

How to work in Denmark?



**DANISH TRADE UNION
CONFEDERATION**



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We express our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who are paying a very high price for the Russian aggression. Russia's action is not merely a violation of international law and an attack on a sovereign state. It is a full-blown attack on fundamental democratic values.

In the Danish Trade Union, we stand with the people of Ukraine and support the EU's sanctions against Russia. We would also like to extend our warmest welcome to all Ukrainians in Denmark - both the ones who have fled to Denmark, but also all Ukrainians who already lived in Denmark when the war broke out.

In addition, I would highly recommend you to join a union. The unions can help you with your job search and help ensure that you get a proper salary and working conditions.

In this leaflet you can read about some of the most important rules and rights you need to know when working in Denmark.

Danish labour market

In many countries, most rules concerning areas such as work hours, overtime, notice period and pay are solely stipulated in laws, passed by politicians.

This is not the case in Denmark. Instead, the so-called 'Danish labour market model' is based on a division of responsibility between the Danish state, the employer organizations and the trade unions. These actors come together to reach collective agreements, that lay out the overriding rules of the labour market. This is possible because a very large percentage of the population is organized in unions.

Additional information is available on workplacedenmark.dk, where pay levels and collective agreement terms for selected occupational groups are further explained (for instance bricklayers, carpenters, cleaners, construction workers, electricians, operators and assemblers, painters, plumbers and pipe fitters, skilled workers in manufacturing, unskilled workers in manufacturing)

Working hours and salary

All employees who work more than eight hours per week must be issued an employment contract no less than a month after being employed. The contract must state the nature of the work, weekly working hours, pay and bonuses, which collective agreement the work falls under, termination notice etc.

As a general rule, working hours are fixed in a collective agreement and in the great majority of sectors standard working hours are 37 hours weekly. The weekly working hours will often be less than 37 hours if the job involves shift work or takes place at night.

There is no statutory minimum wage in Denmark. Wages are typically fixed in the collective agreements for different types of work, and the employer is obligated to pay the wages agreed. If you have questions about your wages, you can contact your trade union. For example, is the average payment DKK 259.88 per hour worked within construction industry. This average salary, however, may vary according to seniority and experience within the given industry.

In addition, Danish employers pay among other things for:

- Payment for the first day of a child's illness
- Pay during parental leave as a supplement to public parental leave benefit rate
- Payment during illness as a supplement to public sickness benefit rate

Danish labour market pension

Not everyone in Denmark is covered by a labour market pension [arbejds-markedspension]. It is, however, quite common that it is stated in the contract that the employer pays a fixed amount to a pension institution or a pension fund. Check what agreements apply to you in your contract. It is not possible to require of an employer to contribute to your pension savings if this is not mentioned in your contract.

The labour market pension can be composed of savings, insurance or group life insurance. How much the employer contributes differs. It is quite common that the employer pays 2/3 and the employee 1/3 of the total pension premium. However, sometimes you may have to pay more.

Unions

Many employees in Denmark are members of a union. However, being in a union is not a legal requirement – it is voluntary. Generally, unions are divided according to trade and type of work.

The members of a union often can elect employee representatives at the workplace, who will represent all employees when negotiating pay and work conditions with the management. The employer cannot demand that an employee be a member of a particular union.

It is a fundamental principle in Denmark that trade unions are entitled to try to conclude collective agreements with employers and employers' organizations. Trade unions may take different kinds of industrial action to reach an agreement with an employer.

Danish trade unions may take industrial action to support the demand for payment of wages or salaries in accordance with a collective agreement with any company based in Denmark. Industrial action may be directed at the company with which the trade union is trying to conclude a collective agreement, or it may be a solidarity action aimed at other companies that supply products to the company in question.

Health and safety working environment

Danish regulations regarding the health and safety working environment apply regardless of the context in which work is carried out in Denmark. This means that they also apply to foreign employers and to employees who are working in Denmark for a limited period of time.

It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that all employees can work under conditions which are acceptable with regard to safety and health, and which are in line with Danish working environment regulations.

It is the employees' responsibility to follow all security regulations given, e.g. regarding the handling of machines or dangerous substances, requirements to use protective measures (respiratory protection, hearing protection, protective gloves) and the like. At most companies with more than 10 employees you will often find a work environment representative who can go to if you are worried about your own safety at work.

What to do if you are injured at work

There are two different types of industrial injury: Accidents at work and occupational diseases.

An accident at work is when you suffer a physical or psycho-social injury due to a sudden incident at work, or the injury may be the result of some sort of exposure that has lasted for a maximum of five days. An occupational disease is a disease that is caused by your work or working conditions. The disease may be the result of some sort of exposure over a short or long period. For example, your hearing may become impaired after working in a noisy environment for several years.

If you suffer an injury at work, your employer must report the injury to the company's insurance company and the Danish Working Environment Authority no later than nine days after the injury occurred. The injury must be reported if you have not been able to work for at least one day in addition to the day of the accident, or if it is probable that the injury will have permanent consequences for you. If the damage is permanent, you can be awarded compensation through Arbejdsmarkedets Erhvervssikring.

Holidays

The Holiday Act normally applies to all employees working in Denmark. The employer must follow the Holiday Act, and an employee cannot waive the right to holiday.

An employee earns approximately two days' holiday per month of work. All employees are entitled to 25 days of holiday per year.

Your payment for the accrued holiday entitlement may either be your usual pay or holiday pay, which is 12.5 % of your pay in the year of accrual. You have an entitlement to 3 consecutive weeks of primary holiday in the period from 1 May to 30 September

Termination

An employer must in most cases have a proper, factual reason for terminating an employee, e.g. if the employee is unfit for the job, or if termination is necessary due to cut-backs.

An employer cannot terminate an employee due to their gender, race, skin colour, religion or faith, political stance, sexual orientation, age, handicap or national, social or ethnic origins. Likewise, it is illegal to terminate an employee due to pregnancy or parental leave.

Furthermore, an employee cannot be terminated because they are a member of a union or choose not to be a member of a union, or because they are not a member of the same union as their co-workers.

Unemployment

The Danish unemployment insurance system is a voluntary insurance scheme. This means that you are not automatically insured against unemployment when working in Denmark.

If you want to be insured against unemployment while working in Denmark, you have to join a Danish unemployment insurance fund, also known as an "A-kasse". These are private associations, and once you have joined an unemployment insurance fund, you must pay contributions to the fund. In order to become a member of an unemployment insurance fund, you must actively contact the unemployment insurance fund of which you want to be a member and apply for a membership.

You have to meet a number of conditions to be entitled to Danish unemployment benefit (see box below). You are entitled to unemployment benefits for 2 years within 3 years, calculated in hours. Unemployment benefits can amount to a maximum of 90 percent of the salary you earned before you became unemployed. You can receive a maximum of DKK 19.351 per month as full-time insured. The unemployment fund will also help in the job search process in addition, the municipal job center will also assist with the job search process.

Being entitled to unemployment benefits

- Have been a member of an unemployment insurance fund for at least 1 year
- Be registered as a jobseeker at your local job center from the first day you are available to the labour market and have a complete and approved CV within 14 days of unemployment.
- Have received a certain income for the past 3 years; at least DKK 246.924.
- Be available for the labour market. This means, among other things, that you must apply for and be able to take over work with the notice of a day.
- Have a complete and approved CV no later than 2 weeks after you have registered as unemployed at the job center.

