Guidance in Education
– the educational guidance system in Denmark
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Facts & Figures

- Population: 5,806,081 million; approx. 1.3% of the total EU population (2019)
- 0-19 years: 22.4%
- 20-59 years: 52.1%
- 60 years + 25.5%
- Percentage of a year group applying for a youth education programme: 92.1% (2018)
- Percentage of a year group completing a higher education programme: 61% (Profile Model 2015)
- Labour force: 2,935,000; 52.2% men, 47.8% women (2019)
- Gross unemployment rate 16-24 years: 1.8% (2019)
- Gross unemployment rate (25-29 years): 7.0% (2019)

Sources:
Statistics Denmark
Ministry of Children and Education
Ministry of Higher Education and Science
Introduction

Provision of educational and vocational guidance for young people is given high priority in Denmark.

The Danish guidance system aims to give easy access to high quality guidance services. Guidance is regarded as a continuous process that should help young people become more conscious of their abilities, interests and possibilities, thus enabling them to make decisions regarding education and employment on a qualified basis.

Today, the Ministry of Children and Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science are responsible for guidance and have a controlling and coordinating role in relation to the guidance system.

This publication gives an overview of the key elements of the Danish guidance system in the educational sector, which is primarily concerned with guidance services for young people.

An online version of the present publication is available at: www.ufm.dk/en/euroguidance
Guidance in Denmark

In Denmark, guidance within the education system is regulated by a specific act of parliament. The Danish Consolidation Act on municipal provision for young people under 25 (Lov om kommunal indsats for unge under 25 år) covers among other things educational guidance in relation to the choice of youth education. It supports the Danish Government’s declared goal that by 2030 90% of all young people should be completing a youth education programme before their 25th birthday. Guidance in relation to the transition to higher education is regulated in the Act on Study and Career Guidance Denmark (Lov om Studievalg Danmark).

The Government wishes to make it easier for citizens to make realistic decisions about learning opportunities and careers - for the individual’s own sake and for the good of society as a whole. The Danish guidance system - and changes made since the reform in 2004 - should be seen in this perspective. The Danish guidance system consists of various elements, which can be seen on the following page.

Key elements of the Danish guidance system are:

- Municipal youth guidance units, which provide guidance services for young people up to the age of 25 years, focusing on the transition from compulsory to youth education, or, alternatively, to the labour market.
- Study and Career Guidance Denmark, which provides guidance for students in youth education programmes and for young people and adults outside the education system who wish to enter a higher education programme.
- eGuidance, which can be reached by e-mail, chat, phone or text message seven days a week from morning to evening. eGuidance is for all citizens – young persons and adults.
- The national guidance portal: www.ug.dk is an ICT-based careers information and guidance portal. The portal helps people to find information that enables them to make qualified decisions about education, training and careers.

General legislation regulating guidance in Denmark covers guidance in the educational sector, with special emphasis on guidance in connection with transitions within the educational system.

The Acts referred to define seven main aims of guidance. According to these aims, guidance related to the choice of education, training and career must:
- help to ensure that the choice of education and career will be of greatest possible benefit to the individual and to society, and that all young people complete an education leading to vocational/professional qualifications or a job;
- particularly target young people who, without specific guidance, would have difficulties in relation to the choice and completion of education or training courses and career choices;
- take into account the individual’s interests, personal qualifications and skills, including informal competencies, previous education and work experience, as well as the projected need for skilled labour and self-employed individuals;
- contribute to limiting, as much as possible, the number of dropouts and students changing from one education or training programme to another, and ensuring that the pupil or student completes their chosen education with the greatest possible academic/vocational and personal benefits;
- contribute to improving the individual’s ability to seek and use information, including ICT-based information and guidance about the choice of education, educational institution and career;
- help to ensure coherence and progression in the guidance support offered individuals;
- be independent of sectoral and institutional interests. Therefore, guidance is to be provided by practitioners with an approved guidance qualification or competencies recognised as being of the same level.

The last objective is to raise the quality level in Danish guidance, including an improvement in the qualifications and competencies of guidance counsellors.
Independent Guidance Units

There are three types of units which are all independent from sectoral and institutional interests:

- 98 municipal youth guidance units (*Kommunal ungeindsats*) provide guidance in relation to the transition from compulsory education to youth education and are responsible for education and training plans designed to meet individual needs.

- Study and Career Guidance Denmark (*Studievalg Danmark*) provides guidance in relation to the transition from youth education to higher education.

- eGuidance provides guidance to all citizens via various virtual communication channels: chat, telephone, text message, e-mail and Facebook.

Compulsory education begins at the age of 7 (form 1) and ends after form 9 (age 15). The 10th year is optional.

The term "youth education" is used as an umbrella term for all upper secondary and vocational education and training programmes (age 16-19).
Youth Guidance Units

Youth guidance units are found in all the 98 municipalities in Denmark. Each unit serves a municipality in terms of quality: quality as regards the number and variety of youth education institutions in the area, as well as cooperation with other municipalities. The local councils are responsible for guidance services, as well as coordinating educational, employment and social efforts in the municipality. The municipalities can decide for themselves how they want to organise the youth guidance units, as long as they fulfil their purposes and responsibilities.

According to the Consolidation Act on municipal provision for young people under 25, all 15-17 year-olds have an obligation to be enrolled in some course of education, some kind of employment or other activities designed to ensure that they will get an education or a job. The youth guidance units also assess the extent to which young people have the academic/vocational, personal and social competencies to begin and complete an upper secondary education.

The municipal youth guidance units provide guidance services for young people up to the age of 25 years, focusing on the transition from compulsory to youth education, or, alternatively, to the labour market. Their main target groups are:

- Pupils in lower secondary school (forms 7 to 9) and pupils attending the optional form 10.
- Young people under the age of 25 who are not attending or have not completed a youth education programme, and are not attached to the labour market.
- Other young people under the age of 25 who are seeking guidance in relation to youth education programmes or employment.
- Young people with a special need for guidance concerning
the choice of education, vocation and career. This is a diverse target group of young people with various problems related to the continuation or completion of an education programme.

In cooperation with school principals, the youth guidance units organise guidance activities at schools – close to the pupils. Teachers are responsible for the provision of general career education from form 1 to form 9, but the youth guidance units serve as a source of coordination, inspiration and further development in this area.

Guidance specifically related to the transition from compulsory to youth education is the responsibility of the youth guidance units – but it is provided at the pupils’ schools. The aim of the guidance process is to develop the pupils’ self-knowledge and ability to make decisions regarding their education and career. It concludes with the drawing-up of an individual transition plan in form 9, describing plans and objectives after compulsory schooling. Since January 1, 2019, it is mandatory for citizens under the age of 25 to have an educational plan if they have no upper secondary education, and are not attached to the labour market.

Introduction courses to youth education must take place in form 8. Bridge-building and contact person schemes are important tools in form 9 and bridge-building also in form 10. In form 9, bridge-building is an obligatory activity targeted at pupils who in form 8 who have been assessed as not being ready for youth education. In form 10, bridge-building is an obligatory activity for all pupils.
The units are obliged to establish contact with young people under the age of 25 who have not completed a youth education programme and are outside the education system or the labour market. Together with the individual young person, the guidance counsellors discuss different opportunities and schemes that may help them get back into education, training or employment.

The youth guidance units are based on guidelines from the municipal councils, who define the overall framework for the guidance activities within the scope of the Act on Guidance.

Quality assurance is emphasised in the guidance reform. Transparency in relation to the activities and results of the youth guidance units is important in order to assure a high level of quality. For this reason, objectives, methods, planned activities as well as the performance of each unit are required to be published on the municipality website. It is the responsibility of the municipal councils to ensure a continuous focus on raising the quality and uniformity of guidance. As a minimum, this includes figures concerning the scope, results and effects of the guidance provided.

Furthermore, the municipalities must annually discuss and act on the search patterns in the transition between compulsory and youth education, as well as making a plan for following up on the development of the whole area of guidance, based on the results and effects of the guidance provided.

Cooperation across sectors is a key issue in the Act on municipal provision for young people under 25. The aim is to ensure a coherent guidance system and a regular exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practice. The youth guidance units are thus obliged to cooperate closely with primary and lower secondary schools and youth education institutions in the area, as well as with local businesses, public employment services and youth guidance units in other municipalities, if relevant.

**Some facts about the school year 2017/18:**

- 66 % in municipal primary and lower secondary schools (Folkeskoler), 18 % in free elementary schools (Frie grundskoler), 12 % in continuation schools (Efterskoler) and 3 % in other schools (uddannelsesstatistik.dk)
Provision for young people in the municipality of Fredericia

The provision for young people is divided into broad, general measures targeting all young people, and specific measures targeting young people with different types of challenges in relation to education, jobs and life as a whole. Both target groups range from form 7 until the age of 30.

**Broad, general measures**
These measures are directed at forms 7 to 10 and consist of collective counselling, group counselling, individual counselling and a number of other activities, such as introductory courses and bridge-building courses between compulsory schooling and upper secondary education, business internships, company visits, educational fairs, etc. In forms 8, 9 and 10, the counsellors evaluate the readiness of all individual pupils for upper secondary education. The process ends with a portfolio, an education plan and enrolment on a youth education course or an individual programme. The professional guidance counsellors at the youth guidance unit are responsible for all these tasks in both municipal and private primary and lower secondary schools in the municipality of Fredericia. The youth guidance unit coordinates all the efforts in collaboration with the primary and lower secondary schools and youth education institutions in the municipality.

**Specific measures**
Specific measures aim to meet the requirement that all young people with special challenges should have a single point of entry to the municipality, by ensuring that they have a single contact person and that all measures are coordinated in one educational plan. The provision for young people in Fredericia Municipality is divided in a matrix structure involving the job centre, the social centre, the schools and the youth guidance unit.

The focal point of the specific measures is the educational plan drawn up by the guidance counsellors in cooperation with the young people and their

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- The municipality of Fredericia has a population of 51,427 people
- 10,100 young people (12-30 years old)
- 18 primary and lower secondary schools
- 14 full time guidance counsellors employed in the youth guidance unit
- The provision for young people as a whole consists of more than 40 employees with different tasks
All young people with special challenges should have a single point of entry to the municipality.

parents in connection with the transition from compulsory education to upper secondary education, or to individual programmes. In most cases, the contact person is a guidance counsellor who is also responsible for coordinating efforts involving the job centre, the social centre, the schools and the youth guidance unit.

In order to optimise cross-sectoral cooperation, we have developed a joint sparring and meeting design to train all relevant staff. We also set aside three hours each week in which staff meet and coordinate their efforts. We call it systematic, relational coordination, where the goal is to create simplicity and clarity for the individual young person through an educational plan involving all actors.

Our goal is that 90% of the young people complete upper secondary education before they reach the age of 25 and that the group of young people who have neither completed a course of education nor have permanent employment will be reduced by 50%.
Readiness for upper secondary education

In form 8, counsellors biannually estimate whether pupils will be able to commence and complete a youth education after forms 9 and 10, taking into account their personal, social and academic competences. In addition to this assessment, there is an interdisciplinary evaluation of the pupil’s competences in terms of vocational opportunities. Pupils achieving an average mark on the Danish grading system of 04 (and above) across all subjects are regarded as possessing the necessary academic competences in form 8. The school and the guidance unit in cooperation design a focused education and guidance programme for pupils who are assessed as not ready for upper secondary education. The goal is that the pupil should be ready to attend and complete a course of education by the end of form 9 or 10. The assessment is repeated in forms 9 and 10. In forms 9 and 10, academic competences vary depending on what upper secondary education is in question.

Pupils who are not immediately assessed as ready will, in form 9, participate in a one-week mandatory bridge-building course involving the compulsory school they are attending and institutions of upper secondary education, during which they receive individual as well as group guidance. The guidance unit helps this group of young people to make an informed decision about educational choices as well as to apply for a youth education course.

Pupils who are assessed as ready for education in form 8 are responsible, along with their parents, for applying for a youth education. This group can search for personal guidance via the digital education guide www.ug.dk or by contacting eGuidance.
Study and Career Guidance Denmark – seven regional guidance centres

Study and Career Guidance Denmark was established on August 1, 2018 as a new national guidance institution in the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The organisation consists of a main office (secretariat) with an executive director, and seven regional centres covering all parts of the country. The new organisation has gathered the seven centres that existed as independent centres from 2004-2018 into one national organisation.

Study and Career Guidance Denmark provides guidance to young people and adults about the choice of higher education and prospective career opportunities. The guidance offered is independent of sectional interests.

Study and Career Guidance Denmark meets the target group in their local environment; guidance in upper secondary education is mostly offered as individual conversations, in small groups or through common activities. The main objective is to put the students in a position to be able to make qualified decisions about their choice of higher education and career. Guidance focuses on the transition from youth education to higher education. The guidance activities give the students an insight into the higher education system, help them reflect on making choices.
about further education, jobs and careers and strengthen their self-awareness.

The counsellors organise a wide variety of educational and career guidance activities for students in upper secondary education, including workshops, seminars, careers fairs and individual and group guidance sessions. These activities take place at the students’ schools. The counsellors cooperate closely with the management and the teachers at the school.

Young people (and their parents), as well as adults, are also welcome to call or visit the centres to get information about higher education opportunities, or to make an appointment for a guidance session. On a regular basis, it is also possible to meet study and career guidance counsellors from the centres at different neutral localities across the seven regions – e.g. at a public library – to ensure that geographical distance does not prevent people from getting access to relevant guidance services.

The organisation is obliged to develop a quality assurance system. The quality assurance system incorporates the voices of users and is very much aimed at developing the organisation of, and guidance provided by, Study and Career Guidance Denmark, as well as at assuring a basic level of quality. Information provided by the quality assurance system will be both quantitative, for example through surveys, and qualitative, for example through group interviews.

Study and Career Guidance Denmark cooperates with relevant partners at the national, regional and local levels to ensure a coherent guidance system and a regular exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practice. Relevant partners include youth education and higher education institutions, the social partners and industry and commerce.
Study and Career Guidance
Denmark, Centre for the Capital Region

The Capital Region of Denmark is a region with a total population of 1.8 million people
121 youth education institutions
45,000 students in general upper secondary education
30,000 students in vocational education and training (VET)
18 study & career guidance counsellors are employed at the centre for the Capital Region

Our guidance service concerns the choice of higher education and paths in working life. Guidance activities differ depending on the target group, but generally speaking our main objective is to put citizens in a position where they themselves are capable of making qualified decisions about transitions from one level of education to another, from education to working life and changing paths in their working life.

In general upper secondary institutions in our region, we work in groups (often individual classes or classes together) to encourage students to stay curious, to have the desire and courage to explore possible scenarios and transitions in life – often focusing on the first transitions they face: higher education programmes.

To accomplish these goals, we offer:

- Three obligatory sessions with each class
- One to two obligatory sessions with more classes together
- A number of workshops with themes that help them get an overview of their situation
- Individual guidance for students (at their school)
- Meetings to which the school invites parents

Through these events, we ensure that students are confronted
with different perspectives on transitions, higher education and working life several times during their two to three years in general upper secondary education.

Each study and career guidance counsellor is responsible for a number of schools, and this ensures that students become familiar with their guidance counsellor. But it also means that the guidance counsellor remains on ‘neutral ground’, in the sense that he or she does not know the students individually from classes, as teachers do, something that many students consider to be an advantage, because they are not met with preconceived opinions when discussing their own thoughts about their future with the study and career guidance counsellor.

Young people and adults are welcome to call, e-mail or book an appointment at our centre in Copenhagen. Here we offer both individual and group guidance sessions.

All clients need to be empowered and placed in a position where they are capable of choosing and applying for a higher education programme by themselves and have some idea of the opportunities open to them in their working life.

Our main objective is to put people in a position to make qualified decisions about transitions from one level of education to another, from education to working life and when changing paths in their working life.
eGuidance was launched in January 2011 and provides individual and personal guidance to all citizens via various virtual communication channels: chat, telephone, E-mail, webinars and social media.

eGuidance is for everyone who wants information and guidance about education and employment and may also refer users to the digital guidance tools on the national portal, The Education Guide UG.dk. We play a central role as guides to the national guidance portal. At the outset, eGuidance was especially targeted at resourceful young persons and their parents, to give them easy access to independent information and guidance and hereby motivate them to continue the search and clarification process on their own. In 2018, eGuidance became the main career guidance service for adults looking for further training or education.

Users can contact eGuidance in the daytime and evenings, as well as at weekends. Many people appreciate the fact that they can get in touch with a guidance counsellor on, for example, a Tuesday evening or Saturday afternoon. Users contact eGuidance with questions relating to youth education as well as higher education and adult education. Because of the high percentage of Facebook users in Denmark, eGuidance is also present on this platform with three different pages. One page for all citizens, one especially for parents with children in secondary school and one for adults. eGuidance can also be followed on Twitter and LinkedIn. Activity on the social media generally happens on the front interface or news feed, where it is public for everybody to see and share.

Webinars are held as a supplement and as another way to offer guidance - on how to choose and apply for further education, for example. Webinars are also held in English for citizens from other countries who wish to apply for admission to a higher education programme in Denmark.

The communication channels are used differently by different user groups. Chat is especially popular among the young users; many of them feel that they express themselves better in writing and anonymously, and
Extract from a chat guidance session with eGuidance

Date: 30-01-2014,

10:14:53 Linda starts a chat

10:15:37 Counsellor Vibeke: Hi Linda

10:15:38 Linda: I'm desperate right now and really need someone to tell me that I can get another chance...

10:16:26 Counsellor Vibeke: That doesn't sound very nice, what do you mean by another chance?

10:16:33 Linda: I finished 3.g* in 2010 and have been kicking myself ever since because I've been so stupid. I chose a direction which was too hard for me and I continued with it even though I couldn't keep up with the level.

10:17:10 Counsellor Vibeke: Why do you think you've been stupid?

10:17:46 Linda: Because I continued instead of changing to another direction... my marks are terrible, so my average is incredibly low.

10:18:56 Counsellor Vibeke: OK, I understand, but you can still get admission to a lot of courses if you've passed your upper secondary school exams.

10:19:50 Linda: At all the places I have the slightest interest in applying to, the average mark for admission is at least 6.

10:20:38 Counsellor Vibeke: OK, where in the country are you applying?

They investigate the options together.

*last year of general upper secondary school
many wish to be able to save the answers. Parents and adults prefer to contact us by phone.

Sessions with eGuidance take place anonymously. Consequently, eGuidance cannot play a role in specific cases that, for instance, the youth guidance units are responsible for. Clients appreciate the anonymity, which in many cases makes it easier for them to ask their questions. eGuidance employs a number of full-time counsellors and a number of counsellors who work part-time for eGuidance and part-time at a youth guidance unit.
National Guidance Portal

The national guidance portal: www.ug.dk, launched by the Ministry of Children and Education, is an ICT-based careers information and guidance portal. The portal provides citizens - young people and adults - with substantial careers information in order for them to make qualified decisions about education, training and careers.

The portal provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on:

- youth education and training programmes
- higher education programmes
- occupations/professions
- labour market issues
- study programmes taught in English at Danish colleges and universities

The portal provides different types of guidance tools that facilitate the choice of education, occupation and careers. The portal also provides specific entry points for different target groups:

- young people seeking youth education programmes
- young people seeking higher education programmes
- persons seeking adult education programmes
- parents wanting to support their children in their choice of education

From the portal you can easily find and reach the regional guidance centres, the youth guidance units, eGuidance and the educational institutions. It also gives access to important and updated information, guidance tools and relevant websites.

The portal is updated on a day-to-day basis in order to have new and updated information available all the time. Users can choose to receive electronic newsletters whenever there is relevant news concerning guidance, education and the labour market.
Guidance in Relation to Completion of Education within General and Vocational Upper Secondary Education

The upper secondary schools (Gymnasier and VET colleges) are obliged to offer guidance to students in a way that enables them to complete their education. Students enrolled in an upper secondary school will therefore have support from school staff, such as teachers, guidance counsellors or other professional staff members, who support students in various ways. Institutions are free to choose their methods and the appropriate staff to support students in completing their education. The work being done at institutions by guidance counsellors, teachers or other professional staff members is an important part of the national effort to reduce drop-outs in education and to support students in their efforts to complete their education.

Educational institutions cooperate with the youth guidance units and the regional guidance centres in order to ensure coherence in guidance. This cooperation has both a general and a more specific perspective regarding students at risk of dropping out of education.

If students do not complete their education, it is up to the youth guidance units to guide them, so they can find another course or become a part of the labour market.
Guidance in Higher Education

Guidance at business academies, university colleges, artistic higher education institutions and schools of maritime education and training

These institutions are obliged to offer guidance to students in a way that enables them to complete their education. Students will therefore be looking for support from the school staff, such as teachers, guidance counsellors or other professional staff who can support students in various ways. The institution is obliged to prepare guidance guidelines targeted at potential dropouts. Furthermore, the institution is obliged to encourage these students to seek guidance at Study and Career Guidance Denmark.

The institutions are free to choose their methods and the appropriate staff to support students in completing their education.

Guidance at Danish universities: Completion and Career Guidance

The universities offer guidance to students at bachelor’s and master’s levels concerning their current programme, access requirements for master’s and PhD programmes and subsequent employment prospects. Each university is free to decide how and by whom this guidance is offered. In general, completion guidance and career guidance are divided between different bodies.

The universities publish and maintain information about bachelor’s and master’s programmes with examples of professions and jobs that these programmes may lead to. They also provide information about
options and recommended configurations of the programme of interest to the student, including the choice of a master’s programme after completion of a bachelor’s degree.

Furthermore, the universities have an obligation to give students who have been delayed in their studies special guidance in order for them to continue their education.

The universities are obliged to encourage these students to seek guidance at Study and Career Guidance Denmark.
Training of Guidance Counsellors

One of the objectives of the Danish guidance system is to improve the qualifications and competencies of guidance practitioners, in order to provide more professional Danish guidance services. Consequently, one common training programme is offered to guidance counsellors from all sectors. Guidance practitioners working in the municipal guidance units, the regional guidance centres and eGuidance are required to complete the diploma or master’s programme in educational and vocational guidance or the bachelor’s degree programme in public administration. Alternatively, guidance practitioners with extensive experience in the field can apply for assessment and recognition of their competencies and prior learning. The diploma programme is not a requirement for guidance practitioners working in other institutions.

Five university colleges across the country offer the diploma programme on a part-time basis. It is equivalent to 12 months of full-time studies and consists of three basic modules, two or three optional modules and a diploma project. It has a value of 60 ECTS points. The training programme is offered as an adult learning programme and corresponds
to a diploma degree. Entry requirements are, as a minimum, a completed short-cycle (two-year) higher education programme and two years of relevant working experience.

Furthermore, it is possible to follow a master’s programme in guidance at Aarhus University. It is equivalent to 12 months of full-time studies and has a value of 60 ECTS points. Entry requirements are, as a minimum, a completed medium-cycle (three-year) higher education programme and two years of relevant working experience.

Both training programmes are offered within the framework of the Danish adult education and training system. They are aimed, and adapted to, adults who already have another higher education degree and two years of relevant work experience.

The university colleges also offer a 3.5-year full-time bachelor’s degree programme in public administration, corresponding to 210 ECTS. The degree makes it possible to specialise within several areas of the public administration field, including educational and vocational guidance. The degree contains compulsory and elective subjects, a six-month internship period and a bachelor project. Admission requirements: upper secondary education or relevant vocational education.
International Perspectives

Lifelong guidance is on the agenda in many international fora, and the main aims and components of the Danish guidance system are very much in line with the EU and OECD recommendations on guidance policies and practices.

The Danish Ministry of Children and Education is also aware of the importance of promoting an international dimension in Danish guidance. International activities for guidance practitioners are initiated by the Danish Euroguidance centre, part of the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, which is an agency within the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

The Euroguidance Network www.euroguidance.eu includes national centres in 36 European countries and is partly funded by the EU through the Erasmus+ Programme. The network supports the development of the European dimension in educational and vocational guidance and promotes mobility, mutual awareness and cooperation between guidance services in Europe.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Children and Education is part of the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, www.icdpp.org.
Further Information

The Danish education system:
www.eng.uvm.dk or https://ufm.dk/en/education/the-danish-education-system

Studying in Denmark:
www.studyindenmark.dk

Working in Denmark:
www.workindenmark.dk

Denmark in Figures 2019:
www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/Publikationer/VisPub?cid=28924#

The Euroguidance Centre in Denmark:
www.ufm.dk/euroguidance (in Danish) or www.ufm.dk/en/euroguidance (in English)

Enquiries concerning guidance in Denmark may be addressed to:
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The Euroguidance network:
www.euroguidance.eu