview





## DATA SOURCES

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