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# **Case studies of good practice for the prevention of racial discrimination and xenophobia and the promotion of equal treatment in the workplace**

Denmark

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WP/97/36/EN



**EUROPEAN FOUNDATION**  
**for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions**

**CASE STUDIES OF GOOD PRACTICE  
FOR THE PREVENTION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION  
AND XENOPHOBIA AND THE PROMOTION OF EQUAL  
TREATMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

**DENMARK**

*by*

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June 1997

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following report constitutes the Danish national study for an EU project coordinated by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin. The aim of the project is to develop a Compendium of Good Practice for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and the Promotion of Equal Treatment in the Workplace. This follows on from the Joint Declaration on the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and the Promotion of Equal Treatment at the Workplace agreed by the European social partners in Florence in October 1995, which calls for a Compendium of Good Practice to be compiled as part of a series of measures to follow up the Joint Declaration. This Danish study forms one of 15 national reports from which the final consolidated Compendium of Good Practice will be compiled.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the Danish Centre for Migration and Ethnic Studies for their assistance with this research: Jan Hjernø for his advice and suggestions, Torben Jensen for his assistance with the statistical material in Chapter 1, Gitte Tilia for help with interpretation, and Jackie Langelund for speedy translation. I would like to thank all 22 interviewees who so willingly gave up their time for the project, and in particular Mette Risak of Århus Amt, without whom my task would have been a lot more difficult.

John Wrench

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

In January 1997, there were 237,695 persons of foreign nationality in Denmark, which is 4.5% of the total population. A total of 74,006 of these were nationals of western European countries, North America or Oceania; the remaining 163,689 came from non-Nordic and non-EU states.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the fact that the issue of first time labour permits has been suspended since November 1973, the number of foreign nationals outside Scandinavia in Denmark increased from almost 60,000 in January 1974<sup>2</sup> to 209,035 in January 1996. This is due to family reunion, natural increase and the granting of asylum to an increasing number of refugees. The majority of labour migrants from non-Nordic and non-EU states have come from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Pakistan and Morocco. In some groups with foreign nationality, such as migrants from Pakistan, it has been far more common for them to take Danish citizenship than, for example, the Turkish population (see Danmarks Statistik, Befolkning og valg, table 1 & 9).

Geographically there is a very uneven distribution of foreign citizens and ethnic minorities in Denmark, with over half of all the refugees and immigrants living in just ten districts or 'kommunes' out of 295. In the North of the country there are very few: most are concentrated in the Copenhagen region, particularly to the South and West of the city, and others are found in the larger cities such as Århus, Odense and Ålborg.

In the period 1990 to 1994 family reunion was the main reason for permission to stay for new immigrants. However, the high rate of Bosnian refugees given refugee status in 1995 caused refugee status to be the main reason for permission to stay over the most recent years<sup>3</sup>. Refugees typically come in large numbers by nationality. Most asylum seekers from abroad never get to Denmark. Instead it is the numbers of spontaneous asylum seekers - persons who are actually in the country when they apply - who determine the number of persons given permission to stay. The major groups of spontaneous asylum seekers between 1993-96, and the permits to stay for refugees within the same nationals, show that refugees from Somalia and Iraq for the moment are the groups who are on the increase, while the number of Bosnian refugees will decline in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Including descendants the figures are 336,740 persons total and 231,314 persons from third world countries. These figures are based on migrants and their descendants and not on citizenship, as most of the Danish statistics are. The two calculations therefore compute with different populations.

<sup>2</sup> On 1/1/1974 there were 46,365 non-Scandinavian persons with labour/residence permits. These figures do not include children, of whom in 1973 there were approximately 12,500.

<sup>3</sup> The permissions given are not necessarily followed by immigration: in 1996 31,917 permits were awarded but only 26,635 acts of immigration. Both the statistics on permits and migration are counted as acts. A person may already have a permit to stay (e.g in the case of Bosnians) but get it changed to one of refugee status. Also one person may migrate several times during a year.

**Table 1: Residence permit by reason 1990-96**

Year	Total	Refugee	EU-legislation	Family	Work	Other
1990	20,154	3,044	1,846	8,397	2,790	4,077
1991	21,652	4,014	1,670	8,962	2,439	4,611
1992	21,332	3,782	2,280	8,572	2,439	4,259
1993	17,613	3,424	2,825	5,632	2,058	3,674
1994	20,268	2,818	4,342	6,670	2,124	4,314
1995	37,899	20,347	3,803	6,767	2,234	4,748
1996	31,917	8,253	6,045	9,338	2,714	5,567

Source: Danmarks Statistik: Befolkning og valg, 1997: 8, oversigtstabel 2

**Table 2: Major groups of spontaneous asylum seekers**

Year	Somalia	Iraq	Ex. Yugoslav.	No state	Soviet Union	Sri Lanka
1996	892	696	692	617	318	299
1995	1,188	547	768	487	230	242
1994	1,572	515	678	578	505	316
1993	1,044	718	678	753	521	126

**Table 3: Permission to stay for selected nationals**

Year	Somalia	Iraq	Ex. Yugoslav.	No state	Soviet Union	Sri Lanka
1996	1,470	945	4,272	333	323	81
1995	1,180	974	16,729	441	100	203
1994	897	560	88	461	96	150
1993	1,232	774	18	439	70	107

Compared to an earlier generation of immigrants such as the Turks, who often migrated from rural areas, refugees are more likely to have come from urban areas and often have a higher level of education when they arrive. Refugees are allowed to work, but only after a proper refugee status has been achieved. Bosnian refugees were initially forbidden to work because they were only given a preliminary status, and for two years existed in a sort of 'limbo'. Now

they have been given full refugee status. Refugees are given an 18 month period of 'Introduction to Danish society', with certain social benefits paid, but these are not available to immigrants entering for family reunion purposes. A government paper is being prepared with regard to a new integration policy for dealing with refugees and immigrants together.

### ***1.1 The labour market***

When labour migrants started to come to Denmark in the late 1960s and early 1970s the majority were employed in manufacturing industries, especially in metal industries, in positions which did not demand skilled qualifications. Some also found work in the food-processing industries, plastic and glass goods manufacturing, and in market gardening. Over time some have become bus and taxi drivers, started their own businesses, or become bilingual employees in schools and kindergartens (Hjarnø 1995a).

Some of the industries which first employed migrants in large numbers were hard hit by the recession from 1972-1982. The metal industry in particular lost many jobs, and though the employment situation has improved, foreign nationals have not been able to regain their employment. During the 1970s and 1980s, migrants started to take over other types of jobs which Danes no longer wanted to do because of low pay, inconvenient working hours, or dirty and unhealthy conditions (such as cleaning, washing-up in restaurants etc.). Hjarnø (1995a) describes how in some workplaces there is a clear tendency towards an ethnic division of labour, with people talking of 'work for Turks, work for Pakistanis and work for Danes'. Immigrants and refugees primarily get the menial, dirty and unpleasant jobs, with few possibilities of moving on to better positions. In addition to this, foreign workers' safety conditions at work leave much to be desired. Hjarnø quotes research carried out in the Århus region which established that employers with many immigrant employees were often in serious violation of the working environment laws. A survey carried out by the Centre for Alternative Social Analyses and reported in the Danish national newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* (28.9.94) confirmed that immigrants are significantly over-represented in the worst, most hazardous jobs, and were also reported to be suffering from an increasing number of work-related illnesses, many of which go unreported.

Many immigrants try to set up as small shopkeepers, particularly as owners of restaurants, pizzerias, grill bars, newsagents and greengrocers. For example, in 1991, 15.3 per cent of the active population of Pakistan nationals were registered as self-employed.

### ***1.2 Unemployment***

On January 1 1995, foreign nationals comprised 2.8% in the Danish labour market but 8.2 % of all unemployed. Unemployment is for some nationalities three or four times higher among immigrants than among Danes, and 50-75% have unstable employment and are hit by periods of unemployment every year.



**Table 4: Unemployment 1/1/1995**

Citizenship	Unemployed	per cent (%)
Pakistani	1,083	45.8 <sup>4</sup>
Turkish	6,572	47.6
Danish	256,038	9.1
Foreign nationals	22,816	28.4

Source: Danmarks Statistik. Arbejdsmarked 1996: 27, table 7

Immigrants are affected by unemployment more often and for longer periods, and if they become unemployed, they have greater difficulty in finding new employment. For foreign nationals from third countries the rate of unemployment increased in the period 1987-1991 for the 16-23 age group, while the opposite tendency was the case for Danish citizens. Studies of the age distribution of the unemployed have shown that half the unemployed Turkish nationals are under 30 years of age compared to about 30% for Danish nationals. By the mid 1990s figures showed that Turkish women were over three times as likely as Danish women to be drawing unemployment benefit, and Turkish men almost four times more likely than Danish men. Younger Turks in particular suffer unemployment. Many leave school without passing the final exams, and 90% of the 16-24 age group have no education or vocational training which provides them with recognised qualifications on the labour market (Hjarnø 1995a). Amongst the refugees, about 44 per cent of stateless Palestinians are out of work (*Jyllands Posten* 1.9.95).

### ***1.3 Negative attitudes towards immigrants in Denmark***

According to Hjarnø (1993, 1995a) attitudes towards immigrants and refugees became increasingly negative in the 1980s and 1990s. Immigrants who first came to Denmark had been welcomed at a time of labour shortage, filling the lowest paid and least desirable jobs. In this sense they were not seen as competitors with other Danish workers. In the 1970s the crisis in the world market produced structural unemployment and began a process whereby the sectors and industries which disproportionately employed immigrants started a period of long-term decline, throwing an above average proportion of immigrants into unemployment. Often new technology demanded qualifications which migrants could not achieve and this also led to unemployment. Furthermore, industrial reorganisation in many cases led to the increased need for "social" qualifications associated with working in teams, and according to Hjarnø (1993) this stimulated informal methods of recruiting new workers via existing workers so that they would "fit in" better, and therefore disadvantaged foreign workers.

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that a far greater proportion of people of Pakistani origin have taken Danish citizenship and so are counted within the 'Danish' group. Therefore the percentage unemployed for all people of Pakistani origin will be in fact much lower than 45.8%. This does not apply so much to the Turkish group, who rarely become naturalised.

Following on from the structural changes which increased the marginalisation or exclusion of migrants came negative attitudes, stereotypes and myths about the migrants themselves, enhanced by the fact that fewer Danes were having personal contact with immigrants and foreigners at the workplace (Hjarnø 1993). People would automatically assume, for example, that foreigners cannot or will not learn Danish and that they are "difficult to work with" because of religious or cultural differences.

Many commentators see discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin to have become more common, or at least more visible, in Denmark over recent years (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995, Hjarnø 1995a, Hansen 1997). Stories relating to immigrants, employment and discrimination which have appeared in newspapers over the last few years gives examples of the problem and show that it is beginning to attract public attention. One was about the experiences of two British electronics students of Asian origin who were forced to give up a year's placement at Bang and Olufsen's headquarters in Denmark because of three days of racist threats and abuse from the townspeople of Struer, in Jutland (*Race and Immigration*, 249, October 1991). A study conducted on behalf of the Board for Ethnic Equality in 1995 found evidence that many Danish companies will not take on trainees who may "irritate customers or colleagues", "lack the Danish sense of humour", or "do not understand workplace jargon". These were reported as some of the ostensible reasons why so many companies refuse to employ second generation immigrants, "just to be on the safe side". It was found that there is a widespread attitude among Danes that second generation immigrants are "different". It is six times more difficult for them to get a work placement than for other Danish youth (*Jyllands-Posten* 15.11.95). There is also evidence of a lack of tolerance of cultural differences once ethnic minorities are in employment. In 1996 a newspaper reported that the Danish Documentation and Advice Centre against Racism (DRC) had reported the central hospital in Nykøbing Falster to the authorities after it was discovered that Muslim staff were being instructed to leave their head covering in the cloakroom. A DRC spokesman argued that he was not impressed by the hospital management argument that the instruction was issued on purely hygienic grounds, as "In principle all clothes are an infection risk when they are worn by someone who comes into contact with many patients every day" (*Jyllands-Posten* 6.8.96).

As well as facing problems in access to work and at the workplace, immigrants find themselves in an increasingly hostile social environment. Increasing unemployment has meant that the social welfare system has had to bear an increasing load, and immigrants began to be seen in popular discourse as a burden and as labour market competitors (Schierup 1992). According to Hjarnø the development of the EU also stimulated nationalism and xenophobia in Denmark with fears that the free movement of labour would cause foreigners to flood into the country and take advantage of the Danish social welfare system. A survey found that the majority of Danes thought that the long-term unemployed were to blame for their own unemployment (Hjarnø 1989).

Items in the Danish media reveal incidents of racism and discrimination. A TV documentary in 1996 exposed the Danish National Railway for following a policy of refusing to serve African customers in its fast food cafe at Copenhagen's main railway station (*Jyllands-Posten* 24.02.96.). In Lystrup near Århus an anti-racist demonstration was called after a gun was fired at a pizza restaurant owned by a Turkish family (*Jyllands-Posten* 05.02.1996). The media also report studies which describe negative attitudes to immigrants and refugees. For example, a survey carried out by Århus University showed that voters want tougher immigration and

refugee policies, and are less concerned with issues of economic and social justice (*Jyllands-Posten* 05.03.95). In 1994 around half of Denmark's 275 mayors and the national association of district councils were reported as calling for a temporary halt to asylum. The Mayor of Århus said that the predictions of the far Right have been proved correct: "too many refugees and immigrants have been allowed into the country and attempts to integrate them have failed." The mayors, who tend to represent districts where between five and fifteen per cent of the population are immigrants, say that the government is provoking racism by failing to deal with cultural conflict and the creation of ghettos (*Jyllands-Posten* 4,7,10,14,15,16.12.94). In the same year the Statistical Institute of Copenhagen University warned that the number of children born to immigrant and refugee communities will experience such a drastic increase over the next decade that "social unrest will follow" unless provisions are made for the new ethnic generations in schools, hospitals and the labour market (*Jyllands-Posten* 30.11.94).

In 1996 criminologists criticised the Danish police for a contribution to an EU report on organised crime which, without quoting any evidence at all, accuses refugees and immigrants of being behind organised crime. The criminologists argued that many of the report's conclusions were based on unconfirmed information from police sources and that there was a wholesale stereotyping of ethnic groups. Pakistanis, for example, were accused of being active in the drugs trade as well as in tax and VAT swindles and money-laundering, whilst Iranians, Turks and others were accused of involvement with organised crime. Danish criminals on the other hand were hardly mentioned in the report (*Jyllands-Posten* 12.09.96.) The Danish journalists' union in the same year organised a conference which condemned the media's role in promoting negative attitudes and stereotypes of immigrants by an unhealthy focus on crime and 'ghetto issues' (*Jyllands-Posten* 23.03.1996).

Fortunately, in contrast to many other European countries, physical and violent attacks on ethnic minorities or their property remain relatively rare in Denmark. However, mainstream political discourse on the subject of immigrants and refugees has shifted markedly to the right in recent years. One of the most active right-wing political groups is Den Danske Forening, the Danish Society. Sampson (1995) argues that the views of this group need to be taken seriously, not because there is any threat of the xenophobic Right taking power in Denmark, but because its ideas have entered the normal political spectrum, so that views which were once considered extreme or racist are now uttered by "respectable people in mainstream organisations". DDF is a xenophobic group which builds its anti-foreigner sentiments on an idealised view of Danish culture or "Danishness" (danskhed). A key term in DDF's ideology is that of "burden" (belastning). The organisation's magazine contains articles on how the immigration of foreigners is a burden on Danish society because of cultural conflicts, excessive public spending, crime, disease and a "cultural deterioration" (Sampson 1995: 62). Other commentators have argued that:

What is particularly significant about the Danish Society is the privileged status it enjoys in a large section of the Danish press. Not only does it publish its own monthly magazine *Danskeren* (which recently contained passages of barely concealed incitement to violence) but it gets a wide airing for such views throughout the rest of the media (Quraishy and O'Connor 1991: 117).

## ***1.4 Background to Danish legislation***

In 1993 a Board of Ethnic Equality was established. It is an advisory board and its aims are to ensure that racial equality forms as integral a part of the life of the community as possible and that any discrimination between persons of Danish origin and persons of other ethnic origin is brought to light and discouraged. It is also the task of the Board to combat all types of discrimination and to help ensure that all ethnic groups in the community, regardless of differences in background, are able to exercise their activities on an equal footing (Hjarnø 1995a). However, the Board is not empowered to investigate individual cases.

Prior to 1996 there was no law providing protection against racial discrimination in the labour market. The feeling by many at the time was that such protection was not necessary because of the very particular traditions in Denmark which emphasise that such questions should be tackled in collective agreements between the industrial relations partners. This reflects the Nordic tradition of labour market regulation, in contrast to, for example, the Anglo-Saxon or Romano-Germanic traditions elsewhere in Europe where legislation has a more dominant role (Hjarnø 1995b). By the Nordic tradition, issues of racism and discrimination should be solved through voluntary agreements between those concerned. In the Nordic system individual employment protection is weak and the main protection against the abuse of employers' discretionary authority has come from the collective bargaining system and grievance procedure (Nielsen 1995: 2). This reflects the view that:

Social protection should be derived not from the employer but from collective agreement and the welfare state thereby enabling workers and employees to remain more independent of their employers than would be the case in a system with stronger emphasis on individual employment protection, which might result in an identification between employees and employers (Nielsen 1995:3).

Thus the view was strong in official quarters that ethnic discrimination should be combated through collective agreements between the employers' association (DA) and the trade union confederation (LO). However, others felt this to be unsatisfactory. For example, it is true that within the area of collective agreements all employees are to be treated equally with regard to pay and employment conditions and therefore discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin would be prohibited. However, outside the area of collective agreement, pay and conditions of employment are specified by individual contracts of employment and here it would be quite possible to discriminate according to ethnic background. Furthermore, it was quite legal to discriminate against a person because of the colour of their skin in recruitment (Hansen 1997).

There was therefore a recognition that more needed to be done. In September 1995 the Ministry of Labour submitted a proposal for an act prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination in employment on the basis of race, colour, religion, political opinion or national, social or ethnic origin covering recruitment, promotion, dismissal, pay and terms of employment. The Danish employers' associations resisted this move towards statutory regulation, arguing that legislation is not the best means of producing change. Instead, they argued, attitudes should be changed by information campaigns. It was feared that legislation could even be counter-productive, alienating public opinion and giving the impression that foreigners were getting preferential treatment. Therefore, employers' associations preferred to rely upon collective agreements (Hansen 1997).

In reaction to this, Hjarnø points out that Denmark is a country with one of the highest rates of unemployment of its ethnic minorities in Europe, and concludes: "It is not advisable to leave the question of solving racial discrimination purely to the goodwill of the employers' association and the confederation of trades unions. Legislation introducing schemes for positive actions is needed" (Hjarnø 1995b: 9). There is a view that legislation can act as a valuable political signal demonstrating to the population exactly what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. Trying to change attitudes without such regulation is very difficult and attempts to change attitudes are improved by legislation with sanctions.

The new Act on Prohibition against Differential Treatment on the Labour Market came into force on 1 July 1996. The law tightened up the earlier law against discrimination, and clearly states that discrimination on the grounds of race, skin colour, religion, political conviction, sexual orientation or national, social or ethnic origin may not take place in connection with new employment. As the introduction of the act is less than a year before the writing of this report, it is too soon to come to any conclusions as to whether the act is effective and enforceable. Nevertheless, in the opinion of Hansen (1997) the introduction of this act shows that discrimination in the labour market is at last recognised as a real problem. It is now officially acknowledged that problems of discrimination have been getting worse in recent years and the two sides of industry have been shown that their earlier performance on this issue has been inadequate. Now that it is clear that Parliament is no longer willing to leave the issue to employers and trades unions to sort out themselves, Hansen believes that there are reasons to hope that the two sides of industry will play a more important role in the future in combating racial discrimination in the labour market.

Furthermore, in June 1996 the interior minister announced that a working party was considering proposals to establish an independent body with power to deal with complaints of racial discrimination and to act as arbitrator in assisting ethnic minorities to take cases to court (*Jyllands Posten* 22.6.96).

### ***1.5 Labour market discrimination***

The international convention whose object is to prevent racism and racial discrimination is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, (ICERD) which was adopted by the UN Assembly on 19 December 1965. The first part of it defines what is meant by racial discrimination:

'The term 'racial discrimination' shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life' (Banton, 1994: 39).

More narrowly, racial discrimination in employment can be said to occur when migrants/ethnic minorities are accorded inferior treatment in the labour market or in the workplace relative to nationals/whites, despite being comparably qualified in terms of education, experience or other relevant criteria.

The existence of negative attitudes and racist practices towards immigrants necessitates serious consideration of the possibility that the higher unemployment rate of migrants is at least partly caused by racial or ethnic discrimination. Of course there are many possible causes of a higher unemployment rate. Even when migrants have full citizenship rights and face no legal barriers to employment opportunity there are many factors which could lead to continuing inequality in the labour market (Wrench 1996: 30-35). These include language barriers, differences in educational attainment and factors related to the geographical location of migrant settlement, and the particular occupational and industrial sectors in which the first generation originally find work. The problem exists when inequality appears to be the result of unjustifiable discrimination based on irrelevant and morally indefensible criteria, such as skin colour or ethnic origin.

There are a number of ways that we can gain evidence for the operation of discrimination in the labour market. Some of this evidence is only indirect. For example, if, after holding constant other variables, such as education, age, sex, occupational level, and region, researchers still find much higher rates of unemployment amongst immigrants and ethnic minorities in comparison with Danes, then this is indirect evidence that discrimination is occurring. However, indirect evidence is by its very nature inconclusive, and for this reason it is important to get *direct* evidence of racial or ethnic discrimination. This can be obtained through discrimination testing, a research method which seems to have been employed first in the UK, and has been adopted by researchers in many other countries, notably the Netherlands and the US. The method utilises two or more testers, one belonging to a majority group and the others to minority ethnic groups, all of whom apply for the same jobs. The testers are matched for all the criteria which should be normally taken into account by an employer, such as age, qualifications, experience and schooling. If over a period of repeated testing the applicant from the majority background is systematically preferred to the others, then this points to the operation of discrimination according to ethnic background (see Bovenkerk, 1992).

Recently, this type of research has been implemented in a number of European countries on the authority of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as part of the ILO's ongoing programme "Combating discrimination against (im)migrant workers and ethnic minorities in the world of work". Discrimination testing has been promoted in a number of other EU countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and Belgium. (In some other countries - Sweden, for example - this type of research has not been possible, as the method has been deemed to be in breach of rules guiding research ethics.) Initial findings show that net discrimination rates of around 35 per cent are not uncommon (see Goldberg et al, 1995; Colectivo IOE, 1996). The method of discrimination testing is one of the most important and effective means of demonstrating the existence of the problem area in the face of those who deny that discrimination occurs.

## ***1.6 The Danish discrimination testing research***

The Danish DRC had in the past carried out some of this sort of testing on a small scale, by sending two people in response to advertisements. However, the first major and systematic research of this kind in Denmark was carried out in 1996, when a discrimination testing programme was initiated as part of the ILO's initiative. The gathering of data took place in June 1996, in the context of the imminent coming into force of the law on discrimination against ethnic minorities in the labour market. In addition, in November 1995 the Minister of

Labour sent out a circular to all job centres in which they were directed not to collaborate with employers who make discriminatory demands when seeking workers to fill their vacancies (Hjarnø and Jensen 1997).

The research was the first systematic scientific evaluation of discrimination against employment applicants in Denmark. In each case, two young people, one with Danish and one with a foreign background, applied for the same position. The young people taking part all grew up in Denmark, had a matriculation certificate and were, at the time, taking a course of further education. They were chosen because they were well-spoken, presentable and had similarly wide occupational experience. The only difference between the two young people was that one was of Danish origin and the other was either of Turkish or Pakistani origin. These two ethnic groups were the most suitable to choose for this experiment. Immigrants from Turkey and their descendants constitute today the largest national minority in Denmark. Numerically, immigrants from Pakistan and their descendants are a smaller group but they are highly concentrated in the Copenhagen area. Because both groups came to Denmark in the late '60s and early '70s it was possible for the researchers to find test subjects who were born and have grown up in Denmark and who speak and write Danish so well that nobody can identify them as being of foreign origin when speaking to them on the telephone (Hjarnø and Jensen 1997).

Where possible, the applicant of foreign origin applied for the job first. The results show clearly that the young people of foreign origin were regularly exposed to discrimination, regardless of how suitable were their qualifications. It was only in connection with certain types of employment within the public sector that employers actually favoured applicants of foreign origin, and these were those jobs where there was a need for people with a bilingual background, such as teachers and assistant-teachers. In total, the degree of discrimination against the test applicants of foreign origin was measured at 38.3 per cent. This means that if young people of foreign origin in Denmark seek 1000 jobs, in 383 cases they will be rejected simply because of the colour of their skin or their ethnic background (Hjarnø and Jensen 1997).

In the testing procedure the majority of employers were - on the surface - welcoming, friendly and interested. It was only through the testing that discrimination was identified. For example, a Pakistani test subject was told when applying for a job as a shop assistant that they had just chosen a former department manager from another shop in the same chain. However, the next day the test subject from the majority group was offered the job. Often test subjects found that when they applied for a vacant position and gave their names they were told that someone would call them back. However, when it was a test subject of Turkish or Pakistani origin, the employer often failed to ask for their telephone number. Some employers offered the minority applicant a job requiring lower qualifications, such as sorting out the return bottles in a supermarket, whilst the Dane would be offered the job as a sales assistant. In a few cases employers confided directly to the test subjects from the Danish majority group that they did not wish to employ people of foreign origin (Hjarnø and Jensen 1997).

The tendency towards discrimination was shown to be stronger in locally oriented companies, and there was also a tendency for smaller firms to discriminate more than the larger ones. Furthermore, private sector companies had significantly higher rates of discrimination than public sector institutions. The researchers concluded that discrimination seems to be less in companies with a properly formulated personnel policy, regular employment procedures and group decision making. If this is correct, they argue, then much discrimination could be

avoided by preventing one person - e.g. the school caretaker, the personnel manager - alone deciding on new employees.

In conclusion, the researchers emphasise that discrimination is unjust for the people exposed to it and creates bitterness, anger and violence:

This bitterness must be seen in the light of the fact that the authorities have strongly encouraged immigrants and their children to learn the language and qualify themselves. When they accept the challenge, as was the case with our test subjects in this study, and they still come up against closed doors, bitterness and frustration are the natural results. People cannot just change the colour of their skin and their ethnic origins (Hjarnø and Jensen 1997).

The proven existence of discrimination in recruitment in Denmark, and the evidence of negative attitudes, stereotypical assumptions, prejudice, and racism, both in broader Danish society and at the workplace, is a clear indication that special policies are needed. There has recently been a growing awareness by Danish authorities that action needs to be taken, and the 1996 Act is a very positive indicator of this. Nevertheless, evidence from other countries makes it quite clear that legislation alone is not enough to produce change. There also needs to be action and individual initiatives at an organisational level, such as those set out in the Joint Declaration on the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and Promotion of Equal Treatment at the Workplace, agreed by the European social partners - including the Danish social partners - in Florence in October 1995. Chapter 3 of this report looks at evidence of initiatives at this level in Denmark. Before that, the background to the project and the research methodology are outlined in Chapter 2.



### THE RESEARCH PROJECT

#### *2.1 Background to the "Compendium of Good Practice" project*

In 1994 the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EFILWC) launched a project "Preventing racism at the workplace in the European Union". It commissioned a report from each of the 15 member states (plus Norway) on measures against racism and discrimination in employment in each country. These reports provided overviews of existing research in the field. They described the circumstances of ethnic minorities and migrants in the labour market, provided summaries of national, company and trade union policies on ethnic minorities/migrant workers, and listed obstacles and facilitators to present and future integration and anti-discrimination policies. These reports were then consolidated into one overall report, and published by the Foundation<sup>5</sup>.

A number of problem areas were revealed by the EFILWC report. Amongst other things, these included:

- Research evidence on direct racial discrimination in a number of EU countries, whereby people were excluded from opportunities they deserved simply because of their ethnic background or skin colour.
- Practices at work of indirect/institutional discrimination. These include the use of family connections and informal 'acceptability' criteria in recruitment.
- A general ignorance and lack of awareness of the problems of racism and discrimination in employment on the part of many employers, trade unionists, labour inspectors etc.
- Misunderstandings and misconceptions of employers and unions about equal opportunity policies, anti-discrimination practices etc., as well as about the concepts of racism and discrimination, suggesting the need for more information provision, training, and 'good practice' dissemination.

There emerged from many of the national reports indications of a resistance by many employers to the ideas of anti-racist and anti-discrimination initiatives. Resistance to anti-discrimination measures could be rooted in different things, such as arguments of opposition to constraints on the free-market operations of business, philosophies about the principle of racially or ethnically specific policies as opposed to universalistic measures, or confusion, ignorance or misapprehension about the true nature of such measures.

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<sup>5</sup> "Preventing Racism at the Workplace: A report on 16 European countries" by John Wrench, published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin/Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1996.

Yet at the same time there was evidence in the national reports of positive policies by some private sector employers and local municipalities which did seem to be, for example, breaking down the barriers to the employment of young people of migrant descent. Clearly there is a tremendous variety, both within and between EU countries, in the attitudes and practices of employers and trade unions on this issue.

## ***2.2 Objectives of the Compendium***

The importance of these issues is recognised in the Joint Declaration on the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and Promotion of Equal Treatment at the Workplace, agreed by the European social partners in Florence in October 1995, which notes that racism and xenophobia are a threat not only to the stability of European society, but also to the smooth functioning of the economy. The Joint Declaration recognises that what happens in the world of work is essential to broader social integration, and calls for a Compendium of Good Practice to be compiled as part of a series of measures to follow up the Joint Declaration.

The Compendium aims to:

1. Identify examples of good practice in the different member states.
2. Disseminate the information gathered, contributing to a broader exchange of experiences amongst the members of the European Union.
3. Provide guidance to all interested parties (i.e. employers, workers, trade unions, employers' organisations and employment services) regarding the promotion of equal treatment and the combating of racial discrimination at the workplace.
4. Promote the notion that it is in the interests of business to implement equal opportunities policies.
5. Assess the dynamics of implementation of the Joint Declaration on the prevention of racial discrimination and xenophobia and the promotion of equal treatment in the workplace.
6. Facilitate the identification of key issues for future actions that could be undertaken by the social partners.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is preparing this Compendium by commissioning national researchers to produce case studies of organisations operating "good practice" in each member state of the European Union. The current report forms the Danish national report for this project.

## ***2.3 The research topic: good practice in organisations***

The Joint Declaration on the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and Promotion of Equal Treatment at the Workplace sets out a range of measures which can make a positive contribution towards preventing racism at the workplace, and which thereby constitute part of the focus of the EU "Compendium of Good Practice" study. These policies are designed to facilitate equal treatment in recruitment and selection, work allocation and promotion, training and development, and dismissal and redundancies, as well as dealing with

discrimination, and showing respect for cultural and religious differences. Such policies are often called equal opportunity policies or anti-discrimination policies.

Laws against discrimination need the support of equal opportunity policies implemented at the workplace. Such policies are generally introduced by the organisation 'voluntarily' in that in most countries they are over and above the actions required by law to prevent discrimination. An equal opportunity policy consists of a set of aims and procedures adopted by an organisation which can be summarised in a public statement and made known to all employees. An equal opportunity policy could include several or all of the following measures:

- measures to avoid discrimination in recruitment, selection, dismissals and redundancies
- procedures against racial harassment
- measures to allow for cultural and religious difference
- the ethnic monitoring of job applicants and employees
- positive action measures to stimulate ethnic minority applications
- equality targets for recruitment
- anti-discrimination training

In some European countries equal opportunity policies covering many of the above measures are already in operation, most commonly in the public sector. In others, there are also parts of private sector employment which exhibit an enthusiasm for equal opportunity measures, particularly in the retail sector (Wrench 1996).

Not all activities to counter racism and promote equal treatment at the workplace are policies which operate at the level of an individual company or organisation. Sometimes action takes place as a result of agreements between trade unions and employers' organisations at a sectoral, regional or national level. These include collective agreements, joint declarations, the provision of training materials, and information and education campaigns.

Participating researchers in each EU member state were instructed to collect information on one or more case studies of good practice in their country. They were presented with a "Common Methodology" which directed that information should come mainly from interviews with key personnel, augmented by documentary and statistical material if available.

According to the common methodology, the most important part of the research was the gathering of subjective evidence from qualitative interviews. Interviews were to cover the origins of the policy, its various forms, evidence of outcomes, difficulties in its implementation, and its successes and failures. Interviews should be semi-structured and could be tape recorded when circumstances allow. The interviews should be carried out with leading participants in the organisation's equal opportunities activities, particularly those in personnel/human resource management and middle to high level administrative positions. It was also important to include some lower supervisory staff, shop stewards, works council representatives and local trade union officials, as well as selected employees within the organisation (both white/majority and ethnic minority/migrant), particularly if they have had personal experience of the policies themselves. Interviewees outside the organisation might include informants from the local municipality, staff from the local Job Centres and

employment agencies, as well as ethnic minority community leaders and members of local migrant organisations. The sort of documentary material to be collected might include literature relating to the policy being considered, the minutes of meetings where the policies have been discussed, and material which provides basic information about each organisation.

#### ***2.4 The process of selecting the Danish case studies***

The research process for the Danish national report began with a reading of existing literature, and some general interviews with key informants - academics, members of NGOs and civil servants who were in a position to give a general overview of the area, make recommendations for organisations which might form potential case studies, and suggest the names of potentially useful contacts and interviewees. At this first stage, eight people were interviewed: two academics with a research interest in the general area, two officials within different sections of the Ministry of Labour, one representative each from a trade union and an employers organisation, and two members of the DRC, the Documentation and Advice Centre against Racism, one of whom was at the time working on a project with Danish employers in order to encourage "good practice" in this field.

As a result of these initial interviews, one thing became immediately clear: it would not be possible to find a case study of good practice in Denmark which could fulfil all the criteria of the project, and be available for study in all the detail set out in the common methodology. The problem in Denmark is that an awareness of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination issues, like the legislation itself, is a relatively recent phenomenon. There are no established equal opportunities policies in employment of the character which are now relatively common in, for example, the UK and the Netherlands. The preliminary interviews confirmed the conclusions of the earlier Danish national report for the European Foundation Project "Preventing Racism at the Workplace" which could find very little evidence in Denmark of equal opportunity policies regarding ethnic minorities (Hjarnø 1995a).

In terms of the overall Compendium project, this was not unexpected. The original European Foundation report (Wrench 1996) had pointed to a great variety in the experience and practice across European countries on this issue. It was quite clear that countries such as the Netherlands and the UK had many years of experience of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies, with tangible evidence of successes and failures. It was also clear that employers and trade unions in a number of other countries had only recently turned their attention to this issue, and that in some countries, policies were non-existent.

However, in the case of Denmark, the preliminary interviews revealed that a number of initiatives are planned, or have recently begun, particularly in the public sector and at the level of the state. For example, the Ministry of the Interior has recently initiated a policy of encouraging ethnic minorities when they advertise positions, and in 1996 the Ministry of Finance printed a booklet called "Etnisk Ligestilling På Statens Arbejdspladser" on equality for ethnic minorities in central government institutions. The aim of the booklet is to inform those involved in recruitment about the July 1996 Act against discrimination, as well as to stimulate debate and awareness in public workplaces about issues of ethnic equality. In the early 1990s there had been some tentative initiatives by the prison service and the police force to attempt to recruit more people from ethnic minorities, and in 1995 it was reported that the Justice Minister had met the Board of Ethnic Equality to devise a strategy to get more members of

ethnic minorities to join the police force, involving an information campaign and visits to educational establishments. An evening school has since collaborated with the National Commissioner of Police to set up an introductory course for ethnic minorities who are considering a career in the police. The first course began in February 1996, and a second started in August. In the latest admissions of students to the Police Academy, seven were from an ethnic minority background out of a total of 128. However, a recent campaign by the training centre of the Department of Prisons and Probate Service involving advertising for applicants with a foreign ethnic background produced few responses.

Some private sector companies are beginning to turn their attention to special projects to encourage job applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds. For example, FDB, the national retail and wholesale chain, has recently started operating special schemes combining work experience, vocational education and language training, directed at getting Bosnian refugees into warehouse and stores work. The stimulus for these on the company's part was the increasing difficulty they were encountering in finding Danes to fill these sorts of jobs, in the context of declining school leaver cohorts.

Therefore, these and later interviews were able to identify a number of examples of initiatives, some of which eventually came to form the case studies in this report. The major problem with all of these is their relative recency. This means that it is only possible to provide relatively limited information about their character and intention, and virtually nothing about their operation, results, successes or failures. It also means that, in contrast to the ideal common methodology set out at the beginning of the "Compendium of Good Practice" project, there was no point in devoting the entire national report to just one, or at the most, two case studies. There was quite simply not enough detail available on one or two cases to make this a sensible option. Therefore, the Danish report is "shallower but wider" than originally intended. To compensate for the lack of detail available on individual cases it covers several different cases, but more superficially. In doing this it hopes at least to provide a reasonable insight into the sorts of policies which are beginning to be set up in different sectors in Denmark.

## ***2.5 The research process***

A total of 22 people were interviewed for this project. As mentioned earlier, eight were preliminary interviews, carried out before the selection of case studies, in order to get a general overview of the topic area, as well as suggestions for case studies and further interviewees. These were two academics with a research interest in the area, two activists from an NGO, two officials from the Ministry of Labour, one trade unionist from an organisation funded by trade unions to concern itself with issues for immigrant workers, and one representative of the DA, the employers association. All were personal interviews apart from the last, which was carried out over the telephone.

The remaining interviews were divided between the four case studies. These were as follows:

1. The public Employment Service (Arbejdsformidling - AF) - in Copenhagen. Five interviews.
2. Århus County and City Council - (Århus Amt and Kommune). Eight interviews.

3. The NIF network of the LO and trade union financed Workers International Forum (Arbejderbevægelsens Internationale Forum - AIF). Four interviews, two in Copenhagen and two in Århus.
4. The Hotel and Restaurant Section of the Restaurant and Brewery Workers Union (RBF) in Copenhagen. One interview.

It can be seen that the interviews in the four case studies plus the eight preliminary interviews add up to more than 22. This is because three of the interviewees were double counted. Two people in the preliminary interviews also turned out to be relevant interviewees for case studies, and one other person was active in two case studies. Therefore, these interviewees were either interviewed twice, or their one interview was simply divided up into two topic areas. In other words, although a total of 22 *people* were interviewed, there were more than 22 *interviews*. In addition to the interviews, documentary material was obtained for most of the case studies. All the interviews were carried out during the first three months of 1997.

The four case studies are described in detail in Chapter 3.

### THE CASE STUDIES

#### *3.1 The public Employment Service (Arbejdsformidling) - in Copenhagen*

The first case study is the Copenhagen branch of the national public employment service, or 'labour exchange' in Copenhagen, the Arbejdsformidling. This will be referred to in this report by its conventional Danish abbreviation, the 'AF'. Interviews were carried out with three AF staff in the Copenhagen office, and two members of the Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen (AMS). The AMS, the national labour market authority, is a section of the Ministry of Labour with responsibility for co-ordinating and offering policy and guidance to AF offices across Denmark. The AMS also oversees the national adult vocational training system, the AMU, which provides short-term practically and vocationally oriented training courses. The legal basis of the AMS rests in the Ministry of Labour, but they have a certain independent status. The AMS, AF and AMU all have tri-partite advisory bodies which means that representatives of both employers' and trade unions' organisations have some influence within them.

The public employment service (AF) is an important institution in the Danish labour market. Its main role is as an agency of job placement. However, it has many other functions including providing information and guidance on how to find work and how to perform in interviews, and giving individual job training or providing general information on training courses. There are two main issues in the AF which are relevant to the 'good practice' interest of this report. One is how staff at the AF respond to racial or ethnic discrimination in the labour market, and in particular, how they respond to employers who make discriminatory requests when they submit vacancies to be filled. The second is how the AF deals with its immigrant and ethnic minority clients - in other words, how it counsels them and submits them to training or to employment vacancies. There have been recent policy developments in both these areas.

#### **Dealing with racist employers**

The employment service is a public sector agency which provides a service to private employers and this in the past has led to some tensions between the two. Before the July 1996 anti-discrimination act private employers were not legally prohibited from discriminating by ethnic origin in their recruitment, whereas the AF, being a public sector body, was not supposed to use ethnic origin as a criteria for placement, and were professionally bound to select the best qualified person for the job (Hansen 1997). Problems would arise when employers made discriminatory demands when contacting the AF to fill their vacancies. In 1993 the Director of the AF in Greater Copenhagen announced that employers did indeed make discriminatory demands on AF personnel (Hansen 1997) and a study by Schierup (1992) quotes officials of the AF who reported to him "off the record" that they sometimes cooperated with employers who requested not to be sent immigrants and refugees for vacancies. There also seemed to be official blessing for the practice of "protective channelling" (Wrench 1990)

whereby officials direct immigrants and refugees away from vacancies where it is anticipated that they will experience racist rejection (Hansen 1997).

Following a ruling by the Parliamentary Ombudsman the Ministry of Labour wrote that it was now the position of the AF to discontinue cooperation with employers who made discriminatory demands. Thus, the Arbejdmarkedsstyrelsen (AMS) drafted a circular for AF staff which directed that they should try to eliminate demands of direct or indirect discrimination by employers through negotiation with them but that if this fails the staff members must refuse to take the job vacancy (Hansen 1997). The AF had previously attracted much criticism for cooperating with racist employers, but had been put in a difficult position by the inadequacies of law at a national level, combined with the professional principle that AF staff should always do their best to accommodate the needs of the employer. This was changed by the new law against discrimination in employment which covered private employers and which came into force in July 1996.

With the circular which came into effect in November 1995 and the new law in July 1996 the situation has changed. However, it is rather soon to see to what extent things have changed and whether these developments have reduced discrimination in practice. There would seem to be a need for a review of the effects of these developments.

### **Counselling of ethnic minority clients**

The second area is that of the professional counselling of immigrants and ethnic minorities and their submission to vocational training and employment. A few years ago it was realised that arrangements were not satisfactory on this issue. Although foreign nationals holding permanent residents' permits have in principle the same right to vocational training and are offered vocational guidance on the same basis as Danish citizens, there are problems. A committee appointed by the Ministry of Labour concluded in 1993: "the vocational guidance and assistance in finding jobs by the labour exchange is not geared resource-wise to the task if it is to offer sufficient guidance, and to get immigrants and refugees employed on the labour market on equal terms to Danes. For immigrants and refugees there are disadvantages in comparison to Danes regarding the activities of the labour exchange. It demands a special effort to secure immigrants and refugees a place on the labour market and it has not been possible for the labour exchange to do anything special for the groups of unemployed immigrants and refugees to the extent needed." (AMS 1993:57, cited in Hjarnø 1995a).

The committee concluded that many immigrants and refugees were unaware of the opportunities that exist in Denmark for educational and vocational training. Therefore to avoid marginalisation and exclusion from the labour market, special initiatives were necessary to take into account their special circumstances. In May 1994 the Ministry of Labour published an action plan to break down barriers to employment for immigrants and refugees. The plan which was to be implemented over a period of two years contained proposals for more classes in Danish, special courses in vocational training and better guidance. Employees of the labour exchanges were to receive special training on guidance for immigrants and refugees and special funds were provided. By the end of 1995 between 200-300 placement officers had participated in courses on working with ethnic minorities.



One initiative which began in the Copenhagen region was to hire specialist careers counsellors or consultants for people from ethnic minority backgrounds. This was the first time this had been done - previously there had been specialists in the service for gender and disability issues. Initially four people from immigrant or ethnic minority background were hired, and later a co-ordinator added, with the aim of turning them into a specialist 'group' within the service, a department concerned with ethnic minority issues. In October 1996 the department was awarded six more posts. It was decided that these should all come from ethnic minority backgrounds, and so the necessary dispensation from the legislation was sought, and given. At the time of the report there were nine consultants in this group, only one coming from a Danish background.

As well as acting as normal careers counsellors concerning themselves with a range of specialist problems for ethnic minorities as they arise, the Copenhagen group sees itself as having other roles. Firstly, they organise special projects relating to labour market access for ethnic minorities and immigrants, and they are allocated extra finance for these. Secondly, they see themselves as having a longer term aim of helping to change the 'organisational culture' of the office. As one respondent put it:

We are hoping to change old ways of thinking. Colleagues used to be so afraid of being thought racist or patronising that they didn't do anything special for immigrants. People in the office were so scared of the registration prohibition that they wouldn't even record how well someone could speak Danish. This is crazy. It is important to register language ability correctly.

A lack of proper information on language ability could lead to a sort of discrimination. A respondent from the AMS described how this could happen:

Sometimes, for example, you don't know how well somebody knows the Danish language and so you just don't send them for the job. Often you don't even have this information but you still don't send them. This in itself could be a sort of discrimination, but without people really intending it.

Therefore the group were trying to raise awareness in the office on these issues, and to set up a system for identifying and recording the level of Danish language that the client was able to speak. An AF respondent added that colleagues were finding that there were a lot of problems which were 'immigrant related', and they were getting 'burn out', particularly as there was a real lack of knowledge, and no in-house training on the subject. It was hoped that the new department would help to change the working culture of the service, and reduce these problems.

More recently, money has been provided in the AF to employ more such consultants in other regions in Denmark, resulting in roughly 25 nationally, about half coming from ethnic minority backgrounds themselves. These aim to meet and exchange experiences around three times a year. Whilst some involve themselves in special projects, others see their role in a much more limited way, as simply 'counselling foreigners'.

## **The projects for "well educated" immigrants and refugees**

In 1996 and 1997 Danish business in the field of trade, service and production with up to 250 employees can be subsidised by the state if they employ a highly educated immigrant or refugee. The subsidy is 11,000 kroner per month for a maximum period of six months. It is called the "icebreaker" arrangement and is designed to increase the possibility of businesses hiring highly educated immigrants or refugees. One of the ideas behind the scheme is that as well as having a higher education the immigrants might also have specialised knowledge which might help the business particularly with regard to foreign markets, e.g. a knowledge of foreign language, cultural or business conditions. In this way the skills of the immigrants or refugees can be of value to Danish business. This scheme follows on from the earlier 'icebreaker' arrangements of 1994-95 which subsidised smaller businesses in this way, although the earlier schemes covered both Danes and immigrants. The arrangement appears to be a success in that more than half of the immigrants and refugees involved in the ice-breaker scheme at that time are still employed in the business.

The Copenhagen group in the AF have organised their own special projects, similar to 'icebreaker' projects. The aim was to take immigrants and ethnic minorities who are highly educated but who have had difficulty finding work. Private sector companies were contacted and asked if they had a project that needed doing, and they were subsidised to employ one of these individuals for six months. At the same time a programme of education complemented their work experience.

The idea for the scheme came after members of the group worked with refugees, and found that they weren't encouraged to apply for jobs because the system had made them into 'clients'. Even the well educated refugees didn't know how to apply for jobs, or knew little about Danish working culture. Well educated refugees and immigrants faced a particular sort of disadvantage because having a level of high education meant that they needed to have much better competence in Danish than if those going for low-skilled work. For example, sometimes competent engineers couldn't write a proposal or a report about their own work. Furthermore, some might be in their 30s by the time they had finished training, and their age might be a further disadvantage. As one respondent put it "All these barriers of age, experience, and how to look for a job, must be removed first before you can talk about discrimination".

So they worked together with a private recruiting agency who recruit for private business and put together a special programme. Employers were sought who already had an existing project "in the drawer" but who needed the resources to carry it out. They received a subsidy to employ the immigrant or refugee for six months, with the instruction that they were not be employed simply as cheap labour. Participants spent four days a week in the company, and one day for education. In this sense, the project was unlike some previous 'icebreaker' projects which had no educational element. Special attention was given to job application techniques, whether written or by telephone, and pressure was kept on them to make applications. Many of the participants could read and write Danish but had difficulty with pronunciation. Therefore, as part of their training there were special courses on pronunciation. One respondent felt that this aspect was a particular problem in Denmark. "Denmark isn't like America or Britain, where different accents are acceptable. It is different here - you need a proper accent. Employers don't hire people because their accents aren't perfect."

The aim of the scheme was to break down barriers, in that previously the employer would have been resistant to taking on a foreigner. For the first two groups of 18 participants who went through the scheme, each time around three quarters were able to get a proper job afterwards. Many of them got jobs in places other than where they had their placement, which, according to one respondent "proves that it is easier to get a job if you are already in work".

Consequently, the Copenhagen AF team felt that the scheme had been a great success, and planned to carry on with it. They were aware, however, that some people within the employment service were less convinced, because of the relatively small numbers of people who are helped by the scheme each time. "The problem in this employment office is the emphasis placed on quantity and not quality". Some colleagues also felt that putting all this effort into finding work for well-educated people was wrong.

However, there are also other projects carried out by the team which are not just concerned with the well educated refugees and immigrants. For example, they were currently running a project with the cleaning department of a hospital, providing work experience for low qualified people, some of whom are totally illiterate. This consists of six months of intensive Danish along with vocational training, and then at the end of the six months the hospital decides if it will employ them. Around half of the participants get jobs afterwards.

There was another initiative where members of the group contacted eight local imams and talked to them about the problems of young Turkish people in school, and the importance of getting qualifications. The imams, they reported, hadn't realised the extent of the problems, and so they talked to their communities in the mosques and persuaded people to encourage their children stay on in school. They also wrote an article for the Imams' magazine about the importance of getting a good education.

### ***3.2 The NIF network of the AIF***

The *Netværk i Fagbevægelsen* (NIF) is a network of ethnic minorities within the trade union movement, coordinated by the *Arbejderbevægelsens Internationale Forum* (AIF), the Labour Movement International Forum, and financially supported by the Danish trade union confederation, the LO, and a number of major Danish unions.

The *Arbejderbevægelsens Internationale Forum* was originally set up by the Danish unions to concern itself with international issues of interest to trade unionists (such as child labour in third world countries). In 1993 the main unions decided they should do something about racism and xenophobia in the labour market in Denmark, and this brief was added to that of the AIF. The AIF began a campaign against discrimination and for tolerance between Danes and foreigners, called the "Plads til Alle" campaign - "Room for Everyone". It was thought that the major target group of the campaign should be ordinary trade union members and their families, as there seemed to be increasing evidence of racism and xenophobia coming from the members, in the context of threatening unemployment.

## **What is NIF ?**

NIF is an outcome of the "Room for Everyone" campaign. A workshop was held where immigrants were invited and asked what they wanted to happen. The result was NIF, with coordination and secretarial functions provided via the "Room for Everyone" campaign. NIF is not an organisation in itself, but a network for foreigners, ethnic minorities and refugees who are members of trade unions, and Danes who wish to involve themselves in issues relevant to them. The network is seen to be a part of the trade unions' activities and not just something "running on the sidelines".

At the time of writing this report there were about 300 members of NIF, with a core of "active" members estimated as 30-40 people. The members are not only those from an ethnic minority background - many native Danes get involved too. The group has national meetings four times a year and regional meetings more frequently. The national meetings formulate the NIF aims and political guidelines, and suggest the initiatives. One of the first of these was the publication of a booklet "An Introduction to the Danish Labour Market" for immigrants and refugees, providing them with basic information on their opportunities, rights and obligations. Another initiative has been the "Etnisk booking" project, a directory of 40-50 speakers, most of whom are from an ethnic minority background, who make themselves available to speak at meetings of Danish trade unionists, teachers and others all over the country. They talk about issues of cultural difference, ethnic equality and discrimination, and are able to speak with the authority and experience of people who have been directly affected by these problems. The NIF group has organised meetings with local unions, information and poster campaigns and provides a "Room for Everyone" tent at union days. They also organise regular visits of groups of trade unionists to their counterparts in Birmingham, the most ethnically mixed city in the UK, to get ideas for further initiatives and policies.

One NIF initiative involves working with unions to provide training for ethnic minorities to become advisors on social benefit as part of the union, assisting members with problems about, for example, unemployment benefit. An advantage of this is that it creates jobs for ethnic minorities within unions themselves, and hopefully increases their chances of getting employment afterwards. Another initiative is a course in the LO schools on "An Introduction to the Danish Union Movement", directed at ethnic minorities to encourage them to use the unions. The aim is to make it a regular course, twice a year.

## **The aims of NIF**

The aim of the initiative is to improve conditions for the ethnic minorities in the labour market and to build bridges between the ethnic minorities and the trade unions. Discrimination at work is to be opposed; immigrants and refugees must work lawfully, according to union agreements, and on their part the trade unions must become more aware of the particular problems facing immigrants and refugees.

The philosophy within NIF is that immigrants and refugees should be in a position where they are able to fight for and secure their rights themselves, rather than be inactive, or simply 'complain'. They want to improve conditions in the labour market and to increase the trade unions' understanding of their problems in the labour market. As one NIF activist, a Tamil member of the general union SiD, put it: "Trade unions, and refugees and immigrants in

Denmark have a joint responsibility to promote equal rights and get conditions in order". At the moment, immigrants are too often found in the worst working conditions:

They may possibly have a working day of 10 hours and earn 20-25 kroner an hour, and there they stay. They are afraid of being unemployed, and they cannot write in a job application that they have relevant work experience ... And they cannot get help if they become ill or are injured. They must be contacted out in the workplace and be told that it is a good idea to be organised. Otherwise they risk being exploited (NIF publicity, in *Etnisk Ligestilling på Arbejdsmarkedet* AIF)

It is also recognised that ethnic minorities are not particularly visible in the local trade unions, and so it is important to organise activities for them and get them involved in union work.

### **Background to the creation of NIF**

Interviews with NIF members revealed three main reasons why they thought that NIF was necessary. One was their experience of racism from their colleagues and other union members. The second was the slowness of unions in responding to issues of importance to immigrant members. And the third was the slowness of immigrant members themselves in getting involved in the unions.

A NIF member from the FOA public sector union in Århus recounted:

Racism happens every day when you are having your breaks at work. It pops up everywhere. Most people, even my pals, say "Why don't they go home?" They all tell stories about the money immigrants get from the Danish Social Security. Everyone knows one or two stories of this kind.

He described how when, six months earlier a Palestinian kicked someone to death "it was in the paper almost every day for six months. Everyone was saying things like 'All Palestinians are criminals, apart from the one I know, and he's okay'". To a degree he felt he could understand it because "when you are under pressure you find scapegoats".

Apart from the negative attitudes so apparent amongst his workplace, he saw that in Denmark the main problem is getting the job in the first place. One of his Arabic friends who had been educated in Denmark wrote to 20 or 30 companies to get a job. "Why wasn't he successful? So he changed his name on one letter to a Danish name and sent it to the same factory and got a letter back, 'We are very interested, come along that day'". He knew of a young person from Afghanistan who wanted to be an apprentice and tried a 100 places without getting accepted.

A Polish friend of mine who had worked 20 years in Denmark was a specialist welder. The shop steward at his place talked to another union man and said "We want a specialist welder." The union man said "I have this one who's Polish" but the shop steward said "We only want our own people". He had worked 20 years in Denmark, but was not 'our own people'!

He had come to the opinion that "the Danish people don't like getting close to foreigners. They think they are too dangerous." He described a Danish friend who told him that he didn't like foreign people "but now I know you, I wouldn't mind getting to know some more." In this sense, he felt "It's not real racism - not like the fascists".

A member of the RBF union observed that public opinion in Denmark is generally negative about ethnic minorities - "Even within the Social Democrats there is a whole spectrum of views from the left to the extreme right on this". This was perhaps, she felt, one reason why unions didn't dare to take a clear standpoint - "they are afraid of their members' reaction".

But anyway, they don't have a clear standpoint themselves. Many people in the trade unions are very progressive on issues like the welfare state and on general equality, but when you get to ethnic minorities there is a difference. You don't get a clear line.

A NIF member of SiD declared that many unions were not aware that they had a problem if their immigrant members are not active. "It is important that the unions also go out and involve foreigners and ask what they would like" (NIF publicity, in *Etnisk Ligestilling på Arbejdsmarkedet* AIF). In the opinion of an RBF member, unless union initiatives were taken and approved officially, the attitude amongst the majority of officials and members will remain that "everything must be OK because immigrants have exactly the same rights as we do".

All the NIF interviewees declared that it was a major problem that there are not more immigrants who are active in the unions. One Copenhagen member observed:

You often find that refugees are afraid of union involvement because of their past experiences. They will pay the fees but they don't ask any questions about it. Some of them even thought the union fee was some sort of protection money for the local mafia.

An Århus member of the union of public workers remarked that at a typical meeting of his local union "you would find only one person with black hair - I am the only one there". So he talked to his immigrant friends and was told 'We don't want anything to do with the union. It's only for Danish people and they only want your money'. The only foreign people who attended his local branch meeting were Germans and Norwegians. "There isn't much encouragement to go to a meeting. Just a notice put up by the union in the rest-room". Similarly a member of SiD Fabrik in the same town noted that migrants didn't attend his local branch meetings either. "They may have been invited but not invited in the right way". He therefore saw NIF as an excellent opportunity to find key active persons from amongst the immigrants.

Three activists in NIF from three different unions were asked why they thought that NIF was important, and what they thought should come from it. One from the Restaurant and Brewery Workers Union (RBF) believed that two things were important: political lobbying at the top of the union, and also producing change from members at the bottom in local initiatives. Despite some misgivings, she felt reasonably positive about the opportunity for change.

There has been progress in the main unions. Generally speaking, union leaders are good in Denmark. I trust the union politicians more than the party politicians.

There is a great competence in the Danish working environment but they need to be convinced, and if you do achieve this, they will react well.

She felt, however, that NIF would not be well established enough within the two year period of its initial funding by the unions. They had therefore given a clear message to the unions at the top that as NIF they were still not confident enough in Danish workplaces.

We are a grassroots movement with a wide structure not a high one. We have told them that we need the (Room for Everyone) Campaign to be our coordinator until we have roots in local areas. We are afraid that if we lose the Campaign secretary and coordination we will fall apart.

A respondent from the Public Workers Union (Forbud af Offentlig Ansatter, FOA) in Århus joined NIF after meeting activists from Copenhagen and Jutland. He joined because "I want to make sure that all Danish companies treat foreigners and Danish people equally". His local network was only just starting, comprising 10 to 15 people covering three local towns and covering different unions. In the future he envisaged being able to provide a telephone number so that when immigrants have a problem they will be able to call and arrange a meeting. "We want to be a channel for foreign workers because many people don't understand the law or the rules in a particular company. We can call the unions to help solve the problem". However, he was aware that they would not have much power to change discrimination in recruitment: to do that "You need to get to people higher in the trade union organisation and use the new law on discrimination".

He felt that the issue for the future was going to be whether the LO supports NIF and whether they want NIF to be a proper part of their organisation. "They have no need to be worried as NIF is a network inside the trade union movement, and it is best for the LO for it to be inside." He felt NIF to be important because it represented the first time that Danish trade unions had done something like this.

A NIF member of SiD Fabrik remarked that there was a long tradition in SID of working internationally, and he had been involved in international projects in AIF for years, "but we didn't used to do anything for those foreigners who came here to Denmark. Now NIF makes the connection for me". The main drive for his involvement in NIF was the high unemployment rate for foreigners - "It gives many people a bad conscience".

The main aim for him was to get key people involved in NIF and the union who have knowledge of immigrants and can speak well in Danish. He emphasised the importance of working within the existing union organisation. "We are first and foremost part of the union - it is a network for active union members".

Our aim first of all is to produce change inside the union. Later on, we can think about things outside. We want the union to support us. These people need to have genuine equal opportunities but at the same time we want them to be active members themselves in the union.

He felt that the awareness and activity on this subject is better at branch and above levels, but that very little happens locally at the workplace level. He was therefore delighted that one of his colleagues had recently got 25 foreign members to come to a meeting. "As there have been

so many years without any activity at all, the very fact that these came to a meeting is a major achievement".

## **The future**

Respondents were asked what were the sorts of practical things they would like to see stemming from the NIF initiative over the next few years. The suggestions were as follows:

In the long run I want every branch and every club in every workplace to have written-down rules on equal opportunities and discrimination, following on from the national legislation, and stating their intentions.

Unions' internal education of shop stewards should have certain parts for handling questions about foreigners. The knowledge of these people on ethnic minorities, harassment, etc., could be greatly improved if they had training on this, and this could have a great effect at the workplace.

We want to increase the numbers of immigrants who go to union meetings and get involved in the union. This will stimulate new life into union work, and help to further democracy. Following on from this, in the longer term, we should try to get immigrants elected as shop stewards.

We should have some joint cultural activities, song, music, food, etc., between ethnic minorities and Danes, because this can help a lot.

In the long run we want equal opportunities issues written down in collective agreements between employers and unions stating that, for example, they won't discriminate.

Finally, everyone wanted to see a committee for migrants existing as part of each local union structure, in areas where there are migrant workers. There is a precedent for this, in that unions already have committees on other issues - for example, a gender committee, an international committee and an education committee. Respondents wanted to see issues of equal opportunities for migrants becoming 'normal', in all local branches. It was emphasised that meetings should be open to all people, not just migrants. As one interviewee put it: "You won't be able to stop discrimination by a committee which doesn't include Danes". Some local branches have already agreed to have a migrant committee, pay transport for the meetings and give a day rate for participants, "so we are already on the way". Within the next year it was expected that more will have agreed. All agreed that the importance of NIF lay in the significance and influence of the trade union movement in Danish working life. "The union system is one of the most democratic activities in Danish society. Denmark is unique in this potential. It would not be possible to have equal opportunities in Denmark without the unions' participation".

### **3.3 *Århus County and City Councils***

The third case study examines local authority activities in the Århus region, focusing on both the county council - Århus Amt - and the city council - Århus Kommune. Århus is the second



city of Denmark, and the city and its environs contain a high proportion of Denmark's migrants, ethnic minorities and refugees. The county and city councils both operate special policies and initiatives for these minorities, according to the different emphases of their respective responsibilities, and they regularly cooperate in the implementation of these activities.

The councils each have a committee for equal rights, covering gender issues, ethnic minorities and the disabled. Each workplace within the council has its own local 'cooperation committee', similar to 'works councils', with elected members from management and employees. Equal opportunities goals are set by the higher committees, and are then discussed and implemented within this system of cooperation committees. In the view of one respondent "It is seen as very important in Århus to have this system of committees with management and the union represented. It is a way of avoiding conflicts."

Recently, local municipalities in Denmark were instructed by the national government to produce a report twice a year on their activities regarding equal opportunities, and make this known to the public. According to one respondent "many local authorities have been annoyed about having to do this, but at least it makes them think about it." In reality, this instruction referred only to equal opportunities between men and women, but Århus Amt and Århus Kommune are the only ones who also provide information about their policy for ethnic minorities, even though in theory this isn't needed.

### **Ethnic equal rights in the labour market**

A project called "Ethnic equal rights in the labour market" has been carried out jointly by the equal rights committees in Århus Kommune and Århus Amt, in collaboration with the Danish Board for Ethnic Equality. It began following a joint "theme day" in 1994, when it was resolved to give a degree of priority to ethnic minority issues. A major goal within this was to recruit a greater proportion into the councils' own workforces, and so they began an initiative to reduce the barriers to employing ethnic minorities by changing attitudes at the workplace. In the words of one respondent "We tried to influence people into hiring minorities and not just rejecting them as soon as they see their names".

It was the opinion of the committees that because of prejudice, ignorance and common reluctance to try something new, people often avoided employing qualified personnel of foreign origin. It was thought that differences in ethnic background, religion, race, pattern of education or culture did not necessarily have to create difficulties but, on the contrary, could be a source both of inspiration and innovation at work and collaboration (Project evaluation document).

### **The newspaper**

With the aid of a grant of 250,000 kroner from the Ministry of Labour a newspaper was produced and sent to all employees in the Kommune and the Amt. The newspaper, "På Lige Fødd" (On an Equal Footing) presents stories about ethnic minorities who are currently employed in Århus. It was written and edited by a journalist who was employed specially for the purpose. It consisted of 8 pages and had many illustrations in the form of photos; a total of 32,000 copies were printed and sent out in May 1995.

The aim was to describe some successful employment stories - "sunshine stories" - though not to such an extent that they became unrealistic. It was intended to be "inspirational", showing the positive benefits that come from working with people from other cultures, and how this can bring new energy and expertise to the workplace. Stories covered, for example, a mid-wife from Montenegro, a Turkish man employed in Kommune at the administrative department, a Turkish woman office worker, and an Iranian man who helps in a children's home. There were also interviews with the supervisors and colleagues of those featured in the paper, and difficulties were also brought out so that the paper could present experiences as to how such problems were solved. One of the main messages was that it can be difficult to get into employment, but it is possible, and is often of benefit to all parties: "The meeting between different cultures can break down prejudices, and dialogue can help to create contact and overcome language difficulties". Furthermore, the paper emphasises that in certain areas there is a special need to employ people with a knowledge of foreign languages, because more and more users do not speak Danish.

The paper was regarded by the equal rights committees as a success. It was made available to all the employees and politicians in the town and county councils, was read and discussed in Århus Amt and Århus Kommune and gave rise to comment in the media. In addition, it formed the basis for subsequent phases of the "Ethnic equal rights in the labour market" initiative.

### **The conference**

The next phase of this initiative was to focus on people in the councils with influence on decision making with regard to personnel policy. This began with a two day conference in September 1995, directed at key people from Århus Amt and Århus Kommune. By key people, this meant chairmen and vice-chairmen from the various committees, covering both management and worker representatives. A total of 78 people took part, mainly shop stewards, members of co-operation committees and a number of immigrants themselves. In addition, there were observers from ministries and from the Board of Ethnic Equality, as well as a panel of experts from outside.

The main idea of the conference was to discuss problems and opportunities in employing personnel of foreign origin. Delegates listened to presentations by people with a knowledge of the subject, and took part in practical workshops together with people of foreign backgrounds. The groups were then encouraged to develop a plan of action and procedures as to how they could continue the work at the individuals' workplace after the conference. Finally at a full session, these plans of action were presented for Århus Amt and Århus Kommune respectively.

### **The follow up**

Since the conference, discussions have taken place in the equal rights committees in the Amt and Kommune, and in activities at the workplace, including in the area of personnel policy.

In Århus Kommune, the project experiences have been included as part of its approved policy for refugees and immigrants, and in connection with this a report was issued in January 1996 about ethnic equal rights on the labour market. The committee for equal rights held a theme day about activities in the Kommune in February 1996. A number of hospitals in Århus Amt

have held conferences on the subject, set up cross-cultural network groups for information, meetings and workshops, and begun to adjust patient and personnel policies.

The equal rights committees see these activities in Århus Amt and Århus Kommune as the first stages of response, before the transition to a more practical phase. "The activities that have been set in motion have the character of a process, which has been started but must now be maintained." Despite its early stages, they feel that the project "Ethnic equality in the labour market" has demonstrated that efforts can be made to mutual advantage across the Amt and Kommune, and the two equal rights committees in Århus Amt and Århus Kommune have agreed to collaborate in the future on ethnic equality and other aspects of equal rights work.

The initial goal of the project can be said to have been achieved, in that increased attention has been focused on ethnic equality in the labour market, and a number of key people in both the Amt and Kommune have been made aware of both the problems and the opportunities in employing people with foreign cultural backgrounds. "The benefits consist in the change of attitude that could be seen during the conference, and which has since been expressed in the desire to continue the work in the individual workplaces." However, the committees are aware that as far as more tangible benefits are concerned, it has been hard to draw concrete conclusions. For example, it is impossible to measure the results in terms of increased employment of people with a different cultural background, because this was not registered from the start.

One outcome of the initiative has been the adoption of specific refugee and immigrant policies. One example of these will be considered next.

### **The refugee and immigrant policy of Århus Kommune**

Århus Kommune has adopted a refugee and immigrant policy to improve their integration, and encourage refugee and immigrant self-support and participation in community life on an equal footing with other citizens. "Our citizens must enjoy a community position characterised by equality and participation in its future." The Kommune recognises that the ability of refugees and immigrants to speak Danish and to find employment is crucial to integration and equality. Therefore, opportunities for learning Danish and getting proper training, education and jobs are an important part of the refugee and immigrant policy of the municipality of Århus.

In 1994 a city council resolution was passed demanding a draft proposal outlining a refugee and immigrant policy. After a great deal of consultation both internally and externally the city council adopted the proposal in May 1996. A body was set up which coordinates the activities of the mayor's department and those municipal departments which are responsible for the daily implementation of measures and actions under the refugee and immigrant policy. This facility is vested with the day to day coordination, evaluation, monitoring, reporting and implementation of the refugee and immigrant policy and is the channel through which the continuous reporting and appraisal with respect to the Kommune is exercised by competent municipal departments. The work of this coordinating body is assisted by a group of refugee and immigrant associations which is invited to present to the coordinating body ideas and proposals for new initiatives and measures.

The refugee and immigrant policy of the municipality of Århus aims at integrating immigrants and refugees by actions in four areas: housing, attitudes, language and employment. Housing is seen as relevant to employment. The aim is to avoid over concentrations of ethnic minorities and stimulate dispersed housing, so that the networks which may help immigrants to get in touch with private labour markets are more easily established. Evidence from recent research by the Danish Social Research Institute has shown that social contacts are very important for company hiring practices. Thus, the aim is to have a geographical dispersion of refugee and immigrant housing, whilst at the same time allowing a sufficient number of people from the same ethnic background to live together in small clusters, so as to allow a degree of mutual social support.

The Kommune is also working to counteract negative attitudes of Danish people towards refugees and immigrants, so as to help their access to the private labour market. Therefore, one initiative is to stage an information campaign aimed at raising the number of refugees and immigrants in jobs. Also, schools are being encouraged to focus on inter-cultural understanding. According to the policy, success stories of refugees and immigrants in work will help to change Danish attitudes and will also increase the desire of young refugees and immigrants to learn Danish and get an education.

Better job opportunities for refugees and immigrants deriving in part from a positive change in Danish attitudes will impact favourably on the refugees' and immigrants' own attitudes to employment thus furthering integration.

The Kommune feels that it is important that children born and raised in Denmark can speak Danish well enough to begin elementary education on ordinary terms. Therefore, it is changing the allocation of resources to schools to reflect the presence of children of refugees and immigrants. It is also introducing a number of other measures in schools, including an experimental programme introducing bilingual pre-school children to the school in two school districts. After two years this will be evaluated to see whether this introductory programme makes it possible for bilingual children to begin elementary education on normal terms, and whether it should be offered more broadly.

The 'Employment' section of the refugee and immigrant policy of the municipality of Århus states:

The Municipality of Århus is taking steps to ensure that refugees and immigrants establish relationships with the labour market that parallel those of the Danish population. This implies that refugees and immigrants should not be worse affected by unemployment than Danes.

To achieve this end the Kommune has proposed a number of measures including:

1. An organisation is set up which is in charge of implementation and coordination, day to day integration activities, language teaching, job training and activation of refugees and immigrants.
2. Each municipal department will be instructed to reserve for refugees and immigrants approximately half of all "activation and rehabilitation" jobs that the city council creates. (These are jobs or work experience provided for those who have previously been unemployed for a relatively long period).

3. All municipal institutions are invited to consider the possibility that many municipal jobs could be performed by refugees and immigrants, so as to encourage the greater representation of refugees and immigrants in regular employment. The long-term target is that refugees and immigrants shall find employment roughly corresponding to their proportions in the surrounding community.
4. Århus Kommune shall take steps to secure a larger number of subsidised jobs for refugees and immigrants within the private sector and in other parts of the public sector.

Interviews carried out with staff who are involved in these initiatives within the Kommune produced more detail on how some of the above measures have since been operationalised. One respondent explained how the council was now registering people by ethnic or foreign background for statistical purposes. They start with a definition of a foreigner as someone born outside Denmark, or inside Denmark with foreign parents. In Denmark, everyone has a civil registration number (cpr number) issued by the National Register. The council uses the cpr numbers to go through the whole population in Århus and see whose parents were born in Denmark or not. It is possible by doing this to find the parents of the 'second-generation', and therefore identify if someone was born in Denmark with parents who are not Danish. Some of these would be Danish citizens and some would be foreign citizens. However, at the moment they are unable to identify subsequent generations beyond that. Although the Danish Register Act restricts ethnic monitoring, this practice is not unlawful as individuals are not identified within the statistics.

At the time of the interview there were an estimated 3.3 per cent of immigrants or foreigners in the Kommune's own workforce. Their aim is to get 7 per cent which would then reflect the broader population, and they are trying to encourage people to do something to achieve this via different projects and initiatives. For example, all the departments in Århus Kommune, when they advertise for new positions, are now told to report how many people come for interview by ethnic background, how many are employed, and so on. "Sometimes they can only guess at this but at least it raises their consciousness." At the end of each year they have to report their policies back to the council, and give totals of how many immigrants and refugees they have recruited.

One respondent described how at first there had been some resistance to this, with some people questioning its legality. "But the heads of sections are strongly behind this policy now. It is on the agenda". National politicians were seen as giving a lot of support to the council on this. However, there were still some problems with the public sector unions, because of the attitudes of employees. "They argue by saying 'We only want the best-qualified' but they don't realise that it is not positive discrimination that we want them to do." Already in child care and kindergarten areas there are many refugees and immigrants employed, but this is mainly where the children themselves are from ethnic minority backgrounds. One respondent was quite well aware that they would still find it much more difficult to get a job in a white Danish area - "They would be told 'We don't need you'".

Århus Kommune also participates in the "ice-breaker" scheme for well qualified immigrants (see Case Study 1). These are subsidised job placements with both vocational and language training components. At the time of the interviews it was too soon to see if people on the ice-breaker project end up in proper jobs. There are also "bridge-building" schemes where people are assisted with counselling and training for a year to get into certain areas of employment. For example, the Kommune is working with FDB, the major retail and wholesale chain, to

encourage immigrants to go into jobs as butchers and bakers, jobs which Danes seem reluctant to take on.

Following on from the interviews at the Town Hall and County Hall, further interviews were carried out in two local hospitals, and in the local bus company.

## **Hospitals in Århus**

In both of the hospitals new initiatives were being set up in response to issues seen to be generated by ethnic minority and immigrant patients and staff. Firstly, new problems were being experienced because of the different expectations and reactions of people from different cultures in a Danish hospital environment. For example, in a maternity unit, women from one ethnic group wanted the windows closed and the lights on all night, and visits from a full extended family of 20 people or more, when hospital rules limited visitors to two. Some Muslim men did not want their wives treated by male doctors, and in some cultures the low status of nurses was a source of friction in some interactions between staff and patients. Other problems were perceived to come from the employment of ethnic minority staff, when, for example, a male employee found it difficult to take instructions from a female nurse.

A second issue is that of whether there is a resistance to the employment of staff with an ethnic minority background within the hospitals. The Personnel Director of one hospital recounted how about two years previously he had telephoned around all his heads of section and asked them about any problems with the employment of immigrants and ethnic minorities, and was told by each one "there's no problem - I would employ them here". Then he asked each one "How many have you got at the moment?" and they all answered "At the moment - none."

So I got interested in people's attitudes. I asked them - "Tell me a story from your department about immigrants". They told a few stories. For example, that in the cleaning department they had once employed an African woman many years ago, and when she did the cleaning she used the same brush for the cups as for the toilet. I had heard that story before so I went to the Service Department and asked, "Is this right?" Nobody there could remember employing the woman. Nevertheless, this story made people afraid of recruiting foreign workers. It says something about the attitudes.

He felt that there were less problems with the employment of well-educated immigrant workers, because often they spoke English and could do this at meetings, because it is a university hospital. However, at the moment he noted that there were not even any foreigners in the cleaning department, perhaps, he thought, because of the sort of attitudes expressed in the above anecdote. He added:

A problem is that the Danes are terrified of being called racist which means it's difficult to have an open dialogue. Some heads of section are just avoiding taking decisions or not employing foreigners because they are worried about this.

Another type of problem is when staff experience racism from patients. One case was when a female physiotherapist from Africa was faced with a male patient who refused to be treated by her. Therefore, the departmental head asked another physiotherapist to do the work.

However, this incident was one which helped to stimulate the hospital staff to critically review their policies.

## **Responses**

As a result of the above incident, the hospital authorities made a new policy statement: as long as the condition is not life-threatening the patient does not have the right to refuse treatment from a member of staff, and if they do they will have to go elsewhere for treatment. Then they started a programme of education for employees on having foreigners as patients, running twice a year. The course topics include an insight into the psychosocial consequences of emigration and exile, the tools of intercultural communication, and a knowledge about other cultures and their particular approaches to health, illness and treatment. These issues are related to participants' everyday work, and cover concrete situations which arise in connection with foreigners in hospitals.

Something similar was done in the maternity ward of the second hospital. Realising that culturally-based misunderstandings and conflicts were causing problems, the manager set up a number of working parties, whose activities culminated in a new set of policies and guidelines. They produced a bank of detailed data on the cultural backgrounds of different ethnic groups, their different assumptions about illnesses and the nature of hospitals, etc. A file of this information is made available for staff to consult in each ward. A rule was introduced that interpretation was no longer to be allowed informally by a member of the family, but must be carried out by a professional interpreter. All patients get the rules and procedures translated for them when they first come into the maternity ward. There have also been meetings with representatives of ethnic minority communities about what is allowed and what they should expect in Danish hospitals.

In the first hospital a new sub-committee has recently been added under the main cooperation committee, on immigrant and equal opportunities issues. Members are both Danish and non-Danish. Their brief is to cover issues arising from ethnic minority patients, and also to look at the problems that ethnic minority employees encounter. The manager from this hospital was of the view that it would be useful to take more staff from ethnic minorities, particularly in the paediatric department, where there are many immigrant children, and also in obstetrics. However, when he voiced this opinion at a meeting, arguing that hospitals should follow the example of kindergartens in employing staff from different ethnic backgrounds, he met some resistance to the idea. A politician from the Kommune argued that his analogy was fallacious, as the main goal of a kindergarten is to integrate children into Danish culture, and so teachers should be 100 per cent Danish. "Others argued that if we took staff from ethnic minorities then the Bosnians would fight the Serbs, whereas the Danish are neutral. So at the moment there is no specific scheme to employ ethnic minority staff."

## **Århus Sporveje**

One part of the Århus public sector which does have significant numbers of ethnic minority and immigrant workers is Århus sporveje, the local bus company. Two further interviews were carried out here, one with a manager and another with an immigrant bus driver. In 1997, out of a total of 979 employees, 73 were foreign born, from a total of 27 different nationalities,

constituting 7.5 per cent of all employees. (This figure includes a few from other European countries, such as Poles, Swedes and Germans.) The two largest groups are Turks and Iranians. Thus the proportion of foreign born employees in Århus Sporveje is approaching the proportion of immigrants in Århus. However, this was not a result of any special recruitment initiative or target. As the manager reported, "The immigrants came to us - we didn't seek them out. In the past, Danes didn't want this job"

One potential problem area with the job was the required level of expertise in the Danish language. It is important that bus drivers communicate clearly with their managers over their bus radios, as this communication takes place without the assistance of the usual non-verbal clues to meaning, such as facial expression. At the job interview a linguistic test of understanding may be carried out, using a tape recording of a typical radio message from the traffic centre to a bus. During the winter of 1993 - 1994, Århus sporveje, in Corporation with Århus Dansk Kurser (Århus Danish Courses) introduced a special course in language and culture. The drivers who participated were selected in terms of the judgement that they needed to improve their ability to speak and understand Danish. There were a number of teething troubles with the course, not least because of the drivers' original suspicions over Århus sporveje's motives for setting the initiative in motion - "they thought it was an exam". Ultimately, the course was regarded as very positive by the seven participants, as far as it improved their understanding of Danish culture, although linguistic improvement happened only to a limited extent. In retrospect the manager felt that he had had unrealistic expectations as to what could be achieved linguistically with a four week intensive course. "We learned that you can't change how people speak Danish in four weeks. It depends who you're talking to at home".

The other potential problem area is racism, whether from colleagues, management or the public. The bus driver found no problem of racism with management - "they treat white and non-white the same". However, he recalled that he had been confronted with evidence of cultural stereotyping at his interview for the job in the late 1980s when the interviewer expressed concern that he was a Muslim. "They said 'will it be a problem that you have to pray five times a day, because you'll be stopping the bus all the time?' I pointed out that we don't do this in Afghanistan, and the buses run okay there. We separate work and religion. You can pray after work."

There was, however, occasional racism from amongst the drivers. The bus driver recalled:

I had a problem in 1989 when someone wrote something bad about me in the toilet. I spoke to the trade union and the personnel chief about it. I wrote a letter in the union paper saying 'If you want to say something, say it openly, don't write it in the toilet'.

The manager confirmed "There used to be a problem with some bus drivers saying things like, 'Go home you pig', but the union went in strongly against it. But some of our drivers are members of a right-wing Danish political organisation against foreigners". The driver reported that he still occasionally got racist insults from the passengers, such as "Go home, we don't like you". But these were a minority - "I know many people on my line and there are a lot of friendly 'hellos'".



One area of concern for the future is that at the moment there are no immigrants at supervisor or management level. Neither have any been elected to works committees. The manager recognised that there were now some who were qualified and eligible for promotion. "In a few years we will get some. It will be a challenge for us. But now we are starting with women and have made some progress. Of 25 supervisors, three are women".

The organisation's position is that it is a "good idea" to have a staff of employees which reflects the composition of the passengers. In the spring and summer of 1994 there were a number of incidents on the buses with immigrant children, and those bus drivers with a knowledge of Arabic language and culture were able to help reduce the problem. "In addition, a number of our foreign employees have tried to influence the children in a constructive way when they met them on the buses." As the manger put it, this is one example of how having drivers which represent the local ethnic mix can be of positive value when dealing with passengers from various ethnic backgrounds.

### ***3.4 Restaurant and Brewery Worker's Union (RBF)***

The Restaurant and Brewery Worker's Union (RBF) was established in 1990 as an amalgamation of four old unions. It is a federation based on four groups:

1. Waiters
2. Cooks
3. Hotel and restaurant workers
4. Brewers

It is a relatively small union in Denmark with about 30,000 members. Within this union the sector for the hotel and restaurant industry has the highest number of immigrant workers. Immigrants work in jobs such as dishwashing or as housekeepers which are unpopular among Danish people because of the bad working conditions, long hours and low wages. Twenty-five per cent of RBF membership are unemployed, which is twice the normal rate.

According to the union's rule book it works for integration and takes an active part in the struggle against racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees. The RBF Congress a few years ago agreed an action plan setting out the union's standpoint and what it wants to do in practice. Its aims, as currently listed, are:

- To secure the legal, social, cultural, economic and residential rights of immigrants on a basis of equality with other members of society.
- To send out material and information about salaries and wages, the labour market, unemployment benefit and social welfare, wherever possible in the immigrants' own languages.
- To secure education for immigrants, starting at their own level.
- To make refugees welcome in Denmark and trying to influence the political system in that direction.
- To offer practical assistance to the membership in their everyday situations.

In the words of the respondent "We are against racism and want to create a society with a place for everyone. We want to support migrant members in their basic rights for example helping them with family reunification, supporting them when they are threatened with unreasonable expulsion from the country, providing them with lawyers, and so on." Another aim is to push migrants to be active themselves in unions. "We support and encourage migrants to take part in solving their own problems and taking decisions, getting them to be spokespersons and encouraging them to stand for election on Works Councils".

The union has an Immigrant Committee with a Secretariat to coordinate activities. Local branches organise courses for immigrants in the Danish language and in industrial relations. There are special courses for immigrants in health and safety, particularly for safety representatives. New courses are planned for members which will be 50 per cent immigrants and 50 per cent Danish. The aim of these is to give participants the opportunities to learn about each others' backgrounds and cultures. The union has started to publish part of its magazine in English and will later try to publish it in other languages. It plans to put out information on agreements and on the labour market on tape, because some of their immigrant membership are illiterate (Hoffman Bidstrup 1996).

### **The hotel and restaurant section**

The activist interviewed for this case study was from the hotel and restaurant section in Copenhagen. This is the largest section in the RBF in Copenhagen, with 3,800 members, 75-80 per cent of whom are migrants, in mainly unskilled work.

In 1995 the hotel section made its own local action plan. Because many migrants seemed to be lacking in confidence about union work or their rights it was decided to coordinate a plan of action to give guidance on collective agreements. One person was recruited to be a migrant counsellor, starting in March 1995. Information material and training courses have been made available for the migrant members telling them about their rights, the unemployment system and assisting them in networking.

Some people wanted to make the groups and networks culturally based - e.g. Turkish -but I didn't agree. You shouldn't have cultural groups in the union. That should be for people to organise outside the union, in migrant cultural organisations. I believe that you should bring people together on the basis of their common interest in the labour market, not on the basis of culture. They need to know how much salary they are entitled to, the conditions of their work and also social and political issues relevant to migrants.

It was perceived that an important first step for migrants to defend their rights is to have a reasonable proficiency in the Danish language. However, there was a problem for the membership in Copenhagen because there was a long waiting list for those in work who want to learn Danish, because most of the courses are only available in the day-time. Also, "Those in work and with families are exhausted by the evenings - some migrants go for years before they can speak". Therefore, after the high season, when people are usually laid off, the union provides courses, using the day high-school system. Courses include elements such as first-aid, security, hygiene, computer knowledge and other things which may be attractive to an employer. Participants are also taught about basic rights in the working environment and union

rights. However, the main part of the course is the language element. The courses produced identifiable results. Some participants were able to gain more security in the labour market and move on to better work; others went into further education.

It has been a struggle because employers were suspicious at the beginning and thought that we wanted to make people into union activists. But now they have been reassured. It doesn't cost employers a penny.

On top of this the union sends people individually to other existing courses, to encourage them to take up positions as shop stewards. This has also produced results in that for the first time they have seen immigrant competitors for election to the union board, including women. It was difficult before to be on the board because they couldn't speak Danish well enough.

However, the respondent was aware that one thing which has been not covered by the union action plan is what happens after people have had the courses and got elected to the board. They still didn't have equality in access to positions such as union secretary. Therefore the board decided to employ one migrant board member for six months at a time to train them in union work - as a union secretary for example - so as to give them the same opportunities as a Dane. This is an example of 'positive action'.

In conclusion, the respondent felt that other Danish unions might learn from this sort of action. In some of the bigger unions, the attitude regarding immigrant members is still "They have the same rights as anyone, and they can go to a general assembly like anyone else". However, she argued that "these migrants don't know what the general assembly is and won't go if you don't encourage them". She also looked for greater endorsement of these activities from above. "There have been many initiatives but they are all individual people doing individual things. If there is not a clear policy by political leaders at the top of the union and if there are not proper guidelines, then these initiatives are going to be limited in their effect."

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS

The first chapter of this report provides the background context for this study of 'good practice' in Denmark. Unemployment is significantly higher for some groups of immigrants. There is evidence of widespread negative attitudes and stereotypical assumptions towards immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities, as well as intolerant statements by politicians, all reflected in the often negative content of newspaper articles and media debate. Personal and anecdotal evidence from some of the interviews in Chapter 3 confirms the racist attitudes encountered by immigrants in the working environment and in everyday life. This evidence in itself is sufficient to justify the question as to whether the higher unemployment rates for immigrants are at least partly a result of negative attitudes and exclusionary practices. The validity of this question is confirmed by the 1996 discrimination testing experiments described in Chapter 1, which produced the conclusion that when suitably qualified young people of Turkish or Pakistani origin in Denmark answer job advertisements they will be rejected in well over a third of their applications simply because of the colour of their skin or their ethnic background. And this is a minimum figure, as it only documents discrimination at the first stage of application, and says nothing about the possible discrimination they may experience at later stages.

There has been a growing awareness by the Danish authorities of the problem, and a recognition that action needs to be taken. The 1996 Act on Prohibition against Differential Treatment on the Labour Market is a positive indicator of this. The Act clearly states that discrimination on the grounds of race, skin colour, religion, political conviction, sexual orientation or national, social or ethnic origin may not take place. However, as the law stands, it still does not make it easy for employers in Denmark to introduce some elements of "good practice" which are common elsewhere. For example, in 1996 the Documentation and Advice Centre (DRC), a Danish NGO concerned with combating racism and discrimination, advertised in a newspaper for an administrative staff member. The advertisement encouraged ethnic minorities to apply, and stated that, due to the need for someone with multi-ethnic competence, in the case of equal qualification an applicant from an ethnic minority background would be preferred. The NGO was told by the Minister of Labour that it was a violation of the Act on Prohibition against Differential Treatment on the Labour Market to apply for and give preference to individuals from a certain ethnic background in this way. In Britain it is a matter of routine for advertisements to encourage applications from under-represented minority groups, and in the Netherlands, preferential treatment for minorities in the case of equally qualified candidates is a commonly accepted practice. Furthermore, restrictions on ethnic monitoring set out in the Act on Prohibition against Differential Treatment on the Labour Market still significantly hamper attempts by employers to collect information on the possible under-representation of groups in their workforce, or to evaluate the effectiveness of policies they might introduce to promote equal opportunities. There is, therefore, an argument that legislation in Denmark could be improved, to make it more friendly to the initiation of some elements of good practice.

Legislation is a necessary but not sufficient mechanism for change, and there also needs to be action and individual initiatives at an organisational level, such as those set out in the Joint Declaration on the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and Promotion of Equal Treatment at the Workplace. The main part of this report has been an examination of activities at this level in Denmark.

### **Stages of reaction**

There are different possibilities of emphasis in the responses of social institutions to the arrival of new flows of migrant workers, who eventually become settled ethnic minority communities. Experience in the UK, for example, shows that these emphases can form roughly chronological stages, as set out below:

1. The first stage consists of measures directed at ethnic minorities and immigrants themselves to assist in their integration into society. The onus is on the immigrants themselves to learn the language and customs of the host society. The training associated with this phase could be called "Teach them about us", sometimes associated with an "assimilationist" perspective. Formal training is often provided for the immigrants so that they can learn the language, culture and customs of the new society, and the appropriate ways of behaving, as well as how to operate in the labour market.
2. The next stage occurs when it is realised that immigrants are not going to be passively assimilated, in a one-way process, into society, and that immigrant cultures are going to persist over time. This has implications in particular for service providers such as social workers, teachers, doctors and nurses, who come to realise that proper service provision requires that they are informed about immigrant cultures, and that immigrants may have 'special needs' related to their ethnic background. The training associated with this next stage is directed at members of the majority, not minority, and could be characterised as "Teach us about them". This stage might also see the introduction of measures to accommodate the specific religious or cultural needs of minority groups within the organisation.
3. The next stage comes with the realisation that a simple 'multi-cultural' approach does not take account of the issues of racism and discrimination in society, and that measures are needed to tackle these. There is often a 'common sense' view that discrimination is caused by prejudice and racist attitudes - therefore, it is assumed, publicity and information campaigns to reduce peoples' prejudices and racist attitudes are required. It is also assumed that the right sort of information provision will lead to attitude change, and that furthermore, attitude change will lead to changes in behaviour. However, the eventual realisation that attitude change is much harder to produce, and that behavioural change does not necessarily follow on from attitude change, leads to the next stage, with its emphasis on *behavioural* change.
4. The next stage sees attempts to produce changes in people's behaviour to be more fruitful than trying to change peoples attitudes. If people are instructed in the correct professional workplace behaviour, their attitudes become less relevant, and indeed, their attitudes may even change as a result of behavioural change. It is seen to be particularly important to encourage appropriate workplace behaviour on the part of gatekeepers and

others whose activities could have a direct effect on the opportunities of ethnic minorities. Measures could include the introduction of fair recruitment and selection procedures, and training on how to operate these, and how to comply with anti-discrimination legislation. It might also include anti-harassment policies and training, and the introduction of disciplinary measures against racism and discrimination within the organisation. Addressing discriminatory behaviour in these ways is seen to be important in creating a 'level playing field' by removing unfair barriers to opportunity.

5. A later stage might be to use a combination of the above approaches in a general equal opportunities package, covering, for example, the range of possible measures set out in the Florence 'Joint Declaration'. This might include elements of positive action. Positive action initiatives are those over and above the simple provision of equal rights and the removal of discrimination. They work from the premise that equal treatment and the provision of a 'level playing field' is not enough. They might include, for example, helping immigrants and ethnic minorities compete for work on a more equal footing with others in the labour market by providing extra training relating to their specific needs, (as in 'stage 1') and/or subsidised work experience for refugees. In addition there could be special recruitment initiatives, such as translating job advertisements into ethnic minority languages, placing advertisements in the ethnic minority press, using statements to encourage applicants from minorities, and using images of ethnic minorities in publicity material. A stronger emphasis within this approach could be to aim for a long term proportional representation of minorities, helped by using ethnic monitoring, and targets. However, positive action is not positive discrimination - it does not seek to give ethnic minorities more favourable treatment in competition for jobs, and ultimately selection remains on merit.

The evidence from the case studies featured in this report suggest that good practice initiatives in Denmark seem to be stronger on the first two or three stages, and weaker on the last two. Training directed at the immigrants themselves is the most commonly accepted feature of the case studies. For example, there is a widespread recognition that without an adequate knowledge of the Danish language, and a reasonably good pronunciation of it, foreign workers are going to be severely disadvantaged in their work opportunities. There is also growing evidence of the 'stage 2' activity of providing training for service providers and other key workplace personnel from the majority workforce in the relevant cultural differences of ethnic minority clients. There have also been some examples of the 'stage 3' information campaigns for Danish workers showing positive aspects of an ethnically diverse workforce in an attempt to reduce attitudes of resistance to foreign co-workers.

There is less evidence of activities characterised by the fourth and fifth stages. The recognition of the problem of "pressure to discriminate" by employers when dealing with the AF, and the instructions to AF staff not to cooperate with this, is a move in the direction of 'anti-discrimination'. However, it is too soon to see how this works out in practice. Evidence from the UK suggests that there are range of subtle and constant pressures on staff of employment agencies to turn a blind eye to such requests, or to channel applicants away from potentially racist employers, so as to avoid the problem. Specific training was found to be needed to give staff the motivation and resources to counter such discriminatory pressures, and ultimately to report their unlawful activities to the appropriate authorities (Wrench 1990).

If we define positive action as extra activities over and above the attempts to provide a 'level playing field', then the icebreaker-type projects of the AF and the local authorities are examples which seem to have produced useful results. Furthermore, the desire within the municipality of Århus to have its own workforce reflect more closely the ethnic mix of its local catchment area is a move in the direction of positive action, particularly interesting because of its use of a form of ethnic monitoring, unusual in the Danish context. It still remains to be seen what specific form their means to this end will take, and how effective they will be. Within the Århus area, hospitals are for the first time instituting measures to make their services more culturally sensitive, (stage 2) and have also introduced policies for staff in the event of racism from patients. However, they have not considered the potential benefits of positive action in recruitment so that their staff might become more ethnically representative of local communities. In Århus sporveje, where ethnic minorities are well represented in employment, this is not the result of any positive action policy, but simply reflects the historical reluctance of Danes to take these jobs.

A sort of 'informal' positive action is operated by the activists in the trade union NIF network, who realise that simply providing equal rights for immigrant and refugee members is not going to do anything to overcome the problem of their severe under-representation at union meetings and within union structures. Consequently they involve themselves in grass-roots networking and lobbying at a personal level to increase migrant participation. More formal positive action is taken within the RBF union, which, apart from having special structures for immigrants within the union, provides courses for immigrants and special initiatives to encourage their access to union positions.

### **Positive and negative aspects**

The case studies selected for this report are amongst the best examples of their kind in Denmark. The positive side of this is that they demonstrate evidence of an increasing awareness of this relatively new problem area and a recognition by many in positions of influence that special policies and activities are needed, something which, according to interviewees, was not recognised even a few years ago. The negative side is that the case studies reflect a relatively limited state of awareness and activity in Denmark, and the fact that there is still some resistance to the extension of good 'anti-discrimination' practice.

It is clear that there are still major problems of attitudes at various levels of society. Like other European countries, Denmark has its share of open racism, and the effects of this have been described by some interviewees in this report. However, apart from this sort of unambiguous racism, there are other attitudes found among people of influence at the workplace, in unions and in politics which are positively detrimental to the introduction of the sort of "good practice" set out in the Florence declaration. One of the attitudes encountered and described by case study interviewees is a sort of "well-meaning colour blindness", where people are so sensitive about being thought racist that they refuse to recognise even genuine cases of special need in members of ethnic minorities. Another problematic attitude is that of an unthinking "assimilationism" which assumes that immigrants are going to adopt the majority Danish culture and that it is primarily the responsibility of the individual immigrant to assimilate successfully. There seems to be a slowness on the part of sections of public opinion to recognise the alternative possibility of a 'multi-cultural' society where different cultures have the right to exist simultaneously. According to some commentators, assimilationism has lain at

the root of Danish official policy towards immigrants for many years (Hamburger 1993). Although there is a desire to integrate immigrants into Danish society with the same opportunities as Danes, this concept of equality emphasises the individual and not the group, and fails to recognise the institutional and structural barriers to integration which exist in society.

This explains the relative lack of controversy over the most common "good practice" initiatives found in the research, namely the special language provision for immigrants. These are clearly adopted in response to an identifiable individual need, and as such are not incompatible with an 'assimilationist' perspective. The language provision described in this report is a very important first step, and is certainly necessary for the successful integration of many immigrants into Danish society on equal terms. The problem is that an over-emphasis on language provision fails to recognise a number of points. Firstly, there are still jobs around where more than a minimal knowledge of Danish is not necessary, and yet where the 'lack of Danish' is used as an excuse not to employ an immigrant. Secondly, and more importantly, it is also quite clear that even when there is no 'language problem' at all, immigrants and ethnic minorities are rejected, excluded, and differentially treated simply because of their ethnic background or skin colour. This has been shown to be the case in, for example, the UK and the Netherlands, where immigrants from former colonies who speak perfect English or Dutch as a first language still suffer discrimination. In Denmark it has been confirmed by the discrimination testing research described in Chapter 1, where young people speaking perfect Danish were shown to be regularly rejected in favour of white Danes (Hjarnø and Jensen 1996). Therefore, even the most effective and extensive language training will prove to be a waste of resources unless there is also a broader deployment of anti-discrimination policies (stages 4 and 5).

There seems to be, however, evidence of a resistance to anti-discrimination policies, perhaps for a number of reasons. Firstly, to introduce anti-racism and anti-discrimination measures is to admit that racism and discrimination exist, and this is still difficult for some people to acknowledge in Denmark. In societies with ostensibly democratic ideologies it is quite common for there to be such a denial of the problem (van Dijk 1993) and this may perhaps be particularly true in Denmark, where egalitarianism and tolerance are seen as valued parts of national ideology. Secondly, anti-discrimination measures, and positive action measures to compensate for discrimination, often operate on a group basis. This is necessary because discrimination itself operates against a person as a member of a group. However, group-based actions are always more controversial than measures based on individual need. They are also confused in Denmark (like in so many other countries) with positive *discrimination*, and this causes further resistance. For example, in March 1997 a member of parliament of the right-wing Dansk Folkeparti asked the Minister of Labour to comment on the decision of Randers Kommune to give positive special treatment to refugees and immigrants when filling vacancies in the council, calling this "discrimination against Danish applicants". However, it is quite possible for a council to introduce positive action measures to increase the representation of immigrants and refugees without this being in any way 'positive discrimination'. Positive action and special measures for immigrants do not entail giving preference to certain groups, lowering standards, or introducing quotas.

Finally, it seems that there is still a relatively weak appreciation of the business benefits of "good practice" in this area, such as those set out in the Florence declaration. There are some indications of moves which seem to be motivated by immediate considerations of labour shortage or client demand, such as the schemes to encourage and train refugees for jobs which



Danes are not applying for, or the recruitment of school teachers and kindergarten workers for their language skills. However, the corollary of this is that there would be seen to be no value in recruiting immigrants if Danes were applying for these jobs, and no value in recruiting ethnic minority teachers in those schools and kindergartens which have no ethnic minority pupils. There seems to be little recognition of the idea that "diversity pays", although one respondent from the Ministry of Labour was of the opinion that employers were now beginning to think in these terms.

In conclusion, there has been no desire in this report to set out whether Denmark is 'better' or 'worse' than its neighbours on issues of racism and employment discrimination. Some have tried to argue that ethnic discrimination in employment in Denmark must be worse because, compared to other countries, the gap between native Danish and ethnic minority unemployment is so much wider. However, this could equally be a result of the Danish welfare system which does not force ethnic minorities into the worst forms of low-paid, highly exploitative jobs found more commonly in the 'sweatshop' sectors of some other countries. Others have argued that problems of racism and ethnic discrimination are less of an issue in Denmark because of some major differences in the organisation of Danish society: for example, the ethic of egalitarianism within Danish national culture, the "Danish model" of industrial relations (Due et al 1994) with a high degree of cooperation and interdependence between the two sides and an emphasis on consensus rather than conflict, the high degree of trade union organisation, a strong welfare state, and so on. This is equally questionable. Such differences do not mean that there is 'no problem here', or imply that anti-discrimination measures are not relevant to Denmark. Racism and ethnic discrimination have been demonstrated to be a feature of the Danish labour market and employment, as they are elsewhere. What these national differences do mean is that some of the responses to counter these phenomena might take a peculiarly Danish form. They are still necessary, all the same.

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