

# Volunteering & Associational life in Denmark

## WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER?

You are a volunteer when you voluntarily help others without being paid for it or forced to do so. Your voluntary work must benefit others, other than yourself and your family, and it must take place in an organized context - i.e., ordinary helpfulness or spontaneous actions, such as following an elderly person across the street, carrying the resident's shopping bags home, or looking after the neighbor's cat, is not voluntary work.

## WHY ARE WE VOLUNTEERS?

Everyone has their reasons for volunteering. More will make a difference that matters to other people, while others want to engage with an interest, cause, or hobby. For most, it is also essential to be part of a community.

### Top 3 reasons to volunteer

- 1 That you can do something in an area that interests you
- 2 That you can participate in a social community that you like
- 3 That you can do something that is important for your local community

## WHAT IS AN ASSOCIATION?

An association is a gathering of people who share the same hobby, interest, or work towards the same cause. The purpose and rules of the association are described in its statutes. Therefore, the statutes are often referred to as the association's law. There are more than 100,000 associations in Denmark, and associations are one of the most widespread and well-known forms of organization.

### What does an association do?

Associations in Denmark bring people together around common interests such as sports, hobbies, leisure, culture, politics, social work, and charity.

In addition to being communities, associations are also a fun way to engage in something you like or a way to meet new people.

### Who can participate in the association?

You can be both a volunteer and a member of an association. Anyone who supports the purpose of the association can typically be a member. As a member of an association, you usually pay a membership fee - it is an amount to be a member. Members have membership rights and help determine what should be in the statutes, what the association should do, who should lead the association and sit on the board, and what the size of the membership fee should be.

### Formal organization of volunteering

An association is a good way to organize voluntary work because an association is a legal entity. This means that an association, like individuals and companies, can enter into agreements. For example, an association can receive money for its activities, open an account in a bank, or purchase goods. Anyone can start an association and can apply for grants and premises from the municipality.

### Informal organization of volunteering

You can also volunteer in an informal group or network, where you gather around a hobby, interest, or cause. Informal groups are not legal entities and do not have statutes, members, and membership rights like associations. Therefore, informal organizations do not have the same opportunities and rights to apply for grants and premises from the municipality.



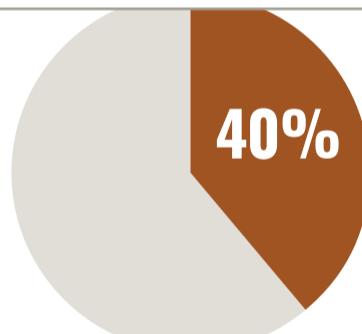
## WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

Volunteers create local communities and make a difference by doing something that benefits other people.

As a volunteer, you can, for example, join the board of an association, become a coach for young people who play sports, offer homework help for students, or be a visiting friend for lonely people. You can also get involved as a volunteer in a local environmental association, organize concerts and festivals, or participate in the work of a residents' association.

## HOW MANY ARE VOLUNTEERS?

Four out of ten (40 %) people are volunteers in Denmark, and studies show that the vast majority engage in voluntary work at some point in their lives.



## HOW TO MOVE ON?

→ If you want to volunteer or become a member, joining an association is a great option. Start with your interests and explore the associations available in your local area.

→ If you wish to start an association, there are several places where you can seek assistance. Find out if there is a local volunteer center or if your municipality has a leisure, association, or volunteer consultant. It's also a good idea to team up with others when starting a new association. Do you know anyone who shares your interest?

→ If you want to apply for funding or borrow premises from the municipality, you should contact the municipality's leisure, association, or volunteer consultant. The municipality sets requirements for associations applying for funding or premises.

## Get answers to your questions about volunteering & associational life

The Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE) is a state-owned, self-governing knowledge and development center on voluntary work in the welfare sector. DIVE disseminates current knowledge about volunteerism and civil society. Through our expertise and consultancy, we support associations, voluntary initiatives, and municipalities in developing and strengthening voluntary social efforts in Denmark. We are available for services such as courses, presentations, development tasks, and research.

Learn more about DIVE at [www.frivillighed.dk](http://www.frivillighed.dk)



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