

# Tripartite agreement on integration reached today

17-03-2016: The Government and the labour and employer organisations have today signed a comprehensive agreement on integration in the labour market. The focal point of the agreement is a new integration training programme. The tripartite negotiations will now move on to other issues when they resume after the Easter holiday.

With today's agreement, the Government and the labour and employer organisations agreed on the framework for improved integration efforts, paving the way for many more refugees and immigrants admitted through family reunification to gain employment and progress towards self-reliance.

From the outset, the Government and the labour and employer organisations were in agreement on the need for fundamental new initiatives to break with unsuccessful integration efforts of the past. Less than one in three refugees is currently employed after three years in the integration programme, which is built around language instruction, with very little focus on contact with workplaces.

The tripartite discussions have resulted in 32 broad-reaching initiatives, ensuring that efforts for refugees and immigrants admitted through family reunification begin earlier, with a larger share of activities rooted in the workplace. A central element of the agreement is the joint proposal by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA) for a new two-year integration training programme (the IGU programme), which is outlined in the agreement and also has the backing of the Government.

The IGU programme will help more refugees into the Danish labour market faster, even if they cannot meet the Danish requirements from day one and do not receive the standard, collectively bargained wage for a given job.

The Government and the labour and employer organisations also agree that other significant challenges in the Danish labour market require common solutions. Therefore, a new tripartite meeting is scheduled for 15 April. Sufficient and qualified labour across Denmark and internships for young people are among the issues at the head of the agenda.

## **Minister for Employment, Jørn Neergaard Larsen says:**

“I would like to acknowledge and thank the labour and employer organisations for working together in the same direction, and for everyone showing willingness to compromise and contribute to an ambitious agreement. With this agreement, we are creating a fundamental shift in the Danish integration efforts. We are doing away with decades of failed efforts. We will now base our efforts on ensuring that refugees are out at Danish companies, contributing instead of getting stuck in passive programmes.”

## **Minister for Immigration, Integration and Housing Inger Støjberg says:**

“I am very pleased that we have now landed an agreement that makes the integration efforts significantly more job-oriented. This was greatly needed – both because it is quite reasonable that people make a contribution to the Danish society when they are here, and because we know it is vital for the integration of individuals into Danish society that they get out into a workplace. Here they meet Danes, Danish norms and values, and the Danish language.

The ambitious agreement reached by the Government and the labour and employer organisations reflects that everyone has embraced the task of strengthening integration. This means that we will see much more employment-oriented integration efforts in the municipalities and it means that workplaces will offer new opportunities for refugees – even if they lack qualifications – to gain a foothold in the Danish job market. We in the Government will support these efforts by targeting Danish language instruction towards employment and with new tools that make it easy for municipalities and companies. It's really good that an agreement has been reached, but now is when the actual work begins.”

**President of the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, Lizette Risgaard, says:**

“The Danish tripartite model has been repeatedly declared dead and laid to rest. But we have proven that it's alive and kicking – and we have demonstrated the ability to find solutions to large and significant challenges to Danish society. The labour unions are contributing to the efforts to ensure that more refugees can become self-supporting faster, and we are ensuring that this can be done within our collective bargaining system.

We are fond of, and we are upholding the collective agreements. And now we continue to the next round, in which we must find solutions for all of those without a job or an education. We are taking responsibility and we are creating solutions for the benefit of union members and all of Denmark.”

**Director General of the Confederation of Danish Employers, Jacob Holbraad, says:**

“I am very glad that we succeeded today in finding a new and common solution that will help more refugees gain employment. The agreement contains a new initiative, which makes it easier for companies and refugees to directly agree on the terms of employment in an un-bureaucratic way.

We have thereby taken the first important step in our efforts to carry out the huge integration task that lies ahead. The companies are ready to take on their part of the task. Therefore, I am also pleased that, according to the new agreement, companies will encounter a much more effective and well-coordinated employment system.”

**Chairman of Local Government Denmark, Martin Damm, says:**

“It's good that the labour and employer organisations have contributed a new tool to help us integrate more refugees into the labour market – a task that companies and unions will be responsible for carrying out. The litmus test for the agreement will be how many refugees are hired in IGU positions, and how many progress from there to a real job. We will have to follow this carefully.

As soon as possible, the Government will seek support for the initiatives among the political parties in the Danish parliament, ensuring that initiatives requiring new legislation can be implemented before the summer holiday.”