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Living and Working in Denmark

A photograph of construction workers holding hard hats. One worker in the foreground holds a white hard hat, while others in the background hold yellow and orange ones. They are wearing safety vests. The image is partially covered by a red rectangle on the left and a teal rectangle on the right.

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| Living and Working in Denmark as a Refugee

Practical guide to community support, courses and everyday integration

Denmark is one of the Nordic countries with a long-standing system for receiving and supporting refugees. People arrive from a wide range of countries, and the Danish integration model combines local authority responsibilities, national programmes and a strong network of NGOs, volunteer groups and community organisations. These organisations help newcomers with language learning, employment preparation, daily administration, healthcare access and finding stable routines in their new environment.

At the same time, the first months in Denmark can feel challenging. The administrative system is highly structured, most services operate digitally, and many tasks require an electronic ID (MitID). The housing market can be expensive in larger cities, and the Danish language may be difficult for beginners. Navigating local rules and understanding what support is available can feel overwhelming without guidance.

This guide focuses on practical information that helps refugees manage day-to-day life and build confidence. It highlights community support networks, training opportunities, mental-health services, housing guidance and everyday essentials. Whether someone is living in Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg or a smaller town, this guide is designed to offer clear pathways and trusted contacts that support long-term integration and independence in Denmark.

01

Community Groups and Integration Centres



| Community Groups and Integration Centres

Denmark's support system for refugees is based on cooperation between local municipalities, national NGOs and volunteer-led community organisations. Municipalities (kommuner) have the main responsibility for integration, but NGOs and community centres provide vital everyday support, language practice, social activities and guidance for navigating Danish systems. The availability of services differs between municipalities, but the organisations below operate widely and offer reliable help.

National-level NGOs with physical centres

These organisations work in multiple cities and provide structured support for refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants.

Danish Refugee Council (Dansk Flygtningehjælp – DRC)

Website: <https://drc.ngo>

Cities: Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg and regional branches

The Danish Refugee Council is the largest organisation supporting refugees in Denmark.

What they offer

- Legal counselling for asylum seekers and refugees
- Support with family reunification applications
- Social counselling and guidance on daily life
- Employment support, CV help and job-matching initiatives
- Local volunteer networks offering language practice, homework support and mentoring
- Community activities, women's groups and social events

Why it's useful

DRC combines professional integration counsellors with a strong volunteer network, making support accessible in many local areas.

Red Cross Denmark (Røde Kors)

Website: <https://www.rodekors.dk>

Cities: Nationwide, including many local branches

The Red Cross supports asylum seekers in centres and refugees living in the community.

They offer

- Activities in asylum centres (for residents)
- Language cafés and conversation clubs
- Second-hand shops offering affordable clothing and household goods
- Homework support for children
- Social groups for adults and families
- Friendly visitor programmes for isolated individuals
- Community events and integration activities

Good for

People looking for informal social contact, community-building and everyday support.

Caritas Denmark

Website: <https://www.caritas.dk>

Cities: Copenhagen and partners across Denmark

Caritas focuses on vulnerable families and newcomers.

What they offer

- Community cafés and support groups
- Practical help with paperwork and digital systems
- Counselling for people under stress

- Women's groups and family activities
- Workshops and social events

Trampoline House (Copenhagen)

Website: <https://trampolinehouse.dk>

City: Copenhagen

A well-known community centre supporting asylum seekers and refugees with a welcoming, social environment.

What they offer

- Language classes and conversation practice
- Legal counselling (in partnership with external advisers)
- Art workshops, cultural activities and social events
- Youth programmes and women's groups
- Community meals and open community days

Why it matters

It is a safe, friendly space where people can build relationships, gain confidence and reduce isolation.

Municipal Integration Services (Kommunale Integrationstjenester)

Every municipality in Denmark is responsible for the integration of refugees assigned to its area. Services differ, but most municipalities provide:

These typically include

- An assigned integration counsellor (sagsbehandler)
- Help registering for health services and MitID
- Access to Danish language courses (through the official language centres)
- Employment and activation plans
- Support enrolling children in school or childcare
- Guidance on housing, budgeting and local rules

Municipal integration services are the main point of contact for administrative matters.

Local community hubs and volunteer groups

Across Denmark, community centres and volunteer groups provide informal, everyday support. These spaces are especially important for practising Danish, meeting locals and building social networks.

International Community Aarhus

Website: <https://internationalcommunity.dk>

City: Aarhus

What they offer

- Social gatherings and cultural events
- Practical workshops on living in Denmark
- Networking opportunities
- Family-friendly community activities

Copenhagen International House

Website: <https://ihcph.kk.dk>

City: Copenhagen

Although aimed broadly at newcomers, it supports refugees as well.

Services include

- Workshops on Danish systems (healthcare, tax, housing)
- Language cafés
- Cultural events and community meet-ups
- Guidance on employment and volunteering

Multicultural community centres (various cities)

Many cities have community spaces run by local associations.

Common activities

- Danish conversation cafés
- Homework clubs for children
- Women's groups and mother–child activities
- Social dinners and cultural exchanges
- Volunteer-led help with forms and digital systems
- Sports, walking groups and creative workshops

Examples include:

- **Café Mellemrummet (Copenhagen)**
- **Aalborg Frivilligcenter**
- **Odense Fællesskab initiatives**

Faith-based organisations and cultural associations

Churches, mosques and cultural groups often run community programmes that welcome refugees.

Typical offers

- Danish language practice
- Social gatherings and shared meals
- Support for families and single mothers
- Clothes banks and donation drives
- Emotional support and friendly listening

These groups help newcomers feel connected to local communities and cultural networks.

02

Courses and Training Options for Refugees in Denmark



| Courses and Training Options for Refugees in Denmark

Refugees in Denmark can access a wide range of free or subsidised courses designed to support language learning, digital skills, everyday integration and entry into the labour market. Training is provided through municipal integration programmes, official language schools, national NGOs, job centres and community organisations. Many courses combine practical skills with help navigating Danish systems, which is useful for people adapting to a highly digitalised society.

This section outlines the most accessible and common training pathways for refugees during their first years in Denmark.

Danish-language courses (free or low-cost)

Learning Danish is essential for everyday life, work and communication with authorities. Language training in Denmark is structured, certified and delivered through official language centres.

1. Official Danish Language Education (Danskuddannelserne)

Managed by municipalities and delivered through authorised language centres.

Levels offered

- Danish 1: For learners with limited schooling
- Danish 2: For learners with some education
- Danish 3: For learners with higher education or advanced language ability

What the programme includes

- Free or subsidised Danish classes for up to five years
- Modules from beginner to advanced levels
- Exams at each stage (e.g. Prøve i Dansk 1, 2, 3)
- Lessons covering everyday life, work topics and civic understanding

Why it's useful

It is the main, recognised pathway for learning Danish and is essential for many jobs.

2. Municipal language cafés (Sprogcaféer)

Offered through libraries, community centres and volunteer groups.

Activities include

- Informal Danish conversation practice
- Help with pronunciation and vocabulary
- Social interaction with Danish volunteers
- Support with letters, forms and digital platforms

These are low-pressure environments that complement formal lessons.

3. NGO-based language support

Organisations such as the Danish Refugee Council, Red Cross and local volunteer centres provide:

- Conversation groups
- One-to-one language buddies
- Homework help for learners
- Danish for everyday tasks (shopping, health, transport)

These programmes help learners gain confidence outside the classroom.

Digital skills and employment preparation

Denmark has a highly digitalised public system. Many tasks require MitID, NemID, e-Boks and digital health portals, so digital skills are essential.

1. Job Centres (Jobcentre)

Municipal job centres provide free courses and employment programmes.

Common courses

- Basic computer skills
- Using e-Boks, Digital Post and MitID
- CV writing and job-search techniques
- Workplace Danish and labour-market orientation
- Short vocational introductions (kitchen, cleaning, care work, warehouse roles)

Job centres also connect people with employers through activation programmes.

2. libraries (Biblioteker) – digital guidance and workshops

Public libraries across Denmark offer beginner-level digital training.

Workshops include

- Using smartphones and computers
- Accessing online public services
- Filling digital forms
- Using online banking safely
- Support setting up MitID or NemID

Libraries are a major source of practical digital support for newcomers.

3. Non-profit digital programmes

Some NGOs and community groups run digital literacy programmes, including:

- Introduction to Microsoft Office
- Online safety
- Job-search platforms
- Digital communication skills
- Coding or basic IT training (in larger cities)

These programmes are suitable for people who prefer small-group learning.

Vocational courses (construction, care work, logistics, hospitality)

Denmark offers many vocational opportunities through the adult education system (VEU), job centres and private training centres. Refugees with the right to work can access these programmes, often combined with language support.

1. AMU Courses (Arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser – Labour Market Training)

AMU courses provide short, practical training for specific job roles.

Typical AMU courses

- Forklift operation
- Warehouse work and logistics
- Cleaning and hygiene standards
- Kitchen and food-handling skills
- Care assistant basics (older people's care)
- Basic construction skills
- Safety courses for construction sites

Why it's useful

Most courses are short, accessible and directly linked to local labour needs.

2. VET Programmes (Erhvervsuddannelser – EUD)

Longer vocational programmes combining school and on-the-job training.

Common fields

- Construction trades (bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing)
- Mechanics
- Hospitality (chef, waiter, kitchen assistant)
- Retail and customer service
- Social and health care (SOSU roles)

These programmes suit refugees wanting full professional qualifications.

3. Integration training programmes (Integrationsgrunduddannelse – IGU)

A two-year paid training scheme for refugees aged 18–40.

What it offers

- Paid work experience
- Danish language education
- Vocational training modules
- Employment pathways after completion

Common placements

- Warehouses
- Cleaning companies
- Municipal care services
- Cafés and hotels
- Factories and production lines

Why it's useful

IGU provides income while gaining experience and Danish skills.

4. NGO and community-based vocational courses

Organisations such as the Danish Refugee Council, Red Cross and local associations often run short, practical courses such as:

- Basic carpentry or repair workshops
- Sewing and textile skills
- Bicycle repair
- Cooking and food hygiene
- Customer-service skills
- Retail experience and internships

These can be easier to join for beginners or people needing confidence-building before formal training.

Recognition and upgrading of qualifications

Refugees with qualifications from their home country can have them assessed in Denmark.

1. Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science

Website: <https://ufm.dk>

They offer

- Recognition of foreign diplomas
- Statements of educational equivalence
- Guidance for regulated professions (medicine, engineering, teaching, nursing)

This helps individuals understand how their qualifications fit within the Danish system.

2. VEU Centres – Adult Education Centres

VEU centres support adults wanting to upgrade skills, gain certificates or retrain.

They offer

- Literacy and numeracy support
- Danish language combined with vocational content
- Courses in trade-specific Danish
- Access to AMU and VET guidance

3. Validation of Prior Learning (Realkompetencevurdering – RKV)

A formal process that assesses skills gained through previous work experience.

Benefits

- Allows entry into higher-level training
- Reduces time needed to complete a qualification
- Helps employers understand a person's experience

This is helpful when formal documents are missing or incomplete.

03

Mental-health and Wellbeing Support



| Mental Health Support and Wellbeing

Adjusting to life in Denmark can be demanding. Refugees often face stress linked to the asylum process, uncertainty about the future, language barriers, financial pressures, and the challenge of navigating a highly digital public system. Denmark provides a strong mix of municipal services, NGOs, health professionals and volunteer-led groups that offer emotional support, counselling and crisis assistance. Support is available for adults, families and young people, with options ranging from formal therapy to community-based wellbeing activities.

This section outlines where refugees can find help, how to access support without fluent Danish, and what services are available across the country.

Main NGOs providing mental-health support

These organisations offer free or low-cost emotional and psychological support for refugees. Services are available in Danish and English, and often in Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya and other languages depending on staff and volunteers.

Danish Refugee Council (Dansk Flygtningehjælp – DRC)

Website: <https://drc.ngo>

Cities: Nationwide support

The DRC offers extensive psychosocial support for refugees and people in the asylum system.

What they offer

- One-to-one counselling sessions
- Support for trauma, stress and anxiety related to displacement
- Social counselling to address housing, family and financial worries
- Women's groups and community wellbeing activities
- Peer-support networks
- Referrals to municipal mental-health services and specialised clinics

Why it's useful

Their staff are trained in refugee wellbeing and understand the challenges newcomers face in Denmark.

Red Cross Denmark (Røde Kors)

Website: <https://www.rodekors.dk>

Cities: Nationwide

The Red Cross supports people in asylum centres and local communities.

They offer

- Emotional support and counselling for asylum seekers
- Social groups reducing isolation
- Activities promoting wellbeing (exercise, art, creativity)
- Support groups for women, families and older people
- Friendly visitor programmes for isolated individuals
- Practical help with appointments and digital platforms

Caritas Denmark

Website: <https://www.caritas.dk>

City: Copenhagen

Caritas provides community-based support for vulnerable adults and families.

What they offer

- Informal emotional support and listening sessions
- Counselling for people under stress
- Parent and family support groups
- Social activities that encourage connection
- Referrals to professional mental-health services

Trampoline House – Community Support and Wellbeing

Website: <https://trampolinehouse.dk>

City: Copenhagen

A well-known refugee community centre offering a safe, welcoming environment.

They provide

- Informal counselling
- Art workshops and creative expression
- Women's safe spaces
- Community meals, social events and recreational activities
- Peer-support groups

Why it matters

It is a space where people feel included and supported during difficult periods.

Headspace Denmark

Website: <https://headspace.dk>

Cities: Available in many large towns

Headspace offers anonymous, free support for young people aged 12–25.

Services include

- Casual, non-clinical counselling
- Drop-in sessions for emotional worries or stress
- Support with school, relationships or settling in
- Referral to specialist services when needed

Mental-health support through the public health system

Refugees with a Danish health card (*sundhedskort*) have access to the public mental-health system.

1. General Practitioners (GPs / Læger)

Your GP is the first contact point for mental-health concerns.

They can

- Offer initial support
- Prescribe medication if appropriate
- Refer patients to a psychologist or psychiatric services
- Provide sick notes for stress-related leave

2. Subsidised psychological treatment

The Danish health system offers partial reimbursement for therapy through GPs in certain cases.

Common reasons for referral

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Traumatic experiences
- Stress
- Bereavement
- Difficult family situations

Waiting times may vary depending on location.

3. Regional psychiatric services

Hospitals offer specialist care for severe mental-health conditions.

They provide

- Assessments and diagnosis
- Crisis intervention
- Short-term or inpatient treatment
- Follow-up care coordinated with community services

Anyone in crisis can contact psychiatric emergency services (*psykiatrisk skadestue*).

Support for children and young people

Children may struggle with school transitions, language barriers, or past trauma. Denmark provides several routes for support.

1. Municipal family centres (Familiecentre)

Available in many municipalities.

They offer

- Parenting support
- Counselling for children and adolescents
- Help with behavioural or emotional challenges
- Family therapy sessions
- Workshops on communication and wellbeing

2. School-based support

Schools often employ psychologists or counsellors (PPR – Pædagogisk Psykologisk Rådgivning).

They provide

- Emotional and behavioural support
- Assessments for learning difficulties
- Assistance with school adaptation
- Counselling for parents
- Referral to external services when needed

3. Youth clubs, sports and recreational programmes

Municipal youth clubs, Red Cross youth groups and local sports associations offer:

- Safe spaces for young people
- Social activities and team sports
- Confidence-building programmes
- Homework support and mentoring

These activities help children and teenagers build friendships and routines.

D. Crisis support and emergency assistance

Refugees experiencing severe distress, safety concerns or urgent mental-health needs can access immediate support.

1. Emergency number: 112

For urgent danger or medical emergencies.

2. Psychiatric emergency services (Psykiatrisk Skadestue)

Available at major hospitals.

They provide

- Immediate assessment
- Crisis counselling
- Short-term stabilisation
- Referral to ongoing support services

3. Lifeline Denmark (Livslinien)

Website: <https://www.livslinien.dk>

Phone: 70 201 201

A confidential hotline offering emotional support for people in crisis.

4. Municipal crisis lines

Many municipalities operate local crisis numbers offering:

- Immediate emotional support
- Guidance for families in crisis
- Referrals to emergency accommodation or social services

Community-based wellbeing activities

Not all mental-health support needs to be clinical. Many people benefit from regular social contact and structured community activities.

1. Language cafés and social groups

Often hosted at libraries, community houses and volunteer centres.

Activities include

- Conversation practice
- Shared meals
- Group outings
- Coffee mornings
- Social gatherings for newcomers

2. Women's groups and family circles

Run by NGOs and community organisations.

They offer

- Safe spaces for discussing challenges
- Parenting workshops
- Craft, sewing or cooking groups
- Mother–child activities
- Peer support networks

3. Art, music and physical wellbeing programmes

Provided by cultural centres, Trampoline House, Red Cross and local volunteer groups.

Examples

- Art workshops
- Music sessions
- Relaxation or yoga groups
- Walking or cycling clubs
- Photography or storytelling projects

These are helpful for people who prefer creative or non-verbal forms of expression.

4. Faith-based and cultural associations

Mosques, churches and cultural centres often offer informal support.

Common offers

- Emotional support from community leaders
- Safe spaces for social contact
- Family events and cultural celebrations
- Help navigating local systems

04

Housing and Everyday Practical Guidance



| Housing and Everyday Practical Guidance

Finding stable housing and navigating daily life in Denmark can be challenging, especially for newcomers unfamiliar with Danish systems. Housing is expensive in many cities, much of the administration is digital, and many services require the use of MitID (the national electronic identification). However, a combination of municipal services, NGOs and community organisations can support refugees in finding accommodation and learning how to manage essential everyday tasks.

This section outlines where to find housing support and provides practical guidance on healthcare, transport, education, digital systems and other daily essentials.

Housing Support

Housing in Denmark is mainly provided through the private rental market, municipal housing lists and social housing associations. Refugees assigned to municipalities during the integration programme may receive initial accommodation arranged by the local authority, but long-term housing usually relies on private rentals or social housing.

1. Municipal Integration Services (Kommune Integrationsenhed)

Each municipality is responsible for supporting refugees with housing when they first arrive.

They typically provide

- Temporary or initial accommodation
- Help searching for long-term housing
- Guidance on signing rental contracts
- Information on social housing waiting lists
- Advice on budgeting, bills and tenancy rules
- Support registering your address (folkeregisteradresse)

Why it's important

This is usually the first and most reliable point of contact for all housing-related questions.

2. Social Housing Associations (Boligforeninger / Almene Boligorganisationer)

Many refugees find long-term accommodation through social housing associations.

How it works

- Register on waiting lists for social housing in your municipality
- Some municipalities give priority to vulnerable families
- Rent is generally lower than market prices
- Flats vary from small units to family apartments

Examples of national providers

- Lejerbo
- AAB (Arbejdernes Andels Boligforening)
- Boligselskabet Sjælland
- DAB (Dansk Almennyttigt Boligselskab)

3. Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

DRC provides housing-related support through its integration and volunteer networks.

They offer

- Help understanding rental contracts
- Mediation with landlords
- Support with moving into new accommodation
- Advice on housing rights and responsibilities
- Contact with volunteers who help search for available flats

4. Red Cross Denmark

While the Red Cross focuses primarily on asylum centres, it also supports refugees living independently.

Support includes

- Practical help with starting a tenancy
- Furniture and household items through second-hand shops
- Local volunteers who assist with moving and settling in

5. Community centres and volunteer groups

Local volunteer organisations often assist with housing searches and settling into new neighbourhoods.

They can help

- Check rental listings
- Accompany people to flat viewings
- Explain housing advertisements and contracts
- Offer donated furniture and household goods

Searching for rentals online

Finding a rental property in Denmark often involves searching online platforms.

Common rental websites

- <https://www.boligsiden.dk>
- <https://www.dba.dk>
- <https://www.lejebolig.dk>
- <https://www.boligportal.dk>
- <https://www.findroommate.dk> (shared housing)
- Facebook groups for rooms and flats (varies by city)

Safe searching tips

- Be cautious of landlords requesting payment before viewing
- Rent should be paid only after signing a contract
- Avoid listings with unusually low rent
- Request everything in writing and keep copies
- Ask a municipal worker or NGO to check the contract if unsure

Understanding Rental Agreements (Bail de Location)

A standard rental contract in Denmark includes:

- Names and CPR numbers of landlord and tenant
- Address and description of the property
- Monthly rent and payment date
- Deposit (typically 2–3 months' rent)
- Prepaid rent (1–3 months)
- Responsibility for utilities (electricity, water, heating, internet)
- Rules about maintenance and inspections
- Duration of the contract
- Notice period and termination rules
- Inventory report (*indflytningsrapport*) when you move in

Important

Taking photos of the property at move-in helps avoid disputes later.

Everyday Practical Guidance

Denmark relies heavily on digital systems. Understanding key services early on can make daily life easier.

1. Digital Systems (MitID, e-Boks, Digital Post)

Much of Danish public administration is digital.

Essential tools

- **MitID:** digital ID used for all public and many private services
- **e-Boks:** digital mailbox where official letters are received

- **Digital Post:** required for communication with authorities
- **Sundhed.dk:** online access to health records and doctor services

NGOs, libraries and municipal services help newcomers set these up.

2. Healthcare

Denmark's healthcare system is public and free at the point of use.

How to access it

- Register with your local municipality
- Receive a CPR (personal number) and yellow health card
- Choose a general practitioner (læge) listed on your card
- Visit your GP for all non-emergency health issues

Emergency numbers

- **112:** urgent medical emergencies
- **1813:** medical helpline in the Capital Region (Copenhagen area)
- **Acute clinics (akutmodtagelse)** are available at hospitals

Language support

Interpreters are available for hospital appointments in many cases.

3. Public Transport

Denmark has reliable public transport, including trains, buses, metro and bicycles.

Examples

- **Copenhagen:** Metro, S-trains, buses and regional trains
- **Aarhus:** Letbanen (light rail) and buses
- **Odense:** Light rail and buses
- **Aalborg:** Buses and regional trains

Travel cards

- **Rejsekort:** rechargeable travel card usable across the country
- Monthly passes are available and often cheaper for regular travel

4. Opening a Bank Account

Banks commonly used by newcomers include:

- Danske Bank
- Nordea
- Nykredit Bank
- Jyske Bank
- Arbejdernes Landsbank

Requirements

- Passport
- CPR number
- Danish address
- Phone number
- Sometimes proof of income or benefits

Some banks offer "basic accounts" for customers with limited documentation.

5. Mobile Phones and Internet

Major providers include:

- Telia
- Telenor
- 3 (Tre)
- YouSee
- Lebara and Lycamobile (good for international calls)

Prepaid SIM cards are easy to purchase in supermarkets and convenience shops.

6. Food, Essentials and Budget Shopping

Affordable supermarkets include:

- Rema 1000
- Lidl
- Netto
- Fakta
- Aldi (in some regions)
- Bilka for larger stores

Second-hand shops

- Red Cross shops
- Blue Cross (Blå Kors)
- Kirkens Korshær
- DBA.dk for used items
- Facebook Marketplace

These are good for inexpensive furniture, clothing and household goods.

7. Education and Schools

Schooling in Denmark is free.

To enrol a child

- Contact your municipality's school placement office
- Provide CPR number and proof of address
- Children may be placed in a reception class (*modtageklasse*) for extra Danish support

Schools offer after-school care (*SFO*) for primary-aged children.

8. Everyday Administration

Key administrative tasks include:

- Registering your address (*folkeregisteradresse*)
- Getting a CPR and MitID
- Setting up Digital Post
- Registering with a job centre if you are looking for work
- Paying utility bills
- Understanding Danish letters and deadlines

Libraries, community centres and NGOs can help interpret official letters and assist with digital systems.

Practical tips for daily life in Denmark

- Keep copies of contracts, letters and receipts
- Seek help early with digital platforms to avoid missed deadlines
- Attend local community events to meet neighbours and practise Danish
- Use libraries for free internet, printing and digital assistance
- Learn basic Danish phrases to help with shopping, transport and appointments
- Ask a volunteer or municipal adviser to review any document you're unsure about