



MINISTRY OF FINANCE

# Action plan to promote Danes in the EU

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Action plan to promote Danes in the EU (curtesy translation)  
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## Introduction

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Within a few years, Denmark is expected to be under-represented in the EU institutions. With fewer Danes in the EU the opportunities for information and influence will be weakened. The Danish Government will therefore strengthen efforts to secure recruitment of more Danes in the EU institutions.

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The EU represents an important forum for safeguarding and promoting Danish interests, and decisions taken at EU level have great importance for the Danish society. It is therefore also important to have Danes employed in the EU institutions to ensure that Danish views, positions and values are represented at all levels. It is thus worrying that within a few years Denmark is expected to be under-represented in the EU institutions.

Many of the Danes who were recruited by EU institutions when Denmark became a member in 1973 are nearing retirement. In the European Commission alone, over 40 per cent of the Danish employees are expected to retire over the next ten years. The recruitment of Danes in recent years has unfortunately been insufficient to offset the departure of these staff. Despite targeted efforts since 2013, too few Danes have passed the admission tests (Concours) providing access to employment at EU institutions. The Danish Government will therefore significantly strengthen its efforts to secure the recruitment of more Danes in the coming years.

This action plan to promote Danes in the EU contains a number of initiatives that each aim to strengthen Danish representation in the EU. The action plan forms part of the implementation of the Government's overall foreign and security policy strategy.

**Action Plan – Initiatives:**

- The Government will second more national experts to the EU.
- The Government will launch a targeted campaign to inform about admission tests, EU career paths and competence development. This campaign will also be directed at relevant personnel groups in and outside government departments as well as Danes living in Brussels.
- The Government will increase the number of public-funded scholarships at the College of Europe.
- The Government will increase the number of Danes admitted to the Junior Professionals in Delegations Programme 2017-2019.
- The Government will launch joint efforts together with the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO).
- The Government will facilitate a mentoring scheme for Danes living in Brussels who are interested in an EU career.
- The Government will ensure accreditation and recognition of international experience, including periods of employment in the EU.
- The Government will establish a new interpreter training programme at Aarhus University.

The action plan's initiatives supplement the already existing efforts and should be viewed as complementing them. In 2013, strengthened efforts were initiated to implement the recommendations of the so-called Fischer-Boel Committee. These recommendations were primarily targeted at young students in higher education and recent graduates, and centered around information and motivation campaigns, preparation of material on EU career paths as well as provision of preparatory training for the EU's general admission tests (Generalist Concours). Whilst these activities continue to be important, EU institutions are increasingly looking for employees with professional experience within public administration and the EU. Consequently, there is a need to supplement the efforts with a greater focus on employees working in government departments and in Brussels, whose background puts them in a strong position for recruitment by the EU.

# 1. The Action Plan – Initiatives

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A range of initiatives will be launched to strengthen Danish representation in the EU.

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## 1.1 Secondment of more national experts

The Government will second more national experts from across the Danish civil service. The objective is to increase Danish insight and influence in the short term as well as boost interest in a long-term EU career among the seconded national experts. The secondments will target policy areas of strategic and great political importance for Denmark.

The Danish Government will set a target of doubling the present number of seconded national experts by the end of 2025. This means that by the end of 2025 at the latest, there will be around 100 seconded Danish national experts in EU institutions. The national experts will represent all ministries in order to ensure the greatest possible influence and insight.

In addition to increasing the number of seconded national experts, Denmark will continue to make full use of its annual allocation of seven national experts in professional training (NEPTs).

### Box 1

#### **Seconded national experts**

Employees working in Danish government departments and other public authorities have the opportunity to be posted as seconded national experts to the EU institutions for a temporary period of up to four years. The scheme has the dual objective of delivering to the EU expert knowledge from the national and local administrations of Member States and of providing the seconded experts with insight into EU policies and working methods that can benefit their national administration upon their subsequent return. The majority of EU institutions – including the European Commission, the Council Secretariat, the European Parliament and the European External Action Service – receive seconded national experts.

#### **National experts in professional training**

The NEPT Programme is broadly comparable to seconded national experts, but the secondment period lasts between 3 and 5 months. The candidates can either be seconded to the European Commission or to the European External Action Service.

## 1.2 Targeted information and competence development for staff employed in Danish government departments and in Brussels

In recent years, too few Danes have passed the EU admission tests. In general, this type of test is alien to the Danish school tradition and is taken under time pressure. Consequently, there is a need to improve information and motivation regarding the test and a need to offer those interested preparatory training. In this respect, several intensive training courses have already been run during 2017, and these courses together with the information events will continue to be organised in the future. The training for the EU admission test and the information events will continue as before to be open to all interested Danes.

There is also a need to supplement the general focus with a specific effort targeted at employees working in government departments. EU institutions are increasingly looking for employees with professional experience within public administration and the EU. In addition, this professional experience stands them in good stead when attending the interviews and undertaking the simulated job situations that form part of the EU admission test. In this regard, experience shows that the Danish candidates who pass the EU admission test (the Concours) are typically in their early 30s and have experience of working in Brussels or Danish government departments. Therefore, the Government will launch an effort targeted at employees in Danish government departments and Danes living in Brussels who are interested in an EU career.

### **Employees working in Danish government departments**

Twice a year, general information meetings will be held focusing on possible EU career paths and types of employment, e.g. contract-based employment, employment in EU agencies and EU admission tests. Those interested will regularly receive information and news about different jobs in the EU.

A training course will be launched to help prepare highly motivated and talented staff in Danish government departments to take the EU's general admission test (Generalist Concours). The programme will be limited to 20 people per year who have been recommended from across the entire civil service. Admission to the programmes is open to anyone, as the selection and recommendation to the programme is determined by the senior management at the respective ministries. This assumes strong active involvement on the part of participants as well as their home organisation and senior management.

Similarly, training courses will be run in connection with admission tests for specialists (Specialist Concours), in which the EU institutions look for staff with several years' experience within, for example, economics, law and development assistance. In this respect, employment in government departments or in international organisations will often be an advantage. Preparatory training courses in

relation to Specialist Concours will be open to all employees in government departments and relevant public sector organisations.

### Danes living in Brussels

An intensive Concours training course will be run for highly qualified and motivated Danish candidates living in Brussels in connection with the EU general admission tests (Generalist Concours). The training course will take place in Brussels and be open to anyone, including Danish employees in special interest organisations, various representation offices and seconded national experts. In addition, highly motivated and talented seconded national experts looking for a future career in EU institutions will be eligible to apply for competence development in connection with preparing for the Specialist or Generalist Concours.

Danes living in Brussels who are interested in an EU career, particularly trainees, will regularly receive information about EU career opportunities, vacant positions in EU institutions and different employment opportunities.

#### Box 2

##### **Generalist Concours**

The EU admission test for generalists (Generalist Concours) is open to anyone with a university education. A bachelor degree is the minimum requirement to participate in the Generalist Concours. Previous professional experience is not required.

##### **Specialist Concours**

The EU admission test for specialists (Specialist Concours) is targeted at persons with specialist competencies within a particular area. The entry requirement will often be a Master's degree and several years' documented professional experience within the particular field.

## 1.3 The number of public-funded scholarships at the College of Europe to be increased

The College of Europe offers one-year Master's programmes in a range of EU disciplines that prepare graduates for employment in and around EU institutions. The Danish European Movement serves as the secretariat for the committee responsible for selecting candidates and promoting awareness of the scheme. To date, four public-funded scholarships have been awarded to Danish students. The College of Europe is the educational institution responsible for training the vast majority of EU officials.

From and including the 2018/2019 academic year, the Danish Government will increase the number of public-funded scholarships by 50 per cent, so that a total of six funded places are offered to Danish students each year. In addition, the Government, in partnership with the Danish European Movement, will make an additional effort to promote awareness of the opportunity for a period of study at the College.



## 1.4 More Danes to be admitted to the Junior Professionals in Delegations – Programme

Each year, the European Commission and the European External Action Service offer two young university Master's graduates from each of the EU Member States the opportunity for a two-year term of employment at the EU delegations. The Member States have the possibility of bilaterally financing further appointments, and thus as part of the Government's effort to secure the recruitment of more Danes in EU institutions, Denmark has financed an additional five positions in 2017 (compared to two in 2015), which the Government will seek to maintain in 2019. The Junior Professionals are regarded as having good opportunities for seeking subsequent employment in EU institutions.

## 1.5 Targeted joint efforts with EPSO

Joint efforts will be launched with the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). EPSO has selected Denmark as one of eight priority countries facing a challenge in relation to EU admission test participation and pass rates. The joint efforts will include, for example, strengthening already ongoing activities and incorporating them into a more structured agreement process. A number of new initiatives are also being discussed with EPSO.

Below are examples of ongoing initiatives that will be strengthened and focused:

- More EU career events will be held. These will include large events on EU career in general with participation of ministers and/or commissioners. Smaller events will also be held – e.g. in collaboration with relevant faculties at universities and trade unions – with specific focus on the opportunities available for a career in the EU system within certain fields. Today, insufficient attention is paid to the employment opportunities in EU institutions with a non-social science background. This could be remedied through an event focusing more specifically on certain professional groups, including humanities, natural science and engineering. EPSO will provide speakers who can talk about the career opportunities and the Concours.
- EPSO will select two EU Careers Ambassadors per Member State and offer them both training and material on career opportunities in the EU. These ambassadors will be selected from among students at institutions of higher education, who will be tasked with raising awareness and knowledge of employment opportunities in the EU among their fellow students through career events, workshops, etc. Denmark is bilaterally financing an additional 15 ambassadors in 2017/18 in an effort to raise the general level of knowledge among students about EU careers. All EU Careers Ambassadors are trained by EPSO, who offer assistance in organising their events and facilitate net-

working opportunities among them. A minimum of 15 EU Careers Ambassadors will also be selected in the 2018/19 academic year.

- Career counsellors at institutions of higher education have an important role in advising the students on opportunities for traineeships and subsequent employment at EU institutions. The career counsellors at eight higher education institutions have – similar to the Careers Ambassadors – received training at EPSO, and they are offered assistance in organising events on EU careers as well as relevant material. Six-monthly meetings are held in the career counsellor network.
- EPSO is working with the Member States to set up an online preparatory training module for the Concours. Denmark is delivering input and proposals to the module with the aim of ensuring that the Danish school tradition and mentality is taken into account.
- As a new element, EPSO is running virtual career events in the eight priority countries (see above), in which those interested have the opportunity to learn more about EU career paths and admission tests via chat fora. Within a specific timeframe on an announced date, Danes – regardless of their physical location – will have an opportunity to get answers directly from EPSO to specific questions about career opportunities. The virtual events are an alternative to attending a careers day in person and will be promoted widely through university networks, trade unions and ministries.

## 1.6 Mentoring scheme for Danes living in Brussels

In collaboration with the Danish Association of Lawyers and Economists (DJØF), a mentoring scheme has been launched for young Danes living in Brussels. The objective of the scheme is to provide advice and sparring regarding the opportunities for a career in EU institutions. The programme lasts 2-3 months and is structured so as to enable the numerous Danish interns in Brussels also to participate. The mentors are experienced employees from EU institutions.

## 1.7 Accreditation and recognition

It is important for Danish enterprises and government departments to have employees with international experience and outlook. This can be promoted by accrediting periods abroad and international experience after people return to Denmark. Efforts will therefore be made to ensure that government departments accredit and recognise EU experience in connection with recruitment and return to Denmark after a posting abroad.

## 1.8 New interpreter training programme at the University of Aarhus

As part of its strategy to strengthen foreign languages in the education system, the Danish Government will support provision of a specialisation programme in conference interpreting at the University of Aarhus. The aim of this programme is to ensure the continued availability of conference interpreters able to undertake highly specialised interpreting tasks at high level in EU institutions and elsewhere. The University of Aarhus already offers an interpreter and translator specialisation course on their Master's programme in business languages and international business communication, and the new training course to be offered will strengthen the professional interpreter and translator community.

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