

Aalborg Universitet



## Somalis in Copenhagen

*At Home in Europe*

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AT HOME IN  
**EUROPE**

# SOMALIS

## IN COPENHAGEN

Somalis in European Cities

# Somalis in Copenhagen

At Home in Europe

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## Open Society Foundations Mission Statement

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant societies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 100 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The reports have been prepared by At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations and in cooperation with local/national based experts.

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At Home in Europe has final responsibility for the content of the report, including any errors or misrepresentations.

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## PREFACE

A central belief of the Open Society Foundations is that all people in an open society count equally and should enjoy equal opportunities. The Open Society Foundations work day-to-day with civil society organizations across Europe to respond to discrimination, prejudice and injustice; to understand the emergence of new and sometimes worrying political phenomena; to inform better practices in policing and security; to connect those seeking justice and equality with policymakers and institutions; to promote inclusion for Europe's minorities; to support a critical and informed discourse among nongovernmental actors; and to empower grassroots organizations to seek change for themselves, unique to their own local context.

At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations, is a research and advocacy initiative which works to advance equality and social justice for groups excluded from the mainstream of civil, political, economic, and, cultural life in Western Europe. It places a high priority on local community and city level practices that mitigate discrimination and seek to ensure access to equal opportunities for all. At Home in Europe engages with policymakers, civil society organisations, and communities at the local, national and international level to improve the social inclusion of Europe's diverse minority and marginalised communities in different ways.

Minority communities – whether Muslim, migrant or Roma – continue to come under intense scrutiny in Europe today. This complex situation presents Europe with one its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity. The Somali community is one such emerging minority group on whom a lack of precise data hampers the possibility of achieving meaningful integration.

People of Somali origin have lived in parts of Europe for many generations but in the past 15 years their numbers have increased. There are no accurate figures for the number of Somalis in Europe but on the whole, whilst small in absolute numbers, they are among one of the continent's largest refugee groups and a growing minority population. Europe's Somalis can be divided into three broad categories: people of Somali origin born in Europe, Somali refugees and asylum seekers (who came directly from Somalia or neighbouring countries largely as a result of conflict) and Somalis who migrated to a country in Europe from elsewhere in Europe, such as from Sweden to the UK for example. They are a diverse and vibrant community who suffer from negative and biased media representation and stereotyping. There is a limited understanding on the specific needs of this community and they are in the category of groups that experience significant inequalities in accessing education, employment, health, and housing with resulting poor outcomes. Somali community groups are very present in certain countries in Europe but their engagement with policymakers and in local and national bodies can be relatively limited.



The comparative research series ‘Somalis in European Cities’ examines city and municipal policies that have actively sought to understand Somali origin communities and their specific needs. The research aims to capture the everyday, lived experiences as well as the type and degree of engagement policymakers have initiated with their Somali and minority constituents. An underlying theme is how Somali communities have themselves actively participated in tackling discrimination and whether the needs of specific groups warrant individual policy approaches in overcoming barriers to equal opportunities.

The ‘Somalis in European Cities’ series contains seven individual city reports and an overview. The cities selected take into account the population size, diversity, and the local political context. They are: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmö, and Oslo. All seven city reports were prepared by teams of local experts on the basis of the same methodology to allow for comparative analysis. Each report includes detailed recommendations for improving the opportunities for full participation and inclusion of Somalis in wider society in the selected city. These recommendations will form the basis for At Home in Europe of the Open Society Initiative for Europe’s advocacy activities.

# Somalis in Copenhagen

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigration from Somalia to Denmark is quite a new phenomenon and is very much linked to the political situation in Somalia. Before 1989, only a couple of hundred Somali immigrants lived in Denmark, but by 2001 more than 16,000 people with a Somali background lived in Denmark. As of 1 July 2014, 19,163 persons were defined as being of Somali origin in Denmark.<sup>1</sup>

As a new group of immigrants, Danish-Somalis have had to face the challenges of the repercussions of civil war, refugee status, split families, resettlement and significant stigmatisation and stereotyping in the ethnic hierarchy in Denmark. Discussions in all focus groups (78 people) and among the majority of stakeholders (38 people) interviewed (both ethnic-majority and -minority) emphasised the role of the media as crucial for the inclusion and identity of Danish-Somalis, and there is a general understanding and perception of the media as dominated by negative stereotypes of Danish-Somalis and Somalis elsewhere.

The Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen is small (4,500 people) but along a number of demographic and socio-economic parameters, the average Danish-Somalis differ from the average population in Copenhagen, for example it is a younger population, the vast majority living in rented accommodation and having below-average incomes; there are more single-parent families, more children in families, lower rates of employment and a higher unemployment rates. Whatever the reasons may be for this, the social and economically disadvantaged situation for Danish-Somali Copenhageners is quite challenging for living and organising everyday life.

The Danish-Somalis who participated in the study in focus groups or in individual interviews represented a broad diversity within the Danish-Somali group, which should always be emphasised in studies like this that frame a specific ethnicity as focus. The interviews reflected many different perceptions and opinions on intergenerational relations, religion, tradition, politics in Somalia, gender, clan, politics in Denmark and so on. This study is not about “how are the Danish-Somalis in Copenhagen”, but about everyday experiences and relationships between Copenhageners with Danish-Somali background and important welfare and societal institutions.

**General Tendencies:** One of the most consistent findings in the interviews was the very high level of discrimination and stereotyping experienced among people with a Danish-Somali background. The perception was also reflected among the majority of

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<sup>1</sup> Danmarks Statistik, Statistikbanken: FOLK1: Folketal den 1. Juli 2014 (Population 1. July 2014), at [www.statistikbanken.dk](http://www.statistikbanken.dk) (Accessed 21 September 2014) Being of a country-specific origin is defined according to either self categorisation (when parents are unknown), or for immigrants equivalent to country of birth, or for descendants equivalent to citizenship, or if only one Danish parent is known then as Denmark or if both parents are known equivalent to country of birth/citizenship of the mother, Danmarks statistik – concepts: <http://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/dokumentation/hvadbetyder.aspx> (accessed 3 October 2014).

interviewees with other ethnic-minority backgrounds as well as ethnic-majority backgrounds. Two kinds of assessments of discrimination and stereotyping were typical across ethnicities:

- discrimination perceived as wrong but more or less almost a given and very difficult to do anything about
- the continuously negative media and political representation of Danish-Somalis is the root cause for powerful discrimination and stereotyping

Discrimination was experienced in many contexts: the educational system, the media and labour market were mentioned most often, but also was felt in the social housing neighbourhoods and the city administration, especially among young men by the police and connected with nightlife. Most of the non-Danish-Somali stakeholders interviewed recognised the experience of discrimination among the Danish-Somalis.

Although anti-discrimination measures are highly profiled in the city's inclusion policy, it appears necessary to address exclusion more directly, in addition to changing attitudes and social relations between individuals. The discrimination experienced among Danish-Somalis indicates the presence of a kind of institutionalised discrimination and lack of effective prevention and sanctions.

Some of the focus areas for this study revealed experiences of considerable gaps between some institutions within and outside the city, but also good practices especially at the local level. This study shows urgent needs for information and knowledge about rights and obligations, assistance in addressing the system, advisers, guidance, support in complaints and links to networks that can offer assistance.

**City Services:** Several corps of bridge-builders, who are mediators or facilitators between the service providers and minority groups, have been established outside and inside the municipality. There are health communicators, integration advisers, dialogue consultants, discrimination consultants, discrimination advisers, neighbourhood mothers and Somali bridge builders who are all facilitating access to and knowledge of the system, as well as informing ethnic-majority professionals about the specific problems of ethnic minorities.

Interviews revealed general satisfaction with the different bridge builder corps as a very important link between the Danish-Somali residents and the system, be it a school, a job centre, a case worker in the social administration department, a housing association or another administrative office. Many of these bridge builder corps are defined as projects with limited time frames and insecure economic futures, however; where workers are paid by the hour the situation is especially tenuous. Instability or high turnover among the workers in these services can undermine the long-term use of the knowledge and working methods when projects are of short duration.

**Organisational Divides and Confusion:** The borderlines between different city administrations seemed to be a source of concern about cooperation, overlap and the



conflict of interests within the municipality. These organisational problems are felt by many of the users of the city services to be a source of confusion and impotence, enforcing the gap between the system and the citizen.

**Education:** The level of experienced discrimination in the educational system was very high, and even though experiences may relate to schools in other municipalities it emphasises a need to deal more explicitly with discrimination in the classroom.

In the interviews the personal relations with teachers first and moderators and facilitators second were extremely important for both pupils and parents. The integration advisers seemed all the way round to work successfully, and the voluntary Somali bridge builders as well as the Youth and Education (ungdom & uddannelse, U&U) supervisors<sup>2</sup> seem also to be important actors in the relationship between school, parents and pupils. It was seen as important to support the whole family instead of just seeing the individual child or parent, especially in single-parent families with many children.

Language is a prime area, both in regard to appreciating minority linguistic skills and using minority languages as communications tools, and it seems to be good practice that bilingual teachers use their linguistic skills to improve communication with the parents.

**Employment:** The overall national employment strategy and organisation of workfare and the focus on activation was characterised in the focus group as “the Ferris Wheel in Tivoli”, referring to the feeling of being forced into a closed circuit with no real prospective employment..

Users of the job centre among those interviewed described a situation of being individually trapped by poverty and control mechanisms; at the same time they characterised the way the system was working at a collective, social level as irrational, unproductive, a waste of money and disorderly. Nevertheless, they did rely on the system to help them find a job.

Several key civil society informants referred to the huge workload among volunteers helping and guiding Danish-Somali Copenhageners who need social benefits and assistance; and not only from the employment and integration administration, but in general in the municipality and the immigration service, housing companies and other agencies. Those interviewed stressed the urgent need for a guidance service adjusted to the need of Danish-Somali citizens enrolled at the job centre and a targeted effort to increase the knowledge in the group about rules, rights and the way the system works.

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<sup>2</sup> Every young person in Copenhagen City between 13 and 15 is attached to a Youth and Education U&U supervisor from the Youth and Education Administration, who guide and support the young person especially when it comes to secondary education, educational choices and employment.

**Housing:** Many of those interviewed were very critical and offended by the government officially terming their social housing neighbourhood a “ghetto”, and perceived it as an insult and yet another mechanism of exclusion. One of the criteria of what makes a ghetto is still its ethnic composition, that is, with many residents having an ethnic-minority background, and this was regarded as extremely provocative and preventing good images and stories from the neighbourhood from reaching mainstream society.

More than 80 percent of the Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen lives in social housing with a locally elected structure that does not seem to work well in including the Danish-Somali residents. Social workers in housing areas also reported Danish-Somalis being at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy in the neighbourhood and that the Danish-Somalis were perceived as isolated and preferring to be only with other Danish-Somalis.

**Police and Security:** Experiences and assessment of the police as an institution were very mixed, but there seemed to be a clear distinction not only between the local and central police, but also between the central police and the Police Intelligence Service (Politiets EfterretningsTjeneste, PET).

Despite the occasionally heated public atmosphere over terrorist threats and violent religious radicalisation, many Danish-Somalis interviewed praised the PET for taking a sensible, rational and practical approach to terror prevention, which involved recognition and dialogue with different actors in the local religious community and civil society in mutual efforts to prevent incidents.

The local police were also described by residents, social workers, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and others as generally good and reliable partners in neighbourhood cooperation and networking. The local police also have a big role in building trust in the local community in the police institution.

However both in focus groups and among stakeholders the difference between the local and the central police was highlighted, pointing out problematic and conflict-escalating attitudes, with the central police cited as those who do not know and are not known in the neighbourhood.

There seemed to be a huge challenge concerned with the legal system, with difficulties getting information on rights and obligations, on how to report a case, on where to complain, on how to get legal assistance, etc. In the interviews the system as such was assessed to work well and non-discriminating. Problems were formulated in terms of access, information and knowledge, and networks to people and NGOs who can assist.

**Health and Social Protection:** Stakeholders interviewed on the health situations of the Danish-Somalis estimated that health problems in this group were more significant than recognised; and more research on the health situation would be valuable in order to better target information and services from the city, given that health profiles

produced by the municipality are only categorised as ethnic minority or majority, or Western or non-Western.

Different barriers and concerns were mentioned in the focus groups, such as the problems with written information. The language barrier had a huge impact on the Danish-Somalis' relationship with the system. The lack of knowledge of and access to the appropriate services was another obstacle.

The fear of having the children taken away by the authorities hangs over many families, according to interviews, a fear that can prevent families from contacting the authorities in case of problems.

Mental problems and diseases were specific areas of concern and according to the focus group discussions, there are many Danish-Somalis with mental illness who are not given the proper treatment and care by the authorities. The fear of being stigmatised and socially excluded among the Danish-Somalis is parallel to the general experience of mental illness as a stigma, even though it may be spoken about in different terms.

Many in the focus groups agreed that the relationship between changing gender roles and the struggles of many Danish-Somali men in Denmark is linked to the widespread phenomenon of khat and alcohol abuse and homelessness. Many Danish-Somalis mentioned that older men in general are a specific vulnerable group and a group without much attention from the social system. At the same time, increasing homelessness among younger people was mentioned as a concern as well as unaccompanied asylum seekers, who may be at risk of living very vulnerable and lonely lives.

**Citizenship and Participation:** There was general consensus among those interviewed that better voting and information on the opportunities to be active citizens in civil society rather than the electoral process is needed. Some felt excluded by the political and bureaucratic system as there are no voices to represent them.

Several of the Danish-Somalis interviewed wanted a platform from which it would be possible to address the political discourse in the municipality and criticised the closing of the Integration Council that had been one such mechanism.

**Overall recommendations:**

- The City of Copenhagen should use the achievements of its Inclusion Strategy for 2011–2014 to ensure that future policies and strategies build on and sustain progress to date, identify effective measures to address challenges that are still to be fully met, and adopt clear integration indicators that together with effective monitoring and evaluation can be used to track progress and assess the effectiveness of specific measures to achieve integration objectives.
- The City of Copenhagen should convene a task group of Danish-Somali civil society organisations to draw on current programmes such as the neighbourhood mothers, health communicators and other bridge-builders to

develop an action plan for further improving the information and advice available to Danish-Somalis on employment and social legislation, health, housing, challenging discrimination, policing, education and opportunities for civic engagement.

- The City of Copenhagen should encourage the Danish government to consider the impact of the asylum system on the ability of Somali refugees to settle successfully in Denmark and the extent to which the asylum system may increase the risk of long-term exclusion due to its possible influence on health and other factors.
- The City of Copenhagen should consider how to address the need for raising awareness of ethnic discrimination and intercultural knowledge and competence among ethnic-majority citizens and professionals. The need could be met by campaigns, projects and training in educational institutions and in in-service training.
- The City of Copenhagen should consider how to use best practices and experiences from other cities and suggestions and opportunities from the Somali diaspora.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is part of a comparative policy-oriented study focusing on cities in Europe with a significant Somali population. It deals with the experience of Danish-Somalis living in Copenhagen. The other cities covered in this project are Amsterdam, Helsinki, Leicester, London, Malmo and Oslo.

The research aims to identify the challenges and successes in ensuring the integration of Somalis living in Copenhagen and to understand their everyday experiences and the relationships between Copenhageners with Danish-Somali background and important welfare and societal institutions.

This is a qualitative study drawing on data from 12 focus groups with Danish-Somalis as well as interviews with key stakeholders who were policy makers, practitioners or active in civil society. The Danish-Somalis who participated in the study in focus groups or in individual interviews represented a broad diversity within the Danish-Somali group, which should always be emphasised in studies like this that frame a specific ethnicity as its focus. The interviews reflected many different perceptions and opinions on intergenerational relations, religion, tradition, politics in Somalia, gender, clan and politics in Denmark.

The study reflects different positions according to ethnic background (and here it is important not only to speak about ethnicity in relation to the group of Danish-Somalis, but as a general social construct, even though the majority ethnicity is very often left out of the equation). Within this very diverse group of Danish-Somalis interviewed for this study some general tendencies are visible as well as differences in experience and perceptions. This is also true of the perceptions and experiences in interviews with people of other minority backgrounds and majority background.

The study also reflects different positions according to employment in the public, private and NGO sectors, managerial hierarchy and gender. Given that the frame of the study is ethnicity this was a priority in the report, but it is important to bear in mind that ethnicity always intersects with other social divisions, such as for example class and gender.

The report begins in Chapter 2 with an outline of the population and demographic characteristics of the Danish-Somali population. Chapter 3 outlines the policy context for Copenhagen, identifying where responsibility for different policy areas rest. Chapters 4–11 then examine the experiences in eight main areas: identity and belonging, education, employment, housing, health and social protection, policing and security, participation and citizenship, and media. Chapter 12 draws key conclusions and Chapter 13 identifies a number of recommendations.

## 2. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### 2.1 The Somali Context for Migration

The Somali Republic was established as an independent parliamentary democracy state in 1960 after 91 years of British and Italian colonisation. Following a coup by General Siad Barre in 1969, the constitution and parliament were eliminated, political activities and labour unions forbidden, the economy controlled by the state, censorship and the death penalty were introduced and clan relationships downplayed. At the same time literacy and mass education campaigns and the development of a Somali written language were launched.

During the 1970s Siad Barre and Somalia were involved in war with Ethiopia which caused significant destruction and a flow of 1.5 million refugees from Ethiopia to Somalia. After a failed coup in 1978, political repression worsened and during the 1980s many intellectuals left the country after being denied access to universities and research institutions. Massive price increases in oil and food and severe poverty among the majority of the population led to resistance groups being established all over Somalia. Siad Barre responded by bombing the main cities of Hargeisa and Burao, killing more than 50,000 people. In 1991 Siad Barre was overthrown and he fled to Kenya.

The general situation could be characterised as chaotic, lawless and highly volatile. The region of Somaliland declared its independence and has managed to keep the area fairly stable since then. Following a widespread famine in 1992, the UN intervened but was unable to bring peace to the region and pulled out in 1995. During the next decade, instability and failed peace negotiations characterised Somalia. Recent developments indicate a new situation is emerging in the country.

It is estimated that the civil war has forced more than 1 million people out of Somalia since 1988, most of them to neighbouring states such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen, and a minor share of 100,000 to Western countries.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2 Somali Migration to Denmark

Immigration from Somalia to Denmark is a fairly new phenomenon linked to the political situation in Somalia. Before 1989, only a couple of hundred Somali

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<sup>3</sup> Christina Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger? Dansksomalieres kamp for at opbygge en meningsfuld tilværelse i det danske samfund—gennem et arbejde" (Co-citizen or contra-citizen. Danish-Somali's struggle to build a meaningful life in Denmark), PhD dissertation, Copenhagen University, 2007, p. 62 (hereafter, Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?").

immigrants lived in Denmark<sup>4</sup> but by 2012 there were more than 19,000 people with a Somali background<sup>5</sup> living in Denmark, most of them on resident permits granted because of asylum or family unification and part of more than 1 million people who fled Somalia.<sup>6</sup>

In 2012, there were a total of 17,673 people with Somali background living in Denmark: 10,168 Somali immigrants and 7,505 people with a Somali background (descendants). The majority resided in five cities, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Number of people with Somali background in five cities in Denmark, 2012**

Municipality	Copenhagen	Aarhus	Odense	Aalborg	Kolding	Other
Residents	4,742	4,108	1,901	986	613	5,323

**Source:** Memorandum 28-06-2013, *Tal og fakta om somaliere i Danmark* (Numbers and facts on Somalis in Denmark), Ankestyrelsen (Appeals Board), The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs.

Experiences on immigration to Denmark seem to be linked to the time of arrival. Somali immigrants from the 1970s and 1980s often have positive experiences and memories of coming to Denmark, whereas the larger influx of Somali refugees into Denmark during the 1990s coincides with the rise of more visible and aggressive anti-immigration political rhetoric in Denmark.<sup>7</sup>

Survey data from 1993<sup>8</sup> on Danish attitudes to refugees and immigrants showed that the Somali refugees were rather popular, more popular than Iranians and Palestinians.<sup>9</sup> But in 1999, a new study on the experience of discrimination showed that the Somali

<sup>4</sup> Tina Kallehave, *Somaliske livsformer i velfærdsstaten. Udforskning af begreber til analyse af brydninger og processer i immigrationsproblematikken* (Somali ways of life in the welfare state. Exploring concepts for analysis of conflict and processes in immigrationproblematics), PhD dissertation, Copenhagen University, September 2003, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> "Somali background" includes both immigrants and descendants of immigrants.

<sup>6</sup> Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?"; Nauja Kleist, "Spaces of Recognition: An analysis of Somali-Danish associational engagement and diasporic mobilisation", PhD dissertation, Sociology Institute, Copenhagen, 2003; Mette Fink Nielsen, Peter Hansen and Nauja Kleist, "Repatriering eller fortsat mobilitet?" (Repatriation or continuous mobility), *Den Ny Verden* 2 (2002).

<sup>7</sup> See for example Øystein Gaasholt and Lise Togeby, *I syv sind. Danskernes holdninger til flygtninge og indvandrere* (In two minds. The Danes' attitudes towards refugees and immigrants), Forlaget Politica, Aarhus, 1995 (hereafter, Gaasholt and Togeby, *I syv sind*); Peter Hervik, *The Annoying Difference: The Emergence of Danish Neonationalism, Neoracism, and Populism in the Post-1989 World*, Berghahn Books, Copenhagen, 2011 (hereafter, Hervik, *The Annoying Difference*).

<sup>8</sup> Gaasholt and Togeby, *I syv sind*.

<sup>9</sup> Hervik, *The Annoying Difference*.

population experienced more discrimination than any other ethnic-minority group in Denmark.<sup>10</sup>

A turning point in the public discussion on immigration and ethnic diversity was a media campaign in 1997 run by the tabloid newspaper *Ekstra Bladet*. It was a combination of a series of articles in the newspaper and posters in public spaces under the headline “*De Fremmede*” (The Aliens), questioning the issue of immigration and diversity, for example by writing headlines such as “Where is the limit for tolerance?” in both Danish and Arabic and depicting the transformation of Denmark from a peaceful society to a multi-ethnic society “again and again as a crime committed by politicians against the Danish people”.<sup>11</sup> In this campaign a smiling Somali man called “Ali”, with two women and three children shown on the front page of the paper, became the iconic picture of the unwanted stranger: Ali was a Somali refugee who was granted asylum in 1992 and in 1994 he was joined by his wife and their six children through the family unification process: at the same time four of his other children and their mother were granted family unification and the 11th child was born in Denmark. The headline about Ali was that he was receiving DKK 631,724 (€83,500) in social benefits because of his large family. His wives were described as “circumcised illiterates” and “isolated according to Somali tradition” and Ali himself was characterised as a “nomad”, not knowing how to use a toilet, dominating his wives and children and living happily on social welfare paid by the Danish taxpayers. Most newspapers and politicians, most from the right and many from the left including Social Democrats, embraced the story and expressed their concern and contempt with Ali and the system.<sup>12</sup> Figuratively, the “unwanted alien” had taken the shape of a Somali immigrant in this political and media panic.

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<sup>10</sup> Birgit Møller and Lise Tøgeby, *Oplevet diskrimination. En undersøgelse blandt etniske minoriteter* (Experienced discrimination. A study among ethnic minorities). Nævnet for Etnisk Ligestilling, Copenhagen, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Hervik, *The Annoying Difference*, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> Hervik, *The Annoying Difference*, pp. 58–69.



**Figure 1. Headline, photo and text in the tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* in 1997 as part of their campaign against “aliens”**



Figure 11. *Ekstra Bladet's* story about Ali from Somalia  
Source: Dahlerup (1997b)

Headline in the tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* in 1997 as part of their campaign against “aliens”:

Receives 631,724 DKK [approximately €83,500] in Social welfare. The text below the photo is: Ali with some of his children in Maribo. 'In Somalia women have to be circumcised according to Islamic tradition. My wives are circumcised. But what am I going to do with my daughters'.

The article describes the family: Ali keeps his circumcised illiterate wives in strict isolation according to Somali custom [...] The school age children must come home straight away and only play indoors [...] [Ali knows] nothing about modern installations [...] The Danish Refugee Council has, for instance, not told him how a toilet is used [...] The house in Nysted will be left so neglected that re-establishment will cost the taxpayers approximately 100,000 DKK [€13,500]. It has happened before, the Somalis are nomads, and Ali has lived seven different places.

Hervik, *The Annoying Difference*, p. 59.

### 2.3 Population Statistics

In 2011 immigrants and their descendants represented 22.2 percent<sup>13</sup> of the total population of 539,542<sup>14</sup> inhabitants in the municipality of Copenhagen; 14.5 percent of this population had a non-Western background.<sup>15</sup>

The Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen makes up about 0.8 percent of the total city population, at 4,742<sup>16</sup> people including both immigrants and descendants.

<sup>13</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Statistics, Shared Services (*Koncernservice*), Factsheet: “Befolkningen efter alder 1801–2013” (Population by age 1801–2013), at [www.kk.dk/statistik](http://www.kk.dk/statistik) (accessed 8 September 2014) (special retrieval from Statistics Denmark (Danmarks Statistik) (hereafter, Factsheet: “Befolkningen efter alder 1801–2013”).

<sup>14</sup> Factsheet: “Befolkningen efter alder 1801–2013”.

<sup>15</sup> Statistics in this chapter are primarily based on 2011 data. However, the total population of immigrants and descendants with Somali background was 562,412 as of 1 April 2013. See Copenhagen Municipality, Statistics, Shared Services (Koncernservice), Orientering fra statistik 7. maj "Folkeregisteropgørelse primo april 2013" (Statement from The National Register of Persons, April 2013), at [www.kk.dk/statistik](http://www.kk.dk/statistik) (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>16</sup> See Table 1.

Of these, 2,754 are immigrants and 1,770 are descendants of immigrants, 45.2 percent are women and 54.8 percent are men.

Compared with the average population in Copenhagen, the Danish-Somali population is young: 44.6 percent of the Somali population is 19 years old or younger while only 19.3 percent of the total population falls into this bracket. The Somali population is also young compared with other non-Western immigrants and descendants of immigrants in general; among this group 27.7 percent are 19 or younger.<sup>17</sup> Only 3.1 percent of the Somali population is over 60, reflecting the fact that Danish-Somalis are quite a new immigrant group in Denmark.

**Table 2. Age distribution of the Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen, 2011**

Age	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years	Total
Total population in Copenhagen	103,866	234,780	121,334	79,562	539,542
Somali immigrants	370	1,303	1,040	141	2,754
Descendants of Somali immigrants	1,746	24	0	0	1,770
Somali immigrants + descendants	2,016	1,327	1,040	141	4,524
<b>As % of the population</b>					
Total population in Copenhagen	19.3%	43.5%	22.5%	14.7%	100%
Somali immigrants	9.8%	47.3%	37.8%	5.1%	100%
Somali descendants	98.6%	1.4%	0%	0%	100%
Somali immigrants + descendants	44.6%	29.3%	23%	3.1%	100%

**Source:** Copenhagen Municipality, Statistics, Shared Services (*Koncernservice*), Factsheet: “Befolkningen efter alder 1801–2013” (Population by age 1801–2013), at [www.kk.dk/statistik](http://www.kk.dk/statistik) (accessed 8 September 2014) (special retrieval from Statistics Denmark (Danmarks Statistik))

## 2.4 Citizenship

According to the Danish Nationality Act, naturalisation can be granted on certain conditions: the applicant must have resided in Denmark for nine consecutive years; be

<sup>17</sup> Copenhagen Municipality Statistikbank, “Tab2-4 Indvandrere og efterkommere i København med herkomst vestlige vs. ikke vestlige lande” (Tab 2-4 Immigrants and descendants in Copenhagen by origin Western versus non-Western countries), 2011, at <https://www.kk.dk/da/om-kommunen/fakta-og-statistik/statistik-og-historie/statistikbanken> (accessed 4 July 2013).

self-supporting;<sup>18</sup> able to pass a Danish-language examination and a test on Danish society, culture and history; and have no criminal record.<sup>19</sup>

In 2011 there were 2,086<sup>20</sup> persons in Copenhagen who had Somali citizenship, which is 46.1 percent of the total Danish-Somali population. Nearly half of the Somali population that year was 19 years old or younger, and among this group (707 people), 35.1 percent held Somali citizenship. The majority of people in this age bracket are descendants of immigrants, indicating that descendants are less likely to have Somali citizenship than first-generation immigrants. The majority of the rest of the Danish-Somali population (especially the descendants who do not have Somali citizenship) are most likely Danish citizens, but some may also be citizens of third countries.<sup>21</sup>

No statistical information on citizenship applications from Somali citizens, including registration of citizenship tests, is available at present.<sup>22</sup>

Given that the Danish-Somali population demographically differs from the average population, statistical comparisons on some socioeconomic parameters should be considered more as a tendency than a stable indicator.

## 2.5 Where and How Are Danish-Somalis Living in Copenhagen?

The Danish-Somali population resides in all 10 neighbourhoods that make up Copenhagen, but the majority (61.8 percent) lives in the Nørrebro, Brønshøj-Husum and Bispebjerg neighbourhoods.

The educational level among the Danish-Somali population is lower than among the rest of the population in Copenhagen. For just over half of the Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen, 51.1 percent, lower secondary school (*Folkeskolen*) is the highest level of education completed, compared with 20.3 percent of the total population. The difference is less pronounced at the upper secondary level, where 13.7 percent of the Danish-Somali population completed their education; among the total

<sup>18</sup> The applicant must not have received any assistance under the Act on Active Social Policy or the Integration Act in the year prior to application and for an aggregate period of two years and six months within the last five years.

<sup>19</sup> Quarantine for applications depending on the type of conviction. The application for citizenship costs DKK 1,000 (approximately €134) with additional fees for the citizenship and language tests.

<sup>20</sup> In 2011. See Copenhagen Municipality, Statistics, Shared Services (*Koncernservice*). Orientering fra statistik 30. marts 2012: "Befolkning i København 1. januar 2012" (Information from statistics March 2012: Population in Copenhagen 1 January 2012), at [www.kk.dk/statistik](http://www.kk.dk/statistik).

<sup>21</sup> Precise information about the distribution of citizenships among the Danish-Somali population was not available.

<sup>22</sup> All six language schools in Copenhagen have been contacted for information on the number of registrations for the citizenship test, but either they did not keep records on this or did not want to share the information.

population the figure is 16.4 percent. Among Danish-Somalis, 16.6 percent complete vocational education as their highest level. Notably, while 32.8 percent of the general population complete a bachelor's or master's degree, just 5.7 percent of Danish-Somalis do so.<sup>23</sup>

Again, available statistics comparing Danish-Somalis with the average population should be treated cautiously, given that the Danish-Somali population is younger than the average.

The Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen also have lower incomes than the total population in Copenhagen. The average income for the total population in 2010 was DKK 261,000 (about €34,991),<sup>24</sup> and at least 78 percent of the Danish-Somali population was below this level. Over 31 percent of Somalis earned DKK 99,999 or less (approximately €13,406) while only 17.4 percent of the total population had income this low. Nearly half of the Danish-Somali population earned DKK 100,000–299,000 (about €13,407–40,086), compared with 30 percent at this level of income for the general population in Copenhagen. Just 7.6 percent of the Danish-Somali population earned more than DKK 300,000 (approximately €40,220) compared with 36.5 percent among the total population.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.6 Civil Status

The family pattern in the Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen differs from the general population in some aspects. Over half of the Danish-Somali population lives alone (single and without children); among these 74.2 percent are men and 25.8 percent are women. Among the average population, 49.9 percent are living alone and the distribution between men and women in this category is nearly equal.<sup>26</sup>

Compared with the total population of Copenhagen, the prevalence of single parents in the Danish-Somali population is high: 17.9 percent of the Danish-Somalis are single parents, of which 94.4 percent are women. By comparison 4.61 percent of the general

<sup>23</sup> Special retrieval from Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark). Information about total population: Copenhagen Municipality, Statistics, Shared Services (*Koncernservice*), Factsheet: "Befolkningen 16–66 år efter køn, alder og højeste fuldførte uddannelse, København 1. januar 2011" (Population 16–66 years by gender, age and highest completed education, Copenhagen 1 January 2011), at [www.kk.dk/statistik](http://www.kk.dk/statistik).

<sup>24</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Statistics, Shared Services (*Koncernservice*), Factsheet: Skattepligtige personer efter bydele og bruttoindkomst, Copenhagen, 2010 (Taxable persons by city parts and gross income, Copenhagen, 2010), at [www.kk.dk/statistik](http://www.kk.dk/statistik).

<sup>25</sup> For information about the Danish-Somali population, see special retrieval from Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark). For information about the total population, see Copenhagen Municipality, Statistikbank, "Tab 21-1 Skattepligtige personer efter køn, alder og indkomst" (Persons liable to pay tax by gender, age and gross income), 2011, at <https://www.kk.dk/da/om-kommunen/fakta-og-statistik/statistik-og-historie/statistikbanken> (accessed 3 October 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Special retrieval from Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark).

adult population are single parents, 86.6 percent women and 13.4 percent men. The Danish-Somali single parents have on average 2.8 children per person, while the national average single parent has 1.4 children. The majority of Danish-Somali children, 63.8 percent, live with a single parent, compared with the total population, where 28.4 percent of children live with one parent.<sup>27</sup> Fewer unmarried and married Danish-Somali couples are living together without children than is the average in society as a whole.

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<sup>27</sup> Special retrieval from Danmarks Statistik (Statistics Denmark).

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

This chapter provides an overview of the administrative structure of the city, and explores some of the national and local policy initiatives for integration. Later chapters will analyse the extent to which this policy framework has succeeded in promoting inclusion and participation for Danish-Somali residents in Copenhagen.

The basic principle of the Danish welfare system, often referred to as the Scandinavian welfare model, is that all citizens have equal rights to social security. A number of services are available to citizens free of charge within the system.<sup>28</sup>

Political decision-making on areas close to everyday life such as welfare, education and social development is located at the level of government and parliament and administered at the regional and city level with a limited range of local political decision-making. Denmark is divided into five regions with public health service as the most significant responsibility; the 98 municipalities are responsible for welfare and public services. Elections for regional and city councils are held every four years.

#### 3.1 City of Copenhagen

The City Council is the supreme political authority in the City of Copenhagen. Its 55 members are elected for a four-year term, and outline the framework for the responsibilities and duties of the committees.

The positions of lord mayor, councillors and mayors responsible for the administrations are distributed according to political strength and coalition agreement. The lord mayor is the chair of the council.

At the political level, the council is made up of seven committees and seven corresponding administrations:<sup>29</sup> the Finance Committee and six standing committees, each of which has its own specialised field of responsibility.

The Children and Youth Committee coordinates and plans services (including some aspects of health services) and education for children up to the age of 17 in Copenhagen.

The Culture and Leisure Committee is responsible for the City of Copenhagen's tasks within the areas of culture and leisure, including libraries, sports and leisure facilities, museums, cultural centres, alcohol licences and management of Copenhagen City Properties.

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<sup>28</sup> The website of the national and regional administrations for information on rules, entitlements, access, etc., is [www.denmark.dk](http://www.denmark.dk) (accessed 3 October 2014).

<sup>29</sup> The website of the municipality of Copenhagen is [www.kk.dk](http://www.kk.dk) (accessed 8 September 2014).

The Employment and Integration Committee is responsible for the city's work on employment, income support payments and cross-sector integration activities. These include job search support and mediation, job-training activities, the reception of new immigrants and Danish-language classes for adult immigrants. This committee is also responsible for coordinating and supervising the City's cross-sector integration activities, and the revision of and follow-up on the City's integration policy.

The Health and Care Committee is responsible for health care in the city, senior citizens, the prevention of diseases and health promotion.

The Social Services Committee is responsible for social work, including preventive special measures and financial help in special situations. The committee also oversees placement of children and young people in residential care, providing services for people with disabilities, substance abuse problems, social housing work and social housing agency services.

The Technical and Environmental Committee administers local planning, urban renewal, environmental and construction areas, and other technical areas.

The political and administrative splits constitute a persistent challenge as regards cohesion in services for citizens and political direction.

### 3.2 The National Government: A Strengthened Integration Policy

Integration and immigration have been subjects high on the political agenda over the last 10–15 years, but they are no longer the dominant focal point for political debates.

The current government presented their integration policy in November 2012; the policy sets out seven main goals:<sup>30</sup>

- Managing integration efforts in a better way and achieving more cost-effective integration
- Strengthening the reception of newcomers
- Ensuring increased employment of new Danes<sup>31</sup>
- Improving the results of new Danish children in schools and courses
- Strengthening citizenship (*medborgerskab*), equal opportunities and gender equality and combating social control and parallel ideas of legal practice and the rule of law (*retsopfattelser*)
- Regenerating vulnerable and marginalised residential areas<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Regeringen: En styrket integrationspolitik, November 2012.

<sup>31</sup> “New Danes” is an expression often used by ethnic-majority politicians and public authorities to characterise people with a non-Western background and visible ethnic minorities.

- Preventing marginalisation of new Danish children and young people

### 3.2.1 Newcomers

Newcomers are directed into one of two tracks in the municipal system: either an integration programme for refugees and family-based immigrants, or an introduction course for labour migrants and their families, students, au pairs and European Union (EU) citizens. Both programmes last for a maximum of three years and include Danish lessons, courses in Danish society, culture and history, as well as support for finding employment.

An integration contract between the migrant and the municipality specifies that participation in the integration programme is compulsory; those who fail to attend lose their social security benefits. The introduction course consists of the same elements as the integration programme, but attendance is voluntary. Refugees are assigned a municipality that has a legal responsibility to provide accommodation and integration programmes. Assignments are made according to a centrally decided quota system imposing an annual number of refugees on municipalities depending on the number of refugees and ethnic minorities already there. The City of Copenhagen has had a quota of zero for many years, like several other cities.

In 2012, 337 Somalis were granted asylum in Denmark and 60 Somalis arrived to reunite with their families.<sup>33</sup> The number of these immigrants that came to Copenhagen is not available.

### 3.2.2 Anti-Radicalisation and De-radicalisation

In 2008 the EU anti-terror coordinator Gilles de Kerchove<sup>34</sup> appointed Denmark as the leading country in de-radicalisation and the prevention of violent extremism. The government adopted an action plan in 2009, named “A mutual and safe future”, for the prevention of “extremist attitudes and radicalisation among young people”, whose goals were:

<sup>32</sup> The previous government and the present government appoints every year a list of vulnerable housing areas which can apply for extra funding to improve the physical environment and tackle social issues. This list is referred to as the ghetto-list in public discussions and among politicians, an expression introduced by the former government, but now included in a normalised rhetoric. One of the criteria for putting a residential area on the list is more than 50 percent of the inhabitants being immigrants or descendants from non-Western countries (see Chapter 7).

<sup>33</sup> Udlændingestyrelsen, *Tal og fakta på udlændingeområdet 2012, 2013* (Immigration, Facts and Asylum 2012, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> MHT (consultants); “Afradikalisering—målrettet intervention. Kort sammenfatning af danske piloterfaringer med afradikalisering og forebyggelse af ekstremisme”, 2012 (Deradicalisation—targeted intervention. Report on Danish pilot experience with de-radicalisation and prevention of extremism) (hereafter, MHT, “Afradikalisering”).



Continuously developing a democratic society and promoting values of freedom, safety and individual opportunities both in Denmark and internationally, and making the society capable of identifying and dealing with extremism in time.<sup>35</sup>

Initiatives have been carried out in vulnerable residential areas, prisons, schools and high schools, incorporating co-operation between schools, police and social services, where radicalisation awareness and de-radicalisation initiatives have been implemented. The Ministry of Integration and the PET trained 100 police and social workers during the pilot project involving the two major cities in Denmark, Aarhus and Copenhagen.<sup>36</sup> In Copenhagen the administrative unit VINK – knowledge, inclusion, Copenhagen [Viden – Inklusion – København] in the Employment and Integration Administration deals specifically with issues of radicalisation among young people (see Chapter 9).

From an administrative viewpoint these initiatives have created new cross-cutting cooperation between the PET and the municipalities, which the evaluation report characterises as positive.<sup>37</sup> The report also links the positive results to an understanding of the environment that produces extremism and radicalisation. What was emphasised as the way forward was the importance of: approaching young people as individuals, with their own stories and contexts; an extended form of mentoring; and the development of a broad foundation of competences and skills for the people involved as professionals.

### 3.3 Integration Policy for Copenhagen 2011–2014: Inclusion and Citizenship

The year 2014 concludes the period of the current inclusion policy of the city. The City Council describes its vision, in the preamble of the inclusion policy in the following terms:

Everyone must have the opportunity to feel at home in Copenhagen and to engage in the decisions taken where they live. We must respect each other's differences, including cultural and religious diversity. Respect also means that we make requirements and have expectations of each other. Most Copenhageners do well in their lives and can be role models for others. Results must be achieved through partnerships across the city, because we all share responsibility for Copenhagen's future. In an inclusive Copenhagen we are against any form of exclusion. We therefore seek solutions that help people with social problems.

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<sup>35</sup> Regeringen (2009). *En fælles og Tryk Fremtid. Handlingsplan om forebyggelse af ekstremistiske holdninger og radikaliserer blandt unge.* (The Government 2009: A Mutual and safe future. Action Plan on prevention of extremist attitudes and radicalisation among young people), p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> COWI Group, *Midtvejsevaluering af regeringens handlingsplan, "En Fælles og Tryk Fremtid"* (Midterm evaluation of the Government's action plan, "A mutual and safe future"), 2011.

<sup>37</sup> MHT, *Afradikalisering.*

This is the only way to ensure everyone a real opportunity to get involved and contribute, on an equal footing.<sup>38</sup>

The policy defines key concepts such as inclusion, integration and citizenship:

Inclusion is the sense of belonging. If you feel you are a Copenhagener, this means you are included in the city.

Integration is a dynamic, mutual process whereby citizens with different backgrounds meet and create a community for the future.

Citizenship means that everyone has the opportunity to make active use of their democratic rights as citizens of Copenhagen. An active citizen shares responsibility for the community and treats fellow citizens, of any background, with tolerance and courtesy.<sup>39</sup>

The goals for the 2011–2014 policy include:

- More competent school-leavers
- More people in jobs
  - More diversified management and staff in the City of Copenhagen
- More citizens must benefit from the City of Copenhagen's services
  - A safer Copenhagen for all groups
- More citizens must feel a sense of belonging to Copenhagen
  - Fewer citizens should feel excluded due to poverty
  - Fewer citizens should experience discrimination<sup>40</sup>

An action plan divided into the areas of responsibilities of the different committees,<sup>41</sup> with various reports and status evaluations, is to be made on an annual basis to the Employment and Integration Committee. In addition, a range of consultants is expected to produce reports and evaluations and the committee has appointed an expert think-tank that also submits recommendations on integration to the committee.

<sup>38</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Engage in CPH Citizenship + Inclusion: Copenhagen's Integration Policy 2011–2014", 2011, at <http://www.blanddigibyen.dk/version2/files/2011/06/Copenhagen-Inclusion-Policy.pdf> (accessed 8 September 2014) (hereafter, Copenhagen's Integration Policy 2011–2014).

<sup>39</sup> Copenhagen's Integration Policy 2011–2014.

<sup>40</sup> Copenhagen's Integration Policy 2011–2014.

<sup>41</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Udvalgenes handleplaner for Integrationspolitikken 2011–2014 (Action plans for the committees regarding integration policy 2011–2014).

### 3.3.1 Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities

The City of Copenhagen established a Citizens Advice Centre in 2010 as an independent complaints board, with a citizen adviser. One of its tasks is to focus on preventing discrimination against citizens by the administration and to receive complaints on discrimination based on ethnicity and other grounds.

Within the framework of the overall integration and inclusion policy, the municipality has initiated a variety of projects and campaigns aimed at combating discrimination and promoting inclusion under four headlines: documentation and research; awareness and attitudes; education and building of competences; strengthening civil society.<sup>42</sup>

At the time of writing, a set of equal opportunity principles was due to be adopted following a two-year consultation period among the other city committees. In addition to new principles, two new administrative units are planned:<sup>43</sup> a contact committee for the promotion of equal opportunities and combating discrimination, with senior managers from all seven sub-administrations, the citizen adviser and representatives from NGOs; and an equality unit in the Employment and Integration Administration with responsibility for implementing equality in all sub-administrations and with the capacity to advise the municipality on equality.

### 3.3.2 Citizens' Involvement in Integration and Inclusion Policy

The City Council decided in 2009 to close the Integration Council, which was established in 1999 on the basis of the Integration Act that committed municipalities to establish integration councils if 50 persons signed a request to do so. Its mandate was to advise politicians in the municipality. Copenhagen's was closed down due to politicians' dissatisfaction with it.<sup>44</sup> Members of the Council included members elected by Copenhagen residents (supplemented with representatives of housing associations, trade unions etc., and two experts). Danish-Somalis were represented on the Integration Council.

An evaluation commissioned by the city administration showed that only 20 percent of the local politicians used the council and that few citizens were aware of its existence. The evaluation also showed that politicians wanted to set up an expert think-tank on integration. However, they disagreed over whether ethnic minorities should be

<sup>42</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, *Beskæftigelses- og integrationsforvaltningens indsatser for at bekæmpe diskrimination og hadforbrydelser* (Efforts of the Employment and Integration Administration to combat discrimination and hate crimes, 26. February 2013), 26 February 2013.

<sup>43</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, *Center for Inklusion og Beskæftigelse: Udkast: Københavns kommunes strategi for fremme af lige muligheder* (Centre for inclusion and employment: draft: The strategy of the municipality of Copenhagen to prove equal opportunities).

<sup>44</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, BIF, 39. *Indstilling vedr. nedlæggelse af Københavns Kommunes Integrationsråd og oprettelse af en Tænketank* (Employment and Integration Administration : Recommendation on closure of the Integration Council of Copenhagen and set-up of a Think Tank) (2009-115425).

represented in it or whether they might be better used in other forms of involvement. It seems that ethnic diversity was not an element in the appointments for the think-tank.

The mandate for the think-tank is also to give advice to politicians in the municipality. The members of the think-tank are appointed on the basis of their expert knowledge on integration and they are supplemented with city officials from different administrations.

The Employment and Integration Administration has occasionally discussed ongoing initiatives with an NGO network, described in the discrimination report (2012) by the Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DRC).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, *Diskrimination og hadforbrydelser*, udarbejdet af Niels-Erik Hansen og Helle Rothenberg, (Discrimination and hate crimes, by Niels-Erik Hansen and Helle Rothenberg), Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DRC), 2012.

## 4. IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Identity and belonging are important for human integration and interaction. The basic understanding of identity determines how individuals interact and associate in relation to the different contexts in which they engage. The specific character of identity and eventually integration will further depend not just on contextual circumstances but also political and social circumstances and the actual concerns and priorities of the citizens.<sup>46</sup> In Denmark in the past decades the issues of ethnicity and integration became important and often controversial, as the welfare state and its policy initiatives needed to navigate and balance the commonality and the specific.<sup>47</sup>

This chapter provides a brief summary of recent initiatives in Copenhagen City concerning identity and belonging and interaction. It also presents findings from focus groups and interviews.

### 4.1 Policy and Practice in Copenhagen

The Copenhagen City integration policy (2011–2014) emphasises inclusion and social empowerment (see Chapter 3). Two main pillars lay the foundation for such efforts. First, the municipality of Copenhagen prioritises the integration of younger migrants, with an emphasis on acquiring Danish language skills and culture. Second, the governmental authorities have stressed the importance of an integration process based on Danish values, with the aim to fostering of trust in public institutions.

The first pillar is a comprehensive integration effort that aims to improve the socialisation and education of younger bilingual migrant children. With an emphasis on the principle that all young people should have a good start in life, the municipality has introduced an initiative to support Danish-language learning for children aged between three and six years old. While this is open to all children, those who will require the most support in Danish are likely to be children with an immigrant background. The municipality provides support depending on the parents' employment situation.<sup>48</sup> According to the municipality, all children from three years of age requiring language support in Danish will be able to get it. It will take place in nurseries with other pre-school children. If a child does not go to kindergarten, it is possible for him or her to have language support for 15–30 hours a week.

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<sup>46</sup> Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: the illusion of destiny*, Penguin Books, London, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Jørgen Goul Andersen, "Immigration and the legitimacy of the Scandinavian welfare state: Some Preliminary Danish Findings", AMID Working Paper Series 53/2006, Aalborg University, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Sprogstimulering på dansk for 3 til 6-årige børn med dansk som andet sprog" (Language stimulation in Danish for 3 to 6 year old children with Danish as a second language), at <http://www.kk.dk/da/borger/pasning-og-skole/integration/sprogstimulering-for-smaaboern> (accessed 8 September 2014).

The second pillar is a value-based effort which aims to build personal relations, encourage committed neighbours and strengthen trust in municipal institutions. The municipality affirms that ‘inclusion’ is based on regarding diversity as a positive resource and opens up multiple ways of being Danish in Copenhagen.<sup>49</sup> This approach by the City of Copenhagen contradicts the political initiative of the national government which focuses on the resistance to and rejection of the so-called parallel society, meaning ethnically dominated residential or geographic areas.<sup>50</sup>

The national government launched its initiative with the following statement:

The Government will establish a comprehensive and integrated plan to combat the ghettos of the country's residential areas. There has been designated a total of 29 ghettos. Some of them are physically and socially isolated from the rest of the city. And it creates a breeding ground for parallel societies, which have different rules than the rest of Danish society. The government will not accept this. The residential areas should be given back to the community and residents who want to live a normal, peaceful life – respect for neighbours and authorities.<sup>51</sup>

The contradiction in approach between the national government and city council is possible because of the autonomy of Danish municipalities, whereby local authorities can take their own initiatives for better integration and coexistence.

## 4.2 Identity and Integration

The analysis of the focus group discussions and key informant interviews suggests that a gap exists in perceptions of understanding of the barriers to integration between Danish-Somalis in Copenhagen on the one hand and the authorities and the Danish majority on the other. This, some say, is in part due to the lack of credible Somali community representatives for dialogue with city officials and politicians. Others note Somalis' religion and cultural background, as well as their multiple linkages to the global diaspora and specifically to their country of origin as partly explaining the persistence of social and cultural distinctiveness. Some suggested that it is not religion as such that is a decisive factor but rather the way religion is practised and integrated into everyday life. The issue of identity and belonging may also differ depending on the gender of the individuals, for instance Somali girls may experience discrimination

<sup>49</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, “Medborgerskab og inklusion, Beskæftigelses- og Integrationsforvaltningen” (Citizenship and inclusion-report. Employment and Integration Administration), 2011, at [http://www.blanddigibyen.dk/wp-content/uploads/Integrationspolitik\\_udkast.pdf](http://www.blanddigibyen.dk/wp-content/uploads/Integrationspolitik_udkast.pdf) (accessed 20 October 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, “Storstilet regeringsindsats mod ghettos” (Large-scale government efforts to combat ghettos), 26 October 2010, at <http://www.sm.dk/Nyheder/Sider/Vis%20Nyhed.aspx?NewsItem=526> (accessed 25 November 2013) (hereafter, “Storstilet regeringsindsats mod ghettos”).

<sup>51</sup> “Storstilet regeringsindsats mod ghettos”.

because of their Islamic dressing style. Interviewees suggested that the Somali community is striving to become part of Danish society by, for example, creating formal associations.

For many Danish-Somalis integration in Copenhagen started with an initial cultural shock and misperception. Many of the new arrivals in early 1990s suffered from trauma or semi-traumatic conditions after enduring a prolonged dictatorship, a subsequent devastating civil war leading to displacement and transitional refugee life. A focus group participant who was among the first large group of Somalis to arrive in Denmark recalled the experiences of Somali arrivals in the 1990s:

This first group assimilated as they did not have communities and places where they can go and meet. The largest waves came in early 1990s and they were confused and traumatised. There were no communities to receive and help us. If the first group had not assimilated, the large wave that came later would have gotten help. But the first groups were too assimilated and could not provide help.

At the time of these first arrivals, there were few Somalis living in the city; the lack of community-owned and managed institutions exposed a need for intermediate institutions between Danish society and the Somali newcomers. Cultural misperceptions arose between a hesitant and frustrated Danish society, confronted by a bewildered Somali community with no obvious frame of reference, networks or experiences to call upon in engaging with their host society.

Somalis in the focus groups felt that pressure for assimilation was one of the main challenges to mutual integration. This pressure they felt came from Danish society, particularly the political elite. They noted that Somalis who in the past tried to assimilate failed due to their uninformed imitation of the host culture:

At the beginning there were Somalis who tried to assimilate and after some time they become disappointed and were not to be accepted as equals.<sup>52</sup>

Some cited their experience as a largely refugee community from a country which for significant periods of the past 20 years has lacked functional state institutions has affected their treatment and vulnerability in the international community. Danish-Somalis feel that they are not treated as well as some other communities.<sup>53</sup> They feel that this relates to the different historical migration of Somalis compared with other ethnic communities, and that other communities are better organised, economically and socio-culturally. Danish-Somalis interviewed drew comparisons between

<sup>52</sup> IB8, Identity and Belonging focus group, 2 February 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Successive reports by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) formally criticised Denmark for excluding and discriminating against ethnic minorities, particularly the Somalis in numerous important areas. See ECRI, "ECRI report on Denmark", 2012, at <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/denmark/DNK-CBC-IV-2012-025-ENG.pdf> (accessed 8 September 2014) (hereafter, "ECRI report on Denmark").

themselves and Palestinians, as both are stateless refugee community communities, meaning that they do not enjoy the general protection some other communities have from their homelands or their homeland embassies.

Furthermore, for Danish-Somalis, as well as other Muslim immigrants, religion may hinder direct assimilation into the society. Religiosity among the Somali migrants may increase or diminish while in diaspora, but most remain Muslim.<sup>54</sup> Over the years Danish-Somalis have established cultural association centres that the community also uses as mosques and religious centres.<sup>55</sup> For most Somalis being a Muslim remains, whether they practise or not, a prime aspect of their identity. Some respondents believe that their religious values complicate the adoption of all the social values found in Danish society;

I am a Muslim—is it possible to integrate the Danish society—as a Muslim  
I have a limitation—we have different drinking and food styles—there are limits  
on what we can integrate.<sup>56</sup>

The impact of religious identity on the integration of Somalis and other Muslims is also made more difficult by the fact that most Danes have come to know Islam and the Muslim identity through a post-9/11 worldview. It is the extremist version that has dominated the public discourse and which is accepted as reality without the necessary critical reflection to differentiate facts from myths.<sup>57</sup>

Danish-Somalis describe themselves as an oral society in which personal communication and social interaction remain paramount. This continues to prevail, even in the diaspora, and seems to influence the integration process immensely.<sup>58</sup> For many in Danish society communication often takes place through indirect channels such as in local and national media, which foster public interest articulation and propositions in the common public sphere.<sup>59</sup> That does not mean that native Danes do not meet face to face, but the media play an important role in their daily lives, while among Somalis the cultural associations they create and the daily interaction between

<sup>54</sup> Abdi Kusow and Stephanie Bjork (eds), *From Mogadishu to Dixon: the Somali diaspora in a global context*, Red Sea Press, Ewing, NJ, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Lene Kühle, *Moskeer i Danmark: Islam og muslimske bedesteder* (Mosques in Denmark: Islam and Muslim places of worship places), Universe Publishing, 2008.

<sup>56</sup> OM 12, Older men focus group, 2 February 2013.

<sup>57</sup> Jørgen Nielsen (ed.), *Islam in Denmark: The Challenge of Diversity*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Rima McGown, *Muslims in the Diaspora: The Somali Communities of London and Toronto*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999, p. 46. Through oral culture Somalis mobilise and create both social realities and myth.

<sup>59</sup> Tom Steele, *Knowledge is Power: The Rise and Fall of European Popular Educational movements*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2007, p. 194. The historical socialisation and educational processes in Denmark make people internalise public communicative tendencies that ground and rationalise public interaction and decision-making in society.



members of the community represent the basic sources of information, identity formation and even decision-making. More important, Somalis' historical background as refugees fleeing from civil war and continuously maintaining a relationship with their homeland influences their daily engagement in Danish society.

#### 4.3 A Persistent Cultural Gap

More than two decades have passed since the first large group of Somalis arrived in Denmark. This is not a very long period for the process of integration into a new society, which often requires several generations of sustained multiple effort.<sup>60</sup> Integration is a two-way process, involving both the group that seeks integration as well as the receiving society's formal and informal institutions.

For Danish-Somalis the process of developing a sense of identity and belonging in Danish society coincided with the period of intense public, political and media discussion of the impact of immigration and ethnic and cultural diversity on Danish society. Somalis often found themselves as the focus of these debates. For instance, a prominent columnist and blogger raised the question of the cost on Danish society from having Somali immigrants.<sup>61</sup> Several Somali organisations signed up to an editorial response indicating that the community can and will participate and influence the public discourse.<sup>62</sup> The Somali organisations' response included the following:

The [columnist] chooses the Somalis as the butt of her speculations because the Somalis are often presented as the symbol of all evil in society. She totally forgets that there is a big difference between the Somalis who arrived in the early 1990s, and those who today feel fully integrated into Danish society. It has been tough and demanding, especially with regard to language, but it has succeeded in many ways.

On another occasion, a prominent politician, Søren Espersen, claimed: "I am surprised that Denmark entertains and supports a huge group of people who have only contempt for us and our way of life."<sup>63</sup> Nauja Kleist, senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), challenged the claim:

<sup>60</sup> Fernando Shanti, *Race and the City: Chinese Canadian and Chinese American Political Mobilisation*, UBC Press, Vancouver, BC, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> "Prisen på en somalier" (The price for a Somali), an article in one of the main Danish newspapers, where Somalis were used as a symbol of the presumed burden of immigrants into the Danish society, 19 January 2013, at <http://kathrine.blogs.berlingske.dk/2013/01/19/prisen-pa-en-somalier/comment-page-3> (accessed 20 May 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Representatives of the advocacy Somali organisation [www.aarhusomali.dk](http://www.aarhusomali.dk), Iidle and Sheik, wrote the editorial for one of the most read major newspapers in Copenhagen and Denmark in general, "Sognepræstens Sludder" (The nonsense by the priest), *Berlingske*, 31 January 2013.

<sup>63</sup> The article "what the heck are 16,943 Somalis actually doing in Denmark...?", at <http://blogs.jp.dk/susetfrahimmerland/2012/05/27/hvad-pokker-laver-16943-somaliere-egentlig-i-danmark> (accessed 8 September 2014).

It is very difficult to perceive Somalis as a homogeneous unit in Denmark ... Moreover, I believe that the premise of a Somali parallel society is flawed. Firstly, many Somalis are in schools and although Somalis labour market [participation] in comparison with other groups of immigrants is low, many of them have jobs and are active in associations that are part of Danish civil society, which they have adopted.<sup>64</sup>

While integration is occurring across a number of domains like education and employment, the following statement by a focus group participant illustrates the challenge of ensuring integration moves beyond the formal settings of employment or education towards more informal and personal relationships:

In Copenhagen, we work together with the Danes, we live in the same neighbourhoods, we have jobs etc. and we speak the language. The Danish people, they take care of themselves and we Somalis we take care of ourselves. The difference is that we don't share culture. After work or schools, each of us (Danes and Somalis) goes to their cultural places. We go to our communities and the Danish go to bars and other cultural activities, so culturally we cannot agree, but we understand each other, we say hello to each, we belong to the same society but we are different in culture and cultural activities. So we are integrated in jobs, education, system etc. but we are different in cultural activities. We Somalis, can, according the laws of this country, have jobs and education and we can also keep our religious and cultural identity.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.4 Experiences of Discrimination

Several studies have shown that Somalis continue to experience a very high degree of discrimination in Denmark compared with other ethnic-minority groups. The 2009 EU-MIDI survey by the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) compiled responses gathered in 2008 from 23,500 people from various ethnic-minority and immigrant groups across the EU's 27 member states.<sup>66</sup> The survey found that sub-Saharan Africans and Roma people in Finland and Denmark were among the top 10 groups experiencing the highest levels of discrimination over a 12-month period.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Mads Teglskov, "Søren Espersens kritik er uoplyst og fejlagtig" (Søren Espersen's critique is uninformed and wrong), *Politiken*, 31 May 2012, at <http://politiken.dk/debat/ECE1641179/seniorforsker-soeren-espersens-kritik-er-uoplyst-og-fejlagtig> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>65</sup> IB6, Identity and belonging focus group, 2 February 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) (2009), "The European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey" (EU-MIDIS), at [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/664-eumidis\\_mainreport\\_conference-edition\\_en\\_.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/664-eumidis_mainreport_conference-edition_en_.pdf) (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>67</sup> Roma in the Czech Republic (64 percent), Africans in Malta (63 percent), Roma in Hungary (62 percent), Roma in Poland (59 percent), Roma in Greece (55 percent), sub-Saharan Africans in Ireland (54 percent), North Africans in Italy (52 percent), Somalis in Finland (47 percent), Somalis in Denmark (46 percent) and Brazilians in Portugal (44 percent).

Based on the same data, but published more recently in a 2012 FRA report on hate crimes, Somalis in Denmark were ranked fourth among the “prevalence rate [of] assault or threat” and third in the “prevalence rate of serious harassment”.<sup>68</sup>

The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has referred to research<sup>69</sup> among 200 minority youth and 181 ethnic Danes showing that even minority youth who are born and raised in Denmark had difficulties entering nightclubs. Among the minority youth responding, 59 percent of those aged 25–34 years old stated that they had been refused entry into a discotheque or a nightclub, compared with only 18 percent of ethnic Danes. The survey further revealed that the darker a person’s skin, the more frequently they were denied entry: while 44 percent of people from the former Yugoslavia were refused entry, the figure was 54 percent for Turks and 79 percent for Somalis.

In the Integration Index<sup>70</sup> which measures integration indicators in 31 European and North American countries, Denmark comes out as 14th on a score indicating a level of halfway favourable integration. The index puts Sweden first.

In a European Network against Racism (ENAR) 2011–2012 shadow report on Denmark, the situation for Danish-Somalis is mentioned specifically, noting with concern the level of Islamophobia in Denmark and “media coverage with primary focus on negative stories, degrading political statements concerning cultural traditions and religious customs of Muslim minorities, from a majority of the political elite”,<sup>71</sup> referring for example to an incident in a suburban indoor playground, which banned Somalis for six months. Another incident referenced in the report was a statement from the leader of the right-wing populist party, the Danish People’s Party, comparing Somalis with rapists.<sup>72</sup>

Another European study (Tolerance<sup>73</sup>) showed an image of difficulties addressing racism and discrimination in public and media discourse in Denmark.<sup>74</sup> One of the researchers, Tina Gudrun Jensen, said in a press release:

<sup>68</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Data in Focus Report, Minorities as Victims of Crime, 2012, at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2012/eu-midis-data-focus-report-6-minorities-victims-crime> (accessed 3 October 2014).

<sup>69</sup> European Network Against Racism (ENAR), “Shadow Report 2008, Racism and Discrimination in Denmark, Ethnic Debate Forum”, 2008, pp. 26–27.

<sup>70</sup> Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), at <http://www.mipex.eu> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>71</sup> European Network Against Racism (ENAR), ENAR-Denmark Shadow Report, “Racism and related discriminatory practices in Denmark”, 2011 (hereafter, ENAR-Denmark Shadow Report).

<sup>72</sup> ENAR-Denmark Shadow Report, p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, TOLERACE, an international research project on the semantics of tolerance and (anti)racism in Europe, 2013, at <http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/tolerance/monitoring/pesq.php> (accessed 8 September 2014).

Our studies show that most of us downplay that racism and discrimination is taking place. And if we have to recognize the phenomenon, we blame individuals, not everyday practices in broader communities or societal institutions.<sup>75</sup>

The issue of discrimination is therefore a key concern of Copenhagen Municipality. Its Inclusion Survey (2012) aims to investigate the “relationship between inclusion, equality, discrimination and language”.<sup>76</sup> The survey operates with an inclusion index, which is composed from responses to questions on experiences concerning levels of trust (towards distant relations such as public institutions and close relations to neighbours, etc.) and sense of community. In 2012, the average score for respondents’ experience of inclusion was 74 (out of a maximum of 100). There was a seven-point difference between the majority and minority population.<sup>77</sup> However, both low income and ethnic discrimination have a significant impact on the experience of inclusion. The report found that 25 percent of minority residents (compared with 8 percent of majority residents) had experienced discrimination, which is experienced in public transport, at the workplace and in nightlife. Furthermore, only 3 percent of the residents who experienced discrimination reported it to the police. The report suggests that general approaches ‘directed towards broader categories of residents with lower levels of inclusion (for example, ethnic-minority residents) is a good idea, but in order to achieve the most effective results, policies need to be targeted and take diversity and heterogeneity in the group as a point of departure, and concentrating on individual needs, especially of vulnerable groups in the broader category’.<sup>78</sup>

In the 2012 discrimination report, commissioned by the municipality and produced by the DRC,<sup>79</sup> the Copenhagen “Inclusion Barometer”<sup>80</sup> is credited as a way of trying to

<sup>74</sup> S. J. Jacobsen, T. G. Jensen, K. Vitus and K. Weibel, Analysis of Danish media setting and framing of Muslims, Islam and racism, Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), Copenhagen, 2012 (hereafter, Jacobsen et al., Analysis of Danish media).

<sup>75</sup> Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), “Vi forholder os undvigende til fænomenene racisme og diskrimination” (We relate evasively to the phenomena of racism and discrimination’), 19 November 2012 (hereafter, SFI, We relate evasively to the phenomena of racism and discrimination) Vi forholder os undvigende til fænomenene racisme og diskrimination”), at [http://www.sfi.dk/s%C3%B8gesresultat\\_visning-7351.aspx?PID=18906&NewsID=3685](http://www.sfi.dk/s%C3%B8gesresultat_visning-7351.aspx?PID=18906&NewsID=3685) (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>76</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012 Rapport” (Inclusion survey 2012) , by COWI Group, January 2013 (Questionnaire to a random sample of 2111 residents, representing the ethnic composition of the city) (hereafter, Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012”).

<sup>77</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012”, p. 8.

<sup>78</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012”, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DRC), “Diskriminationsrapport for Copenhagen Municipality”, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> The Inclusion Barometer’, part of the 2011-2014 inclusion policy. Updated on a yearly basis. <http://193.169.154.149/bif/integrationsbarometer/Sider/default.aspx> (accessed 21 September 2014).

focus on the relationship between inclusion and discrimination. The report highlights that ethnicity-based discrimination is the major complaint among the ethnic-minority population and that there is a lack of easy, accessible ways to file a complaint and get advice, as well as a lack of effective channels to disseminate information about ethnic discrimination in general and rights and remedies more specifically. This is, according to the report, linked to the fact that NGOs working to combat ethnic discrimination have little or no funding. Furthermore, there is no central registration of reports and cases on ethnic discrimination that could produce an overview of the current situation.

Only a few cases of ethnic discrimination are reported to the authorities. The Board of Equal Treatment wrote in its 2012 annual report:

As for complaints cases regarding unequal treatment due to ethnicity, the picture changes entirely. In 2012, 18 cases regarding proclaimed discrimination due to ethnicity were settled, compared with 43 in 2011. One case was settled in favour of the plaintiff. A drastic decrease in the amount of complaints cases regarding ethnicity is thus evident. A tendency which continues, as we are only receiving few complaints about ethnic discrimination. The falling rate of complaints cases cannot, according to the Board's opinion, be interpreted as indicative of there being no issues in this area.

However, it has shown to be difficult for plaintiffs to present the required evidence and 2012 was no exception. Preceding the majority of the verdicts, the plaintiffs have been unable to present proof of the actual circumstances, which led to the assumed discrimination. Five cases have been rejected by the jury, as the question of whether plaintiffs had been exposed to discriminatory treatment could only be settled in accordance with proof in the shape of witness testimonials before the judges. It is with worry, that the jury has been observing these developments.<sup>81</sup>

In the Tolerance project,<sup>82</sup> workshops were held with practitioners to discuss discrimination and racism; as a case worker from the Employment and Integration Administration in Copenhagen stated,

What was exciting was also the new angle, which is, why do we not speak of discrimination? What is it, that makes people pass this agenda by? It was put up very clearly in bullet points, that people refuse to speak about this here in Denmark. For me it was confirmed that it'll take more than just campaigns, that is, focus on the issues through a national strategy and policy for discrimination and equal treatment.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Board of Equal Treatment, Annual report 2012, 8 August 2013, p. 4. <http://ast.dk/naevn/ligebehandlingsnaevnet/om-ligebehandlingsnaevnet/publikationer-fra-ligebehandlingsnaevnet> (accessed 21 September 2014).

<sup>82</sup> Jacobsen et al., *Analysis of Danish media*, described in Chapter 3.

<sup>83</sup> SFI, "Vi forholder os undvigende til fænomenet racisme og diskrimination".

The municipality has divided the initiatives to fight discrimination and hate crimes into four areas. The first area is investigation and documentation, that is studies that document the experience of discrimination. Second, there are campaigns to provide information and challenge attitudes. Examples of this includes teaching resources and a theatre performance on discrimination in nightlife aimed at older students, as well as the Facebook campaign on encouraging the reporting of hate crimes entitled “Stop Hatred”. The third area of work is training on discrimination for staff in the municipality and increasing the municipality’s capacity to address the issues through discrimination advisers and dialogue consultants. The fourth area of work involves initiatives to strengthen civil society,, such as the annual “Taste the World” event, which in 2012 involved the participation of 85 NGOs and was visited by over 50,000 people. There are also celebrations of faith-based events such as Eid and support for interfaith networks, dialogue meetings on international conflicts becoming local and a Constitution Day for youngsters to celebrate democracy.<sup>84</sup>

As part of the inclusion policy, the City has, on its own or in cooperation with Institute for Human Rights (IMR), the DRC and the Copenhagen Police Force, implemented a number of campaigns and projects in 2012 and 2013,<sup>85</sup> including training 24 discrimination advisers, another 15 dialogue consultants, civil society events and dialogue events for young people, a four-hour public debate on labour-market discrimination and a workshop for managers on diversity.

The corps of 30 dialogue consultants, with an ethnic-minority background including Danish-Somali, facilitate citizens’ dialogues in the Tingbjerg and Nørrebro neighbourhoods and facilitate dialogue between citizens and the local authorities. The consultants are trained and participate in public meetings, giving presentations for professionals. Closer cooperation between the dialogue consultants and the police was planned. The project closed at the end of 2013. In 2013 the Employment and Integration Administration set up a team of discrimination advisers, 50 people of various ethnic backgrounds (including Danish-Somali), who were given four days of training to open discussions on discrimination and disseminate information.

The annual Copenhagen Inclusion report compiles and presents data<sup>86</sup> on discrimination:<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Københavns kommune, BIF(2013-175315): Beskæftigelses- og Integrationsforvaltningens indsatser for at bekæmpe diskrimination og hadforbrydelser. 26-02-2013 Copenhagen Municipality, Efforts of the Employment and Integration Administration to combat discrimination and hate crimes, 26. February 2011) (hereafter, Copenhagen Municipality, Efforts of the Employment and Integration Administration to combat discrimination and hate crimes).

<sup>85</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012” (2013-175315): Beskæftigelses- og Integrationsforvaltningens indsatser for at bekæmpe diskrimination og hadforbrydelser (Efforts of the Employment and Integration Administration to combat discrimination and hate crimes), 26 February 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Data in the report are based on a questionnaire survey and a random sample of 2,011 citizens reflecting the ethnic composition of the city.

Of all ethnic-minority citizens, 13% have felt discriminated against 2–5 times. The same is true for 4% of citizens of the ethnic majority. The result indicated that ethnic-minority citizens more often suffer from repeated episodes of discrimination. Amongst citizens belonging to an ethnic minority, who experience discrimination, it is predominantly ethnicity (72%) and religious affiliation (38%) which is experienced to be motivating the discriminatory behavior. Of all ethnic-minority citizens, 18% and 9%, have experienced discrimination motivated by ethnicity or religious affiliation, respectively.

The differences between majority and minority citizens, who have experienced discrimination are significant with regards to educational institutions, restaurants, nightlife and contact with the local council.

It is a very small fraction of the discrimination suffered which is reported or registered. Only 3% of citizens who have experienced discrimination, have reported one or several cases to the police, no respondents (have) contacted a lobbying group, the citizens adviser, a union, the Board of Equal Treatment or Institute for Human Rights. All in all, discrimination is an experience which people deal with—or do not deal with—alone, or with their closest friends and family.<sup>88</sup>

Parallel to the COWI survey, the interviews for the Open Society Foundations research showed the same evidence of only very few complaints and reports, and the same pattern has been observed by the municipal complaints system and by NGOs working with discrimination. One NGO noted that if they meet Danish-Somalis seeking assistance, it is most often about citizenship and residence permit cases or social cases, not discrimination.<sup>89</sup> Focus group participants ascribed this phenomenon to a lack of knowledge about individual rights and procedures and a lack of confidence that complaining would make a difference.

## Nightlife

Systematic long-lasting discrimination against visible ethnic-minority men in clubs and bars was documented again and again in interviews for this report, irrespective of the ethnic background of the interviewee. According to one focus group participant, the result is that foreigners go to foreign clubs. In the focus group with young men, the respondents also reported experiencing ethnic discrimination in nightlife. However, none of them had complained, and one of them said that he wanted the experience to remain private:

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<sup>87</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012”.

<sup>88</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Inklusionsundersøgelse 2012” p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with LS, anti-discrimination NGO representative, 30 May 2013.

I wouldn't be able to turn my life into something public in that way, you don't necessarily want to share your clubbing life, I mean, who would I complain to, if I were to complain to the authorities my parents would probably find out that I was lining up to get into a nightclub and they would say thank God you didn't get in ... if there were any injustices it would probably be something you would endure.<sup>90</sup>

On the question of what it means to be rejected one answered that it weakens your feeling of belonging when you experience discrimination:

It creates conflict, I think. And it definitely makes your feeling of belonging in and your relationship to Denmark ... you go back into yourself and think, well, is it worth it? You assess being a citizen in Denmark a bit critically, because you see the discrimination. At least that's how I see it.<sup>91</sup>

All the visible ethnic-minority men interviewed for this report brought up nightlife discrimination if the subject was discussed. One of the Danish-Somali representatives working with young people described the situation for young men:

But you do experiences these failures, which can affect you. Because you think "There's discrimination in this country", when you're stopped by the bouncer outside a club and all the Danes just rush past you, you know ... It is a nightclub where everyone should be allowed access whether they're black or not. I think it is a serious problem for society if you are not able to be part of the nightlife. Because there are bouncers who will kick people out. It might be that some people are causing troubles, but then the bouncers need to deal with that. It shouldn't affect everyone. It's affecting me, Ahmed and Ali and so on. And that's when kids take a hit, when you're 16, 17, 18 years old and you're going out to have a good time. And then they won't let you in anywhere. The places where you can get in, there are a few old men and women. So then you have to just hang around on street corners and get into trouble, right?<sup>92</sup>

A social worker with ethnic-minority background remembered his experiences of rejection as a young man:

And I also remember, when I was young, we would get into fights with the bouncers because they would stop us, as a young man you can get just so angry inside right, you just think this is shitty this, this is worse than getting your ass kicked, it is much worse, it is really, you're worth nothing, you won't get in here, exactly you, you won't get in, everyone else yes, but not you, it is unsettling. Because, and the reason why not much is happening, I think it is several things, Muslims don't want to be open about it, because, the majority of

<sup>90</sup> YM4, Young men focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>91</sup> YM1, Young men focus group 23. March 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with AK, Danish-Somali social worker, 25 March 2013.



my friends who were there ... The parents have no idea ... they had no idea that they were part of that.<sup>93</sup>

Some 10 years ago the Integration Council, which has since been shut down, strongly encouraged the city to take steps to combat discrimination in nightclubs; in 2003 the council proposed more stringent oversight of licences for owners of restaurants, bars and discos, and close monitoring of discrimination in these locations. This did not happen; instead, several public awareness campaigns with various target groups have been implemented.

The findings from the Open Society Foundations' focus groups suggest that greater interaction and integration are also hindered by the experience of discrimination and racism. One of the participants in the focus group on social protection recalled her own experience of exclusion, as a parent on a school trip with her son, organised by the teacher. The teacher reprimanded her son, saying, "In Denmark this is how we do this," even though her son was born and raised in Denmark, while at the same time being very lax towards the ethnic-majority children.

I moved my child to a private school, which previously only had Somali students, because I was so angry and couldn't understand ... because if my child hears this kind of remark so many times daily, I think, the child will be deeply upset. And the child might not be able explain everything the teacher says, but it will still sit there, somewhere inside.<sup>94</sup>

Another participant in the same focus group spoke about a teacher who wanted to put Ali in the carnival barrel instead of a "black cat", and when asked by the participant if he was a racist, replied "I was only joking!" "So was I," was the answer.

Another participant in the social protection focus group had a year and a half-long dispute with a teacher, on what she interpreted as a conflict founded on racial prejudices and discrimination against her son:

I've made so many complaints; I've been to so many meetings. Genuinely. And eventually, she [the teacher] reported sick. She's been off sick now for three months. And then, when she came back again—she now has a different attitude—she acted differently. And I'll say, my son ... he won't be changing schools. They wanted to move him around. He'll stay in his class or leave the school. But today he is back in his former class; they said, they recognise that she's the problem; I was allowed to move him to a different class ... She is not perfect, she has her flaws, but this is much better.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with IR, Social Administration, head of after-school institution, 28 May 2013.

<sup>94</sup> S2, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>95</sup> S2, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

Three mothers were all working as semi-professional social workers, in line with their own education or experience. One of the mothers described how her son now wants to go to Somalia, which she links to his experience of exclusion:

I just sat there, crying for my son who turned thirteen last year. He's been to Somalia, when he was six years old, for two months ... A lot of children get involved in crime in this way. Because they are so angry with their teachers. This is something that it's really important that we keep in mind.<sup>96</sup>

One of the participants in the focus group with older women described her son's school career as being characterised by harassment from the school and that he was now involved in criminal activities.<sup>97</sup>

The experience of the disadvantage of being singled out as immigrant, Muslim and black was also present in the narrations of school experiences:

Somalis are simultaneous black and Muslims, and in this way, there's something extra about us. For example, Arabs are a bit fairer. We are black, we are Muslims, ... so we are the ones who are black Muslims, it's always this thing about us being black and Muslim, and it is always and as if you're saying then it's only right for us to be reminded of who we are.<sup>98</sup>

A participant in the focus group on young women described her experience as follows:

I always knew that I was different, because when I first joined my class at school, one boy called me a "golliwogg" (*negerbolle*), the next one "Somali" and those kinds of things. On the first day. And of course, you are aware that you are different. Even though we had different groups, we had Turks, we had different backgrounds in my class group, but I was singled out because I was the black girl. So from Year 1 through to Year 12, I always knew that I was different. But when I came to London, England, I wasn't different any longer. So there was a large difference, which is why I thought "Okay, Denmark, negative," I wasn't at all interested in coming back. But I did come back. You grow up, you get older.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.5 Positive Trends Towards a Greater Sense of Belonging

Nevertheless, there were positive signs in the discussions. For example, the younger generation of Danish-Somalis feels attachment to the city of Copenhagen, as the following statement illustrates:

<sup>96</sup> S1, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>97</sup> OW1, Older women focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>98</sup> S2, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>99</sup> YW1, Young women focus group, 23 March 2013.

When I say Copenhagen, I am thinking [of] the metropolitan area. I grew up on the West side, High Taastrup and Rødovre, but now I live in the South Harbour, and so I feel at home in Copenhagen and never ever think I will be able to accustom myself to stay in a smaller city.<sup>100</sup>

Compared with the older generation, the younger generation of Danish-Somalis has had better chances to adjust. The demographic factor is relevant, as the youngsters not only understand Danish culture better, but other members of the community see the significance of youth-driven better integration of Somalis in the future:

We can divide the Somalis into three main categories; the first are those that came to Denmark when aged above 25 years old and stayed in the country for the past 20 years. Many of them have limited chances to overcome integration barriers. The second are those who came as teenagers, if they take up the fight they could succeed. The third groups are those born in Denmark and they have the best chance to integrate.<sup>101</sup>

A number of Somalis left Denmark around 2000 and many moved to the UK. The reason for leaving was typically the discrimination against the Somalis at that time. Some of those (interviewed in this study) who were children at that time are now studying or have completed their education and returned to Denmark. They seem to be very good at navigating between multiple identities such as Somali, Danish and English, and feel that they belong to all three societies.

This reflected an ongoing debate also seen in other focus groups and among stakeholders: how is the intergenerational relation supposed to develop, who is responsible for what, and the question of what it means to be Somali, including the relation to other Danish-Somalis in Denmark, in the diaspora and in Somalia, and the relation to other ethnic-minority groups and to the ethnic majority.

A lot of young people choose not to get involved, also out of fear for the consequences, for them personally, because you constantly have to defend yourself and because you're constantly pigeonholed and now suddenly you're a spokesperson for all Somalis and are you really up for that, when Somalis internally have so many issues? Making it all add up is a difficult manoeuvre.<sup>102</sup>

Somalis identified two main factors contributing to recent positive developments in their integration. When Somalis acquire legal resident permits they also become eligible for a range of rights under the Danish welfare model. There is, however, a difference in obtaining legal and institutional rights and accessing and implementing these rights. In order to fully use the social, educational and institutional services,

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<sup>100</sup> ID, head of Somali Diaspora Organisation, 19 March 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with SD, Consultant and Community Organizer, 18 March 2013.

<sup>102</sup> M1, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

Somalis and other immigrants often need mediating institutions to understand and fully navigate the complexities of the welfare state and system.

If the support and the consultations received are appropriate, people proceed to seek further opportunities.<sup>103</sup> There are a few studies on the impact of integration initiatives and projects on the Somali community, and the effect of Somali community associations on the integration process also remains understudied.

Integration is a complex phenomenon and is influenced by the different periods in which people arrived and the kind of reception and circumstances they encountered on their arrival. In Denmark in the past, the immigration debate was less politicised and divisive, until the political discourse changed in the late 1980s.<sup>104</sup> Foreigners arriving in the country before that period had opportunities to adjust to the society without macro-political pressure, in which some political parties considered immigrants cultural and political objects. In general overall integration has improved since the 1990s. Somalis, particularly the younger generation, gradually adjust, getting better educations and getting jobs, and many of the second-generation Somalis who were born and grew up in Denmark pursue higher education.<sup>105</sup> In addition, through small entrepreneurship, some members of the community are becoming employers, managing companies and gradually becoming part of the city.

<sup>103</sup> One of the organisations that provide preliminary assistance for the Somali community is the Somali Diaspora Organisation, at <http://somidias.dk/en> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>104</sup> Grete Brochmann and Anniken Hagelund, *Immigration Policy and the Scandinavian Welfare State 1945–2010*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2012.

<sup>105</sup> A Danish report shows that increasing numbers of the ethnic-minority younger generation, including Somalis, enter the Danish employment market and have realised that the path of successful integration goes through education and the job market. See Jørgen Goul Andersen, “Holdninger til uddannelse og arbejde blandt unge indvandrere, danskere og deres forældre” (Perceptions towards education and employment among young immigrants, Danes and their parents), Working Paper no. 20, 2008, 2010.

## 5. EDUCATION

This chapter will explore the position and experiences of Danish-Somalis in the Danish educational system, first discussing some of the basic facts, then looking more closely at the qualitative experiences of Danish-Somalis. The focus group on education consisted of six young women, of whom one had finished her education as a radiographer and was now unemployed, three were students (one at nursing school, one skipped occupational therapist school and was applying for biomedicine at the university, one studying to become a radiographer), and two were in high school. Education and experiences with the educational system also came up in discussion in the majority of the other focus groups.

### 5.1 City Policy on Education for Ethnic-minority Pupils and Parents

Education has been one of the four prioritised themes in the Copenhagen inclusion policy 2011–2014. The policy formulated by the Children and Youth Committee and the Social Services Committee emphasises that it is important to “identify the barriers to equal opportunities for a good boyhood or girlhood, and the different challenges faced by girls and boys”.<sup>106</sup>

The City of Copenhagen has initiated a range of initiatives for children up to the age of 18 years as part of this policy and focused on linguistic skills in Danish as a decisive element for initiatives, plans, distribution of pupils, tests, support and so on. Ethnic-minority pupils and parents are referred to as “bilingual” (*tosproget*) as opposed to “Danish” or “monolingual” (*etsprogethed*) in this area of policy and administration.

For several years the administration has promoted the so-called Copenhagen model of integration and mainstreaming diversity in public schools in Copenhagen. This model has now been updated in version 2.0. A key difference between the Copenhagen models 1.0 and 2.0 is, according to one of the city officials interviewed for this study, a shift from ethnicity as indicator of a special need for support to a more general focus on linguistic skills, opening up the possibility of ethnic-majority children also being included in the target group.<sup>107</sup> Key features of the policy include:

- early intervention in nurseries, targeting the most vulnerable bilingual children, based on individually adjusted support, further education of and cooperation between pedagogical, health and social workers
- assessment of language level at three and five years of age for all children, including follow-up plans and activities

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<sup>106</sup> Copenhagen’s Integration Policy 2011–2014.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with ND, Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

- language places in day-care centres with few bilingual children; reserved places for bilingual children with special needs
- efforts to increase the majority/minority diversity balance at schools with many or very few majority pupils, through advice and consultancy
- establishing a network of integration supervisors who are affiliated with schools and facilitate the cooperation between school, children and parents. All of the integration supervisors have an ethnic-minority background, at least bilingual and with different educational backgrounds; however, at the time of writing none had a Danish-Somali background.

According to the city officials interviewed, the advantage of the integration supervisors is that they are visible and more accessible and available (in time and space) than teachers. Furthermore, they can draw on personal knowledge and experience of living in two cultures, and have competence in building relations.<sup>108</sup>

## 5.2 Mother-tongue Teaching

The government suspended the right of ethnic-minority parents to send their children to mother-tongue classes in 2002, and made it voluntary for municipalities to offer parents mother-tongue teaching. The DRC<sup>109</sup> reported in 2008 that only 5,000 out of 70,000 pupils eligible for mother-tongue instruction in Denmark took mother-tongue classes.

In Copenhagen, mother-tongue classes are offered to children free of charge between first and fifth grade for DKK 1,679 (€225) a year from sixth to ninth grade.

In 2012, 874 pupils were registered in public schools (first through ninth grades) as having Somali as their mother tongue.<sup>110</sup> According to the Education and Youth Administration, 15 percent of the pupils in Copenhagen municipality that are registered as having Somali as their mother tongue have signed up for mother-tongue classes.<sup>111</sup> These figures, however, do not include pupils in private schools, or those who are signed up for private mother-tongue classes.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with ND and AS, Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

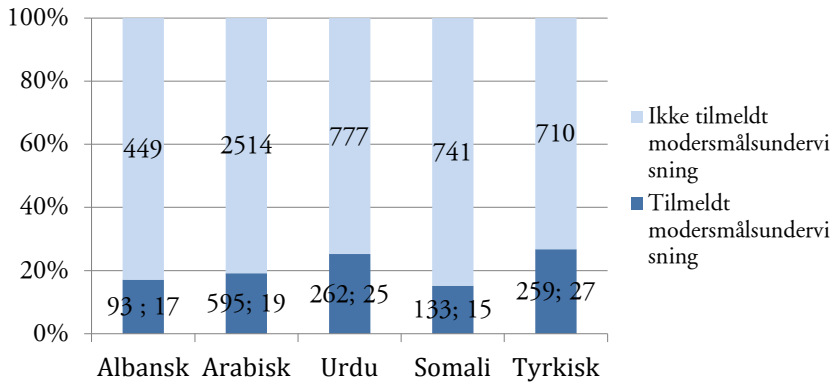
<sup>109</sup> Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DCR), Fifth periodic report submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), Report E/C.12/DNK/5. 15, March 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Memorandum from the City Education Administration. Statistical information on achievements, distribution on schools and dropouts for students with Somali background is not available, neither is the number of Danish-Somali parents on school boards and Danish-Somali pupils on pupils' boards.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with ND, AS Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

Compared with other minority languages (see Figure 1) this share is at the lower end, but in general only a limited group of those registered as having a minority mother tongue actually participate in the municipality's language classes.

**Figure 2. Total share of pupils in grades 1–9, 2013**



**Notes:** Pupils from private schools not included. English translation: light grey = number of pupils not signed for mother-tongue classes, dark grey = number of pupils signed for mother-tongue classes; percentage of the whole population of pupils with respectively Albanian, Arabic, Urdu; Somali, Turkish mother-tongue. Albansk = Albanian, Arabisk = Arabic, Urdu = Urdu, Somali = Somali, Tyrkisk = Turkish

**Source:** Memorandum from the Education and Youth Administration; interview 31 May 2013

Somalis are the fourth-largest group among participants in mother-tongue languages in Copenhagen, with 133 students enrolled, 6.7 percent of the total. Arabic (29.7 percent), Urdu (13.2 percent) and Turkish (12.9 percent) were the three largest language groups.<sup>112</sup>

The majority of the focus group participants had only sporadically attended mother-tongue classes and several had learned Somali late and were working to improve their Somali-language skills; they described themselves as embarrassed by the fact that they did not speak or write Somali properly. This notion of lacking the ability to speak and write Somali with the family and in the wider diaspora on the internet, especially on Facebook, was repeated in many interviews with young people.

The education focus group agreed on the importance of learning the mother tongue in a professional environment and referred to newspaper debates and research on the benefits of learning one's mother tongue. One participant spoke about teaching her

<sup>112</sup> Memorandum from the Education and Youth Administration; interview with ND, AS Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

future children “our own language”, even though all the participants spoke Danish at a native level.

In the focus group discussion with young men, the main argument for mother-tongue classes was that it would improve the capacity to learn more languages and learning capacity in general. Furthermore, the respondents felt that offering mother-tongue classes showed support for bilingual skills and complex identities in Denmark, and it was disappointing when these classes were made optional for the municipalities.

### 5.3 Different and Overlapping Danish-Somali Positions and Perspectives

Among the Danish-Somalis who took part in the Open Society Foundations research, experiences and opinions especially among young people were not only based on experiences in Copenhagen; by contrast the experience of parents and professionals was more Copenhagen centred.

What was repeated again and again was the importance and significance (good or bad) of the personal and social relations with teachers; for children, relationships with family, social workers and other adults were somewhat less important, and for parents relationships with the school headmaster and social workers, including the integration supervisors, were of secondary importance.

There was general agreement among the focus group participants that education is a qualitatively good thing because it increases knowledge, improves chances of finding employment and economic stability, and is encouraged by their religion and by their parents. The participants acknowledged the opportunities offered by the access to free education in Denmark:

If you are uneducated or unemployed, you are not part of society. You won't receive knowledge from anywhere. You feel a bit lost. Then, when joining a work place or when studying, you start to live again. We know people who have not completed any qualifications, who didn't graduate from middle school, and who regret not pulling themselves together.<sup>113</sup>

The education focus group participants also agreed on education as a foundation for independence on a more global scale;

When you have an education, you will automatically enter the workforce, if the opportunity is there. If there are no opportunities here, there is also abroad. That is a very good thing.<sup>114</sup>

One of the city officials interviewed about employment matters also endorsed the portability of an education among clients at the jobcentre as positive motivation for the Danish-Somali residents. Several respondents in the Open Society Foundations'

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<sup>113</sup> E3, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>114</sup> E2, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.



research mentioned the possibility of returning to Somalia or Somaliland with an education from Denmark.

The young women participating in the focus group reflected on the difference between women and men in the educational system and agreed that men have a harder time with the system than they do:

I have two older brothers. One of them would have liked to have done a vocational degree and that was also the way he chose, but then his counsellor held him back. He was told that he would not be able to continue studying for his degree. So he was pretty much fired from that place. My other brother also tried to do a vocational degree, and was fired. So they lost enthusiasm for further studies, because they have experienced setbacks that have stopped them during their degrees.<sup>115</sup>

In regard to physical education, parties and school camps<sup>116</sup> the participants referred to gender limitations because of their religious practices: difficulties wearing the scarf and a skirt in gym classes; (Somali) boys may try alcohol, but the girls could not imagine doing so; three of the participants were not allowed to join their class camps on religious grounds. Two participants referred to a major and successful fight with their parents and bribing their parents to let them go, while one who attended a Muslim private school did not suffer any objections as her parents trusted the school completely. However, one of the young women whose family forbade her from going to camp mentioned that girls in her family were now allowed to attend the camp.

The participants indicated that they appreciated their teachers' eagerness to pave the way for the girls' participation, but only to a certain degree;

I think it is good that they attempt to fight for you, and that they like you. But it is not good that when you get home, your mum thinks that you are the one who told the teachers to push them. And then they'll get a call.<sup>117</sup>

And they reflected on the difference between a Danish girl not wanting to participate for some reason and their decisions being characterised as a reflection of their religious or minority community, not as a person making an individual decision.

### 5.3.1 Transitions from Elementary School to High School

Several participants in the focus groups told stories about teachers or supervisors who did not believe that they were suited to attend high school and the negative effect it

<sup>115</sup> E1, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>116</sup> Throughout schooling, camps of a duration from a few to five days are organised, where one or several classes spend time outside the school (for example in a scout hut) and most often also outside the municipality. Attendance in school camps is in principle compulsory.

<sup>117</sup> E4, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

had on their self-esteem; often it was one teacher or parent who believed in them that made a huge difference and gave them the energy to follow their wish to educate themselves.

It destroys your self-esteem when your teacher doesn't believe in you, while you yourself know that you can do it, and you can prove through your grade point average that you can do it, and then they still will just say 'No you can't'. I do feel that this is also racially motivated ... Just being Muslim. I thought, there must be something behind this, since she just did not want me to continue.<sup>118</sup>

Another education focus group participant went to a school in the suburbs with very few other ethnic-minority children, and "they were always nice to me". But she reflected on being different:

I wore a headscarf but regardless, they did everything for me to not feel any different. I also had teachers who believed in me. But having to always struggle with being an immigrant, like they assumed that I wasn't getting any help at home, that I wasn't clever enough to be in the class.<sup>119</sup>

Another participant told a story about the crucial assessment by the school of whether a student is suited (*egnet*) to continue in high school and not understanding what "suited" meant.<sup>120</sup>

She also referred to her class teacher as a very important and positive person in her childhood.

I loved my form teacher. She was great. Really. If we needed extra lessons, she was there. She let us know where we fell short and what we could do better. I remember during exams, she'd kick us under the table if we were giving a wrong answer. So then you knew that you were in the wrong and needed to straighten yourself up a bit. And she'd give you hints. So she was an excellent teacher. I think sometimes it helps being in a class with lots of Danish students.<sup>121</sup>

One of the participants in the focus group of young men referred to bad experiences with some teachers, but emphasised that he did not believe there was anything wrong with the system as such:

But maybe some teachers have been ... very condescending, for example, the line I hate the very most is the one about "In Denmark, this is how we do this." So if I hear that today, I can go from being very friendly to being furious, if they

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<sup>118</sup> E6, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>119</sup> E3, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>120</sup> E4, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>121</sup> E4, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

say “In Denmark we do this,” you know. Just really condescending, like in Denmark we don’t like to brag.<sup>122</sup>

Staff in the city administration were also aware of this experience of exclusion arising from low expectations:

We are aware of these stories too, and it is discriminating, if there is no academic justification. It affects them throughout their lives, if teachers have low expectations for them. We know definitively, from research, that having high expectations for someone is one of the things that can change things and means the very most.<sup>123</sup>

A social worker interviewed emphasised the priority given to education by Danish-Somali youngsters, which did not always correspond with teachers’ assessments.<sup>124</sup> He gave examples of young men who successfully challenged these assessments by pursuing and graduating with the degrees they had wanted.

The experiences of an interpreter and teacher interviewed presented a different picture of the situation:

I’ve sat with them and had to interpret. I saw the situation in the exact same way as the teacher did. There are times when the status associated with education in a group is so important, but their efforts as parents are non-existent.<sup>125</sup>

The informant ascribed the parents’ gaps in expectations to lack of knowledge about the school and how to support the children, and to an unrealistic sense of the educational level and capacity of their children. A teacher pointed to the rejection of special-needs education for some children as an example of this gap, combined with a fear of stigmatising the child and the family by accepting that a child might have special needs.

### 5.3.2 Significance of Adults

Appreciative mothers and students’ supervisors and friends who understand the situation were mentioned as important persons to lean on when education becomes a challenge. Individual adults were key people in stories of educational choices and problems.

Social workers interviewed for this research emphasised the importance of after-school activities supporting school activities (homework cafés, individual assistance and so on) and their commitment to helping and supporting the children.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> YM4, Young men focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with NE, Employment Administration, Inclusion section, 14 May 2013.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with AK, Danish-Somali social worker, 25 March 2013.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with NA, public elementary-school teacher, 11 June 2013.

The U&U supervisors<sup>127</sup> were mentioned by focus group participants, teachers and social workers as important for vulnerable young people understanding and navigating through the educational system. Their flexibility in time and space was mentioned as a key quality.

### 5.3.3 Significance of Wearing a Headscarf

All the young women participating in the education focus group wore headscarves. One had gone to a private Muslim school where scarves were the norm, another went to a school with many Muslims and girls wearing scarves and did not experience any problems. One found it important to be placed in a class with Danish pupils:

There were only two of us in our class wearing headscarves. Other than that, it was a Danish class. I actually think as well, that this has helped me to become who I am today. Because there were so many Danish students in my class, I had to level with them, whereas if you are part of class in which there are many immigrants you will quickly fall in with them.<sup>128</sup>

### 5.3.4 Being a Parent

In the focus groups, being a mother (and often a single parent) and keeping up a focus on the children's education were generally brought to the fore in describing everyday life and aspirations. Mothers often spoke about sending their children to private lessons during the weekends and paying for extra classes in order to compensate for the children having difficulties in keeping up at school.<sup>129</sup> Added to the fact that Danish-Somali mothers often have more children than average, many of the mothers interviewed spoke about the difficulties of trying to participate in all school events for all the children and still being able to work.

A teacher at a school with a high proportion of Danish-Somali families characterised the family size as a special condition for Danish-Somali children:

What grabs your attention is that many of these families have a lot of children. And that becomes a challenge for a system in which you only have your parents, and not the extended family to care for the children. The parents carry a full load, compared with that of other minority groups. They simply just have so much to do. And then there is also a large share of single mothers, not all but

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with, IR, Social Administration, head of special after-school institution. 28 May 2013.

<sup>127</sup> U&U supervisors is a corps of around 120 employees in the Education Administration who help young people up to 25 years old with advice and access to youth education programmes, and keep up contact with young people who drop out of education. They supervise individually and collectively and cooperate with other administrations of the municipality.

<sup>128</sup> E4, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>129</sup> Older women focus group, 2 February 2013.

there are some, and that is hard on the mother, but also on the children. The attention children need during that age. Also in relation to succeeding academically.<sup>130</sup>

One participant recalled her own struggle to attend school events as well as the difficulties other Somali mothers face in understanding that attendance is part of the perception of a good mother in Denmark:

I participate in nearly everything. Today I had a meeting, but I couldn't participate, I had to be here, and I felt a bit embarrassed. But in our culture, children learn in school. There are none of all those extra meetings.<sup>131</sup>

She referred to information given to Somali mothers in order to let them know how the school works and how they are expected to act in order to be considered a good mother:

Become a member of the school board if possible, and participate in meetings, like social meetings where everyone gets to know one another. If you can, participate. Because then, if there is a problem with the children, you will be better able to talk to her in future meetings. Try to be a little active. But it's not because they don't want to, they just don't understand it. The mums consider the meetings a waste of time.<sup>132</sup>

The lack of linguistic competence in Danish can prevent the parents from participating and understanding communications with the school:<sup>133</sup>

There are many parents, many mums, who wish to do what's best for their children. But they're held back, they can't participate fully in the conversation, such as school consultations, because they lack the language skills. Or they haven't had any proper schooling in Somalia, so they need an interpreter ... but no one is aware of it, which rights they have. There are a lot of mothers who do not know.<sup>134</sup>

Participants in the focus group on social and health protection all expressed concern about many parents not showing up for the annual parents' conversations, and then, as one said, interpreting everything as racism when their child is said to be not suited for high school.

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with NA, public elementary-school teacher, 11 June 2013.

<sup>131</sup> S1, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>132</sup> S1, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Parents have the right to translation in meetings and conversations with the school.

<sup>134</sup> S6, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

### 5.3.5 Social Relations and the Parents' Role

One stakeholder was a parent of a child in Nørrebro. She and her husband deliberately chose to move from a homogenous environment and private school in Østerbro to a multicultural neighbourhood and public school in Nørrebro. She was content with the school and liked the way the school worked, being a community centre with open access during the evening, and eating together, but she registered difficulties with the arrangements for playing together after school, organising birthday parties and the like. These arrangements are part of the normal expectations of parents with young children and it is expected that parents invite the whole class of all the boys or girls to children's birthday parties. She referred to a Danish-Somali mother who had chosen to move her child to a private school:

All that stuff surrounding birthdays, play dates and invitations, it was just too stressful for her. The idea that parents should actively participate in things can be stressful for some. So then if your child goes to a private school it becomes much easier, because when you set play dates ... you completely understand what it entails, because there's nothing there that's unknown. So that is one thing, and the other thing is the culture, and the teachers.<sup>135</sup>

### 5.3.6 Further Training for Professionals

According to the city administration, further training of professionals on intercultural issues has been a top priority:

Nationally, Copenhagen is without a doubt the municipality that during the last 10–15 years has invested the most in the education of teachers and child caregivers. A lot of resources have been invested.<sup>136</sup>

However, there seems to be a need for more specific education about the context, migration history and personal experiences, which should be combined with intercultural competence in ethnic-majority professionals.

One of the municipality official (ethnic-majority) stakeholders told about a groundbreaking experience for him in his professional work with Somali youngsters, when a colleague, a social worker with a Somali background, quite informally one day took the time to explain to him the historic and political development in Somalia, in order to understand the mental backdrop for the Danish-Somali community. Another Danish professional had a similar experience of getting important knowledge on the migration context of Danish-Somalis, by chance and not as part as organised training, from a colleague with Danish-Somali background himself.

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with NS, secondary elementary-school teacher, 28 May 2013.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with ND, Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

A teacher with Danish-Somali background at a higher-education institution emphasised the need for teaching intercultural competence to both students and teachers.

The participants in the focus group on social and health protection agreed that there are significant social responsibilities for form teachers to live up to for all pupils irrespective of ethnic background: tackling bullying, conflicts, academic problems and so on. While the issues affecting young people may be the same, some felt that the support given differed, as a parent expressed it:

They don't worry as much as they worry about Peter, because they are well aware, if there is a conflict or if Peter misses a few lessons because he is away on holiday, she'll then worry much more ... She forgets about Ali, but only because Ali's parents don't speak the language, because there's a language barrier. Which doesn't necessarily mean that they are not bright people, no ... but it still will affect Ali. Ali, had he been able to choose, would have chosen for his parents to speak Danish fluently.<sup>137</sup>

Communication difficulties between the school and parents was exemplified by a participant in the social and health protection focus group, who worked part-time as a mother-tongue teacher and interpreter. She recalled a late-night event involving a mother and a decision on moving her son from one class to another:

I received a call at nine o'clock in the evening and was told that I'd have to interpret for a mother, if her son was to be taken away from his class ... I can't explain what had happened, but there'd been a conflict, where he had been involved in a fight and he'd been doing all sorts of other things during class time, causing disruption for the teacher and then a meeting was scheduled without his mum being aware, during which the form teacher and the head teacher of the school decided for the boy to be taken out [of the class]. So then the mum was called in, it was a Thursday evening and on the following Monday, the boy was not expected in school at the regular time, because the class he is transferring into is away on a school trip. You could then sense that there were communication issues.<sup>138</sup>

The mother here clearly had felt overwhelmed and overruled by the school, which had apparently failed to involve her in the decision and the follow-up on the decision.

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<sup>137</sup> S3, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>138</sup> S3, Social and health protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

### 5.3.7 Private or Public Schools<sup>139</sup>

There was agreement in the focus group on education that the main difference between public and private elementary schools was that the academic level and content are higher and given greater priority in private schools, whereas public schools prioritise social skills more. They did not, however, agree on which is the best for a child, echoing the general public discussion in Denmark.

However ethnicity and religion were also factors in the choice between private and public schools. A teacher in the focus group on identity was concerned about the children of very religious families choosing private schools and increasing the risk of producing an isolated community:

As a middle-school teacher, it is my experience that we are not receiving any children of religious parents. The children of this group are sent to Quranic and Arabic schools. This is where the problem lies, as there are two parallels in society.<sup>140</sup>

## 5.4 Ghettos and Ethnic, Socio-economic Segregation

There is an ongoing debate in Denmark about the social effect of schools with a large concentration of pupils from minority backgrounds. Focus group participants expressed a range of opinions on which majority-minority balance was good or bad in a school, but in general, the discussions referred to larger groups, such as immigrants as whole, or Muslims, rather than Somalis specifically. One said it was easier as a Muslim to go to a private Muslim private school, wear a scarf without problems and be foreigner among other foreigners. Another said that the educational level was higher in private schools, but also that childhood in the sense of playing and exploring disappears too fast in private schools. The remarkable difference in reputation between public schools in Copenhagen was also brought to the fore.

There was a general acknowledgement in all the discussions among focus groups and stakeholders that socio-economic factors, in particular the resources of parents and schools, are decisive for educational achievement.

It is exactly like the formation of ghettos, right, but you just extend the ghetto to include the school. If you have a population group facing socio-economic challenges—the ethnicity of this group is irrelevant—then there is a tendency for crime to increase

<sup>139</sup> The majority of elementary schools are public schools, but Denmark has legislation on private or free schools, originally founded on the wish to give different religious communities the opportunity to establish an educational environment where a specific religious, political or other attitude could dominate alongside the general curriculum. So-called private schools are non-profit, 85 percent public funded institutions with a 15 percent contribution from parents. The education must maintain general standards and the Department of Education supervises them: 15 percent of children in Denmark go to private schools.

<sup>140</sup> I1, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.



in that area, maybe—and so in this case, the inverse is true and students benefit less from their middle-school education.<sup>141</sup>

A Danish-Somali parent chose to move her child from a white neighbourhood and a white private school to a public, ethnically diverse school because she wanted her child to experience a more diverse environment. She remembered, “people found it insane ... They considered us completely mad.”<sup>142</sup>

One of the social workers interviewed who worked with teenagers described the Danish-Somali position as a “minority within the minorities”,<sup>143</sup> and another stakeholder described the specific Somali experience, where “the colour has been a disadvantage”.<sup>144</sup>

Among majority stakeholders, colour was not mentioned as a factor for discrimination or inequality. Colour (black) in combination with other characteristics, Muslim, immigrant, non-Western, seems to be a sort of taboo or blindness among ethnic-majority professionals.

## 5.5 Experiences of Discrimination, Racism and Bullying

### 5.5.1 The Copenhagen Barometer

Since 2007, the Copenhagen barometer (*Københavnbarometeret*) has been a tool in the city administration used to facilitate pupils’ welfare at schools, through an annual survey among all pupils on a range of welfare parameters, including indicators on bullying. One of the city officials explained that majority (monolingual) pupils experience the least bullying; the Arab group, which is large, experiences more bullying, but the Somali group and other small language groups experience most bullying:

Looking at issues in isolation, such as bullying ... we can see that the monolingual children are bullied the least, while when looking at the bilingual groups, it’s the very large bilingual groups, for example Arabic speakers, they experience bullying to a greater extent than members of the monolingual group, however not as much as say Chinese or Spanish speakers ... This is our theory, also because it is obvious that the smaller the linguistic group is, the more members will say that they are being bullied. Which is where the Somalis come in. Somali speakers are not among the smallest groups, but it is much smaller than Arabic speakers, as an example.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>141</sup> YM3, Young men focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with NS, secondary elementary-school teacher, 28 May 2013.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with IR, Social Administration, head of special after-school institution, 28 May 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with SH, activist 29 July 2013.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with AS, Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

### 5.5.2 Bullying and Discrimination

One of the participants in the focus group on older women told about her daughter being bullied and excluded in her class, and the frustration of not knowing how to stop it, despite having complained to the teachers and the school's headmaster.<sup>146</sup> The teacher and headmaster promised to stop it, but the mother did not feel that they took her seriously, and the bullying went on.

One of the stakeholders, who is in regular contact with a large number of Somali women, stressed that education is a major locus for experiences of discrimination:

Discrimination is actually a massive theme within schools, the fact that there are many parents and children who say so ... There are some who feel that the teachers target their children or even discriminate against them and in these cases integration councillors are useful mediators who can help propose solutions ... and [discriminated] not just by those who are ethnically Danish but also by other ethnic groups.<sup>147</sup>

The stakeholder felt that people of majority backgrounds as well as non-Somali minorities may discriminate, and involving the integration advisers (see above) could be a good solution for preventing and resolving these concerns, which add to the feeling of being excluded.

The experiences of focus group participants differed. A participant in the focus group with young women had a story about racism in elementary school, where her teacher did not find her suited for high school despite good marks.<sup>148</sup> A participant in the focus group with older women said that she was content with her (public) school and from her perspective this was linked to differences in her neighbourhood, between one more lenient school with many ethnic-minority children and the one her children were attending, a stricter school with 80 percent ethnic-majority Danes.<sup>149</sup>

Most of the city officials acknowledged ethnic discrimination and racism as a reality in the lives of Danish-Somalis. This was explained by an ethnic-minority social worker who works with teenagers:

But that is where the increased exposure becomes relevant, it's the skin colour, it is racism. I will have to add, as well, that it's true that one senses, because they are black, whether you are Somali or just, how to say, generally African, it's difficult for them ... that is, racism is part of our society, in a very special way.

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<sup>146</sup> OW6, Older women focus group, 2 February 2013.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with NE, Employment Administration, inclusion section, 14 May 2013.

<sup>148</sup> YW1, Young women focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>149</sup> OW2, Older women focus group, 2 February 2013.

In this way I do consider them more at risk, because their skin tone is darker than ours is.<sup>150</sup>

## 5.6 Changing Schools, Changing Countries

### 5.6.1 Change of School as a Strategy

In focus groups, changing schools from time to time came up as a solution or strategy for various reasons. While changing schools is a strategy that is used by parents of all backgrounds as a kind of last solution to a problem, it seems to be one that is more frequently used by Danish-Somalis.

Statistical information on this phenomenon is not available, but it was referred to by several stakeholders. A Danish-Somali teacher identified some of the problems that changing schools caused for the children who are transferred, including instability and disrupted relations with teachers, classmates and friends. She also emphasised that there could be various reasons for moving children; conflicts; a hope for a new beginning; religious considerations; family plans; or the rejection of a special needs diagnosis. However, wishing for a fresh start in another school in Copenhagen is not in accordance with reality, given that the pupil plan follows the child to the next school. This practice of repeated transfers could, according to this Danish-Somali teacher, be prevented by teaching and communicating more carefully with the parents about both the importance of attending a neighbourhood school for the child, and the possibilities for a special-needs child.

### 5.6.2 Change of Geographical Location as a Strategy

Several people interviewed for the Open Society Foundations research mentioned that certain families move from country to country repeatedly:

The parents flip between schools, but also between countries. The parents live here, but have also lived in London, in Yemen, and they seek out religion as a missing, fixed point of reference, it's a nomadic syndrome, which is continuing. These parents return. We have received some children who were well adapted, but who have then been to three countries without their parents and come back very maladjusted.<sup>151</sup>

One stakeholder of Danish-Somali background referred to an incident in which she was involved where a young boy in 8th grade was starting to hang out with undesirable friends, and had twice been arrested for minor thefts. The mother was very traditional and religious. Her strategy was a re-education trip to Somalia for her son, but the

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with IR, Social Administration, head of special after-school institution. 28 May 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with NA, public elementary-school teacher, 11 June 2013.

stakeholder had suggested a continuation school (*efterskoler*)<sup>152</sup> in Denmark as an alternative, and the mother was positive. The story shows how continuation schools can be a compromise between the parents' worry about a child's future, and a child's frustrations on not being able to live a life of his own choice.

These re-education trips were mentioned as yet another element in stigmatising the Somalis. Media attention to this phenomenon has made a reasoned debate difficult. However, indications in this study raise the question of whether the Danish authorities have adequate insights. Some have said that from personal experience voluntary re-education trips or culture trips, a term which is preferred by some as more neutral, can have a positive, eye-opening effect on the mind of a young person. Others have referred to sad stories of young people being dumped in Somalia involuntarily. One such case involved a young boy and his sister who were left with families in Somalia for several years. The boy succeeded in travelling back to Denmark, but because of immigration regulations he had to apply for asylum again, was rejected and was to be expelled from Denmark.<sup>153</sup>

The Education and Youth Administration and some of the stakeholders have a different perception of "lost children" (both those who drop out of school and those who may be set on a re-education trip):

The system cannot accept that a child, whom it is obligated to educate, whom no one knows where it is. Then the parents need to take responsibility for the child's education, which is a possibility. We don't have children floating about without being the responsibility of someone, in that case it'd mean the system had failed.<sup>154</sup>

### 5.6.3 Change of Image: Role Models

Linked to the general negative stereotype of Danish-Somalis, the participants in the focus group with young women agreed on the importance of young Danish-Somalis having role models, especially linked to getting a higher education:

You don't need to do as the media tells you to, to be criminals or to receive welfare benefits, you can actually get an education, you can get far. I know that there are many people in Denmark who would think "I just finished middle school, I don't think I'll start high school, maybe I'll do a different specialisation", and then there aren't many who will want to go to university,

<sup>152</sup> Continuation school (*efterskole*) is a kind of boarding school, open to children from the age of 14 or 7th grade, which combines ordinary subjects with, for example, music, technology, art. Continuation schools are quite expensive at approximately DKK 2,000 a week, but the tuition fee is graded according to parental income. In some cases municipalities financially support continuation school for children in vulnerable situations.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with SH, activist 29 July 2013.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with ND, Education and Youth Administration, 31 May 2013.

because they're too scared of being rejected, exactly for these reasons ... excuses. I have experienced racism, just try and look at me and how far I have come, who would have thought I'd be studying at the University of Copenhagen, I never thought so when I was in middle school.<sup>155</sup>

In the focus group on citizenship, the absence of role models in the older generation was viewed as a problem:

The problem with the Somali youth is that lack of the role model. Some of them have education but they don't have some elders to guide them as role models. Many get education but they need to use that education.<sup>156</sup>

Several of the participants in the focus group on education identified a number of barriers to continuing education, including the social pressure and exhaustion that comes from being one of a few ethnic-minority or Muslim students in higher education and having a different lifestyle and attitudes towards drinking, going out and clothes.<sup>157</sup> Another participant noted that such experiences strengthened people's bonds with other Muslim students.

The university freshers' weekend (*rustur*)<sup>158</sup> is another difficult area because it is an important event for making friends, but it is also an event based on drinking and being drunk. One of the focus group participants had attended the freshers' weekend out of curiosity and fear of missing something. The group would like to see events like *rustur* but without alcohol, and the same for Christmas parties (*julefrokost*), but they did not believe that this would ever happen.

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<sup>155</sup> YW2, Young women focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>156</sup> C1, Citizen and civic participation focus group, 19 March 2013.

<sup>157</sup> E3, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>158</sup> Freshers' weekend (*rustur*) traditionally takes place at educational institutions within the first month of term: the students organise it themselves and are away together for between two and four days. It is traditionally an event with a lot of drinking and drunk people, like Christmas parties.

## 6. EMPLOYMENT

Employment is central to integration. This chapter summarises the situation of immigrants in the Danish labour market and the national and city policies for inclusion, and then looks at the role of the employment in the integration of Somalis, as well as the causes and consequences of labour market discrimination against Somalis.

The focus group on employment consisted of eight women aged 34–57, most of whom who were currently unemployed and enrolled at the job centre in order to get a job. Labour market issues, employment, and municipal services for employment and relief were discussed in several other focus groups even though employment was not the theme of the discussion, emphasising its huge significance for both livelihood and identity.

### 6.1 General Trends in Employment

#### 6.1.1 Denmark

Compared with the 2012 employment rate (the percentage of the population of working age that is employed) of 68.7 percent<sup>159</sup> in the average population, in 2012 the Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen 32.7 percent,<sup>160</sup> which is higher than other cities in Denmark such as Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg and Kolding. The general employment rate in Denmark among Danish-Somali men (aged 16–64 years) was 30 percent, compared with 53 percent among the male immigrant non-Western population in general. The employment rate among Danish-Somali women was 26 percent in 2012, compared with 45 percent among women in general with non-Western background.

The employment rate among Danish-Somalis is increasing, however. In 2004 the employment rate in the same groups were 23 percent for men and 10 percent for women and in 2005, 27 percent and 13 percent respectively.<sup>161</sup> A substantial proportion (34 percent) of young Danish-Somalis between 16 and 24 years old (immigrants and descendants of immigrants) were not employed or enrolled in education in 2012.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Copenhagen Municipality Statistikbank, "Beskæftigelsesfrekvenser efter beregning, alder, område, køn, herkomst og tid" (Calculated employment rates by age, area, gender, origin and time), 2012, at <https://www.kk.dk/da/om-kommunen/fakta-og-statistik/statistik-og-historie/statistikbanken> (accessed 4 July 2013).

<sup>160</sup> Appeals Board (Ankestyrelsen), Memorandum, "Tal og fakta om somaliere i Danmark" (Numbers and facts about Somalis in Denmark), Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs 2013 (hereafter, Appeals Board, "Tal og fakta om somaliere i Danmark").

<sup>161</sup> Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?", p. 66.

<sup>162</sup> Appeals Board, "Tal og fakta om somaliere i Danmark".

The employment rate of Danish-Somali inhabitants varies between the largest cities in Denmark, as Table 3 illustrates.

**Table 3. Number of Danish-Somalis and employment rates, January 2012**

Municipality	Copenhagen	Aarhus	Odense	Aalborg	Kolding
Number	4,742	4,108	1,901	986	613
Employment rate (16–64 years)	32.7%	24.5%	23.1%	28.9%	22.8%

**Source:** Ankestyrelsen, Memorandum, “Tal og fakta om somaliere i Danmark” (Numbers and facts about Somalis in Denmark), June 2013

### 6.1.2 Copenhagen

The unemployment rate among the Somali population in Denmark is higher than among the total population; among Somalis, 27 percent are unemployed<sup>163</sup> (37.2 percent including people participating in activation programmes), while only 5.4 percent of the total workforce is classified as unemployed (7.5 percent including those in activation programmes).

In general, the Danish-Somali population’s social situation and their position in the labour market in Copenhagen are more insecure than that of the general population. For example, 10.6 percent of the Danish-Somali population receives social security (*kontanthjælp*),<sup>164</sup> while only 2.4 percent of the general population receive it.

<sup>163</sup> Special retrieval from Danmarks Statistik RAS (Statistics Denmark, RAS). 2011/2012

<sup>164</sup> A temporary social security for residents not able to provide for themselves because of e.g. being unemployed or getting divorced

**Table 4. Social position of the Danish-Somali population and the total population in the municipality of Copenhagen, 2012**

Social position	Danish-Somali population		Total population	
	Number	%	Number	%
Self-employed	25	0.54	18,273	3.33
Employed	860	18.64	266,295	48.50
Unemployed (net)	272	5.9	12,464	2.27
Unemployed people participating in activation programmes	151	3.27	5,702	1.04
Temporarily outside workforce because of sickness or parental leave	61	1.32	3,924	0.71
Temporarily outside workforce (others)	148	3.21	7,349	1.34
Withdrawn from workforce/retired	134	2.9	20,582	3.75
Social security recipients	492	10.66	12,966	2.36
State pension recipients	83	1.8	51,203	9.33
Other adults outside workforce	330	7.15	31,264	5.69
Enrolled in education, 16 years and above	216	4.68	31,655	5.77
Children and young people under 16 years	1,842	39.92	87,383	15.92

**Source:** Retrieval made by the Administration, Copenhagen Municipality 21 June 2013  
 Information about the Danish-Somali population: special retrieval from Statistics Denmark (Danmarks Statistik. Information about the total population. Statistics refer to the year 2012.

Compared with the average population, occupations among the Danish-Somali population are concentrated in a few specific fields. Danish-Somali men are mainly in trade, travel agencies, cleaning and operational services, social and health services and in particular transport. Danish-Somali women are mainly employed in travel agencies, cleaning and operational services, and in particular social and health services. The size of the category “without employment” is twice that of the total population, which corresponds with the differences in employment rates and degrees of unemployment. Interestingly, among unemployed business entrepreneurs the proportion of ethnic-minority citizens is high, but this seems not to be so for Danish-Somali citizens.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>165</sup> This was generally the case in 2003 and seems not to have changed much. See Niels Henning Bjørn, Dorthe Agerlund Pedersen and Lene Kofoed Rasmussen. *Somalierne og det danske arbejdsmarked – om netværk, kommunikation og integration* (The Somalis and the Danish labor market—on networking, communications and integration. *Arbejdspapir* no. 13, Copenhagen, Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI). See Chapter 2, Occupation.



## 6.2 Employment Strategies

The strategy on employment is described by the government as an active labour market policy. According to the Ministry of Labour, the policy aims to maintain a functioning labour market through measures directed at both unemployed and employed persons who are looking for work, training or education. The policy's objectives include assisting job seekers to find employment; supporting private- and public-sector employers in recruiting and retaining employees, stressing help for individuals to receive social assistance, particularly those who due to reduced working capacity have a special need for assistance. The measures apply to all unemployed persons irrespective of whether they are receiving unemployment benefits, social assistance, start help or sickness benefits. The emphasis is on making work pay and on ensuring that all unemployed persons are actually available for work. All unemployed persons have a right and duty to receive an activation offer<sup>166</sup>.

Until 2009 the municipalities and the state shared the responsibility for putting the employment measures into practice. Since then the municipalities and their 91 job centres have had responsibility for all contact with unemployed people. Thus the job centres are responsible for all unemployed people and for recipients of sickness benefits and includes people who can start work immediately and people who need help before they are ready to work.<sup>167</sup>

### 6.2.1 National Policies

As part of the EU's Europe 2020 Employment, Social Affairs strategy, in 2012 the government adopted an "integration reform aimed at achieving employment for 10,000 immigrants". According to the government:

Too many immigrants are unemployed and every fourth immigrant grows up in a disadvantaged housing sector. The reform introduces new approaches aimed at ensuring more education, a reduction of the number of disadvantaged housing sectors supported by the cash benefit system reform.<sup>168</sup>

Immigrants are included in the government's general employment policy, but some special initiatives target new Danes. In 2012 DKK23.3 million (about €3.1 million) was put aside for language training, social assistance, education for especially non-Western, female immigrants outside the labour market and the welfare system and DKK115 million (about €15.4 million) was earmarked for special municipal

<sup>166</sup> "Activation" is an integrated part of the social benefit system requiring unemployed persons to work in special jobs for the social benefit, not salary.

<sup>167</sup> See the Ministry of Employment at <http://ams.dk/da/Ams/English/The-responsibility.aspx> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>168</sup> See the Ministry of Social Affairs, "National Social Plan 2012 Denmark. Report to the EU Commission", 2012, at <http://sm.dk/en/international-priorities/the-european-union/social-report/s/National%20reports%20within%20the%20social%20area> (accessed 4 October 2014).

programmes for vulnerable welfare recipients, one-third of whom is estimated to be immigrants, with some combination of social problems.<sup>169</sup>

However, most employment measures are financed within the municipal budget, including those for unemployed citizens with an ethnic-minority background.

### 6.2.2 City of Copenhagen's Integration Policy: Inclusion and Citizenship

In its 2012 report on employment, the municipality of Copenhagen stated its goal is to create the most inclusive European city, with the world's best employment service by 2015.<sup>170</sup>

The Employment and Integration Committee of the city formulated the following in its "Inclusion Policy 2011–2014":

We make demands of both job-seekers and employers. We must work for a less divided and more inclusive labour market. We will cooperate with companies on creating new jobs and training good employees. If a person without a job needs to learn Danish to get a job we must help, preferably in cooperation with companies.

The inclusion policy also referred to the need to get more people into employment. It identified five ways that this could be done:

- Initiatives directed at specific ethnic-minority groups
- Fighting direct and indirect discrimination in companies
- Making it easier for well-educated foreigners and their families to come to Copenhagen
- Strengthening the Danish-language skills of ethnic minorities
- Increasing focus on socio-economic enterprises

The inclusion policy argued for more diversified management and staff in the City of Copenhagen, thus identifying the need to tackle direct and indirect discrimination and utilise employees' diversity.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> See the Ministry of Employment: Special efforts for immigrants, at <http://bm.dk/da/Beskaeftigelsesomraadet/Flere%20i%20arbejde/Integration/Saerlige%20indsatser%20for%20nydanskere.aspx> (accessed 21 October 2013).

<sup>170</sup> The status report on employment 2012.

<sup>171</sup> The Municipality of Copenhagen: Engage in Copenhagen. Citizenship and Inclusion. Copenhagen's Integration Policy 2011-2014 at <http://www.blanddigibyen.dk/version2/files/2011/06/Copenhagen-Inclusion-Policy.pdf> (accessed 4 October 2014).

One of the city policies that has created tension with some Somali organisations is the ruling that initiatives must not focus on a specific ethnic or national group. The job centres have decided that they will no longer refer unemployed citizens to projects catering for specific nationalities. This decision has directly affected the project “From Dependence to Participation (AFD)”,<sup>172</sup> which is run by the NGO Somali Diaspora Organisation and financially supported by the municipality and which is now very critical towards the municipality and vice versa.

A representative of the Employment and Integration Administration argued that support of this type of project was not “compatible with equality thinking”.<sup>173</sup> This seems to contradict one of the statements on achieving the goal of inclusion policy, initiatives directed at specific ethnic-minority groups. It is an interpretation of the inclusion policy which indicates a certain weight on an ethnicity-blind or colour-blind inclusion. For example, the policy does not expect staff members to possess language skills that would allow them to communicate with clients from particular minority groups (explained as avoiding being unprofessional)<sup>174</sup> and the in-service training appears to prioritise general competences and exclude specific cultural and intercultural knowledge and experience.

The Employment and Integration Administration is responsible for job centres (which are divided according to different target groups), benefit payments and language training, and has eight central divisions, one of which is dedicated to inclusion and diversity. The services offered are training in job-seeking, different courses, organisation of internships, subsidised employment schemes, etc. The competences of the different city administrations seem to suffer from too much cooperation, overlap and conflict of interest.

In general, people with an ethnic-minority background are overrepresented in the proportion of unemployed citizens and citizens on social welfare. Several initiatives have been planned and implemented, including some that involve language training and language mentors for ethnic minorities. However, initiatives very seldom target specific ethnic groups.<sup>175</sup> A senior manager in the Employment and Integration Administration explained:

As a general rule, we don't think that tailoring offers to specific ethnic-minority groups is a constructive approach when seeking to lower unemployment levels, and there's a risk of stigmatisation. It was, however, the plan to try this approach

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<sup>172</sup> The project worked on upgrading the skills of Somali women with the aim to get them into the labour market (see below).

<sup>173</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>174</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Statusrapport på beskæftigelsesindsatsen (Status report on employment). 2012

in relation to groups with especially high unemployment rates, when the integration policies were first formulated.<sup>176</sup>

However, the Open Society Foundations' research identified at least one project targeting Somali women, which has been supported financially by the municipality as it is seen as a method-developing project. The target group was Somali women with limited experience in the Danish labour market and its purpose was to change the women's perception of themselves and to increase their belief in their ability to act and qualify for employment. The project used different kinds of group and individual dialogue, training, health-promoting activities, practical guidance and assistance, and information on regulations and the labour market.<sup>177</sup>

The evaluation of the project painted a mixed picture. On the one hand, there were fewer participants than planned and changes in staff during the project period were identified as problematic. On the other hand, the specific focus on women with a Somali background and speaking Somali was one of the positive methodological results emphasised by the staff and the participants. A positive outcome was the role of the staff as system interpreters for the women in the project, for instance an interpreter who not only translated but also acted as a guide to how the system worked.<sup>178</sup> The evaluation emphasised that the staff and the people participating in the Project found the specific ethnic and linguistic focus useful and valuable. However, the evaluator suggested that despite good results in changing the women's attitude from passive to active, the narrow target group also may have contributed to sustaining some of the ideas of the women.<sup>179</sup> It is unclear which ideas are being referred to here and whether the narrowness of the target group is being understood in respect of ethnicity, social position or gender. The evaluation recommended that the system interpreter role should be used in future projects, but consideration should be given to whether projects with a broader target group would benefit more.

The municipality has a goal to increase ethnic diversity among its employees so that the staff should reflect the labour market in the Copenhagen area, taking into account their educational background.<sup>180</sup> The municipality monitors the ethnic composition statistically and according to the December 2012 report, 17.7 percent of the total employees in the Copenhagen area have another ethnic background than Danish and 17.2 percent of employees in the Copenhagen municipality have an ethnic-minority background. However, the statistics also show that the distribution between

<sup>176</sup> Interview with LE, senior manager, Employment and Integration Administration, 17 June 2013.

<sup>177</sup> New Insight: Projekter støttet af metodeudviklingspuljen. (Projects supported by the method development fund – final evaluation) Slutevaluering, 2013.

<sup>178</sup> New Insight(2013), Projekter støttet af metodeudviklingspuljen. Slutevaluering, pp. 29–31.

<sup>179</sup> New Insight(2013), Projekter støttet af metodeudviklingspuljen. Slutevaluering, p. 31.

<sup>180</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Økonomiforvaltningen Statistisk redegørelse om ansatte i Københavns kommune med anden etnisk baggrund (Economic Administration. Statistical memorandum on ethnic minorities employed in Copenhagen city). December 2012.

administrative sections, educational levels and hierarchies are uneven. For example, the proportion of employees with a non-Western background among the kitchen and cleaning staff is 44.6 percent, and among office and IT workers the share is only 4.4 percent.<sup>181</sup>

### 6.3 Research and Studies

The labour market participation of Danish-Somalis in Copenhagen has been researched in various contexts.<sup>182</sup> In the most recent independent study, published in 2007, the researcher began her work against the backdrop of a national welfare policy that combined workfare with special low seven-year start help social benefit provisions targeting newcomers (*starthjælp*) and a very aggressive anti-immigration political rhetoric.<sup>183</sup> The research focused on Danish-Somalis' motivations to find a job. In her fieldwork the author met citizens who were highly motivated to find employment and to leave the social welfare system, but who encountered barriers like the lack of a network and discrimination. For some, according to the research, this led to resignation; for others, to emigration from Denmark, typically to the UK. But she found that most of her informants kept up their motivation of finding a job, despite discrimination. The research found that a decisive factor for those who persevered was a positive contact with an ethnic-majority Dane, who provided knowledge, a network and a friendly attitude.<sup>184</sup>

### 6.4 The Danish-Somalis Experience with Employment Services

Somali women in the employment focus group were very dissatisfied with the job centre and the municipality in general. Their criticism, however, was part of a general

<sup>181</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Økonomiforvaltningen Statistisk redegørelse om ansatte i Københavns kommune med anden etnisk baggrund. December 2012

<sup>182</sup> See, for example Niels Henning Bjørn, Dorthe Agerlund Pedersen and Lene Kofoed Rasmussen, *Somalier og det danske arbejdsmarked – om netværk, kommunikation og integration* (Somalis and the Danish Labour Market—on network, communication and integration), *Arbejdsrapport* no. 13, Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), Copenhagen, 2003, dealing with the labour market generally; Tina Kallehave, "Somaliske livsformer i velfærdsstaten. Udforskning af begreber til analyse af brydninger og processer i immigrationsproblematikken" (Somali forms of life in the welfare state. Exploration of concepts for analysis of conflicts and processes in immigration issues), PhD dissertation, Copenhagen University, September 2003, addresses the tensions and processes involved in the relations between the Somalis and the Danish welfare state and the group of Danish-Somalis in Denmark; Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?", conducted research for her PhD in 2007 among the Somali population in Copenhagen; Immigrant Women's Centre (Indvandrer Kvindecenret), "Hvordan når vi hinanden? ... en dialog mellem danskere og herboende somaliere (How can we reach out to each other? a dialogue between Danes and Somalis living here), conference report, 1997, based on experiences at the centre and a conference for Somali women.

<sup>183</sup> Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?"

<sup>184</sup> Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?"

frustration with what they felt was a closed labour market and a media representation of Somalis as people who avoided working and preferred being on social welfare. At the edge of the conversation were issues such the risk of increased poverty and illness; having one's children taken away by the municipality; the lack of trust in complaint mechanisms and recognition of discrimination, and a concern on behalf of society with wasted money on the fiction of jobs instead of real jobs.

The labour market is closed off. It's stagnant. I have lived here for 16 years, during those 16 years I've interned and tried to work and tried to work and tried to work ... Now I'm old, and I've become angry and sad.<sup>185</sup>

In Somalia, when I was young, I worked in an office and had the future ahead of me. But here, it is people you don't understand, they push you, they hold you back. You feel pressure from the employees at the job centre. And there are things which don't add up, if you look at Somalis, there's no one sitting at home, everyone is out. But it is commonly said that Somalis don't work, we don't understand that. It doesn't make sense. It is not just among the employees at the job centres, it is generally said, in the media, the newspapers: Somalis just sit around at home.<sup>186</sup>

#### 6.4.1 The Ferris Wheel

The focus group participants often used phrases such as “locked up” and “trapped” to characterise their situation. They expressed a deep frustration with what one characterised as the “Ferris Wheel in Tivoli”. They criticised the municipality for sending them to an endless number of activation-jobs from their experience seemingly without a chance for them to get a proper job with a proper salary.

It is not that Somali women want to sit at home and look after our children. That's not the way it is, we want to work, but we're not sent out to work, they are just sent to something in between ... We're like a herd of animals, fenced in and just whipped to move around.<sup>187</sup>

The first suggestion mentioned in the group to improve the situation was that the never-ending job training had to end.

The participants did distinguish between their experiences of the centralised job centre (general public employment service) and the local Guidance Service (Åben Rådgivning), a special service established in six vulnerable housing areas of the city, open to all citizens irrespective of employment status, offering guidance, information and advice concerning education and employment). One of the participants referred to the adviser in the Guidance Service as a person with whom one could talk even though

<sup>185</sup> EM3, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>186</sup> EM4, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>187</sup> Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

she could not provide a job, whereas the job centre<sup>188</sup> was described as “a hostile place with a locked door in front of a staircase and guarded by a security person”. Another described the complexity of the municipal employment system:

We don't have a regular case worker, I have maybe 7–8 case workers. The whole thing is a mess, we meet someone, the next time there's a different person, then they'll say that you haven't turned up, your social benefits are reduced, then they write up some small bit of the action plan etc. It is messy, the whole thing.<sup>189</sup>

Several reported that they felt the system was too harsh:

If you forget an appointment, your benefit payments are terminated—but everyone's just human, people forget things.<sup>190</sup>

I have experienced forgetting an appointment and having my benefit payments cut. No one understands the human aspect, it happens that you forget an appointment. I am human and sometimes forget, why aren't you given a chance? And they say, that's the way it is. When the Danes say “That's the way it is”, then there are no options.<sup>191</sup>

A threatening tone is also implied. And it's been there the whole time. For example, before the end of 2006 you need to get a job, for example at one of those activity places they've been to. Or in 2012, if you don't find a job, then there'll be no benefit payments, so then I say, well I don't want to be on benefits, can you not just give me a job. There are a lot of people who want a job and they then don't understand why they're being threatened with their benefits payments being terminated. But there is no work.<sup>192</sup>

Even though this focus group expressed frustration and negative expectations of their own future position in the labour market, they did know Danish-Somalis who were able to secure employment and could give up the job centre.

To a certain degree, interviews with the Employment and Integration Administration mirrored the description of the job centre as a place emanating hostility and alienation:

With most of the residents we have from non-Western countries, the authorities largely do not contribute with anything positive. And then we can see the set-up

<sup>188</sup> Similar experiences are described in several reports for example in the 1997 Somali report from the Immigrant Women's Centre and among isolated ethnic-minority women in a report from 2008 commissioned by the municipality itself: ALS Research, (Socially isolated women with ethnic minority background) *Socialt isolerede kvinder med anden etnisk baggrund i Københavns kommune*, Report commissioned by the municipality. November 2008.

<sup>189</sup> EM4, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>190</sup> EM5, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>191</sup> EM7, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>192</sup> EM3, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

... just think that there's a guard in uniform who says welcome. You were taken aback yourself as well when you passed 'the prison'. We don't think of it as a prison, I know that it's an old vault. But when someone doesn't know something in an absolute sense and has difficulties navigating and is very concerned with all the bad stuff surrounding them, it is not easy to come here.<sup>193</sup>

According to the Employment and Integration Administration, the Guidance Service has turned out to be a valuable improvement in the service since 2009:

In all kinds of ways, we do communicate out in the social housing developments that we are here for them, that we're a service available to them and that here, there's a place for them to come.<sup>194</sup>

And it means an incredible amount to meet them under, I think, relatively less formal circumstances and somehow in a more level way, and then to signal that I'm actually here because I want to help you. I'm not here to control you, or to sanction you or anything else like that.<sup>195</sup>

One of the stakeholders interviewed, employed in the Employment Administration, characterised the Danish-Somali women in general as strong and resourceful, although they did not always seem to consider themselves strong and resourceful.

In the employment focus group, participants described the effects of being unemployed on social benefits, in terms of poverty, and physical and mental stress and illnesses.

They become psychologically unwell from being shoved around the system and then the children are taken away.<sup>196</sup>

You're given 10,000 [DKK, about €1,340] in social benefits. One day you're not able to come in, you've left a message, someone else took your message, but it doesn't reach [the right person]. Then you lose some of your benefits payment! Then there's the headache, what to do. Rent has to be paid, children need food. No one else is able to help. We don't have grandparents and parents to borrow from or go to. So many injuries I've gotten from the job centre. The traffic light's red but I'll still cross ... Because of stress ... To me, it's important

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.



that there's rent and that it's warm. And that's why I need my social benefits, because otherwise we'll be kicked out.<sup>197</sup>

The respondents in the focus group talked of the risk of losing one's livelihood or benefits as an ever-present fact, increasing stress levels and the feeling of precariousness. With few available outlets from which to borrow money, the respondents emphasised, poverty is a real fear.

Even though the risk of losing social benefits was very high on the agenda in the focus group, with references to their own or friends' experiences, interviews with the Employment and Integration Administration staff indicated that it was rare for this sanction to be carried out.<sup>198</sup> One explanation of the fear could be that references to loss of benefits are common in the letters sent to clients by the Benefit Payment Service, a different department from the job centres.

But the situation of poverty and being poor was acknowledged by the Employment and Integration Administration informants as the main problem for unemployed ethnic minorities on social benefit in general:

For a lot of the citizens we meet, for ethnic Danes as well as for citizens of other ethnicities, I am just about to say, maybe citizens with a non-Western background, it is about extreme poverty and depravity in reality. So heavy, heavy loads to carry.<sup>199</sup>

The significance of migration history, asylum history and being on the now abolished start help programme in an extremely poor economic situation as newcomers were related as factors in the discussions in the focus group on social protection and health that often create an increased precariousness and impede labour market integration.

Participants in the focus group on employment exchanged several stories characterised as mistreatment by the municipality or job centre concerning social benefits and the lengthy procedures for making complaints that were ultimately unsuccessful. Referring to the closed labour market, most of the participants seemed to regard the job centre as the gate to improving their situation, which can be seen as a kind of structural confidence in the institution itself, but they were most critical and disappointed in evaluating the practice and experience of using the job centre:

They open a lot of projects. This project, that project. They're wasting 2 million kroner. Afterwards ...? They might toss in 25,000 for rent, I don't know. And afterwards? Why plan? We want to work, why constantly plan? Why the job

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<sup>197</sup> Focus group participant.

<sup>198</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>199</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

centre, job centre, job centre. Ask here, ask here, ask, it is a waste of heads, waste of money. Copenhagen, they're making a bubble.

What has happened, has happened. If we just think progressively and do something about this. Maybe from the state, they could come down and say, what is going on, are people getting what they're owed or are they just shuffled around and around. Maybe every third month they could come by and see if people do as they're supposed to. Otherwise we feel like a mouse, trapped in a net.<sup>200</sup>

The participants saw the government as the proper authority to set things right and stop wasting money and find proper jobs for people.

## **6.5 Discrimination in the Labour Market**

At a national level the Board of Equal Treatment (appointed by the Ministry of Employment) deals with discrimination complaints. Decisions made by the board are final and binding for both parties and in certain situations, the board may decide that the victim is entitled to compensation. The board deals with discrimination complaints based on gender, race, colour, religion or belief, political views, sexual orientation, age, disability outside the labour market and national, social or ethnic origin *in* the labour market.<sup>201</sup>

Copenhagen Municipality has launched a number of initiatives in order to document and fight discrimination taking place in Copenhagen, and the Citizens' Advice Service has been given the task of monitoring incidents of discrimination visible to the public. The Citizens' Advice Service has also been given the responsibility of carrying out a campaign on the rights and legal remedies concerning issues of discrimination. A website has been established with the overall purpose of informing people on their rights and guiding them on their access to legal remedies ([www.diskrimination.kk.dk](http://www.diskrimination.kk.dk)).

### **6.5.1 Experiences from the Workplace: Conflicts That Are Difficult to Manage**

One of the participants in the focus group on employment described how she had worked in cleaning jobs for seven years in a municipality outside Copenhagen. When she moved to Copenhagen she changed to another cleaning job, but as she described it, was harassed by her mid-level manager, who accused her of not doing a proper job. The senior manager did not find anything wrong with her work and supported her verbally, but when she asked for help finding another place to work he declined with

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<sup>200</sup> EM3, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>201</sup> See Board of Equal Treatment, at <http://www.ligebehandlingsnaevnet.dk/artikler/default.aspx?page=1175> (accessed 8 September 2014).

regret, but he did not/could not stop the harassment and it became too hard to continue, so she chose to quit because of what she characterised as a racist manager.

The focus group with older women included mostly employed participants, who shared more stories and experiences of the workplace.<sup>202</sup> The references to discrimination and racism were explicit in the discussion, but the opinions and experiences varied. One participant referred to experiences of repeated discrimination without help from the management, her colleagues and her trade union, while another one explicitly emphasised not having experienced workplace discrimination:

Because I've worked as a care worker for 13 years and in the same places, I have never experienced any problems, but of course some people do experience some ... for example, my daughter also has problems at work but I have never experienced any.<sup>203</sup>

The same woman later referred to a conflict and harassment that had taken place 10 years ago with her then line manager, in connection with her being Muslim and wearing the hijab and wanting to pray at the workplace. She did not want to leave her job, so her union and her senior manager were involved. The conflict was resolved in the sense that the harassment stopped when the manager was moved to another workplace. She described the incident as one of misunderstanding and conflict, but not discrimination.

Concerns about the future of the young and educated generation were also revealed in the employment focus group; there were similar experiences of unemployment among young people despite their better education. But here, there were also references to discrimination because of the hijab and *abaya* (long black dress). Better opportunities among other ethnic minorities, especially those more adjusted to Western clothes, were compared.

One of the participants referred to her daughter, who had been unemployed for three years and sent 1,700 job applications without receiving a job offer, and now the future for her seemed to be on the activation-jobs programmes:

They are sent out into job training, and you work there for six months and then you're sent back and then you're sent out again for somewhere else and then back ... she'll never find a job ... for six months she stays in the same [job]. Afterwards the media and others say that Somalis are at the bottom.<sup>204</sup>

This group also shared concerns about training places and apprenticeships (*praktikpladser*) in vocational education for young Somalis. They did not feel that the municipality would be able to address these problems.

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<sup>202</sup> Also in the Young men focus group: see Chapter 11.

<sup>203</sup> OW2, Older women focus group, 2 February 2013.

<sup>204</sup> OW1, Older women focus group, 2 February 2013.

The possibility of going abroad to work as a young educated person was mentioned as a positive perspective in the focus group on education (see Chapter 5). Even one of the Employment and Integration Administration's staff interviewed mentioned the possibility of going abroad to work as a way of thinking for the Danish-Somali group:

It might look as if it is taking a long time for them to enter the workforce. But from our perspective they are, predominantly, involved in a range of really quite sensible activities, both in relation to succeeding in Denmark, but also maybe in other European countries.<sup>205</sup>

Discrimination in the labour market was identified as a problem not only in focus groups but also among stakeholders of Danish-Somali background, for example a NGO representative said:

It is the employees who are prejudiced, they need to change their behaviour. If I take, as an example, myself, I was unemployed 18 months after finishing my education. When unemployment is at its highest, then the selectivity and discrimination are at their highest. They don't look for qualifications and skills, it's discrimination at a different level.<sup>206</sup>

Within the municipality there seemed to be different opinions on whether Danish-Somalis experience a specific kind of ethnic discrimination, as expressed in some focus group discussions. Two representatives of the Employment and Integration Administration responded to the question of specific barriers for Danish-Somalis:

It is more because maybe you're an immigrant from a non-Western country. That is why I start out by saying to you, why is it especially Somalis now, because you can say; here we use a categorisation which is, someone's an immigrant from a non-Western country.<sup>207</sup>

The Somalis are themselves relatively flexible, then it might be that if you meet them in the street, they appear in one way, but if they have gained access to a workplace they are among those who are pretty quick at getting out there to look like everyone else. So that I don't find to be a very big problem. In Copenhagen there's also a certain amount of openness, but there are fields to which it is impossible or difficult to gain access. The fields in which it is difficult for women to get in, it is also difficult for immigrants to get into those.<sup>208</sup>

And another representative in another part of the administration answered:

<sup>205</sup> Interview with SE, case worker, job centre, 31 May 2013.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with IN, Somali NGO, 24 April 2013.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with DE, head of team at job centre, Employment and Integration Administration, 31 May 2013.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with SE, case worker, job centre, 31 May 2013.

Yes, it is definitely especially [discrimination], there is no doubt about it ... I am completely convinced that, with the stories I hear and with the factual knowledge I also do obtain through EU-related contexts, it is one of the groups which is exposed to discrimination to a large extent, and which doesn't report it.<sup>209</sup>

There seems to be internal disagreement on Danish-Somalis Copenhageners' risk of experiencing discrimination, but all those interviewed referred to the inclusion policy. It is, however, thought-provoking that the representative who assessed the Danish-Somalis as a particularly vulnerable group in terms of discrimination had no daily or continuous personal contact with clients, and the representatives who did not recognise special challenges for the Danish-Somali Copenhageners saw Danish-Somali clients daily.

Furthermore, the initiatives in the inclusion policy on "fighting direct and indirect discrimination in companies" do not stand out. One representative from the Employment and Integration Administration referred to the general anti-discrimination initiatives and the establishment of a diversity board that includes members from business and organisations and a campaign for signing up for the diversity charter.<sup>210</sup> An NGO representative who described the inclusion policy as very advanced did, however, also criticize the City of Copenhagen for wasting opportunities to influence companies, for example through more focused anti-discrimination clauses in city tenders.

## 6.6 Conclusions

In the focus groups and among most civil society stakeholders, the Employment and Integration Administration was described as providing a poor and confusing service. Clients found it difficult to navigate and to learn about procedures and responsibilities, rights and obligations. This created a feeling of mistrust of the system and stress among the clients. While the focus group discussion did not elaborate on this topic, interviews with the administration's representatives suggested that increasing efforts locally could improve services in the municipality.

The overall national employment strategy and organisation of workfare and the focus on activation-jobs, which in the focus group was called the Ferris wheel in Tivoli,

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<sup>209</sup> Interview with NE, Employment and Integration Administration, Inclusion section, 14 May 2013.

<sup>210</sup> From the text of the Copenhagen Diversity Charter: "Diversity is a strength. Everybody should have the opportunity to join. Citizenship concerns all. Work to practise diversity in one's own organisation; contribute to making diversity an asset in public debate; support initiatives promoting diversity, inclusion and combat discrimination in Copenhagen. 533 organisations have signed." See <http://www.blanddigibyen.dk/skrivunder/mangfoldighedsskiltet> (accessed 8 September 2014).

seemed to increase the frustration, but the source of frustration was generally identified as the municipality.

Several key civil society representatives referred to their volunteers' huge workload, helping and guiding Danish-Somali Copenhageners who need social benefits and assistance from various sources. These representatives stressed the urgent need for a more relevant guidance service that is adjusted to the need of Danish-Somali clients enrolled at the job centre, and the need for a targeted effort to increase knowledge in the group about rules, rights and the way the system works. A key question is whether the benefits of focusing on the specific needs of a particular community or group, such as the Danish-Somalis, would override concerns about equality and across-the-board solutions. It would allow projects founded in the community to receive funding and provide services to vulnerable groups.

It is also thought – provoking that issues from 1997 that came up at the Indvandrer Kvinde Center (Immigrant Women's Centre,) addressing the experiences of the Danish-Somali women and the labour market services, are still the same today; this includes the need of the women to learn their rights, know how the system works and how to get assistance and to work with the system.

## 7. HOUSING

Housing is important in terms of location, the number of people in the area and the social, economic and cultural opportunities. The housing situation is linked to the conditions of the people who live there and their social, economic and cultural status, and housing conditions influence the well-being of families, young people and communities overall and their participation and contribution to society.<sup>211</sup> The priorities of institutions and policies also affect how housing conditions shape up, not just for those who live there but also for society in general. This chapter reviews the institutional policies and sets out residents' concern over their housing conditions, as this is relevant to understanding how to overcome the challenges to improve housing.<sup>212</sup>

### 7.1 Background

#### 7.1.2 Types of Housing

There is a considerable difference between the housing styles of the Danish-Somali population and the general population. The majority, 81.8 percent, of Danish-Somalis live in social housing (*Almene/almennyttige boliger*),<sup>213</sup> compared with just 20.2 percent of the general population.<sup>214</sup> Of the non-Danish-Somalis, 20.25 percent live in owner-occupied dwellings, while only 0.13 percent of Danish-Somalis do. The most common

<sup>211</sup> James Krieger and Donna L. Higgins, "Housing and Health: Time Again for Public Health Action", *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (5) (May 2002), pp. 758–768; Hans Andersen, "Spatial Assimilation in Denmark? Why do Immigrants Move to and from Multi-ethnic Neighbourhoods?", *Housing Studies* (25) 3 (2010), pp. 281–300 (hereafter, Andersen, "Spatial Assimilation").

<sup>212</sup> Brian Lund, *Understanding Housing Policy*, University of Bristol, 2011; Philip Harrison, Marie Huchzermeyer and Mzwanele Mayekiso (eds). *Confronting Fragmentation: Housing and Urban Development in a Democratising Society*. University of Cape Town Press, 2003.

<sup>213</sup> Social Housing in Denmark is part of Danish welfare and the stock varies from family and youth housing to housing for disabled people and the elderly, including nursing homes. The aim of the Social Housing Sector is legally defined as affordable and decent housing for all in need hereof, and to give tenant a legal and decisive right to influence their own living conditions. This manifests itself in a non-profit sector that aims at being both financially, physically and socially sustainable and well-functioning. The regulation of the Social Housing Sector in Denmark is strict. Apart from the overall aim everything from financing to the size of the individual flats, construction and to the individual activities that housing organizations can engage in is regulated. As the sector underlies municipal supervision there is also a strong relation to the municipalities, which have a right to dispose over every fourth letting. The municipalities are responsible for evaluating the need for new construction, which also makes Social Housing part of local urban development. See The Danish Social Housing Sector. [www.bl.dk](http://www.bl.dk) (accessed 22 September 2014).

<sup>214</sup> Social housing is subsidised by the municipality, which in return has a certain amount of flats at their disposal for people in need of social and/or economic support.

housing type for the latter is social housing,<sup>215</sup> where 31.54 percent live, compared with only 1.8 percent of the Danish-Somalis.

Economic capacity is of course vital when it comes to choice of housing, but also religious background, such as being a Muslim, may influence the choice. Some Muslims avoid taking interest for loans for religious reasons and therefore live in rented housing.

**Table 5. Types of housing in Copenhagen, 2011**

Housing	Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen		Total population in Copenhagen	
	Number	%	Number	%
Other type of housing (unspecified)	222	4.91	8,278	1.53
Owner-occupied dwelling (private)	6	0.13	109,238	20.25
Private rental	389	8.60	125,253	23.22
Private/unspecified	14	0.31	7,433	1.38
Social housing	3,703	81.85	109,265	20.25
Cooperative dwelling	83	1.83	170,164	31.54
Residence hall/college	28	0.62	8,835	1.64
24-hour care centre	79	1.75	1,039	0.19
Total	4,524	100	539,505	100

**Source:** Special retrieval from Statistics Denmark 4 July 2013

### 7.1.3 Government Housing Initiatives

Although in Denmark public housing belongs to companies or housing associations which own and administer properties, the government has the responsibility for housing at both local and national level. Over the years policies have, however, shifted

<sup>215</sup> Cooperative housing is different from home ownership. Danes access these houses through cooperative associations, see <http://www.andelsboligforeninger.com/mere/artikel/andelsbolig-hvad-er-en-andelsbolig-egentlig/1192.html> (accessed 8 September 2014).



from government initiatives to governance.<sup>216</sup> The former refers to the government dealing directly with housing conditions, trying to impose certain structures and priorities; the latter implies the inclusion of relevant parties in contributing and implementing public policies aimed at improving housing. The government terms neighbourhoods where many ethnic communities, including Somalis, coexist as “disadvantaged areas” often inhabited by people with “weak resources”. Such areas need renovation as well as social and economic investment.

Social housing areas are typically large single-use housing estates built in the 1960s and 1970s, which appear to be physically isolated from neighbourhoods in the surrounding urban environment. The areas seem segregated as a result of limited infrastructure and lack of roads to the rest of the city, and are often in poor condition both inside and in the surrounding outdoor environment. These areas often house a high proportion of immigrants and their descendants, employment rates and educational achievement are low, many families have low incomes and there are problems with crime and insecurity.<sup>217</sup> The government has acknowledged the continuing ethnic segregation of disadvantaged areas and the urgent need to deal with the problem.<sup>218</sup>

In the past few years there has been a growing social, ethnic and geographical segmentation in the housing market, which has meant that well-educated and well-off citizens are concentrated in the more attractive neighbourhoods. At the other extreme, the government identifies some neighbourhoods as ghettos. In these neighbourhoods there live mainly disadvantaged citizens and people with a non-Danish ethnic background.<sup>219</sup>

In recent years there has been a growing perception of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods as an obstacle to the integration of ethnic-minority groups. A picture has been created of the neighbourhoods as places where ethnic groups have accumulated in a manner that hampers or obstructs their integration into Danish society and from which they will never escape. This perception has facilitated measures that hamper the access of ethnic

<sup>216</sup> Hans Thor Andersen and Ronald van Kempen, “New trends in urban policies in Europe: evidence from the Netherlands and Denmark”, *Cities* 20 (2) (April 2003), pp. 77–86.

<sup>217</sup> Ministry of Housing and Rural Areas, “Udsatte boligområder Værktøjskasse” (Disadvantaged areas, a tool box), Report, 2013, at [http://www.mbbi.dk/sites/mbbi.dk/files/dokumenter/publikationer/vaerktoejskasse\\_-\\_udsatte\\_boligomraader.pdf](http://www.mbbi.dk/sites/mbbi.dk/files/dokumenter/publikationer/vaerktoejskasse_-_udsatte_boligomraader.pdf) (accessed 15 December 2013) (hereafter, Ministry of Housing and Rural Areas, “Udsatte boligområder Værktøjskasse”).

<sup>218</sup> Ministry of Housing and Rural Areas, “Udsatte boligområder Værktøjskasse”.

<sup>219</sup> Guncor Christensen (ed.), “Udsatte grupper på boligmarkedet i” (Vulnerable groups in the housing market), in Ulla Haahr and Ove Karlsson (eds), “Danmarksbillede SFI forskning I år” 50 (Denmark’s pictures: SFI, 50 years’ research, 2008), at [http://www.sfi.dk/udsatte\\_grupper\\_p%C3%A5\\_boligmarkedet-4754.aspx](http://www.sfi.dk/udsatte_grupper_p%C3%A5_boligmarkedet-4754.aspx) (accessed 1 September 2013).

minorities to multi-ethnic neighbourhoods as well as to proposals to demolish these estates.<sup>220</sup>

In formulating its policies for vulnerable neighbourhoods, the municipality of Copenhagen agrees with the Danish government's initiatives and goals, which are as follows:

- It aims to reduce the number of vulnerable residential areas by one-quarter by the end of 2016 and halve it by the end of 2021.
- The initiatives targeting disadvantaged areas must be strengthened and focused.
- Conditions in disadvantaged areas are to be improved physically, economically and socially, to avoid isolation from the surrounding community.<sup>221</sup>

The purpose of these is the interest of the residents, as vulnerable neighbourhoods inhibit integration, maintain social inequalities and create inferior educational opportunities for children and young people. The wider society also benefits, since deprived neighbourhoods generate conditions for increased crime and other values which pose a threat to cohesion.<sup>222</sup>

The ECRI, which has published periodical reports on the Danish government's efforts to deal with exclusion and discrimination, has recognised the progress made but also recommends that the government ensure implementation, assessment and research on the impact of such initiatives and changes experienced by the people who live in such neighbourhoods. The report also strongly recommends that "the Danish authorities monitor the impact of measures taken in these fields", based on the finding that "no study was carried out on the impact of measures taken for more integrated neighbourhoods on groups of concern to ECRI".<sup>223</sup> The government's stated goals are clear but the government's documents do not mention social and cultural divisions and the need for mechanisms for people who feel pressure from the housing associations or other more resourceful residents to file complaints.

The public discourse often states that there are recurring cross-community "troubles" and general "insecurity" in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods; studies, however, indicate that residents in such neighbourhoods respect their neighbours and have positive attitudes towards each other.<sup>224</sup> Incidents such as a residential board's decision not to

<sup>220</sup> Andersen, "Spatial Assimilation".

<sup>221</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Politik for udsatte byområder" (Policies for vulnerable city neighbourhoods), at [http://kk.sites.itera.dk/apps/kk\\_pub2/pdf/871\\_2Oh6MqcOSn.pdf](http://kk.sites.itera.dk/apps/kk_pub2/pdf/871_2Oh6MqcOSn.pdf) (accessed 10 August 2013) (hereafter, Copenhagen Municipality, "Politik for udsatte byområder").

<sup>222</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Politik for udsatte byområder".

<sup>223</sup> "ECRI report on Denmark".

<sup>224</sup> K. Hansen, A. Hansen, H. Kalkan and W. Rasmussen, (eds), *Om at bo sammen i et multietnisk boligområde* (Living together in a multi-ethnic housing neighbourhood), Aarhus University Press, 2010.

hold a traditional Christmas party or instal a Christmas tree have caught the attention of the media and politicians,<sup>225</sup> and reached the level of a national debate over the marginalisation of Danish culture and traditions.<sup>226</sup>

## 7.2 Copenhagen Municipality's Housing Initiatives

Copenhagen municipality has developed several initiatives to support vulnerable communities and citizens in marginalised poor neighbourhoods. They have established outreach entities directly communicating with the vulnerable communities with the aim of engaging and incorporating them into the social and economic processes of the city, for example:

A stronger and more binding cooperation between the social housing sector and the general public. Cooperation with the public sector has to be developed through binding agreements in relation to social housing ... particularly vulnerable neighbourhoods in Copenhagen, characterised by a higher proportion of residents with non-Western origin, a low labour force and a relatively high crime incidence.<sup>227</sup>

Similarly, the authorities have engaged existing groups such as housing and voluntary associations with the aim of building bridges between neighbourhood actors. The municipality's goals include support for families with children and large groups of students needing accommodation.

The municipality has developed a master plan (*Helhedsplan*) which aims to better coordinate and implement regeneration and development efforts.<sup>228</sup> Its measures cover large estates with complex issues, and are usually overseen by a project manager and several employees. Smaller projects that address a specific problem have also been carried out. Some earlier master plans were extended several times and operated for many years. The evaluation shows that the plan's overall size and age makes a difference: larger plans generally have a more collaborative approach, including municipal actors and local initiatives and organisations. Master plans that have existed

<sup>225</sup> Ritzau Agency, "Juletræsballade: Konfliktramt boligforening skal have ny bestyrelse" (Christmas tree controversy: Conflictual housing association will have a new board), 15 November 2012, at <http://politiken.dk/indland/ECE1813595/juletraesballade-konfliktramt-boligforening-skal-have-ny-bestyrelse> (accessed 10 November 2013).

<sup>226</sup> Ritzau Agency, "DF resumes kampagne mod boligforening" (Danish People's Party resumes campaign against housing association), Politiken, at <http://nyhederne.tv2.dk/article.php/id-59899601:df-genoptager-kampagne-mod-boligforening.html> (accessed 20 November 2013).

<sup>227</sup> (Politik for Udsatte Byområder ((Policy for Vulnerable city neighbourhoods) The Economic Council of the Labour Movement "Poverty in Denmark" 16 August 2013 [http://kk.sites.itera.dk/apps/kk\\_pub2/pdf/871\\_2Oh6MqcOSn.pdf](http://kk.sites.itera.dk/apps/kk_pub2/pdf/871_2Oh6MqcOSn.pdf) (accessed 20 November 2013).

<sup>228</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Politik for udsatte byområder".

for several years are more visible and have more recognised partners.<sup>229</sup> Local media reports indicate that these plans have helped ordinary residents to shape their neighbourhoods in consultative processes that take local priorities into consideration.<sup>230</sup>

### 7.3 Housing Experiences of the Danish-Somali Community

Danish-Somalis who participated in focus groups and others interviewed for the Open Society Foundations' study confirmed the existence of numerous problems with housing. Interviewees spoke about pressure from housing associations and from some of their neighbours. Some participants in focus groups recalled certain housing associations abusing their powers, for instance by not refunding deposits and not taking the Danish-Somali residents seriously in their daily interactions. Participants also reported that some native Danish neighbours complained about Somali families, visits and disturbances in the neighbourhood.

The combination of the experience of exclusion from the housing associations and the tension with neighbours concerned the Danish-Somalis participants in the focus group on housing, who felt they had a limited voice. Though acknowledging that some community activists and voluntary associations try to deal with these problems, respondents expressed concern that they were not being attended to due to a lack of political and financial support from the government. Consequently, an increasing number of men, women and even families are becoming homeless, contributing to a deterioration in the community's integration processes.<sup>231</sup>

According to several informants, some Danish-Somali believe that the municipality owns their apartment and therefore they do not take full responsibility for the house and taking care of it, which indicates an information gap.

#### 7.3.1 Avenues for Raising Concerns

Danish-Somali focus group participants reported facing numerous predicaments over housing opportunities in Copenhagen. The assessment of the focus group discussions was that Somalis refrained from taking cases of poor treatment or discrimination by the authorities or other citizens, individuals or organised groups to the competent authorities or the courts:

<sup>229</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Politik for udsatte byområder".

<sup>230</sup> Licitationen Byggeriets Dagblad, "Ny identitet til Københavnergade" (New Identity for a Copenhagen Street), 9 August 2013, at <http://www.licitationen.dk/artikel/VisArtikel.aspx?SiteID=LI&Lopenr=108090079> (accessed 1 November 2013).

<sup>231</sup> H3 and H4, Housing focus group, 1 February 2013.

Each [housing] associations has certain rules, some housing associations give good service, others not—people complain when they don't get the same service in two different associations.<sup>232</sup>

To a certain extent, a lack of information or awareness may contribute to the low number of formal complaints, since many in the Somali community, especially in the early years of their arrival, are not well informed about the rules and regulations for renting houses, maintenance, the conditions of deposits and so on, although these rules are widely available. Before problems with housing associations can go to court, complaints must first go through the Resident Complaints Board, which is a complex procedure:

A resident can complain to (*Beboer klagenævnet*) through the municipal authorities. Complaint must be in writing, people have to pay a fee and it is possible to be anonymous<sup>233</sup>.

The complexity of the complaints process means that housing companies are seen as intentionally exploiting community weaknesses and violating people's rights.<sup>234</sup> Stressing the challenges in making a complaint, a member of the focus group provided the following explanation:

People do not know the rules. If Somalis' rights are violated they do not complain. But if people complain about them they surprise and say why are they complaining about me.<sup>235</sup>

The trend is not specific to the Somali community alone, as it equally affects other vulnerable communities and is linked to the general political and social attitude towards multi-ethnic neighbourhoods.

According to some participants, not all public housing companies behave inappropriately; many treat people fairly and provide better service for families with children. The problem is partially, respondents suggested, with the Somali community itself:

There are companies that provide good service, swimming for women and places where children can play, Somalis are not visible in areas that affect them—they do not contribute to the processes and decision making.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>232</sup> H1, housing focus group 1 February 2013.

<sup>233</sup> Generelt om klager og sagsbehandling ( general on complaints and case processing) <http://www.kk.dk/da/borger/bolig/uenighed-mellem-lejer-og-udlejer/generelt-om-sagsbehandling> (accessed December 2013).

<sup>234</sup> H2 and H4, Housing focus group, 1 February 2013.

<sup>235</sup> IB5, Identity and belonging focus group, 2 February 2013.

<sup>236</sup> H2, Housing focus group, 1 February 2013.

Many Somalis also fail to participate in the regular housing meetings and thereby miss the opportunity to take active roles in housing and neighbourhood boards. Explaining the reason for the Somalis' reluctance to complain and engage, Abdi, a Danish-Somali community activist, suggested:

Certain housing associations establish a kind of exclusive power. The boards of these associations take unilateral decisions to punish and exclude certain communities. They have become so powerful that they don't even inform people of relevant activities and plans for the future. Decisions are often taken without consultation and inclusion of the people who live there. Sometimes the decisions taken by the boards have serious consequences for the residents, who lose their apartments or could be accused for serious charges for house disorder.<sup>237</sup>

Over the years some neighbourhoods have become so insecure, particularly for the younger generation, that some community organisers are concerned about the overall negative development:

Somalis live in areas with many immigrants and refugees—these are poor and marginalised neighbourhoods. There are many problems in these neighbourhoods. It is easy for children to be recruited and socialised badly. There is no direct racism and exclusion in these neighbourhoods but there are gang problems.<sup>238</sup>

Specific conflicts Somalis experience, for instance, are cases where families with many children run up against hostile neighbours, particularly elderly Danes and people living alone who often complain about noise and disturbance. Reportedly, housing companies have terminated contracts with Somali families as a consequence:

I have been in this country for 17 years and have lived in different housing associations. Many families have many children, so it is better they get a house in the first floor. If they get a house that is above, it depends, but some Danes will complain about noises. The Danes gather signatures from the people they know in the neighbourhoods. There are many warnings.<sup>239</sup>

Finally, an increasing number of Somali men have become homeless over the years.<sup>240</sup> Both focus group participants, those discussing integration, housing, identity and political participation, and stakeholders suggested many reasons for this and identified domestic violence as the main cause, where a husband is removed from the home following the wife's request. Gender roles in general shifted for most Somalis when they resettled in Denmark. The Danish welfare system is founded on equality among

<sup>237</sup> H1, Housing focus group, 1 February 2013.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with SH, Teacher and community organizer, 1 June 2013.

<sup>239</sup> CPP2, Civic and political participation focus group, 19 March 2013.

<sup>240</sup> Heidi Lauritzen, Bence Boje-Kovacs and Lars Benjaminsen, *Hjemløshed I Danmark* (Homelessness in Denmark), SFI, 2011.

spouses, which leads to conflicts in the Somali family about leadership and organisation.<sup>241</sup> A study of divorced Somali women suggests that the divorce rate among Somali women in Denmark could be as high as 75 percent.<sup>242</sup> For some men this can lead to homelessness and drug abuse:<sup>243</sup>

People with drug abuse, people who move from other parts of Denmark [to Copenhagen], and people who lose accommodation due to family problems and divorce. They are different, but the problems are there and everybody can see it.<sup>244</sup>

Some Somali alcoholics and some people from broken families, the number is large when we see the number of Somalis in the city. It affects the Somalis at large. These homeless people come to the community and people can see them they are on the streets. Some of them get permanent places they can go and there are places that can help them with the alcohol abuse. I am not sure whether people get the proper support.<sup>245</sup>

Homelessness affects women and families as well. The situation worsened after the government introduced reforms of housing support. These were new reforms designed for universal welfare balance but to focus on neighbourhoods with social challenges as a problem.<sup>246</sup> There are also many Somalis who are working but remain poor as their low wages mean they cannot afford to pay their rent.

The focus group on social protection and health touched upon the gendered aspect of labour market exclusion and the downward social mobility of Danish-Somali men:

Our men also have an odd sense of pride. A lot of them had a good education, had a good job in Somalia, and then they come here, and they have nothing ... He is not the one, where people look at him: "Here he comes." Here is his name and he is big. Here, he suddenly becomes nothing, and the man cannot handle this. We women are good at adjusting. And then it goes wrong and many of

<sup>241</sup> Farah Abdulkadir Osman, *Transnational civic mobilisation and engagement, the case of Somali Diaspora in Denmark and the UAE*, Adonis Abbey, London, 2012, pp. 111–113.

<sup>242</sup> Tonsi Mary Jesuloganathan, "Hellere gift 30 gange end at leve i et ulykkeligt ægteskab: Et kvalitativt studie af en skilsmisses betydning for førstegeneration somaliske kvinder i Danmark" (Rather married 30 times than be in an unhappy marriage: A qualitative study of the first generation of Somali women in Denmark) 2010, at <http://projekter.aau.dk/projekter/files/38013031/Specieale30-09-10%20med%20forside.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2013).

<sup>243</sup> Tina Kallehave, "Hjem og hjemløshed blandt somaliske mænd: In- og eksklusionsprocesser" *Nord Nytt* 97 (2005), pp. 75–89.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with SH, Consultant and community organizer, 1 June 2013.

<sup>245</sup> Interview with AD, Consultant and community organizer, 20 June 2013.

<sup>246</sup> John Andersen and John Pløger, "Social Innovation and Empowerment Strategies in Deprived Urban Areas in Denmark. Challenges for Urban and Regional Governance". in Andrea Gallina and Søren Villadsen (eds), *New Challenges and Opportunities for Local Development, Social Cohesion and Innovation*, Ed-it, Catania, 2008, pp. 93–94.

them stand on Nørrebrograde chewing khat, many of them break down psychologically.<sup>247</sup>

This is a narrative of strong women and broken men repeated in the literature,<sup>248</sup> in other focus groups and in stakeholder interviews. At the Employment and Integration Administration, an employee described the Danish-Somalis as follows:

We don't see this Somali group as being especially deprived ... The Somali group, we have more women and they are of course characterised by their family structure ... The women we have, they are often very independent and they manage to be doing things, although they actually have a lot of children.

These Somali women are typically very motivated to get an education, also even if they have some health issues, also some genuine ones, they still perceive learning Danish, receiving an education, as things that matter. It fits quite well with them being the sole provider in a way, or at least that they carry the main responsibility for the children and for raising the family. They can handle that better, if they actually also go out there themselves and see what's going on.<sup>249</sup>

The discussion among the women in the focus groups suggests that the employment administration caseworkers' perception of Danish-Somali women as strong and competent is not recognised by the women themselves.

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<sup>247</sup> S1, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>248</sup> Bækkelund Jagd, "Medborger eller modborger?"; *Indvandrerkindecenter* (1997).

<sup>249</sup> Interview with LN, Employment and Integration Administration, 30 May 2013.



## 8. HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

This chapter examines Danish-Somalis' experiences of health and social protection. The chapter begins with some key data on their health status. A key focus of this chapter is in the methods and mechanisms for reaching out to Danish-Somalis via city and other officials to ensure that all services in the areas of health and social protection are being accessed. The chapter identifies problems of communication and understanding the health care system and social protection and highlights initiatives. The chapter also looks at Danish-Somalis' experiences of social welfare, in particular their fears about children's services, and mental-health services, where the impact of drug and substance misuse is discussed and the role this plays in the increasing number of homeless Danish-Somali men.

The information for the chapter came from interviews with key stakeholders and focus groups as well as the research and academic literature. There were seven women participating in the focus group on health and social protection, coming from different parts of the city (Nørrebro, Nordvest, Amager, Valby), most of them working (three social-and-health-assistants, a nurse, a pedagogue), the majority were mothers (with one to six children) and participating in peer-to-peer projects and assisting other Danish-Somalis.

### 8.1 Danish-Somalis and Health

Health and socio-economic situations usually coincide. A 2013 study from AE (Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd)<sup>250</sup> showed that poverty among ethnic-minority Danes increased dramatically between 2002 and 2011. Today 6,800 children in immigrant/descendant families are poor compared with 5,200 ethnic-majority children. This figure is even more significant considering that the ethnic-minority population is just 10.4 percent of the total population.<sup>251</sup>

A 2009 report from the National Institute of Public Health describes the general health of immigrants in Denmark as follows:

Immigrants are more vulnerable to a number of health problems, while disease patterns vary among ethnic groups. Overall immigrants judge their own state of health as being worse than ethnic Danes and experience stress more frequently. Several chronic diseases are more frequent, such as diabetes, while cancer is less

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<sup>250</sup> AE (Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd: Fattigdom i Danmark (The Labour Movement's Council for Trade and Industry: Poverty in Denmark), 16 August 2013.

<sup>251</sup> Statistics Denmark, *Indvandrere i Danmark* (Immigrants in Denmark), 2012.

frequent. Mental health is also worse with more immigrants experiencing chronic anxiety and depression than ethnic Danes.<sup>252</sup>

Medical studies have shown Danish-Somalis to be a vulnerable health group, with, for example, poorer dental health among children, lower frequency of attending breast cancer screenings<sup>253</sup> and high early child mortality.<sup>254</sup>

A study of Danish-Somalis and Sudanese found that their knowledge about HIV/AIDS was very poor.<sup>255</sup> Migrants, including Somalis, have an increased prevalence of TB compared with the general population.<sup>256</sup> However, TB does not seem to transmit between the migrant population and the majority population, which according to researchers is the result of poor integration (less contact) rather than good health care.<sup>257</sup> One stakeholder suggested that an increasing number of Danish-Somali children are being diagnosed with ADHD.<sup>258</sup>

## 8.2 City Policy

One of the four themes in the City's inclusion policy is "reaching out to vulnerable groups and areas". The goals of this policy include having more citizens "benefit from the City of Copenhagen's services". Responsibility for this part of the inclusion policy lies with the City's Culture and Leisure Committee, the Social Services Committee, the Children and Youth Committee, and the Health and Care Committee

The inclusion policy includes specific reference to minority youth with special needs as well, since they have problems with substance misuse. Under the terms of the Social Service Committee's 2011–2014 action plan,<sup>259</sup> the City wants the share of minority

<sup>252</sup> Teresa Holmberg, Nanna Ahlmark and Tine Curtis, *Etniske minoriteters sundhed i Danmark* (Ethnic minorities' health in Denmark). Copenhagen: National Institute of Public Health (NIPH), 2009.

<sup>253</sup> Linnea Lue Kessing, Marie Norredam Ann-Britt Kvernd, Anna Mygind and Maria Kristiansen, "Contextualising migrants' health behaviour—a qualitative study of transnational ties and their implications for participation in mammography screening", *BMC Public Health* 13 (2013), p. 431. At <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/431> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>254</sup> Grete Skøtt Pedersen, Laust Hvas Mortensen and Anne-Marie Nybo Andersen, "Ethnic variations in mortality in pre-school children in Denmark, 1973–2004", *Eur J Epidemiol* 26 (2011), pp. 527–536.

<sup>255</sup> Jeffrey V. Lazarus, Himedan Mohammed, Lise Rosendal Østergaard and Jerker Liljestrand, "HIV/AIDS knowledge and condom use among Somali and Sudanese immigrants in Denmark", *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 34 (2006), pp. 92–99.

<sup>256</sup> Z. Kamper-Jørgensen, A. B. Andersen, Al Kok-Jensen et al., "Migrant tuberculosis: the extent of transmission in a low burden country", *BMC Infectious Diseases* 12 (2012), pp. 60, at <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2334/12/60/> (accessed 8 September 2014) (hereafter, Kamper-Jørgensen et al., "Migrant tuberculosis").

<sup>257</sup> Kamper-Jørgensen et al., "Migrant tuberculosis".

<sup>258</sup> Interview with AO, project manager, Immigrant Women's Centre, 13 March 2013.

<sup>259</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Udvalgenes handleplaner for Integrationspolitikken 2011–2014.

youth with special needs completing their elementary school to be equal to the share of majority children with special needs completing their basic education; it also aims to increase the number of non-Western minority citizens with substance abuse problems in treatment.

The Health and Care Committee's action plan (2011–2014) aims to improve the health of ethnic-minority citizens who are outside the labour market.<sup>260</sup>

According to a 2012 study by the National Institute of Public Health (Statens Institut for Folkesundhed, NIPH),<sup>261</sup> the Copenhagen municipality has initiated activities and projects targeting ethnic minorities in several areas, including fitness and exercise, dental health, type II diabetes, support for trauma survivors and the development of peer education services such as neighbourhood mothers and health communicators.

### 8.3 Danish-Somalis' Experience of Health Care

#### 8.3.1 Knowledge and Understanding of the Health-care System

Based on both personal experience and experience from peer-to-peer social work, the participants in the health and social protection focus group highlighted a whole range of gaps and difficulties in the system.

The participants agreed that language barriers have a huge impact on their relationship with the system:

We tell the municipality council, when they've only misunderstood a mum, who is a good mother, and whom we know to be raising her children and to be passionate about participating in her child's life, but whom the council misunderstands, thinking, "She's not responding." But she doesn't understand [this], she really does want to. So then we explain to the council: "You need to be careful here. It's not because she's a bad mother, it's not because she wants this. It's just a misunderstanding, it's just the language barrier, it's just cultural differences, it's all these other things."<sup>262</sup>

Lack of knowledge and access to the system was another big obstacle: "So many women are unaware of the offers available, and that is what we show them."<sup>263</sup> This statement is reflected more generally among NGOs working on social problems among Danish-Somalis and is also related to the generation divide:

<sup>260</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Udvalgenes handleplaner for Integrationspolitikken 2011-2014.

<sup>261</sup> Nanna Bjerg Eskildsen, Dan Biswas and Nanna Ahlmark, *Indsatser målrettet etniske minoriteters sundhed i danske kommuner – En kortlægning af sundhedsfremme og forebyggelsesindsatser*, (Efforts aimed at the health of ethnic minorities in Danish municipalities. – A survey of health promotion prevention efforts), National Institute of Public Health, Syddansk University, Copenhagen, 2012.

<sup>262</sup> S2, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>263</sup> S1, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

I believe there is a large gulf between the old and the young, due to a lack of knowledge about Danish society and because a lack of education means that the older generation is unable to be part of the lives of the youth here in Denmark, and it means that they cannot support the younger generation through their education and so we see a lot of young people turning to crime—especially here in Tingbjerg and in other places such as Husum, where we see that many young Somalis are being raised on the streets. These are what I consider the largest challenges.<sup>264</sup>

One of the Danish-Somali stakeholders remembered his own experience of growing up in Copenhagen not many years ago:

I grew up in an area where there were a lot of immigrants. And we were a lot of young people. And there wasn't really anyone who took the initiative to do stuff with us. We were forgotten. There were a lot of things about the system here which we did not know about ... It was as if we were shut into a cage where we were only dealing with each other.<sup>265</sup>

The focus group participants also mentioned that newcomers do not get an adequate introduction into how to navigate the system:

When giving someone a residency permit, I think that person should also be given the right to learn about the culture, to learn the language and to learn ... but thousands of laws and regulations have been made and you cannot move.<sup>266</sup>

The damage of long stays in an asylum centre came up in discussion in several focus groups, when talk turned to explaining hardships:

If I talk about it, for example, when you've just left an asylum centre you receive something called start help. And when you start out in an asylum centre, before you are granted asylum, you live there and do not even have enough food to eat. My own mother lived in an asylum centre for many years while I lived here. My sister and I having been living here, and she only has two daughters, she couldn't live with us. She wasn't allowed to be in my house, she absolutely had to sleep at the asylum centre. She has diabetes and she needs to eat in smaller portions several times and she was not allowed to do that ... But the lives which the refugees lead there, it is inhumane, and then even before you are granted asylum you will have all kinds of damage done to your brain.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Interview with IS, social worker, Somali NGO, 10 May 2013.

<sup>265</sup> Interview with AK, Danish-Somali social worker, 25 March 2013.

<sup>266</sup> S2, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>267</sup> S2, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

### 8.3.2 Support for Accessing and Understanding Health-care Services

A key aspect of the municipality's work is the development of peer education activities, for example the Neighbourhood Mothers and health communicators mentioned above. The first of these, Neighbourhood Mothers,<sup>268</sup> is a private national organisation for training ethnic-minority women in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods to facilitate contact between the official system and ethnic-minority citizens, as well as disseminate information on health and social issues. In 2013, the municipality provided financial support for them.

The second, health communicators has been established since 2005 as part of a municipal project called Health in Your Language. In this project, a corps of health communicators (*sundhedsformidlere*)<sup>269</sup> of ethnic-minority people were trained in health issues, so that they could give presentations and conduct workshops with their fellow citizens. There are now 28 ethnic-minority citizens (of whom four are Danish-Somalis) who have been given 70 hours of training and are employed to participate as presenters and facilitators in meetings with ethnic-minority citizens. Some of the meetings are held on the premises of Danish-Somali associations or networks.<sup>270</sup>

One indication of the success of this approach is the request by health carers (*sundhedsplejerskerne*) for health communicators to be included in home visits. However, this has not been possible so far due to limited financial resources.<sup>271</sup>

Several stakeholders among the city officials and social workers interviewed on the health situation of the Danish-Somali community suggested that the health problems in this group are more substantial than is recognised and that they would find more information about the health situation valuable in order to better direct City services, given that health profiles produced by the municipality are only divided into ethnic minority/majority and Western/non-Western categories.

## 8.4 Social Welfare

The lack of understanding of the system and problems arising from poor communication was also a feature raised in relation to Danish-Somali interactions with social welfare services. The participants in the focus group on health and social protection expressed a general frustration about the rules, services and the administration of social benefits. One woman referred to an incident when she became sick and lost her job as a child-minder. In order to get a disability benefit she filled out the forms and sent them together with the

<sup>268</sup> See <http://bydelsmor.dk/bydelsmoedre> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>269</sup> Health Communicators explained for citizens of Copenhagen s. see <http://www.kk.dk/da/borger/sundhed-og-sygdom/forebyggelse-og-sundere-livsstil/sundhed-paa-dit-sprog> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>270</sup> Interview with TE, city official, Health Administration, 7 August 2013.

<sup>271</sup> Interview with TE, city official, Health Administration, 7 August 2013.

doctor's note. The municipality did not receive the papers and she had to re-send them. Afterwards she was told that she had broken the rules and that she could not get any financial support. She was informed that she could complain and did so, but the case took a very long time, and in the meantime she and her husband had only his salary to live on. She had been dropped from the system and as a consequence had no income for seven months. After sending many letters she abandoned hope of getting a resolution. The area where these issues are perhaps most acute is in the interaction of clients with the children's services.

#### 8.4.1 Fear of Having Children Removed from the Family

A decision by public authorities to remove children from their family requires an assessment that the child has special needs, and the municipality is obliged to conduct an investigation into the child's situation. If the municipality assesses the child to have special needs, various measures can be taken, of which removal from the family is considered as the most drastic. The municipality operates with two types of removal: a voluntary removal in which the parents give their consent and cooperate with the social workers; and a forced removal, which has to be proved before a judge, two elected politicians in the municipality and two experts. Complaints by the parents have to be taken to the regular courts.

Placement of the child whether from a voluntary or forced removal can be in an institution, in foster families or network homes and kinship homes. These homes are an alternative to placement in standard foster families where members may lack the linguistic skills to stimulate the mother tongue of the child and are not part of the social network of the child. A 2008 study showed that ethnic-minority children aged 13–17 were overrepresented among removals in this group, but underrepresented in the age group 6–12. Ethnic-minority children were overrepresented in the number of forced removals.<sup>272</sup>

In Copenhagen network consultants are employed to facilitate the placement of children with special needs in the network homes and kinship homes. In 2011, Copenhagen Municipality placed 1,406 children and young people outside their home for various lengths of time.<sup>273</sup> Most children were placed in Bispebjerg and the fewest in City/Østerbro.

The women in the focus group on health and social protection explained that being a good mother was an important dimension of being a Somali woman. Other focus groups also touched upon this. The fear of having children removed by the authorities

<sup>272</sup> Tina Hammen and Tina Gudrun Jensen. *Anbringelse af børn med etnisk minoritetsbaggrund* En forskningsoversigt, (Placement of ethnic minority children in care. A research survey),. Servicestyrelsen og Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd (Service Agency and the National Centre for Social Research), Servicestyrelsen 2010.

<sup>273</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, "Det sociale barometer for udsatte børn og unge" (The social barometer for vulnerable youth), 2012.

was depicted as the ultimate fear for a mother; several mothers mentioned being broken and never recovering from such incidents:

And when a Somali mother has her children taken away, it means a lot. It might be that a Danish woman would be able to manage, because somehow there is a difference, but a Somali mother, if her children are removed from the home, she will never be normal. She will eventually become psychologically ill. It means a lot to her, because she will not be able to re-enter Somali society, as she'll be scared to be branded as the woman who couldn't look after her children and then they were taken away. And she is angry with the Danish society for taking away her children, and she herself thinks that she was a good mother. Which I think that she was. Or that a lot of them are.<sup>274</sup>

According to participants in the focus group on health and social protection, this fear was a decisive factor leading parents to hide needs and problems and needs in the family for as long as possible, for example mental health problems and children's needs. One of the participants talked about the Danish-Somali children being overlooked:

How is it that this child is lost within the system at some point? Again, when we look at the statistics, at the crime rate, immigrants rank very highly compared with ethnically Danish citizens. Why is that? It is because child-minders, teachers, various authorities close their eyes to the problems.<sup>275</sup>

A social worker with an ethnic-minority background who had worked in Nørrebro in a family team, explained the experiences from a mediator's position within the system:

It was rough to start out there, it was in Nørrebro, there were a lot of ethnic parents, who had a case open with the council and misunderstandings and conflicts defined the relationship between them. They thought, okay they'll come in and take away our children, the council is out to get us, and then I would have to explain ... a lot of them do refuse to collaborate, because they are scared, and that's when it goes completely wrong, and they are taken away. There hasn't been any processes in between, because there hasn't been any communication or bridging.<sup>276</sup>

Another social worker emphasised the lack of foster families with a Danish-Somali background in order to improve the cultural competences in foster families and to reduce fear among families in need.<sup>277</sup>

In the Social Administration, the Ethnic Consultancy (*Etnisk Konsulentteam*) service is offered to professionals in the city working with young people in cases involving

<sup>274</sup> S2, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>275</sup> S3, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

<sup>276</sup> M3, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>277</sup> Interview with AO, project manager, Immigrant Women's Centre, 5 March 2013.

situations perceived to be related to ethnic-minority cultural phenomena such as social control, forced marriages, honour killings and “re-education” trips. The consultancy has been involved in a few cases with Danish-Somali families, but most of them are about “re-education” or “culture” trips for young boys on the brink of a criminal career or serious problems. The team’s approach is to facilitate dialogue between the family and the system and to try to both assess the situation and suggest solutions and strategies. Long-term trips outside Denmark for non-citizens can jeopardise their residence permit, and for children this rule is strict. After three months abroad on a re-education or culture trip or any other kind of stay abroad, children lose their permanent residence permit because the authorities have made a policy that this sort of travel undermines education and integration.<sup>278</sup>

### 8.5 Mental Health Problems and Substance Abuse

Mental health problems and conditions are concerns that touch both health care and social protection. In the focus group on health and social protection the participants agreed that there are many Danish-Somalis with mental health problems who do not receive appropriate treatment and care. One participant referred to a case where a woman was only treated with medication and was living in a filthy apartment, another referred to an incident where she had to alert the police a number of times before they responded and picked up a mentally ill and suicidal woman and brought her to the emergency room. Whether these incidents are a product of the generally limited mental health-care system in Denmark or a specific Danish-Somali experience is difficult to assess. Social and health-care workers interviewed for this study suggested that more attention needs to be paid to the mental health-care needs of Danish-Somalis. Two Danish-Somali health professionals asserted that the methods of treatment of Danish-Somali persons with mental illnesses have improved, but at the same time resources have become scarce. However, a recent article<sup>279</sup> by a Danish-Somali psychiatrist also emphasised the need to build trust by giving the community more information about psychiatric treatment. For instance, distrust in the Danish psychiatric system led a family to send a schizophrenic young man to Somaliland, where he was locked up and chained in an Elaj, which is a psychiatric institution run by people who believe that mental illness can be treated with Quranic recitation, electric impulses and herbs. The young man was later sent back to Denmark and received treatment in a Danish psychiatric hospital.

In the focus group on identity, mental health problems and the connection with being a refugee, gender, marriage and drug use and abuse were discussed among the participants.

<sup>278</sup> Ministry of Migration, Integration, Asylum: Rules and regulations on migration: [http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/Ophold/hvis\\_du\\_forlader\\_dk/asyl\\_og\\_familiesammenfoering](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/Ophold/hvis_du_forlader_dk/asyl_og_familiesammenfoering) (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>279</sup> Fatuma Ali, “Psykotisk dreng I Danmark sendt til åndebehandling I Somalia” (Psychotic boy sent to Somalia for treatment by spirits), *Dagens Medicin*, 14 February 2014.



It makes me think of Nørrebro, where there are a lot of men and increasingly women too who are psychologically unwell, who have substance-abuse problems. Then you have to work out how to help all of those who are addicted to chewing khat. Khat-chewing leads to many things, depression, paranoia etc. You also need to determine who has been traumatised, as the majority are refugees. In Copenhagen you still need to look into this. If you go to a homeless shelter, most of the Somali men are there and it is worrying, how few of us there are here, and how many of them you can find there. And also, it is expensive for society.<sup>280</sup>

Some people, who did not have psychological problems when they arrived in Denmark, but because they now have some money and somewhere to sleep, they also have easy access to khat. So when you chew it every day, you just sleep all day and after two to three years they're given early retirement, even though the person is 30 years old. So you find many Somalis, who are given early retirement because of khat abuse. They ought to help them and figure out how they might get out of their khat addiction.<sup>281</sup>

I still think it might be more complicated than that, naturally because I've read about it. They are given money, they buy khat, yes, but then why do they choose to chew it? From what I've read, it might either be family problems or some sort of an identity crisis, or it might be that they just don't feel good about themselves.<sup>282</sup>

There was widespread agreement among Somalis participating in the Open Society Foundations' research that the relationship between changing gender roles and the social downfall of many Danish-Somali men is linked to the widespread phenomenon of khat and alcohol abuse and homelessness.

I think a lot is asked of the men when they come to Europe. For us women it is easier, because there are washing machines here.<sup>283</sup>

That might be right, but don't forget that in Somalia it is the man who has to provide for the family in most cases. The man has the power, he is the one who decides everything. So when you arrive in Denmark, where the woman also receives money, and due to the system in Denmark he can be kicked out of the family immediately. So in that way, a role reversal happens, when you arrive in Denmark. And because of that, the man doesn't take any responsibility, he just

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<sup>280</sup> 12, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.

<sup>281</sup> 11, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.

<sup>282</sup> 13, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.

<sup>283</sup> 12, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.

goes out and chews khat or becomes an alcoholic and moves out of the family home.<sup>284</sup>

The voluntary and professional social workers interviewed mentioned a range of vulnerable groups in the Danish-Somali population, including the homeless.

Especially people with alcohol or khat abuse problems, they're the ones who go through being homeless. There are quite a few, especially here in Copenhagen. It is mostly due to the social problems. There are also some who find it hard to pay rent. Many experience problems with evictions because they didn't make their rent payments within the month. The municipality is unable to do much about it, because there isn't really any free housing here in Copenhagen.<sup>285</sup>

There was a general feeling in all the interviews that the older Danish-Somali men, more than the women, are the more vulnerable, more often homeless, drug abusers and lost in the system:

Those men specifically are very much at risk. They are on khat the entire time, and they are really very much at risk, compared with the men of Arab descent.<sup>286</sup>

A social worker who is working with homeless people in Copenhagen stated that Danish-Somali men are seldom found sleeping outdoors like other homeless groups. Many Danish-Somali homeless men end up at Sundholm, a municipal shelter and activity centre for socially vulnerable individuals in Copenhagen. The social worker reports that Danish-Somalis who move on from khat and cannabis to hard drugs avoid getting help and advice (and clean needles) that they may get in a private shelter because they fear word of their decline will get back to the Danish-Somali community. Drug abuse and mental health problems are taboo in the community, whereas khat and cannabis use and abuse do not seem to carry the same stigma.

The Isbedel project in Copenhagen on drug and khat abuse that ran from 2006 to 2009<sup>287</sup> targeted Somalis and was regarded as successful; its closure was seen as a loss. The primary target group of the project was 30–40 homeless men with Danish-Somali background and substance abuse problems, and the second target group was khat users. The aim of the project was to reduce substance abuse, and develop and disseminate new methods of treatment. The core of the project was to develop outpatient treatment and courses of dialogue. This was done in the street through cooperation with the psychiatrist, Fatuma Ali, or in the network through personal relations. These courses

<sup>284</sup> I3, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.

<sup>285</sup> Interview with IS, social worker, Somali NGO, 10 May 2013.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with IR, Social Administration, head of after-school institution, 28 May 2013.

<sup>287</sup> Anders Pedersen and Klaus Toudahl, *Evaluering af Projekt Isbeddel. Projekt Rådgivning af somaliere med misbrug* (Evaluation of Project Isbeddel. Project Counselling for Somalis with substance abuse), Copenhagen Municipality, 2009 (hereafter, Pedersen and Toudahl, *Evaluering af Projekt Isbeddel*).

successfully facilitated treatment, housing initiatives, employment, and provided a pathway to the rest of the social system.<sup>288</sup>

Homelessness is on the rise among younger people, including Danish-Somalis, including girls, due to a lack of affordable accommodation as well as drug abuse, and mental health and social problems.<sup>289</sup> A social worker working with young homeless people in Copenhagen said that the Danish-Somalis who end up homeless at the shelter are driven by the desire to live in a larger city, but they often arrive with few resources:

I think coming to Copenhagen, it is probably the same for everyone not from Copenhagen, that when you reach the big city, well that's where it's all happening, and once you reach there you won't be coming back here ... a lot of Somalis I've met, they just arrive. Or they just come here, because they don't have anything holding them back where they come from, or bad family relations; for different reasons.<sup>290</sup>

The same social worker estimated that of the 30 places at the shelter for young homeless people, 60 percent were occupied by Danish-Somalis and of these, 15 percent were women or girls. The young homeless people at the shelter often had problems with alcohol in combination with khat and/or cannabis. Added to the problems of referring the young people to proper treatment, housing and other services, it also seemed to be difficult to motivate them to change their situation because of what the social worker characterised as a society with an "anti-Somali" attitude:

But it is just difficult for me to tell any Somalis that you just have to keep fighting etc., etc., because I see that behind this, reality is slightly different, because they say, well okay, if we do all of this, get out of crime, enter into rehabilitation for substance abuse, if we do this and do that, well, what then? Will there be a job, will it be easier to get into a nightclub? Will we then not be spat on in the streets? Will people stop calling us terrorists, etc., etc. you know?<sup>291</sup>

A third social worker emphasised the need for Danish-Somali young people who grew up in socially vulnerable housing areas to be lifted to the level of other young people before they reached the age of 18 and became adults:

I see that there are also many young Somalis who do not feel comfortable around other people. It is as if they struggle to keep up. What they need is for someone to

<sup>288</sup> Pedersen and Toudahl, *Evaluering af Projekt Isbeddel*. 2009

<sup>289</sup> Interviews with EN, supervisor, Education Administration, 14 May 2013; RT, Outside project/Projekt Udenfor, 13 May 2013; UN, social worker, shelter for homeless young people, 21 May 2013.

<sup>290</sup> Interview with UN, social worker, shelter for homeless young people, 21 May 2013.

<sup>291</sup> UN, social worker, shelter for homeless young people, 21 May 2013.

lift them up, to make an effort and activate them so the youth will be able to enter into the system, you know. If you don't put in that effort while they're very young, it is then difficult to reach them when they're 18 years old.<sup>292</sup>

Unaccompanied minors were also mentioned by several social workers as particularly vulnerable. Some become homeless in Copenhagen, like other young people who move to Copenhagen from other parts of Denmark and do not have networks or opportunities.

On top of that, there are also those who are unaccompanied. And they are probably some of the saddest cases I've ever met. He didn't know anyone, the friends he had were only there because he was good at selling and buying hash.

One just has to recognise that some people fall out and fly under the radar ... He was so far out and so deep into crime and substance abuse, hash dealing, that all his teeth were gone. And worst of all, he has now disappeared again.

None of the other Somalis wanted to speak to him at all, not as I understood it from the homelessness unit. I also think there is a culture of self-justification, where some will just say, you sort that out for yourself. I don't know, and I can't find him now because he's moved out of the municipality of Copenhagen, and then they do oftentimes disappear.<sup>293</sup>

According to several of those interviewed, structural mechanisms that reduce the amount of affordable accommodation affect the Danish-Somali population:

We are currently hard at work pushing those who do not have very much money away ... it just hasn't been a priority to build decent student housing at an affordable cost. It is ridiculous to be on a budget in the municipality of Copenhagen, now that they're building 105 housing units—it is laughable. 12,000 young students move to Copenhagen every year, of course that increases the pressure. [Some of them become homeless.] They live on the streets, or they couch-hop and sleep at their friends' places until they no longer have any friends, as one of them told me, and it's the same for everyone.<sup>294</sup>

## 8.6 The Role of Bridge-builders and Mediators

Copenhagen's inclusion policy concentrates on outreach initiatives in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods, by:

Strengthening initiatives for poor and disadvantaged families via e.g. the Family Coach scheme; strengthening mentoring schemes, such as Urban Mothers, in disadvantaged housing areas, thereby utilising residents' resources; ensuring that

<sup>292</sup> Interview with AK, Danish-Somali social worker, 25 March 2013.

<sup>293</sup> Interviews with EN, supervisor, Education Administration, 14 May 2013.

<sup>294</sup> Interviews with EN, supervisor, Education Administration, 14 May 2013.

more children and young people take part in leisure activities, e.g. via permanent discount schemes; better cohesion between the City of Copenhagen's initiatives and between job, education, health and social initiatives; reducing waiting lists for club places.<sup>295</sup>

A number of organisations and individuals involved in this research had taken on the role of assisting fellow citizens with contacts, communication, and complaints between citizens and public institutions and authorities, called bridge-builders. In the perception of many people, everything linked to the system (such as housing companies, social welfare, job centres, schools, hospitals and the like) is part of the municipality. Such bridge-builders are needed to ensure that people get the help and assistance they need, even though the actual situation of people in need was characterized as frustrating.

The bridge-builders are formally organised. Workers usually already have some experience with an ethnic-minority organisation, as well as a relevant professional and educational background. The members of the corps are normally paid by the hour; a few of them work full-time. There is also a bridge-building team within the City's administration, the Ethnic Consultancy team (see above), which facilitates contact between the city officials and ethnic-minority residents to discuss social control, forced marriage, honour killings and so on. Currently 18 bridge builders are working in different neighbourhoods in Copenhagen. They undergo three months of education and training in social legislation, psychology and psychiatry, youth and identity, conversation skills and conflict management.

The bridge-builders in the Somali Mothers Building Bridges (Somaliske Mødre Bygger Bro) are organised by the Immigrant Women's Centre. They are paid an hourly rate and often combine education and/or work in the welfare system with their role as bridge-builders. Participants in the health and social protection focus group had worked with the project Somali Mothers Building Bridges, and discussed how they facilitate contact between citizens and the authorities in a way that informs both the Danish-Somalis and the relevant case worker in the municipality, the local police or another responsible authority:

We understand their culture, we understand their language. And it means a lot to express oneself in the language they know. Moreover, our job as bridge-builders is that we strengthen the mothers' ability to help herself.<sup>296</sup>

While identifying the positive contribution they can make, they recognise that they supplement and support existing services that need to be effective. They regret that the service was not available earlier, as it they feel it could have helped prevent the development of some of the problems that Danish-Somalis face today:

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<sup>295</sup> Copenhagen's Integration Policy 2011–2014.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with AO, project manager, Immigrant Women's Centre, 5 March 2013.

It is a big task and we are not able to lift this alone, it is too heavy ... It is because, maybe if we had started this when we first arrived here, in the early 90s, late 80s, then maybe things would have been different today. Many have not learnt the language, they might be in serious debt because they have been cheated repeatedly and haven't been able to pay the bills. Their children have already become involved in crime, so it is too late. Now we need to try and fix what has happened, so we need someone to help us.<sup>297</sup>

They also suggested concrete improvements such as assisting mothers and families in their homes instead of removing the children; integrating more cultural knowledge into the training curriculum of social and health professionals; ensuring interpretation exists if needed; reducing the checks and monitoring of ever changing rules and replace them with information and assistance; increasing the number of bridge-builders; supporting young boys (the bridge-builders are establishing a mentor network for them); and persuading the public authorities to acknowledge that families rather than just individuals need the support of the municipality.

Men and women in various kinds of voluntary and professional social work, ethnic minority and majority, inside the municipality and outside, are doing this important but not very visible work to inform and support vulnerable communities.

### **8.7 Need for Improved Cultural Competence in the Educational System and Among Social-work and Health Professionals**

In a way, the bridge-builders concept reflects the lack of cultural competence among professionals. The focus group on health and social protection agreed on the need to improve cultural competence generally in the education of welfare professionals:

I think [health care workers] have learnt, the ones working in the municipality of Copenhagen, they've learnt a bit more. They just come through the door with their shoes still on. Our carpets are supposed to be clean, you're not allowed to wear shoes. But they respect this now, because they understand the reasoning; it is because we pray.

Because their education is about caring for people, so in that way, nurses and doctors, they have to save lives, they have to give comfort and in that way, their education helps them to be more humanist. But they also have cultural issues. But the school teachers haven't been taught that aspect of caring, which the doctors, nurses and carers have learnt. And maybe the teaching aides and after-school staff have also learnt about relationships and guidance.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Interview with AO, project manager, Immigrant Women's Centre, 5 March 2013.

<sup>298</sup> S2, Health and social protection focus group, 26 March 2013.

One of the stakeholders, who provides teaching and training for welfare professionals, also emphasised the need to raise the general level of cultural competence among those teaching and training to work in welfare services:

You can say that it is quite funny, that half, if not more of our students are from minority groups. It is not a point one puts forward. Now we've been discussing the pedagogical areas a lot. But bloody no one talks about cultural understanding ... There's no one talking about it, at all, there's no knowledge about it. We have had something about supervision, about difficult conversations and all these other things. But with regards to minority groups, in relation to cultural understanding ... they don't exist at all.<sup>299</sup>

Many of the stakeholders interviewed stressed the need for better integration and mainstreaming of cultural competences in the general educational system for welfare professionals and as part of their continued training.

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<sup>299</sup> Interview with NS, teacher, secondary elementary school, 28 May 2013.

## 9. POLICING AND SECURITY

### 9.1 Experiences with the Police

The police in Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland constitute one national force, employed directly by the state. The Minister of Justice, who is the chief police authority, exercises his powers through the National Commissioner and the Commissioners of the police districts. In all districts, there is a main police station that provides round-the-clock service and a number of local police stations that serve the citizens of the community in the daytime. Throughout the country, the police participate in cooperation with local authorities, schools and associations, for example organised in municipal Social Authorities, Schools and Police (SSP) cooperative schemes, where much of the crime prevention work is carried out.<sup>300</sup>

Within the organisation the police is organised into centralised units covering a whole city or part of the city / special tasks, or to local police stations covering targeted smaller often socially vulnerable areas in the city.

In the late 1990s, the police's attitudes towards the public and diversity were openly debated as part of a general equal treatment agenda. In 1999 the Copenhagen police produced a "Strategic Memorandum", "The relationship between the Copenhagen Police Force and ethnic minorities",<sup>301</sup> in which the police commissioner emphasised the importance of ethnic-minority groups perceiving the police as:

just, helpful and non-discriminating ... it is important that police officers do not generalise on the basis of appearance and behaviour linked to negative experiences with criminal immigrants, but realize that 95 percent of immigrants are law-abiding and respectable fellow-citizens, who want a good relation with the police.<sup>302</sup>

The police have implemented anti-discrimination training courses for staff.

The focus group on policing and security included three men, one a 22-year-old student, substitute teacher and volunteer with activities for Danish-Somali children, one 28 years old and unemployed, and the third a 40-year-old unemployed father, volunteering with Danish-Somali families and children. None of the participants had ever reported a case to the police. In general in the focus groups, participants'

<sup>300</sup> See the official website of the police force at [www.politi.dk](http://www.politi.dk) (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>301</sup> Copenhagen Police, "Københavns Politis forhold til de etniske minoriteter" ("Copenhagen Police Strategic Memorandum on the relationship between the Copenhagen Police Force and ethnic minorities", Politidirektørens Orientering no. 6, 1999 (hereafter, Copenhagen Police, "Strategic Memorandum"), quoted in Documentation and Advisory Centre on Racial Discrimination (DRC), *En afrikaner med røde øjne! – Rapport om politiets praksis i forbindelse med visitationer* (An African with red eyes! – report on police practice related to visitation). Rapport, 2011.

<sup>302</sup> Copenhagen Police, "Strategic Memorandum", p. 44 (hereafter, DRC, *En afrikaner med røde øjne!*).



assessment of the police and relationships with the police were divided into experiences with the central police, the local police and the PET. The central police was associated with negative experiences, but both the local police and the PET were held in positive regard. Experiences with the police were brought up in other focus groups such as the focus groups for younger men, older women, health and social protection and the media.

The focus group on policing and security agreed that Somalis' relations with the police were often founded in their experiences in Sandholm refugee camp. One of the participants told a story from the camp of being falsely accused by the police of lying about not having received a summons to report to the police, and then it turned out that the police had not summoned him at all. The point of the story was that the narrator had had the opportunity to prove that the police wrong and do something about it, which was a rare experience. Another participant agreed:

We don't know the rules or the laws ... there is this tendency of not complaining. We just got used to it from the asylum seeking days of takin' and takin' and takin' ... when something happens now the last thing I think about is complaining. I just think it happened. I forget it and move on. Even when racist incidents happen, Somalis they just move on, because they are used to it. It's nothing new, it's nothing shocking.<sup>303</sup>

The general mistrust of the police as an institution was also reflected in the assessment of what reporting crimes to the police means:

A lot of Somalis when they have problems at home or they have problems within the society, they will not go to the police because they don't trust the police.<sup>304</sup>

## 9.2 Local and Central Police

The difference between the local and the central police was highlighted both in the focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews, pointing to problematic and confrontational attitudes with the central police as those who do not know and are not known in the neighbourhood:

[The police] like having that power over people most of them and especially if you're Somali or even foreigner then it is more difficult ... [The central police] who are setting up these check points are not the local police, that know these kids. They are from Nordsjælland or different ... who are not used to dealing with angry foreign kids ... and that creates this tension and drama and the kids they burn things and instead of the police make their presence felt at home ... there are definitely differences between the local and ones who come from

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<sup>303</sup> P1, Policing and security focus group, 6 August 2013.

<sup>304</sup> P1, Policing and security focus group, 6 August 2013.

outside and try to control kids. And the thing is there are not many foreign police officers in this system, so they think that the police is the evil white men who are gonna put you in prison ... so the whole thing escalates and now even the normal Danish people, they ... even though they need the police ... most of them ... the youth are not as happy to see the police so the police have dented their image and ruined their image ... in general.<sup>305</sup>

One of the Danish-Somali stakeholders spoke about an incident when two officers (both ethnic-majority Danish) arrived in a car and patrolled the neighbourhood with two dogs the locals named Allah and Muhammed.

I say to the police, what are you doing, is it to provoke the youth? There is someone who says to the young people "Leave, or I'll send the dogs after you." I tell him to remember his uniform. This won't solve the conflict, it will only aggravate it. So they get into their car and drive off. It was pure provocation. Those two often come and everyone knows them.<sup>306</sup>

In contrast, the local police officer in the neighbourhood was praised by the same stakeholder for his good skills: "He is a regular police officer ... Other policemen are very different. [He] doesn't need to show superiority, he knows, that the uniform alone is adequate."<sup>307</sup>

At least one of the Danish-Somali stakeholders challenged the view that the police were discriminating. He thought that those who had problems with the police were those who had problems in general:

I wouldn't call it discrimination. The police is all right with Danish-Somalis. I think the only ones who have issues with them are the young people. There are starting to be many young Danish-Somalis who figure negatively in statistics, in relation to crime and so on. So the only problem is, it is actually in this area. Especially in those ghetto areas, like Tingbjerg etc., so it is a bit of a shame that there are many issues with the young. ... I don't have too many worries with regards to the police. I don't feel that there are so many problems with the police, I haven't experienced it too much. I think the police does a good job.<sup>308</sup>

Another stakeholder, a social worker who works with young people, praised the local police for their good cooperation:

Well, previously ... there was something happening all the time. When it is going well, our cooperation with the police is very smooth. If there are some issues, then ... Lately it's been going well. Our local police officer, he's a really

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<sup>305</sup> P1, Policing and security focus group, 6 August 2013.

<sup>306</sup> Interview with AI, activist, Danish-Somali NGO, 29 January 2013.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with AI, activist, Danish-Somali NGO, 29 January 2013.

<sup>308</sup> Interview with IS, social worker, Somali NGO, 10 May 2013.

good guy who knows the kids and knows how to tackle the problems out here ... he is really good at dealing with the kids. He comes out here wearing his uniform and they want to play with his car and ... so when you open up, that's when young people feel safer. Instead of the police being bastards, you know. Sometimes on the Saturdays, he'll come out here too. I think that that's really cool.<sup>309</sup>

Some stakeholders were content with the approach of the PET, where cooperation and trust were important values.

### 9.3 Stop and Search

A qualitative study<sup>310</sup> on the experiences of 20 young visible ethnic-minority men being searched in Nørrebro in 2010–2011 showed the subjects had feelings of being singled out in random searches because of their ethnicity, and of humiliation and shame because of being wrongly treated as a criminal. The impact of being repeatedly targeted in random searches developed into routine emotions of anger and powerlessness. Those who were stopped felt that ethnic profiling by the police was linked to the understanding that the police are hostile to immigrants and Muslims.<sup>311</sup>

In the focus group on policing and security, all three of the men mentioned above had been stopped in the street by the police for various reasons. One of the participants, who had also lived in the UK for several years, was very tired of it.

The police ... when they see Somalis driving, they have already planted in their heads the idea that Somalis are criminals or they have khat or they are doing something wrong ... I don't want to generalise about the entire police department but if you experience the same thing again and again you start to believe this, even though people say it is just one time ... you start to believe that the whole police in this city is just after Somalis.<sup>312</sup>

Similar experiences were expressed in the focus group with older women:

But in our neighbourhood the young people have problems and the problem is the police. They [the police] will stop you at three different points [in our neighbourhood] and every time our young boys walk past they will be stopped. Their intention is to pressure them and they can't defend themselves.<sup>313</sup>

In the focus group discussions with young men the respondents had experienced being stopped by the police:

<sup>309</sup> Interview with AK, Danish-Somali social worker, 25 March 2013.

<sup>310</sup> DRC, En afrikaner med røde øjne!

<sup>311</sup> DRC, En afrikaner med røde øjne!

<sup>312</sup> P1, Policing and security focus group, 6 August 2013.

<sup>313</sup> OW1, Older women focus group, 2 February 2013.

I don't mind them body searching us if you're not hiding anything or are carrying anything and I guess you can say that we've been used to looking different and to being treated differently, that's been throughout the time we've lived in Denmark, that maybe you have had to work harder in some places and maybe would have to be a little bit more ... careful about where you go ... you also think well, now again, well eventually it becomes normal behaviour in your head, but sometimes it does test your patience ... at some point you do get sick of it, because I always need to factor in a certain delay if I'm travelling to somewhere and I've had to explain myself and show that I'm not the person who's listed in their database. So that's pretty annoying.<sup>314</sup>

#### 9.4 The Police's Experiences with the Danish-Somalis

A local police officer recalled his experience in learning how to work productively in a multicultural area. When he started as a local officer he subscribed to a zero-tolerance strategy towards the young boys and men:

I'll say, if I can talk about my own role out there in the beginning, I was this very square person, who got out there, and basically didn't feel they should be allowed to mess with me. I wanted to do a zero tolerance approach, and tried that for about a year, and realised that it wasn't working for me. I could easily work in collaboration with a club and a school and a board out there etc., but the youth didn't let me in.<sup>315</sup>

As part of a new strategy the officer was positioned in the neighbourhood as the beat cop who should prioritise talking to and getting to know the young people, while other officers did the patrolling and searching.

I felt it was working. But the problem in the area is that people aren't uniform, there are some who feel that they are being handled with too much leniency, the kids who are noisy on the streets at night, and they play loud music from open cars from 11 pm when others are tucking their children in to bed. I understand that ... When I was doing the zero tolerance approach out there, we had burning containers every night as a reaction to our behaviour, and we had stones thrown at our dog patrols driving past, and it meant that the situation escalated and we had a conflict situation every time we went out there. There was a bad atmosphere. When we changed this, the atmosphere became better, however some citizens out there now don't think we're doing enough. There's always a balance [to strike]. I then chose for us to keep this [balance].<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> YM3, Young men focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>315</sup> Interview with OK, police officer (local), 7 May 2013.

<sup>316</sup> Interview with OK, police officer (local), 7 May 2013.

According to the officer interviewed, the crime rate is now very low in the area, the cost of vandalism in the housing area has fallen from DKK 1 million per year (€34,350) to zero and the police officers benefit from a well-functioning network of teachers, social workers and NGOs who cooperate on taking care of the children and young people.

However, internal issues within the police are still difficult to tackle. One is the paradox that a peaceful situation can motivate the police management to move the officers from the neighbourhood to other more troublesome areas and thereby risking the good progress made:

I myself feel that I have been part of, not individually, there were a lot of people who've spent a lot more time on it than I did in other institutions etc., but I feel that we have turned the developments out there in a positive direction. I feel that there is very little crime going on out there. So I am satisfied. My problem simply is, that management looks at these statistics and sees that out in this area nothing is happening, "Could we maybe use him out in Nørrebro where loads is going on?"<sup>317</sup>

The conflict escalation with the central patrols served to emphasise the role of the local officer, which is founded very much upon his personal relations and local reputation:

If we try to avoid these conflicts between police and youth we then don't need for it to get going again out there, because sometimes it only takes a spark, we've experienced going on a mission in the evening and then for everything to fall apart the next day. Because there is loads of tension, which isn't being vented at the moment, as they feel that we're an adversary. We are not the adversary right now, at least I'm not, but there might easily be an evening where a dog patrol drives past a group of kids and they walk over to them and turn their pockets inside out, finding nothing, and the kids will feel they've been treated unfairly. "We haven't done anything wrong and standing on the street is not illegal." So it doesn't take a lot. I think we should try and maintain this good relationship.<sup>318</sup>

It is easier for me to talk to the young than it is to speak to the dog patrol. These dog patrols can destroy six months of my work in a single evening, definitely, I've experienced that. When I attend crisis meetings over there, to try and calm this lynching atmosphere which arises because they simply feel that they have been treated poorly and there are different attitudes within the police and not everyone thinks in terms of crime prevention, it is also not everyone who thinks that they are destroying my work. It can be difficult to coordinate approaches between departments, because I don't necessarily know the situation, and there's always two sides to a story, and there are loads of kids who act provokingly, I know that, and they do, because they want stuff to happen, and they can easily drive a dog patrol up into the highest gear. So I've actually experienced that if

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<sup>317</sup> Interview with OK, police officer (local), 7 May 2013.

<sup>318</sup> Interview with OK, police officer (local), 7 May 2013.

you're just completely cool and don't let them wind you up, you can win far more battles, because they want you to get wound up.<sup>319</sup>

### 9.5 Recruiting Police from Ethnic Minorities

Over the years the government has implemented recruitment campaigns for education as police officers and created networks in the police force of ethnic-minority officers. However, the proportion of ethnic-minority police officers is still small. According to a study by the Institute for Human Rights, 98.6 percent of officers had an ethnic Danish background and just 1.4 percent had an ethnic-minority background in the Danish police force in 2011.<sup>320</sup> In that same year Police Academy cadets with an ethnic-minority background represented 4.4 percent of the total number of cadets (0.5 percent of Western origin, and 3.9 percent of non-Western origin).<sup>321</sup> It was not possible in the Open Society Foundations' research to identify any police officer in Copenhagen with a Somali background. The focus group on policing and security suggested that the general mistrust and dislike of the police among younger Somalis discourages them from entering the force themselves.

The participants in the focus group on policing and security expressed their worries about legal justice as related to arrests and media coverage, but in general they trusted the court system.

### 9.6 Bridge-building

In the focus group on health and social protection, a meeting with a local police officer who was part of the SSP cooperation with Danish-Somali women in the local neighbourhood was mentioned as an important relation-building initiative.

For example, we've had an SSP employee and many women didn't know that you could seek out someone like that when encountering problems at school or elsewhere. And many say that in a way they are scared of you, because if you come into my home, I just see a woman in a uniform ... and I can also come wearing my civilian clothes, it doesn't make a difference. I'm here to build bridges, to help. It is not because I'm here to arrest you or anything like that. Then they sort of calm down a bit more. "Okay well I might call you if something comes up." So many women don't even know the available services, and that's what we show them.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Interview with OK, police officer (local), 7 May 2013.

<sup>320</sup> Institute for Human Rights, "Etnisk mangfoldighed i politiet. Ligebehandlingsafdelingen" (Ethnic diversity in the police force. Department for Equality), 2012.

<sup>321</sup> Institute for Human Rights, "Etnisk mangfoldighed i politiet. Ligebehandlingsafdelingen" (Ethnic diversity in the police force. Department for Equality), 2012.

<sup>322</sup> P1, Focus group on policing and security, 6 August 2013.

During a period of gang shootings<sup>323</sup> in Copenhagen, the Employment and Integration Administration organised a meeting between a Danish-Somali women's organisation and the police through one of their projects, which, according to an interview was fruitful and built up trust:

In some contexts, it is awhile back, 3–4 years ago, when the gang wars were starting up, when there was a lot of uncertainty in several areas, and where we had a Somali women's association among others, which we had a meeting with, where a policeman also attended. It was insanely interesting and there was a really good, good dialogue between him and them and he listened to their worries and they listened to him and his different stories and how they could support their children and keep them out of some of these situations ... It was my impression that at that time, they were very much being taken seriously, this group of women. That is actually also my experience, in different contexts, when there are representatives of different associations. Of course it depends on where you sit and in what contexts, but it is also difficult because the amount of stereotypes surrounding Somalis is incredible, and many have very negative ideas about all the things they aren't allowed to do and you need to sort of sweep that out of the way and if the authorities start to realise how many resources there are within these communities, I have a feeling that then, the way in which this very diverse group is approached will start to change.<sup>324</sup>

## 9.7 Criminality

There was wide agreement across focus group discussions and interviews that the link to social and economic hardship must be acknowledged when addressing crime and violent radicalisation. In the focus group on policing and security, the overrepresentation of Danish-Somalis in the crime figures was linked to the generational situation in many families. According to the participants, the threat of the children being removed undermines the family or the father's authority, leading to children—especially boys—getting out of control and taking part in dangerous or illegal activities. A focus group participant recalled how his own father corrected him by commanding him to clean the kitchen for one month, which disciplined him and at the same time taught him how to cook and clean.

Another participant referred to the interplay between different actors and situations, also causing an overrepresentation of Danish-Somalis in crime statistics:

<sup>323</sup> During the last decade conflicts have broken out between different criminal groups most often fighting over the drug market. Some of these criminal groups are labelled immigrant gangs and others motorcycle gangs. In some incidents they have taken the conflict to the streets and several people have been shot dead.

<sup>324</sup> Interview with NE, city official, Employment Administration, Inclusion section, 14 May 2013.

I think it is everybody's fault. The government has let them down, the council has let them down, the parents who are not there for them, the Somali communities ... this not a perfect community ... it should have joined together and done something about it ... What the municipality does not understand is that these children and these parents are not your average Danish parents. They have different mentality, different traditions.<sup>325</sup>

The Somali community does not have enough role models ... their parents are all on benefits, ... the young don't understand how serious crime is ... the community within itself ... the Somali community is very divided between families and different things so it is not one big community. It is a community within a community within a family ... the ones that lose out are the young boys ... they have no role model, they have no job, they have no education, they think everyone is against them, they think the police is racist ... they get friends like them who are lost and when you get a group of lost boys with no cause it is a missile with no target—they will hit anywhere and explosion happens.<sup>326</sup>

Some of the NGOs interviewed pointed to the generation gap that makes solving conflicts difficult:

I believe there is a large gulf between the old and the young, due to a lack of knowledge about Danish society and because a lack of education means that the older generation is unable to be part of the lives of the youth here in Denmark, and it means that they cannot support the younger generation through their education and so we see a lot of young people turning to crime—especially here in Tingbjerg and in other places such as Husum, where we see that many young Somalis are being raised on the streets. These are what I consider the largest challenges.<sup>327</sup>

One of the stakeholders reported an increasing number of Somalis joining gangs:

There are lots of gang problems here and there's been an increase in the number of Somalis who join these gangs, unfortunately. Especially in the areas where most Somalis live, in the Tingbjerg etc. This is a new development, it's been happening for the last three or four years. Somalis aren't people who have gangs, like so many minority groups have, but they become part of the gangs. They are attracted to it, they become part of it. The reason lies in the way these schools function. One starts becoming part of these gangs from very early on, you're given a bit of money or some sweets for keeping an eye out for the police. From there on out it escalates quickly, and then you're suddenly trafficking something,

<sup>325</sup> P1, Focus group on policing and security, 6 August 2013.

<sup>326</sup> P1, Focus group on policing and security, 6 August 2013.

<sup>327</sup> Interview with IS, social worker, Somali NGO, 10 May 2013.



or you're selling weed and then you've really already entered the circles and it is very difficult to get back out of it again.<sup>328</sup>

One of the social workers mentioned that gangs were here to stay.

### **9.8 Danish-Somalis and the Focus on International Terror and Radicalisation**

A range of initiatives linked to violent radicalisation and extremism have been implemented within the last five years. In 2009 the government adopted a National Action Plan, "A shared and safe future". The plan targeted young people and aimed at preventing extremism and promoting democracy. It included projects in vulnerable housing areas, programmes in prisons, training police officers, teachers and social workers, disseminating information to high-school students, establishing a new Danish youth council and establishing mentor programmes. These have been implemented in cooperation between ministries, police, the PET and municipalities, and civil society actors have participated in various projects.<sup>329</sup>

The national strategy and the plans adopted by each city all emphasise that extremism is not only found in Islamist environments but also as left-wing and right-wing extremism, especially after the Breivik case in 2011.<sup>330</sup> The most intense prevention efforts focus on radicalisation related to al-Qaeda.

The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs has established a democracy office, responsible for example, for the "prevention of extremism, anti-democratic tendencies, hate crimes, international cooperation on prevention of radicalisation, prevention of parallel perceptions of justice and outreach towards religious communities".<sup>331</sup> This office has financially supported some of the NGO initiatives in Copenhagen, including the bridge-builders (see Chapter 8).

The City of Copenhagen has participated in the National Action Plan through facilitating the incorporation of the PET into the existing local SSP network. The City has included training and implementing methods of awareness and strategies for actions on violent radicalisation and has also established a central project (VINK) in the city's Employment and Integration Administration on the prevention of extremism and violent radicalisation.

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<sup>328</sup> Interview with IS, social worker, Somali NGO, 10 May 2013.

<sup>329</sup> MHT, "Afradikalisering".

<sup>330</sup> In July 2011, Anders Breivik set off a car bomb outside government headquarters in Oslo, Norway, then went on a shooting rampage at the summer retreat of the Labour Party, motivated in part by his opposition to immigration and Muslims in particular. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/24/breivik-verdict-sane-21-years> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>331</sup> See [www.sm.dk](http://www.sm.dk) (accessed 8 September 2014).

The VINK secretariat has organised meetings for city officials working with young people on topics such as “How it is be young, angry and criminal” or “Al-Shaabab and the recruitment of young people to go to Somalia”. It has also organised a group of 10 young resource people of different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds who can be consulted, and has developed web-tools, a telephone hotline for questions and discussions of concerns.

While the general tendency in city policy and administration not is to focus on a specific ethnicity or nationality, anti-radicalisation policy appears to be one of the few areas where explicit references are made to t Danish-Somali or Somali identification. In 2010, the VINK secretariat and the Employment and Integration Administration produced a memorandum of preparedness (*Beredskabsnotat*) on the Somali community. The memorandum has circulated in the administration as a kind of handbook of knowledge on Somalis, furthermore, Danish-Somalis appear to be the only ethnic group to be featured in this way.<sup>332</sup> It does not see the Danish-Somali community as a source of potential terrorists and warns against stigmatising the community through linking the group to terror, but it does note that Somali organisations in Copenhagen are competing, conflicting and wanting to promote themselves, and notes this as something that should be taken into consideration.<sup>333</sup>

One of the Danish-Somalis interviewed for the Open Society Foundations’ research was very critical of the way in which the memorandum singles out the Somali community:

I definitely haven’t experienced this kind of discrimination before. Even just the title, “Preparatory Note on the Somali Community” gives me a bad taste in the mouth. It is difficult to set up successful integration projects when those who are assigned the resources to do so won’t even meet the Somalis as equals but instead ask consultants to conduct research about Somalis.<sup>334</sup>

According to the administration, Danish-Somalis have not been not singled out as a specific group:

Our efforts are directed at all forms of extremism and not at targeting specific groups within the municipality of Copenhagen. With the Somali youth, we are attentive, as we are with all of the Copenhagen youth, if they show signs of being maladjusted or present that they’re marginalised, if they’re discriminated against or in other ways not functioning well, or maybe are involved in criminal activity or in our case, extremism and radical statements and actually overlap

<sup>332</sup> Copenhagen Municipality, Employment and Integration Administration, “Beredskabsnotat om det somaliske miljø” (Preparatory Note on the Somali Community). 2 March 2010, (hereafter, Employment and Integration Administration, “Beredskabsnotat om det somaliske miljø”).

<sup>333</sup> Employment and Integration Administration, “Beredskabsnotat om det somaliske miljø”, p. 2.

<sup>334</sup> Interview with IN, head of Somali NGO, 24 April 2013.

with the troubled areas which we have identified in the municipality of Copenhagen. And so these are young communities or groups, not that we have a special mission targeting Somalis as a demographic, but naturally we are especially attentive to the fact that Somalis, among many other minority groups, are exposed to more through marginalisation, also socio-economically, social housing is extremely marginalised.<sup>335</sup>

One of the social workers interviewed called for a more concentrated effort in the municipality on religious radicalisation, including working with people who have knowledge of Islam and experiences of religious and traditional practices, and the linguistic skills in order to engage in dialogue with the young people on what they share among each other or learn on the internet, for example.<sup>336</sup>

Among focus group participants' and stakeholders' discussions anti-radicalisation was brought up in various ways. In the focus group on policing and security, the group reflected on why the police paid them such close attention and referred to 9/11 as the moment when every Somali man became a potential terrorist for the police:

10 years ago the police was not like that. I don't know when they became like this ... maybe 9/11 or something ... for example today, if the police want to come to your house, normally they go to court and get a letter but today it's not ... they just come to your door and break everything and when they don't find anything they just say "Sorry—it was a mistake." It has to be changing that thing.<sup>337</sup>

A tendency among young Danish-Somali men in focus groups in this study is that they had experienced ethnic profiling in contacts with the police, which they often explained with stereotypes linked to terrorism, crime, or radicalisation:

I feel that the police is constantly after me ... Even though they don't stop me I feel they give me the look walking in the street—I don't know if I look dangerous—I don't know why ... It becomes this whole paranoia. Maybe it is because I have been living in England ... in England they changed the laws after July 7 bombings so the police can stop anyone at any time and I have been stopped a lot and when I came over here I've been stopped again a couple of times and I thought the whole world is the same ...and there might be all these movies and media where the black guy is always the bad guy ... I feel personally that the police are more after the black and the foreign people than they are after white Danish guys.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Interview with DA, official Employment Administration, VINK, 27 May 2013.

<sup>336</sup> Interview with IR, Social Administration, head of after-school institution, 28 May 2013.

<sup>337</sup> P2, Policing and security focus group, 6 August 2013.

<sup>338</sup> P1, Policing and security focus group, 6 August 2013.

The participants in the focus group on policing and security did not know that they could make a complaint against the police for their ethnic discrimination.

## 10. PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This chapter presents the views of the focus group's members on participation and citizenship in society, particularly political participation. The discussion concentrated on participation in local elections and mobilising the community to contribute to the decision-making process.

The link between participation and citizenship is complex and can take multiple formal and informal forms. In some countries, citizens' engagement and political participation are not necessarily directly linked, while in Denmark the two are closely linked.<sup>339</sup> In a welfare state like Denmark, citizens enjoy wide social, political and economic rights.<sup>340</sup> Participation can therefore take place at the macro level where people contribute to the formation of both national institutions such as the national assembly and local political institutions such as regional and municipality councils. People also exercise their citizenship by contributing to civil society movements and organisations.<sup>341</sup>

In an open democratic system like Denmark's, citizen participation results from interaction and communication between citizens on the one hand and between voters and their designated representatives on the other, mediating the so-called life world with the system world.<sup>342</sup> In this regard, accountability takes the central stage in the relationship between citizens and the political parties they support.

Studies of ethnic minorities and their political participation in Denmark have shown that communities often mobilise themselves on ethnic lines.<sup>343</sup> For instance, ethnic communities often vote for politicians with minority backgrounds who represent leftist parties. The first generation, with its immigrant and refugee background, is different from the second and third generations in terms of political mobilisation. The concentration of ethnic minorities in major cities such as Copenhagen also influences citizen and participation opportunities at the city level.<sup>344</sup> In November 2013 voters in

<sup>339</sup> B. Siim, *Gender and Citizenship Politics and Agency in France, Britain and Denmark*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>340</sup> Jørgen Goul Andersen, "Public support for Danish welfare state: interests and values, institutions and performances", in E. Albæk, L. C. Eliason, S. N. Asbjørn and H. M. Schwartz (eds), *Crises, Miracles and Beyond: Negotiated Adaptation of the Danish Welfare State*, Aarhus University Press, 2008.

<sup>341</sup> Kenneth Newton, "Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy", *International Political Science Review* 22 (2) (April 2001), pp. 201–214.

<sup>342</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007.

<sup>343</sup> Lise Togeby, "The Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities Denmark as a Deviant Case", *Party Politics* 14 (3) (2008), pp. 325–343.

<sup>344</sup> Johannes Bergh and Tor Bjørklund, "The political representation of immigrants in Oslo and Copenhagen: A study of electoral systems and voting behavior", *Comparative Social Research* 22 (2008), pp. 101–121.

Copenhagen elected 55 city council members. Among them there were four members with ethnic-minority backgrounds, all from centre-left parties.<sup>345</sup>

The civic and political participation of Danish-Somalis is influenced by the experiences of many as recent arrivals to Denmark, as refugees from a country that has suffered under a dictatorship and civil war. Thus full participation in an advanced, stable society like Denmark might take generations. Many have, nonetheless, adjusted to exercising their citizenship and participation opportunities.

### 10.1 State Initiatives for Participation and Citizenship

The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs states that the government's goal is to "ensure that all citizens can actively participate in socie and democracy". It identifies four major problems for new citizens' active participation:<sup>346</sup>

1. Participation in associations is significantly lower among citizens with an immigrant background than among ethnic Danes
2. Considerably fewer citizens with an immigrant background think that one can generally rely on others
3. Some immigrants and their descendants feel that their efforts in Danish society will not be recognised and that there is, for example, a discrepancy between their jobs and qualifications
4. There is a small group of citizens with an immigrant background who often lack knowledge of Danish and largely do not participate in society politically, culturally or in associations. This group of passive citizens mainly consists of older immigrants.<sup>347</sup>

The government emphasises the link between democracy and integration and one of its policies is active citizenship. This is described as working for a society where all citizens enjoy rights, duties and opportunities on an equal footing and where all, according to their abilities, participate actively in democracy and the wider society. All forms of violence, coercion and discrimination are unacceptable practices that the government is working to prevent.

<sup>345</sup> See <http://www.kk.dk/da/om-kommunen/politisk-organisation/borgerrepraesentation/medlemmer> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>346</sup> Summary of the report "Medborgerskab i Danmark", Regeringens arbejdsgruppe for bedre integration, August 2011 ("Citizenship in Denmark") Published by a working group under the then Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration in August 2011. At [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl\\_23337\\_376172373.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_23337_376172373.pdf) (accessed 26 September 2014) (hereafter Summary of the report "Medborgerskab i Danmark").

<sup>347</sup> Summary of the report "Medborgerskab i Danmark".

For new citizens, alongside learning Danish and either working or being educated, the government focuses on the integration of ethnic minorities by cultural citizenship in the form of socialisation and participation in civil society and associations. There is less emphasis on the political dimension of citizenship and mobilisation.<sup>348</sup>

## 10.2 Political Participation

Denmark is a democratic country where citizens have the right to vote and elect the parties and politicians they want. In national elections, Danish citizenship is a requirement for politicians seek membership of parliament. All Danish citizens above 18 years old and who reside in the country are eligible to vote and to be elected. With regard to municipality elections, all citizens over 18 years including people who have residence permit over three years can vote in the local and regional elections. If people want to run for parliamentary office they must have Danish citizenship.

The municipality subsidises political activities and campaigns. During elections associations can apply funds for mobilisation and other election activities.<sup>349</sup> The Somali community is also eligible for funds, and some Somali associations, though not always successful, do apply.

Although ethnic communities vote and interact with politicians and different parties, it is not clear whether they contribute to and access political capital proportionately. Diverse ethnic communities have contributed to the election of several politicians with both native Danish background and minority background, but this has not resulted in any major increase in political and citizen participation. Marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, often do not vote in elections. A study by the Department of Political Science at Copenhagen University shows that citizens with ethnic-minority backgrounds participate less in elections compared with the general population. In the 2009 municipality elections, 68 percent of ethnic Danes voted compared with 37 percent of ethnic-minority voters. There are, nonetheless, differences between different ethnic minorities, as for instance Turks have a higher electoral participation rate than other ethnic communities originating from developing countries such as Iraq and Somalia.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Summary of the report “Medborgerskab i Danmark”.

<sup>349</sup> See <http://www.frivillignet.dk/aktiviteter/alles-valg-2013/retningslinjer-for-puljen-til-kommunalvalg-2013> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>350</sup> See Yosef Bhatti & Kasper Møller Hansen “Valgdeltagelsen ved kommunalvalget 17. november 2009. Beskrivende analyser af valgdeltagelsen baseret på registerdata” (Study on election participation) working paper from Political Science department, Copenhagen University (accessed 13 September 2014).

### 10.3 Participation and Citizenship Experiences in the Danish-Somali Community

Discussions in the Open Society Foundations' focus group meetings and interviews with stakeholders suggested that Somalis have a different concept of citizenship from that of the Danish state. Danish-Somalis often see citizenship mainly as a political undertaking in which politicians who are the prime decision-makers interact to seek support from voters. They tend to see politics and political participation as consisting of manipulation, broken promises and distrust. Some participants thought that the responsibility for these attitudes lies with the Danish-Somali community, which seems to be less mobilised and more fragmented than other migrant groups. Many participants felt that the lack of political contribution and participation by Danish-Somalis has less to do with the exclusion of Somalis; in particular, they noted that other migrant communities seem more organised and coherent and able to mobilise more effectively.

There has been an increase in the number of Danish citizens with Somali background seeking political office. While a few have succeeded in gaining seats in the municipality administration in Aarhus and Aalborg,<sup>351</sup> Copenhagen has yet to elect a politician with a Somali background.

Focus group participants argued that the election of more politicians with Somali origin would work to motivate and mobilise the Danish-Somali community to support greater civic participation and stronger mobilisation. At the same time there was a sense of disempowerment and disillusionment. Many Somalis, particularly younger people in the focus groups on identity and belonging and civic and political participation, expressed disappointment with the political system. Apart from feeling disempowered they blamed political parties for being dishonest and lacking sincerity. In general mainstream politics have become increasingly unpopular as few people seem interested in becoming politically active in the traditional way. Participants noted that they have voted for particular candidates but felt that nothing changes, and that political participation makes little difference since politicians only seem to build alliances and launch electoral campaigns. The experience expressed was that politicians only approach voters when an election period nears, and disappear as soon as the election ends. Relationships with constituents and the interaction of politicians and voters were felt to be absent.

I have tried to vote in elections and I am very disappointed. When there is an election they promise a lot, we will do this and that, but when it comes to actions they never keep their promises. I will not vote next time as the promises were not kept.<sup>352</sup>

<sup>351</sup> See <http://www.aalborg.dk/politik/udvalg,-raad-og-naevn/oversigt-over-udvalg,-bestyrelser,-kommissioner-mm/person?perslbnr=1207> (Nuuradiin is Somali-Dane local politician who was elected with a relatively high number of votes (accessed 13 September 2014)).

<sup>352</sup> CPP2, Civic and political participation focus group, 19 March 2013.



The discussion suggests that the core challenge to active political participation among Danish-Somalis is the gap between election campaign-oriented politicians and demoralised, sometimes immobilised citizens. According to focus group members, politicians, native Danes, other immigrants or even Somalis only see the Danish-Somalis as an opportunity to gain votes when the election term gets closer.<sup>353</sup>

For some focus group members, the main reason for Danish-Somalis' reluctance to participate in politics is their experience of civil war, which has diminished their appetite for long-term political strategies. It was suggested that people who have experienced civil war remain cautious and fearful towards political organisations and other forms of social mobilisation.<sup>354</sup> For some this is also reinforced by their experience of dictatorship before the civil war, when politics was personalised and people were not treated as citizens with rights and obligations.<sup>355</sup>

#### 10.4 Civic Participation

Despite the dissatisfaction with politics in general, many Danish-Somalis in the focus groups recognised and engaged in civic mobilisation at the level of the local association, particularly their own Somali associations. Somalis are also involved in activities concerned with social housing and neighbourhoods.

Interviewees suggested that in order to overcome the numerous challenges Danish-Somalis face, the community needs to engage in internal dialogue and mobilisation. This will require role models to help steer the community. A large part of the responsibility for civic participation rests on the Somali associations, which are expected to fill the gap in providing consultation. They initiate and organise guiding the community to navigate the system, providing consultation and helping them to understand the language.

Many Somali associations focus on the situation in Somalia, rather than providing services to the Danish-Somali community. Initially when Somalis first arrived, they established cultural centres to preserve their religion, culture and language. Later women in these associations began to mobilise, as activists identified the need for activities to address the challenges families face and supported the empowerment of young women. At the same time, young people also began to create their own sections of sub-associations, focusing mainly on sports and other programmes for youngsters.

<sup>353</sup> CPP4, Civic and political participation focus group, 19 March 2013.

<sup>354</sup> T. Iosifides and D. Sporton, "Identities and belonging: a study of Somali refugee and asylum seekers living in the UK and Denmark", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2 (2009), pp. 234–250.

<sup>355</sup> Hussein Adam, "Somalia: militarism, warlordism or democracy?", *Review of African Political Economy* 19 (54) (1992), pp. 11–26.

The specific problems of ethnic-minority women and the challenges from young people stir up debates and controversies.<sup>356</sup>

This focus by Danish-Somali civil society on social and cultural activities and its lack of engagement in politics creates a particular barrier to their development due to the nature of funding for civil society in Denmark, since access to funding is a political process and Denmark is one of the most politically regulated countries in the world. Participation in politics is therefore important in order to contribute to the distribution of resources for civil society. Some focus group members referred to internal obstacles, for which Somalis disagree on strategies, for the lack of political gains.

Some communities are doing fine, for example the Pakistanis. They mobilise and organise and better and they take part of their cake but getting projects etc. Pakistanis gather around one candidate and support that candidate. Somalis have many candidates.<sup>357</sup>

While politicians run for formal offices and power, ordinary people often mobilise in civil society platforms and interest groups in engaging in indirect politics.<sup>358</sup>

Focus group participants expressed frustration that public authorities had paid inadequate attention to the problems of Danish-Somali youth. According to one stakeholder, the divisions and the disorganisation of the Danish-Somali community have been cited by public authorities as the main obstacle to moving forward.

There is something I and the others I work with are frustrated over. They often tell us that Somalis are fragmented and it is an argument that goes over and over again when we ask municipalities and ministries, well, why are we not included in these processes? Why can we not function as advisers? Why can we not be inside, solve and deal with these problems? And the answer is always the same: you are so many, and you cannot agree. And because you cannot agree, we cannot include you. It is very tough. We have tried many times.<sup>359</sup>

There are opportunities and resources the community should be able to access. Citizens in Copenhagen who create their own associations and organisation can get economic support from the municipality, if the activities relate to social events, sport and other

<sup>356</sup> Garbi Schmidt and Vibeke Jakobsen, *Pardannelse blandt etniske minoriteter i Danmark* (Marriage patterns among ethnic minorities in Denmark), National Centre for Social Research, Copenhagen, 2004.

<sup>357</sup> IB5, Identity and belonging and civic and political participation focus groups, 19 March 2013.

<sup>358</sup> Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2009, p. 100. Ulrich Beck discusses people in the Western world who have in recent years begun engaging in alternative politics where they organise and mobilise beyond the institutionalised forms of government and traditional politics.

<sup>359</sup> Interview with YN, Community Organizer 18. June 2013.

orientation activities for youth, children, communities and the wider society.<sup>360</sup> Indeed, many Danish-Somali associations do use these opportunities.

The Somali Diaspora Organisation in Copenhagen is a good example of an association that is mobilising and organising the community to get hold of opportunities and resources.<sup>361</sup> Through advice and advocacy it empowers and mobilises women's and youth groups to participate actively in local activities as well as in the wider society. But key stakeholders in organisations involved in activities for young people note that the municipality's bureaucracy prevents the preparation of long-term strategies to help children and young people. In particular they note the strict rules for reporting and monitoring activities that receive funding and the municipality's reluctance to employ professionals to organise and coordinate activities.<sup>362</sup> They also note that the support for projects is sensitive to changes in the political system. For example, the 2013 elections led to the appointment of a mayor from the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party having responsibility for culture, sports and leisure activities in the city. This mayor has proposed changes in a range of policies and programmes for the integration of ethnic minorities, which has led to the latter being closed down.<sup>363</sup>

The absence of Danish-Somalis from politics and other decision-making mechanisms in the city is considered to be a key weakness and an explanation for such decisions as adversely impact the community. There are two main areas of decision-making, the city council and the various administrative offices. Many Danish-Somalis feel that there are citizens with Somali background with the competence to work in these offices, but that so far they have not had the opportunity to get these jobs.

There are opportunities through different types of network for citizens to express their views, frustrations and priorities. Danish-Somalis' contributions to these consultation processes are limited. It was felt by some interviewees that the community lacks representatives who could make contributions to the decision-making processes.

Of course, there are associations and groups that deal with the everyday problems that Danish-Somalis face, but the public authorities need to engage with them more directly.

<sup>360</sup> See <http://www.kk.dk/da/brugbyen/kultur-og-projektstoette/foreningsstoette> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>361</sup> The Somali Diaspora Organisation in Copenhagen works for dialogue and trust between Somalis and Danes and development projects for Somalia: see <http://somdias.dk/> (accessed 1 June 2013).

<sup>362</sup> Interview with YN, Community Organizer 18. June 2013.

<sup>363</sup> Jakob Sheikh, "DF-borgmester varsler kamp mod kønsopdelt svømning og Hizb ut-Tahrir" (Danish People's Party mayor for culture in Copenhagen announces fight against gender segregation in swimming and Hizb ut-Tahrir), *Politiken*, 3 December 2013, at <http://193.169.154.149/bif/integrationsbarometer/sider/default.aspx> (accessed 10 December 2013).

## 11. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

This chapter explores the role of the media in inclusion affairs. It begins with a note on research studies that identify the nature and portrayal of minorities in the Danish media, before providing details of the issues discussed in the focus group on media. The focus group consisted of five participants, all male and in their 20s and 30s living in Tingbjerg, Husum and Østerbro, all active in civil society organisations. As civil society activists, the participants were able to discuss their own experiencing of working with the media as well as the impact that media portrayals had on them as individuals. The chapter then looks at some initiatives that try to provide alternative media avenues for communicating the lives and experiences of Danish-Somalis.

### 11.1 The Media and Ethnic Minorities in Denmark

In successive reports over the past decade, the ECRI has criticised the Danish media for creating negative images of ethnic minorities and thereby contributing to a general climate of intolerance and discrimination against ethnic minorities and, in particular, Muslims in Denmark.<sup>364</sup> Two reports in 2012 (Kontrabande<sup>365</sup> and SFI<sup>366</sup>) indicate the problematic and unbalanced relation between ethnic minorities as sources, journalists and editors and the public in Denmark, and confirm the findings of earlier studies.<sup>367</sup>

The 2012 Kontrabande study, “New Danes in the News”,<sup>368</sup> found that new Danes were underrepresented and figured mostly in news ghettos, such as reports on crime

<sup>364</sup> “ECRI report on Denmark”.

<sup>365</sup> Kontrabande, ”Nydanskere i nyhedsbilledet – En undersøgelse af danske nyhedsmediers inddragelse af indvandrere og efterkommere i indlandsstoffet” (New Danes in the News – A survey on the inclusion of immigrants and descendants in Danish News media Kontrabande, 2012, at [https://www.novum-net.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded\\_images/nydanskere\\_i\\_nyhedsbilledet.pdf](https://www.novum-net.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded_images/nydanskere_i_nyhedsbilledet.pdf) (accessed 22.09.2014

<sup>366</sup> Jacobsen et al., Analysis of Danish media; for Tolerance, see <http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/tolerance/monitoring/pesq.php> (accessed 8 September 2014).

<sup>367</sup> See, for example, Madsen, Jacob Gaarde, *Mediernes konstruktion af flygtninge- og indvandrerspørgsmålet* (The construction of the refugee and immigration question in the Media), Århus: Magtudredningen, 2000; Nævnet for Etnisk Ligestilling, *Konferencerapport, Stafet 2001: konference om demokrati, magt og rettigheder i et multiethnisk samfund* (Conference report. Baton 2001: conference on democracy, power and rights in a multiethnic society), 2001; Peter Hervik, *Mediernes muslimer. En antropologisk undersøgelse af mediernes dækning af religioner i Danmark* (Muslims of the Media. An anthropological study of the coverage of religions in Denmark), Nævnet for Etnisk Ligestilling 2002; Tanja Nyrup Madsen, *Journalister: Indvandrere forstyrrer budskabet* (Journalists: Immigrants disturb the message), Ugebladet A4, nr. 33, 2005.

<sup>368</sup> The study focused on ethnic minorities as sources and their portrayal in 10 news media (Politiken, Jyllands-Posten, Ekstra Bladet, BT, Urban, 24 timer, DR 1 TV Avisen, TV 2 Nyhederne Nordjyske Stiftstidende and Lolland-Falster Folketidende) and 1,162 stories during the first 14 weeks of 2011.

and items about foreigners. Most news stories about immigration and integration concerned crime, and this has meant that non-Western new Danes feature in crime news more than in crime statistics. New Danes were seldom used as experts, and the appearance of female new Danes was rare.

The 2012 SFI report explored the role played by Danish newspapers in the reproduction of racial and ethnic inequalities and was based on a two-month and a two-week monitoring of four Danish newspapers between mid-October and mid-December 2011. The conclusion of the study was that a large proportion of the news stories dealing with Muslims and Islam was negatively framed and restricted to topics like extremism, terror and sharia, whereas positive actions and difficult topics like racism and discrimination against Muslims were more or less non-existent in the coverage. Constructed through an antagonistic and hierarchical relationship between Danes and Muslims, Muslim culture and Islam tended to be represented as a threat to Danish society and Danish values. The reporting was rather one-sided and excluded minority voices, and when Muslims appeared, it was always the same few publicly visible and vocal actors. At the same time, the lives and opinions of the less visible majority of Muslims were more or less invisible. In this way, the newspapers constructed a distorted and negative picture of Muslims and their religion, and thereby contributed to a general climate of intolerance and discrimination against Muslim minorities.<sup>369</sup>

A scan through 2013 news involving the search word “Somali” gives an impression of what seems to be an aggravated version of the characteristics noted by the two reports. News reports focus on piracy, terror, fraud, assaults, rape, incest, unemployment, the social burden and lack of integration, but also—even though to a much lesser degree—prejudices against Somalis, the invisible successes of young Danish-Somalis and local media reporting on neighbourhood mothers facilitating integration, cultural events, etc.

While there have been national politicians and commentators expressing hostile views of Muslim Somalis, researchers who previously analysed the stigmatising effects of negative representation of Somalis in the Danish media and political debate noted that the media representation of Danish-Somalis in the Danish media have actually improved, or rather some of the heat has disappeared compared with the 2000s.<sup>370</sup>

The city administration of Copenhagen is not directly involved in media initiatives, but as part of the inclusion policy has hosted debates on the media and ethnic

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<sup>369</sup> Jacobsen et al., *Analysis of Danish media*, p. 5.3.

<sup>370</sup> Interviews with Nauja Kleist, Senior Researcher, DIIS, 28 May 2013, and Christine Bækkelund Jagd, PhD, consultant, 29 May 2013.

minorities, and cooperated with the media NGO Ansvarlig Presse (Responsible Media), which conducts workshops in schools on ethnic equality.<sup>371</sup>

## 11.2 Negative Stereotypes

Discussions in all focus groups and among the majority of stakeholders interviewed (both ethnic majority and minority) emphasised the role of the media as crucial for the inclusion and identity of Danish-Somalis. There is a general perception of the media as dominated by negative stereotypes of Danish-Somalis and Somalis elsewhere. As one participant in the focus group on policing and security expressed it, when there is a negative story about a person it is described as a feature of the “Somalis” and when there (rarely) is a positive story about a person it is described as an individual story, downplaying the “Somali” aspect or portraying it as the exception that proves the rule.

It is problematic, when the media discusses Somalia. Some connect what goes on in Somalia with all Somalis here in Denmark. It plays a large role, that that's where we come from. It has bad connotations to be from Somalia.<sup>372</sup>

But that it's commonly said that Somalis don't work, we don't understand that. It doesn't make sense. It is not just among the employees at the job centre, it's generally in the media, in the newspapers, that it's being said: the Somalis just sit at home.<sup>373</sup>

You just get so tired of the media at the moment, it's all bad things. I don't watch the news, there is such a large focus on Muslims and it just ends up weighing you down. When I read *BT* it'll say something or the other about Muslims. I just think that there are so many good things about immigrants and Muslims. It might be that someone from Russia does something, but then he's suddenly a Muslim. Everything is just Muslim.<sup>374</sup>

Every day there is an attack on Muslims and Somalis by politicians and the media, so young people are frustrated, they want to make a difference but they are angry.<sup>375</sup>

The focus group participants criticised many media and politicians for supporting a negative stereotype of Danish-Somalis, especially at election time and during heated political debates on integration and migration.

<sup>371</sup> Interview with NE, official, Employment Administration, Inclusion section, 14 May 2013. The city administration distributes newsletters, pamphlets and web comments on its inclusion and diversity policy, but for this study such materials were not considered media.

<sup>372</sup> I1, Identity and belonging focus group, 24 June 2013.

<sup>373</sup> EM4, Employment focus group, 14 November 2012.

<sup>374</sup> E3, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>375</sup> C1, Civic and political participation focus group, 19 March 2013.

There are politicians who make a living out of referring to immigrants in a negative way, among them Somalis as the worst ones. It is the Danish People's Party, they ride on the immigration policies, it's gradually become a trend to criticise immigrants, because they can't defend themselves and because there isn't any Danish industries which comes in, they don't have a spokesperson, they are the easiest victims. It is a trend among politicians to speak critically and negatively. It also has to do with this negative Islamophobia in all of Europe. It is a chain reaction which affects this matter, so we're just caught in the line of fire, it's hard to do anything about it.<sup>376</sup>

The practice of referring to neighbourhoods with many ethnic minorities as ghettos was challenged by one participant:

Tingbjerg, I also thought when I moved to Tingbjerg a few months ago, it might be a bad idea, because I was living centrally before, but it is a pretty nice place there and I haven't experienced anything. There are some groups, but they keep to themselves, it is not what the media makes it out to be, but then again, they make a living peddling horror stories.<sup>377</sup>

The focus group participants distinguished between various media according to their credibility and influence. *Politiken* and *Information* were regarded as more credible than other newspapers, whereas *Jyllandsposten* was characterised as a newspaper where information and comments always get twisted.

### 11.3 Contact with the Media

Three of the five focus group participants had experienced being sources for journalists in the Danish media. One summed up his experiences as follows:

They like to call, when things happen. They don't want to speak to us when we have something to say ... When there's a new terror case, an axe murderer carrying around an axe, the pirates—when a new ship has been hijacked, I'll tell you, they'll be ringing incessantly. But then, if we have an event for which we'd like journalists to come, it can be difficult to get the message through, I think ... we really try to stay friendly with them.<sup>378</sup>

The consequences of this continuously negative portrayal of Danish-Somalis were emphasised in the interviews as a huge challenge for Danish-Somali civil society activists, especially among the young Danish-Somalis who try to actively change the discourse and see themselves as agents of a two-way process of integration:

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<sup>376</sup> M1, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>377</sup> M5, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>378</sup> M1, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

For every story published, for all the negative attention, then the bridge is ruined, or we go back several years, we start over. Then once again we need to defend, why did a Somali choose to do as he did and that it's not all Somalis who are like that.<sup>379</sup>

Well it is understandable that of course they want to sell, the newspapers they want to sell copies ... It just means that they might generalise about a group which is already weak and fragile, which is unable to defend itself. Then they're pigeonholed; it ruins the work we do as civil society work, and then you're left frustrated.<sup>380</sup>

### 11.3.1 Consequences

The Danish-Somali community's comments in the media are often distorted, according to the focus group participants. This is not only a problem of the ongoing negative social construction of Danish-Somalis, but also often a problem for Danish-Somali activists who engage with the media. If their comments are twisted or misused this can cause problems in the Danish-Somali community:

If you give a statement, your words will be twisted ... So then there'll be a conflict between you and your community, and you need to shut your mouth or try to explain that this does exist, that this is also an issue. This is the dilemma we deal with as volunteers or as active participants in the public debate.<sup>381</sup>

This denunciation of Danish-Somalis who speak out in the media was also reflected by one of the participants in the focus group:

Media determines a lot as it manipulates people. If there were Somali who could speak for the Somalis it was great. The problem is that Somalis who reach that position change character and do not keep their promises. Every day there are problems written and shown by the media [that are] negative about the Somalis. Somali politicians never come and react. The older generations have done nothing. If the media talks negative about Somalia, a white man comes and defends the Somalis, that is not good. If we had Somali spokespeople and politicians the situation would have been much different.<sup>382</sup>

The focus group agreed that the usual reaction among Danish-Somalis to the negative stereotyping was to stay out of reach of the media:

They might get a negative impression from the media and think, no, now there's a Somali in the picture again ... There are many who stay away from, if a

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<sup>379</sup> M1, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>380</sup> M3, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>381</sup> M3, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>382</sup> C3 Civic and political participation focus group, 19 March 2013.



journalist rings up associations or something similar they'll say, we don't want to talk, because it will be on the front page. This is why they stay back, when it comes to the media.<sup>383</sup>

We said [in an association meeting] after that thing with the axe murderer, the terrorist bombs, then we said, from now on we won't give statements to the media, because we have lost some of our members, there is some trust which has been lost there, therefore we can no longer give statements. We just focus, we use our energy to mobilise people and do something to include them in society, I can't spend time meeting journalists, because what do I get out of it if in the end, it doesn't benefit the people it was supposed to.<sup>384</sup>

In the focus group with young women, one of the participants explained the effect of talk by media and politicians:

When I'm with my friends I don't feel that there's any difference between us, but as soon as the media says, Danes and Somalis, that's when we feel that there is a very large difference, even though we have lived here and feel a part of the country but we still feel that we are pushed aside, also for being Somalis.<sup>385</sup>

Another participant in the same focus group suggested that young Somalis have to counter the image in the media that all Somalis are criminal and uneducated:

The most important thing is, that us Somalis in Denmark or in England, we need to come together and try to show especially to the young, that actually we can be an example to you and you can be an example to those even younger, that this way ... you don't have to do as the media tells you to do, to be involved in crime, to be on social benefits, you can actually get an education, you can go far.<sup>386</sup>

Not only does the negative media portrayal influence the Danish-Somalis and the ethnic majority, it also influences the image of Somalis among other ethnic-minority groups. One city official with an ethnic-minority background, in discussion with an ethnic-majority interviewer, formulated the link between media constructs and the Somali position as marginalised both in relation to the ethnic majority and other ethnic minorities:

That they need to struggle with you, but now they also have to struggle with us, because we see them as being, not inferior, but we share the same frustrations, because they are so visible publicly. And of course the media plays a large part, but then they always have done. ... And then there has been some radical cases

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<sup>383</sup> M4, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>384</sup> M3, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>385</sup> YW1, Young women focus group, 23 March 2013.

<sup>386</sup> YW2, Young women focus group, 23 March 2013.

related to Somalia, and everything is trudged up on to the front pages, well that does mean that the general attitude in society as a whole becomes anti-Somali. The connotations surrounding Somalis, then I think well this, this, this, you know? 25 wives, female circumcision, this and that. And naturally, this is the same thing again, these are the same frustrations which I also remember from my own childhood and that today we see in different contexts. The sad part then is, that even those of us who have been through these things are unable to recognise that these are the same difficulties which the Somalis also face.<sup>387</sup>

#### 11.4 Individual Efforts to Change the Image

One of the media focus group participants felt responsible for changing the Somali image and reflected on different conditions for doing so:

I have experienced that a lot, when I was studying among fellow students at the school, there you had to explain yourself, but how much can you affect right? It is a little easier, when it is something with your co-workers in a workplace, where there are five to ten people working there and they see you. Some time has to pass, of course, they need to see that what you say that it is also true. It depends on where they live, if they live in Nørrebro and you say some stuff, then maybe they'll say it's not everyone, we also have neighbours. If they're from Northern Sealand, then they'll say "That can't be true, what you're saying." It is difficult, I'm thinking, that's when you have to fight.<sup>388</sup>

The attitudes and perceptions among politicians are assessed as the most difficult to change:

Well, the thing about the media and the politicians, they need to protect their electorate, they also need to be recognised again by these same people, so if they start saying things which they've never said before, then people might think, okay what is happening, we suddenly don't need you, if that problem no longer exists.<sup>389</sup>

In the focus group on education, one of the participants spoke about a meeting with a teacher-student counsellor in which she was asked about herself and her religion.

I started talking about myself and my headscarf and why I wear it. Her image of what an immigrant woman is, what Muslims are, changed entirely. She was completely shocked. I asked her why she was of that opinion and she answered, it's that stuff in the media. She just believed that we were oppressed and that I wore a headscarf because I was forced to. I told her that I myself put it on. ... I

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<sup>387</sup> Interview with IR, Social Administration, head of after-school institution, 28 May 2013.

<sup>388</sup> M3, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>389</sup> M2, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

didn't think the media could make such an impression on people. Make a person judge so many millions of people.<sup>390</sup>

### 11.5 Alternative Media Initiatives

Several current media initiatives have involved Danish-Somalis throughout the country, for example, *Etniqua*, a lifestyle ethnically diverse magazine with volunteer staff and a Danish-Somali editor-in-chief. A Danish-Somali journalist is working at the web magazine *Opinionen*, which defines itself as part of the new Danish critical cross-cultural media, independent of political, religious and commercial interests. A large group of Danish-Somali young people set up a Danish-Somali media platform, CODKA, which is the Somali word for "the voice". Its mission statement is described on their website as an online media conglomerate consisting of a think-tank, a web magazine, a forum for debate and a professional news agency, all set up by Danish-Somalis. It was launched in 2012 and has been run so far as a countrywide voluntary NGO. Meetings are held to discuss the way forward and the web magazine is organised through Facebook groups. It was established as a response to the very negative portrayal in the media and by politicians of Danish-Somalis, and with the aim of disseminating "both positive and self-critical analysis and stories by Somalis in Denmark to the public".<sup>391</sup> However, some of the activists in the CODKA group were frustrated with the slow speed of the process and lack of real commitment among many members of the Facebook working group. They felt that the project was threatened by endless discussions and religious, traditional and clan feelings about whether an interview person or an activity was morally acceptable or not.<sup>392</sup>

One of the stakeholders interviewed described the aim of the platform as revealing the forgotten, invisible stories, so that Danish-Somalis can communicate their own stories and versions of the news to politicians, media representatives, commentators and others in order to change the one-sided coverage of Danish-Somalis.<sup>393</sup> In the media focus group, one of the participants explained that it was also their aim to mobilise the younger generation, those who are doing fine and distance themselves from being Somali. They have a responsibility, according to this participant, for contributing to a positive image and for helping the older generation to function in society.

The media focus group discussed whether a newspaper based on a general ethnic-minority platform, like *Opinionen* or *Etniqua* or African-Danes in Denmark doing radio in English could be a way forward, but participants said that the specific Somali situation was important:

<sup>390</sup> E5, Education focus group, 6 May 2013.

<sup>391</sup> See [www.codka.org](http://www.codka.org). (accessed 4 October 2013) Not available September 2014

<sup>392</sup> Interview with AN, student, 31 January 2013.

<sup>393</sup> Interview with IN, head of Somali NGO, 24 April 2013.

It is difficult to speak of all the minorities as the same, I think. It is definitely the same problems that we are facing, but we are different and the solutions needed are different. The specifically Somali [aspect] is very important to me.<sup>394</sup>

### 11.6 Widespread Frustration

Among the focus group participants and many stakeholders a deep frustration with the predominately negative media stereotypes and the feeling of being locked up in these stereotypes went hand in hand with concerns for the future. Several focus group participants and stakeholders emphasised the need for media, politicians and institutions to transcend these barriers and move into a more realistic view of the world.

My biggest worry in relation to politicians is that they always want to come in and talk about Somalis only when there are negative stories in the media, and not come and speak with Somalis when those kind of stories aren't in the media. When Somalis are mentioned, it is only negative, and it is only then all of the politicians ... like Søren Espersen: all of those Somalis, they need to get out of the country. My biggest worry is that the politicians won't do their job properly and won't find a solution to the challenges that are there and not be inclusive. Because a lot of politicians help the constituency which they represent. But unfortunately, these ones do not. Especially here in Copenhagen, because in rural Denmark you can reach your politician, but here in Copenhagen it is hard to know who is supposed to represent us. Because of that, I think that politicians aren't doing enough and only get active when it is too late, or only get active to join the negative voice in the media.<sup>395</sup>

The amount of stereotypes surrounding Somalis is incredible, and many have very negative ideas about all the things they aren't allowed to do, and you need to sort of sweep that out of the way and if the authorities start to realise how many resources there are within these communities, I have a feeling that then, the way in which this very diverse group is approached will start to change.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> M1, Media focus group, 26 May 2013.

<sup>395</sup> Interview with IS, social worker, Somali NGO, 10 May 2013.

<sup>396</sup> Interview with NE, official, Employment Administration, Inclusion section, 14 May 2013.

## 12. CONCLUSIONS

As a new group of immigrants in Denmark, Danish-Somalis have had to face the challenges of fleeing civil war, the repercussions of which include refugee status, split families, resettlement, and significant stigmatisation and stereotyping.

The Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen is small (4,500 people) the average Danish-Somali is different from the general population along a number of demographic and socio-economic parameters. For example, it is a younger population, with the vast majority living in rented accommodation and subsisting on less than the average income; there are more single-parent families and more children in families; and employment rates are lower, with more unemployment. Whatever the reasons, the social and economically disadvantaged situation of Danish-Somali Copenhageners poses great problems in living and organising everyday life.

Integration is a complex process that requires sustained efforts from all involved parties, particularly the responsible authorities in the city and nationally. People form their identities in relation to both historical and contextual circumstances, and depending on how they see their social and cultural identity in the light of government policy and civil society initiatives, they will form attitudes that will influence their integration.

### 12.1 Discrimination

One of the most consistent results in the interviews was the very high level of discrimination and stereotyping experienced by people with a Danish-Somali background. The perception was reflected among the majority of interviewees with other ethnic-minority and majority backgrounds. Two kinds of assessments were typical across ethnicities:

- discrimination was perceived as wrong but a given and very difficult to do anything about
- the continuously negative media and political representation of Danish-Somalis is the root cause of discrimination and stereotyping

Discrimination was experienced in many contexts. The educational system, the media and the labour market were mentioned most often, but it was also encountered in social housing, the city administration, and especially among young Danish-Somali men in their interactions with the police and in accessing nightlife. Most of the non-Danish-Somali stakeholders interviewed recognised the experience of discrimination among the Danish-Somalis.

Discussions in all focus groups and among the majority of stakeholders interviewed (both ethnic-majority and minority) emphasised the role of the media as crucial for the inclusion and identity of Danish-Somalis. In general the media are understood to be dominated by negative stereotypes of Danish-Somalis and Somalis elsewhere.

The discrimination is institutionalised there is a need for more effective prevention and sanctions. Although anti-discrimination measures are given a high profile in the inclusion policy, exclusion should be addressed more directly, in addition to changing attitudes and social relations between individuals.

### **12.2 Advice, Information and Mediation**

Some of the focus areas of this study revealed considerable gaps between some institutions inside and outside the City, but also good practices, especially locally. The study reveals an urgent need for information and knowledge about rights and obligations, assistance in addressing the system, advisers, guidance, support for complaints and links to networks that can offer assistance.

Bridge-builders have been established. There are health communicators, integration advisers, dialogue consultants, discrimination consultants, discrimination advisers, neighbourhood mothers and Somali bridge-builders, who are all facilitating access to the system, as well as informing ethnic-majority professionals about the concerns of ethnic minorities. Interviews for this study revealed general satisfaction with the different bridge-builder corps as a very important link between the Danish-Somali residents and the system, be it a school, a job centre, a case worker in the Social Administration, a housing association or another administrative office. According to those interviewed, these corps are regarded as extremely important in communication, resolving conflicts and finding new solutions.

Many of the bridge-builder corps are projects with limited time frames and insecure economic futures, however; where workers are paid by the hour the situation is especially tenuous. Instability or high turnover among the workers in these services can undermine the long-term use of the knowledge and working methods when projects are of short duration. For instance, the Somali bridge-builders at the Immigrant Women's Centre are not financially supported by the City and so are dependent on private funding.

Taking the long view, the administration should consider whether the bridge-builder strategy may prevent or delay necessary changes in the mainstream system. The bridge-building teams invest considerable time and energy in cultural and linguistic competences, whereas the training and development in the mainstream system seem to focus on general skills. Rather than relying on minority intermediaries, the administrative structures should consider investing in training for all employees to develop their intercultural skills and comprehension.

### **12.3 Colour-blindness**

Copenhagen's inclusion policy and its implementation are centred on balancing the majority and the minority, and in this research it was sometimes difficult to discuss Danish-Somali Copenhageners as such. Municipal employees argued that there are no

data dividing people by ethnicity, and a typical referral within the City was to the VINK project dealing with religious radicalisation.

A memorandum on the Somalis has circulated within the City Administration, pointing out Danish-Somalis as a specific group among ethnic minorities. Many interviewees acknowledged that Danish-Somali residents share some problems with other ethnic-minority Copenhageners, but they agreed that they do have specific issues arising from their particular circumstances. While majority Danes avoided reference to race, minority interviewees often spoke about ethnicities and skin colour. The tendency to talk about socio-economic status instead of ethnicity seemed to be founded in a wish to avoid relying on ethnic stereotypes for social problems, which is well intentioned, but has created a taboo concerning reference to ethnicity and skin colour, which has become a silent reality. The insistence on the only divisions being according to language disguises the important differences

The insistence on the term “ethnic-minority” instead of Danish-Somali is seen in the economic funding strategy, where NGOs working with the Danish-Somali community, for example in labour market projects, and the Somali bridge-builders are refused financial support due to their ethnic focus. In interviews there were discussions about whether it was prudent to establish special initiatives or projects aimed at Danish-Somalis. Danish-Somalis working with Danish-Somali citizens find it very difficult to get financial support. It appears that a significant amount of social work is carried out by Danish-Somalis on a voluntary basis and does not attract the attention of the city or the social housing projects because they are below the economic radar.

## **12.4 Education**

Discrimination in education was very high, which suggests that there is an urgent need to deal more explicitly with discrimination in the classroom.

The personal relationships with teachers, moderators and facilitators were extremely important for both pupils and parents who were interviewed, and there were examples of how a teacher can make a huge negative or positive impact. The presence of integration advisers seemed to work successfully, and the voluntary Somali bridge-builders and the Youth and Education supervisors seem also to be important actors in the relationship between the school, the parents and the pupil. It was seen as important to support the whole family instead of just seeing the individual child or parent, especially when dealing with single-parent families with many children.

## **12.5 Employment**

The national employment workfare policy and the focus on activation was characterised in the focus group as “the Ferris wheel in Tivoli”.

Users of the job centre described being trapped by poverty and control mechanisms, but at the same time they also described the system as irrational, unproductive, a waste

of money and disorderly. Nevertheless, they had to rely on the system to help them find a job and they directed their main frustration against the job centre or the municipality instead of the labour market. So despite the heavy criticisms, they had to rely on a system that they hoped could help them get a job.

Several key civil society informants referred to the huge workload among volunteers helping and guiding Danish-Somali Copenhageners who need social benefits and assistance, not only from the Employment and Integration Administration, but in general from the municipality and the immigration service, housing companies and other agencies. Those interviewed stressed the urgent need for a guidance service adjusted to the needs of Danish-Somali citizens enrolled at the job centres and a targeted effort to increase their knowledge about rules, rights and the way the system works.

## **12.6 Housing**

Many of those interviewed were very offended by the government officially terming their social housing neighbourhood a ghetto, perceiving it as an insult and yet another mechanism of exclusion. Since one of the criteria for designating an area a ghetto is still its ethnic composition, that is, having many residents with an ethnic-minority background, the label was regarded as provocative and preventing good images and stories from the neighbourhood from reaching mainstream society.

More than 80 percent of the Danish-Somali population in Copenhagen lives in social housing with a locally elected structure that does not include the Danish-Somali residents. Furthermore, many Danish-Somalis found it difficult to manoeuvre their way through a whole range of housing inquiries, rights and responsibilities. Participation in social events and activities in the neighbourhood with other residents was reported to be difficult, and there were conflicts with other residents, for example at the playground. Social workers in housing areas also referred to Danish-Somalis as being at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy in the neighbourhood and that the Danish-Somalis were seen as isolated and preferring to be only with other Danish-Somalis.

## **12.7 Health and Social Protection**

Stakeholders interviewed on the health of the Danish-Somalis estimated that their health problems were more significant than recognised; and more research would be valuable in order to better target information and services from the City, given that health profiles produced by the municipality are only divided into ethnic-minority/majority or Western/non-Western categories.

Different barriers and concerns were mentioned in the focus group discussions, such as difficulties with written information. The language barrier had a huge impact on their interaction with the system and the lack of knowledge about services was another important obstacle.



The fear of having their children taken away by the authorities hangs over many families, according to interviewees, which may prevent them from contacting the authorities.

Mental health was a specific area of concern, and according to the focus group discussion, there are many Danish-Somalis with mental illnesses who are not given the proper treatment by the authorities. The fear of being stigmatised and socially excluded among the Danish-Somalis is parallel to the general experience of mental illness as a stigma, even though it may be spoken about in different terms.

Many in the focus groups agreed that the relationship between changing gender roles and the struggles of many Danish-Somali men in Denmark are linked to khat, alcohol abuse and homelessness. Many Danish-Somalis mentioned that older men are a specific vulnerable group who are not attended to by the social welfare workers. Increasing homelessness among younger people was also mentioned as a worry, as well as unaccompanied asylum seekers who may be at risk of living very vulnerable and lonely lives.

## **12.8 Police and Security**

Assessments of the police were very mixed, but there seemed to be a clear distinction between the local and central police, and also between the central police and the PET.

Despite an occasionally heated public atmosphere regarding terrorist threats and violent religious radicalisation, many Danish-Somalis interviewed praised the PET for taking a sensible, rational and practical approach to terror prevention, which involved recognition and dialogue with different actors in the local religious community and civil society in mutual efforts to prevent incidents.

The local police were also described by residents, social workers, NGOs and others as generally good and reliable partners in neighbourhood cooperation and networking. The local police also have a very important role in building trust in the local community.

However, the difference between the local and the central police was highlighted in focus group discussion and among stakeholders, pointing out problematic conflict-escalating attitudes, with the central police perceived as both not knowing and not known in the neighbourhood.

## **12.9 Participation and Citizenship**

There was consensus among those interviewed that better information on the opportunities to be active citizens in civil society is needed. Some felt excluded by the political and bureaucratic system as they felt there were no voices representing them.

Several of the Danish-Somalis interviewed wanted a platform from which it would be possible to address the political discourse in the municipality and criticised the closing

of the Integration Council which had been one such mechanism. A few interviewees reported that they had joined a political party, but the general attitude to participation in local elections was passivity and lack of confidence that elections would lead to any significant change for Danish-Somalis.

## 13. RECOMMENDATIONS

### General

- The City of Copenhagen should use the achievements of its Inclusion Strategy for 2011–2014 to ensure that future policies and strategies build on and sustain progress to date, identify effective measures to address challenges that are still to be fully met, and adopt clear integration indicators that together with effective monitoring and evaluation can be used to track progress and assess the effectiveness of specific measures to achieve integration objectives.
- The City of Copenhagen should convene a task group of Danish-Somali civil society organisations to draw on current programmes such as the neighbourhood mothers, health communicators and other bridge-builders to develop an action plan for further improving the information and advice available to Danish-Somalis on employment and social legislation, health, housing, challenging discrimination, policing, education and opportunities for civic engagement.
- The City of Copenhagen should encourage the Danish government to consider the impact of the asylum system on the ability of Somali refugees to settle successfully in Denmark and the extent to which the asylum system may increase the risk of long-term exclusion due to its possible influence on health and other factors.
- The City of Copenhagen should consider how to address the need for raising awareness of ethnic discrimination and intercultural knowledge and competence among ethnic-majority citizens and professionals. The need could be met by campaigns, projects and training in educational institutions and in in-service training.
- The City of Copenhagen should consider how to use best practices and experiences from other cities and suggestions and opportunities from the Somali diaspora.

### Identity and Belonging

- The City of Copenhagen should work with civil society organisations and their Citizens' Advice Bureau to review current mechanisms for reporting and challenging discrimination and identify measures to improve: the information and support available to individuals and communities on rights and procedures for challenging discrimination; the procedures for responding to complaints, taking action and informing and supporting complainants; the monitoring and analysis of discrimination complaints.

- Civil society organisations working with Danish-Somali young people should work with bodies representing the entertainment industry to raise awareness and prevent discrimination by clubs and other entertainment venues.

### Education

- The City of Copenhagen should bring together business associations and Danish-Somali civil society organisations to encourage businesses to sponsor civil society initiatives that promote the value of education and link educational achievement to concrete employment opportunities such as work placements, internships and other opportunities for young Danish-Somalis.
- Mainstream civil society organisations with an interest in promoting educational achievement by disadvantaged groups should work with schools and Danish-Somali civil society organisations to develop initiatives that would enable Danish-Somali parents to understand the Danish educational system and the role of parents in education and help them to engage with schools and support their children's education more effectively.
- The City of Copenhagen should strengthen initiatives to address and prevent ethnic stereotyping and ethnic bullying in schools in Copenhagen.

### Employment

- The City of Copenhagen should investigate the factors behind the rise in the employment rate for Danish-Somalis and identify measures that can accelerate an increase in the employment rate.
- The City of Copenhagen should work with the job service and the commissioners and providers of community employment services to identify changes that would enable the employment service to refer individuals to community employment initiatives where these have been shown to be effective for individuals with specific needs.
- The City of Copenhagen should investigate (through its membership in the Eurocities initiative) municipal procurement policies that promote a diverse workforce and consider adopting relevant policies for Copenhagen.
- Danish-Somali civil society organisations should work with mainstream mentoring organisations to identify practical, fundable proposals for mentoring projects that could help adult Danish-Somalis expand their networks and acquire a better understanding of pathways to employment.
- New socio-economic businesses involving Danish-Somalis and small Danish-Somali entrepreneurs should be supported.

## Housing

- The main social housing institutions in Copenhagen should work with Danish-Somali civil society organisations to identify and promote good practice in diversity training for staff, policy, tenant information, tenants' complaints, meeting tenants' language needs and tenants' engagement.

## Health and Social Protection

- As part of the proposed review of neighbourhood mothers, health communicators and other bridge-builders and peer-to-peer initiatives, the City of Copenhagen should work with Danish-Somali civil society organisations to identify ways in which these and other initiatives could improve information and guidance for Danish-Somali families on child protection services.
- The City of Copenhagen child protection service should seek to share experiences and practice with other cities to identify measures that could be taken to develop more effective approaches to child protection and welfare issues involving Danish-Somali families.
- More knowledge and documentation on health and ethnicity are needed, and the City of Copenhagen is recommended to facilitate research in cooperation with universities and health institutes.

## Policing and Security

- Danish-Somali civil society organisations should work with the Copenhagen police to identify ways in which they could help Danish-Somalis to engage with the political level and develop guidance for the police on engaging with the Danish-Somali community.
- It is recommended that discrimination awareness and intercultural competences are substantially prioritised in education and further training of police officers.

## Participation and Citizenship

- The City of Copenhagen should strengthen its partnership with Danish-Somali civil society organisations and enable them to make better use of their strengths to promote integration by recognising and facilitating their role in implementing many of the recommendations in this report.
- Danish-Somali civil society organisations should consider engaging an independent facilitator who could assist them to establish common objectives and then convene a meeting with the government and other stakeholders to identify the chief challenges facing the Danish-Somali community, gain a better understanding of the activities and potential of Danish-Somali civil society organisations to promote inclusion, and identify practical suggestions for

enabling Danish-Somali civil society organisations to work more effectively with government and other stakeholders towards greater inclusion.

### **Role of the Media**

- Danish-Somali civil society organisations should hold a joint event with media organisations and/or organisations of media professionals to showcase Danish-Somali achievements, expand media contacts that can be used to improve coverage of the Danish-Somali community and encourage media professionals to provide pro bono media training for Danish-Somali organisations and activists seeking to engage more effectively with the media.

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Minority communities – whether Muslim, migrant or Roma – continue to come under intense scrutiny in Europe today. This complex situation presents Europe with one of its greatest challenges: how to ensure equal rights in an environment of rapidly expanding diversity.

At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations, is a research and advocacy initiative which works to advance equality and social justice for minority and marginalised groups excluded from the mainstream of civil, political, economic, and, cultural life in Western Europe.

Muslims in EU Cities was the project's first comparative research series which examined the position of Muslims in 11 cities in the European Union. Somalis in European cities follows from the findings emerging from the Muslims in EU Cities reports and offers the experiences and challenges faced by Somalis across seven cities in Europe. The research aims to capture the everyday, lived experiences as well as the type and degree of engagement policymakers have initiated with their Somali and minority constituents.