

## City Impression Copenhagen

### 1) General Information

Copenhagen is a city of 602,000 inhabitants. 24% of all inhabitants are of non-Danish origin. The biggest groups of immigrants are from Pakistan, Turkey and Poland.

In Copenhagen there are around 62,000 children between the ages of 0-6 years. Around 50,000 children in this age group attend a childcare facility. Children from ethnic minorities visit childcare less often than children from Danish background (94% versus 77% in the age group 1- 2 years and 97% versus 89 % in the age group of 3-5 years old).

Most of the childcare facilities are municipal institutions. There are more than 400 institutions of the municipality of Copenhagen. Only a small proportion of all childcare institutions is privately or independently run. The number of private institutions is growing but the municipal institutions are still the largest part of all institutions.

The key objectives of childcare **in Denmark** are:

- To promote the well-being, development and learning of children
- To provide families with flexibility and options
- To break the vicious circle of deprivation of children who come from low-income families
- To create coherence and continuity between facilities

Since 2004, there has been a national curriculum for all institutions throughout Denmark. Each institution has to describe the relevant pedagogical approaches and activities to reach the objectives of the curriculum.

The **local Council** (from Copenhagen) is responsible for childcare and besides the parental contribution for almost all childcare funding as well. On the basis of the national key objectives the municipality can establish local objectives. The objective is to create the right service for all children and young people. One of the ways to achieve this is by creating communities in which all children and young people are included.

In order to support this initiative the administration (Child and Youth Administration) has developed an inclusion policy for those between 0-18 years. The focus is on the community and the efforts are based on the strengths of children, families and the community.

The overall goal of the inclusion policy is that all children and young people can thrive and develop in the communities they are part of.

This principle is described in 6 more specific goals: relationships and positive contact with a professional adult every day, partnerships with the parents, quality in transitions, inclusion and youth communities for all children, opportunities through language and systematic work by professionals, knowledge based and well-considered.

In this way, opportunities are created to use and develop knowledge, competences and resources so that current and future options and choices can be increased. The focus must always be on the child's or young person's competences, resources and learning. A good collaboration with the parents is important, because the home is the child's or young person's primary arena. The parents should therefore be involved in and have the opportunity to influence decisions made about the child.

The focus is on early and prevention action. This does not mean that all children or young people should be included in mainstream settings. There should still be special services for the children and young people who can benefit from them most.

The local council is also responsible for the supervision of all the facilities and for ensuring that children aged 3 who need language stimulation as well as children who do not attend childcare facilities are offered a language assessment test. Subsequently, the local council must offer language support activities.

## **2) Inclusion Politics**

Denmark signed the Salamanca Declaration in 1994, but the inclusion agenda has primarily gained force over the last decade, as, for instance, indicated by the establishment of a 'National Research Centre for Inclusion and Exclusion' (NVIE) in 2005 by the Ministry of Education and two university colleges. Also the Danish Ministry of Education highlights inclusion as a main pedagogical goal in Danish day care facilities for children between 0-6 years old.

The overall goal of the inclusion policy is that all children and young people can thrive and develop in the communities they are a part of.

Inclusion is an on-going process which involves creating open and development-oriented environments in which all children and young people can play an active part in the community. The objective is that all children and young people are seen, acknowledged and appreciated as the unique persons they are, which ensures that they can develop academically, personally and socially.

The six focal points for inclusion and therefore for inclusion policy are:

1. Open and development-oriented environments
2. Academic, social and personal development for everybody
3. Flexible resource allocation
4. Early and preventive action
5. Holistic thinking and bridge building
6. Inclusion as a dynamic and an on-going process.

However, there are some special institutions in Copenhagen because the objective is not that all children attend regular institutions at all costs. If a child needs a place in a special institution for its well-being, then action will be taken. Also the well-being of the other children in a group can be a reason for a placement in a special institution. But it must be the exception and not the rule.

### **3. Inclusion policy and extra effort where needed**

The general inclusive policy in Denmark and Copenhagen is supported by a broad range of the political parties and the population in general.

The inclusion practice in some parts of Denmark and also in Copenhagen did not always have the intended results. As of 2010, integrative politics have gained momentum. At that time 84,000 students in the whole of Denmark were assigned to special education. 33,000 students (5.6% of the students) were placed in a separate institution.

This arrangement took 30% of all financial resources in education – with an upward trend. From then on, the practice has been changed with a stronger emphasis on inclusion in childcare and education.

These results in Denmark can also be seen in Copenhagen. A growing awareness by politicians of exclusion in some parts of Copenhagen emerged. Especially, progress in language competences of children in these areas has been insufficient, and also the progress in intellectual development at the age of 3-5 years has not been adequate. Furthermore, the relationships between professionals, adults and children were not good enough:

- 20 % children need special attention in the first year of life;
- 6 % of children are socially marginalised
- 18 % of children, especially bilingual children, in pre-school were linguistically challenged (in 2014).

Therefore the city of Copenhagen developed a temporary Early Intervention Program (EIP) in the parts of the city with the most socially marginalised families/children. In six parts of the city, 72 childcare institutions were chosen to work in the EIP. But the focus in the EIP is not only on the childcare institutions but also on health and social services in the neighbourhood. A very tight working together of childcare staff with health care staff from birth on is at the heart of the programme. For example, childcare workers visit the families after the birth of a child together with a health care worker. They try to persuade parents to bring their child to a qualitatively good institution early. In the institution there is extra staff and the leadership in the institution has been strengthened. Also the interior design of provisions is redesigned.

Through early intervention and personal contact the transitions from home to childcare and later from childcare to school are strengthened. The parents are visited also when the child is in the institution and parents are given extra tools for example books, play material etcetera. The development of the children is (better) assessed during the years in childcare.

It is a temporary programme but the principles are valid in all parts of Copenhagen to be successful in general but also in this project. For the city of Copenhagen, an excellent support system for teachers/ caregivers and staff in childcare facilities has very high priority.

In the area of Norrebro/Bispebjerg (nearly 100,000 inhabitants), there are around 130 professionals who support the parents and the childcare workers. Support and a high quality services are a key to a more successful inclusion policy.