



Christina Egelunds tale til International Citizen Days

Taler

Christina Egelund
Uddannelses- og
forskningsminister

Dato

22. september 2023

Sted

Øksnehallen, København V

A Dane is like a ketchup bottle

I am so happy to see you and so happy to be here. What a festive day.

Today is about your life in Denmark. How you can find your path and make this tiny country your home. But it is also celebration. We celebrate all of you for being here. Because you have chosen Denmark.

Maybe you've come here to work. Maybe you've come here for love. Maybe you've come here to study. Maybe you've simply come here to try something new.

Whatever the reason. Whatever your background. Each and everyone of you: Welcome.

Denmark is not an island

Denmark is a small country. We're only about 5,8 million people. Just to compare that's roughly the same as in the state of Colorado. Or just about two thirds of the City of London.

Because of our humble size we need to attract people from all over the world. People who want to live here, work here and study here. And at the same time, we need to inspire the students who already come here to stay and work once they have their degree.

Because we need more people. People with skills and insights that we can

benefit from and be inspired by. Even though we are currently on an island, Denmark is not an island. We are deeply dependent on and connected to the world around us.

And I believe we can become even better at exchanging knowledge, ideas and technology with the rest of the world.

A greater understanding of the world around us has value beyond the growth that it generates. It gives us a better understanding of ourselves – who we are as people and as a society.

When I speak to Danish companies they are very clear that international graduates and employees are of enormous value to them.

This is why the Danish government is actively working towards making it easier for foreigners to come to Denmark to study and work.

We need all hands on deck

The thing is we are in a rather unique position in Denmark right now. Traditionally a lot of politics is about distribution and economy.

But Denmark's biggest challenge right now isn't about funds or capital in the traditional sense.

We have resources. What we need is people. Skilled hands, sharp brains. Different perspectives.

We need more people to work for our companies, in our hospitals, at our construction sites. In our daycares, in our schools, at our universities.

We are a small country, yes, but we have big ambitions. So, we need all hands on deck.

A land of trust

If Denmark is to achieve the goals we have set as a society, it is an important prerequisite that we have the right skills and qualifications.

That is one of the reasons I am so happy to see all of you here today. If Denmark is to move in the direction we want, we need all of you.

People who want to live and work here. Become part of our workforce and our society. People who want to make this country their new home.

By making Denmark your home you get to live in a small but thriving country. A strong democracy where people trust each other. Where you're never more than 50 kilometers from the sea. Where we have found a way to balance personal freedom with social responsibility and security.

Being an expat is hard work

Before I leave you to enjoy the rest of today's program I also want to tell you that I know it can be challenging being an expat.

I myself have lived abroad. For study, for work and yes also for love. And after spending years in Paris my partner and I returned to Denmark where we have lived together since. So, I have witnessed firsthand what it is like for a foreigner – and a Frenchman no less! - to settle down in my home country. I know it can be tough.

My own mother is from Norway. My brother just moved back home to Denmark after 17 years in Singapore – bringing his wonderful wife from Indonesia.

So, it comes quite naturally to me seeing Denmark through the eyes of foreigners.

It's worth the effort

Danish people are sometimes described as cold. Or even rude. And I actually understand why we've gotten that reputation.

We can be hard to get to know. We don't strike up conversations with strangers on the bus. We're very direct and we're terrible at small talk. And whatever you do, do not show up at a Danish home uninvited.

I know these stereotypes. But I don't think any of this means Danish people are unfriendly.

The Danish playwright Kjeld Abell described Danish people like this:

“A Dane is like a ketchup bottle. At first nothing comes out. But then all of it comes out at once”.

So please don't be scared off by our seemingly closed-off attitudes. A few metaphorical pats on the back – maybe a few literal drinks – and we open right up. I promise you it's worth the effort.

Because making Denmark your home is about more than work, school and housing. You'll need friends, a social network. Someone to keep you company on those long dark winter days. Someone to explain to you why Danish birthday parties involve so many flags. And a human shaped cake, which we decapitate while screaming. Someone to teach you bike lane etiquette and how to navigate the pandemonium that is Danish queuing culture. Someone to show you how we dance around the Christmas tree.

Someone to share a meal and a glass of wine with on an endless and light summer night.

Thank you

So, thank you for being here today at International Citizen Days but especially for being here with us in Denmark.

By bringing your story, your experience, your skills and your culture. You make our tiny country feel so much bigger.

Thank you.

Kilde

ufm.dk

Kildetype

Dokumentation på online medie

Tags

Moderaterne, Velkomsttale

URI

<https://www.dansketaler.dk/tale/christina-egelunds-tale-til-international-citizen-days>