

Culture Guide

# HELLO DENMARK



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“Hello Denmark” was published by the association for general education Folkevirke. The wish is, for newcomers quickly to feel welcome in Denmark and through advice and guidance be able to navigate better in the Danish society.

Legislation is one thing, but the unwritten laws and the culture borne guidelines is quite another. That can be difficult to read for new Danes, who did not grow up in Denmark.

With the pamphlet “Hello Denmark” we are pointing out some of the areas that can be difficult to be familiarized with, and that differ from countries with cultures very different from the Danish.

Quite simply you can say that of course there are many good ways to meet the Danes. But one of the most important conditions to fit in well in Denmark is to make sure to create good networks. For instance, it is a good idea to participate in coffee breaks at work and to take part in the voluntary communities such as associations and clubs.

This pamphlet is available in Danish as well as in English and Turkish.

**ENJOY THE READING!**

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from the Agency of Culture*





■ <b>IN SHORT ABOUT DENMARK</b> .....	6	Caring for the elderly .....	19
Confidence and democracy.....	6	Support for the elderly.....	20
■ <b>THE DANISH DEMOCRACY</b> .....	8	Death.....	20
The constitution .....	8	Divorce .....	20
Freedom of speech.....	8	Crisis shelters.....	21
Freedom of religion .....	9	Libraries.....	22
The age of majority .....	9	Mutual trust.....	22
Equality of status .....	9	■ <b>ON JOB IN DENMARK</b> .....	24
The age of criminal responsibility .....	10	The workplace .....	24
Treatment of children .....	10	The labour market .....	25
Rights .....	10	Unemployed .....	26
The Inheritance Act.....	10	■ <b>AUTHORITIES</b> .....	28
Economy.....	11	The police .....	28
■ <b>FORMAL REQUIREMENTS</b> .....	12	The courts of justice.....	28
Digital Mail.....	12	Sentences .....	29
The CPR-number .....	12	■ <b>THE INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE DANES</b> .....	30
The National Health Service medical card .....	13	Learn Danish .....	31
MitID .....	13	Mutual respect for others.....	31
■ <b>EXPECTATIONS TO THE COMMUNITY</b> .....	14	■ <b>A TYPICAL DANISH FAMILY LIFE</b> .....	32
Health services: Doctor .....	15	Interaction between generations.....	32
Health services: Psychologist.....	15	Danish parties .....	33
Health services: Dentist .....	15	Party at the workplace .....	33
Health services: Hospitals .....	16	■ <b>THIS IS HOW THE DANES SPEND THEIR LEISURE TIME</b> .....	34
Health services: Maternity/paternity leave .....	16	Parents/children co-operation in day nurseries, kindergartens and schools.....	34
Health services: Abortion .....	17	Associations .....	34
Caring for young children .....	17	Links for supplementary reading.....	36
Kindergartens.....	17	Keyword index .....	38
Schools .....	18		
Schooling: Public primary schools .....	18		
Schooling: Independent schools and private primary schools .....	19		
Schooling: School/leisure-time arrangements .....	19		



## IN SHORT ABOUT DENMARK

To better understand how the Danish society functions in practice, it can be useful with a short introduction about Denmark. The following are some main features of the Danish society – geographically and legally.

Denmark is a small country with about 6 million inhabitants. The country consists of many islands and a peninsula. Denmark borders on Germany and Sweden. The size of the country is about 43.000 square kilometres, and it has a coastline of 8.593 kilometres.

Denmark offers forests and beaches. Here you are welcome to visit and to bathe. If it is private area, you are allowed to go for a walk, if you follow the rules set up by the entrance to the forest or the beach. These will often be that you have to walk on the paths; you are not allowed to put up a tent or to make a picnic. You may only collect branches and small pieces of wood, if you have a permission to do so.

And adults may only fish, if they have purchased a fishing licence. This goes for lakes as well as for the sea.



### Confidence and democracy

In Denmark the social confidence is big. It is taught to the children at a very early stage and stays stable all through life. In Denmark, a big part of the population trusts the government, the judicial system, the police and the administration. Together with the other Scandinavian countries, Denmark has the highest social confidence in the world.

The confidence is shown in many ways – f.inst. is it quite common to leave your pram with the sleeping baby outside, while you are in a café or visiting friends. There is a completely basic trust that the baby can sleep safely alone without surveillance.

The prevalent confidence is especially founded on the unspoken expectation that your fellow citizens live up to your trust and do not offend the agreed morals code and cultural ground rules.

Denmark is a democratic state. According to a Danish philosopher, democracy is the most peaceful way to disagree. Denmark officially became a democratic state on June 5 1849. The day is marked every year with flags from all public buildings and buses as well as with speeches from Danish politicians.

In Denmark, the power is divided into three:

- The legislative power, which is the Parliament.
- The executive power, which is the government.
- The judicial power, which are the law courts.

### “Why do the Danes let their young children sleep outside?”

Denmark is a safe country, where the Danes let their young children sleep outside in their pram. Danish parents often leave the pram outside a shop, if they need to go shopping, or outside a café if they are having a cup of coffee with their friends. The parents believe that fresh air is healthy.



An example of how the division of power works is that if you get arrested, the police will always inform you, what time it is. That is, because the prisoner must be brought before a judge within 24 hours. The judge – the judicial power – must evaluate if the arrest, made by the police, is in order according to the laws.

### “Why are there so many windows without curtains?”

The Danes very seldom draw their curtains – and often they have no curtains at all. The explanation is that Danes are very fond of the light. Denmark is located so far up north that a good part of the year – all through winter – it is very dark.





## THE DANISH DEMOCRACY

The Danish democracy is based on a number of laws – primarily the Constitution that indicates a number of ground rules for the democratic state. In the following, some of the most essential will be presented. Knowing them will make it a lot easier to navigate in the Danish society and understand the Danes’ approach to everyday life.

### The constitution

On the 5th of June 1849 the Danish Constitution was passed. King Frederik 7 renounced the power, and the form of government became a limited monarchy.

The Danish constitution, in relation to many other countries’, is rather short. It consists of 11 chapters and 89 paragraphs. The entire constitution can be contained on less than 40 pages.

It is very difficult to change the Constitution. It requires, amongst others, that the

parliament vote for the changes over several rounds.

The Parliament is elected by Danish citizens, residing in Denmark, Greenland and the Faeroe Islands. All Danes, from the age of 18, and with permanent residence in Denmark, have the right to vote.

For municipal elections, held every four years, also everybody with a permanent residence permit in Denmark may vote.

### Freedom of speech

In Denmark you have a constitutionally secured freedom of expression. That means that you may express your opinion. You may f.inst. write reader’s letters to the newspaper, where you express your opinions. But it is important to pay attention that what you say and write must be within the framework of the laws; it is f.ex. prohibited to offend the honour of others and to utter racist and sexist remarks.

In Denmark you also have freedom of assembly. This right means that you are allowed to gather for meetings and demonstrations. But it does require a permission from the police to stage a public demonstration – demonstrations may require that the police must block streets and give notice of changes in traffic.

### Freedom of religion

In the Danish constitution, it says that “The Evangelic-Lutheran church is the Danish national church and as such supported by the State”. Therefore all Christian holidays are days off in Denmark. About 70% of the Danish population is member of the Danish national church. Most people consider religion to be a private matter, and therefore there are not extensive sociable functions connected to the church services.



But several churches do offer a weekly common meal as well as common meetings in the churches. Several churches also offer concerts on a regular basis. In Denmark there are several recognized religious communities, and some of these communities have their own burial grounds. Although you have freedom of religion in Denmark, you do not have equality of religion.

### The age of majority

In Denmark the age of majority is 18 years. Until you turn 18, you are considered to be “minor” and therefore only can make limited arrangements.

The person with the custody of a “minor” is automatically the guardian. Until the “minor” turns 18, the parents can – in a number of cases – control various matters, amongst these the economy.

### Equality of status

In Denmark, a law of equality of status has been passed, and in the government, a minister for equality of status has been appointed.

Equality of status between the genders means that women and men have equal duties, rights and opportunities within all important areas of life. There is equality of status between citizens of various sexual orientation, religion and birth. Equality of status also means that all citizens in Denmark are equal with reference to salary, education and political influence. In Denmark it is f.inst. prohibited in job advertisements to search for an employee of a certain gender. A pregnant woman cannot be dismissed on the grounds of expecting a baby. Furthermore, during a job interview, an employer is not allowed to ask a woman, if she is pregnant or is planning to have children.

Finally it must be mentioned that equality of status also is valid when greeting somebody else. A normal greeting, when you meet other people, is to shake hands. You put your right hand forward and shake each others hands. This goes for meeting with authorities as well as acquaintances.

Only with close friends and family the Danes hug and maybe also exchange a kiss on the cheek.

### The age of criminal responsibility

The age of criminal responsibility is different from the age of majority. The age of criminal responsibility in Denmark is 15 years. That means that children under 15 years cannot be sentenced to prison for a crime, regardless of how serious it might be. But a child under the age of criminal responsibility and its parents can be held liable to pay damages for its criminal acts.



### Treatment of children

Sexual intercourse with young persons less than 15 years old is prohibited. Violence and assault against children is prohibited. You are not allowed to beat your own nor other people's children. In the criminal law it says that "it is prohibited to beat another human being". Prohibition against violence and assault is valid for mental as well as physical violence.

### Rights

In Denmark there is a number of constitutionally secured rights that mean a lot to the Danes. In the Constitution it says,

amongst others, that in Denmark you have freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and that your home is inviolable.

That "your home is inviolable" means in basis that nobody may enter your home without permission from the court of justice. But the police, if it is absolutely necessary and in very special circumstances, can enter your home.

All citizens in Denmark must be treated equally, and you cannot be put in prison on the grounds of your religion, sexual orientation, political opinions or the origins of your family.

Even though you have an extensive freedom in Denmark within a long series of areas, there are also limitations. Here it is important to remember that citizens in Denmark may not carry guns or big knives without a special permit.

### The Inheritance Act

It is always important to have your final will written down – to have a will drawn. It can either be a sheet of paper, where you write down your wishes for administration of an estate and wishes for who should inherit. The sheet of paper must then be signed and placed among your personal documents. You can also choose to have your will registered with a notary. The notary office belongs under the court of law.

If there is no will drawn, the inheritance will be distributed via the probate court. As a point of departure, the spouse will inherit one third, while the children will inherit two thirds.

By death of the last parent the children will inherit equally, unless the will states

otherwise. But any child must have an entitled inheritance and hence cannot be made totally disinherited. If one or more of the children have died, their children will inherit on equal terms with the deceased's children. If there are no children, the parents will inherit. If there are no heirs, the inheritance will fall to the state.

### Economy

As a rule, husband and wife in a marriage have shared economy. That means that any debt is common, unless both parties have signed that the debt is personal. This applies f.inst. to study debt.



### "Why do the Danes light so many candles?"

If the Danes need light to see indoors, they switch on the electric light. But if you need light to create a cosy atmosphere, then you light some candles. Especially during the winter months, when there are so many dark hours, you often light candles – in the morning when you have breakfast, and during the entire evening. The Danes light particularly many candles in December – the Danish Christmas month.



## FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

When you are in contact with the authorities in Denmark, it often takes place digitally – typically via websites or via public web portals such as f.inst. e-boks.dk, borger.dk and skat.dk.

For many years, Denmark has been one of the leading countries in the world in the field of digitising. The Danish politicians have chosen this strategy to secure good public service. Some processes with the authorities are often faster, when the communication is digital. Besides, digital communication is very safe. Sensitive personal information is always encrypted, when you communicate via the approved channels.

The digital communication can be made from your own pc at home, or you can borrow a pc in a library, where the staff can also assist you with the process, if you need it. This service is free of charge.

### Digital Mail

Since 2014 it has been mandatory to receive letters from the authorities in the

form of digital mail in e-boks.dk. This can f.inst. be information about payment of public pensions, information from the taxation authorities, letters from the municipality or summons for examinations at the hospital. In special cases, though, you may be exempted from being connected to digital mail. You must apply for exemption at Borgerservice (=citizen service). If your application is approved, you will instead receive physical letters.

### The CPR-number

When you arrive in Denmark and have the right to stay here for more than three months, you need a civil registration number from Folkeregistret (=national registration office). CPR stands for "Central Person Register". To obtain a CPR-number, you must either present yourself at the Borgerservice in your local municipality or at an International Citizen Service (ICS). Before going to Borgerservice, you must have booked an appointment via the website. When you go to Borgerser-

vice, you must bring your residence permit, your passport and documentation for the address, you are residing in.

Regarding CPR-numbers for children, there are various rules.

A new-born child must be registered no later than 14 weekdays after the birth. If the birth takes place in a hospital, the midwife will take care of registration and CPR-number. By home birth, the parents themselves must report the birth. The report must be sent to the parish, where the mother has her permanent address. An exception is that if the birth takes place in Sønderjylland, the birth must be reported to the municipality.

If the child is born abroad, it will not receive a CPR-number, until it has moved to Denmark and fulfills the requirements of being registered in CPR as an entry. If the child is baptized by the National Church, however, the parish will give it a so-called administrative civil registration number, which is a real CPR-number.

### The National Health Service medical card

In Denmark, most consultations with doctors and treatments in special clinics and hospitals are free of charge, when you have a medical card. You may have your medical card mailed to your address, when you have registered as a patient with a local doctor or a health centre. From 2024 you have to pay to have a physical medical card, but it is free to have a digital card that you must keep in your mobile phone. In Denmark, it is very common that several doctors have established a common health center, so that the patients may choose between different doctors and have alternative possibilities, if your own doctor should be ill.

Children must also have their own medical card. The card will automatically be mailed by surface mail, when your child has been named/baptized. That will usually take three weeks after the child's name giving/baptism. Please note that the medical card will only be delivered, if the child's family name is listed on the letter box.

When a child between the age of 15 and 18 years needs a new medical card, the child itself must order it via digital self service with its own MitID.

### MitID

MitID is a personal digital ID that you use in Denmark for login and digital signature. With MitID you can prove, who you are, on the internet – f.inst. when you select your doctor, transfer money in your net bank or check mail from the authorities in e-boks. You need to use MitID to get access to these pages. You may only use your own MitID, and you are not allowed to share it with others.

To obtain a MitID you can either do it from a computer by following the instructions on [www.mitid.dk](http://www.mitid.dk), or you can make an appointment with Borgerservice in your municipality. You have to be able to prove, who you are. MitID sets high requirements for being able to document your identity, amongst others to prevent theft of identity. So at Borgerservice you need to bring your residence permit, passport and a document with your CPR-number (f.inst. your medical card). You also need to bring a person to be a "witness" and to confirm, who you are.

Children can get MitID from the age of 13 years.



## EXPECTATIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

In many international studies, Denmark stands as one of the countries, where the citizens are most happy, and where the confidence in the authorities is very high. Many studies also show that Denmark is a country with very little corruption, and where you have great transparency in the decisions made by authorities and public offices.

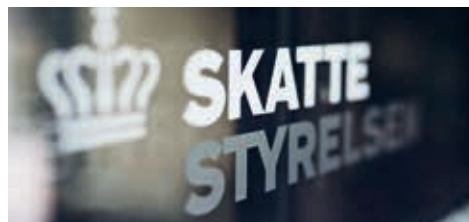
Happiness, confidence and practically no corruption are based on a number of premises that most Danes take for granted.

In general, the Danes expect you to observe all the rules of the country, and that you follow the guidelines that are the basis of the configuration of the laws.

After the end of World War II, the Danes more purposively began to adapt the Danish society according to the wish of establishing a Welfare State, where all citizens are given the same opportunities. That implies, amongst others, that those,

who cannot provide for themselves, will get help, and that the State will secure that the old and the sick will be cared for. To make the State capable of managing these tasks, it is necessary that all adults, who are working and earning money, also pay taxes of their income.

You have to pay tax on everything, you earn. If the State discovers that a citizen has earned money without reporting it to the taxation authorities, he/she will have to pay tax on the amount, he/she has earned. Furthermore, he/she will have to pay a heavy fine. In very serious cases, he/she may even be sentenced to prison.



It is with the citizens' payment of taxes that it will be possible to offer:

- Free health services.
- Public economic support for caring for young children.
- Free schooling.
- Free care for the elderly.
- Free stay in a crisis shelter.
- Free use of the libraries.
- Public roads that are being maintained

### Health services: Doctor

In Denmark, most consultations with doctors and treatments are free of charge, when you have a medical card. Your medical card will be mailed to your address, when you have registered as a patient with a local doctor or a health centre. On the internet, you can find name and address of a doctor or a health centre close to your home. The sick person himself must make an appointment with the doctor. The appointment time must be kept. If you do not show up without having cancelled the appointment beforehand, you very often have to pay a fee. As a rule, the visit to the doctor is personal, and you usually see the doctor alone. Naturally, the parents accompany their children, and persons with a personal assistant may bring their assistant to the doctor without problems.

The health personnel have professional secrecy. The patient may ask to bring an extra person for the consultation – it may be a spouse or a close friend, who can support the patient during a difficult conversation. There are also several NGO-organisations with a group of assessors, who may assist by this type of visits.

If there is a need for interpretation in the medical clinic, this can in certain cases be granted.

### Health services: Psychologist

If children, young people or adults feel mentally bad, it is possible to get a referral for a psychologist from your doctor. With a referral it is possible to get economic support for the treatments with a psychologist. The referral is valid for three months after the issue.



Amongst others, economic support is given to relatives of seriously mentally ill persons, persons struck by a serious invalidating illness, relatives by death and persons, who before the age of 18 have been victims of incest or other sexual assaults.

The support amounts to 60% of the psychologist's fee. As a rule, you get support for 12 consultations.

Young people between the age of 18 and 24 can obtain free psychologist treatment, if they are referred with anxiety or depression.

### Health services: Dentist

Children and young people from 0 to 22 years can get free dental care. If the



young person is between 18 and 25 years and is a member of the Health Insurance "danmark", a grant of 100% is given for dental check, X-ray and tooth cleaning at a private practising dentist.

After that, it costs money to have your teeth treated at a dentist. With a medical card you can get economic support for dental treatments. The valuations are decided in your local municipal social services department. You choose your own dentist, and the choice is not depending on your residence, as it usually is by the choice of doctor.

#### **Health services: Hospitals**

It is free of charge to use public hospitals. You are usually referred by your own doctor. When you are hospitalized, your family may visit. During visits, everybody must show consideration for the other patients. That means not too many visitors at the same time, and the visitors must speak in subdued voices.

When you are hospitalized, the hospital will provide clothes and food, and the

hospital staff also takes care of the cleaning and of nursing the patients.

Regarding the meals, you have a choice between various dishes. Vegetarian dishes are getting more and more common, so it is also possible to choose merely vegetarian dishes in the hospitals, and possible allergies are also being taken into consideration.

#### **Health services: Maternity/ paternity leave**

Both parents have the right to a total of 48 weeks leave between them with paid maternity leave benefit after the birth of the child. Furthermore, mothers have the right to four weeks leave before the birth with public paid maternity leave benefit. The 48 weeks leave is split equally between the parents, so each parent as a rule has 24 weeks leave after the birth with public paid maternity leave benefit. Out of the 24 weeks, two of them must be spent in connection with the birth. 13 of the weeks may be transferred to the other parent.



#### **Health services: Abortion**

In Denmark, women over the age of 18 have the right to have an abortion, if it can be done within the end of the 12th pregnancy week.

Furthermore the women have the right to get information about the support, they can get, if they choose to go through with the pregnancy.

Abortion is free of charge for women, who have permanent residence in Denmark. This is a benefit paid by the public. If the pregnant woman is under the age of 18, the parents or guardian must consent to the operation.

If a woman wants an abortion, she must address to her own doctor or a specialist. The operation will then be made in a hospital or at a gynaecologist clinic.

As of June 01 2025, Denmark will introduce new rules for abortion. With the new rules, the abortion limit will be raised, so that after June 01 2025 you can have an abortion until the end of the 18th pregnancy week. After the implementation of the new rules, women between 15 and 17 years of age will be able to have an abortion done without the consent of parents or guardian.

#### **Caring for young children**

Most adult Danes have a job or are undergoing an education. Therefore most young children are being cared for by others than their parents, after they have turned one year. From the age of one to three this will take place in a day nursery or with a child-minder. From the age of three till about six, they will be in a kindergarten. A child-minder is a person, employed by the municipality, to take care of usually

four-five children in her private home. In day nurseries the personnel is typically a mix of trained nursery teachers, trained nursery assistants and assistants without nursery training.

With a child-minder, the person has usually passed a short training course.

Although there is public economic support for the arrangements, it costs money in all places to have your children cared for. But the parents may apply for further economic grants to the caring.



#### **Kindergartens**

The young children will usually go to a kindergarten from the age of three. Here they will be, until they will join school. In Denmark, the children begin school in the 0th grade at the age of six. The school will expect that the children have been to a kindergarten, so that they are sure, they can dress themselves, receive a common message, sit quietly and function as a part of a group. Furthermore, the language development of the children plays an important role.

The personnel in the kindergartens is typically a mix of trained kindergarten teachers, trained kindergarten assistants and assistants without kindergarten training.

Although there is public economic support for the operation of the kindergartens, the parents have to pay to have their children attend a kindergarten. But the parents may apply for economic grants to the caring.



### Schools

In Denmark there are different types of school. Common for them all is 10 years of compulsory education. For the Danes, it is vital to have 10 years of compulsory education and not compulsory school attendance, as you find it in many countries of the world.

The compulsory education means that Danish parents have a choice, of how their child should receive this education – in a public primary school, a private primary school or education at home. But for all the possibilities there is a requirement that certain rules must be followed concerning the education and its contents, so that in the end, every child will have been offered the same curriculum. If the child does not receive education in a public school, the authorities will check that the child has been taught, what the law requires, and what is written in the public syllabus.

The majority of Danish children attend a public primary school that you find all over the country.

### Schooling: Public primary schools

It is free of charge to attend a public primary school. That means that teaching and books cost nothing. Although in some cases a small sum will be charged to attend a school travel. There are no uniforms in Danish public primary schools. Boys and girls attend the same class. For sports, girls and boys are often separated, so that the boys have a male teacher and the girls a female, and boys and girls also change clothes and shower separately after classes.

In school the pupils often work independently in small groups. The teaching can take place outside the school f.inst. on an excursion or a camp school. Here the pupils travel with minimum two teachers to a camp, where they stay for a week. That way they have moved the education to a different location in Denmark.

In the primary school it is expected that the parents take an active part in their children's everyday life. That means f.inst. that they take care to have their children arrive at school in due time, bring a packed lunch to school, that the children have done their homework and do not go to bed too late. The school is holding parents' meetings and parents' consultations. The meetings take place between the teachers and the parents and usually after school hours. Here the parents must turn up at an appointed time, where they have a private conversation with the teachers.

### Schooling: Independent schools and private primary schools

Independent schools or private primary schools can be established by a group of parents with another religious conviction than the public primary schools, or by parents with a common basic attitude to various matters.

The teaching language must be Danish, and the contents of the education must be the same as in the public primary schools. In these schools the education is made in accordance with the schools' own conviction, and the teaching is planned in accordance with this conviction. The schools can freely decide which pupils they want to attend their schools. In their purpose and in their entire activities the schools must prepare the pupils to live in a society, like the Danish, with democratic rights, freedom and effective democracy, as well as develop and boost the pupils' democratic education and their knowledge and respect for basic freedom and human rights, including equality of status between the genders. The schools may also offer a 1-year education in the 10th grade.

The schools can receive public grants, and in addition, the schools charge the parents a certain fee.

### Schooling: School/leisure-time arrangements

Most schools have offers for leisure-time arrangements for children from the age of about 6 to 10 years. It is optional, if your children will attend a leisure-time arrangement. It is an offer to parents who wish to have a care arrangement for their children.

Usually the leisure care takes place at the school that the child attends, otherwise it is located close to the school. Here the children can play after school hours under supervision. Trained leisure-time teachers will provide offers such as games, sports and working in a workshop. The leisure time arrangements receive public grants, but the parents have to pay a modest fee to have their children attend the leisure-time arrangement.

### Caring for the elderly

When you turn 67 year, everybody with Danish citizenship is entitled to a public granted old age pension. From 2030, then old age pension age will be regulated to 68 years. After this the old age pension age will be currently increased. To obtain the full old age pension, the recipient must have lived in Denmark for a minimum of 40 years after the age of 15. If the recipient has had permanent residence in Denmark for a minimum of three years between the age of 15 and the old pension age, you may receive a reduced old age pension. Finally it must be stated that there are certain exceptions for the requirement of citizenship, f.inst. for refugees and EU-citizens.



The citizens themselves must apply to get the payment of the old age pension. When you are awarded the right to pension, it will automatically be paid out to the recipient's bank account every month. As of January 01 2024, work income of old age pensioners no longer affects the calculation of the old age pension.

If you are unable to work, until you reach the old age pension age, it is possible to apply for senior pension or early retirement pension.

If you have physical or mental handicaps, you can get help from the authorities in the form of money and appliances for handicapped persons.

### Support for the elderly

If you become impaired or ill and need special care, the municipality can assign persons to come to your house and provide various forms of assistance and care. Home help in various extents – it can f.inst. be help for personal care and help for cleaning and other practical purposes. If you need assistance many times during the day and night or for some reason need more care and solicitude, than the home help can provide in your home, you can apply to the municipality for accommodation in a sheltered housing or a nursing home.

When you are referred to accommodation in a nursing home, you have a free choice of which nursing home, you prefer to stay in. You can freely choose between all the nursing homes in your municipality or in other municipalities, if you so wish. Accommodation in a nursing home is usually a small dwelling of one to two rooms and with private bathroom. Some nursing

homes also have accommodations with private kitchen.

Often there is waiting time for accommodation in a nursing home. Although there are public grants, it costs money to stay in a nursing home, but you can apply for public benefits.

### Death

By death, a doctor must write a death certificate. That means that the doctor must state the cause of death. The doctor will report the death to the authorities. The family may contact an undertaker who will thereafter take care of the practical issues about the funeral or burial. The authorities give a minor grant to funerals or burials.

There are burial grounds for most recognized religions in Denmark.

### Divorce

If a married couple wants to be separated or divorced, they must send an application to Familieretshuset (=Family Court House).

You have to apply digitally for separation or divorce. If you have no possibility to use the internet, you can get help at Familieretshuset and at Borgerservice in your municipality. Here it is important to pre-book an appointment.

You can choose to go to a meeting in Familieretshuset – a so-called negotiation of terms – where a case officer will inform you about what it implies to be separated or divorced.

If you can agree on whether one of the parties must pay spousal support to the other, and – if you live in a rented house – who might continue to live in the house,



you can be separated or divorced in connection with the negotiation of terms meeting. If you cannot agree, the Familieretshuset will give a verdict about the issues, you disagree about.

By disagreement it requires a longer case management, and therefore you can only get divorced or separated at a later stage. If you agree on what will happen, you do not need to attend a negotiation of terms meeting.

You can get divorced without having been separated first, if you agree on it. By disagreement, you can normally only be divorced after a six months' separation. It costs DKK 825 (2024) to have a case tried about separation or divorce. If you also choose a negotiation of terms meeting, it costs an additional fee of DKK 2.150 (2024).

The same rules for separation and divorce apply to a registered partnership as to a marriage.

### Crisis shelters

All types of violence – physical as well as mental – is illegal in Denmark.

Violence is defined as an act or a threat that – regardless of the purpose – can affront another person's integrity. Violence can also be an act that scares, hurts or harms the person – regardless whether the person is a child or an adult.

If the violence is being inflicted by a spouse, family, a lover or former spouses/lovers, it is called "violence in close relations".

If you are exposed to violence – physical or mental – you can phone day and night to the national hotline "Lev Uden Vold" (=Live Without Violence") on phone 1888 and get help and guidance free of charge. Here you can also get referred to a crisis shelter. The free offer is valid for women as well as for men.

On a crisis shelter you can stay with your children and get professional help to live a future life without violence.

There are six different types of violence in close relations:

- Physical violence – f.inst. to be beaten or kicked, to be thrown into a wall or jerked.

- Mental violence – f.inst. repeatedly to be wiped out, to be controlled or being abused vocally.
- Material violence – f.inst. your clothes, your mobile phone or other possessions are being ruined.
- Sexual violence – f.inst. to be forced to sexual acts, you do not want.
- Economic violence – f.inst. that your partner is controlling your money or threatens you to sign debts.
- Digital violence – f.inst. that your MitID is being abused or intimate photos of you are being posted on the internet without your consent.

### Libraries

If you have a medical card, you can use the Danish public libraries. Here you can borrow physical and electronic books in many languages free of charge. If your library does not have the book, it can often be provided from one of the other libraries in the country. If another library has it, it will be brought to the library where you want to borrow it from. You may borrow books up to one month. If you return it or renew it too late, you have to pay a fine. If you lose material that you have borrowed, it must be replaced.



All fines and replacements must be paid directly via the municipality collection on "Mit betalingsoverblik" (=My payment overview) – the message will be sent via digital mail.

The libraries also invite to events for children as well as adults. Some are free, and for others you need to buy a ticket.



### Mutual trust

The Danes are world champions in trust. They meet people with confidence and trust each other. There is a basic expectation of honesty in the meeting with other people.

If you have arranged to meet at an appointed time, it is expected that you can trust the participants to arrive precisely at the appointed time for the meeting. This is, because many Danes experience that time is passing – it does not arrive – and therefore they feel that they are wasting their own and other people's time, if they have to wait to start a meeting, because some of the participants for the meeting arrive too late.

Precisely this showing up in time and not wasting other people's time is important for the Danes, because they have a tradition to meet and talk things over. The Danes have confidence in each other, so you use the conversation to try to reach an agreement. Therefore the Danes expect that every participant in a meeting is attentive and present. It is regarded as

impolite and a breach on the appointment of the community to have a cross conversation or speak on the phone during a meeting.

The Danes expect everybody's attention to be directed towards the subject of the conversation.

HELLO DENMARK

"The Danes always show up on time"

For the Danes, it is important to show up at an appointed time. It is important to show up at work on time, to get to school on time and to start meetings at an appointed time. The Danes feel that they are wasting time, if they have to wait for others, who turn up late. In Denmark you feel that time is passing, whereas in other cultures you experience that time is coming – and in that case there is plenty of time.



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## ON JOB IN DENMARK

### The workplace

In Denmark it is difficult to see from the clothes and behaviour who is the boss with the overall responsibility, and who is an employee. There will rarely be a difference in clothes and fixed show-up time, or where you sit in the lunch room.

It is per agreement with the workplace, how your working hours are. Some places have flexible working hours, and other places are offering their employees to work from home some of the weekdays. But regardless of the agreements, it is important that the employees respect them. You must show up and leave at the appointed time, and you cannot skip work, because you have some private matters to attend to. If there are some special circumstances, it must always be precisely agreed with the employer beforehand.

If you are taken ill and cannot attend work, it is important quickly to contact your workplace to report sick.

As your tasks must be taken over by a colleague, you will often be asked, how long you expect to be ill. There are special rules for, how much absence, due to illness, you are allowed without it having consequences for your employment. Furthermore, the employer may ask for a doctor's certificate. That is a document, where your doctor in a solemn declaration describes your illness. The expense for the doctor's certificate must be paid by the employer.

It is not allowed to drink alcohol during working hours. Nor is it allowed to turn up intoxicated at your workplace. In Denmark it is an unwritten rule that you do not smell of alcohol at work, so if you start work in the afternoon, it is a bad idea to have had f.inst. a beer for lunch. You will then smell of beer – and nobody knows, how many beers you have had.

Several workplaces have a canteen arrangement that you pay for. Here you will

often find a wide selection of dishes, and it is also possible to choose a totally vegetarian meal.

In many workplaces smoking is not allowed, neither in your own office nor in the common areas.

### The labour market

Many Danes are members of a trade union. It is voluntary, if you want to be a member, but at some workplaces they prefer that all employees are members of a union. You have to pay a union due to be a member. In return, the union takes care of the negotiations about the general salary and working conditions, and the union may also provide guidance and lawyer assistance in case of illness and resignation from the job.

In bigger workplaces the employees have a shop steward that you may contact, if there is something, you do not understand, or something that you are not satisfied with. The shop steward will then address to the boss.

In workplaces with minimum 10 employees, the employees must elect one or more work environment representatives. In connection with an employment, as a

rule you get paid an agreed salary, and in addition the employer will pay a certain percentage of your salary into a pension savings account. In short, an employer-paid pension savings account is typically composed of economic amounts from the employer and amounts that you pay in yourself.

When you have a paid job, you earn "feriepenge" (=holiday money) in your workplace. This is money paid out in the periods, where you are on holiday. It can be holidays that you take in agreed periods or a holiday that you take in connection with change of jobs.

If you change jobs, you should ask for a reference from your workplace. You can show that to the next place, where you seek employment. This is valid if you have been dismissed, or if you have resigned yourself. The unions negotiate with the employers about the salaries. The State very seldom interferes. The way, the labour market functions, is called "the Danish model", because the employees and the employers in unison agree on salary and work conditions. Therefore there are also very few strikes in Denmark.

### "How does the Danish system of taxation work?"

To put it very short, the Welfare State is founded on the fact that everybody, who can work, does work and pays tax of the money, they earn. Paid tax goes to the State, which is the umbrella term for all the people who live in Denmark. The money is subsequently spent to cover expenses for roads, schools, health services, the Defence, social benefits such as f.inst. cash benefit, old age pension and child benefit.

## Unemployed

If you are without a job and cannot provide for yourself, you can, in most cases, get help. It can be in the form of unemployment benefit, cash benefit, education benefit, integration benefit, self-support and repatriation benefit or interim benefit.

If you are a member of an "A-kasse" (=unemployment fund), you are also secured economic support for a period.

To obtain help you have to meet certain requirements and follow some rules. That will, amongst others, be:

- You have to reside and live in Denmark.
- You have to be available for the job market. Meaning that you must be able to start a job with one day's notice.
- You have to be actively job seeking.

You therefore have to report to be unemployed at jobnet.dk, if you want to receive unemployment benefit, cash benefit, education benefit, integration benefit, self-support and repatriation benefit or interim benefit.

It is also important to inform your job centre, if you are taken ill. You must report fit again on Jobnet.dk.



HELLO DENMARK

**"Why are the many fine playgrounds empty?"**

The playgrounds are often empty, because the parents are at work. The playgrounds will not be empty during holidays, days off and weekends.





## AUTHORITIES

In general, the Danes have great confidence in the authorities. Overall, the Danes are sure that the authorities are working within the parameter of the law, and that nobody in the public system is corrupt. In Denmark, you find a well developed judicial system and a visible police force that takes care of enforcing the laws. The Danes basically believe that the authorities – f.inst. employees in the State and the municipalities, the taxation authorities, the police and the judicial system – are prepared to help the citizens with solving their problems, and to guide the citizens onwards through a system that sometimes may seem difficult to find one's bearings in.

### The police

In Denmark it is important that the police are visible in the everyday life, and that the police are accessible. The police are helpful in many situations.

The police are willing to assist by questions about everyday incidents, and of course they naturally use many resources in investigating breaches of the law.

In Denmark it is important that only a very short time will pass, from you have had the need to speak to an employee in the police, until it is a reality. It may be personal contact over the telephone or a wish of getting quick assistance in connection with illness, an assault or a fire. Denmark is divided into 15 police districts.

It is your address that decides which police district, you belong to, but you must always report a crime to the police district, where the crime was committed. If you report digitally or call 112 or 114, the police will see to that the case will reach the correct police district.

### The courts of justice

The Danish courts of law are completely

independent of the government, the Parliament and the Royal Family.

In Denmark there are three different courts that deal with civil cases and criminal cases:

- District court.
- High court.
- Supreme Court.

In Denmark there are 25 district courts, two high courts and one Supreme Court. The highest authority is the Supreme Court.

If you are not satisfied with a ruling in a district court, you may have your case tried in a high court. Principal cases may also be tried in the Supreme Court.

### Sentences

If you have been convicted to an unconditional prison sentence, you will be put

in one of the Danish prisons to serve the sentence. In prison you have your own cell and will get food. The inmate is also offered a paid job within the prison walls. The inmates may usually receive one weekly visit. In the Copenhagen area, the inmates must send a visitor's permit to the persons, they want to have a visit from. The visitors are being examined/ searched in various extents. It depends, amongst others, on the inmate's sentence, how extensive the examination/ search will be.

There are various forms of prisons/sentences, f.inst. conditional discharge, custody that you will be put in, before you are sentenced, as well as open and closed prisons.





## THE INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE DANES

In general, the Danes are very informal and relaxed. The Danes usually meet new people with trust and are open for a conversation. It may be quite informal in trains and buses. It may also be, when you meet the parents of your children's playmates, f.inst. in kindergartens and schools.

But one thing are the informal conversations in public places. Another is to be invited home in the private surroundings. Here the Danes are more reserved. Here you must arrange to meet – whether it is for a short cup of coffee or to eat a meal together.

But regardless of where and when you meet, the conversation is very important in a democracy. You must be able to discuss and disagree without falling out and without regarding it as a personal offence. A useful rule in the conversations is that when you express an argument, it should

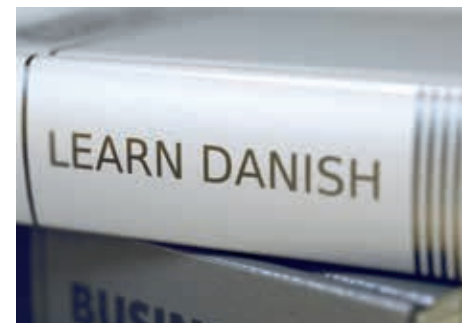
be followed by a "fordi" (=because), so that in this way you can explain your argument. A discussion does not have to end with one of the parties being right, but after a discussion, both parties should have gotten a better understanding of the subject.

There are some simple rules for the democratic conversation:

- When you speak together, it should be in a language that both understand.
- It is important that everybody speaks the truth. You should not lie or tell untrue stories.
- It may be difficult to understand each other, if the participants in the conversation have a different cultural background, where the same word is used with a different frame of reference. So in a conversation between persons with

different cultural backgrounds, it is important to be careful to bring out more details. That could f.inst. be a conversation about family relations that may be difficult, because different cultures may have different traditions for, how you socialize with and treat family members in various situations.

- In the democratic conversation, you must speak briefly and preferably go directly to the main subject of the conversation. That is very Danish. In many cultures, you often start with a long series of courtesies and with thanking f.inst. the organizers, teachers and family. In Denmark this is usually implied.



### Learn Danish

An important part of getting into the Danish society is to learn Danish. Various places offer free Danish teaching – amongst others, in certain language schools. The first five years after your arrival to Denmark, you are offered free lessons in Danish. After five years' stay in Denmark, you must pay for the teaching. You can take courses in Danish on several levels. A common language helps to create a sense of safety and help establish good community spirit.

Furthermore, free mother-tongue teaching is offered to children and young people.

The municipality may refer persons with a foreign background to education centres, where you can follow various types of training, directed towards jobs as well as education.

It is also possible to apply for admission to further education. That can f.inst. be a vocational education, upper secondary level education or more advanced studies. Several educations have special "pre-courses" as a preparation for the actual education.

### Mutual respect for others

Generally it is expected that you speak nicely and friendly to each other and do not start being abusive – although you disagree or even fall out.

It is the responsibility of the parents that their children speak nicely about and to other children, parents, teachers and educators, regardless if you disagree in what is being said or done. Therefore the parents must show a good example and be clear role models.

In Denmark, most people address each other with "du" (=you). This is a sign of an equality culture. In some supermarkets and other shops you may experience to be addressed with "De" (=a more formal you).







## A TYPICAL DANISH FAMILY LIFE

Parents have the responsibility for their children, until they turn 18 years.

The father and the mother have the same rights and duties. Both are jointly in control of the children, the economy and the daily life of the family.

In the democratic family, the tasks are being solved jointly. It is also typical that the parents give the children more and more freedom, as they grow older.

Boys and girls are being brought up on equal terms. That means that the children are given the same opportunities and rights. Pre-arranged marriages are not allowed.



Circumcision of girls is prohibited according to the law. Even though it is executed abroad, it may result in a prison sentence in Denmark for the parents.

In Denmark two persons of the same gender can be married, either in a registry office in the town hall – a civil marriage – or in church.

It is possible for the family to adopt children.

### Interaction between generations

A family has the freedom to live, as it pleases. A family decides themselves where to live, how to control the economy, and how to bring up their children. The older generation often helps minding their grandchildren. The generations gather at birthdays and celebrations. The grandparents give their grandchildren presents for Christmas and birthdays.

It is seldom that several generations live in the same house. The main part of

dwelling in Denmark – apartments as well as villas – are usually fitted with room for two parents and a couple of children. But changes are on the way, so that families may find bigger houses – mainly in the outskirts of the cities and in the countryside – where there is room for bigger families, and where several generations may live together.

Many families want to arrange matters, so that the children each have their own room; that way they can make their homework in peace and quiet and see their friends without being disturbed.

### Danish parties

Children's birthdays are usually celebrated with the child's schoolmates or friends from the kindergarten being invited to a gathering at home. In general the entire class is invited, otherwise the guests are split up, and so it will be the group of boys or girls.

The children arrive at the time, stated on the invitation, and bring with them a small present. If it is young children, their parents are usually also invited. The guests are treated with cocoa or fizzy drinks plus a layer cake. In the layer cake there are small lit candles – the number of candles indicate the age of the child. The birthday child must blow out the candles – preferably in one blow. Then you eat the cake. The duration of the birthday party is about three hours. Often there will be arranged games such as a treasure hunt. Here the participants must find a treasure by the help of a map, drawn by an adult. The treasure could f.inst. be sweets.

When you attend milestone birthdays and other celebrations for adults, there will

often be speeches, ending with everybody shouting "Hurra!". It is also very common that the guests have written a song about the person, you celebrate. It is written to a melody that everybody knows. A copy is handed out to all the guests who will thereafter sing the song.

### Party at the workplace

At most Danish workplaces, there will be a summer party just before the summer holidays, and in December, there is a Christmas party or a winter party.

Usually you gather at the parties to eat together. Often alcohol is served at the parties, but many choose to drink only fizzy drinks, juice or other non-alcoholic beverages. So you can easily participate in the celebrations without drinking alcohol.

Here the bosses and employees have a good time together across demarcations and wish each other a nice summer or a merry Christmas. You are not obliged to attend the parties, but you can just wish your colleagues a good summer or a merry Christmas and a happy New Year and then leave the party.

Often they are very cosy gatherings, where you socialize more informally – and not the least – may create a useful network. You get to know your colleagues in a new way, and maybe on longer terms gain more than colleagues but actually friends.

It is important to create a network.



## THIS IS HOW THE DANES SPEND THEIR LEISURE TIME

### Parents/children co-operation in day nurseries, kindergartens and schools

Schools, kindergartens and day nurseries have executive committees, elected among the parents. They plot the guidelines for the co-operation between the institutions and the parents.

Most Danes are engaged in some kind of sports. The children have sports at school and are often engaged in a kind of sport in their leisure time. The parents are members of a fitness club or a sports club. The children are engaged in sports to get exercise and to be together with other children.

The adults are engaged in sports to keep fit and to take care of their health. Also elderly people get exercise to avoid getting too many defects. Even Danes with disabilities can be engaged in various forms of sports - that could be teams

fitted for the handicapped. Elderly and people with big handicaps, meaning that they cannot move very much around, can f.inst. exercise with chair gymnastics and hence help increase their well-being and health.

It costs money to be a member of a sports club.

The price for a membership is kept down, because many members contribute by working voluntarily for the club and without being paid. Coaches work voluntarily, parents drive children to and from the matches and meetings, and some parents laundry the club t-shirts.

### Associations

It is said that Denmark is the country of associations. Many Danes are members of one or more associations. You can f.inst. be a member of a trade union, a sports

club or an association where you can cultivate your interests for f.inst. cooking. If you are interested in nature experiences, you may join a hiking club or more specifically an ornithological association, if birds are your passion.

You find clubs or associations for almost any interest. Here you meet people with the same interests as yourself. All associations and clubs have this in common that it costs money to be a member, and that an executive committee is elected that does the work voluntarily and without being paid.

Voluntary work means that a person does the work from inclination and without being paid for it.

The definition of voluntary work is that you may not make money on the voluntary work. The work must be for the good of others than yourself and your family. Voluntary work can be done by people of all ages.

In Denmark voluntary work is practised in, amongst others:

- sports clubs
- nursing homes
- among refugees
- hospitals



As a parent you may be asked to do some voluntary work in your children's day nursery, kindergarten, school or after-school centre.

In general, it may be important to be able to say that you have done or are doing voluntary work, if you are looking for a paid job. The voluntary work shows others that you are willing to help without being paid for it.

Furthermore, the voluntary work may secure that you get a good network and thereby set roots in your neighbourhood.

**HELLO DENMARK**

### "The Danes behave differently at big parties!"

When the Danes celebrate an anniversary or a person, there are speeches and cheers. Furthermore, it is very common that one of the guests has written a song about the person being celebrated. It will go on a tune that is familiar to everybody. A copy is being distributed to all the guests who will subsequently sing the song.

# LINKS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

HELLO  
DENMARK

## **Birth registration:**

<https://www.borger.dk/Sider/foedselsregistrering.aspx>

## **Births:**

<https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/borgere/befolkning/foedsler>

## **By wanting a reference:**

<https://www.detfagligeus.dk/spoergsmaal-og-svar/ophoer-af-job/har-jeg-krav-paa-en-anbefaling/>

## **Celebrations:**

<http://www.kristendom.dk/hoejtider>. Store bededag er afskaffet 2023

## **Citizen service:**

<https://www.borger.dk/>

## **Constitution:**

<https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/grundloven>

## **Constitution in easy Danish:**

<https://bibliotek.dk/materiale/grundloven-paa-let-dansk/work-of%3A870970-basis%3A23729016?type=bog>

## **Corruption:**

<http://transparency.dk/korruption/korruption-i-danmark/>

## **Courts of law:**

<http://www.domstol.dk>

## **Day nurseries and kindergartens:**

<https://www.borger.dk/Sider/Dagpleje-vuggestue-boernehave-og-privat-pasning.aspx>

## **Danish model:**

<https://bm.dk/arbejdsomraader/arbejdsvilkaar/den-danske-model/>

## **Democracy:**

<https://www.ft.dk/da/leksikon/Demokrati>

## **Denmark in short:**

<https://www.norden.org/da/information/fakta-om-danmark>

## **Dentist:**

[https://www.tandlaegeforeningen.dk/Patienter/Priser/tilskud\\_tandpleje\\_2013/boern\\_unge\\_under\\_18\\_aar\\_sektion/boern\\_unge\\_under\\_18\\_artikel.aspx](https://www.tandlaegeforeningen.dk/Patienter/Priser/tilskud_tandpleje_2013/boern_unge_under_18_aar_sektion/boern_unge_under_18_artikel.aspx)

## **Digital child care list:**

<https://www.borger.dk/Handlingsside?selfserviceId=089fbb51-c6b1-4aed-82b8-553ad8943870>

## **Elderly and handicapped:**

<https://www.borger.dk/Sider/aeldre.aspx>

## **Advice and guidance about contraception at Sex and Society:**

[www.sexogsamfund.dk](http://www.sexogsamfund.dk)

## **Greeting:**

<https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilseform>

[http://denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,\\_religion\\_og\\_filosofi/Sprog/Sprogvidenskab,\\_overbegreber/tiltaleform](http://denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,_religion_og_filosofi/Sprog/Sprogvidenskab,_overbegreber/tiltaleform)

## **Health authorities:**

<https://www.borger.dk/Sider/sundhed-og-sygdom.aspx>

## **Life in Denmark:**

[www.lifeindenmark.dk](http://www.lifeindenmark.dk)

## **Law on equality of status:**

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2020/1147>

## **Meeting with institutions:**

<https://www.borger.dk/>

## **My ID:**

<https://www.mitid.dk/kom-i-gang-med-mitid/>

## **Parliament:**

<http://www.ft.dk>

## **Prisons:**

<https://kriminforsorgen.dk/>

## **Schools:**

<https://www.borger.dk/Sider/skole-og-uddannelse.aspx>

## **Study circle manual:**

<http://www.folkevirke.dk/aktiviteter/studiekredsmateriale/>

## **Violence:**

<http://www.lokk.dk/For-fagfolk/Lovstof/Danske-love-og-regler/>

## **Voluntary work:**

[frivilligjob.dk](http://frivilligjob.dk)

## **Weather:**

<http://www.dmi.dk/>

## **Welfare State:**

<https://faktalink.dk/titelliste/velfaerdsstaten/introduktion-til-velfaerdsstaten>

<b>A</b>		<b>L</b>	
Abortion.....	17	Labour market, The .....	25
Associations .....	34	Leisure time .....	34
Authorities .....	28	Libraries.....	22
<b>C</b>		<b>M</b>	
Caring for the elderly .....	19	Majority, The age of .....	9
Caring for young children .....	17	Maternity/paternity leave.....	16
Children, Treatment of.....	10	MitID .....	13
Confidence and democracy.....	6	<b>N</b>	
Constitution, The.....	8	National Health Service	
Courts of justice, The.....	28	medical card, The .....	13
CPR-number, The .....	12	<b>P</b>	
Criminal responsibility, The age of ..	10	Parties .....	33
Crisis shelters.....	21	Party at the workplace .....	33
<b>D</b>		Police, The .....	28
Danes, The .....	30	Psychologist .....	15
Danish language, The.....	31	<b>R</b>	
Death.....	20	Religion, Freedom of.....	9
Democracy.....	8	Respect for others, Mutual .....	31
Denmark .....	6	Rights .....	10
Dentist.....	15	<b>S</b>	
Digital Mail.....	12	School/leisure-time	
Divorce .....	20	arrangements .....	19
Doctor .....	15	Schooling .....	18
<b>E</b>		Schools .....	18
Economy .....	11	Schools, Independent and	
Equality of status .....	9	private primary.....	19
<b>F</b>		Schools, Public primary .....	18
Family life .....	32	Sentences .....	29
<b>H</b>		Speech, Freedom of .....	8
Health services.....	15	Support for the elderly.....	20
Hospitals .....	16	<b>T</b>	
<b>I</b>		Trust, Mutual .....	22
Inheritance Act, The.....	10	<b>U</b>	
Interaction between		Unemployed .....	26
generations .....	32	<b>W</b>	
<b>J</b>		Workplace, The.....	24
Job .....	24		
<b>K</b>			
Kindergartens.....	17		



## COLOPHON

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"Hello Denmark"

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With the culture guide "Hello Denmark" in your hand, you will quickly get a general view of how to navigate easily in the Danish society. "Hello Denmark" can be used by newcomers as well as new Danes and foreigners passing through Denmark. Furthermore, it is good to consult, if you quickly need to help a fellow citizen. In "Hello Denmark" we have gathered a series of useful information about the most important rules and laws. Here you can also read about the unwritten laws and the social conventions that those, who grew up in Denmark, are familiar with. "Hello Denmark" is built up after subjects, so it is easy to navigate in.

The Culture Guide also has a very good subject index, so that you may also use it as reference book.

If you need supplementary information, at the back you will find a series of links to central spots, where you can read further about each subject. Culture Guide "Hello Denmark" is published in Danish, English and Turkish.

Culture Guide

**HELLO  
DENMARK**