



Easier access to highly skilled people – reforming international recruitment

Highly skilled foreign manpower boosts growth and welfare

The Danish government will be launching an international recruitment reform to improve competitive conditions for companies, thus creating growth and welfare in Denmark. The aim is for Denmark to recruit more highly-skilled foreign workers than it does today.

An efficient business community is necessary to maintain and develop the Danish welfare state. However, this means Danish companies must perform capably in the face of international competition and be able to recruit workers with the high level of skills and qualifications these companies need.

Good opportunities for recruiting foreign manpower also play a significant role in attracting foreign investors. Danish and international companies and industry pundits point out that access to highly qualified workers is a central decision-making parameter when new investments are made. The ability to draw on specialised international workers is therefore a key consideration for global businesses.

However, several studies indicate that Denmark's highly skilled workforce is insufficient to meet future business needs. A league table based on responses from companies in the OECD countries shows that Denmark ranks number 19 when it comes to attracting and retaining highly skilled foreigners. A shortage of highly skilled people has serious consequences. The absence of good international recruitment opportunities may compel companies to move production and jobs abroad – and Denmark risks losing out on growth and welfare.

Every highly skilled worker who finds work in Denmark paves the way for a host of new Danish jobs. While in Denmark, a highly skilled foreigner and his or her family contribute a net average of approx. DKK 1.9 million to Danish society. This money helps finance the Danish welfare model.

The Danish government has set high ambitions. An international recruitment reform is intended to give Danish companies and universities easier, faster access to highly skilled workers from third countries and better equip them to compete internationally. The current schemes in the area must be adjusted to companies' needs for highly skilled people. In addition, the government is adamant about ensuring that foreign workers who come to work in Denmark must be treated properly and enjoy the same pay and working conditions as their Danish counterparts. The government will not accept social dumping.

Denmark must join the battle for highly skilled people

Danish enterprises are not the only ones looking for more highly-skilled workers: it is a general global trend that makes the fight for high skills tougher than ever. Denmark is in an international race for the most talented workers, and we are competing against countries from everywhere around the globe with expanding growth economies.

However, Denmark has a vast potential for attracting more highly-skilled people. In a recent international survey of 103 countries, Denmark was estimated to have the third-highest potential for attracting foreign knowledge workers. This is because we have an efficient public sector, a flexible labour market and a high knowledge level that gives highly educated workers opportunities to use their talent.



Easier access for highly skilled people

The government wants to realise Denmark's potential for attracting highly skilled foreign nationals. The international recruitment reform aims to help Danish businesses recruit highly skilled workers from abroad more swiftly and easily.

Companies and universities need to be able to employ highly skilled staff from abroad at short notice or to quickly bring in international employees for a short period. However, current application processing times can cause companies to lose projects or experience production lags. Accordingly, the government wants to simplify and improve the current schemes and regulations. Companies must feel that they can quickly and easily employ the international specialists and researchers they need.

International graduates following study programmes in Denmark are an attractive resource for Danish businesses. They are highly skilled, well established and thoroughly familiar with Danish society. For this reason, the government wants to adjust the current schemes in a way that enables Denmark to attract and retain more highly-educated international graduates. Hopefully, this would also encourage more talented young people to study in Denmark – and decide to stay here when done.

Research is the key to product development and innovation and a must for companies to take on fierce international competition. The government therefore wishes to give international researchers more flexible conditions. It also wants to ease the tax scheme for researchers, which will make it easier for companies to attract key international staff to Denmark. In turn, companies will find it easier to develop their production systems, thereby bolstering growth and employment. The scheme will improve Danish business competitiveness.

The government also wants to ramp up efforts to retain highly skilled foreigners who have already found a place in the Danish labour market. Far too many opt to leave Denmark again because they fail to feel at home here – perhaps because they lack international schooling options for their children or cannot communicate with authorities in English. The government wants to change this. It must be simpler for people to establish a daily life after choosing to come here and contribute to Danish society.

Schemes must be tightened to get more people into jobs

Our starting point is clear. Although the government wants to ease access for highly skilled people, we do not want to bring in foreigners to areas where unemployment is already high. Instead, foreign workers must support those sectors of the job market in need of skilled people.

Several of the present schemes do not match today's labour market. For example, the green card scheme was introduced at a time when unemployment was low and workers in demand. Many people living in Denmark with a green card today work in sectors associated with unskilled labour. The government wants to re-target this scheme so that workers coming to Denmark better meet businesses' demands for qualified people.

An international recruitment reform should also support the principle that people with jobs in Denmark work under Danish conditions. Companies must comply with Danish labour market regulations governing fair competition and provide decent work and pay terms. In return, the government wishes to reward companies that play by the rules by giving them swifter access to highly skilled labour.

The international recruitment reform has four targets

1. Companies must be able to recruit international workers more swiftly and easily
2. Denmark must be better at retaining international students
3. Efforts to welcome and retain international workers must be intensified
4. Equal conditions for international workers



The international recruitment reform has four targets

1. Companies must be able to recruit international workers more swiftly and easily

Companies and educational institutions must feel that they can quickly and easily recruit highly skilled people from third countries.

- New fast-track scheme
- Re-targeting and simplification of green card scheme
- Easing of tax scheme for foreign researchers
- Start-up Denmark – attracting more entrepreneurs
- Better conditions for researchers
- Simpler, more flexible rules

2. Denmark must be better at attracting and retaining international students

International graduates undertaking study programmes in Denmark are a valuable resource for Danish companies. Consequently, the government wants to attract and retain more students.

- Establishment pass for international graduates
- New scholarship programme to attract more talent
- Equal conditions for student jobs
- Action plan for internationalising higher education programmes
- Simple, flexible rules for internships and study periods
- Better career information and guidance
- Simplification of access for students to youth education programmes
- Clear residence permit rules for private education institutions

3. Efforts to welcome and retain international workers must be intensified

International employees and their families who are new to Denmark must have better opportunities for establishing a smoothly functioning daily life in Denmark.

- More places in international primary schools
- Wider range of international programmes at upper secondary school level
- Better guidance in English
- Funds to help companies welcome and retain international workers
- Dialogue with the business community about welcoming and retaining people
- A single point of entry to Danish public authorities

4. Equal conditions for international workers

Foreign nationals who move to Denmark to seek work must be treated decently. The pay and working conditions applying in the Danish labour market must be clear and explicit to international workers.

- Simplification of residence rules for other paid work
- Simplification of internship programmes
- Stronger focus on assistance from the workindenmark website
- Restrictions on international graduates' entitlement to benefits on graduate terms
- No residence permit during labour disputes
- Increased, more effective inspection of workplaces
- Better control of foreign workers' pay and employment conditions
- Better information about the Danish labour market model