

August 2016

A stronger Denmark

- Controlling the influx of refugees

The Danish Government

1. Introduction and summary

The Government pursues a consistent and realistic immigration policy. We must render assistance in the world around us, but we must also take care of Denmark. We must preserve our social cohesion and values. And we must avoid putting too great a pressure on the local municipalities. We must keep the influx of refugees under control. We must keep the number of asylum seekers at a manageable level.

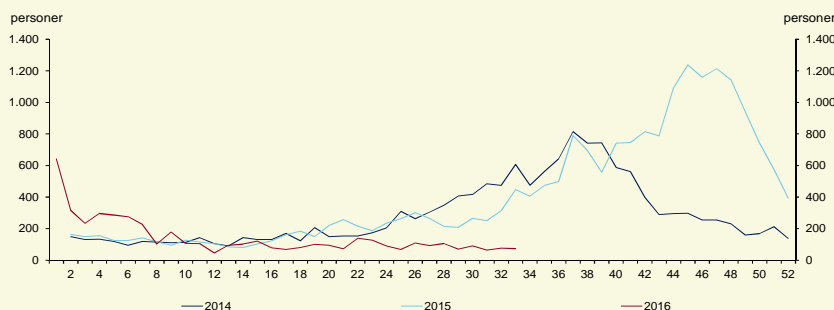
Between 2000 and 2012, the annual number of asylum seekers was on average 5,100. This figure rose to 7,500 in 2013, 14,800 in 2014, and 21,300 in 2015. This is a dramatic development.

Last autumn, Europe's borders were breached. An unprecedented number of people crossed the external borders and continued northwards. Europe was paralysed. A national response was needed. We took responsibility. We introduced significantly stricter measures in the asylum field. In January, we introduced border controls.

Gradually it also became clear to the rest of Europe that the influx needed to be halted. The Balkan route was closed, the EU signed an agreement with Turkey, and temporary border controls were introduced in a number of places in Europe. These are effective measures for which Denmark has pushed for.

There are signs that the Government's policy in combination with intensified European efforts is working, and the pressure has eased. At its peak last autumn, approx. 1,200 arrived each week, whereas the current figure is 100 per week, *cf. box 1*. We are bringing the influx of refugees under control. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. The pressure on Europe and Denmark could increase again. We must take timely action. Therefore, the Government will reinforce its stringent, consistent and realistic immigration policy.

Box 1
Asylum registrations in Denmark 2014-2016 (per week)



Up until now we have expected up to 25,000 asylum seekers to come to Denmark in 2016. However, the current low number of asylum seekers means that the figure is most likely to be 10,000 asylum seekers at most in 2016 and 2017. This figure has also been used to calculate the estimated number of asylum seekers in the years after 2017.

The new lower asylum projections mean that significantly less Danish tax money will be used in the immigration field towards, for example, providing accommodation and financial support than previously forecast. We can use this money instead for other purposes.

- Firstly, the Government will focus on areas where we can help the most people. And where we can also ease the pressure on Europe's external borders. We will significantly strengthen our efforts in regions of origin. From the saved asylum costs, the Government will transfer a total of DKK 1 billion in 2016 and 2017 towards strengthening region-of-origin efforts. These efforts will be financed within the development cooperation budget of 0.7 per cent of GNI. This means that over DKK 4.7 billion is to be earmarked for the Danish region-of-origin efforts in 2016 and 2017. This is a historically high level.
- Secondly, lower asylum costs will mean that more money is available to strengthen core welfare and public safety in Denmark. The saved asylum costs will be used towards financing the overall Finance Bill. In the Finance Bill for 2017, the Government will earmark DKK 180 million annually for efforts aimed at improving the quality of life and increasing self-determination for the country's approx. 46,000 care home residents. The Government also wishes to improve the daycare provision for our children. The Government will also invest a total of DKK 1.5 billion over the next four years in Cancer Plan IV. The ambitious plan aims to help prevent fewer citizens from developing cancer and ensure that more people survive. Lastly, the Government will earmark a pool of funds for public safety totalling DKK 2.2 billion over the next four years with the aim of helping to ensure that Denmark remains a safe and secure country.
- Thirdly, the lower number of refugees will reduce the pressure on public services within health, education, etc. in the period up to 2020. This will be felt particularly in the municipalities, where the pressure on their budgets will be less.

It is positive that the number of asylum seekers has fallen significantly. However, 10,000 is still too high a figure. And we must ensure that we have the necessary instruments available to use if the asylum pressure on Denmark once again increases significantly. Therefore, the Government will present a comprehensive immigration proposal which focuses on the following themes:

- An emergency brake to enable us to reject asylum seekers at the border.
- Strengthened region-of-origin efforts
- Peace and order

- Stricter rules for residence in Denmark
- Deportation and voluntary repatriation
- Increased use of contribution requirements for entitlement to public benefits
- Conventions – back to the core

The Government will take effective action across a broad spectrum. Nationally and internationally.

We will continue the stringent line here in the country. Denmark naturally provides protection to refugees as long as there is a need. But that is not the same as saying they must stay here permanently. The Government will therefore significantly tighten the rules on permanent residence.

The foreign nationals who do not have a legal basis for residence in Denmark must be sent home. The Government will therefore intensify the efforts to deport and repatriate rejected asylum seekers and illegal immigrants.

At the same time, we will make the repatriation scheme more attractive, so as to encourage foreign nationals to return to their home country.

In addition, the Government will increase the use of a contribution requirement for entitlement to public benefits, so as to give immigrants, among other things, a greater incentive to support themselves.

We must also do our part to provide help in other countries. We must help in the regions of origin where the need for our help is greatest. Strengthened region-of-origin efforts will generally underpin the Government's foreign and security policy priorities, and they will contribute to preventing refugees and migrants seeking to reach Europe and Denmark.

And in order to be prepared, we will introduce an emergency brake so as to enable us to reject asylum seekers at the border and send them back if we find ourselves in a situation resembling the one we experienced in September 2015.

The people who come to Denmark seeking our protection must of course abide by the common rules that apply to us all. And we must ensure that the authorities have the right instruments available to use if it becomes necessary. This gives a feeling of security. This gives peace and order.

The Government's initiatives are presented in *box 2*.

Box 2

Overview of foreign policy initiatives

- Emergency brake
- Strengthened region-of-origin efforts
- Peace and order
- Stricter rules for residence in Denmark
- Strengthened deportation and increased repatriation
- Stricter contribution requirements for entitlement to public benefits.
- Conventions – back to the core

2. Emergency brake

In 2015, the external borders were breached, and we experienced chaotic situations through Europe. Several thousand refugees and migrants crossed the Danish border and wandered along our motorways on their way towards Norway and Sweden. These were dramatic scenes which gave rise to a sense of unease and insecurity among the population and our authorities faced a tough test. It is a situation that we do not wish to see repeated.

Also Norway experienced last autumn the consequences of the refugee and migrant crisis. Before the summer break, therefore, Norway adopted rules that make it possible to reject asylum seekers at the Norwegian border in the event of a crisis situation in which the Dublin system is formally in force but has effectively ceased to function.

Since autumn 2015, the Danish Government has contributed to finding common European solutions, as a result of which, among other things, the EU's external borders are now under better control. The current situation is of course also different from the one in autumn 2015. The Dublin cooperation is currently functional in all significant respects, and the pressure has eased.

However, the situation could change. Therefore, we must be constantly careful to ensure that Denmark does not find itself in a situation resembling that in autumn 2015. For that reason, the Government – inspired by the latest amendment to the Norwegian Immigration Act – proposes the introduction of an emergency brake in the Danish Aliens Act so as to allow the authorities to reject asylum seekers at the border if a crisis situation arises that puts the Danish borders under pressure.

At present, the Danish police are unable to reject immigrants who seek asylum at the border to another EU Member State covered by the Dublin Regulation. This is due to the provisions of the Dublin Regulation which stipulate that we must allow asylum seekers to enter the country whilst the Danish Immigration Service assesses which Member State has responsibility for processing their asylum application according to the Dublin Regulation. A potentially determining factor in such cases is whether the asylum seeker has been registered in other countries than Denmark.

In line with Norway, the Government will introduce legal provision to enable us to reject asylum seekers at the border and send them back if we find ourselves in a situation resembling the one we experienced in September 2015.

3. Strengthened region-of-origin efforts

The Government is working to ensure that refugees and internally displaced people as far as possible are helped in their regions of origin. This is the way we can help the most people. And we can also deliver our efforts closer to where the challenges are faced, so that fewer people embark on a long and treacherous journey fleeing towards Europe and Denmark.

Quota refugees

Since 2005, Denmark has received approx. 500 quota refugees a year divided into three-year quotas totalling 1,500 placements. The current three-year quota expires during the current year. The number of vacant placements within the quota currently totals 491 placements.

Due to the many asylum seekers that Denmark has received in recent years, the Government has decided to transfer the remainder of the quota to subsequent years.

The Government wishes that the determination of the future resettlement quota will take into account the number of asylum seekers who come to Denmark. A low number of asylum seekers will represent a better opportunity to receive quota refugees.

The region-of-origin efforts to be strengthened with DKK 1 billion

The lower number of asylum seekers entails a significant reduction in the expected costs related to managing immigration, such as providing accommodation and financial support. The Government will use a large proportion of these funds – together with the saved costs on quota refugees in 2016 – to strengthen the efforts in regions of origin.

The Government's goal is to spend 0.7 per cent of GNI annually on development assistance. The Government's stricter measures in the asylum field and the falling number of asylum seekers in Denmark will now lead to savings on the part of the development assistance budget designated for receiving refugees in Denmark. This frees up funds that can be used directly to prevent, alleviate and manage the refugee and migration movements that triggered the crisis, and which continue to pose a major challenge to security and welfare in Europe.

The Government proposes to allocate a total of DKK 1 billion in 2016 and 2017 to strengthening the region-of-origin efforts, *cf. table 1*. This means that over DKK 4.7 billion in total is earmarked for the humanitarian frame in 2016 and 2017. This is a significant strengthening and a historically high level.

Table 1
Strengthened region-of-origin efforts

DKK million	2016	2017	Total
Current budget	1,825	1,900	3,725
Allocation to humanitarian frame	525	475	1.000
Total budget	2,350	2,375	4,725

The region-of-origin efforts will be significantly increased, with particular focus on the conflicts in the Middle East, but also in other areas of unrest, from where refugee movements and migration directly impact on Europe and Denmark.

Efforts in the Middle East could, for example, include initiatives to help destitute population groups in Syria as well as refugees and affected local communities in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Our attention will also be targeted specifically at Iraq, where the efforts to combat so-called Islamic State could trigger substantial humanitarian needs, particularly as a result of new influxes of refugees and internally displaced people. Lastly, smaller-scale activities could be implemented in Libya, which is constantly threatened by instability and conflict that could cause movements of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean.

In specific terms, the efforts will involve, among other things, providing emergency relief to refugees and internally displaced people in the form of, for example, food aid, shelter, healthcare services and distribution of emergency aid items. In addition, more long-term initiatives will be launched aimed at countering secondary movements of refugees and internally displaced people. Efforts will focus on providing education and protection to children, young people and women, improving living conditions and implementing other initiatives to tackle the underlying causes of instability and migration.

The efforts will be delivered through several channels. It is the Government's ambition that up to 50 per cent of the new funds be used for activities implemented by, or in partnership with, the EU. Substantial contributions might also be channelled through foundations and programmes organised within the sphere of the World Bank and the UN system. Additional support through Danish and international NGOs might also be provided.

4. Peace and order

Denmark is a safe and secure country. With laws and rules that we must all observe. This applies also of course to people who come here and seek our protection. At the same time, the authorities must also have the right instruments available to use if it becomes necessary.

Strengthened security and control in the immigration field

For the Government, it is absolutely crucial that the Danish immigration authorities have the best possible conditions for safeguarding Denmark's security.

Therefore, the Government has already implemented a number of measures to strengthen the security related screening of asylum seekers. Among other things, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) has a permanent liaison officer stationed at the Sandholm Refugee Reception Centre, whilst staff at the asylum accommodation centre operators have received competence development training to improve their ability to tackle signs of radicalisation among asylum seekers. Furthermore, the skills of staff at the Danish Immigration Service who conduct asylum interviews have been upgraded.

The Government wishes to further strengthen security and control in the immigration field as well as the prevention and investigation efforts of the Danish intelligence services. The Government will present proposals in these areas at a later stage.

Maintenance of peace and order in and around the asylum centres

It is important for the Government to forestall and prevent crime committed by asylum seekers that creates unease and insecurity – particularly locally, which we have unfortunately witnessed a number of times over the last period.

Comprehensive action plan

For a long period of time, the police have engaged in close local collaboration with the asylum centres, for example in relation to following up on cases and incidents in the local area. In extension of the current efforts, the Government proposes that the police conduct a specific assessment of the situation in and around each asylum centre and address whether there is a need for increased patrolling or other public reassurance activities in relation to the centre and the local community.

There must at all times be a police presence at the Kærshovedgård Return Centre, where, among others, immigrants on tolerated stay are to reside in the future.

It is crucial to take action quickly if problems arise. The police have therefore established a nationwide system to monitor incidents at the asylum centres. The Government proposes that the nationwide monitoring system be further intensified so as to enable the authorities to launch necessary initiatives at local and national level. In addition, the Government proposes that a comprehensive action plan be prepared which focuses both on the asylum centres and the local area with the aim of strengthening the prevention efforts.

Peace and order at the asylum centres for minors

We have also witnessed how a number of under-age asylum seekers who arrived in Denmark unaccompanied have created unease and displayed criminal behaviour.

We must ensure that the unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are treated properly as long they reside here in the country. However, they must naturally abide by our law and rules, and they must behave in a proper fashion. If they fail to do so, it must have a clear and precise consequence.

Today, the asylum centres are already engaged in great efforts to ensure that the young people do not create unease, but the recent events have shown the need for additional action and more effective instruments.

Re-establishment of small asylum centres for minors and enhanced feeling of security

With the falling number of asylum seekers coming to Denmark, there will be an opportunity to re-establish small asylum centres for minors, so as to ensure that fewer unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are congregated in one place. This in itself will have a preventive effect, and it will give the staff at these asylum centres better opportunity to manage the difficult minors.

But we must also strengthen the ability to intervene directly in relation to the maladjusted unaccompanied minors in the asylum centres who create unease and display unwanted behaviour.

The Government wishes that at the asylum centres for minors there are clear rules for good and proper behaviour and that it must have a consequence if the rules are broken.

The Government proposes therefore to lay down rules regarding the preparation of a set of house rules at the asylum centres for minors. It will ensure that clear rules are laid for the unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. The Government also proposes that it be made possible to dock the financial benefits (pocket money) of minors if they fail to abide by the house rules.

In addition, the Government wishes to tighten the rules for docking financial benefits if the minor, for example, shows an unwillingness to cooperate in the processing of his/her asylum case.

Clear parameters and less disruptive behaviour

The Government also wishes to lay down clear parameters for the use of force in the special asylum centres for children.

The Government intends therefore to lay down regulations regarding provision for using force, including, for example, rules on use of physical force. The aim is to help provide clarity to staff regarding their scope for intervening physically in response to signs of unrest and thus curb the unaccompanied minor asylum seekers' disruptive behaviour. The rules will be similar to those being introduced within social services legislation (Act on adult responsibility for children and young persons placed in foster care).

In this connection, it is also proposed that the staff at the asylum centres for children be empowered to search the unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and their rooms for, for example, illegal drugs. This enhanced ability to carry out supervision and checks of the unaccompanied minors aims to help ensure timely intervention and in this connection, for example, ensure transfer of the minor(s) in question to existing special accommodation centres which have greater supervision or focus on preventing criminal behaviour.

In the very serious cases where an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker is a danger to his/her surroundings and him/herself, the authorities must have scope for placing the minor in an institution - if necessary by force - where the person can be taken care of and if necessary detained. This measure is to help ensure peace and order in our society as well as ensure that the minor does not harm him/herself.

The Government wishes to ensure that the possibility for placing a person in an institution applies to all unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who pose a serious danger to themselves and their surroundings.

Criminalising roadside camps and imposing a stricter penalty for begging

Over the summer, we have seen how immigrants travelling to Denmark have pitched camp on roads and streets, thereby creating a feeling of unease. It is crucial for the Government that ordinary citizens feel they are able to walk safely around in the public space.

Residing in camps on roads and in other public areas must therefore be criminalised, and the Government also proposes the possibility of issuing zone bans for repeated violations.

The Government will also take action to tackle the feeling of unease and insecurity that begging creates. The Government therefore proposes to abolish the requirement of advance warning from the police, and that the penalty for begging in all forms be doubled and made unconditional. This means that 14 days' unconditional prison sentences will be issued as a rule for first-time offences.

Temporary border control

In May 2016, the Council adopted a recommendation for Denmark, among others, to maintain the temporary border control for six months from the recommendation's adoption. The Danish Government has endorsed the Council's recommendation and will maintain the temporary border control until 12 November 2016.

The Government will work for an extension of the temporary border control after 2016 if there continues to be an absence of control over the EU's external borders, and it will finance the cost of the negotiation reserve on the Finance Act for 2017.

5. Stricter rules for residence in Denmark

The Government strives to ensure that Denmark is open to those who can and will, but also that the door is closed to those who will not. The Government wishes therefore to tighten up the rules further so that greater demands are placed on the refugees and immigrants who wish to obtain permanent residence permits in Denmark.

Specifically, the Government proposes that greater demands be placed on refugees and immigrants with regard to their ability and desire to integrate into Danish society. These stricter requirements would impact the following areas:

- Today, foreign nationals must have resided legally in Denmark for at least 6 years in order to obtain a permanent residence permit.

The Government wishes to increase the requirement to 8 years. Raising the requirement will, moreover, have a corresponding effect on the access to the family reunification of spouses, seeing as today immigrants must have had a permanent residence permit for three years before they are eligible for spousal reunification.

- Today, in order to obtain a permanent residence permit, foreign nationals must not have received a sentence of unconditional prison sentence of 1 year or more.

The Government wishes to lower the requirement regarding the length of unconditional prison sentence so that foreign nationals who have received an unconditional prison sentence of 6 months or more will be excluded from obtaining a permanent residence permit.

- According to the current rules, a foreign national who receives a suspended prison sentence is precluded for obtaining a permanent residence permit for 4 years and 6 months after the sentence. The preclusion period for foreign nationals who is sentenced to an unconditional prison sentence of less than 6 months is currently 12 years from the time of release.

The Government wants to increase the preclusion periods so that they correspond to the penalty periods for obtaining Danish citizenship. This would mean that the preclusion period for suspended custodial sentences would be extended to 6 years instead of the current 4 years and 6 months and the preclusion period for mandatory custodial sentences of more than 60 days but less than 6 months would be extended to 15 years as opposed to the current 12 years.

5. Stricter rules for residence in Denmark

- Today, in order to obtain a permanent residence permit, foreign nationals must not have received public relief in the past 3 years. The Government wishes to raise the requirement to 4 years.
- Today, in order to obtain a permanent residence permit, foreign nationals must have held ordinary fulltime employment or must have been self-employed for at least 2 years and 6 months within the last 3 years.

The Government wants to raise the employment requirement so that in the future foreign nationals must have been employed for 3 years and 6 months within the last 4 years.

In order to obtain a permanent residence permit, it is currently required that foreign nationals meet a minimum of two out of the four supplementary integration-related requirements. If all four of the integration-related requirements have been met, a permanent residence permit may be obtained after only 4 years.

The stricter requirements outlined above will not affect this special scheme. The intention behind leaving this scheme in place is to provide foreign nationals with an incentive to strive on their own to become integrated into Danish society.

6. Strengthened deportation and increased repatriation

Asylum seekers who have had their applications for asylum rejected do not have the right to reside in the country and must leave. However, many asylum seekers refuse to leave voluntarily and remain here in the country. This undermines the legitimacy of the asylum system.

In autumn 2015, the Government tightened up the conditions for asylum seekers who have had their applications for asylum rejected and must therefore leave the country. But there is still a need to strengthen the efforts to deport these asylum seekers. The high number of asylum seekers who entered the country in 2015 means that many of them will be denied asylum and must therefore leave the country. At the same time, we are challenged by the fact that the possibilities for deportation to a number of countries are extremely limited.

With regard to foreign nationals who have residence permits in Denmark, the Government will increase the incentives for them to return to their countries of origin by increasing the economic assistance to help them in this process.

Increased deportation of rejected asylum seekers in closer cooperation with their home countries

The forced deportation of rejected asylum seekers can only be carried out if the recipient countries allow it.

The Government wishes therefore to strengthen the cooperation and dialogue with the home countries vis-à-vis accepting the return of their citizens. Deportation is a high priority issue for Denmark, and the Government is sending a clear signal to this effect.

The Government will post immigration attachés to those countries where the need is greatest. In the first instance, this will involve 2-3 attachés who will be supplemented by a number of mobile immigration attachés who can be sent out on an ad hoc basis.

The Government will also appoint a Danish ambassador with a special mandate to support matters regarding deportation.

The Danish diplomatic and foreign policy efforts are to support the work within the field of deportation. Deportations are to constitute a regular part of the foreign policy agenda.

In the course of 2016, there has been a great increase in the number of unaccompanied minors coming to Denmark. These young people are often sent off on a perilous journey to Europe, and many of them will not gain access to residence here in this country. The Government wishes to counter this development. The Government will therefore work to establish reception and care facilities for unaccompanied minors in the countries of origin so that it is possible to return a certain number of the unaccompanied minors to their home countries.

In December 2015, the Government set up a task force to strengthen the link between deportation and foreign policy instruments. In the autumn of 2016, the task force will launch tailored initiatives with regard to the countries where there are challenges involved with deportations. The initiatives will involve concerted action within the foreign policy area, including the use of relevant development and trade policy instruments so that these instruments become a lever for ensuring effective deportations.

A successful deportation policy also involves getting as many rejected asylum seekers as possible to return home voluntarily. This saves resources for government authorities and it ensures the foreign nationals a dignified and respectful return home.

The Government will encourage voluntary home returns by making the counselling efforts regarding voluntary deportations more proactive and targeted for each rejected asylum seeker. Each asylum seeker must be called in more often for interviews aimed at motivating them to return home voluntarily.

Uncertainty about the opportunities in the home country can hinder asylum seekers from returning home voluntarily. The Government wishes therefore to provide more support for the establishment of reception and reintegration programmes in the countries of origin, where there can be a particular need to provide help with and support for the return home of individual immigrants. The Government is already working to establish such programmes in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

Moreover, the Government will consider supporting recipient countries where there is a special need in order to improve their possibilities for accepting the return of forcibly deported citizens.

Challenges regarding the deportation of rejected asylum seekers are not solely a Danish problem. Great focus is placed on deportation issues in many other European countries. The Government will therefore also cooperate at the European level in order to strengthen the efforts with regard to deportation. In this way we will strengthen our position vis-à-vis the specific countries of origin.

In light of the fact that the future joint European Border and Coast Guard Agency will receive an expanded mandate and increased resources with regard to deportation, the Government will work to ensure that Frontex, in particular, can be used more often in the efforts involving deportation.

Encouraging voluntary return

The Government proposes increasing the support for the repatriation of immigrants who have residence permits through increased health insurance upon repatriation to countries with little or no public health care systems (up to DKK 30,000), economic support to continue schooling in the country of origin for families with children attending school (up to DKK 24,000) and by increasing the lowest rate for the reintegration aid that can be provided for elderly immigrants (from DKK 2,500 per month to DKK 3,500 per month).

In order to encourage the municipalities to improve the guidance for refugees and immigrants regarding their options for repatriation, the Government suggests that a performance-based

6. Strengthened deportation and increased repatriation

subsidy of DKK 25,000 be introduced, which a municipality will receive for every foreign national residing in the municipality who is repatriated with the support provided under the Danish Repatriation Act.

In order to avoid the abuse of this scheme, the Government proposes introducing an unconditional requirement regarding the repayment of assistance that has been provided for repatriation in cases when foreign nationals change their mind and return to Denmark.

Strengthened efforts regarding prisoners sentenced to deportation

The Government will take action against foreign nationals who commit crimes while they reside in Denmark and strengthen the efforts to send criminal foreign nationals back to their countries of origin.

The Government will therefore work to establish Danish lodgings in prisons in another country and investigate in detail how the legal, economic and practical issues associated with this practice can be resolved.

When criminal foreign nationals have served their sentence in Denmark, they must be sent home. Thus, there is no need to use resources in the prisons on re-socialisation measures. The Government therefore proposes that the conditions for prisoners who have been sentenced to deportation be tightened up.

7. Stricter contribution requirements for entitlement to public benefits

Foreign nationals who reside in Denmark must actively contribute to the labour market. This benefits Denmark, but it is also good for the individuals who come here. The Government will increase the use of contribution requirements for entitlement to public benefits in order to encourage people to support themselves and because the right to receive full social benefits must be reserved for people who have spent a certain amount of time in Denmark.

Employment requirement for social security

In 2015 the Government introduced integration benefits with the clear purpose of making it less attractive to come to Denmark and more attractive to work and contribute to Danish society.

Today, however, residents automatically transition from integration benefits to educational grants or social security after they have lived in the country for 7 out of the last 8 years. The Government believes that this does not send a sufficiently strong signal that self-support through employment is the norm in Denmark and that obligations and rights always go hand in hand.

The Government proposes therefore introducing an employment requirement for people receiving integration benefits so that the transition to educational grants or social security after 7 years is made contingent on the person having had regular and unsubsidised employment in the Danish realm corresponding to fulltime employment for a total of 2½ years within the last 8 years.

With this employment requirement, foreign nationals and other people who come to Denmark will be encouraged to establish a more permanent attachment to the labour market.

Following the proposal, the changes will take effect on 1 July 2017 and will apply to everyone receiving integration benefits as of 1 July 2017.

Tightening up the contribution requirements for achieving the right to full early-age and old-age pensions

Today, the right to full early-age and old-age pensions is earned on the basis of the number of years you have lived in the country. In order to receive a full old-age pension, you have to have lived in the country for 40 years (calculated based on the period between the 15th year and the old-age pension age). The regular increase of the old-age pension age means, however, that the earning period has been extended without the required number of years of residence following suit. Therefore, given the increased age for receiving a pension, it would

7. Stricter contribution requirements for entitlement to public benefits

be possible to live a greater percentage of your life outside of Denmark and still earn the right to a full pension.

The Government believes that the right to a full early-age or old-age pension should be reserved for people who have also lived the majority of their lives in Denmark and that the requirement should not be eased in line with increasing lifespans and the rising pension age.

The Government therefore proposes limiting the number of years that a person may reside outside of Denmark and still earn the right to an old-age or early-age pension in Denmark and simultaneously proposes reducing the pension-related advantages that EU citizens can achieve by residing in Denmark for a period of time. At the same time, the contribution requirement will be set up in such a way that, in the future, it will keep pace with the increasing pension age.

For pensioners, the proposal will mean that they must have resided in the country for 9/10 of the possible contribution period (from the 15th year to the old-age pension age). With the current pension age, the proposal would thus mean that the residency requirement would be increased from 40 to 45 years. For early-age pensioners, the residency requirement would similarly be 9/10 of the contribution period, which runs from the 15th year up to the year that the early-age pension is granted. At the same time, it will continue to be possible to undertake short stays outside the country and still receive a full pension.

Following the proposal, the changes will take effect on 1 January 2018 and apply to everyone who is granted an early-age or old-age pension as of 1 January 2018 or later and who reaches the old-age pension age 1 January 2023 or thereafter.

Tightening up the residence requirement for earning the right to full child benefits and the special child allowance

In keeping with the contribution requirement for entitlement to public benefits, the right to receive full child benefits and the special child allowance is contingent on at least one of the people who have the maintenance obligation for the child having resided or had employment in Denmark for at least 2 years within the last 10 years prior to the period that the payment covers.

With shorter stays in the country, a proportional share of the benefit is paid out: 25, 50 and 75 per cent of the benefit after 6, 12 and 18 months of residence or employment in Denmark within the last 10 years respectively.

The Government proposes that the requirement regarding the affiliation to Denmark be increased by raising the contribution period from 2 years to 5 years within the last 10 years, with the gradual earning of benefits of 10 per cent for every 6 months such that the right to full benefits will be achieved after 5 years of residence or employment in Denmark.

In line with the applicable rules, new arrivals from EU/EEA countries which are covered by EU Regulation 883/2004 will be able to include periods of time spent in other Member States (the aggregation principle).

7. Stricter contribution requirements for entitlement to public benefits

Following the proposal, the changes will take effect on 1 July 2017 and will apply to people who establish residence on 1 July 2017 or later.

8. Conventions – back to the core

Denmark has a clear interest in a strong international legal order, including respect for human rights. The Government believes, therefore, that Denmark must engage in active international cooperation and comply with to the international conventions that Denmark has ratified.

At the same time, the Government believes that there is a need to take a critical look at the way that the dynamic interpretation of the convention texts has, in practice through the years, brought the scope of the conventions out of line with the original intentions.

The Government will work towards a return to the original intention of providing protection. This will be the Government's focus during the upcoming Danish Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

