

CHARTER FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN THE VOLUNTEER WORLD AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The volunteer world includes volunteers, associations and organisations. Volunteer Denmark is large and diverse. Almost every other Dane makes a difference in volunteering – in sports clubs/associations, children and youth associations, nature and outdoor organisations, adult education associations, culture and ecclesiastical organisations, voluntary social organisations, disability organisations, patient societies, social housing organisations, residents' associations, neighbourhood councils, international NGOs and many more.

Denmark is founded on a long-standing tradition of a thriving civil society with citizens sharing responsibility, formation of associations and voluntary organisations flourishing in their own right as well as in interaction with the public sector. The volunteer world is a pillar of our democracy. We are rooted in a culture that has created a spirit of community and progress enabling us to face the challenges of tomorrow. The volunteer world contributes to an inclusive society and has in many contexts helped to create our welfare society.

To strengthen the possibilities of active citizenship in binding communities and promote the interaction between the volunteer world and the public sector, the Charter for interaction between Volunteer Denmark/Associations Denmark and the public sector from 2001 has been renewed.

VISION

The Charter must help create the conditions to further develop a volunteer world which alone, jointly and in interaction with the public sector enriches, moves and touches individuals, community and society, and promotes a dynamic development.

Voluntary commitment is of value in itself, to the volunteer and to others. Voluntary commitment contributes to the development of the individual as well as the community at large.

The vision of the Charter for interaction between the volunteer world and the public sector is that it will provide guidance allowing both the volunteer world and the public sector to use it to develop, create and ensure interaction.

The vision of the interaction between the volunteer world and the public sector is jointly to contribute to an inclusive, responsible and meaningful society where citizens see a purpose in helping develop society. Where the volunteer has the opportunity to contribute to something that makes sense to the volunteer and his or her fellow human beings, and where personal commitment, responsibility and compassion are the driving force in volunteering and its derived changes. The public sector supports the framework and conditions of voluntary activities.

The continued development of Danish society depends on constructive and dynamic interaction. The joint potential must be realised, and the interaction must therefore be based on equality and trust in the relationship between the volunteer world and the public sector – in dialogue and in practice alike – where we acknowledge and respect each other.

1 OUR AIM IS DEMOCRACY, CULTURE AND SELF-REALISATION

Diversity in volunteering is a strength. This applies to diversity in identities, values, activities, members, users, structures, etc.

The formation of associations forms the backbone of volunteering: Culture and democratic understanding develop on that basis. The public sector must actively contribute in order to create the relevant framework for the volunteer world and support the volunteer work of the individual citizen and the organisational work of associations.

The public sector should involve organisations, associations and volunteers in all relevant issues and contexts. A strong civil society with active volunteers is a prerequisite for a sustainable and democratic society. Voluntary affiliations that transcend differences help to bind communities together. We find that, in spite of our differences– we feel that we belong. Binding communities contribute to structural and economic sustainability and the development of identity and competences.

It is important to be aware of the fact that the volunteer world and the public sector help create and challenge the different roles of one another.

2 OUR AIM IS MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, TRUST AND RESPECT

The volunteer world and the public sector each have their strengths and goals. We view it as constructive that we challenge one another from our respective starting points and our respective competences.

The differences between the volunteer world and the public sector constitute strength.

It is essential that interaction takes place in an environment of respect, trust and understanding of the roles and circumstances of one another. This requires among other things management, commitment and action in the volunteer world and the public sector.

For us to seriously make a joint contribution to societal developments, it is a prerequisite that we together can analyse challenges and opportunities – at all levels. The joint analysis forms the basis of the necessary balancing of expectations and the mutual understanding of what we can achieve, in equal interaction to create new solutions.

The public sector acknowledges and respects that associations voice the opinions and interests of their members.

3 OUR AIM IS FELLOW CITIZENSHIP AND DIVERSITY

An active citizenship is a cornerstone of voluntary activities. The commitment of the individual begins locally, but is a precursor for voluntary organisations and associations to be able to take on big and complex tasks that contribute to social cohesion. In this way, the voluntary commitment of the individual grows into a larger binding spirit of community.

There must be room for all in the volunteer world, which is made up of self-elected communities in all their diversity.

Different types of volunteering exist, and they all have something to contribute. Voluntary commitment contributes to the quality of life of the individual, and the volunteer world creates solutions in concert with the citizens. Through dialogue, the volunteer world and the public sector must create the framework for the commitment of the individual and the joint commitment, which motivate the solution of tasks and facing of challenges, thus increasing the number of active citizens. It is important that the tasks are comprehensible, specific and meaningful. By conjoining the knowledge, values and conditions of volunteers in societal developments, we can develop solutions founded on cohesion and involvement.

4 OUR AIM IS COOPERATION

Both the volunteer world and the public sector gain strength by increasing cooperation and increased knowledge of each other. The volunteer world is a committed and critical counterpoint to the public sector.

When the volunteer world and the public sector cooperate and challenge each other, we can rejuvenate and develop both democracy and new solutions for the welfare society, e.g. by involving other parties such as professional organisations, the corporate sector, foundations etc. An important element in the cooperation is trust and respect for and understanding of the fact that voluntary activities are voluntary. We meet at eye level where we talk *with* each other and not *to* each other. We agree at local level who does what so each individual interaction is based on local needs, local wants and common rules, including the cooperation between volunteers and public-sector employees.

The volunteer world and the public sector have a joint responsibility to define clear goals for cooperation and to ensure that efforts are of value to the individual and society. The volunteer world that receives public subsidies is entitled to and ought to set out the values, goals and framework of its work based on the democratic processes in the associations and among volunteers.

Volunteering thrives best on the basis of a broad framework. We will aim at simple and non-bureaucratic cooperation as that is a key prerequisite for voluntary commitment. If associations and volunteers are to contribute actively to developments, it is essential that no unnecessary administrative obstacles are put in the way of association activities and volunteers.

Both the volunteer world and the public sector can launch and support the cooperation.

It is pivotal that the Charter does not stand alone, but is put into practice and specified in a local context. The national charter should serve as a platform for dialogue at both national and local levels, locally for the purpose of drawing up a local framework for cooperation across sectors and organisational boundaries.

WORKING GROUP FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE VOLUNTEER CHARTER

Ministers

Karen Hækkerup, Minister for Social Affairs and Integration
Marianne Jelved, Minister for Culture
Astrid Krag, Minister for Health and Prevention
Margrethe Vestager, Minister for Economic Affairs and the Interior
Pia Olsen Dyhr, Minister for the Environment (acting)

Associations, organisations, councils, etc.

Palle Adamsen, Chairman of the National Federation of Housing Associations - Social Housing
Peder Bisgaard, President of the Danish Federation for Company Sports
Stig Glent-Madsen, Chairman of the Danish Refugee Council
Per Paludan Hansen, Chairman of the Danish Council for Adult Education
Niels Nygaard, President of the Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF)
Susanne Larsen, President of the Danish Red Cross
Signe Bo, Chairman of the Danish Youth Council
Søren Møller, Chairman of the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations (DGI)
Stig Langvad, Chairman of the Disabled Peoples Organisations Denmark
Lars Mortensen, Chairman of the Danish Outdoor Council
Vibe Klarup Voetmann, Chairman of the National Council for Volunteering (Denmark)
Johs. Bertelsen, Chairman of Frivilligt Forum, the National Association of Voluntary Social Organisations
Jens Maibom Pedersen, Chairman of YMCA's Social Work in Denmark
Frede Olesen, Chairman of the Danish Cancer Society
Bente Schindel, Head of Secretariat of the National Association of Voluntary Cultural Councils
Steffen Husted Damsgaard, Chairman of the Danish Council of Rural Districts
Kristian Bennedsen, Vice President of SIND (the Danish Association for Mental Health)
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