

The Norwegian report from the M2M study visit in Copenhagen

1) Immigrant situation

- Denmark introduced a law in 1973 that stopped immigration to the country for economic reasons (work immigration). Only love and family (family reunification) and danger and persecution are acceptable reasons to be let into the country. The same kind of restrictions was introduced in Norway in 1975 but the law is practiced in a more liberal way. In Norway the number of persons that immigrates on the grounds of family reunification was nearly 21 000 in 2008, which is a considerable increase compared to earlier years. Persons who wish to be reunited with a family member in Norway must be ensured subsistence in Norway. This income requirement amounts to NOK 215 200 annually but is adjusted every year. The consequence of this law is that women who have started their education quit their studies to find a job in order to earn enough for bringing a husband from their country of origin to Norway.
- In 2002 there was a slight change in the policy and the Danish government “closed the borders” the argument being that they had to support the immigrants that were already in the country. In 2008 Denmark experienced an all time high immigration rate but these were highly educated people. The same regulations are being discussed in Norway but have not been implemented. This has changed the flow of immigration to Denmark so that the immigration from non-Western countries has declined significantly while the immigration of highly educated people has risen. To attract specialists, the Danish authorities have introduced a tax reduction scheme for five years to retain this group. This is something that does not exist in Norway. In Denmark, many of these ex-pats leave the country because of the high tax level.
- To have a permit of residence in Denmark an immigrant is obliged to acquire Danish language skills at a certain level. In Norway there is no such obligation. It is enough that the immigrant can document having followed the language course of minimum 300 lessons.

2. Tools for integration in the labour market

- As to immigrants and the job market, experience shows that it is worth while giving immigrant women from Non-Western countries the chance to enter the labour market. When they have got a job, they have a retention rate that is six time higher than what is the case for men from Non-Western countries. This group of women is often considered to be “weak”, but reality shows the opposite. We find this very interesting. This is something that should be interesting to look into in Norway as well.
- In Denmark there is an 80/20 recruitment system on a national level. This implies that the immigrant works 80% and follows a training programme 20% of the time during one year. The salary is based on the same proportion. As far as we know, we don't have such a system in Norway.
- Wage subsidy is also a tool to get immigrants into the labour market in Denmark. This is a system that we recognise from Norway.

3. The introductory programme

- The introductory programme for immigrants and refugees with a permit of residence was introduced in Denmark in 1999. In Norway a similar programme was introduced in 2004. Both

countries seem to have good experiences with the programme. A major part of the participants finds a job or starts further education after the end of the programme.

4. The ISS apprenticeship programme

- This is the only structured and implemented programme for qualification and recruitment of managers with immigrant background we have been introduced for so far after the study visit in Oslo. This programme is different from the Norwegian management recruitment programme for immigrants in the sense that the duration is only six weeks, it is less theoretical and more practical. The ISS programme has a master – apprentice approach. The selected candidates for management are coached by a master that is not their own superior during six weeks. This is combined with classroom training in Danish language and accountancy and also with practicing Danish language one hour a day. The Norwegian programme is of one year duration and has more theoretical content and a formal exam in the end. In the Norwegian programme the participants were selected on the background of their Norwegian language skills together with their personal skills, work performance and talents for management. The language skills were a crucial selection criterion. We didn't get the impression that Danish language skills were so much emphasized in the ISS apprenticeship programme, which we find strange.

5. Haldor Topsøe A/S

- Our impression from having met with the Haldor Topsøe representatives is that knowledge-based enterprises recruiting highly skilled work force is not very interesting from the point of view of integration. This was an engineering enterprise and employees tend to relate with other with the same technical/professional background. This is different from for example medical doctors of immigrant origin who are also highly educated but have to relate to patients with another linguistic, cultural and educational background than themselves.