

## A fair direction for Denmark

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The 2019 general election provided Denmark with a historic opportunity for plotting a new political course.

**We must lead the fight against the climate crisis.** Denmark must significantly increase its ambitions towards climate, environment and nature and assume an international leadership role relative to the green transition. The Danish Parliament can become the world's greenest parliament; a parliament which not only does something, but does what it takes to comply with the Paris Accord.

**We must strengthen our welfare again.** So that Denmark becomes the world's best country in which to be a child, so that there is more time for care in the health sector, and so that everyone can look forward to an old age characterised by safety and dignity. Welfare provides equal opportunities and the freedom to be different.

**We must combat the increasing inequality.** So that we once again reinforce the society model which made Denmark one of the world's most trustful and safest countries. Neither poverty nor greed have a place in our nation, and we have the opportunity to challenge both.

**We must challenge the centralisation of Denmark.** To provide development, opportunities, jobs and welfare throughout the country. Decision-making close to those who will be affected has intrinsic value. Denmark is too small for big differences.

**We must focus on education.** To allow our young people to develop and challenge themselves to their utmost – and to ensure that each new generation faces a better future than the one before it. In a welfare society such as Denmark, a person's background must not be the deciding factor for their opportunities in life.

**We must promote integration.** So that we can live together in spite of our differences. With respect for one another and for the democratic foundations of our society. In Denmark, everyone is free and equal.

**We must shoulder a responsibility for the world.** So that Denmark is the sort of nation that will help people in need. That will protect international conventions, will actively work to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals and will be a committed participant in international communities. Denmark must be an open country, sustaining ourselves on the basis of our view of the world.

We believe that politics matter. That we can solve real problems instead of pursuing symbolic politics. So that, together, we can set a new and progressive course for Denmark. There are great expectations. Not everything can be realised at once, and the prerequisite is a responsible financial policy which ensures beneficial framework conditions for the business world. We have a unique opportunity for realising the expectations that the electorate holds of a new political majority.

On this basis, parties with a majority of mandates in the Danish Parliament have nominated Mette Frederiksen (S) as royal investigator for the purpose of forming a Government that will ensure a new political direction for Denmark.

As a prerequisite for the creation of such a Government, Socialdemokratiet, Radikale Venstre, SF and Enhedslisten have agreed on a "political understanding", which entails a commitment from a new Government to implement a number of initiatives that, together, will set a new political course for Denmark. The initiatives will be realised throughout the life of the Government, preferably in broad collaboration with the other parties of the Parliament. The new Government will also respect all existing parliamentary conciliations.

A new Government will allow Denmark to assume an active, committed and dedicated international responsibility. Although the parties behind the political understanding hold differing views on Denmark's membership in the EU, it is agreed that Denmark, as an EU member, will work to promote a far more progressive EU policy than is currently the case. This especially relates to the promotion of a more ambitious climate policy and increased efforts against tax havens and tax avoidance. Denmark is part of the Schengen Agreement. The new Government supports this Agreement and wishes to remain part of it. There is a need to revise the Schengen regulations. This must be worked out in connection with a new political agreement related to Europa.

Denmark is also part of the Unity of the Realm. A new Government wishes to see an equal, positive, and strengthened partnership in the Unity of the Realm, based on trust and mutual respect. We will develop Danish areas of responsibility together with Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

*Christiansborg, 25 June 2019*

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## 1. A green and sustainable future

The world and Denmark are facing a climate crisis. We are using more of Earth's resources than it can sustain, and this has consequences. The last four years were the warmest years ever measured on Earth. Ocean water levels are rising at a record pace, and we have seen record low Arctic sea ice.

We are not just in the middle of a climate crisis. We are also experiencing a biodiversity crisis and a crisis for our environment and nature. More than 2,000 species of plants and animals are in danger of going extinct in Denmark alone. And far too many Danes are dying or contracting illness due to air pollution.

The international community has tackled great challenges before, and we can do it again. But the condition is that we limit the increase in temperatures. There is little time to do this if we are to succeed.

It is not just the right thing to do, it is also the most financially responsible. In Denmark, we have the benefit of qualified Danish workers and visionary Danish industries which have taken risks, have lead the way, and are ready to do so again – but this requires political will.

The global green transition market continues to grow. In order to reach the temperature increase target limit, the international community must invest a staggering 90,000 billion Danish kroner in green transition over the next 11 years. This represents a unique opportunity for the Danish business community, which must be exploited. Denmark must be known as a nation of green entrepreneurialism.

*A new Government must promote a sustainable policy under which Denmark resumes leadership of the green transition, significantly increases its ambitions concerning the climate, environment and nature, and ensures that Denmark is in compliance with the Paris Accord.*

This is by far the most important global challenge. A new Government will have the ambition of being among the world governments that do most – both domestically and abroad – to combat climate change and the deterioration of our environment and nature. In order to reach those targets, a very significant effort will be required throughout the tenure of the Government, which must be take place in a socially balanced way.

A new Government will:

- **Introduce binding targets.** During the first parliamentary year, a new Government will present a proposal for a climate act with binding sub-targets and binding long-term targets, including:
  - A goal to reduce greenhouse gases by 70% by 2030, relative to 1990 levels. This is a very ambitious goal, and it will be particularly difficult to realise the last part of the goal, i.e. from 65% to 70%. This will require currently unknown methods and, therefore, also a close collaboration with the Danish Council on Climate Change and other experts.
  - That the Danish Council on Climate Change assists a new Government in making decisions on reduction targets and methods which ensure that Denmark complies with the Paris Accord temperature targets.
  - That an annual follow-up target assessment is performed, and that this follow-up is linked to the national budget process.
- **Transport sector transition.** As part of a green mobility plan, a wide range of initiatives are required to ensure a significant increase in the number of electric vehicles on the roads and the required transport sector transition:
  - A stop to sales of all new diesel and petrol cars as of 2030 and enhanced low emissions zones.

- It will be investigated whether the Commission for Green Transition can advance its work so that the final report is available before the end of 2020. As soon as possible thereafter, a political agreement must be reached to provide a sense of security to the industry and car owners and to ensure that the green transition can be undisturbed.
- A new Government will negotiate an infrastructure agreement, which will consider climate and environmental issues to a much higher degree. This requires investments in public transportation and cycling, among other things.
- Implementing initiatives to ensure more sustainable aviation.
- **Secure climate contributions from agriculture.** A binding reduction target for agriculture will commit the industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Agricultural support shall be used as an active tool to provide farmers the incentive to transition to a more sustainable production and thereby supporting the green transition of the industry. A new Government will also initiate land reform, including setting aside agricultural land for nature.
- **Adopt a climate action plan.** The climate act will be immediately followed by a climate action plan, which will contribute to ensuring that national reduction targets are met. In addition to describing which initiatives, cf. above, will be required for the transport industry and agriculture, the action plan will also include the following elements: 1) Energy efficiency measures, including energy saving requirements for public sector buildings; 2) a national strategy for sustainable construction; 3) a unified strategy for electrification of the transport sector, industry and society in general; 4) increased funding for green research and demonstration programmes; 5) investigating the potential for Denmark to prepare a common strategy with the North Sea nations for a significant expansion and exploitation of the offshore wind potential; 6) investigating the potential for Denmark to construct the first energy island by 2030, with a minimum of 10 GW connected; 7) support forestation; 8) climate adaptation, including stronger coordination of coast protection efforts.
- **Combating plastic pollution and ensuring better drinking water protection.** Higher taxes on plastics and a plastics action plan will contribute to reducing plastic consumption and ensuring fewer types of packaging. In order to reduce harmful chemicals in everyday life, the tax for harmful substances such as PVC, phthalates and PVC foils will be re-introduced. A mapping will be conducted of challenges related to Denmark's ground water as the basis for a coherent effort to secure better drinking water protection and reduce the use of spray-based herbicides. This will be done via means such as an increase in woodlands near urbanisations and investigating the possibility of outlawing the use of spraying and fertilising in protected nature areas (Section 3 areas). It must be ensured that the targeted regulation is effective and that nitrogen emissions are noticeably reduced. The Government will present a plan for implementing and complying with the EU's Water Framework Directive. It is additionally a priority to manage and clean up substantial generational pollution.
- **Assume the responsibility for more ambitious targets in the EU and enhance green diplomacy.** EU started off as a coal and steel union. A new Danish Government will propose the objective that a future EU will be a climate union. This means, among other things, that Denmark will be working towards increasing the EU climate targets in 2030, that the EU will be climate neutral by 2050 and that the future EU budget will focus more on climate. Denmark will also, together with other ambitious nations, push for an expansion of sustainable energy in the EU so that the EU becomes self-reliant in terms of energy. A new Government will also strengthen green diplomacy, thereby increasing Denmark's international commitment. A new Government will implement a new development policy strategy with climate assistance as a central element.

- **Create greater biodiversity and more woodlands.** There is a need for more untouched woodlands and more cohesive nature areas where nature is allowed to spread out on more natural terms than is currently the case. A biodiversity package will improve conditions for biodiversity in Denmark. The plan will include clear targets for the proportion of the area of Denmark to be laid out as nature zones (including untouched woodlands and national nature parks) as well as specific initiatives to ensure that targets are reached.
- **Strengthen green calculation models.** Climate and green transition considerations shall be integrated in the Ministry of Finance's calculation models, and the effort to develop greener calculation models will be secured and enhanced. A dialogue will be entered into with Statistics Denmark about strengthening the effort to produce green national accounts and GDP.
- **Increase organic foods targets and strengthen initiatives against food waste.** A new Government will increase the ambitions for more organic foods in Denmark, starting with an aim to double organic farming acreage, the export of organic foods and the consumption of organic foods by Danes by 2030, and to implement initiatives to reduce food waste.
- **Include stakeholders.** With the purpose of qualifying and anchoring Denmark's green efforts, a new Government will include stakeholders in the work on an on-going basis, including independent experts, popular movements and interest organisations. This will be the case, e.g., for areas such as promoting a strategy for circular economy, transitioning to a more energy-efficient society, smarter waste sorting and transitioning public sector procurements so that they support the green transition to a higher degree.

## 2. Denmark must be the best country in the world in which to be a child

Thanks to the strong, committed communities we have formed in Denmark, each new generation has been able to face a better future than the previous one. More and more people have had opportunities that their parents did not have.

Will it be like that for our children, too? Will they have better lives than us? Will they have stronger communities? It is possible - on paper. But there are still unequal terms and conditions for people growing up in our society.

Good day nurseries, childminders and daycare centres are crucial to the quality of children's daily life and relations, their early learning and development. Daycare institutions contribute significantly to combating negative social inheritance among children from low resource families. They are also important to the integration of children from other ethnic backgrounds.

The same goes for the primary school system. The primary school is the school of the community and the foundation for providing all pupils with knowledge and skills to prepare them for further education and instil in them the desire to learn more. Primary schools play a crucial role in enabling all students to participate, share responsibilities, rights and obligations in a society characterised by freedom and democracy. Primary schools – and our welfare institutions in general – must also help ensure that children with functional limitations have the opportunity to benefit and develop.

Generally speaking, free and equal access to education is a cornerstone of the Danish welfare society. This is not only fair – it also makes financial sense. A well-educated populace which continues to acquire skills is a prerequisite for Danish companies to succeed in stronger global competition. In spite of this, recent years have seen annual savings leading to reduced education quality.

As a society, we are experiencing an increase in mental vulnerability among children and young people. This is one of the greatest issues for modern societies – and therefore one of society's greatest challenges. Not one child, not one young person must be left to face their problems alone.

*A new Government must pursue policies in the areas of children, youth, schools and education which will make Denmark the world's best country in which to be a child – with a focus on education, tackling the increased mental vulnerability and with the stated aim of providing all children with equal life opportunities.*

One of the single most important elements related to our children's life opportunities is whether they are surrounded by competent and committed adults. And whether there are enough adults to leave time and room for the individual child. It will take time to educate and then employ more pedagogical and teaching staff, but it is critically important that we get started.

A new Government will:

- **Present an ambitious children's plan.** The objective must be to improve conditions for children and employees in daycare institutions via a long-term investment plan toward 2025, which coordinates numbers of staff and children, education, quality, and management and which includes:
  - The introduction of legally mandated minimum staff numbers to be implemented in the period leading up to 2025, such that they have been fully phased in by 2025. This will be initiated with the municipal agreement for 2020.
  - Ensuring the education of more pedagogical staff.
  - As a result of the introduction of minimum pedagogical staff numbers, more staff will be employed in addition to the increase following from demographic developments.

- **Combat child poverty.** Irrespective of a child's background and their parent's circumstances, it must be ensured that all children in Denmark grow up under decent conditions and with the opportunity to take an active part in the community. A new Government will combat poverty and will therefore introduce a poverty limit to enable monitoring of the development. Combating poverty will also be one of the purposes of creating a benefits commission, which shall present recommendations within the benefits area within 12 months. These recommendations will serve to alleviate problems related to child poverty, to increase labour market participation and a simplification of the benefits system. The recommendations must also specify a replacement for the unemployment assistance limit, so that it can be discontinued without allowing for the possibility of receiving unlimited public benefits. Until the commission has presented its recommendations, affected families with children will be offered targeted assistance. An annual 250-300 million Danish kroner will be allocated for temporary cash child benefits, to be implemented as soon as possible and to be targeted at children aged 0-14 in families covered by the unemployment assistance limit or the integration benefits limit. The temporary cash benefit will cease when a future benefits system is implemented. If these funds are allocated in such a way that the child benefit comes out to around 60% of the current child/youth benefit, this will mean that a single mother with two children aged 2 and 4 will receive a tax-free sum of approx. 1,700 kroner per month. The benefit will be paid monthly and will be implemented as soon as possible. The funding will be taken from unclaimed reserves in the 2019 national budget. The details of the benefit will be agreed between the parties. In addition to the temporary child benefit, the former Government's planned changes to the unemployment assistance system will be discontinued until the commission has presented its recommendations. This means a cancellation of the approved reduction to integration benefits as per 1 January 2020, which has also been included in the earmarked financing.
- **Strengthen the primary school system.** Close collaboration is needed to give the primary school system the necessary framework and resources to enable teachers to provide all pupils with a high quality education. Consequently, a new Government will support the agreement between The Danish Union of Teachers and KL (Local Government Denmark) under the title "New Beginnings" (Ny Start). A new Government wants, among other things, to abandon national testing in the early grades and generally to re-consider the use of testing, to provide better opportunity for starting school later, to abolish the education preparedness assessment in the 8th grade, and to strengthen the educational guidance efforts. A new Government will additionally investigate the option of suspending national testing until it has become a better indicator of student skills.
- **Focus on education.** In the first national budget, a new Government will be proposing a discontinuation of the redeployment contribution and thereby stopping the annual education cuts. A new Government will invest in education in step with identifying the required financing. By also creating a sufficient number of traineeships, this will contribute to securing jobs or educations for the nearly 50,000 young people who are currently unemployed and not in education. A new Government will also support the opportunities for young people to complete education via a credit transfer system reform initiative. It is a goal for a new Government that primary and secondary school student recruitment more accurately reflects the population composition. This is one of the reasons why a new Government will want to investigate the possibility of introducing a social credit system related to the public subsidiaries for independent schools and private schools, to ensure that more schools in Denmark will assume a greater societal responsibility.
- **Promote the well-being of children and young people.** A national mental health action plan and a review in particular of the education system is intended to identify measures to promote the well-being of children and young people and to diminish the "performance culture". This will include, among other things, an assessment as to whether grades can be made to be less of a factor in the education system, whether the grading scale needs to be changed, whether other forms of testing should be introduced, and finalising the ongoing assessment of the access system. A new Government will also be discontinuing the education limit.

- **Ensure educational programmes across the country.** All young people must have good educational opportunities irrespective of where in the country they live. For this reason, a new Government will prepare a plan aiming for a better geographic distribution of welfare educations and access to secondary educational programmes throughout the country, and ensure that those adult education centres threatened by closure can stay open.
- **Strengthen future solutions.** Our educational and research institutions must be the source of new ideas and solutions to tackle the problems we face as a society. For this reason, we must strengthen the research effort, safeguard the freedom to conduct research and aim to reach the Barcelona objective, such that public investment in research is at least one percent of GDP.



### 3. A stronger welfare society

The welfare society has made Denmark one of the richest and most equitable countries in the world. Welfare provides equal opportunities and the freedom to be different.

However, welfare is under pressure in several areas. Some of the reasons are that welfare has been under-financed for several years and that rules and bureaucracy have taken time away from core tasks. This means that staff are pressed for time in many settings, leading to reduced quality and a worsening of working conditions. Welfare is created in collaboration between citizens and qualified and motivated employees – but existing conditions have made this more difficult.

At the same time, Denmark has undergone a period of centralisation which has resulted in fewer welfare offers outside larger towns. This contributes to a skewing in Denmark. There is a need for opportunities and attractive welfare offers throughout the country.

*A new Government will lead a welfare policy in which funding will follow when there are more children and elderly, where welfare is gradually expanded, and which will lead to an increasingly more cohesive Denmark.*

Welfare expectations are justifiably considerable, but it will take time to secure enhanced welfare beyond covering demographic developments. On an ongoing basis, it will be necessary to adjust priorities and to ensure the required funding and to secure and educate more employees, which is the very basis for being able to implement new improvements.

This will be done by forming a "base" under the welfare to cover demographic developments. At the same time, a new Government will demonstrate, via national budget proposals and other political initiatives, how to create further actual welfare enhancements.

A new Government will:

- **Increase dignity within elderly care.** With the aim to give the elderly maximum autonomy and dignity, an effort will be implemented to reduce unnecessary documentation requirements, controls and clock-watching related to the elderly care, thereby freeing up time for working with the individual citizen.
- **Invest in health.** A new Government will call for negotiations on a health agreement with the following priorities:
  - A continuation of the administrative regions to secure a continued decentralised healthcare system with decisive regional influence and co-decision making.
  - That health care system quality and prevention is strengthened and that patient conditions, including for maternity wards, are improved.
  - That more healthcare personnel are educated and employed and that working conditions are improved to provide more time for patient care in the healthcare system. At the same time, it be ensured that employee skills are exploited in the most beneficial manner possible.
  - To create greater cohesion and better collaboration between general practitioners, municipalities and administrative regions.
  - That a targeted effort is implemented to ensure more general practitioners throughout the country.

- That a treatment committee is established which will help uncover unfair discrimination of patient groups in the healthcare system and to create a better basis for political decisions regarding future healthcare system investments.
- That initiatives are implemented with a view to creating greater equality in the healthcare system.
- That initiatives are implemented with the goal of ensuring that fewer people smoke and, in particular, that fewer young people take up smoking. An element of this will be increased taxes on tobacco.
- That a status is prepared for Quality Fund construction projects.
- **Improved psychiatric care.** A new Government will seek to negotiate an agreement on a 10-year plan for psychiatric care with binding targets on, among other things, reducing the number of re-admissions, reducing waiting times and increasing the average life expectancy of citizens with psychiatric illnesses and with the following priorities:
  - Preventive measures to tackle psychiatric vulnerability.
  - An increase in the preventive efforts and increasing the number of interdisciplinary treatments on offer.
  - More bed capacity in psychiatric care units.
  - An expansion of the current scheme covering free psychological counselling so that it includes those aged 6-24.
- **Improve the opportunities for people with special needs.** There must be quality and legal certainty when it comes to the offers available to people with special needs and functional impairments, and the efforts must be characterised by a high degree of professionalism and the required specialisations. Together with relevant actors, a new Government will complete an evaluation of the current planning and organisation of the special needs area with a view towards strengthening the initiatives, the national knowledge sharing and ensuring the most suitable distribution of tasks between municipalities and regions. A new Government will take the initiative to provide young people with special needs or functional impairments with better opportunities to take an education.
- **Help the most vulnerable and people who are on the margins of society.** A new Government will pursue an active and ambitious social policy and, among other things, it will present proposals that:
  - Improve the initiatives aimed at helping and reducing the number of homeless people.
  - Reduce the self-payments for dental care – and ideally make it completely free – for the most socially vulnerable.
  - Launch an anti-”kviklån” (easily available high-interest loans given to those who cannot get loans at lower rates) initiative to prevent people from being trapped by unmanageable debt.
  - Provide the most vulnerable substance abusers with an ID card that will ensure that they get more assistance and a more dignified existence.

- Add clarity to the formulation on the prohibition against creating or staying in so-called intimidating camps and the related option for the police to issue a zone ban, so that it is made clear that the intent is to act against individuals who have settled in permanent camps and not homeless people who are forced to sleep outdoors.
- Investigate how it can best be ensured that there are no profits taken out of private day care institutions and social care/housing units, for example based on the same model which is currently being used for free schools and private schools.
- **Ensure more equal opportunities.** A new Government wants a society where men and women actually have equal opportunities. Based among other things on the recommendations of the Penal Code Council (Straffelovsrådet) on the opportunities to implement a consent-based definition of rape, a new Government will take the initiative to create new legislation.

## 4. A responsible and fair economy.

The Danish economy is in the midst of an economic upswing. The past few years have seen solid growth, both in terms of GDP and employment. Employment levels have risen continuously for more than five years and have reached historical highs. Danish businesses are growing at a rapid pace and new jobs are created each month.

However, there are also challenges.

In a few years, Denmark will find itself short of many thousands of professionals while, at the same time, unskilled jobs are disappearing. And despite this, annual cuts have been made to the education budgets.

The low levels of unemployment means that companies are finding it harder to find new employees. Even though the Danish labour force will grow by 90,000 over the coming years due to the reforms of the last 10-15 years, already now there are labour shortages in certain industries, and there is a risk that these labour shortages will grow further. There is also a need to attract more employees to core welfare areas in order to meet the demographic changes and further improve welfare.

At the same time, money laundering, tax evasion and massive tax debts have weakened the Danish social contract. Inequality has been rising in Denmark. Social mobility has been declining. The number of children living in poverty has increased. Revenues from capital have been increasingly become concentrated in fewer hands. New global tech giants do not sufficiently contribute to society. When the differences in our society grow too large, social cohesion suffers.

Finally, the employment levels among refugees and those who came to Denmark via family reunification programmes are too low.

*A new Government shall pursue an economic policy which strengthens employment and fights poverty and inequality, invests in education and upskilling and ensures a good framework for Danish businesses. It must ensure that four years from now the state finances are in better shape, while at the same time ensuring that inequality levels have been reduced.*

The prerequisite for a strong welfare society is that the economic policy is responsible and fair. The total balance in the economic policy must therefore be just and contribute to fighting inequality and poverty. The following initiatives are aimed at achieving this balance. Denmark is a small, open economy, and therefore, there will be a need to make ongoing adjustments to the economic policy.

A new Government will base its economic policy on the following conditions: a) That there is no budget deficit in the public finances in 2025 and 2030, b) that Denmark complies with its international economic obligations and the associated Danish legislation, c) that new spending proposals must be financed via the annual finance bills or as part of signed agreements, d) that initiatives that might reduce employment are offset by other – but not necessarily concurrent – initiatives that will at a minimum increase employment by similar levels, e) that the economic disparities in society are not further increased, that the top tax brackets are not lowered and that the social safety net is not degraded.

A new Government wants to respond to the demographic impact on the welfare state so that money will follow as the number of children and elderly in society increases. In addition, a new Government will ensure better welfare that demonstrably improves the level of welfare compared to today. This requires funding. A new Government will therefore have an objective of securing new funding of up to 10 billion Danish kroner in 2025 in order to meet the objectives of investing in children, education and upskilling, fighting poverty and reducing inequality, as well as ensuring a good framework for Danish businesses.

In order to achieve an improvement in welfare, it is also required that the levels of employment are increased so that both the public institutions and private companies can recruit the employees they need. Therefore, an objective of the new Government will be to increase the levels of employment beyond what is already projected.

In addition, a new Government will implement a reprioritisation of public spending and targeted tax hikes - for example, by rolling back the lowering of the estate and inheritance taxes for individuals inheriting companies.

A new Government will:

- **Provide better opportunities for full-time employment, less absence due to sickness and dropping out, etc.** More of the part-time employees in the public sector who want to go to full time should have the opportunity to do so. It must be investigated whether it is possible to implement a legal entitlement for part-time public sector workers to go to full time. A reduction sickness absence and a general economic policy that allows for the hiring of more employees in the public sector will contribute to a better working environment and less absence due to sickness. An analysis of the reasons for individuals dropping out of commercial and welfare-related study programmes can identify initiatives that reduce the dropout rate and thus ensure that more professionals and welfare workers complete their study programmes.
- **Ensure that more people contribute.** A targeted educational and upskilling initiative can help more refugees and those who came here via family reunification programmes to find jobs. More of the 50,000 young people who are neither studying nor working need to be activated. A flexible retirement scheme can provide senior citizens with better opportunities to remain on the labour market at reduced hours after they have received the early retirement or state pension age. The previous Government set up a senior citizen think tank, which was to complete its work by the autumn of 2019. A new Government will – drawing inspiration from the proposals of the senior citizen think tank – present proposals for how even more senior citizens can remain on the labour market. This applies to those aged 60-64 but in particular to those who are 65+, which is an age group with relatively few participants on the labour market. A new Government will also implement the agreement on senior citizen pension.
- **More skilled labour from abroad.** This is to ensure that companies or welfare institutions that have a specific shortage of labour (which as a minimum falls under skilled labour) can quickly attract qualified workers from abroad without a lot of red tape. A new employment minister will be authorised to determine the job roles for which recruitment can occur on the basis of objective criteria for the labour shortage. The prerequisite will be that employers comply with Danish salary and employment terms and meet their social obligations, for example in terms of taking responsibility for training apprentices and trainees/interns. The labour market parties shall work together to prepare a recommendation for a specific model that will form the basis for political discussions. After a year, it will be evaluated whether the scheme is working as intended. By creating new Danish job centres in countries around Europe and via a collaboration with the business community that opens up for more English-speaking students from the rest of Europe in the areas where companies are facing a labour shortage, it will be possible to attract more European labour. A new Government will seek to retain international students who have studied in Denmark and remove the ceiling for English-language study programmes.
- **Upskilling of unskilled workers.** Via investments in research, education and upskilling, the productivity and competences of employees can be increased.
- **Ensure a good and stable framework for Danish businesses.** This is to contribute to increasing Danish exports and promoting Danish competitiveness. A new Government will pursue an active and green business policy which is widely supported by parliament, which promotes foreign investments in

Denmark and which supports Denmark's core competences.

- **Improve working environments and do more to fight social dumping.** In order to improve working environments, a new Government will allocate more permanent funding to the Danish Working Environment Authority and increase the compensation given for work-related injuries. In addition, a new Government will work comprehensively towards fight social dumping, including by retaining a strong joint effort by authorities, carrying out more controls and increasing the penalties for using illegal labour.
- **Take the initiative for a critical review of selected reforms.** This will include the major reforms that in recent years have been implemented on the labour market, including the disability pension reform. The objective is to straighten out the parts of the reforms that have unfortunately resulted in some individuals being stuck in the system.
- **Support opportunities to find good housing throughout the country.** Depending on where in Denmark you live, there are different challenges that a comprehensive housing policy should aim to solve:
  - In the major cities, too many people with regular incomes cannot afford to live there. In order to address this, it is among other things necessary to take a stand against foreign capital funds buying cheap rentals and also to allow the municipalities to issue conditional building permits that contain a clause that up to a third of new housing units should be social housing and include a requirement that they be built quickly.
  - In the rural districts, citizens and companies find that their chances of taking out mortgages are based on other conditions than those that apply to the rest of Denmark. A new Government will therefore initiate a study of this issue.
  - A new Government will evaluate whether the opportunities for receiving exemptions from the requirement of reducing the proportion of family homes in the most vulnerable urban areas can be expanded beyond the largest cities in specific cases. The processing of these applications for exemptions in the most vulnerable urban areas should be evaluated so that, in the future, the municipalities and housing organisations have the greatest amount of flexibility to adapt their development plans to local conditions.
- **Ensuring democratic ownership of critical infrastructure.** Critical infrastructure is of vital interest to society and its citizens. For many years, Denmark has had a tradition of public ownership of critical infrastructure. This has resulted in Denmark retaining ownership of infrastructure and a high degree of security in terms of deliveries from utility companies. With a view towards ensuring a continuing democratic control of critical infrastructure, a new Government will launch an initiative to define where the state currently owns critical infrastructure.

## 5. An immigration and refugee policy that promotes integration

Solving the refugee and migrant crisis can only be done via an international and binding collaboration wherein Denmark needs to play an active role and respect the international conventions at all times.

From a historical perspective, there are record numbers of displaced people. However, the current asylum system is nowhere near fair or appropriate. Among other things, it helps to support a human smuggling industry that exploits the misfortunes of others and where refugees are facing violence and assault or losing their lives crossing the Mediterranean.

Many of those who have come to Denmark have been successfully integrated. They have learned to speak Danish, they go to work and they are an active part of the local communities and make significant contributions to our society that we cannot do without.

At the same time, there are still challenges associated with making integration work everywhere. Too many immigrants and refugees are not participating in the labour market. In particular, this applies to women who have come to Denmark as adults.

We are also increasingly living separate lives instead of living in integrated communities. It creates distrust when children of different backgrounds do not go to the same schools and when housing sectors with a lot of immigrants are also socially vulnerable areas.

We do not need symbolic politics, we need real solutions that work to solve real life integration issues.

*A new Government will pursue a responsible immigration and refugee policy, which will take a more active approach towards promoting integration and the lives of children and their opportunities to take an active part in Danish society.*

A new Government will:

- **Work towards building a more humane asylum system.** The current asylum system is characterised by severe unfairness, and it means that people on the run are exposed to violence and assault and risk losing their lives, while at the same time, human smugglers are making billions of Danish kroner from the misfortune of others. It will be a significant priority for a new Danish Government's foreign policy to attempt to gain international support for a future and more humane asylum system within the framework of international law.
- **Providing more aid to more people.** The conditions in the poorest parts of the world need to be fundamentally improved, otherwise people will continue to, quite understandably, seek a better life elsewhere. A new Government will pursue a policy on an international level that addresses the underlying causes for people being displaced or wanting to emigrate to Europe. In connection with the next budget negotiations in the EU, a new Danish Government will work towards the implementation of a historic aid package, particularly aimed at Africa.
- **Promote integration in Denmark.** A new Government will pursue a policy that promotes integration and ensures that individuals, regardless of how long or how briefly they stay in Denmark, contribute to society, learn Danish and find a job. A new Government will work to counter the trend of society becoming more and more divided and will instead work actively to promote a society wherein we live in mixed communities. The objective of promoting integration and promoting a mixed society is to be supported by the following initiatives:

- An annual action plan that will specifically state how integration can be promoted and strengthened.
  - Ensuring that people are met with a clear expectation that they should contribute so that no one is left to a passive life living off social benefits.
  - Ensuring that the basic integration course (integrationsgrunduddannelsen/IGU) is continued and, if possible, strengthened.
  - It will be expected that all foreigners – also refugees with only a temporary residence permit – contribute to society while they are here, either by taking an education or having a job. For those who are here on a temporary basis, this will help them when they return and help to rebuild their country. A new Government will focus on ensuring access to study programmes above the level of youth educations for refugees with a temporary protected status.
  - The approximately 70 children who have been hit by the integration evaluations from 2016 and until now will be helped by giving them three months to apply for a family reunification based on the criteria of the new legislation, even if their parents have been here longer.
- **Ensuring common sense in the immigration and refugee laws.** The immigration and refugee laws are extremely complex and they need to try to manage a lot of different considerations and situations. Unfortunately, this often means that there are frequent examples of the rules appearing unfair and unnecessarily bureaucratic in concrete situations. A new Government will construct its policy based on common sense principles. For example, this means that international students who have paid for their studies themselves in Denmark need to have better opportunities to apply for a relevant job when they have graduated. At the same time, the fees for Danish courses in relation to employment need to be reduced to an appropriate level, while the penalties for not participating will be increased. Spouses from abroad coming from English-speaking countries should not have to go through an unfairly bureaucratic process to document their English proficiency. Similarly, a new Government will aim to create good conditions for citizens of the U.K. to remain in Denmark after a potential Brexit. Refugees who have been employed in Denmark for two years can have the opportunity to remain while they are in employment under certain employment contracts – however, residency may be extended in case of employment in the same industry and on similar employment and salary terms.
  - **New departure centre for families with children.** A new Government will respect the fundamental principles of the asylum system and therefore respect the fact that asylum seekers who have received a final rejection to their application for asylum must return home. However, this does not change the fact that children are blameless in the situation they find themselves in. Therefore, the current conditions for children should be improved in way that supports the children in having an everyday life that is as normal as possible. A new Government believes that within that context it will be possible to find a more appropriate location for a departure centre for children with families than Departure Centre Sjølsmark (Udrejsecenter Sjølsmark). The new departure centre must be set up based on the recommendations of the Red Cross and the Ombudsman's report concerning the conditions at Sjølsmark.
  - **Resume Denmark's acceptance of quota refugees.** Based on the current low level of residency permits related to asylum and family reunifications, the new Government assesses that Denmark can resume accepting quota refugees in 2020, with a particular focus on women and children. Already in 2019, a new Government will receive the smaller group of quota refugees who require a particularly high level of support. If the spontaneous asylum applications and the number of family reunifications increase, the sitting Minister of Immigration and Integration shall retain the authority to lower the quota or temporarily



halt the acceptance of quota refugees.

- **Departure centre for those who have received deportation orders due to criminal convictions.** A new Government will work towards ensuring that criminals with a deportation order are sent out of Denmark faster than what is currently the case. A new Government will launch an investigation of where best to place such individuals while they remain in Denmark.

## 6. A more trusting and cohesive society.

Denmark is one of the most high-trust societies in the world. This has been a work in progress for generations, it is deeply embedded among the population and it impacts all parts of our society.

We trust that everyone will contribute with what they are capable of. We trust each other. Therefore, we are not afraid to act communally on the big tasks: maternity wards, public schools, public pensions, children and grandparents, and each other.

Trust creates security, and security creates courage. In Denmark, we are not afraid to say that we are not sure because we trust that no one will use that against us. We are not afraid to take a chance and change the direction of our lives. We think out loud and can say no because we grew up in a society where we believe in fairness. We trust the society that we live in.

Unfortunately, in recent years in particular, some of that trust has been lost. This undermines the social contract we have with each other, and it is a serious issue. If everyone does not contribute, then in the end, no one will.

This was perhaps most clearly illustrated in the scandals involving SKAT (Danish tax agency) and the revelations of how European societies were cheated out of billions of Danish kroner, that the large banks failed to live up to their social responsibility and that authorities did not act responsibly

Another issue putting pressure on trust levels is the growing economic divides. It is a sign of a troubling development when a CEO of one of Denmark's 100 largest companies now earns 17 times more than a regular employee. The figure has almost doubled since the year 2000. Incomes from capital also show that the divides have doubled in the last 20 years.

At the same time, the trust people have in politicians and media outlets are at a very low level. The reality of the modern media landscape challenges our ability to create a shared conversation in the public space, and similarly, social media which is playing an increasingly larger role in forming opinions, has been very late in assuming social responsibility.

*A new Government will pursue a policy that rebuilds critical societal institutions such as SKAT, reduces the divisions inside Denmark and contributes to increasing the levels of trust towards politicians and the media.*

Restoring trust and thereby strengthening the Danish social contract cannot be done with any single act. It requires structural solutions, but it also requires a commitment to collaborate between politicians, media, businesses, critical social institutions and civil society.

A new Government will:

- **Manage the public sector in a new way.** There is a need to do away with the short-term management of the public sector, where too much bureaucracy and control and too many requirements for documentation take time away from the core tasks and reduce the employees' job satisfaction. Together with the unions, the public sector employers and other relevant parties, a new Government will discuss how to create more trust and autonomy for the individual employee and institution and how one can find local solutions that are deemed most appropriate for citizens. A new Government will take the stance that the public sector should be subject to fewer objectives and that gains from streamlining lead to local benefits, and it will also evaluate whether multi-year budgets can be introduced that can create more stability in the planning work. A new Government will also work towards promoting freedom of speech for public sector employees so that freedom of speech can be exercised within the applicable limitations

without fear of either direct or indirect negative reactions from management. This issue must be emphasised to public sector managers, and the employees must be informed of their opportunities to exercise their freedom of speech.

- **Strengthen the Danish tax authorities.** In many ways, trust in the tax authorities is the foundation for the high level of tax morality among a large majority of Danish citizens and companies. When individuals cheat or otherwise avoid paying taxes, this not only undermines the financing of our welfare state but also the fundamental trust in the notion that everyone is contributing. Therefore, it is a critical task to restore and strengthen the Danish tax authorities to reduce the gap between taxes owed and taxes actually paid as well as to increase the trust towards SKAT. Among other things, this will take place via the hiring of more employees that work with controlling taxes.
- **Strengthen the Danish labour market model.** This will take place in collaboration with the relevant parties and by looking at how the coming collective agreement negotiations for the public labour market can be organised in a different and better way than they are today, allowing for the negotiations to be more respectful and with better dialogue and increasing the focus on long-term management instead of short-term control.
- **Strengthen Danish democracy.** Among other things, this will take place via the following initiatives:
  - Mapping and removing bureaucratic burdens for voluntary associations and increase the use of “leisure time passes” to vulnerable youths and children, so that more have the opportunity to participate in associations.
  - Initiate an investigation that will recommend initiatives to strengthen trust in the central administration, media and the political decision-making processes and follow up on the report that the Committee for the Agenda in Parliament (Udvalget for Forretningsordenen i Folketinget) delivered on parliamentary investigations.
  - Strengthen Danish public service. After the parliamentary election, there is no longer a majority backing the media agreement. The government will take stock of the implementation of the agreement and, on that basis, encourage political discussions aimed at strengthening Danish public service and, among other things, take the initiative to encourage streaming services to contribute with more Danish-produced content.
  - In order to ensure that there is respect for democratic decisions concerning commissions set up by the Danish Parliament, it must be ensured that initiated investigations are completed, for example by introducing a requirement that a government cannot decide to abolish a commission itself.