

# Lifelong learning

*In Denmark, there is a tradition of taking part in education through all phases of life.*

## Introduction

Denmark is one of the countries where most people participate in education: adult education and continuing training, on-the-job competence development and liberal adult education activities in their leisure time. Both public and private investments in the development of new qualifications and competences are among the highest in Europe.

A considerable proportion of overall learning and competence development takes place in connection with the job, and it has long been an established practice for provision to be made for the employees' competence development and educational planning in the enterprises in the collective agreements between the social partners.

A highly qualified and well-educated workforce plays a decisive role in the global knowledge economy and is the key to Denmark's development as a leading knowledge society.

In light of the challenges facing Denmark, the Government has launched extensive educational reforms that will contribute to securing continued growth and welfare in Denmark in the years to come. The reforms are to ensure higher quality and better coherence in educational efforts- from pre-school class to higher education and in adult education and continuing training.



In spring 2007 the Government finalised a report on Denmark's strategy for lifelong learning as part of European cooperation on education. This constitutes the Government's contribution to the realisation of the common goals in the Lisbon strategy. The report is available at: [www.uvm.dk](http://www.uvm.dk). The overall aim of the strategy is to make Denmark a leading knowledge society with strong competitiveness and strong cohesion. Education, lifelong skills upgrading, research and innovation at the highest international level are crucial for achieving this aim.

## Objectives for lifelong learning

The strategy for lifelong learning includes the following objectives:

- A coherent education system from pre-school to higher education must provide the opportunity for everyone to acquire excellent basic skills, a qualifying education and a solid foundation for lifelong learning. There must be equal opportunities and room for all.
- The education programmes must be world-class. The education system is to foster talent and be more accommodating to weak learners. Quality is given

pride of place, and education must match the needs of the labour market and the society.

- There must be relevant, high quality adult education and continuing training for everyone in the labour market which matches the needs and puts particular emphasis on the need for lifelong skills upgrading for those with the lowest level of education. There is a shared responsibility to ensure that everyone in the labour market is engaged in lifelong learning.
- Systematic competence development in the workplace should be strengthened in both public and private enterprises. Increased public and private investment in continuing training and competence development for employees is to contribute to improving the skills of individuals and strengthening the development of the enterprises.
- Opportunities for guidance and counselling must be improved and help ensure the best possible conditions for pupils, students and adults to choose education programmes and to participate in lifelong learning.
- All forms of education and learning should be based on and build on the knowledge, skills and competences of individuals. In adult education and continuing training new and improved opportunities are to be created promoting visibility and recognition of an individual's prior learning.
- Coherent education paths and transparency in the education system are to contribute to targeted education and lifelong skills upgrading and facilitate the best possible use of public resources.
- A global perspective must be included in all education programmes contributing to strengthening internationalisation and cooperation with the world around us.
- Stronger higher education environments are to be created in order to contribute to higher

quality in education and knowledge development, and a better framework and better conditions are to be developed for interaction between educational institutions and enterprises and other relevant players.

In order to fulfil the overall objectives of education and lifelong skills upgrading, the Government has prioritised a number of specific goals and initiatives within the overall education system and in the area of adult education and continuing training.

Lifelong learning is also being supported and promoted through actions and initiatives in a large number of other areas, for example employment and integration efforts, liberal adult education and in association and cultural activities.

Realisation of the extensive reforms is predicated on all relevant players accepting co-responsibility and making an active contribution. It is the aim of the Government to strengthen dialogue and partnerships between all players. This is decisive for realising Denmark's strategy for education and lifelong skills upgrading.

### **Goals for a world-class education system**

It is the Government's aim that the education system, from pre-school to higher education, ensures that all young people receive a high-quality education and a solid foundation for engaging in lifelong education.

The education system should also contribute to fostering a learning culture that promotes creativity, independence and responsibility. There must be cohesion between the various education pathways and levels such that the individual can obtain qualifications and competences. The Government has set the following specific goals for all levels of the education system—from pre-school to university level higher education.

### *Pre-school*

- All children should have a good start in school.
- Language assessment for all children at the age of three and again at the age of six when they start pre-school.
- Compulsory education to be extended from nine to ten years of schooling by pre-school class being made an obligatory part of the municipal primary and lower secondary school.
- Curricula to be drawn up in all day-care facilities.
- Subject-based teaching in Danish to be introduced, in particular reading in the pre-school class.

### *Primary and lower secondary school (Folkeskole)*

- All pupils must have excellent academic skills and knowledge
- The Folkeskole must provide pupils with knowledge and skills, promote creativity and independence and prepare them for further education.
- The pupils must be among the best in the world in four basic subject areas: reading, mathematics, natural science and English
- All young people are to gain knowledge and skills that provide them with the basis for actively taking part in a globalised world.

### *Youth education*

- All young people are to have a qualifying education. At least 85 per cent of all young people are to complete a youth education by 2010, and a minimum of 95 per cent by 2015.
- The education programmes are to be attractive and of the highest quality.
- The general upper secondary education programmes are to provide pupils with good academic and general competences enabling more to complete higher education.
- The vocational education and training programmes are to challenge the most talented pupils and provide them with increased possibilities for higher education. At the same

time, the programmes are to provide realistic educational and training possibilities for academically weaker pupils.

#### *Higher education*

- At least 50 per cent of a youth cohort are to have a higher education in 2015.
- The quality of short cycle and medium cycle higher education programmes and university education programmes must match the best in the world.
- The content of all higher education programmes must match the needs of society.
- All young people are to obtain an education with a global perspective.
- Young people are to be encouraged to begin higher education programmes earlier, and the education programmes are to be organised so as to minimise delay.

#### **Goals for adult and continuing education**

The constant changes in the labour market and in society continuously make new demands on the skills and adaptability of individuals. Participation in adult education and continuing training helps individuals participate actively in the labour market throughout their lives. The competitiveness of Danish enterprises and the quality of services is largely dependent on investment in continuing training and competence development.

Demand for adult education and continuing training among workers and enterprises must therefore be strengthened. Those with the lowest level of formal education and training, who have the greatest need for and barriers to education, must be motivated. Public and private enterprises must be encouraged to become learning and developing workplaces to a greater degree and to help strengthen the development of human resources.

Based on a close dialogue with the social partners, the Government

has laid down the following goals to be promoted in adult education and continuing training:

- Everyone should engage in lifelong learning
- Adult education and continuing training efforts must be effective and flexible. They must support good job opportunities for individuals, good competitiveness in enterprises and high employment and prosperity in society.
- Adult education and continuing training must provide everyone with opportunities to improve competences - not least those with the lowest level of formal education.
- Adult education and continuing training must reflect changes in the qualification requirements and needs of the labour market.

#### **Crosscutting actions for education and lifelong skills upgrading**

##### *Guidance and counselling*

Guidance for young people must be strengthened and professionalised. It is the Government's aim that guidance at all levels in the education system is to provide young people with an informed basis for choosing an education programme that corresponds to their own desires and abilities and to society's need for qualified labour.

The guidance is also to contribute to strengthened bridging between the levels.

Guidance and counselling about opportunities in adult education and continuing training for employees and enterprises must also be improved. It is the Government's aim that the guidance effort is to contribute to strengthening and qualifying the demand by both employees and enterprises. For the groups that have the greatest barriers to participation, the outreach guidance and counselling effort is to be increased by means of a number of new initiatives in the area of adult guidance and counselling.

#### *Recognition of prior learning*

It is the Government's aim to create better opportunities for individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences assessed and recognised within the adult education and continuing training system regardless of where they were acquired. This is to promote the participation by adults in adult education and continuing training and to improve their opportunities in the labour market. It is to be promoted especially through the implementation of legislation on increased recognition of prior learning in adult education and continuing training, from general adult education to diploma level.

#### *Cohesion and transparency in the education system*

The Government aims at better transition between all levels in the education system and opportunities to transfer credit, and for the education system to be transparent and accessible to all.

This is to be implemented through, in particular, better bridging between the primary and lower secondary school and youth education programmes, better opportunities for credit transfer in the education system, increased recognition of prior learning in adult and continuing training, and the development of a national qualifications framework for lifelong learning.

A coherent qualifications framework will also help improve comparison and recognition of qualifications between Denmark and other European countries.

#### *Global perspective in the education programmes*

All young people should complete an education programme with global perspectives and many more of them should spend some time studying abroad. It is the aim of the Government that education should provide young Danes with strong academic competences and a global outlook.

### ***Stronger professional institutions***

It is the Government's goal to create fewer and stronger institutions with broad academic breadth and high quality. This should help develop and future-proof education and training, and help strengthen knowledge development and innovation through interaction with research and enterprises etc.

### ***Partnerships in education and training and lifelong skills upgrading***

The Government and members of the Globalisation Council have entered into a framework agreement on binding partnerships that can help convert the strategy into concrete action.

Partnerships in the area of education and competence development can help strengthen the quality of and demand for education and adult education and continuing training and can help strengthen regional efforts to promote growth and business development.

### **The next steps**

The implementation of Denmark's strategy for education and lifelong skills upgrading for all is to help to strengthen lifelong learning in all parts of the education system, in the labour market and in society. The political agreement on future welfare policy and the agreement on the implementation of the

globalisation fund in 2006 have established the overall goals and framework for a long-term, coherent development of education and training in Denmark.

This is a long-term strategy to be implemented in the period 2007-2012, which is to improve both the quality and capacity of the education system and of adult education and continuing training. It is the aim of the Government that all- national, regional and local players- are to become engaged in and accept co-responsibility for the widespread embedding of the strategy in Danish society.