

# A common and safe future

An action plan to prevent  
extremist views and  
radicalisation among young  
people

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Government of Denmark



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# Preface

Denmark is an accommodating and safe society with many possibilities and opportunities for each citizen. A society with a healthy economy, a dynamic labour market and a well-developed social safety net. An open society with room for diversity.

Democracy, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression and religion, equal rights and duties for all, regardless of gender and colour, along with respect for the law in general, comprise some of the fundamental values and ground rules that ensure our healthy co-existence.

Another fundamental value is that all should be able to live out their full potential as individual human beings and take part in the many opportunities offered by Danish society.

Internationally, Denmark is well-respected. Our society is considered by many as a model to follow, and our international efforts striving towards a world with freedom, security and opportunities for ever more people is highly appreciated.

Regrettably, we also experience the presence of negative forces such as crime, extremism and discrimination. Efforts to combat these forces should continue in order for them not to undermine cohesion, security and mutual trust in our society or the surrounding world.

These negative forces originate from both inside and outside our society, because – for better or for worse – Denmark is part of a wider a global society.

There is a general threat of terror against Denmark and Danish interests abroad, and resulting from myths and misinformation, some people around the world have a negative and distorted perception of Denmark.

Both in domestic and foreign policy, we should co-operate with those forces that wish to promote the fundamental values of freedom, security and opportunities for all, and fight the forces that want violence, hatred and oppression.

The Government works to promote these values in a number of different areas – inside as well as outside Denmark. This includes:

- **Counter-terrorism.** The Government has taken a multitude of initiatives to counter terrorism. The police and intelligence capabilities have been strengthened, and a number of legislative changes have been made in order to take into account the global nature of terrorism, strengthen the possibilities for police investigation and ensure an efficient counter-terrorism effort.
- **Efforts against gangs and youth crime.** The fight against gangs is a high Government priority. In 2005, the Danish National Police launched a special

strategy targeting gang crime. The effort is two-fold. One element comprises prompt and decisive reactions towards the most hardened gang criminals, and the other involves preventive and crime-preventive measures directed at maladjusted youths who are not yet stuck in a criminal career pattern. In addition, the Government has set up a Youth Commission, the purpose of which is to carry out an overall review of the efforts against youth crime and, on the basis of this, put forward recommendations on how to strengthen the efforts.

- **International co-operation on peace, development and democracy.** The Government's international efforts to promote peace, stability, economic and social development as well as democracy and human rights comprise the full spectrum of foreign affairs, development, security and trade policy tools, ranging from humanitarian aid and trade co-operation to economic sanctions and military intervention. The means are adapted to the situation, but the objective is the same. The fight against poverty in Africa, the overall engagement in Afghanistan, the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, the long-term political commitment to ensure a just and viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the efforts to promote global free trade – all efforts have the same fundamental objective: to ensure that the world Denmark is part of develops peacefully and with opportunities for the individual human being.
- **Efforts against discrimination and intolerance.** It is a fundamental, democratic value that no one should be subjected to hatred or discrimination because of what they are or what they believe in. The Government is addressing this issue both in Denmark and in the international efforts to promote human rights. The Government has made it an aggravating circumstance if a crime is committed based on the victim's ethnicity, beliefs, sexual orientation, legitimate expressions or similar. In addition, a great number of activities related to intercultural dialogue, education, dialogue and campaigns have been carried out in order to promote mutual respect, regardless of gender and colour etc. An important element of these activities has been the campaign "Give Racism the Red Card", which is being implemented in Denmark and other countries. In its legislation, the Government has also improved the individual protection from discrimination. A complaints committee has been set up, and from 1 January 2009 this area was further reinforced through the establishment of a special Board of Equal Treatment. Finally, the Government has begun work on a new overall action plan to promote equal treatment and respect for the individual whereby the protection against discrimination will be further strengthened.
- **Education, jobs and opportunities for all.** The flexicurity model and active social and labour market policy in Denmark are important elements of what Denmark is known for abroad, and they contribute to the creation of social cohesion, security and progress. The Government wishes to ensure the existence of a qualified labour force, to strengthen efforts aimed at breaking hereditary social inequality

and to provide all with equal opportunities. These efforts comprise a solid system for education and activation along with preventive initiatives directed at socially vulnerable individuals, skill improvement in elementary schools and efforts to prevent drop-out from youth educational institutions. Therefore, the Government – among other initiatives – has launched the campaign “Need For all Youngsters” comprising education bazaars, role model visits to schools, schoolwork assistance, targeted recruitment campaigns etc. In order to find employment for even more people, the Government has implemented a multitude of targeted employment activities.

- **Integration and intercultural dialogue.** For a number of years, the Government has strengthened the integration activities directed at new citizens – e.g. through improved Danish language and civic training along with improved employment schemes focusing on both duties and rights. In addition, the Government has launched or supported a number of initiatives promoting intercultural dialogue and increased mutual integration in e.g. sports clubs and other association activities. The results have been good, although challenges still remain. While one in six Danes with immigrant backgrounds felt poorly integrated in the year 2000, today only one in twenty feels that way.

These are just a few of the challenges and activities that are included in the general Government efforts to maintain and further develop Denmark as a society with freedom, security and opportunities for all – and to promote these values in the world around us. They are efforts that each hold a value and serve an independent purpose.

The Government now wishes to direct its focus on one particular challenge: the increasing trend in recent years towards extremism and radicalisation – in Denmark and elsewhere in the world.

Activities to prevent extremism and radicalisation comprise yet another element in the efforts to promote the values of freedom, security and opportunities for the individual person, in as well as outside Denmark. Therefore, in order to counter and prevent extremism, it is necessary to develop activities that are partly separate from and partly overlapping with some of the different areas of intervention mentioned above.

This is the basis on which the Government is now introducing an overall action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people.

The development of the action plan began in January 2008 when the Government set up a group of government officials which in June 2008 put forward a report proposing a number of initiatives to prevent extremism and radicalisation. The proposal built on research studies, the strategic EU co-operation, experience from other countries and an assessment of the specific Danish challenges. In order to promote broad dialogue on the preventive efforts, the Government initiated a public consultation and dialogue

process with the participation of municipalities, organisations, research institutions etc. This process, which is described in further detail in appendix 1 and 2, laid part of the foundation for the Government considerations behind the elaboration of the final action plan.

This action plan does not only constitute a new effort; it also represents a further development and co-ordination of existing efforts. Aside from the above activities, some of which may contribute to countering extremism, there are already a number of initiatives in place that are more specifically targeted at preventing extremism.

The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) has set up a special Centre for Prevention under its Preventive Security Department. Similarly, the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs (the Ministry of Integration) has set up a Division for Cohesion and Prevention of Radicalisation. These preventive units shall – in each their area of expertise and in collaboration with other authorities – work to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people. Also in the international co-operation, Denmark is already working to prevent and counter extremism around the world.

To this should be added that various municipalities, institutions, organisations, immigrant associations and others are also working to prevent and counter extremist views among young people in the local communities.

The Government believes that there is a need to strengthen and further develop the collective efforts of society and, therefore, the object is to develop a strengthened and comprehensive strategy that includes all relevant actors. The Government will work to gain political support for the prioritisation of the funds necessary to realise this endeavour.

# 1. What is extremism and radicalisation ?

All individuals have a personal responsibility for contributing positively to the society they are part of. Nothing may justify the use of violence or the spreading of hate against certain groups in society. However, the fact remains that extremist groups do exist – also in Denmark.

Research offers no clear answers as to why some young people undergo radicalisation. Systematic studies still remain to be carried out and, therefore, the Government has strengthened the research in this field. There are indications that the reasons for radicalisation are characterised by a number of common features. One common feature, which plays an important role, is young people's search for identity and a sense of belonging. We also know that extremists are found in a wide variety of environments. Radicalisation is not a phenomenon that exists exclusively among socially disadvantaged groups, although social and societal issues, including feelings of injustice and discrimination, may lead to a small minority becoming vulnerable to the explanations and feelings of group belonging that extremism has to offer. The extremist groups exploit the young people's search for a platform in life by spreading misinformation and bombarding them with propaganda aimed at legitimising the extreme views.

Sometimes, the so-called radicalisers and other negative influencers actively seek to make the young person join the extremist ideas and groups. Within these groups, the young person is socialised into accepting the radical ideology, hostile imagery and a division into "us" and "them" and, possibly, into accepting the use of violent and undemocratic means.

International issues such as global ideological trends and various forms of conflict may also be contributing factors to radicalisation.

Researchers are not in agreement as to how the concepts of extremism and radicalisation should be defined. The Government's understanding of the concepts is as follows:

- **Extremism** is characterised by totalitarian and anti-democratic ideologies, intolerance to the views of others, hostile imagery and a division into "them" and "us". Extremist ideas may be expressed in different ways, and ultimately they may bring individuals or groups to use violent or undemocratic methods as a tool to reaching a specific political objective, or they may seek to undermine the democratic social order or make threats or carry out demeaning harassment against groups of people based on e.g. their skin colour, sexuality or beliefs.
- **Radicalisation** is the process in which a person gradually accepts the ideas and methods of extremism and, possibly, joins its organised groups. Personal circumstances, group dynamics as well as political, financial and cultural factors may all contribute to radicalisation processes.

Only a minority of young people accept the methods and views behind extremism. The vast majority of young people across life philosophies and cultural backgrounds reject extremism and support an open, inclusive and democratic society. And the vast majority of those who are politically active are so in a fully legitimate way. In a democratic society there should be room for us to not agree about everything.

But extremism is dangerous. When extremism in its various forms is expressed through illegal acts, it should be fought through a firm justice policy and allocation of resources to the efforts of the police. Consequences should be severe when extremists threaten public safety or certain minority groups such as Jews, Muslims or homosexuals. And Denmark should continue its contribution to the fight against extremism around the world.

It is important to note that some of the activities of the extremist groups may be completely legal; some even deliberately use democratic tools to obtain influence. But the spreading of hatred against democracy, Danish society or certain groups can and should be renounced and actively countered. We can and should give young people positive alternatives to the sense of fellowship offered by the extremists and their ideologies.

There are many different kinds of extremism. In Denmark, one type of extremism is practised by left-wing extremist circles. Their interpretation of global issues as well as local issues, such as the closing of Ungdomshuset ("The Youth House") in March 2007, has formed the basis for radicalisation. The extreme left-wing groups have, for instance, been involved in violent riots, sabotage and vandalism. Similarly, the activity level is high in extreme right-wing circles. These groups have been involved in acts of violence as well as the spreading and promotion of racist messages and harassment of individuals with minority backgrounds.

Today, militant or radical Islamism constitutes a new type of global threat borne by a totalitarian ideology. The threat is shared by the West, the Muslim World and other parts of the world that have been the scene of numerous acts of terrorism and violence. Militant Islamism is unacceptable in the eyes of the majority of Muslims and comprises a common concern for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Radical Islamists are also opposed to the democratic legal order in western countries, and they attempt to influence Muslims in those countries to oppose democracy and avoid any involvement in society.

A large part of the militant and radical Islamist activities are part of propaganda aimed at creating the image that the Western World, including Denmark, is hostile towards – or outright waging war against – Islam or Muslims. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Danish Government does not divide the world into religions or religious communities. Instead, it works – in Denmark as well as internationally – to ensure

equal opportunities for all in safety and freedom regardless of ethnic background or beliefs. This entails, for instance, that there is freedom of religion in Denmark and that all denominations are respected. It also means that no distinction is made in terms of the religion of the individuals whose interests we are trying to protect or promote as part of the international efforts. In the fight against extremism and terrorism, Denmark has joined forces with the vast majority of countries and populations of the world – regardless of religious affiliation.

## 2. Government objectives

This action plan has two main objectives:

- Through a direct, preventive effort, it must be ensured that we as a society are prepared to identify and address specific problems related to extremism in a timely manner. Extremist propaganda should be met with factual information and alternative offers for the young people. An early, multi-stringed and co-ordinated preventive effort should counter the processes and influences that make certain young people turn their backs on society or be recruited into radical and extremist groups. Furthermore, Denmark should keep contributing to the prevention of extremism in the world around us.
- At the same time, the Government wishes to use this and many other initiatives to maintain and further develop Denmark as a democratic society with freedom, responsibility, equality and opportunities for all. Primarily, because it holds an independent value for society as well as for the individual, but also in order to weaken the growth basis for radicalisation of young people and to strengthen society's alternatives and resilience to extremism.

Thus, the Government wishes to promote a development in which we, as a society – across our differences – stand together and combat extremism in its different forms.

Even though only marginal groups of young people are attracted to extremism, the majority – across skin colour, religious affiliation and cultural background – have a shared responsibility for being part of the solution together with other parts of society. In return, society must work to ensure that all young people feel that democracy offers them opportunities, responsibility and recognition.

### 3. Focus areas and initiatives

The Government wishes to implement 22 specific initiatives divided into seven focus areas:

1. Direct contact with the young people
2. Inclusion based on rights and obligations
3. Dialogue and information
4. Democratic cohesion
5. Efforts in vulnerable residential areas
6. Special initiatives in prisons
7. Knowledge, co-operation and partnerships

#### First focus area: Direct contact with the young people

Through an early, concerted effort, a direct contact should be established to individual young people in order to enable society to handle the youngsters who are already influenced by extremist views. The young people should be helped to a normal life based on schooling, leisure time, education, work and other legitimate alternatives to what the extremists have to offer.

#### **Initiative 1: Special interventions towards young people who are already in a process of radicalisation**

Experience from abroad points to the fact that individuals who are in a radicalisation process or who are affiliated with radical or extreme circles may be affected positively in a variety of ways. This should be achieved through development and implementation of:

- **Individual preventive talks.** PET is going to develop a concept for targeted and individual preventive talks with individuals who are in the early stage of a radicalisation process or who are affiliated with extremist circles.
- **Mentoring schemes focusing on young people and identity issues.** The mentor should be someone whom the young person trusts and respects, and someone who, over a longer period of time, may assist the young person in finding a more constructive direction in life.

- **Other special interventions** where municipalities and other local actors organise the activities that are deemed most appropriate in each case – such as lengthy periods away from the usual environment, special compulsory measures or schooling or, in severe cases, man-to-man marking.

## **Initiative 2: Support for an early and comprehensive effort aimed at young people**

The local efforts are a cornerstone of the activities aimed at preventing radicalisation. Most often, local actors are the first to identify signs of extremist views among young people, and the possibility for early preventive efforts also lies within the local communities. The Government wishes to support the establishment and further development of broad, local co-operation and the upgrading of skills for the professionals and association workers who are in contact with the young people. In particular, this should be achieved through consultants who will offer advice and support for individual municipalities, local communities and associations. Advice and other support will be given in connection with e.g.:

- **Focus on radicalisation in the co-operation between schools, social services and the police (SSP).** The counter-radicalisation efforts are incorporated into the local crime preventive co-operation in line with other types of worrying behaviour: drug abuse, property crime etc.
- **Model municipalities.** An agreement will be reached with 2-3 model municipalities that have experienced radicalisation trends among children and young people and that are in the process of – or interested in – carrying out systematic mapping of the problems and developing a local and integrated solution.
- **Tailor-made courses and teaching material on extremism.** The objective is to upgrade the skills of employees who are in contact with the young people, enabling them to identify problematic behaviour among young people and elaborate solutions that may contribute to a more positive development for the youngsters.
- **A handbook on extremism.** A handbook, which in brief and clear terms describes various forms of extremism and suggests possible actions and preventive measures, will be drawn up.
- **Documentary.** For use in teaching and discussion activities, a documentary will be produced. The documentary should contain personal accounts from individuals who have been involved in but since left various extremist environments.
- **Local network meetings** where a broad spectrum of actors may strengthen the local co-operation on prevention and ways of handling young individuals who display signs of being involved in extremism.

- **Local dialogue and campaign activities.** The municipalities should, upon request, receive assistance and guidance in connection with the planning of local campaigns and dialogue processes addressing diversity, civic citizenship, mutual respect, security, trust-building between citizens and authorities etc.
- **Knowledge base and newsletters** on extremism, preventive activities, new research etc.
- **Establishment of local information centres** where citizens and local actors may seek counselling on ways of handling specific problems related to extremism and radicalisation.

## Second focus area: Inclusion based on rights and obligations

The balance between freedom and responsibility and between rights and obligations is essential if we are to enjoy a sustainable community. Partly by countering discrimination and partly by focusing on the responsibility of the young people and the role of their parents as active citizens and positive role models, the ties between the individual and society should be strengthened. All should feel that they have freedom and rights while at the same time they have responsibilities and obligations towards others. There is an independent value to this principle, which is incorporated into a number of Government policies. In addition, a good balance between rights and obligations among citizens may contribute to weakening the growth conditions for the different types of extremism.

### Initiative 3: Strengthening of parent responsibility

A number of initiatives have already been launched – among those, the development of special parent programmes and the so-called Project Parent's Guide – involving the elaboration of a multilingual series of brochures to be used as parent information and a dialogue and counselling tool for professionals and others with parent contact. The Government also wishes to strengthen parent involvement in primary schools and youth educational institutions. In addition, the Government is going to propose a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring that parents take responsibility for the development of their children. This involves, for instance, a tightening of the so-called parent order and the introduction of a youth order and – based on recommendations from the Youth Commission – a tightening of parent liability for damages caused by their children. Overall, the initiatives should contribute to parents acquiring skills and a sense of responsibility and that children develop into responsible citizens.

#### **Initiative 4: Increased anti-discrimination efforts**

Discrimination is unacceptable and creates social gaps. The Government has previously strengthened the existing anti-discrimination legislation by passing a law ordering the establishment of a new Board of Equal Treatment, which began its activities on 1 January 2009. The Board is competent to handle discrimination complaints from within as well as outside the labour market. Furthermore, it can decide cases and award compensation if any discrimination rules are violated. Thus, it has become easier to file complaints about discrimination. The Government now wants to reinforce its anti-discrimination efforts by preparing a new action plan to promote equal treatment and respect for the individual. The action plan is expected to incorporate some of the following initiatives:

- **Better information on access to justice.** No one subjected to discrimination should have any doubts as to their rights or where to turn for information or to lodge a complaint.
- **Activities targeting discrimination in the nightlife.** There should be repercussions for alcohol license holders such as discotheques etc. that discriminate in the nightlife.
- **Anti-discrimination through the allocation of vocational traineeships.** Studies show that many traineeship consultants have seen examples of discrimination in connection with the allocation of vocational traineeships. The extent and nature of this discrimination should be uncovered with the objective of developing specific initiatives to solve the problem. This initiative should be launched as soon as possible.

### **Third focus area: Dialogue and information**

Some young people feel left out of society or see themselves as being in opposition to other groups. One reason could be the perception they have been given through extremist propaganda which to a high degree originates from outside the Danish borders. Another reason could be their actual situation in society or how they perceive their situation. Therefore, the young people should be made familiar with facts about society and the opportunities it has to offer as well as with international issues and the way various extremist groups exploit ideologies and religion and tell one-sided stories about e.g. immigration, Islam, Judaism, racial differences, Holocaust, relations between the Western and the Muslim World, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict or other issues. The young people should also feel they have the opportunity to make their opinion known and that someone is listening – even if they will not always agree. Therefore, dialogue and information in a number of areas will be promoted through democratically founded alternatives to the flow of information from extremists and other influences.

### **Initiative 5: Role models and campaign activities**

Young, successful people who embrace unity and diversity and renounce extremism and racism should increasingly be used as role models and ambassadors. This may include musicians and athletes or young people who are well into the process of work, education or association activities. In order to strengthen the sense of community, there is also a more general need for increased mutual recognition of the diversity that is characteristic of modern Danish society and of our mutual responsibility for maintaining a good society. Based on this, the following activities will be implemented:

- **Role models.** The various role model schemes under the campaign Need for All Youngsters and in municipalities, associations etc. should be strengthened and given further qualifications enabling them to discuss issues such as identity, civic citizenship, democracy and extremism with the young people.
- **Show Racism the Red Card.** By supporting the campaign Show Racism the Red Card, 40 ambassadors among the best footballers in Denmark have acted as spokesmen for affirmative action and against racism. This campaign should now be strengthened and expanded to include other athletes and cultural figures within fields such as theatre and music, the role of which will be to create visibility and enter into dialogue with the young people. Furthermore, the co-operation with the official fan clubs in order to tackle problems concerning small groups of fans with extremist or racist views should be continued.
- **Celebration of democratic cohesion.** A visible campaign will be carried out celebrating democratic cohesion, diversity as well as the common and mutual responsibility for a good society with opportunities for all and respect for the individual.

### **Initiative 6: Increased dialogue and information on the Danish foreign policy**

In order to create a counter image to the propaganda and hostile imagery of extremist groups, there should be focus on the facts concerning international issues and Denmark's foreign policy. Therefore, targeted information activities on Danish foreign policy will be implemented, focusing on relations with the Muslim World. One of the objectives is to challenge and counter the one-sided and negative description of the relations between Denmark / the West and the Muslim World. The communication activities will, for instance, be carried out through information meetings at universities and schools, youth clubs and other places frequented by young people as well as through the development of information material and targeted use of the internet. The information meetings will draw on the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danish and foreign Muslim partners – including partners from the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme – staff members from the Armed Forces, including formerly deployed Danish soldiers etc.

### **Initiative 7: Dialogue and information in countries with Muslim populations**

In the efforts to promote a nuanced and objective understanding of the relations between the West / Denmark and the Muslim World, the flow of information from this part of the world should be taken into account, including information from – in some cases extremist – blogs and websites on the internet. Increased dialogue and information in Denmark should go hand in hand with increased dialogue and information in the Muslim countries and the European countries with large Muslim communities. Efforts should be made to give Muslim populations in various countries factual knowledge on Danish foreign policy, conditions for Muslims in Denmark and co-operation between the West and the Muslim World. In order to ensure this, an Arabic-speaking staff member is employed, inter alia to establish contact with the Arab media.

### **Initiative 8: PET's dialogue forum against militant extremism**

Since 2004 and as part of PET's multi-faceted approach to the prevention and combating of terrorism, there has been an ongoing dialogue with a number of representatives from ethnic minorities and imams. Based on own experience and experience from abroad, PET plans to further develop this dialogue by extending the circle of dialogue partners to include additional representatives from Muslim communities in Denmark who may exert influence in their local communities. The objective is to strengthen the "disagreeing dialogue" by entering into dialogue with individuals who represent controversial views. Often, it is precisely these individuals who have the best chance of influencing the attitudes of the young people who are in a process of radicalisation, in a non-violent direction.

## **Fourth focus area: Democratic cohesion**

A strong, vibrant and inclusive, democratic culture carried forward, in part, by education and association participation is an independent objective for all of Danish society, and may also contribute to strengthening the resilience of young people towards the group belonging and explanations offered by extremism. Among the democratic competencies that need strengthening are knowledge of the democratic principles of freedom, mutual responsibility and social governance, the ability to partake in democratic processes and to resolve problems through dialogue as well as respect for the views of others and knowledge of other cultures.

### **Initiative 9: Strengthening of democracy and civic education**

In connection with a revision of the public school teaching curricula, the Government has strengthened lessons in democracy and civic citizenship. For instance, the objects

clause for the topic of social science now states that the lessons should contribute to bringing about genuine respect for the democratic ground rules and fundamental values of society. The new teaching curricula come into effect in the school year 2009/10.

In addition, the Government has strengthened the lessons in democracy and civic citizenship through a variety of new teaching materials.

The Government now wishes to further strengthen the lessons in democracy and civic citizenship in a number of areas:

- **Youth educational activities on democratic understanding.** In collaboration with the university colleges, the Government wishes to develop a catalogue of ideas for students at colleges of education. The purpose of the catalogue is to provide the students with knowledge of social issues and values in a democratic society along with inspiration for how these issues and values may be incorporated into the educational activities with children and young people.
- **Inspirational material on democracy and civic education in Danish public schools.** Based on the Democracy Canon and best practice examples, a catalogue of ideas inspiring to ways of organising cross-disciplinary democracy education will be worked out.
- **Network for school principals addressing democracy education and extremism.** Exchange of successful educational practices within the fields of democracy and civic citizenship and exchange of experience on identifying and combating extremism, intolerance and discrimination, including double discrimination in the form of mutual harassment and racism among students of different cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds. The network should emphasise the responsibility of the school principals to solve the problems.
- **Lessons in democracy and civic citizenship in the independent primary schools.** Similar to the public schools, the independent schools should prepare the students for living in a society with freedom and democracy. For the purpose of strengthening and quality assuring these efforts, the Government is going to develop new methods of supervision within the framework of the existing legislation along with a catalogue of sample indicators to be used by all involved in the school efforts to meet this requirement – e.g. the parents. Additionally and in co-operation with the school associations, a report should be elaborated to form the basis for an assessment as to whether there is a need to modify the relevant independent school legislation. As part of this process, a series of inspection visits to 25 selected schools will be carried out.

- **Strengthened training in democracy and civic citizenship in the Danish Language Education for adult foreigners.** Parallel with acquiring Danish language skills, new citizens receive a thorough introduction to Danish society and democracy. In this connection, a programme for supplementary teacher training should be implemented, and additional material developed in order to ensure that democracy and civic citizenship training specifically support and develop the democratic competencies of the new citizens.
- **Civic citizenship training for religious preachers.** The Government is going to establish a training scheme on Danish social issues to religious preachers with foreign backgrounds in order to ensure their optimal preparation for offering guidance to their congregations. The results of a pilot training course that has already been carried out will be incorporated into the organisation of this scheme. Additionally, persons who obtain a preacher residence permit are required to pass the so-called immigration test, which is being developed.

#### **Initiative 10: Mutual integration through association activities**

Similar to the educational system, associations and their democratic processes constitute a solid framework for young people to interact across cultural backgrounds, experience positive fellowship and acquire democratic competencies. Thus, association activities are a good alternative to the fellowship extremist groups have to offer. However, many associations find that they lack the tools to include and maintain especially young people with multicultural backgrounds in the activities along with other young people. Therefore, the Government is going to launch the following initiatives:

- **Association mentors.** The existing efforts involving volunteer athletic guides should be further developed so as to enable municipalities, associations, building societies etc. to receive support for the recruitment of association mentors. The purpose of these mentors is to promote the participation and continued activity in associations, in particular by young people with multicultural backgrounds.
- **Capacity building in associations.** The ongoing efforts to strengthen the existing associations for young people with multicultural backgrounds should be expanded. This should be achieved by way of competence development and capacity building through partnerships between nationwide associations and youth associations or groups wishing to form an association. Among other things, the young people should be taught about rules and regulations of associations, financial governance and recruitment of members.

### **Initiative 11: Civic citizenship through civic centres**

In order to strengthen young people's development of identity, sense of belonging, responsibility, civic citizenship and democratic competencies, the Government wishes to promote the establishment of civic centres creating a framework for education, enlightenment and possibilities for meeting and discussing culture in a variety of forms. These offers are all included in existing civic centres within the framework of local public libraries. They function as informal counselling, learning and activity centres where a targeted, cross-disciplinary and locally adapted service is provided for families – children, youngsters and parents – who find it difficult to seize the opportunities society makes available. The activities may include learning in informal environments, social and creative togetherness as well as mentoring schemes and associating role models. The civic centres may also offer school work assistance – including online assistance – and vocational / professional counselling.

Civic centres may also systematically launch initiatives addressing democracy, religion and various forms of extremism in Danish society in the shape of discussion forums and meetings with respected – possibly local – speakers.

### **Initiative 12: Establishment of a democratic platform for young people**

Although many young people are active participants to democracy, there are, unfortunately, quite a few young people – especially among those with multicultural backgrounds – who do not use it or see its possibilities. The Government wishes to establish a forum for young people with different cultural backgrounds who are involved in associations or networks that are engaged in democracy, civic citizenship or intercultural activities. The democratic platform should, in particular, target its activities towards the group of young people who feel excluded from the democratic community and who are not involved in general association activities. Members of the democratic platform should have an outgoing role and initiate new, inclusive initiatives and engage young people in the democratic processes at various levels.

### **Initiative 13: Internet forum for young people on democracy and radicalisation**

Today, many religious and political discussions of a more or less radical nature take place on the internet. Thus, the internet offers a lot of answers and opportunities for group belonging for youngsters who are searching and open to extreme ideologies and messages. It is important that there are alternative discussion forums for young people allowing for objective information and debate – also in order to promote the overall democratic participation. Therefore, a special internet forum for young people will be established containing, among other things, debate and information related to democracy, extremism and international issues with relevance to these themes.

Emphasis will be on making the young people assume co-ownership of the new internet forum and on making it interesting and attractive for the users. One way of achieving this could be through the incorporation of a variety of offers for young people in one comprehensive solution.

## **Fifth focus area: Efforts in vulnerable residential areas**

Sometimes, extremist forces may have a solid growth basis in subcultures and parallel societies where behavioural norms and values are isolated from those of the surrounding society. Isolated residential areas with large concentrations of residents with little contact with the surrounding society pose a risk in terms of developing such subcultures. The most vulnerable and isolated residential areas pose a threat to social cohesion and integration. However, they also hold the possibility for targeting and concentrating efforts and initiatives where they are needed and most effective. By continuing to strengthen the efforts to break the isolation of these areas and their residents and to slow down the ghettoisation, it should be made increasingly difficult for radical forces of different persuasions to recruit children and young people in these areas. Therefore, the existing efforts to change negative development trends in residential areas should be supplemented with additional initiatives.

### **Initiative 14: Efforts to prevent parallel societies and ghettoisation**

Together with the Danish People's Party and the Danish Social-Liberal Party, the Government has earmarked DKK 2.2 billion in the National Building Fund for a social and preventive effort from 2006 to 2010, and it has provided the municipalities and building societies with a number of tools for preventing the formation of ghettos. In the spring of 2009, the Government is going to present a legislative package addressing housing policy issues. Some of the initiatives may contribute to reduced ghettoisation and, consequently, be preventive in relation to radicalisation. In the future, there should be increased co-operation between municipalities and building societies in order to improve the efforts against ghettoisation and to ensure good housing at a reasonable rent. Therefore, the legislative package is going to improve the possibilities for achieving this at a local level. For example, restrictions will become more lax with regard to agreements on the terms for renting a house or a flat. Below are a few examples of the proposals that will be included in the legislative package:

- **Combined letting** which will give more residential areas access to implementing a halt to additional letting to long-term recipients of cash benefits, start-up assistance or introduction benefits.

- **Temporary halts to the letting of vacant flats.** In residential areas where combined letting is implemented, it is proposed that building societies be allowed not to let out vacant flats for up to six months if no resourceful tenants can be found. Any loss of rent will be covered by the building society or the municipality.
- **Advertising.** In vulnerable residential areas where a massive effort is needed in order to restore a diverse composition of residents, it is recommended that the building societies be allowed to let a number of vacant flats with no regard to waiting lists and through advertisement so as to attract more socioeconomically advantaged people.

#### **Initiative 15: Inclusion of children and young people in resident democracies**

For a number of years, municipalities and the public housing sector have gathered experience on the inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups in resident democracies and other local decision-making processes. In continuation of this experience and in order to provide vulnerable children and young people with basic democratic education and a feeling of inclusion and recognition, a democracy pool for the inclusion of children and young people in public housing resident democracies will be set up. The purpose of the pool is to ensure inclusion of young people in vulnerable areas and to make use of their resources as well as to offer them an alternative possibility for gaining influence, other than through the established decision-making structure.

#### **Initiative 16: Co-operation with sports associations in vulnerable residential areas**

In order to put particular focus on association participation in vulnerable residential areas, the Government is going to support efforts to promote co-operation between volunteer sports associations and other local actors (municipalities, police as well as other local authorities and associations) in selected areas so as to support the participation of the vulnerable children and young people in leisure-time activities. Improved co-operation of this kind will be co-ordinated within the framework of the general schemes for the vulnerable residential areas, which already include associations, municipalities, building societies, residents and other residential actors in the relevant area. The activities should materialise as targeted support for the participation of vulnerable children and young people in leisure-time activities and the establishment of comprehensive sports activities – so-called sports camps – during holidays where no other offers are available.

## Sixth focus area: Special initiatives in prisons

Research and experience in a number of European countries have shown that there is a risk of prison inmates becoming influenced by radical and extremist views. In the specific environment of a prison, the inmates are used to dividing the world into separate groups, and often they are searching for identity and a place to belong. This gives room for extremism to thrive and, therefore, the Government is going to implement separate preventive measures in prisons.

### Initiative 17: Preventive efforts in prisons

In order to strengthen preventive efforts in prisons, the Government is going to implement the following measures:

- **Educational programme for prison staff** enabling them to identify signs of radicalisation.
- **Practical lessons in local democracy in prisons.**
- **Social reabsorption measures and coaching for prison inmates.**
- **Approval scheme for religious preachers in prisons.** An approval scheme will be implemented for religious preachers assigned to prisons in order to ensure that they are qualified and responsible and that their activities seek to prevent radicalisation.

## Seventh focus area: Knowledge, co-operation and partnerships

For the purpose of dealing with the challenges related to extremism, long-term and co-ordinated efforts are needed on the part of the authorities. The efforts should support the local activities that are carried out by municipalities, associations, religious communities etc. as well as the international activities that are carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, international organisations etc. As many actors as possible need to pull in the same direction. Focus should be on co-operation, partnerships and improved knowledge about the problems. As part of these efforts, the Government is going to collect information on the methods and propaganda used by extremists.

### **Initiative 18: Strengthening of the knowledge and co-operation of the authorities**

A new division to address, among other things, the prevention of extremism has been set up under the Ministry of Integration. The division is responsible for performing outreach activities and supporting local actors. In addition, a similar unit working within the field of prevention has been established within PET. Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is active in a number of areas within the field of prevention at an international level. With this as the centre of rotation, there should be an ongoing effort to improve knowledge of the challenges to be addressed, and work should be carried out to ensure that authorities and actors at all levels are working together on comprehensive and co-ordinated solutions. The measures to be implemented include:

- **Measurement and evaluation** of the efforts to strengthen civic citizenship and social cohesion and to prevent extremism and radicalisation.
- **International sharing of knowledge.** Strengthening and expansion of networks and contacts between Danish and foreign authorities and researchers.
- **Contact group.** A permanent contact group for key authorities and other actors will be set up. The purpose of the contact group is to contribute to the overall preventive efforts.

### **Initiative 19: Improved international co-operation against extremism**

The Government takes part in many forms of international co-operation on the prevention of extremism and radicalisation processes:

- **EU co-operation.** Denmark will assist in the development of instruments for countering extremism and radicalisation in accordance with the recommendations from the EU Terrorism Co-ordinator and other relevant guidelines.
- **The United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.** Denmark is going to partake in the development of anti-radicalisation efforts and democracy training in co-operation with the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.
- **Development co-operation.** The plan “Principles governing Danish development assistance for the fight against the new terrorism” (February 2004) will be revised, and steps will be taken to ensure that experience gained will be transferred to the relevant Danish authorities.

### **Initiative 20: Special partnerships against extremism.**

- **Youth education programmes and institutions of higher education.**  
The Government wishes to launch a co-operation with youth education programmes and institutions of higher education, the purpose of which is to counter trends towards extremism. Efforts are initiated to uncover the needs and possibilities for implementing preventive efforts against extremist views among students.
- **Muslims in Denmark.** According to the Government Platform, Danish Muslims should be assisted in the development of a code of conduct ensuring that extremist forces do not use mosques or Islamic cultural centres as a platform for spreading undemocratic views or recruiting members. As part of these efforts, dialogue with the Muslim religious communities should be initiated addressing this topic and ways of jointly countering extremism.
- **Partnership with the Muslim World.** The positive co-operation between Denmark and organisations, authorities etc. in the Muslim World – through e.g. the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme – should be continued and strengthened.

### **Initiative 21: Elaboration of an overall communication plan to counter misinformation**

Misinformation, propaganda, misunderstandings and communication difficulties are key elements of the complex of problems that extremist views are a part of. It is not only a matter of communicating with young people who may be threatened by radicalisation, but also of national and international communication in a broader sense. Therefore, the Government is going to develop an overall plan for information on and communication of the efforts within areas such as inclusion and citizenship, prevention of extremism, Denmark's commitment in the surrounding world etc. A communication plan could, for instance, be used as a tool for putting focus on information channels and key messages, including the areas on which public institutions should actively counter misinformation and propaganda.

### **Initiative 22: Research and mapping**

The question of why and how young people develop extremist views and in some cases turn to acts of violence has only been scarcely answered. In order to further target and qualify the preventive efforts, new knowledge from research into extremism and radicalisation processes is needed. Thus, the 2005 Government action plan to combat terrorism also identified the need for strengthened research efforts – especially with

regard to radicalisation and recruitment related to militant Islamism. In continuation thereof, two different research projects received a DKK 10 million grant each; namely a research project under the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) and another under the Ministry of Defence which resulted in the establishment of a Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation under the Faculty of Social Sciences at Aarhus University.

However, there is a need for a number of additional studies and mapping exercises addressing the various types of extremism in Denmark. This involves, for instance, the mapping of what and who influence young people with radical messages, including how the influence is exerted and what, specifically, the messages contain.

## Appendix 1

### **The process of elaborating the Government's action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people**

The Government Platform of 2007 "Society of Possibilities" states that the Government is going to put forward an action plan to prevent extremism and radicalisation among young people. In January 2008, the Government set up a working group of officials tasked with developing a proposal for such an action plan. The working group comprised the Ministry of Integration (chair and secretariat), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Culture.

The working group convened six times. As part of the working group activities, the Ministry of Integration carried out a number of consultations with foreign authorities and organisations as well as with relevant researchers, organisations and municipal actors in Denmark. In March 2008, there was a ministers' seminar to discuss the preliminary work, which included presentations on international experience and research within the field of radicalisation.

In June 2008, the working group put forward the report "A common and safe future – proposal for an action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people". Included in the report was an analysis of the challenges society faces with regard to extremism and radicalisation among young people as well as a number of specific initiative proposals.

The report of the working group was submitted to the Government, which decided that it should be subject to a public consultation among 74 selected consultation parties. In addition, comments to the report could be posted on the website of Ministry of Integration from 1 July to late August 2009. The comments from the consultation process are available at [www.borger.dk](http://www.borger.dk).

As a supplement to the consultation process, the Ministry of Integration hosted three dialogue meetings with selected actors and the participation of a number of the ministries behind the working group. The three dialogue meetings were divided into themes and carried out with research institutions, civilian actors and local authorities (schools, police and local governments). The topics discussed at the meetings included the challenges of measuring the potential effect and evaluating the preventive efforts as well as the practical experience among municipal actors and civil society in terms of strengthening civic citizenship and preventing radicalisation.

In addition, the Ministry of Integration co-hosted a conference on democratic cohesion and the prevention of extremism with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9 December 2008. The conference was primarily aimed at leading figures within the municipalities and the police. The primary purpose of the conference was to strengthen the common focus on the challenges posed by extremism and radicalisation. Presentations from the Minister of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Per Stig Møller, and Director General of the Danish Security and Intelligence Service, Jakob Scharf, illustrated the challenges we are faced with at a local and global level as well as the importance of attuning the national preventive efforts with the international efforts.

The importance of the efforts of local authorities in the preventive work was underlined through specific examples from the East Jutland Police and the Municipality of Copenhagen where particular emphasis was put on inclusion and diversity. The challenges of the preventive efforts were qualified through presentations from the Norwegian professor Tore Bjørge and PhD. Martin Harrow who introduced examples from their research into radicalisation among right-wing extremists and militant Islamists, respectively. The conference underlined the importance of strengthening the sharing of knowledge and experience across local, national and global boundaries.

## Appendix 2

### Results from the public consultation and dialogue process

The Government found it essential that a wide circle of actors were included in the elaboration of this action plan. As described in appendix 1 concerning the process of elaborating the action plan, the June 2008 report from the working group of officials “A common and safe future – proposal for an action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people” was subject to public consultation among a wide range of knowledge institutions, municipalities, associations and organisations, and three thematic dialogue meetings and a large conference were held.

A thorough review was carried out of the many qualified contributions and points of view that resulted from the consultation and they were taken very much into consideration during the elaboration of the Government’s action plan; both in relation to the overall approach of the action plan and the individual initiatives. The following describes an extract of positive as well as negative comments to the original report from the group of officials that have influenced the contents of this action plan.

Many believe that the report is characterised by a balanced approach to the topic. The report’s understanding of issues concerning radicalisation is described as being nuanced, partly because it looks upon radicalisation as a historic and political phenomenon that exists in many environments with different political and ideological persuasions; an approach that has been maintained in this action plan.

In line with the research into this area, assessments have varied as to how much weight should be put on different factors such as ideological, political, social and personal aspects etc. Similarly, there have been many expressions of opinion about how to define concepts such as extremism and radicalisation. In this action plan, the Government has sought to strike a balanced approach that incorporates the most important factors which can help us understand and counter extremism.

A number of parties comment that the lack of empiric knowledge of what leads to young people undergoing a radicalisation process poses a big challenge in terms of pinpointing the efforts that could have a preventive effect. The Government also believes that there is still a big need for research into radicalisation and its prevention. A number of large research projects in this area have already been launched, and in this action plan, the Government gives research activities a high priority, also as part of the forward-looking efforts. However, the Government does not wish to remain passive while we await the results of ongoing or future research. It is certainly possible to make a difference even at this stage. However, future research results will be important for our ability to adjust and qualify the required efforts as we go forward.

Among the consultation and dialogue parties, there is general support for strengthened efforts against discrimination. Broad efforts to prevent discrimination are generally recommended, incorporating both law enforcement and prevention in different parts of society. There has also been support for the target area involving direct contact with the young people. Similarly, many consider the inclusion of parents as a key point in

the preventive efforts. The Government considers these areas important elements in the broad preventive efforts, and they continue to hold a central position in the overall spectrum of initiatives.

A number of the consultation and dialogue partners remarked that the wide focus of the report, which also includes measures aimed at strengthening the inclusion and democratic competencies of young people, carries the risk that suspicions of extremism may be cast at a large group of young people. This was in no way the intention. First and foremost, the promotion of a strong and democratic culture, where all, regardless of background, may participate and assume responsibility for the community, holds an independent value, but at the same time, it may also contribute to weakening the overall growth conditions for extremism. This has been clarified in the action plan.

A number of contributors were concerned that the issue of extremism will take up too much space in the preventive efforts. Even if extremism and radicalisation comprise a current problem in Denmark, it is important to avoid disproportional focus on this challenge, which could have an opposite effect. Extremism and radicalisation should be considered one of many points of concern to be incorporated in the preventive efforts. The fear of radicalisation must not become a source of exclusion, as one party to the consultation remarked. The Government strongly agrees with this.

Some of the consultation parties remarked that there should be room for the right to think differently, including thoughts that follow various extremist directions. The Constitution guarantees that even extreme views may come to light, and the Government does not wish to keep a lid on political activists or individuals with critical views who fight for their conviction in a peaceful and legal manner. The same goes for the more extreme groups, as long as they stay within the letter of the law. However, there is every reason why the Government and all others that want a society with cohesion and security should speak up against those who want division, hatred or the abolishment of our democratic system. It is partly that which the Government is doing with this action plan.

Not least the conference on democratic cohesion and the prevention of extremism as hosted by the Ministry of Integration in coordination Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9 December 2008 confirmed the Government in the importance of co-ordinating the efforts related to Denmark with those related to the surrounding world.

The hearing and dialogue process has resulted in new, specific initiatives. Firstly, special partnerships with youth education programmes and institutions of higher education aimed at countering extremism, a sub-initiative under initiative 20. Secondly, a more targeted effort to upgrade the skills of frontline personnel in municipalities, the police etc. in order to strengthen the preventive efforts. There is now increased focus on this effort through a sub-initiative involving tailored courses and teaching material on extremism under initiative 2: Support for an early and comprehensive effort aimed at young people.

It is very important that as many as possible support the preventive effort and that it becomes as efficient and coherent as possible. The long-term endeavour to ensure Denmark as a country characterised by safety, cohesion and room for diversity should be based on partnership and co-operation between a variety of different actors. Therefore, the Government wishes for the dialogue that has been initiated in connection with the elaboration of this action plan to be continued in the future co-operation to develop, implement and qualify the effort. Therefore, the Government hopes that there will continue to be the same profound and widespread interest among the different actors in Denmark to co-operate on the challenges that face Danish society.

**A common and safe future**

**An action plan to prevent extremist views  
and radicalisation among young people**

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