

Charter for interaction between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector

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The development of Danish democracy and the Danish welfare state is based upon a unique and vigorous interaction between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector. It is the story of how farmers, smallholders, workers and others helped build Denmark. Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark is a network of volunteer social organizations, sports associations, cultural and ecclesiastical organizations, adult education associations, youth groups, associations for persons with disabilities, patients associations, residents associations, grass-roots organizations, international NGOs and many more.

Volunteer Denmark is diverse, ranging from informal networking organizations to what is often called Associations Denmark, i.e., organizations and associations with formal political decision-making procedures.

In order to strengthen and develop the interaction between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector, representatives of each have agreed to prepare a charter setting forth the framework and fundamental values for such interaction.

The purpose is

- to provide the individual citizen with the best conceivable framework for participating actively in community coalitions and to strengthen the forces of social cohesion
- to help build respect for the diversity of goals and forms of organization in Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark
- to strengthen and develop the interaction between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector while respecting their differences
- to maintain and develop the efforts of Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark to promote the development of society, the welfare of community coalitions, and the individual's quality of life
- to promote volunteer efforts and make them more visible.

THE FOUNDATION OF VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

The autonomy of its volunteer associations and organizations is a fundamental condition for Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark. It is the members and participants who, through the exercise of their democratic rights, make the decisions that affect the operations of their associations and organizations.

Thus, the freedom of association secured by the Danish Constitution is an important prerequisite for Associations Denmark.

Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark is made up of freely-participating community coalitions in all their diversity.

The commitment, responsibility and active participation of individuals in their communities and society form the foundation for volunteer efforts.

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

Volunteer efforts derive from the human desire to become involved and influence the development of society locally, nationally and internationally.

Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark is a committed and critical ally and adversary of the public sector. It contributes to the welfare and quality of life of the individual, the many and society as a whole. Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark can blaze new trails for the public sector and contribute to the development of society.

Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark promotes contact among people with different backgrounds through activities in community coalitions.

Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark promotes interest in the common good and has decisive significance for a vital democracy. It helps develop competencies crucial to democratic understanding, the formation of public opinion, cooperation, leadership and organization.

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND VOLUNTEER DENMARK

The interaction must be based upon mutual trust and respect for the other's roles and missions. The right of a volunteer organization to set and prioritize its own missions must be respected.

There is a need for comprehensive and versatile volunteer efforts, but such efforts should not replace the contribution of the public sector.

Organizations and associations that receive public support should have articulated values, goals and parameters for their work, drawn up on their own without interference from the public sector.

Contribution to the development of society

Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark's contribution to the development of society takes its starting point in individual human beings who are inspired and encouraged to take responsibility, together with others, for themselves and their fellow human beings.

The welfare state is developed, among other ways, through the mutual sharing of knowledge and dialogue on all levels. In this way, the foundation is laid for new initiatives - including legislation.

Opportunities should continuously be created for volunteer organizations to develop and try out new solutions to society's problems - for example, by experimenting with new partnerships between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector.

The knowledge and experience of Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and its interaction with the public sector should to a higher degree be accumulated, disseminated and, perhaps, even made an object for research.

Legislation and resources

The public sector cannot ensure that Denmark has a broad range of active associations and other volunteer organizations - only the volunteers themselves can do that. However, the public sector has a duty to help see to it that volunteer efforts are not made unnecessarily difficult.

Therefore, proposed laws, etc., should be evaluated with respect to their impact on volunteer efforts to ensure that they do not have unintended effects.

The public sector recognizes and supports volunteer efforts. Public support must provide wide parameters for volunteer activities, the life of associations and organizations - including opportunities for education, development and experiments that bolster the quality of their work.

The basic principle is that ordinary contributions from the public sector are to be made so that the autonomy of volunteer organizations is not called into question.

The public sector may earmark resources for the promotion and implementation of common initiatives between the public sector and volunteer organizations and direct resources toward special problems that Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark may undertake to solve.

It would be expedient to arrange meetings of government-established committees, etc., in a manner that would not prevent volunteers from participating because of economic, work-related or organizational reasons.

CONTINUING DIALOGUE

The work group behind the charter and the government call for this charter to serve as a starting point for continuing dialogue on values, parameters and concrete opportunities for interaction between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector at all levels of society.

WORK GROUP MEMBERS

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