

# A guide to trade unions in Denmark for highly skilled workers



If you are a highly skilled worker who is new to the Danish job market, this booklet is for you. A trade union membership can give security with regards to your job situation.

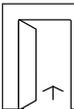
In this booklet, you can read about what it means to be a member of a trade union in Denmark and how a trade union can help you in your current situation.

## Why should you join a trade union?

A trade union<sup>1</sup> offers legal advice on employment-related matters, networking opportunities, and support in job search and career development. Below you can see a list of what we think are the most relevant services to you as a newcomer to the Danish labour market.

### Here is what you can expect from your trade union when entering the Danish labour market:

- **Job search:** Learn how to find a job in the Danish labour market – get assistance and feedback on CV, applications, job interviews etc.
- **Contract review:** As an international professional in Denmark, it can be difficult to know whether your salary and conditions are fair. You can ask your trade union to review your contract before you sign it to make sure that everything is according to Danish legislation.
- **Salary benchmarking:** Your trade union has unique insight into salary levels divided into positions and industry, giving you the best foundation for determining your market value and whether you receive the right salary for your work. Trade unions also advise on salary negotiation techniques and how to argue for a salary increase.
- **Mentoring:** Access to mentorships, where you receive sound feedback on your professional and personal development from a dedicated mentor with a thorough knowledge of your field or profession.
- **A professional network:** Trade unions offer a chance to expand your network in Denmark by meeting other professionals in your field who also share your educational background.
- **Professional and social events:** Many trade unions offer professional events and courses to develop your skills and knowledge. You can also join social events to meet other professionals in your industry.
- **Member's benefits:** Most unions offer a range of money saving benefits, from cheap insurance policies to discounts on shopping and experiences.



**Many unions have decided to offer free or highly discounted membership to displaced persons and refugees.**

<sup>1</sup> A union is not an unemployment insurance fund (A-kasse). Although most trade unions are typically affiliated with unemployment insurance funds, you will need to enrol separately to ensure that you have the right to unemployment benefits if you lose your job.

## **Here is what to expect from your trade union in the long term:**

Your trade union is here for you in all stages of your working life: from counselling on parental leave and holiday entitlements to supporting you in the event of stress or illness. If your contract gets terminated or you decide to change directions in your career, you can get advice and guidance from your union's career counsellors and legal advisors.

Most unions offer all-inclusive access to counselling and services once the membership is obtained.

## **Welcome to Denmark and the Danish labour market**

When you are new to the Danish labour market, it is essential to know that you are entering a labour market that is to a great extent regulated by social partners rather than by legislation. Within a model popularly known as the Danish Model, employers and employees reach voluntary collective agreements regarding pay and working conditions. These agreements largely replace actual legislation and help ensure a peaceful and stable labour market.

In addition, trade unions also negotiate with the government – the so-called tripartite cooperation – about labour market policy on questions such as unemployment and insurance issues. By European standards, the agreements on the Danish labour market are highly flexible, for instance regarding working hours, overtime and hiring and firing of personnel.

## **Trade union membership in Denmark**

Since the trade unions play a pivotal role in the Danish labour market, there is a high level of union membership among Danish workers at all levels of employment. In fact, more than 70 pct. of Danish wage earners are members of a trade union. The proportion of union members is especially high among unskilled and skilled workers, but union membership is also common among people with a higher education like yourself. This is primarily because salary and labour conditions in the private sector are negotiated individually, making it essential to know one's market value and the relevant salary and employment terms – information that all unions offer to their members.

You should know that every worker is entitled to organize in a union and employers cannot discriminate against employees for union membership. Therefore, being a member of a union is very common and fully acceptable, whether you are a blue-collar worker or part of the top management. In Denmark, most unions are divided into professional areas rather than industries. The Danish labour market is built on trust and compromise between trade unions and employers' organizations and membership of a union is considered an integrated and completely non-controversial part of your connection to the labour market.

You can freely choose whether you want to be a member of a union. Which union you can join depends on your education, position, and place of work. Visit the website of each union for an overview of its services and membership offers to help you decide which one is the best match for you and your professional profile. You can see a list of all the Danish trade unions for highly skilled workers on Akademikerne's website.

**We look forward to welcoming you.**



**Further reading:**



## **The highly skilled Ukrainian's guide to finding employment in Denmark**

For the many people arriving in Denmark from Ukraine, continuing ones life - and worklife, in a new country with little advance warning can be an overwhelming experience. For this reason Akademikerne have compiled a collection of resources relevant to finding employment on these shores, on a dedicated sub-section of our website. The website is relevant for Ukrainian jobseekers, as well as Danish based employers seeking to hire highly skilled workers.

**Visit “The Highly Skilled Ukrainian's Guide to Finding Employment in Denmark”.**

The Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (Akademikerne) is an umbrella organisation for its 28 member organisations. These organisations offer services to professional and managerial staff graduated from universities and other higher educational institutions. We currently represent 468,800 highly skilled workers across Denmark. We look forward to welcoming you.