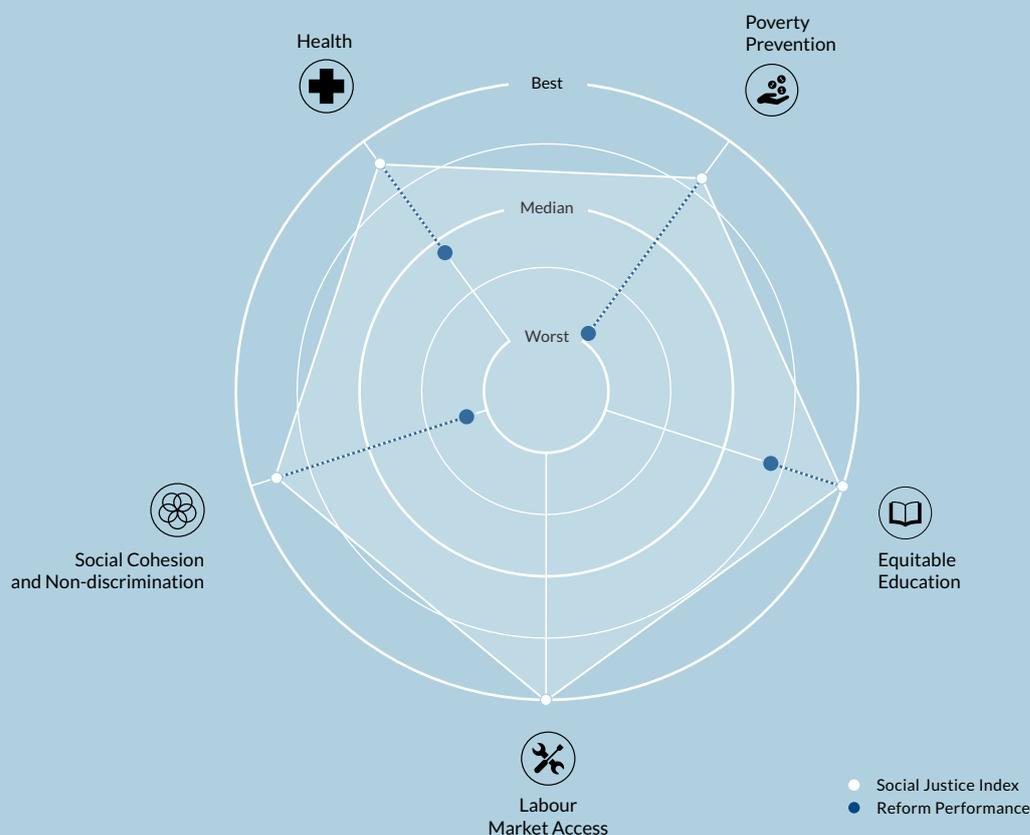


Findings by Country

Denmark

How does the country rank in the EU?



Overall Findings

Need The overall need to improve social inclusion in Denmark is the lowest across Europe (1.55, rank 1/23). This clearly reflects Denmark's outstanding performance in the 2015 Social Justice Index, where the country ranks 2nd in five of the six dimensions. Looking at the different categories of social inclusion, only in the dimension Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination do the experts see a rather pressing need for reforms (2.16, rank 10), whereas in the other dimensions, the need is only modest and far below the EU median.

Still, looking at the individual policy objectives, the experts see a strong or even very strong need for improvement for some of them. With regard to Poverty Prevention, this applies to refugees (2.18) and the foreign-born population in general (2.0). In the Education dimension, the experts see a more or less pressing need to improve the integration of refugees (2.38), to reduce the number of early school leavers (2.0) and to safeguard independence of learning success from children's socioeconomic background (2.0), where Denmark ranks 20th.

With regard to improving Labour Market Access, the experts see an urgent need to improve job chances for the foreign-born population (2.89) and

Overall Reform Performance Ranking



Overview of Reform Barometer Scores



for refugees (2.67), with a relatively high need for the ‘usual suspects’, such as young people (2.22), low-skilled people (2.22) and the long-term unemployed (2.0). Bearing these results in mind, it is no surprise that – with regard to social cohesion – the experts see a pressing need to improve integration policies for refugees and the foreign-born population in general (2.6). Furthermore, the experts would like to see government action aimed at tackling income inequality (2.2) and reducing the number of NEETs (2.33).

Activity According to the experts, 45 percent of the overall reform need to improve social inclusion in Denmark has been addressed (rank 13/23). With regard to the dimensions Equitable Education, Labour Market Access, Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination, and Health, all activity rates are between 41 and 58 percent, whereas in the Poverty dimension, only 26 percent of the identified reform need has been met.

Looking at the most pressing policy objectives, the respective activity rates for most of them are relatively high or even very high. Between 71 and 87 percent of the reform need to raise employment levels for the above-mentioned ‘problem groups’ has been addressed. A high activity rate was also

reported with regard to the policy objective ‘improve the integration of refugees in the education system’ (81%). However, very little has been done to reduce poverty among refugees (33%) and the foreign-born population in general (22%). With regard to income inequality, only 10 percent of the reform need has been tackled.

Quality The experts assessed the overall reform quality as slightly positive (0.17, rank 17/20) but significantly worse than the median quality in the EU (0.69). Looking at the dimensions, the reform quality differs strongly. With regard to Education (0.54, rank 12/21) and Health (0.55, rank 12/19), the experts expect the initiated reforms to have positive effects, whereas for the dimensions of Social Cohesion (-0.29, rank 11/12) and Poverty Prevention (-0.35, rank 24/24), the experts expect the reforms to worsen the situation slightly. Especially the measures concerning the integration of refugees and the foreign-born population into society as a whole are expected to have quite negative effects (-0.77/-0.93). On the other hand, the activities aimed at improving Labour Market Access for these groups are rated as having quite positive effects (1.2/1.0).

Dimension Findings



Poverty Prevention

Need Denmark has the second-lowest need (1.38) for Poverty Prevention in the EU. The experts reported a very low need to reduce poverty among the total population (0.55), with a low need as well for most of the specific societal subgroups. Only with reducing poverty among refugees (2.18) and the foreign-born population (2.0) do they see a quite pressing need to improve the situation.

Activity Looking at the latter groups, the activity rates are quite disappointing, with 33 percent for refugees and 22 percent for the foreign-born population.

Quality The measures taken to reduce poverty are expected to have slightly negative effects on all of the examined subgroups of Danish society (quality scores between -0.23 and -0.59). Concerning refugees, the experts’ written answers provide some explanations for this rating. They report that there were “cuts in economic support and conditions to stay and get family members to Denmark”, “benefits were lowered” and “social assistance was reduced for newcomers, which might, ceteris paribus, increase poverty among immigrants and refugees.”

Another expert explains: “A residence requirement has also been reintroduced, and this mainly affects immigrants. If not satisfying the residence requirement, there is no eligibility for social assistance, but for a so-called start-aid, which is significantly lower than social assistance.” One expert reports that “the liberal government which took over in 2016 has introduced a so-called modern minimum income ceiling that reduces benefits for families the more children they have”, which “also affects many ethnic Danish families.”

Furthermore, he laments that “in general, minimum incomes and other public benefits have been reduced every year since 1992 compared to the de-

velopment in wages and prices by a so-called rate adjustment. Social benefits are seen, even in Denmark now, as expenditures, not as investment, even if the historical fact is that Denmark is among the richest societies. ”

One expert, who thinks the reforms will have positive effects, explains that “they are connecting social benefits with education (this goes for the general population on social transfers below the age of 30). There is an ongoing political dispute regarding whether the effect of lowering welfare benefits will induce work motivation. In my opinion it will, if it is part of a holistic approach towards persons being very far away from the labour market.”¹

Equitable Education

Need As Denmark ranks a clear first in this dimension in the 2015 Social Justice Index, the experts see only a low need to ensure equal opportunities (1.21), to improve the structural conditions regarding finances and human resources (1.29), and to improve the quality of teaching (1.15). On the other hand, they report a more or less strong need to better integrate refugees within the education system (2.38), to reduce the number of early school leavers (2.0), and to weaken the link between children’s socioeconomic background and learning success (2.0).

Activity Of the reform need to improve the integration of refugees, 81 percent has been addressed by the Danish government. For the policy objectives ‘reduce the number of early school leavers’ (48%) and ‘safeguard social mobility’ (57%), this rate was significantly lower. For the latter policy objective, and “to a certain degree for refugees”, one expert reports on a “reform of primary education in Denmark: New Nordic School introducing longer school days aimed at helping less advantaged children to manage academic demands during the school day and having all children be more physically active.” He or she thinks that this “to a certain degree addresses the question about independence of learning success and socioeconomic background by introducing longer school days, with teachers being available during the whole day with both lessons and help for children’s homework.” Another expert reports that “as part of the reform of primary education and a result of investigations, it was suggested that bi- and multilingual children should possibly follow normal teaching.”

Quality The measures aimed at improving social mobility in the education system are expected to have quite positive effects (1.11). On the other hand, the experts assume that the initiatives to improve the integration of refugees will not change the situation at all (0.0). One expert thinks there is a “lack of focus on these groups and a lack of knowledge among teachers within this area.” Another comment goes in the same direction: “Some of the bi- and multilingual children might need further support – in terms of language, culture and social relations – which has not been offered.”

¹ Sidse Thygesen, Think Tank DEA, Copenhagen

✳ Labour Market Access

Need The experts see a low need to reduce in-work poverty (1.33) and a very low need to tackle precarious employment and/or temporary contracts on an involuntarily basis (0.5). With regards to the policy objective ‘increase employment’, the need differs strongly when looking at the specific subgroups of the labour market. For the total population (1.56), senior citizens (1.44) and women (1.44), the need is relatively low. On the other hand, the experts see an urgent need to improve job prospects for the foreign-born population (2.89) and for refugees (2.67), and they see a relatively high need for the ‘usual suspects’, such as young people (2.22), the low-skilled (2.22) and the long-term unemployed (2.0).

Activity Looking at these groups with a high or even very high need, between 71 and 87 percent of the reform need has been addressed to improve the situation. One expert reports that there were “numerous changes in labour market policy (activation) and the unemployment insurance scheme. A shortening of the duration of unemployment benefits from four to two years (and tighter eligibility conditions) have been very controversial, and there has been a number of ad hoc measures to mitigate the effects.”

Quality The measures aimed at improving job opportunities for the above-mentioned groups (young people, long-term unemployed, low skilled, refugees and foreign born population) are expected to have quite positive effects, with scores between 0.77 (low-skilled people) and 1.2 (refugees). On the other hand, the experts think the reforms will have slightly negative effects on the job chances for women (-0.17). One expert thinks that success “depends on the economic conditions. The reformed system is fine, but jobs still need to be there.” Another one thinks the possibility to “work at a wage somewhat lower than the relatively high general Danish wage level is likely to increase employment prospects for refugees.”

✳ Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination

Need Though Denmark ranks a respectable 4th in this dimension in the Social Justice Index, the experts see a rather high need for improvement regarding the policy objectives of integrating refugees and the foreign-born population into society in general (2.6), reducing the number of NEETs (2.3) and tackling income inequality (2.2). With regard to gender equality, the need is only modest (1.5).

Activity According to the experts’ assessment, the activity rates in this dimension differ strongly. While about 60 percent of the reform need concerning the objectives ‘better integration of refugees/foreign-born population’ and ‘reduce the number of NEETs’ has been addressed, the activity rate to tackle income inequality was extremely low (10%). With regard to the latter aspect, one expert complains that “despite growing inequality, more is done to give the rich tax breaks and the poor a tougher time ‘in order to prepare them for the labour market’. Refugees are the worst off.” With regard to NEETs, one expert reports that “the social assistance scheme has been changed for young people (now defined as up to the age of 30), stressing the need to undertake education.”

Quality The measures aimed at reducing the number of NEETs are expected to have slightly positive effects (0.29). On the other hand, the experts think that the activities aimed at improving the integration of refugees (-0.77) and the foreign-born population (-0.93) will have quite negative effects. As one expert explains: “There were a number of reforms limiting rights of refugees and foreign-born populations. The aim of the reforms has been to prevent more refugees from coming to Denmark and, thus, not really to promote social cohesion and non-discrimination. One example is Bill No. L87 adopted by the Parliament on 26 January 2016, which includes the right to family reunification only after three years in Denmark and confiscation of valuables of entering asylum-seekers.” Another one argues: “More targeted programmes are needed to increase integration into society of people with an immigrant background. Especially housing policies, educational policies and a strengthening of general social programmes are needed.”

In order to reduce the number of NEETs, one expert thinks that “it would be highly relevant to increase subsidies for private companies that provide apprenticeships, as there is a strong need for skilled labour and a need for better incentives for companies to provide apprenticeships in these fields. The market does not adequately provide for this.”