

# **Action Plan**

**to Promote  
Equal Treatment and Diversity  
and Combat Racism**

**November 2003**

**The Danish Government**

## ■ Foreword

‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’ So states the preamble to the UN’s International Convention on Racial Discrimination. The central message is respect for the individual. All citizens, regardless of race, ethnic origin or belief, have equal rights and duties, and everyone is entitled to protection against racism and unfair discrimination. That is classic liberalism. That is the government’s policy.

At the World Conference against Racism in South Africa in 2001, many nations around the globe, amongst them Denmark, affirmed the need for resolute action to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, racial hatred and related intolerance. The present action plan is a direct offshoot of the conference.

The principle of equal treatment rules out unreasonable discrimination. However, the principle of equal treatment does not mean we should treat everyone the same. The ancient Nordic saying ‘freedom for Loke as well as Thor’ promotes the principle of equal treatment while conveying the message that we are not the same and should not be forced to be alike. Equal treatment is a necessary condition for democracy, which in turn is a condition for freedom. Democracy does not require us to be the same, however. On the contrary, diversity is a prerequisite for all democratic dialogue.

In this action plan, the government sets out initiatives intended to help secure equality of treatment for everyone, regardless of race, ethnic origin and similar grounds of discrimination.

It is the government’s view that a modern welfare state should be based on liberalism, diversity and inclusiveness. An inclusive community that provides scope for personal initiative and freedom to differ, with due respect for fundamental social values. We should be true to our own values while remaining open to impulses from outside.

In 1946 – in other words, shortly after the Second World War – the Danish philosopher of law Alf Ross wrote that ‘the sanctity of the individual lies at the heart of all forms of humanism. The opposite is contempt for the individual, the intellectual core of fascism’. Unfortunately, Alf Ross’ argument proved to hold true for many years to come, and a distressing number of crimes have been committed against humanity in the name of race or ethnic origin. The process of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in former Yugoslavia and the mass killings in Rwanda are extreme examples of acts that bear the label of racism and intolerance.

Fortunately, the conditions for fascism and unadulterated racism in Denmark are poor. However, surveys show that discrimination

on the grounds of race, ethnic origin or belief is a genuine problem in modern-day Denmark, although it is hard to uncover the full extent of the problem. Nonetheless, we have to acknowledge that no society is ever totally free of racism.

We also need to recognize that legislation against discrimination is not enough. In Denmark, we have implemented a finely meshed set of regulations prohibiting discrimination. The most recent addition to legislation in this area was the Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Ethnic Origin passed by the Danish Parliament in June 2003 to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin. In other words, the legal framework is in place, but it is important to bear in mind that legislation to a certain degree tends to focus on problems rather than opportunities and innovative solutions. Even the best-researched framework needs content. This is a lesson learned from other countries whose constitutions contain many well-intentioned ideals about equality and equal treatment, but whose practice is something else. Therefore, legislative measures cannot stand alone.

How can we create innovative solutions? First and foremost, by realising that equal treatment is not something that is ours by tradition, but a privilege we must fight for every day.

We also need to create the conditions necessary to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities regardless of race or ethnic origin. People who live under inequality see a world of inequality. The willingness to understand society, a prerequisite for democracy, is under siege if the conditions are vastly unequal. In addition to being a goal in themselves, initiatives against racism and illegal discrimination are thus a necessary prerequisite for ensuring that everyone, regardless of race, ethnic origin or belief, has the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the life of the community on an equal level with other citizens.

In a dynamic society, it is essential that no one is limited by prejudice and everyone has the opportunity for personal development. Plans to promote diversity can generate additional concrete benefits in the form of new knowledge, new competencies and new possibilities. And efforts to promote diversity and stimulate dialogue can in themselves help to eliminate discrimination.

Bertel Haarder  
The Minister for Refugee, Immigration  
and Integration Affairs

# ■ Chapter 1. Background and concepts

First and foremost, the action plan contains a series of new initiatives to promote equal treatment and diversity.

The aim of the action plan is thus not to describe in detail the wide range of public and private initiatives already launched at national, regional and local level to combat racism, intolerance and illegal discrimination.

## ■ Fact

### *Concepts*

The term ‘ethnic origin’ is generally defined as affiliation with a group of people who share a common history, traditions, culture or cultural background, language, geographic origin, etc.

‘Racism’ refers generally to the view that ‘racial differences’<sup>1</sup> should translate into differences in social or political rights.

The Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Ethnic Origin (the act on ethnic equality) defines ‘illegal discrimination’ as direct and indirect discrimination and harassment. ‘Direct discrimination’ occurs when a person on the grounds of race or ethnic origin is treated less favourably than another person is, has been, or would be in a similar situation. ‘Indirect discrimina-

tion’ occurs when an apparently neutral legal provision, etc., puts people of a certain race or ethnic origin in a less favourable position than other people, unless the provision in question is impartially based on an objective purpose, and the means to achieve it are appropriate and necessary.

In the present context, the concept of ‘diversity’ refers to the view that all individuals are unique and that differences between people are a resource and source of renewal and development for the labour market and society in general.

It should be noted that these definitions are not exhaustive, but summarize the content of the individual concepts as generally interpreted or expressed.

## 1.1 The UN World Conference against Racism

As part of efforts to combat racism, the UN General Assembly decided in 1997 to hold a World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The World Conference against Racism was held in Durban in September 2001.

<sup>1</sup> The use of the word ‘race’ does not imply any acceptance of theories that attempt to establish the existence of different human races.

## ■ Fact

### *National action plans*

The world conference was concluded by the adoption of a declaration and programme of action to combat racism. It appears from the programme of action that the world conference urges states to establish national policies and action plans to fight racism.

According to the programme of action, the purpose of national action plans should be to promote diversity, equality and equal treatment; ensure opportunities for participating on an equal footing in the country's political, economic, social and cultural development; and promote democracy and political participation at all levels.

According to the programme of action, measures to combat racism and promote diversity should include legislation and other forms of government regulation and administration, the dissemination of policies and practices in certain areas, education, and educational activities.

The UN World Conference against Racism is one of several compelling reasons for the Government's decision to publish an action plan promoting equal treatment and diversity.

## **1.2 The Government's Vision and Strategies for Improved Integration**

In June 2003, the Group of Ministers on Improved Integration submitted 114 proposals for concrete integration initiatives. In its report, *The Government's Vision and Strategies for Improved Integration*, the group stressed that making room for diversity and learning to benefit from it is a common fundamental principle of the integration policy agenda and the strategies and concrete initiatives in the report. Initiative number seven of the report is the preparation of an action plan. The report can be viewed at the website of The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, [www.inm.dk](http://www.inm.dk)

## **1.3 Everyone is included**

The action plan is not limited to specific groups. Every individual is entitled to protection against illegal discrimination or racism, and initiatives to promote diversity and tolerance naturally involve all spheres of Danish society.

Nonetheless, surveys show that people from ethnic minority backgrounds living in Denmark are particularly susceptible to illegal discrimination or racism. Several of the initiatives contained in the action plan will thus be specifically targeted at them.

Ethnic origin is not the only source of discrimination for people from ethnic minority backgrounds; they may also find themselves

discriminated against on the grounds of gender, age, sexual orientation or health. Although initiatives addressing these issues will be incorporated where specially relevant, they are not a specific focus of this action plan.

It is clear that people from ethnic minority backgrounds can also hold racist views or be intolerant towards other groups. Several of the initiatives should also be seen in this light.

## ■ Fact

### *Legislation*

Danish law comprises a finely meshed set of rules prohibiting discrimination, the expression of racist views, etc.

Some of the provisions of the Danish Constitution contain prohibitions against discrimination: section 70, for example, on equality of treatment regardless of creed or race, and section 71 on personal liberty.

Public authorities are governed by the principle of equality applicable under general administrative law, which means equal matters must be treated in full equality before the law.

Under section 266b of the Danish Criminal Code – more popularly known as the ‘racism paragraph’ – the public expression of racist views is a punishable offence. The provision also pro-

hibits the distribution of racist propaganda.

The Act on Prohibition against Discrimination based on Race etc. – more popularly known as the ‘discotheque act’ – contains a prohibition against discrimination in two areas: the provision of goods or services, and access to certain places or events.

The Act on Prohibition of Differential Treatment in the Labour Market contains a general prohibition against discrimination on grounds of race, skin colour, religious conviction, political views, sexual orientation, and national, social or ethnic origin. Under this law, which applies to the employment area exclusively, a person whose rights have been violated may be awarded compensation for non-pecuniary damages. The prohibition applies during employment, to recruitment and dismissal, and prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination.

The Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Ethnic Origin, which deals with conditions outside the labour market, contains a prohibition against direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin and a prohibition against harassment and instructions to discriminate. In addition, the act contains provisions concerning the shared burden of proof and a prohibition against reprisals. Viola-

tion of the law is punishable by a claim for compensation for non-pecuniary damages. The Danish Institute for Human Rights can hear appeals concerning violation of the prohibition against discrimination. The Institute may express its opinion about whether the law has been violated in specific cases. In such instances, the Institute may recommend that free legal aid be granted.

According to the Act on Establishment of the Danish Centre for International Studies and Human Rights, the Institute for Human Rights is also in charge of providing assistance to victims of discrimination and initiating independent studies on cases of discrimination, as well as publishing reports and making recommendations on issues relating to discrimination. These powers apply to conditions in and outside the employment area.

## ■ Chapter 2. Providing more information about racism and discrimination

### 2.1 What do we know about racism and discrimination in Denmark?

Our knowledge about the extent of discrimination and racism in Denmark is limited. Only a few actual surveys have been conducted in the area due to the difficulty of monitoring instances of discrimination.

There are, however, surveys that attempt in various ways to shed light on the occurrence of discrimination against ethnic minorities in Denmark. One study of discrimination against ethnic minorities in the Danish labour market involved having a group of young people with the same qualifications but from different ethnic backgrounds apply for the same jobs (Hjarnø and Jensen, 1997). The study showed that people with a Danish background are more likely to be invited for a job interview than ethnic minorities. The fact that ethnic minority youth have greater difficulty getting a placement than young people with a Danish background may also indicate discrimination in the labour market against young people with ethnic minority backgrounds.

The extent of discrimination against ethnic minorities in Denmark has also been studied by asking members of these groups whether they felt they were being discriminated against. This type of survey of subjectively perceived discrimination among the largest ethnic minority groups in Denmark, showed that one in three felt discriminated against

when seeking jobs, and one in four when shopping (Møller and Tøgeby, 1999). Several respondents also experienced discrimination on the street, on public transport and when visiting discotheques. The extent of perceived discrimination varied greatly between the different nationalities surveyed. If one disregards perceived discrimination in the labour market, those who experienced most discrimination were the most capable and best-integrated ethnic minorities.

A recent survey shows that the proportion of immigrants and refugees who feel discriminated against has fallen drastically over the past three years, from over 40% to under 25% of respondents (CATINÈT Research, 2003).

The number of calls to the Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DRC) also gives an idea of the extent of perceived discrimination. From 1997 to 2003, 1,100 people contacted DRC because they felt they had been victims of discrimination.

Perceived discrimination is subjective, and the extent of such discrimination is therefore not necessarily equal to the number of incidents that are objective examples of illegitimate or illegal discrimination against ethnic minorities. On one hand, some people subjected to certain incidents may not perceive them as illegitimate or illegal discrimination. On the other hand, some incidents that could be perceived as illegitimate discrimina-



ation do not necessarily reflect intolerance, but may be due to objective factors such as insufficient language or professional skills.

The extent of discrimination is naturally tied to the Danish attitude towards foreigners in Denmark. Comparisons with citizens of other nationalities do not present a clear-cut picture. In comparison with the EU average, Danes are both more tolerant and more intolerant. For example, almost one out of three Danes finds that people with other religions are a disturbance in their daily lives. In contrast, a majority of Danes think ethnic minorities enrich Danish culture. Comparisons over time show that Danes are becoming less racist. In 1970, more than 60% agreed with a racist statement compared with close to 30% in 2001 (Rockwool Foundation Research Unit, June 2002; Tøgeby, 1997).

Our knowledge about the number of racist acts against ethnic minorities is also limited. For example, the number of incidents ruled by a court of law as expressions of racist views is very low. Over the past six years, the Danish national police annually registered between 24 and 65 cases of violation of the 'racism paragraph' of the Danish Criminal Code. It is unlikely that all incidents of racial discrimination are reported, and police statistics cannot therefore be taken as a precise indication of the extent of racist acts in Denmark.

Thus, the picture of the extent of racial discrimination differs greatly depending on who is asked and how the results are

measured. However, although there are no precise figures about the extent of racial discrimination in Denmark, there is no doubt that the problem exists.

*List of references:*

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## 2.2 How can we get more facts about racism and discrimination?

Before we can tackle racism and discrimination, we need to know exactly where and how it occurs. The existing body of knowledge and documentation on discrimination must thus be constantly updated and expanded.

Police files and other sources, such as the government’s periodical reports to the UN, contain a substantial amount of documentation on judicial cases relating to discrimination. However, this information does not exist centrally in an updated, easily accessible and comparable form. Collecting the documentation in one place would improve our knowledge about the extent of discrimination.

### ■ A good example

*Documenting discrimination in Denmark*

Under The Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Ethnic Origin, the Institute for Human Rights amongst other things, is in charge of initiating independent investigations of cases of discrimination. In future, it will also act

as an independent body of appeal and handle the task of regularly preparing, updating and publishing statistics on reported discrimination and court rulings in discrimination cases, under Danish law and international conventions.

The registration of reported discrimination and court rulings in racism and discrimination cases will not, however, provide a sufficient basis for assessing the extent of discrimination in Denmark. The extent of discrimination must be also be mapped in other ways.

One particular method the government wants to use to bolster documentation about discrimination, is to improve existing information on the extent to which ethnic minorities encounter intolerance in the labour market and education system, whether unnecessary requirements are demanded, and whether existing practices affect ethnic minorities harder than the rest of the population. To clarify the issue, it is important that ethnic minorities have the opportunity to voice their own opinions. To this end, the government has opened a so-called hotline.

### ■ A good example

*The Ministry of Education’s hotline for ethnic minorities*

*The Government’s Vision and Strategies for Improved Integration*, published in

June 2003, proposes that the Ministry of Education open a hotline. Immigrants and their descendants can call the hotline when in doubt whether educational institutions are following the rules or exploiting the options for ethnic minority students set out in the legislative framework for the various training programmes.

To illuminate the extent of direct and indirect discrimination in the education system and labour market, the government also intends to conduct surveys into certain specific issues.

One serious problem today is the excessively high drop-out rate among young immigrants and their descendants who never complete their courses of education. We need to better clarify the reasons for this widespread drop-out, including whether there is a connection between the drop-out rate and direct or indirect discrimination. For example, it is conceivable that intolerance means ethnic minorities have greater difficulty joining reading groups or become socially marginalized in other ways at places of education.

#### ■ Initiative 1:

*Room for diversity on training programmes*

The Think Tank on Integration in Denmark intends to launch a survey to investigate why ethnic minority youth drop out of their studies. The govern-

ment will encourage the survey to describe the extent to which the drop-out rate is due to discrimination against or intolerance of ethnic minority youth at places of education.

Another barrier to ethnic minority youth completing training courses that qualify them for the labour market is that they often fail to meet the Danish language admission requirements. Failure to meet requirements may reflect a genuine lack of the Danish language skills necessary to complete a course of study. However, in some cases, it may be an indication that the language requirements are too high for the type of job at which the training course is aimed.

We need more accurate information on this issue. Institutions of further and higher education have themselves indicated the need to clarify whether they are demanding the right Danish language requirements of foreigners. Foreigners must be sufficiently proficient in Danish to avoid starting a training course that they cannot complete because of language difficulties. However, the necessary requirements must not in themselves be a barrier that discourages foreigners who want to study for a qualification.

#### ■ Initiative 2:

*Easier access to the education system*

The government wants to implement a survey into the transitions from Danish

language teaching for foreigners to the rest of the education system with a view to giving ethnic minorities easier access to education.

First, the government will map the options for easing the transition from 'Danskuddannelse 2' (Danish for foreigners who have completed short-term education in their home country) to vocational qualification and AMU (labour market training) courses. The initiative will clarify the need and options for extra Danish language teaching to enable foreigners to complete vocational training programmes.

Second, the government will launch a survey of the transition from 'Studieprøven' (Danish for foreigners who have completed long-term education in their home country) to further and higher education. The survey is intended to establish whether Danish language admission requirements for foreigners are necessary and sufficient to complete the course.

We know that discrimination in the labour market can be one of the reasons for major disparities in the employment rate between people from ethnic minorities and the rest of the population. Another possible symptom of ethnic minority discrimination is the placement of ethnic minorities in job functions for which they are overqualified. Current information about this subject is limited.

### ■ Initiative 3:

#### *More information about skills and job functions*

The government wants to launch a survey of whether people from ethnic minority backgrounds are in jobs for which they are overqualified and if so, why. The survey will include a proposal on how to bridge the gap between skills and job functions so we do not waste the resources of the individual or society.

As mentioned earlier, it is very hard to measure the extent of racism and discrimination, and we will probably never find a precise method. However, this does not alter the fact that we can improve documentation in this field, particularly as regards discrimination and intolerance that create barriers to the integration of ethnic minorities in the education system and labour market.

By acquiring more information about the mechanisms behind the direct and indirect discrimination that takes place today, the government hopes to promote equality and diversity in Danish society.

## ■ Chapter 3. Diversity and tolerance through dialogue and debate

### 3.1 Introduction

The government wishes to put focus on equal treatment, diversity and the fight against racism. However, the government can only provide a framework. Basic government requirements or legislation to secure general human rights are not enough to promote equal treatment, diversity and tolerance. It is crucial for the public to take an active part in creating an inclusive society with room for everyone and tolerance and respect for diversity.

Thus, we should try to be open and tolerant whenever we meet other people. We should be better at exchanging opinions and viewpoints so we can build a platform for mutual understanding. Unprejudiced dialogue is the weapon to combat the sort of ignorance that spawns intolerance and dissension. Dialogue encourages acceptance of differences and counteracts the development of a divided society. We need to stop talking *about* each other and talk *to* each other instead.

People can meet in open democratic dialogue in a variety of ways: by active political participation, in the public sphere, workplaces, local neighbourhoods, the education system, the media, the internet and through cultural and recreational activities.

The government wants to promote diversity and tolerance through dialogue and debate. It has already launched initiatives to

increase the involvement of our new citizens in the labour market, education system, associations and organized recreational activities, the housing sector and public debate in general. But we want to do even more.

At the same time, we want to stress that each individual refugee and immigrant has a personal responsibility to actively influence his or her own integration in Danish society – culturally, politically, socially and in terms of employment.

### 3.2 Public debate and dialogue

Opinions are aired wherever people meet. Therefore civil society plays an important part in drawing attention to equal treatment, diversity and the fight against racism. Public organizations, immigrant associations and labour market parties also play key functional roles. They can contribute to targeted initiatives to include ethnic minorities in society and share responsibility for promoting greater public respect and tolerance.

Information, the involvement of civil society and support for public dialogue between different communities will therefore be significant elements of the government's measures on integration.

For example, the government will urge debate and dialogue with relevant stakeholders, such as religious communities, associations and organizations.

#### ■ Initiative 4:

##### *Information campaign on diversity and equal treatment*

To prevent discrimination and combat racism we need to create awareness of the principles of equality and diversity. The government will thus launch a public information campaign aimed at relevant target groups, including professional groups, social workers and ethnic minority groups.

In this connection, the government will start preparing an information package about The Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Ethnic Origin and the possibility of lodging a complaint to the Institute of Human Rights in cases where this act is violated.

#### ■ Initiative 5:

##### *Local events focusing on diversity*

In continuation of its information campaign on diversity and equal treatment, the government will allocate funds to support local events that focus on the advantages of, and potential barriers to, a tolerant society with room for diversity. Such events could be organized in educational institutions, municipalities, associations, organizations and workplaces that wish to put focus on both the norms and values that ethnic minorities have brought with them, and those on which

Danish society is based. These events will focus on bringing people together to help eliminate prejudice and create mutual understanding of similarities and differences.

### **3.3 Sharing responsibility for a nuanced debate**

To avoid greater social polarization, it is important to stimulate public debate based on a detailed picture of people from all sectors of society. We all share responsibility for the debate – but politicians, opinion-makers, professional groups and other social commentators have a special obligation.

The media provide a forum for public debate and thus also share responsibility for promoting tolerance and understanding between people. It is important to increase the awareness of journalists, media workers and the general public about how language usage influences public opinion with regard to specific population groups.

#### ■ Initiative 6:

##### *Focus on diversity and good examples*

In working with the media, the government wishes to highlight good examples of integration and diversity where respect for other people and equal citizenship come first.

### ■ A good example

#### *Programme in journalism for ethnic minorities*

The Danish School of Journalism recently introduced a two-year diploma course in journalism for people from ethnic minority backgrounds. It has attracted a large number of applicants, and the first class of students started studying in September 2003. When qualified, the new journalists will be able to use their cultural background to create a media picture that better reflects the composition of society and provides more multi-faceted coverage of social issues. The new journalists will give the media and the general public insight into the current concerns of ethnic minorities.

### ■ A good example

#### *The campaign 'All young people are needed'*

The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs has launched the campaign *All young people are needed*, aimed at helping ethnic minority youth to break the pattern of negative social stigma. The campaign involves role models who visit schools in selected regions of Denmark. The role models are young people with ethnic minority backgrounds who have chosen occupations that are not traditional for immigrants and their descendants.

The role models are expected to motivate and help young people select an education and answer questions about career and job choices.

The campaign also includes setting up voluntary homework schemes, targeted campaigns to employ trainees in public sector and other training programmes, creating placements and jobs, and promoting cooperation between school careers advisors and youth club workers.

## 3.4 Tolerance goes both ways

Discussions about discrimination and intolerance often overlook the fact that both phenomena also occur among the ranks of ethnic minorities themselves. Problems arise within and between ethnic minority groups, and ethnic minorities may also hold intolerant views about the majority population. For example, ethnic minority individuals may be harassed by people within their own group if they are perceived as having become too well integrated or having adopted Danish norms. Certain ethnic minority groups hold the opinion that women should not enjoy the same opportunities and rights as men, and in some cases, suppressive and discriminatory traditions such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation are still practised.

There have also been instances of second-generation immigrants throwing stones and

other projectiles at homosexuals, and of fundamentalists in Denmark issuing threats, abuse and incitements to kill members of other ethnic minorities.

Freedom to differ does not mean anything goes and everything is equally good. Freedom for the individual is limited by consideration for other people.

We should never use 'culture' – or anything else – as an excuse for suppressive behaviour such as racism, female genital mutilation or forced marriages.

Freedom to differ can only thrive if there is broad support in society for the common fundamental democratic values of freedom, equality, responsibility, duty and active participation. These values contribute to the welfare and development of society and pave the way for its citizens to work together to solve problems in society.

*The Government's Vision and Strategies for Improved Integration* from June 2003 outlines numerous government initiatives already launched, which highlight the basic obligations that everyone living in a democratic and diverse society has to assume responsibility for.

The open democratic society is a natural framework for the mutual responsibility that ensures freedom and respect for minority groups. It is therefore a paradox that society includes groups of individuals who denounce the very same system that provides them with protection.

It is paradoxical not only in terms of the anti-democratic forces that exist in groups of Neo-Nazis, Islamists and others, but certainly in terms of ordinary people as well.

Why do some members of ethnic minority groups choose to turn their backs on Danish society? Why do some isolate themselves in closed environments in residential areas, private Muslim schools and so on?

Could it be that our society does not represent a credible alternative for ethnic minority groups? Could it be that our society, despite our well-meaning democratic intentions, is in many ways perceived as a closed society?

Is our society alienating minority groups when well-qualified young people have difficulty finding placements or jobs, when people do not meet acceptance of their religious beliefs, or when they have difficulty finding a suitable burial ground for deceased relatives?

And does the minority response of retreating into traditionalism and fundamentalism or showing disrespect for widely accepted norms and values actually widen the gap?

There are many signs that we are dealing with a vicious circle – a circle that the government wants to break.

In the view of the government, we can break the vicious circle by:

- Enhancing the quality of dialogue between different groups in society



- Putting the focus on the responsibilities of citizenship and common democratic values so that ethnic minorities gain a better understanding of the advantages of democracy and the process of integration
- Working to make society more inclusive and better at dealing with cultural diversity

Not everything can be regulated through legislation. Legislation is a natural and necessary bulwark against anti-democratic forces, terrorism, discrimination, racial hatred, coercion and violence.

However, our shared consciousness of what is right and wrong is far more important in helping us to get along with each other on a daily basis.

The problem today is that notions of right and wrong often seem less clear-cut than they used to. In many situations, people seem to have little understanding of or respect for what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour.

Obviously, when people display lack of sensitivity, others will feel offended. Such behaviour could be shouting abuse at people in public or not respecting them at work, because of their gender or skin colour. Other examples could be the public burning of a national flag or derogatory comments about certain groups of society.

These are examples of personal violation as well as the violation of our collective understanding of right and wrong.

One of the government's concerns in this connection is whether we as a society can agree on some general human values that apply regardless of religion, culture and language, and could serve as common anchors for our society. Can we lay the groundwork for a set of common values that can help to instil more respect throughout society?

As mentioned earlier, Danish society is founded on values such as democracy, freedom and equal treatment. We must continue to uphold these values. At the same time, we need to understand these democratic values better so we can put them into practice, give them a concrete place in our daily lives and explain to people who have not been brought up in a democratic society, why we have certain expectations of them.

It is also reasonable to ask whether we know enough about the values represented by other cultures. Joining the debate about issues such as headscarves, halal meat and genital mutilation requires a good grounding in democratic values as well as knowledge about the values held by other cultural groups.

Do we dare to take up the challenge and engage in open dialogue, or would we rather turn our backs?

### ■ Initiative 7:

#### *Dialogue about democracy, citizenship and diversity*

The government intends to launch a process aimed at stimulating dialogue about democracy, citizenship and diversity.

It is important not to restrict dialogue to central-level talks between politicians, civil servants and experts. Debate should be introduced broadly at all levels of society and in local community fora where norms and values are encountered and challenged in practice.

The government envisages involving local integration councils or coordination committees in the debate along with district councils, schools, businesses, religious communities and associations.

In addition to reinforcing dialogue with public institutions, the mutual exchange of values between ethnic minority groups is another central issue the government wishes to address.

Parents, who have the main responsibility for child upbringing, religious community leaders and teachers in private independent primary schools all have an important contribution to make to the success of the integration process. Government measures will therefore focus on improving dialogue about

responsibility, duties, rights and mutual respect.

The initiative will include increasing our knowledge about how values are created, communicated and degenerated. Our knowledge about discrimination and tolerance among ethnic minority groups and towards the majority population is particularly limited.

### ■ Initiative 8:

#### *Survey of norm-driven integration problems in Denmark and other countries*

The government will launch a research project into the knowledge of ethnic minority groups about social conditions, basic norms and values and how they are communicated in Denmark and other selected countries. The survey also aims to highlight measures used by the selected countries to set norms and deal with norm-driven conflicts during the integration process.

## **3.5 Active participation in political life**

Respect for minorities is a cornerstone of any democratic society. However, if our democracy is to endure, it must be strong and able to defend itself against those who denounce it. This means that the work of expanding and strengthening democratic institutions and traditions, including the political involvement of all citizens in society, is an absolute core issue.

Democracy builds on participation, discussion and mutual understanding. The government believes that the desire to influence decisions that affect our daily lives is a universal human goal that unites people and is stronger than anything that sets us apart and divides us. Taking part means making decisions and accepting co-responsibility. Political participation strengthens the community as well as tolerance and respect for other people.

#### ■ Initiative 9:

##### *Dialogue meetings on political participation*

The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs will provide financial support to enable local integration councils or coordination committees to organize dialogue meetings focusing on ethnic minority participation in political activities. They could be local meetings held in community centres, libraries and associations, or large-scale events. Among other things, dialogue meetings will provide information about the opportunities for participating in local and national politics and forge understanding of the importance of participation for the individual and for democracy. Dialogue meetings are intended to build a bridge between ethnic minorities and the various political parties and associations.

#### ■ Initiative 10:

##### *Pamphlet on playing an active role in the local community*

The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs will prepare a pamphlet on the opportunities for political involvement as part of daily life. The pamphlet will focus on local democracy and active participation in the local community, for example, through user committees at schools and day-care institutions, associations, and cultural and recreational activities. The pamphlet is intended to supplement the handbook *Citizen in Denmark* and will be handed out to new arrivals in the local municipality. The pamphlet will be translated into several languages and designed for use by a variety of target groups, including new citizens who have not yet learnt to read and write Danish.

### 3.6 The labour market

It is the government's opinion that involvement in the labour market is the key to successful integration. Having a job gives our new citizens self-respect and earns them the respect of others. Workplaces give them the chance to learn about Danish culture and improve their language skills, helping to break down prejudices about Danes and ethnic minority groups.

The employment rate for immigrants and their descendants from third countries – countries outside the Nordic region, the EU and North America – is far too low. Only 53% of 16–66-year-old foreigners from third countries are currently part of the workforce compared with 80% of the Danes. Unemployment among immigrants and their descendants who are members of the workforce, is on average three times as high as for Danes.

There are several explanations for the lower employment rate of immigrants. Part of the explanation could be the educational background and language skills of the immigrant population. Another reason could be that some Danish companies are resistant to change and organize work in a way that makes it difficult for immigrants to gain foothold in the labour market.

The barriers that keep ethnic minorities from joining the labour market are a social problem. As well as being a waste of human and professional resources, unemployment among ethnic minorities is a financial burden for society. The age imbalance expected in the population in coming years will also mean a severe decline in workforce numbers.

Fast, more effective integration in the labour market, private and public sectors alike, offers considerable potential for employment opportunities and economic growth in society. Furthermore, experience shows that employee diversity can raise the skill level of companies and stimulate business development.

Strengthening the ties of resident refugees and new arrivals with the labour market is one of the government's key priorities. On 24 May 2002, the government entered into an agreement with the two sides of industry, management and labour and the association of municipalities regarding the integration of refugees and immigrants into the labour market. Based on the government's integration proposal of March 2002, the agreement emphasizes the responsibility of all parties to help give new arrivals an active start so that they can find jobs as fast as possible, primarily through Danish language classes and workplace introductions.

Another element of the agreement of 24 May 2002 was the decision to set up regional knowledge centres to assess the qualifications of refugees and immigrants. Five centres will be set up throughout Denmark in the course of 2004. The purpose of the knowledge centres is to make sure that all public authorities have access to qualified information and advice about qualification assessment. The centres should supplement and qualify initiatives already undertaken in municipalities and the public employment service (AF).

The two sides of industry have announced a focus on incorporating solutions in collective pay and employment agreements to ensure integration is implemented according to a stepwise model. This means that individual workplaces will make local agreements on concrete working conditions, lower start pay, for example, or reduced working hours.

Businesses and municipalities can enter into agreements for refugees and immigrants to follow a cohesive integration plan in close association with a workplace.

The government has also implemented an incentive scheme starting on 1 January 2004. The municipalities will receive financial support in the form of a DKK 30,000 'result subsidy' for every foreigner in regular employment after the three-year introduction period. By agreement with the local municipality, businesses will be reimbursed for the cost of upgrading the professional and language skills of new employees.

The labour market-related tasks of the integration councils have been transferred to the coordination committees to simplify the committee structure of local integration work. The coordination committees have been bolstered by the addition of a representative from the local integration council.

The integration and employment reforms complete the government's implementation of legislative measures to pave the way for fast, effective labour market integration. It is now up to the municipalities, businesses and employees to seize the opportunities to accommodate ethnic minorities in workplaces around the country.

#### ■ Initiative 11:

##### *The diverse workplace*

The government wishes to break down barriers that prevent ethnic minorities from forging ties with the labour mar-

ket. The government will instigate discussions with the two sides of industry, management and labour, about the need for campaigns to shape public opinion, with focus on the special professional and cultural skills and resources of ethnic minority workers.

The campaign will focus on the advantages of the diverse workplace where differences are not only accepted but actively encouraged, appreciated and used to enhance the quality of the company's products and create a stimulating and challenging network of colleagues. The campaign is also intended to help increase the cultural understanding of businesses and employees in relation to welcoming colleagues from different cultures and ethnic minority backgrounds.

#### ■ Initiative 12:

##### *Information campaign on reasons for exclusion and intolerance in the labour market*

In addition, the government will hold discussions with the two sides of industry, management, and labour concerning the need to launch an information campaign to illuminate the possible reasons for exclusion and intolerance in the labour market.

A campaign of this nature would include good advice and examples of

how to avoid labour market discrimination. The campaign should provide information on how hiring and recruitment processes, organization of work and social staff events can accommodate ethnic minorities in the workplace on an equal footing with other groups.

### ■ A good example

*Joint initiative for labour market integration by the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (LO) and the Danish Employers' Association (DA)*

LO and DA have launched a project called *The Whole Family at Work* intended to motivate small municipalities to work together to promote labour market integration. The project involves developing new guidance techniques and methods for the whole family (household). The idea is that families continue to be the focus of integration efforts until every member of the household is employed or receiving education.

In 2001, LO issued a publication entitled "Taking the Lead in Integration" aimed at shop stewards and employers. The publication contains integration tools for the labour market and reviews the positive and negative lessons learned by companies in their efforts to integrate ethnic minorities.

LO has also launched a *Guide Project* to support and advise young people from ethnic minority backgrounds who are having difficulty making the transition from lower secondary school to occupational training, higher education or employment. The project offers young people an adult volunteer guide who is familiar with the Danish labour market, has a broad social network and is ready to provide advice and guidance.

### ■ A good example

*Culturally diverse staff composition*

Employing staff from ethnic backgrounds other than Danish is a favourable economic proposition. Companies that employ people who are uniquely suited to offer services to ethnic minority customers have access to a growing market and can potentially enjoy the advantages of an invaluable form of marketing. Several Danish businesses are already reaping the benefits of this potential. TDC, a telecom provider, has opened a 'Turkish customer service' and the Dansk Supermarked supermarket group wants its staff to reflect the composition of the population: 8% of all Føtex, Bilka and Netto employees come from other ethnic backgrounds.

### 3.7 Housing

The everyday life of the local community plays a key role for the integration of ethnic minorities into Danish society. In general, contact between Danes and ethnic minorities tends to be limited due in part to the housing patterns of the various population groups.

Many ethnic minorities live in relatively concentrated districts in major urban areas, typically apartment buildings in social housing complexes. These areas are often socially isolated and rife with unemployment, social problems and youth crime. Successful, highly skilled residents tend to move away from these disadvantaged areas. This exacerbates the problem and prevents the informal, daily integration of ethnic minorities through contact with Danish neighbours that could otherwise happen in residential areas. This form of migration contributes to the isolation of ethnic minorities from the local community.

Residential areas offer many opportunities to strengthen social networks, for example, through local activities, organized sports and recreational activities, and voluntary inter-cultural initiatives. Appealing and unusual local activities give people the chance to get together on an equal footing and learn more about each other's culture, values and norms. Such activities help to give these residential areas a better reputation and make them more attractive.

#### ■ Initiative 13:

*Activities to promote integration in housing districts*

The government wants to work to encourage a more varied mix of residents, particularly in larger disadvantaged social housing complexes, by allowing residents to purchase their own home, for example.

The government will also support initiatives that focus on civic democracy and activities that encourage social interaction between Danish and ethnic minority residents. Examples of such initiatives could be family-to-family and neighbourhood watch programmes, networks to help new residents settle in, and activities to inform residents about the objectives and organization of civic democracy.

Support can also be given to projects that encourage ethnic residents to join cultural, sporting or political activities in the local community outside their immediate residential area.

#### ■ A good example

*'Multicultural association' in the northwest Copenhagen urban renewal district*

A multicultural association has been set up in an urban renewal area in northwest Copenhagen. The association

organizes initiatives to promote integration such as debate evenings and activities to provide information about various cultures and strengthen ties between Danish and ethnic minorities. The association has taken the initiative to launch a theatre project aimed at promoting tolerance between Danes and immigrants and upgrading the social and language skills of the participants.

### ■ A good example

*'Blind Date Community – Dinner Dates and Cultural Insight'*

An initiative has been planned in conjunction with the URBAN Programme involving the Gellerup, Hasle and Herredsvang districts of Århus. The idea is to put Danish families with solid ties to the labour market in touch with ethnic minority families who are unemployed. The families commit themselves to invite each other to their homes for both social visits, but also with the intention of building professional networks. The families are matched by professional interests and background. It is hoped that the meetings will give the families greater cultural insight, a better understanding of each other's professional situation and the opportunity to be part of a professional network whose long-term goal is to open the way for employment

opportunities for unemployed ethnic minorities.

## 3.8 Culture and recreation

The commitment of cultural institutions and organizations is the primary driving force behind initiatives to promote cultural diversity. The cultural sector's contribution to fostering inter-cultural understanding is usually a by-product of overall goals to create a framework for cultural development, humanitarian information and education. The government will continue to support this vital commitment, which has spawned many interesting and valuable projects such as FINFO ([www.finfo.dk](http://www.finfo.dk)), an internet service catering for minority language groups in Denmark, and a library service for ethnic minorities ([www.indvandrerbiblioteket.dk](http://www.indvandrerbiblioteket.dk)) plus numerous activities in museums throughout Denmark focusing on the meeting of different cultures.

### ■ A good example

*Museum activities*

'The Old Town' open-air museum of urban history in Århus has explored the meeting of different cultures from a historic perspective by studying the lives of migrant craftsmen who settled in some of the first multicultural towns and cities of Copenhagen, Fredericia and Christiansfeld. The Copenhagen City Museum and the Museum of



Cultural History in Randers have carried out surveys of integration processes seen from a local and contemporary perspective. Varde Museum held an exhibition about the historic use of headscarves in Denmark, and the South Jutland Art Museum organized an exhibition about immigrant influence on urban structural change. Viborg Stiftsmuseum and the municipality of Viborg work together to ensure all refugees in the municipality are given a tour of the town and the museum's permanent exhibitions, as part of the local integration programme. The museums in Fredericia play an active role in formulating the municipality's integration policy and are involved in integration and identity projects.

Sport provides unique opportunities to integrate new Danes into the cultural life of Denmark. Sport is universal and offers a common arena where everyone can take part regardless of cultural background.

However, the whole concept of associations as they exist in Denmark is unknown to many people who come from other countries. Mutual cultural insight should be encouraged in associations with a preponderance of ethnic minorities.

#### ■ Initiative 14:

##### *Integration in local societies and sports associations*

The government will continue to support initiatives aimed at reinforcing integration through local sports activities. The government particularly wishes to encourage young new Danes to take part in local societies and sports associations. The political parties behind the 2003 agreement on special allocation funds (The Social Democratic Party, Venstre, Denmark's Liberal Party, The Conservative Party, The Danish Social Liberal Party, The Christian People's Party, and The Socialist People's Party) have earmarked funds to help boost the numbers of ethnic minority youth in local societies and sports associations. If the fund cannot provide enough support to finance all qualified applications, the government will look into further options for supporting these projects from other allocation funds.

#### ■ A good example

##### *Support for basketball, the Danish Guide and Scout Association, and 'Partier med Plads' (Inclusive Political Parties)*

The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs has already supported projects such as *Street Basketball 2003* for disadvantaged ethnic

minority youth from eight socially strained districts in Copenhagen, Århus and Odense. The aim of the project is to give these young people the chance to take part in basketball training sessions and local music events in order to integrate them into volunteer-run sports activities.

The Danish Guide and Scout Association has received funds to produce a recruitment folder in various languages. The folder is aimed first and foremost at the parents of young new Danes in the hope of involving more of them in the work of the scout movement, both as regular members and as leaders.

The Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs has also supported the 'Partier med Plads' project. This project for inclusive political parties, originated as a joint effort by a broad cross-section of political youth and ethnic organizations. Its aim is to create awareness of political and democratic processes among ethnic minority youth.

### ■ A good example

*Societies and sports associations as vehicles for integration*

*Brøndby IF*

Brøndby IF sports club has about 1,500

amateur members, of whom 30% have an immigrant background. The professional division has about 300 sponsors, representing 30,000 potential jobs. A project has been launched to create a network of young ethnic amateur members and professional sponsors and thus help young people to find jobs or to contact educational and training institutions. The project is jointly organized by Brøndby IF and the campaign *All young people are needed* from the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs.

### *Learning about associations*

The Himmerland and Northeast Jutland branches of the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations have organized seven three-day courses about Danish associations, held in language schools in various local municipalities. A further three courses are planned. The courses provide an introduction to the activities of local and national associations in Denmark and help increase the involvement of refugees in Danish associations.

### *Køng Sports Academy*

Køng Sports Academy offers a special course called the inter-cultural sports coach. The prime target group is Danes with an ethnic minority background.

The idea is to give participants an all-round course in leadership and project

management, offering tools and skills to enable them to take active part in sporting and cultural activities as trainers, leaders and promoters. The aim is to provide the new inter-cultural sports coaches with a skill set that will help them act as bridge-builders, primarily between sports clubs and people with ethnic minority backgrounds.

Organized jointly with the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations, the course opens opportunities for individual sponsorships.

Eight participants completed the special inter-cultural sports coach course in autumn 2002, four completed it in spring 2003 and five have been admitted for the autumn 2003 session.

For further information about Danish Folk High Schools and ethnic minorities, visit [www.minoriteter.hojskolerne.dk](http://www.minoriteter.hojskolerne.dk)

## ■ Chapter 4. Conclusion

Danish society needs to provide more room for diversity, and we need to get better at exploiting its advantages. The government wants to eradicate prejudice and intolerance and work towards creating an all-inclusive society. The government intends to combat all forms of illegal and racial discrimination.

The government has presented a series of proposals and initiatives in this action plan to promote equal treatment and diversity and combat racism. In 2003, DKK 2.6 million from the special allocation funds has been dedicated to implementing the initiatives, and DKK 2.5 million will be allocated in 2004. The government will also earmark money from the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs fund for research, urban development and the Programme for Inclusive Cities.

The government's action plan to promote equal treatment and diversity and combat racism is an attempt to build a cohesive society with room for diversity and focus on the individual. It would be naive, however, to think that we can achieve this goal through an action plan alone. The work of combating racism and intolerance will require effective long-term efforts. One of the objectives of an action plan is to attract as many players as possible and involve municipalities, the two sides of industry, management and labour, organizations, associations, local integration councils and individuals. Everyone shares responsibility for creating an open, inclusive and cohesive society where everyone makes an active, committed contribution.

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