



## **THEMATIC NETWORK PROJECT IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGES III**

**SUB-PROJECT TWO:  
LANGUAGES FOR ENHANCED OPPORTUNITIES ON THE EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET**

### **NATIONAL REPORT / Denmark**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 General introductory remarks**

This report purports to present a picture of the current situation in Denmark with a view to answering the questions implied in the title of the sub-project. The report is based partly on a number of sources which are referenced in the text, and partly on an interpretation of the situation, and some of the sources, based on a number of years' experience as dean at the Copenhagen Business School.

An overarching purpose of TNP3 is to try to fill out the agenda created by the decision in the European Union to work towards 'mother tongue + 2 foreign languages'. The participants in TNP3 nearly all come from language departments, language centres etc. and thus have expertise in the area but also a natural inclination to argue in favour of as many and as varied a selection of languages as possible. I have found, in connection with the writing of the report but also through a number of years in the sector that this sometimes contrasts with the 'real world'. I have tried in the report to highlight some of the aspects of this dichotomy, which I believe is one we need to address seriously.

### **1.2 A brief overview of the Danish economy and labour market<sup>1</sup>**

The Danish business structure has experienced enormous changes during the last few decades. Denmark has gone from being an agricultural/industrial society to becoming a society where services are the dominant activity. In 1960, almost 20 per cent of all employed people worked within agriculture and fishing, and almost 40 per cent of the total labour force worked within manufacturing and construction. In 2002, the corresponding percentages had fallen to less than 5 per cent and less than 25 per cent. In turn, the proportion of employed persons working within services has increased from well below half of all employed persons to almost three in four of all employed persons. The most pronounced increase has occurred within public services. About 33 per cent of all employed persons now work within public services compared to only about 10 per cent in 1960.

Business structures are ideally described by using two business levels: enterprises and workplaces. The enterprise is legally and financially responsible for the operation of the enterprise. Each enterprise owns one or more workplaces. A workplace is a defined part of an enterprise situated at a given address which produces one - or mainly one - type of goods or service. Thus, workplaces are the sites where physical production of goods or services takes place.

The Danish labour market is characterized by a large number of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) and fairly few large corporations. Approximately 98 - 99% of Danish companies belong to this category, which employs roughly 38% of the total work force. Furthermore, recent surveys indicate that small and medium-sized com-

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<sup>1</sup> Section based primarily on text and data from Denmark's Bureau of Statistics, Yearbook 2003.

panies generate approx. 35% of the total national export with companies of 1- 49 showing the fastest growth rate in the private sector.

From an employment point of view, studies and surveys of the employability of the academic work force in general have pointed to small and medium-sized companies as the most important group of *potential* employers for academics, despite the fact that Danish SMEs are reluctant to employ university graduates. Traditionally, most academics have been employed by major national or international companies or by the public sector.

There are about 280,000 enterprises in Denmark with a real activity, i.e. enterprises performing work corresponding to at least a half man-year. Agriculture and fishing account for more than one in five of these enterprises, while the main activity of almost two thirds of all enterprises concerns trade and other services.

Thus, manufacturing accounts for less than one in ten of all enterprises in Denmark, with construction accounting for a similar percentage.

The size of enterprises varies considerably. Whereas an enterprise within agriculture and fishing employs slightly less than one full-time employee, manufacturing enterprises employ an average of almost 17 full-time employees.

Danish companies had DKK 2,250 billion in total turnover in 2000. Of this amount, exported goods and services accounted for slightly more than DKK 546 billion. The remaining goods and services were sold in Denmark.

Enterprises within manufacturing account directly for half of all sales of goods and services abroad. Processed goods from agriculture and fishing account for a considerable part of manufacturing exports. This fact, and the fact that unprocessed goods from these two primary sectors are exported through trading enterprises, explains why exports directly from agriculture and fishing are very limited. Service enterprises account for one fourth of total exports, with transport accounting for a very significant percentage of this figure. Exports only account for a small percentage of the total turnover within construction, and such exports account for a very small part of total Danish exports.

Denmark has almost 300,000 permanent workplaces. Approximately 3 million jobs are being performed at these workplaces or at workplaces which have not been stated. "Not stated" is a category of workplaces used in the preparation of statistics in order to include jobs which cannot be pinpointed to one permanent workplace, e.g. cleaning business, insurance business, social and health services (child-minders, district nurses, etc.).

R&D expenditure is particularly high within manufacturing, and total expenditure on own R&D activities reached almost DKK 13 bn. This amount corresponds to more than half the amount of the private sector's expenditure on R&D. Business units within knowledge services, which include, e.g. ICT service activities, research and development and consulting engineers accounted for R&D expenditure amounting to DKK 7.4 bn., which corresponds to one-third of R&D expenditure in the private sector.

In the EU countries, business statistics are compiled in accordance with homogeneous principles, which make it possible to compare the business structure among the EU countries. In the present context, only non-agricultural industries in the private

sector are described, except for some selected personal services. The number of jobs within this group which is distributed to main industries is more or less similar in Denmark and in the other EU countries. The groups manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and hotels and other services account for about 30 per cent, while construction accounts for just over 10 per cent of the total number of employees. There is a slight difference in the distribution in our neighbouring countries Sweden and Germany. The share of employment within services is higher in Sweden, while the share of employment within manufacturing is higher in Germany.

The services sector comprises a number of different industries with one thing in common: the production of services. These industries include the wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants and catering, transports, telecommunications and postal services, financial services and business activities comprising ICT services, research and development, auditing and book-keeping, cleaning, leasing of machinery and equipment, temporary employment agencies, etc. The services sector has experienced a 20 per cent increase in employment during the period 1992-1999, followed by a 6 per cent growth from 1999 to 2001. In comparison, the number of persons employed in manufacturing has declined by 3 per cent from 1992-1999. Since then it has been stabilized.

The structure of the private services sector is illustrated in figure 1. In 2001, the greatest number of persons employed was found within the wholesale and retail trade, which accounted for 302,000 full-time employees. Next was business activities with 266,000 persons employed. In 2001, the wholesale and retail trade accounted for 61 per cent of the total value added, followed by transport which generated 20 per cent, and business services with 15 per cent. Business services accounted for 41 per cent of the total number of business enterprises within the services sector and the wholesale and retail trade for 32 per cent.

### **1.3 Recent changes in the labour market as a result of increasing European integration and globalisation<sup>2</sup>**

It is generally accepted in Denmark that the country is faced with the challenges of a new, third wave of globalisation which entails historic opportunities for growth but which also poses new demands from Danish trade and industry. This is probably a situation shared by many other European countries.

This already has had and will continue to have effects on the labour market, especially as a consequence of increased off-shoring of jobs. The international division of labour is changing as a consequence of new patterns of competition with countries in Eastern Europe and Asia using their competitive advantage. Denmark is a high labour-cost country and several companies are moving labour-intensive manufacturing production to those countries. Additionally the tendency now is that also service or office jobs are moved abroad, e.g. with call-centers, ticket-reservation systems etc. being moved to for example India. One current estimate is that as many as 200,000 jobs will be off-shored over the next 5-year period.

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<sup>2</sup> Section based partly on: Det Globale Danmark – En nyvurdering af fremtidens konkurrencevilkår (2004), Monday Morning

This development could be quite dramatic for Denmark. At present it seems that many companies are very well prepared for the new global competitive environment, whereas society as a whole is not. I.e. political initiatives to address the problems that may occur as a consequence are only slowly..

There doesn't seem to be any doubt that this new wave of globalisation will require concrete action in the area of foreign languages and education in general. At present only 18% of higher education programmes in Denmark are offered in English. The Danish primary school sector delivers 18% of each age cohort as 'functional illiterates'; only 2 out of every 3 25-34 year olds have an education which gives them specific, job relevant competences – of these only 6% with a BA or MA degree. To put it in other words the situation is that the young generation now entering the labour market are not better educated than the generation about to leave it. That is a problematic situation in which to compete with countries doing better.

It is questionable whether the full consequences of this new, third wave of globalisation have completely dawned on Danish society and population – as is probably the case in numerous other countries in Europe. This wave is likely to cut much deeper into 'the way things are usually done', also when it comes to language competences on the European labour market. Is it just a question of mother-tongue + 2 or are we faced with entirely different issues.

#### **1.4 General consequences for the use of languages of the above**

From an employment point of view, studies and surveys of the employability of the academic work force in general have pointed to small and medium-sized companies as the most important group of *potential* employers for academics, despite the fact that Danish SMEs are reluctant to employ university graduates. Traditionally, most academics have been employed by major national or international companies or by the public sector.

#### **1.5 Perspectives for the future**

To be filled

## **2. New linguistic demands resulting from European integration and globalisation: languages and skills/competences**

### **2.1 A note on the Danish education system in relation to the sub-project theme**

The Danish education system is fairly homogeneous which means that pupils in primary and secondary school get more or less the same amount of foreign language instruction, meaning that they leave school and enter the labour market or university with fairly well-defined and validated levels in foreign languages<sup>3</sup>.

The Danish education system consists of three levels: primary and lower secondary school (a 9 year comprehensive school, also called basic school), upper secondary school (3 years), and higher education. Prior to the basic school, there is a voluntary pre-school class (1 year) which most children attend, and there is a voluntary 10th school year.

Youth education is either academically oriented (general upper secondary education) or vocationally oriented (vocational education and training). Upon completion of a youth education programme, students may continue into higher education. This is divided into short cycle programmes (typically 2 years), medium cycle programmes (3-4 years; professionally oriented bachelor programmes) and long-cycle (university) programmes.

The university programmes are organised in a 3+2+3 structure in accordance with the recommendations of the Bologna Declaration (1999): 3-year bachelor programmes, 2-year master programmes, and 3-year Ph.D. programmes.

Denmark has a strong tradition for life-long learning, and there is also a parallel programme structure for adult (continuing) education in which the highest level is a 1-1½ year master programme (full-time equivalent), requiring as entrance qualifications another academic degree as well as a minimum of 2 years of professional experience.

Foreign languages are generally taught as follows: The first foreign language is English, taught from the 3rd year of primary school; the second foreign language (German or French) is taught from the 6th year, and the 3rd foreign language (French/German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Japanese, or something else) is taught from the first year of the academically oriented upper-secondary education programmes. The schools will typically offer French/German or Spanish, whereas one or more of the other languages are only taught at some schools. Throughout the school system and in the youth culture in general there is a strong impact of Anglo-American culture and English is almost becoming a second language for at least part of the young generations.

When students enter university only those who choose to study languages or a programme with foreign language(s) as an integral part receive foreign language instruction. In all other university programmes foreign languages are not part of the curricu-

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<sup>3</sup> Of course there are huge variations between individuals but at the structural level the systems delivers comparability and homogeneity.

lum, which means that probably in the area of 90% of all university students finished language instruction when they left high school at the age of 19. An increasing number of university programmes or parts thereof are now taught in English, which probably has some effect on students' skills in English, but all other foreign languages are basically 'shelved' after high school.

This is not a satisfactory situation and it is counterproductive when Denmark's international economic aspirations are taken into consideration.

From the perspective of university programmes' interaction with the world of work it is worth mentioning that a new university act was introduced in 2003 and now in the process of implementation. The University Act of 2003 emphasises close cooperation between research, curriculum development and the labour market. The act introduces boards of directors as the top decision-making level with a majority of external members appointed by the minister among prominent persons from the business sector and other sectors of public life in Denmark.

## **2.2 Use of languages in business and industry in general - internationalisation of Danish working life**

Denmark is a relatively small country with a 'small' language which is only spoken by approximately 5 million people. Denmark is also, as appears from previous sections, a very open economy which is very dependent on trade with other countries. Consequently, it has always been a basic condition for Danish businesses to a large extent to work in and with foreign languages in connection with its international trading relations. Which languages that have been the most dominant ones have varied over time. Over the past couple of centuries French, German and now predominantly English have been the languages used.

These three languages have also been the three languages which the educational system has focused on the most, both from a cultural point of view and from a 'commercial' or employability point of view. But of course there is a strong link between the usefulness of the various languages in the job market and the interest shown for these languages among school pupils, especially in secondary school, and among university students.

There is no doubt that there is a strong and increasing correlation between the dominance of English worldwide as the language of business, science, entertainment, etc. and the dominance of English as the preferred foreign language. This development is likely to continue to accelerate to the extent that one can foresee a situation where Danish and English are seen as two parallel or equal languages in many companies and business contexts.<sup>4</sup> The competition among foreign languages in Danish business life and labour market has been 'won' by English to the extent where knowledge of and skills in this language are taken for granted in many jobs and not even considered as a special qualification. Skills in other languages are generally only required or expected in jobs where these language skills are specifically sought after.

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<sup>4</sup> At present there is a debate in Denmark about 'domain loss'. It is feared that a number of subject areas are lost for Danish, because English is used so pervasively that e.g. new terminology in Danish is not being created, e.g. in the natural sciences.

Language use in the business sector is subject to the rationale of economic logic. It is of course economically rational to break down also language barriers among other trade barriers to further international trade, and for businesses to achieve the cheapest possible method of transaction in international trade.

Basically, business communication between persons with different mother tongues may take place in one of three ways. Either A and B each speak their own mother tongue and they understand each other because the two languages are closely related. This often happens in inter-Scandinavian interaction. The second option is that A or B speaks the other's language, or, as the third option, both parts speak a lingua franca – usually English. The more people who master English the more sense it makes to learn it. English is and will remain the lingua franca, and thus the incentive to learn it well increases. That is the situation Denmark and in a number of other countries.

As far as I have been able to investigate there exists no international statistics of how many people possess skills in the major languages in the world.

David Crystal (2003) estimates that in the year 2000 appr. 1,5 billion people use or are able to use English (L1: 330-400 mill; L2: 430 mill; L3: 750 million).

Eurobarometer 54 (INRA 2001) presents a study of language knowledge in Europe. 41% indicated to know English in addition to their mother tongue. The figures for French, German and Spanish were 19%, 10% and 7%, respectively.

In Denmark, as in many other countries in Europe, language training is also an (important) political issue. There is sometimes a tendency to claim that the business sector uses or ought to use more languages (and more) than is actually the case. I.e. the political and ideological discussion of the importance of languages is mixed up. In Denmark, for example, the political ambition of mother tongue + two languages is not a realistic option in the business sector for the simple reason that companies, at least at present, are not prepared to subscribe to this point of view with other than polite or ideological backing. In real life in business the saying is: English is enough. Other, additional, languages are OK, but not really required.

From a globalisation point of view, the mother tongue + 2 would probably make more sense in the Danish context if the second language of the 2 is an 'exotic' language; a pattern that could perhaps also be found also in other countries in Europe.

The mother tongue + 2 principle could perhaps be said to be a political compromise which major countries in Europe like Britain and, notably, France and Germany, could subscribe to because it means that those countries' languages would usually go into the combination.

The debate in Denmark about the number of languages to focus on in general and for the world of work more specifically tends to be quite divided. Between, on the one hand, the opinions of language specialists, teachers of languages in the primary and secondary school system and university teachers, who want to argue (and to find evidence to support their arguments) for strong language competences in addition to

English. And on the other hand representatives from companies, employers organisations etc. who tend to focus on strong and improved English as an absolutely necessary prerequisite and other language qualifications as a useful add-on – but often not much more than that. Some of the data presented in the next section tend to indicate that in fact English and to some extent also German are the important languages for Danish business, whereas other languages play a minor role.

### 2.3 Use of foreign languages in companies

The above description of the in Denmark with regard to the use of languages in business and internationalisation of Danish working life covers the general situation as it is now on the basis of tendencies registered in recent years. It is probably a depiction of the situation which will increase over the coming years.

However, when turning more concretely to the use of languages in companies the picture may look somewhat different, or at least more varied. It is not easy, on the basis of studies and surveys to get a clear picture of the use of foreign languages in companies – in addition to the general situation as described above.

As indicated above the need of private companies for employees with foreign language qualifications derives from their trade with other countries.

This need can be and is covered in different ways.

a) that a proportion of employees are hired on the specific condition that they have foreign languages at a given level. This solution often implies that the company has to pay a higher wage in order to hire a languages specialist (typically holding a university or business degree in languages).

b) the company buys language services from outside specialists- translators, interpreters, etc.

c) that the company uses English as a lingua franca for all employees. This of course requires that this is also accepted by the company's trading partners.

The choice of solution depends on the situation of the company or the tasks to be solved. The trend is as is described in the previous section.

The following will attempt, by using the relatively few surveys of language use in companies that exist, to substantiate further what the picture is in Danish enterprises.

The focus will be put on two sets of data: Language requirements seen from an export point of view, and language use and needs, language barriers, cultural barriers, etc. as investigated in the ELISE-project.

Table 1<sup>5</sup>

The composition of Danish exports divided by language areas:

Language	Value of exports mill.DKK	Percentage
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<sup>5</sup> Chr. Hjort Andersen (2004): Dansk sprogpolitik: På hvilke sprog skal danskere tale med udlændinge i 2030? (Which languages will Danes need to talk to non-Danes in 2030?)

English	90,171	20.8
German	88,525	20.4
French	33,447	7.7
Spanish	17,169	4.0
Italian	14,782	3.4
Russian	7,592	1.7
Swedish	54,938	12.7
Other languages	127,605	29.4
Total	434,229	100.0
English as ling. franca	54,440	12.5

It appears from this table that English and German are by far the dominant languages, and that other European languages by this measure are fairly negligible. It is probably reasonable to assume that the majority of exports to 'other language areas' is conducted in English, which means that English accounts for appr. 60% and German 20,4%. It may be interesting to see how these figures look for the other countries participating in the sub-project.

Another way of looking at this is to use employees' information of their use of foreign languages on the job. The European Community Household (ECHP) database gives some indication of this.

Of approximately 3,000 interviewees during the period 1994-99, 43.5% of the Danish respondents said that they used a foreign language on their job, while the rest said that they did not.<sup>6</sup>

Table 2: Danes' 'on-the-job' use of foreign languages 1994-99<sup>7</sup>

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> language</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> language</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> language</b>	<b>Total</b>
English	72.4	14.2	0.1	86.7
French	0.1	1.7	4.1	5.9
German	17.9	33.1	1.7	52.7
Spanish	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.9
Italian	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.4
Russian	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1

Source: ECHP Database

Again it is remarkable to see – not that English is so dominant – but that French comes out so low<sup>8</sup> and that e.g. Spanish, which is a popular language among secondary school pupils and university language students is almost negligible as a language for work. Only English and German have a role to play as the 1<sup>st</sup> language. It is also worth noting that the total number of people who in fact use a foreign language on their job is close to 50%.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Just as an aside: A special element of French is its importance as an EU-language. Truchot (2003) mentions a table of languages used to produce original documents in the EU. In 1986 58% of texts were drafted in French, 26% in English, 11% in German. In 1999 35% were drafted in French, 52% in English and 5% in German. With the enlargement in 2004 of a number of countries with no history of attachment to France the share of French texts will most likely decline further and vice versa for English.

It is also worth noting that there is no close correlation between exports statistics in Table 1 and Table 2.

The ELISE-project, funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, set out to document how well companies in various parts of Europe manage the linguistic and cultural dimensions and challenges of their international trade. The survey includes Denmark, Ireland, Holland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Sweden; a total of 452 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Table 3:

Country	Number of SMEs taking part
Denmark	52
Ireland	75
Holland	92
Northern Ireland	50
Scotland	139
Sweden	44

Source: ELISE overview report written by S. Hagen<sup>9</sup>

ELISE also investigated the use of foreign languages and, for Denmark, resulted in even higher percentages than the ECHP-survey, as is seen in the following table.

Table 3: The use of foreign languages | SMEs in 6 European countries

<u>Denmark</u>		<u>Ireland</u>		<u>Northern Ireland</u>		<u>Holland</u>		<u>Scotland</u>		<u>Sweden</u>	
English.	92%	French	43%	French	44%	Engl	82%	French	43%	Engl.	86%
German	81%	German	40%	German	26%	German	82%	German	42%	German	25%
French	33%	Ital	20%	Spanish	12%	French	53%	Spanish	17%	French	14%
Swe- dish.	19%	Span	16%	Dutch	4%	Spanish	15%	Italian	14%		
Spanish	17%	Jap	4%	Korean	4%	Italian	7%	Japanese	10%		
Norwe- gian	12%	Swed	3%					Chinese	4%		
Italian	6%	Norw	3%					Swedish	4%		
Portugu ese	4%	Dutch	1%					Russian	4%		

Source: ELISE

Again it is seen that for Denmark English and German dominate whereas other languages play a minor role, although French comes out somewhat better in this table than in the ECHP-table above.

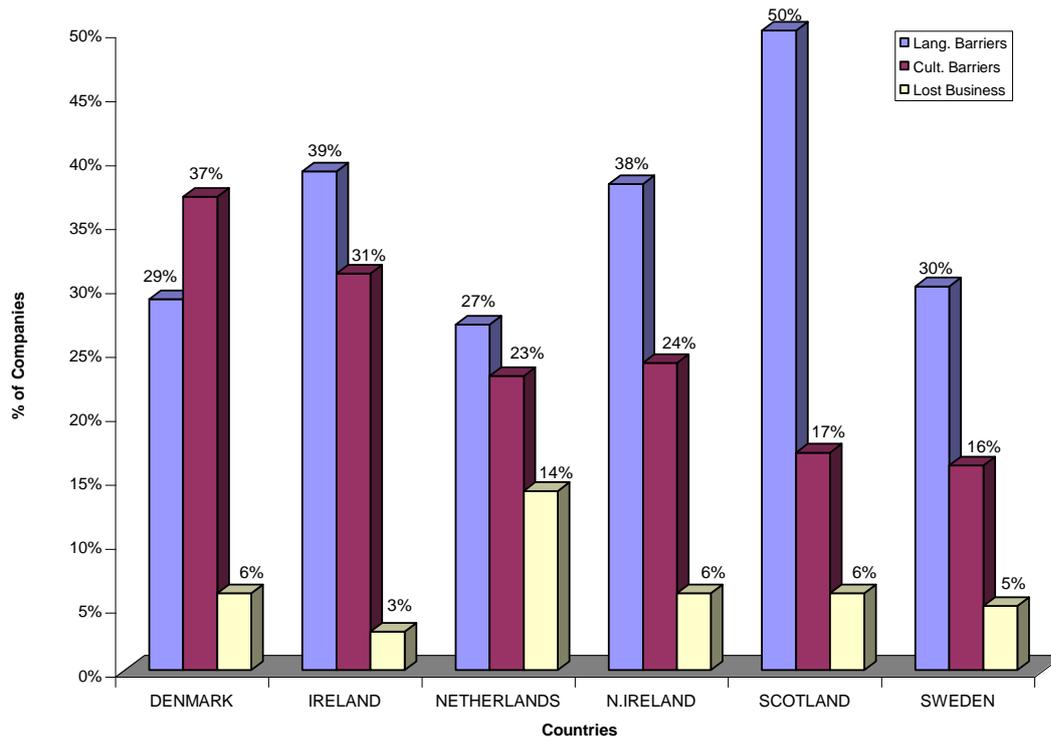
<sup>9</sup> ELISE (2001): European Language and International Strategy Development in SMEs.

## 2.4 Market opportunities and language resources

The ELISE-project referred to above also contains some data on the extent to which business is lost due to communication problems.

The following figure shows the extent to which business is considered to be lost due to language barriers and cultural barriers.

It appears, for Denmark, that the figure is just 6%. However, this figure should be interpreted against the fact that most Danish exports go to near or 'easy' markets.



Source: ELISE

### 3. In regard to non-language graduates, what formal or informal linguistic and intercultural qualifications – languages/skills and competences – are sought after on the national labour market?

To be filled in

#### **4. In regard to language graduates (bachelor and master) outside language-related industries and professions, what formal or informal linguistic and intercultural qualifications languages /skills and competences – are known to enhance career prospects?**

Basically two types of language graduates come out of the Danish universities. On the one hand graduates from the traditional universities, whose education primarily focuses on jobs as secondary school teachers, and on the other hand language graduates from the two business schools' language faculties whose focus is on translation, interpretation and other specialist language functions. As it was pointed out at the beginning of this report Danish is a small language only spoken in Denmark. This means that the labour market can only absorb a limited number of graduates in pure language jobs, far fewer than actually graduate with a language degree. Therefore, especially the two business schools have developed a number of new language programme combination where languages are studied together with economics, communication, area studies, computational linguistics, marketing, etc to give the graduates the possibility of a broader profile and thus easier access to the job market. This has been quite successful and is thus the answer to the question in this section.

#### **5. Validation**

As mentioned in section 2.1 the Danish education system is homogeneous and fairly well-structured with a strong element of central planning and definition of levels, learning outcomes, etc. Therefore the national school-leaving certificates after primary and secondary school as well as university diplomas and degrees normally need no supplementary validation. On this basis the labour market/employers usually have knowledge about what a job applicant is able to do when it comes to foreign languages. However, an increasing tendency for employers to use their own tests of job applicants, also with a view to testing their language abilities, is seen.

#### **6. Communication and co-operation between higher education institutions/public authorities and the world of work**

Pending

#### **7. Institutional, regional and national career service**

Pending

#### **7. Recommendations**

- Further and updated studies of the use of foreign languages on the Danish labour market ought to be made.

- Consultative bodies between the users (employers) and providers (universities) should be established to discuss action for the next 10-20 years in the area, e.g. what languages, to what extent, expectations from universities, universities' involvement in life-long learning activities
- The Common European Framework should be communicated actively to employers as a set of benchmarks.

Recommendations to be elaborated further pending discussion

#### **8. Needs for future projects, studies and research needs for future projects, studies and research - to be specified**

See under recommendations

#### **9. Conclusion – what then does this mean for languages in Denmark?**

Primary Sources used for this report:

Crystal, David (2003): "English as a Global Language", Cambridge University Press.

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Truchot, Claude (2003): "Languages and supranationality in Europe: The linguistic influence of the European Union. In Maurais og Morris (2003).