

**The Red Cross Asylum Department
Denmark**

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EUROPEAN NETWORK OF ASYLUM RECEPTION
ORGANISATIONS



Report of an exchange programme in Denmark

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Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Asylum procedure in Denmark
3. The Danish Red Cross asylum department
 - 3.1. Asylum centres
 - 3.1.1. Departure and Reception centres
 - 3.2. Special centres
 - 3.2.1. Centre Kongelunden
 - 3.2.2. Centre Kribskov
 - 3.2.3. Woman's centre 'Fasan'
 - 3.3. The Culture House
 - 3.3.1. Magazine "New Times"
 - 3.3.2. ASIG
 - 3.4. Activation rules
4. Human Trafficking
 - 4.1. Question about human trafficking
 - 4.2. Definition
 - 4.3. What the (Danish) Red Cross does
5. My recommendations
 - 5.1. Children
 - 5.1.1. Translating
 - 5.1.2. Playrooms
 - 5.1.3. Integration vs. Repatriation
 - 5.1.4. Children- and youth activities
 - 5.2. Human Trafficking
6. Enclosures
 - 6.1. The Red Cross
 - 6.2. Reception of asylum seekers
 - 6.2.1. Allowances
 - 6.3. Magazine "New Times"
 - 6.4. Written information about Human Trafficking
 - 6.5. Information in the internet about Human Trafficking

1. Introduction

From May 8th until May 19th I stayed in Denmark for the ENARO exchange programme.

First of all I would like to thank everybody making this experience possible, especially the people of the Red Cross in Denmark, who shared information and ideas with me and received me with a lot of hospitality.

The programme that the Red Cross offered my Swiss Enaro colleagues and me, gave me a very good impression of the reception of asylum seekers in Denmark.

We visited the reception centres in Kongelunden, Sandholm and the Fasan women's centre in Copenhagen. We also visited the Culture House in Copenhagen, what was most impressive. I will describe these centres and the Culture house shortly in this report.

My organization, the COA, asked me to investigate the subject of Human Trafficking. I had never really been confronted with this theme, but I found it most interesting to read and hear about it. As the subject of Human Trafficking is to widespread, I will only give some general information. I already shared a lot of written information with my colleagues working for the COA's project concerning Human Trafficking. In the enclosures I will describe where to find this information.

A lot of what I have seen and experienced in the reception of asylum seekers in Denmark, can be compared to the way we organize the reception of asylum seekers in The Netherlands. Most important of the two weeks in Denmark was that it gave me a lot of inspiration and new ideas. In my recommendations, I will try to explain how I think we can improve some parts of the reception of asylum seekers in the Netherlands.

The experience of the Enaro exchange programme is useful for my own development and hopefully useful for others reading this report.

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2. Asylum procedure in Denmark

In 2004 about 3200 people applied for asylum in Denmark. In that year some 2200 cases were reviewed and about 10% were granted asylum. In 2004 most people came from Afghanistan, Iraq, Montenegro and Russia. The Danish Immigration Service is responsible for processing the applications for asylum. More information about the DIS can be found on: www.udlst.dk

Submission of the asylum application

- Registrar with the police
- Possible transfer to the Reception Centre and the filling out of application forms.
- The Immigration Service decides on the basis of the police registration report to:

1. Rejection to a safe third country.

Denmark rejects processing the asylum application and the asylum seeker must go back and seek asylum in the country where he was prior to arrival in Denmark.

2. The sending back/transference to another EU-country

Denmark shall not process the asylum application and the asylum seeker must travel to the EU-country which, according to the Dublin Convention, is responsible for processing the asylum application

3. Denmark accepts to process the asylum application

- Possible filling out of the asylum application form, or translation of the already filled out form.
- In depth interview with the Immigration Service
- The Immigration Service decides on the basis of the application and the interview on which procedure the application shall be processed in:

A. Manifestly unfounded:

- The case is referred to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- The asylum seeker goes for an interview with the DRC.
- The DRC may find that a case is not manifestly unfounded. If so, the applicant has the right to appeal.
- If the DRC agrees with the Immigration Service's evaluation (manifestly unfounded) the Immigration Service makes a decision in the case. The asylum seeker is notified of the rejection for asylum without the right to appeal to the Refugee Board.

B. Normal procedure

- Asylum
- Rejection

Appeal

- Rejections are automatically considered to be under appeal to the Refugee Appeals Board
- Lawyer is appointed to represent the asylum seeker.
- Normally the asylum seeker is given the opportunity to attend the hearing of the case by the Refugee Appeals Board.
- The Refugee Appeals Board reaches a decision: rejection or asylum

Rejection:

- The rejection of the application for asylum is final and the asylum seeker must leave the country

Asylum:

- Recognition of refugee status
- Residence permit
- Three year introduction programme

3. The Red Cross Asylum Department

In Denmark the Red Cross Asylum Department is responsible for operating most of the accommodations used for the reception of asylum seekers.

The work of the Red Cross Asylum Department is grounded on the Red Cross principles: *Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary service, Unity and Universality*. The asylum department has to ensure all residents have a safe, meaningful and dignified waiting time at the asylum centres. It is very important that asylum seekers strengthen and maintain their skills while they are waiting. One of the fundamental principles of the Red Cross is neutrality. This means that the Danish Red Cross Asylum department has nothing to do with the processing of residents individual cases.

The Danish state asked the Asylum Department of the Red Cross to organize the reception of asylum seekers. The department is financed by the state, while other parts of the Red Cross are financed by donations and collections.

As of 1 February 2006, the estimated number of asylum seekers to be housed in accommodation centres was 2,479 persons. And a total of 10 accommodation centres were in service around the country.

3.1. Departure and Reception centres

There are two Reception- and departure centres in Denmark, located at Centre Sandholm, in Allerød Municipality, and Centre Avnstrup, in Hvalsø Municipality. I visited the Sandholm centre.

The Sandholm centre and the Avnstrup centre receive new arrived asylum seekers in Denmark. The centres are operated together with the Immigration Service. This is where asylum seekers get registered.



Residents at the departure centres are asylum seekers who will not co-operate with the police on their departure after they have received final rejections of their application for asylum and have not left the country by the set deadline.

A number of special conditions that differ from the conditions at normal centres apply at the departure centres. These departures centres feature:

- Cafeteria service, i.e. residents are provided with meals three times daily
- Asylum seekers on the food allowance program do not receive any form of cash allowance.
- Information about the food allowance program can be found in the enclosures.
- There are extra guards to ensure that only individuals with approved business are allowed access to centres. This means that only individuals invited by residents are admitted to centres
- There are police present in order to ensure order
- Adult residents are not permitted to participate in courses or job activation while awaiting departure
- Residents may not relocate unless the Immigration Service permits them to do so

3.2. Special centres

The Red Cross also operates special centres, like the centre for unaccompanied minors in Gribskov, the woman's centre 'Fasan' in Copenhagen and the special care centre in Kongelunden. I visited the last two centres.

3.2.1 Centre Kongelunden

Centre Kongelunden is a special care centre for asylum seekers who are in need of care beyond the care which is given to all asylum seekers. The centre has 150 special care places and 100 regular places. The staff works in shifts and is present 24 hours a day.

The referral to the centre's special care places takes place by recommending the case in question to a referral committee, managed by The Danish Immigration Service. The Danish Red Cross is represented in the referral committee with: The Asylum Department's doctor and psychiatrist, the head of the health department and head of Special Care Centre Kongelunden.



3.2.2. Centre for unaccompanied minors Gribskov

In Denmark there is one centre for unaccompanied minors, located in Gribskov. In Centre Gribskov, within the first six weeks the child follows a reception programme at the centre, including interviews, medical screening and an examination by a doctor. The child will also follow a training course in order to obtain strategies making the child able to manage its own life in Denmark.

Unfortunately the planned visit to this centre was cancelled. Instead we visited the Woman's centre Fasan in Copenhagen. The staff members working in that facility could also give me some information about the centre in Gribskov. It seemed to be organized in a similar way as we organize the accommodation of unaccompanied minors in Holland. A lot is focussed on maintaining and developing skills, like cooking, cleaning, maintaining relationships, etc. Also education and spare time activities are important in the centre. Like in Holland, the amount of unaccompanied minors decreased. In 2004 about 117 came to Denmark

3.2.3. The Woman's centre 'Fasan'

A centre only and especially for women (and their children) is located in Copenhagen. It has around 59 places. The Red Cross staff in the reception centres can discuss whether it would be good for a certain female asylum seeker to live in the Fasan Centre and whether they should offer a place in that centre. There are no real criteria for it and it is up to the asylum seeker to accept the offer. Most women living in this centre are not comfortable living with men, for whatever reason. It can be a safe environment for these women. Men are only allowed as visitors until 23.00 at night and women with sons turning 14 years old, must leave the centre.

3.3. The Culture House in Copenhagen

I was very impressed by the ‘Kulturhus’ (The Culture House). Since 1994 the Culture House has been the centre for a wide range of activities for asylum seekers, living in the area. Visiting the Culture House I noticed the equality between Red Cross staff and asylum seekers. They seemed to work together as colleagues, supporting and stimulating each other. One part I found most interesting was ‘the open door’ policy, something I can't imagine in my work in Holland. The activities organized in the Culture House are very diverse. Different language courses, like Danish and English as well as courses in Danish Democracy. Also very practical courses and activities are organized, like computer courses. People can work as a receptionist, in the Culture House café/restaurant, bicycle repair shop or internet café. (also see 3.4. Activation rules)

3.3.1. Magazine “New Times”

One thing that impressed me most at my visit of the Culture House was that asylum seekers produce the “New Times”, a magazine that gives a different and clear look on how asylum seekers experience the world around them. In the enclosures I add some links to the latest internet-editions of the magazine.

3.3.2. Asig (Asylum Seekers Information Group)

During my visit to the Culture House we received a clear introduction from one of the asylum seekers working in the Culture house as a journalist. His son, who was a photographer for the “New Times”, supported him. They gave information to us about legal procedures and the Asylum Department in general. Although I knew much of it already, I found it a much more convincing way of informing outsiders, especially because of the personal notes they added to the objective information. The Asig group produces very clear presentations on different subjects concerning asylum seekers. The Asig is able to inform all kinds of people, like on schools, etc.

3.4. Activation Rules

In 2003 the Danish Parliament adopted new rules. Asylum seekers in Denmark above the age of 18 have to participate in ‘activation’ in order to receive extra money.

In the first four weeks in Denmark, asylum seekers will have to participate in a 30 hour introduction course. It is meant to give asylum seekers the first elementary knowledge about Danish society. Asylum seekers also have to do necessary daily chores at the asylum centre, such as cleaning shared facilities. If it has not been decided yet whether the application for asylum is to be processed in Denmark, only this in-house activation is allowed.

If the asylum application will be processed in Denmark, asylum seekers can also do un-paid work outside the centre. In this phase asylum seekers can receive about ten hours of training a week. This training can include for example Danish lessons, English lessons or a computer course. Detailed information about allowances and the extra money that can be received, is included in the enclosures.

4. Human Trafficking

A personal note:

I think that everybody who is involved with vulnerable (groups of) people, like asylum seekers, should be aware of the existents of 'Human Trafficking'. In our work, the reception of asylum seekers, it does not seem to be a relevant issue. Ones in a while we hear or face somebody disappearing and most of the times we forget about it very soon, saying it's 'another part of the job'. I hope that COA's project "Bestrijding mensenhandel" will open the eyes of people working for the COA and being responsible for the reception and having possibilities to signalise and even prevent human trafficking in whatever way it occurs.

I am glad that being sent to Denmark for Enaro made me read and think about the subject...it did open my eyes! I hope that many colleagues will read at least some information I suggest in the enclosures.

The COA asked me to investigate the subject of Human Trafficking in Denmark. The COA is working on a policy considering this subject and would like to get as much information as possible.

4.1. Questions about human trafficking

The following questions were given to me by the COA:

1. Are reception centres confronted with human trafficking?
2. In what way human trafficking is known in the Danish reception centres?
3. What's done to prevent human trafficking?

During my stay I could not get a clear answer on these questions about human trafficking. Most staff members knew that the Red Cross is active in dealing with the issue of human trafficking, and most of them could mention situations that had to do with human trafficking, but it did not seem to be a relevant issue in the centres we visited, like in Kongelunden or Sandholm. Most of the times people would refer to the centre for unaccompanied minors, where for example they had to deal with Chinese minors who disappeared after staying for a short while. Also Bulgarian and Rumanian boys who stayed in Denmark and seemed to be involved in organized crime, like theft, were mentioned.

I was pleased to get the opportunity to meet Ms. Pia Beger, working in the head office of the Red Cross Asylum department for a project concerning human trafficking. In just an hour she made me very aware of the global problem of human trafficking. Organizations like ours should make every effort to prevent human trafficking with the possibilities we as reception organisations have, despite the fact that human trafficking seems to be invisible most of the time.

4.2. Definition

The Palermo Protocol is the UN Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against trans-national organized crime. The Palermo Protocol is often used to define the term "Trafficking in persons". It states:

”Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organ”.

4.3. What the (Danish) Red Cross does

The Danish Red Cross is part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC). Like many national Red Cross departments the Danish Red Cross is also involved in an International cooperation programme. Main part of it is to develop and implement activities targeting human trafficking. Capacity building, increasing knowledge about Human Trafficking, creating partnerships among the National European Red Cross Societies and exploring and ensuring cooperation beyond the Movement, are ways to respond to human trafficking, on a national and international level.

As I told before, during my visit I could not get concrete examples of situations where staff members got confronted with human trafficking and what was done with it. That’s why I will give links to general information about human trafficking in the enclosures, for those who want more information about the subject.

5. My recommendations

During my stay in Denmark I got inspired and got a lot of ideas that could be interesting for my organization, the COA. The conversations and discussions I had with Red Cross staff members are the basis of my recommendations.

5.1. Children

In about every conversation I had with staff members of the Red Cross, they would always mention the importance of special attention for children. The Danish Red Cross has always showed special attention to the children and specialized staff members will do their best to assure that they get a life/childhood that is as normal and happy as possible.

Considering this, I think we, as the COA should also have a good look on how we deal with children in our reception centres. My impression is that in the last couple of years, the attention for children got less. Of course, parents are responsible for their children in the first place, but we also see and we know that a lot of them are not capable of raising their children as they would in a 'normal' situation. That's why I recommend that the COA will take a good look at how we can assist parents in order to give children a life as 'normal' as possible. Therefore I would like to mention a view subjects I think we, as the COA should take a good look at.

5.1.1. Translating

There might be occasions where parents use their children as interpreters when contacting the staff.

The Red Cross asylum department has a specific policy that children must not act as interpreters and that professional interpreters must be engaged in all cases where difficult and sensitive conversations take place. A child can be involved in very difficult situations, dilemmas or conflicts between staff and parents, problems which a child may not be capable of understanding or handling.

The staff has been instructed that children must never be used as interpreters. However, acute situations may arise where it is acceptable that a child is asked to translate a brief message. The asylum department request all parents to respect this directive.

As far as I know the COA has no strict policy on this issue. I think we should have one in order to protect children (and staff). We can use external translation services, so I think we should do that more instead of letting children translate. We should, at least get aware of the way we deal with this issue.

5.1.2. Playrooms

The COA has playrooms for the youngest children, just like the Red Cross in Denmark has. The only difference is that in Denmark, a pedagogical model is used to meet the special needs of children. This so called STROF model (the name is bases on the Danish words for Structure, speech, rituals, organized play and parents cooperation)

The aim of the model is to create structure and predictability in the children's life as a contrast to the insecurity and chaos which often mark their daily life.

The COA also offers playrooms in all reception centres. In taking care of very young children the COA takes the responsibility of an important part of the development of these children. At this moment it is up to every Programme Supervisor to organise it the way he/she thinks it is done best. Most of them are not directly involved in taking care of children but use volunteers to do it.

In my opinion the COA should have a real basis on which the playrooms are organised. I recommend a decent model on which we should work, to make sure the playrooms are not just a place where parents can drop their children and children just fool around with no purpose. We should make sure that Programme Supervisors know enough about taking care of children and about stimulating and educating the volunteers who work in the playrooms.

5.1.3. Integration vs. Repatriation

During my visit of the Sandholm Centre, the issue of repatriation came by, talking to a Danish colleague working with children. Especially the subject of 'children and repatriation' got me thinking.

In Holland we do everything possible to make repatriation an accepted part of the reception system, as most asylum seekers live in Repatriation Centres. The only thing is that at this moment it is only focussed on adults. Children are totally left out when it comes to repatriation. We even stimulate children to integrate, while we do everything possible to make their parents aware of the fact that the moment of repatriating is coming, one way or the other. Only imagine the distance we create between parents and children. At this moment the COA does not do anything to make sure that children get aware of their position.

I think we should consider developing a policy on 'children and repatriation', or at least make plans for the future.

For example, a lot of children do know nothing about their home countries, some barely speak their own language and most of them are totally "Dutch" in their behaviour. I could imagine a more international educational system. Children learning international skills and using English as the main language. For adults we organize so called Repatriation Training sessions. Why not develop some kind of training for their children, and cooperate more with children's schools when it comes to this issue?

5.1.4. Children's- and youth activities

In Denmark, most children participate in after school activities. Also in the centres I visited there where all kinds of after school activities. Like in centre Kongelunden, they have a so called boys club and a girls club. Well-trained staff members organize all kinds of activities for/with the children.

As much as we stimulate children to participate in regular clubs in the municipalities, it seems that it is still very hard for them to fit in. And as I mentioned before, we should asked ourselves if they should fit in, especially in most cases where children live in Repatriation Centres, where integration should not be stimulated in my opinion.

At this moment it is up to every centre whether activities are organized or not. That's why I would like to recommend more activities in the centres, for children. I could imagine a system used like in the Social Cultural Work, which is offered in most municipalities. Well trained professionals organize all kinds of activities, which can be educational or just fun and contribute to the social environment of the children.

For example, in the centres for unaccompanied minors it is made possible to 'work' in the centre, for a small amount of money. It makes them aware of their environment and their responsibilities. In all the other centres it is only possible for adults (18+) to work. I think we should make work for minors possible. The more responsibility youngsters get, the more responsible they will behave.

5.2. Human Trafficking

Because of the complexity of this subject, I will leave any recommendation up to the experts. The only thing I hope is that the COA will do everything to make its staff aware of the existence of human trafficking and how to deal with it.

6. Enclosures

6.1. The Red Cross

More information about the Red Cross can be found on:

<http://www.ifrc.org/>

<http://www.redcross.dk/sw57607.asp>

<http://www.rodekruis.nl/>

6.2. The reception of asylum seekers in Denmark

6.2.1. Allowances (see next pages)

6.3. “New Times” magazine

This magazine is produced in the Culture House in Copenhagen. It gives a different look on the live of asylum seekers.

<http://www.redcross.dk/graphics/Asyl/pdf/nt68.pdf>

<http://www.redcross.dk/graphics/Asyl/pdf/nt67.pdf>

<http://www.redcross.dk/graphics/Asyl/pdf/nt66.pdf>

<http://www.redcross.dk/graphics/Asyl/pdf/NT65low.pdf>

6.3. Written information about Human Trafficking

"Good Practices in response to human trafficking - Cooperation between civil society and law enforcement in Europe".

This manual focuses on identification and referrals, operational modalities and training and it is targeting both newcomers and practitioners on the field of human trafficking.

(ISBN: 87-85026-78-6)

Or download from the Danish Red Cross website: <http://www.drk.dk/sw59525.asp>

6.4. Information on the internet about Human Trafficking

<http://www.humantraffickingsearch.net/>

http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/trafficking/

<http://www.savethechildren.org/>

<http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org/>

<http://www.unicef.org/protection/index.html>

<http://www.osce.org/cthb/13335.html>

<http://www.antislavery.org/>

6.2.1. Cash allowances

The cash allowances for asylum seekers in Denmark are categorised accordingly:

- A basic allowance
- A supplementary allowance, if applicable
- A caregiver supplement for first and second children
- A reduced caregiver supplement for third and fourth children

Basic allowance

The basic allowance covers expenses for food, personal hygiene items, etc. This is paid to all asylum seekers over the age of 18 who do not receive free food at their asylum centre.

Supplementary allowance

All asylum seekers over the age of 18 can receive extra money if they live up to the contract they enter into with asylum centres governing completing necessary tasks, participation job activation, and participation in courses.

Caregiver supplement

All asylum seekers with children receive money to support their children. Only one supplement per child is given. The caregiver supplement is paid for a maximum of two children. If a family has more children, they can receive a reduced amount for the third and fourth children (reduced caregiver supplement). It is not possible to receive payments for more than four children.

Cash allowances for foreigners placed on the food allowance program or whose cases are being handled according to the apparently groundless expedited procedure

Asylum seekers placed on the food allowance program or whose cases are being handled according to the so-called apparently groundless expedited procedure cannot receive a supplementary allowance, only the basic allowances and a reduced caregiver allowance, if applicable. Applicants living at asylum centres where meals are served receive no cash allowances

Current amounts

Below is a list of 2005 allowance amounts. The amount paid is adjusted annually.

The basic allowance is DKK 42.73 per day per adult. If applicants are married and living with their spouses, both will receive DKK 33.83 per day per adult. The basic allowance is paid in advance every other Thursday.

While applications are in their initial phase - when it has yet to be determined whether requests for asylum will be processed in Denmark - the supplementary allowance will be DKK 7.13 per day. If it is decided that a request for asylum is to be processed in Denmark, the supplementary allowance will be increased to DKK 24.93 per day. Applicants who have received final rejection of their applications and must therefore depart Denmark will have their supplementary allowances lowered to DKK 7.13 per day. The supplementary allowance is paid every other Thursday, at the end of each fourteen-day period.

The caregiver supplement for first and second children during the initial phase is DKK 49.86 per child per day. If a decision is made to process an application in Denmark, the caregiver

supplement will be increased to 67.66 per child per day. Asylum seekers living at asylum centres where meals are provided will only receive caregiver supplements of DKK 24.93. For third and fourth children, the caregiver supplement is reduced to DKK 35.61 per day per child. Asylum seekers living at asylum centres where meals are provided receive no caregiver supplement for third or fourth children. The caregiver supplement is paid every other Thursday, at the end of each fourteen-day period.

Examples of cash allowances

Examples of cash allowances for asylum seekers in the **initial processing phase** or for asylum seekers whose applications have been **rejected**:

Example 1: Family with two children

Living at a normal asylum centre where meals are not provided: DKK 2543 every 14 days.

Example 2: Single adult without children

Living at a normal asylum centre where meals are not provided: DKK 698 every 14 days.

Examples of cash allowances for asylum seekers whose applications are being processed according to so-called normal procedure:

Example 3: Family of two adults and two children:

Living at a normal asylum centre where meals are not provided: DKK 3539.75 every 14 days.

Example 4: Single adult without child:

Living at a normal asylum centre where meals are not provided: DKK 947.25 every 14 days.

Examples of cash allowances for asylum seekers on the **food allowance program** or whose cases are being processed according to the **apparently groundless expedited procedure**:

Example 5: Family of two adults and two children on the food allowance program

Living at a normal asylum centre where meals are not provided: DKK 2143.75 every 14 days.

Living at a centre where meals are provided: DKK 0

Example 6: Single adult without children on the food allowance program:

Living at a normal asylum centre where meals are not provided: DKK 598.25 every 14 days.

Living at a centre where meals are provided: DKK 0