

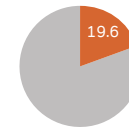
“Country recommendation

Denmark should strengthen child-family investments, policies, and adjacent professions, with a focus on supporting children and families with a migrant background.

Country
Profile 2023



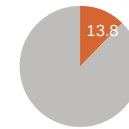
Denmark



Child Population:

1,151,729

19.6% of total population



Child Poverty:

158,939

13.8% (2022)

▼ -0.2 compared to 2021

RESPONDENT ORGANISATION(S):

[Fairstart Foundation](#)

Children's Rights in Denmark

At national level, the Minister for Children and Education is responsible for children's rights. Unfortunately, there has been a trend in Denmark to cut budgets for professional staff supporting children and their families. Moreover, recently a new law, the [Danish Act of Parental Responsibility](#), has been passed that encourages the use of adoption without consent, which is contrary to UN and European conventions.

Child participation

According to Fairstart Foundation, many local authorities have been decreasing budgets for child participation while increasing bureaucratic state control systems, which makes it difficult to meaningfully include children in decision-making.

Anti-child rights movements

Concerning anti-child rights movements, the needs of children are being ignored, as children continue to not have opportunities to influence decision-making in economic and political matters.

Child protection services

Denmark has a family-service-oriented child protection system that is centred around children's basic rights and needs. Following a system of consent, it is the responsibility of the protection systems to provide help and services when a child needs it. In 2018, 5.2% of Danish children receiving child protection services.¹

Children in migration and refugees

Denmark is currently suffering from a political stalemate

amongst the governing parties on the topic of migration, whereas close to no process has been made towards a more open and supportive migration system. Instead, Denmark has introduced more restrictive laws for immigrants, in which immigrant families are being separated and second-generation immigrants are denied citizenship. Naturally, this also impacts children in these families, as they have to endure being separated from their parents or carers.

In contrast, children fleeing the war in Ukraine have been welcomed to Denmark with open arms and they have received support from all sides. Despite these regressive policies, Fairstart Foundation sees that the general Danish population is more tolerant than the government towards the inclusion of people in migration and more welcoming regardless of people's origin.

Climate change and children's rights

Climate change is a topic of vast importance for young people in Denmark. 84% of people aged 15-29 consider climate change as the biggest challenge for humanity at the moment and almost 70% feel that it has a direct impact on their daily lives². According to a [recent study](#), temperature increases can have major consequences for human health, particularly impacting children of risk of disease and malnutrition.

Children's mental health

Children continue to have significant mental health struggles in Denmark, as 15% of Danish young adults are diagnosed with mental disorders, which has been increasing over the last few years³.

Despite the rising numbers, children and young people still

1 Hestbæk A et al., *The Child Protection Systems in Denmark and Norway*, Oxford Handbook of Child Protection Systems, 112 – 132, 2023.

2 European Investment Bank, *79% of Danish people think that climate change and its consequences are the biggest challenge for humanity in the 21st century*, 2021.

3 Euronews, *Mental health: Is Denmark's youth living up to the country's happiness claims?*, 2023.

have to wait for often several years to gain access to psychiatry wards and receive treatments, which also reflects the stress of professionals working in this field. There is a lack of social services directed at children with mental health struggles as well as an insufficient number of professional workforce trained for working with children. This also risks creating insecure early attachments for children due to high turnover of professional caregivers and teachers throughout childhood.

Poverty and Social Exclusion – Experiences of children, families, and communities

Child poverty in Denmark

Denmark has a total child population of 19.6% out of which 13.8% live at risk of poverty and social exclusion as of 2022. The rate of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion has decreased since 2021 after

having increased the previous years. However, Denmark has abolished the official poverty limit for families, which makes the comparison of the data more difficult.

According to Fairstart Foundation, the groups of children most in need are children below the poverty line as well as second generation immigrant children. The rise in poverty is related to the following factors among others: firstly, a general increase in wealth during the economic boom leading to a higher income level for the poverty indicator. Secondly, the rise in unemployment following the economic crises from 2008. Thirdly, the introduction of various – for Danish standards – very low cash benefits such as ‘start help’, ‘introductory benefit’, ‘225 hour rule’, etc. At the beginning of 2022, 50,000 households with children received a housing benefit. It is estimated to cover on average between 40-60% of

monthly rent payments depending on the composition of the household.

Local authorities assess the local need for public housing in their communities, and on that basis commit - and provide financial support - for the establishment of new housing⁴. However, regarding the child allowance, only residents with Danish nationality or foreigners with 1 to 3 years of residence in Denmark are eligible to receive the benefit. Despite the intention of this policy to incentivise job seeking among non-Danish residents, this criteria exempts certain groups of refugees and poses a challenge for newly arrived children and their families.

To help tackle child poverty and social exclusion, the Danish government should utilise a multidimensional poverty concept and focus on the structural causes of poverty and inequality. This means that all programmes

and projects must include objectives that address one or several dimensions of poverty, ensuring that the UN Sustainable Development Goals are applied, namely that no one must be left behind. Additionally, highlighting non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability would serve as leverage to fight poverty.

A promising example of a project taking a multidimensional approach to supporting children at risk of poverty and social exclusion is an [initiative by the Fairstart Foundation](#), funded as part of a European Union funded Lifelong Learning grant. The project was directed at children's mental health in alternative care institutions and, was designed to include online educational courses for foster families and group home staff. At the same time, group training sessions were designed for students, in which attachment practices such as infancy or leaving care were

⁴ Government of Denmark, [42nd National Report on the implementation of the European Social Charter](#), 2022.

discussed. By creating a more stable environment for children, the project managed to improve the mental health of these children.

In addition, following the new legislation Preventing segregation of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) from 2018, each ECEC facility in Denmark must ensure that they hold a maximum of 30% of children from vulnerable housing areas. The purpose of this initiative is to promote better opportunities for each child to develop their language, well-being and their general readiness to learn.

European Semester 2023 – Country reports and recommendations

Overview of the Country Report: identification of the children in need

This year's European Semester Country Report for Denmark outlines vulnerable groups of children that should be targeted by national policymakers, particularly in the field of education. The Country Report suggests improving the digital skills of individuals by increasing the use of digital tools throughout all levels of education. Moreover, the focus on young people not in education, employment, or training should be increased.

Needs analysis: alignment at country-level

The recommendations included in the Country Report to some extent do correspond sufficiently

to reform needs on the ground in Denmark. For instance, it is well reflected that in Denmark, while equity remains high generally, schools differ in teaching time, and quality, and pupils with a migrant background achieve significantly worse education outcomes.

The Country Specific Recommendations for Denmark failed to highlight the need to support children in poverty. Social inclusion targets and several social inclusion efforts are focused on employment and labour market. While this is tightly related to social marginalisation and poverty, applying a single-focused labour market approach is questionably adequate⁵. In addition, the recommendations do not respect the rights of children living in poverty as it foresees cuts in certain child benefits.



⁵ Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage, EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion, Denmark.

Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.



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