

## EWSI Analysis on Voluntary and Citizens' Initiative: Denmark

### 1 INTRODUCTION

---

Are considered as citizens' initiatives all activities mobilising large numbers of volunteers (e.g. in workplaces, schools, local communities, etc.) to support immigrants' long-term integration and/or open up the public to integration matters and diversity. **These initiatives most notably involve people-to-people or mutual learning activities** matching migrants with mentors, peers or people volunteering their time or space. These initiatives may concern housing, mentoring, child or university-level education, extracurricular activities for children, lifelong learning, language learning, information provision, assistance with public services, translation, job preparation, awareness-raising/advocacy, etc.

Given EWSI's thematic focus, the emphasis is placed on citizens' initiatives focusing on long-term reception (e.g. during the asylum procedure) and integration (of beneficiaries of international protection and/or other categories of migrants), and not on the **initial front-line humanitarian reception for asylum-seekers** (e.g. food, clothing, shelter before entering the reception phase).

### 2 LONG-ESTABLISHED VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

---

*Description of initiatives that have been running for several years.*

1. [The Danish Red Cross](#) has a number of voluntary initiatives:

[Stores](#): 233 nationwide, where people contribute with time and ideas to raise funds – annually more than DKR 50 million – for the organisations aid work, including the asylum and integration work.

[Representative for unaccompanied minors](#): Legally mandated guardian for unaccompanied or separated children in their interaction with official Danish authorities ensure that the best interests of the child are respected by authorities. They are also go-to persons of trust for the children.

[Homework helper for kids](#): 28 homework cafés nationwide for those asylum seeker or refugee children, which lack networks of support.

[Asylum Centre Volunteer](#): Danish Red Cross operates most of the asylum centres in Denmark by way of contract with the Immigration Board. As part of this, 450 volunteers try to create a safe, meaningful and dignified everyday life for residents. Activities range from sports, homework, creative labs, IT cafés, bicycle shops, etc.

2. **Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd (DUF)**

[Krydsfelt](#) (Partnerskabsprojekt): Launched in 2010 to facilitate and inspire local organisations coordinated effort to include more new Danish children and youth in local civil society activities.

Support is done through financial contribution, network meetings and learning activities. Each year, 9 cities have been selected as recipients of this aid.

### 3. **Danske Gymnastik og Idrætsforeninger (DGI) – Inklusion**

Between 2011-2013, annual funds of DKR 1,75 million (in total DKR 5,25 million) from the Integration Fund were used to launch the Idræt+ project in 5 regions (Greater Copenhagen, Northern Zealand, Aarhus, Midtjylland and South East Jutland). Its purpose was to affiliate youth (primarily on youth between 14-19 years) with other background than Danish to DGIs sports associations.

### 4. **Dansk Idrætsforening (DIF) – [Get2Sport](#)**

The project, which aims to include minority youth in the organisation's activities has existed since 2005. It is a collaboration between selected municipalities and sports associations. Between 2010-2013, Get2Sport received DKR 15,2 million, primarily from the Ministry of Gender, Children, Equality and Inclusion, and after that it has received support from the IOC. It follows three stages:

- 1) Two Get2Sport-workers support the collaboration by travelling to the municipalities, where they hold meetings, and information-exchange sessions about the project.
- 2) Funds are devoted to hire locally known and respected workers, such as pedagogues or teachers, who for a certain amount of hours per week, support training and organisational staff in order to free resources for sports activities targeting minority youth. In 2013, the Danish Football Union (DBU) and Get2Sport co-arranged 10 summer football schools, and 15 more in 2014. DBU Get2FootballSchool's won the Rode Award for its work in 2013.
- 3) New sport offers are developed particularly for girls, as these tend to have a lower degree of participation in sport than boys.

### 5. **KVINFO [Mentor network](#)**

Launched in 2002 as a pilot project establishing a mentor-programme for women with other ethnic background than Danish under the long-existing KVINFO-network, the idea was to create synergies between often highly-educated KVINFOs users and ethnic minority women, who are in need support to realise their potential on the job market and to be better integrated in the Danish society. Many of these have limited knowledge of Danish and lack social networks and knowledge of rules and own rights. The dual goal has therefore been to strengthen mentees' self-confidence, as well as strengthening the voluntary integration effort by mobilising well established women in the civil society for mentor work. KVINFO's mentornetwork received the Alt for Damernes Womens Award as well as the Integration Award in the Public Danish Job Market, 2004. In 2005, the initiative was one of two Danish nominees to the European Integration Award. It received honourable mention by the OECD in 2007. The same year, the network grows to one of the worlds largest of its kind. In 2009, the network conducted a pilot project, which paved the way for 15 minority women' participation in Danish and European politics, by pairing them with Danish women politicians, spokeswomen and EU parliamentarians. Since its inception, more than 7000 women and men have participated in the network and more than 3200 mentor-processes have been concluded.

## 6. Danish Refugee Council

**Frivillignet:** Coordination and information-exchange web portal comprising all voluntary activities for the Danish Refugee Council.

**Network-families:** Initiative which, for years, have aided newly arrived refugees with day-to-day questions.

**Mentornet:** Initiative where volunteers make their own knowledge, experience and network available for a person with a minority background. Mentornet is grounded in the Integration Act, but may also aid refugees with a range of daily projects and challenges, depending on how local authorities understand preparing for education or the job market.

**Boys clubs:** Since 2008, the Danish Refugee Council has created 12 clubs for boys with minority background between 13-17 years, designed like safe havens where this segment of the population can form social ties and friendships outside their homes.

**Girls clubs:** For girls between 8-17, which for several reasons are not covered by offers in the local area. Activities cover everything from football tournaments to making jewellery, while meeting many new cultures.

**Mind Your Own Business:** Offer to ethnic minority boys, who wants to start up their own microbusinesses, by jointly mobilising the local business and civil society in order to strengthen the boys' scientific competences, social relations and their affiliation to the educational system and job market. So far 18 new microbusinesses have been started all over the country. The initiative received the Royal Couple's Social Award in 2015.

**DFUNK:** Is the Youth pendant of the Danish Refugee Council. It conducts a range of activities from bowling to summer camps and *political networking activities*. It has developed [10 recommendations](#) to improve young refugees' conditions in Denmark:

## 3 NEW VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES:

---

*Description of major initiatives started only recently, particularly since the large numbers of refugee arrivals in 2015.*

**Venligboerne** started out as a Facebook-group in the small town of Hjørring in 2012, but has experienced an explosive growth during 2015 to reached over 80.000 members in over 70 Danish cities, including 38.000 in Copenhagen, 1600 in Randers, 8200 in Aarhus, 2200 in Aalborg, 2800 in Odense and 335 in Sønderborg. As these grouping are formed in closed social networks, it is difficult to establish the exact number of volunteers as well as the exact number of beneficiaries. Its goal is to involve local communities in the day-to-day meeting with refugees. Venligboerne is an extremely dynamic community which recruits, mobilises and communicates primarily through social networks, such as Facebook. Here, refugees can ask questions or seek company, and volunteers can respond in a matter of minutes. From small beginnings, the initiative has expanded to numerous activities, involving anything from donation of bicycles, furniture's or clothing, to helping people move, arrange dinners or provide legal assistance, language training, education assistance, etc. In general, it aims at creating new networks for newcomers. Venligboerne is a 2.0 citizen-evolution of mentor networks. In Vesterbro, Venligboerne also opened a café, Café Venligbo.

At the outset, efforts to include refugees were not the main focus, but just a subchapter under the general aim of welcoming new people to local communities. With the evolution of the refugee crisis, and the arrival of more refugees to Denmark, however, the initiative experienced a meteoric growth. Now, it is also involved in several initiatives in Hungary, Germany, Greece, etc. In November 2015, Venligboerne received the Hal Koch Democracy Award from Krogerup Højskole. It has also received a local Rotary Award, the Samvirke and COOPs Voluntary Award. At the 2015 Folkemødet, the founder of the first Venligboerne group, Merete Bonde Pilgaard received the award for the most “amazing volunteer of the year”.

## 4 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

---

*Description and comparison of the profile of volunteers active in old versus new initiatives.*

Comparing the numbers of volunteers between new and older initiatives is difficult, but it seems certain that the new initiative, Venligboerne, has far more active members than the traditional networks. The largest traditional volunteer-network, Danish Refugee Council’s Frivillignet, has some 5000 members, while Venligboerne has over 150.000. Moreover, members of new and older networks sometimes overlap.

Since the beginning of the 2015 refugee crisis, long-standing organisations such as Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council have also experienced an important increase of the number of volunteers. The boost of voluntary aid thus appears to be general, spanning new and older networks. While the numbers of refugees arriving (as of 2015) was relatively low, the media coverage was very intense, and this probably reinforced the volunteer drive.

Concerning the ethnic background of volunteers, third country nationals tend to be underrepresented in both new and older networks, although in both a significant minority is involved, for instance in mentor-activities. In Venligboerne, many Danish citizens with a refugee background, or parental refugee background, have gotten involved in cultural, translation or mentorship activities.

## 5 INNOVATION ASPECT

---

*Description and comparison of innovative or entrepreneurial aspects of the old versus new initiatives.*

Compared to the Danish Refugee Council, Red Cross, Get2Sport or DUF-activities, the Venligboerne-initiative has a much looser organisational and operational structure. This makes it easy for new members to get involved, and for old ones to sign out. As the initiative is grounded on social media, activities and specific tasks can be communicated, discussed and organised much faster than in the older networks. For instance, Venligboerne is separated into city- or regional Facebook groups, and one member may in the morning write that a refugee family of four needs help with moving into an apartment and volunteers who can assist with cars or lifting power can then sign up, and typically, within some hours, the necessary help has been found.

The speed with which these activities are undertaken represent an innovative aspect, as do the “1-to-1” aspect where individuals can help, meet and connect with other individuals, mediators.

## 6 ADDED VALUE

---

*Description of the added value of such initiatives (both long-established and new), including the uniqueness of their activities compared to the existing practices of the (1) state and (2) NGOs.*

One clear added value is what volunteer networks in Denmark have traditionally struggled with personal contact for lasting social networks. Experience tells that this is crucial in the integration process. The social media-dimension of the Venligboerne-network allow the start of integration processes by 1-to-1 meetings which then evolves to practical matters, whereas the opposite has been the case earlier. The drawback is that such looser affiliation will make it harder to keep volunteers engaged and active. So potentially, volunteers could drop off quicker than in traditional networks.

## 7 IMPACT

---

*Description and comparison of the impact of old versus new initiatives.*

There seems to be a certain overlap between members of existing NGOs and the new Venligboerne-network, this also means that the discharging of certain of the daily tasks is taken care of by both Venligboerne and, say, Danish Red Cross-representatives or Danish Refugee Council networks. However, traditional NGOs have not yet attempted to emulate the social media-strategy of Venligboerne.

Local and state structures have in recent years been streamlined and exposed to massive budgetary cuts. Therefore, local caseworkers have, for a while, been unable to perform exactly the kinds of 1-to-1, daily encounters with refugees, that both traditional and the newer voluntary initiatives strive. Several caseworkers inform that without the volunteers, the integration effort would collapse in many parts of the country.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Als Research, 2011, *Kønsligestilling blandt etniske minoriteter i Danmark – Best practice og kortlægning af viden og indsatser*. Ligestillingsafdelingen under Minister for Ligestilling.
- Bloksgaard, L., 2010, *Integration, mentoring & networking. Erfaringer fra KVINFO's mentornetværk for indvandrer- og flygtningekvinder i Danmark*. Aalborg: Institut for Historie, Internationale Studier og Samfundsforhold. FREIA's tekstserie; Nr.73. 10.5278/freia. 19821708.
- Clutterbuck, D., Poulsen, K.M., and Kochan, F. (eds) *Developing Successful Diversity Mentoring Programmes – An International Casebook*. McGraw Hill Education.
- Frivillignet, 2014, *Netværksfamilie for flygtninge – hjælpe nye familier godt i gang i Danmark*.
- LG Insight and Foreningen Nydansker, 2011, *Brug frivillige mentorer – en guide til frivillige foreninger og organisationer*. Metodehæfte, Integrationsministeriet.
- OECD, 2007, *The labour market integration of immigrants in Denmark*. Thomas Liebig, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No.50.
- Oxford Research, 2010, *Sammenlignende analyse af frivillighedsindsatsen på integrationsområdet: Dansk Flygtningehjælp, Dansk Røde Kors, KVINFO's mentornetværk, Get2Sport*. Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration.
- Oxford Research, 2014, *Slutevaluering af puljen "Forpligtende samarbejde om videreførelse af det frivillige integrationsarbejde"*.
- Oxford Research, 2013, *Slutevaluering af Røde Kors' integrationsarbejde 2009-2013*.
- Petrovski, K., 2012, *Investeringer i etniske minoritetsforeninger. En landsdækkende undersøgelse af de etniske minoritetsforeninger og deres ansøgning om økonomisk støtte*. Frivilligrådet
- Sommer, S.K., 2012, *Familiementorprojektet i Aarhus 2009-2011. Evaluerings-rapport*. Frivilligcenter Aarhus.