



How the use of technology in the system of social benefits in Denmark risks people's rights

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Who we are

We are Amnesty International.
We are a world organization
that works to protect the human rights
of all people.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Human rights are the rights that all people
should have.

For example, all people should have the right to:

- Be safe;
- Have equal chances in life;
- Say what they think without fear;
- Be treated fairly.



What this text is about

At Amnesty International, we made a study
about the use of technology
in the system of social benefits
in Denmark.

With social benefits,
we mean the money or other kind of support
countries give their people in need.



For example, social benefits can be money or other kind of support that countries give to:

- Older people;
- People who have children;
- People with disabilities;
- People who have lost their jobs;
- People who are sick and cannot work.



In the next few pages, we will explain:

- How the system of social benefits uses technology in Denmark;
- Why this system puts the rights of people at risk;
- What Denmark should do to make things better for its people.



How the system of social benefits works in Denmark

Denmark is a country in Europe.

Denmark is known to give different kinds of social benefits to people in need.

For example, Denmark gives money or other kind of support to:

- Older people who can no longer work;
- People with disabilities;
- Parents and especially single parents who raise their children without the help of a partner;
- People who cannot find a job.

Denmark has given the job of social benefits to a company. This company is in charge of:

- Checking people's requests to get social benefits;
- Deciding which of them has the right to get social benefits;
- Giving social benefits to the people they select.



Denmark is also known for using technology to give these kinds of services to people.

This means that people in Denmark do not have to go to the city hall or other public offices in person.

They do the things they need online.

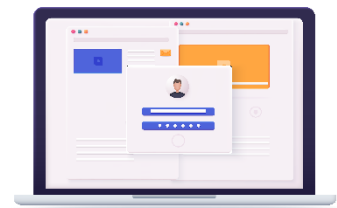


The system of social benefits is also digital.

This means that applying for social benefits happens on the internet and through devices such as computers and smartphones.

Denmark also uses technology to check if the people who apply for social benefits have the right to get them.

When people apply for social benefits online, the system collects a lot of personal information about them.



Amongst others,
the system may collect information about:

- Where people come from;
- Where they live;
- Who they live with;
- Where they work and how much money they earn;
- What religion they believe in;
- Their health;
- Their disability.



Denmark uses this information to decide who has the right to get social benefits.

Denmark also uses this information to control fraud.

Fraud is when a person lies to get money or other benefits.



Denmark uses digital systems to:

- Analyse people's personal information.

Thinking that people are more likely to cheat based on their race, religion and other personal information is not fair.

- Predict which people are more likely to try to commit fraud or to cheat to get social benefits. These people go through more checks by the government.



In this case, Denmark may also collect more information about these people:

- From the police and other offices of the government, like the city hall.
- From people's social media, like Facebook and Instagram.
- From any person of the public who wants to give information about the person under check.



This could be a neighbor, a colleague or anyone else.

This risks people's right to privacy.



What is wrong with the system in Denmark

We have many reasons to believe that the use of technology in the system of social benefits in Denmark puts the rights of people at risk. Denmark should ban all aspects of the system that put the rights of people at risk or cause certain groups of people to be treated unfairly.



Amongst other things, our study showed that:

Denmark's system risks targeting people who may already be left out because they are different.

For example,
Denmark's system risks targeting:

- People who live in Denmark but come from different countries or have family members in other countries. These people may have a different culture and lifestyle from most other people in Denmark.



- People who live with many members of their family in the same house. This is common in some cultures but it may feel unusual for most people in Denmark.
- People with disabilities.

Trying to predict which people are more likely to cheat the system based on this information is against people's right to have privacy and be treated as equal.



It is unfair to suspect that people are cheating based on things like:

- Race;
- Religion;
- Sexual preferences;
- Who they live with.



Countries should treat all people as equals.

People who apply for social benefits may not know that the system collects all this information about them

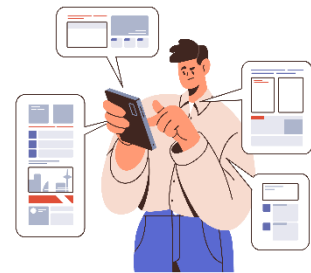
But even if they know it, they may not have another option than giving their permission.



People who apply for social benefits feel they are constantly watched by the government

This causes a lot of stress and anxiety in their lives.

People may even be afraid to post pictures or other information on their social media because the Danish government may check and make conclusions about them.



People may not know how the system selects them for further checks

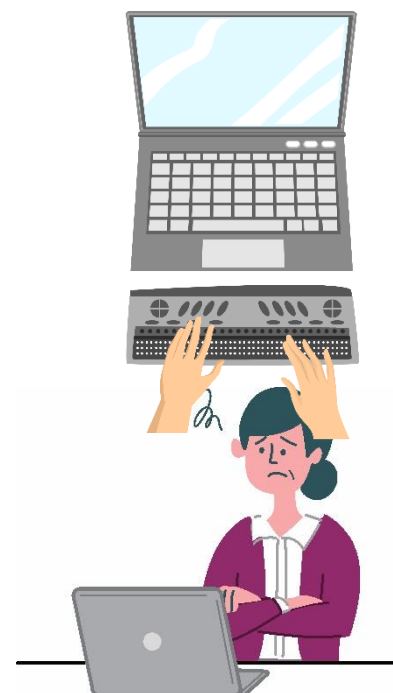
People do not know that the system may automatically choose them for further checks based on their personal information. For example, their race, religion and other things. As a result, people cannot defend their rights.



Denmark's digital system makes it hard or impossible for certain groups of people to apply for social benefits

For example:

- It is hard for some people with disabilities to use the technology that is necessary to apply for social benefits. For example, computers and smartphones.
- Many older people do not know how to use computers and other technology



that is necessary to apply for social benefits.

- It may be hard for women in crisis centers to apply for social benefits. Crisis centers give shelter to women who are attacked or harmed by their partners or other people. Women in crisis centers may not know how to apply for social benefits. This is because they may not have access to computers.



The way Denmark checks on people who want to get social benefits is against many important laws

Denmark has signed laws that protect the rights of different groups of people.



Amongst others, these laws say that:

- All people should be treated as equals;
- No one should be left out or be treated unfairly because of their race, religion, gender, age, or disability;
- People have the right to express themselves freely and without fear;



- People have the right to know how their personal information is used online and should be asked for their permission;
- People with disabilities should have the same chances in life as everyone else.



We find that the use of technology in the system of social benefits in Denmark goes against these rights and many more.

Denmark does not check enough the company in charge of choosing who gets social benefits

Denmark has given the job of choosing who gets social benefits to a company. We believe that Denmark does not check this company enough to see if their system respects the rights of all people.



Personal experiences from people

In our study, we talked with different groups of people who had the experience of applying for social benefits in Denmark.

We asked them to tell us how their experience was.



We also checked articles in the media where people talked about their experiences.

Here are some examples:

The experience of Annette

Annette was getting money from the Danish government as help because she was a single mother. That means she was raising her child without the help of a partner.



The government checked her Facebook page and made the conclusion that Annette was living with a partner. So the Danish government believed that Annette was lying about being a single mother to get extra money from the government. As a result, the Danish government asked Annette to return part of the money she had received as help for being a single mother.

Annette challenged the decision of the government and proved that she was indeed raising her child as a single mother. This means that Annette did have the right to get this money from the government.

This example shows that using someone's social media to make conclusions about their situation can lead to serious mistakes.

The experience of Zahra

Zahra is a woman from Iraq who lives in Denmark. Zahra is not her real name. It is a name we chose to use to protect her privacy.



Due to the war in her country, Zahra has serious health problems that make it impossible for her to work. She applied for social benefits in Denmark to be able to survive.

Sadly, Denmark had Zahra under continuous checks for 4 years to make sure she was indeed unable to work and she could get social benefits.

During these 4 years, Zahra had to work in jobs that were not good for her health.

The experience of a person with a disability

A representative from an organisation that works with people with disabilities told us in an interview that when a person with a disability asks for a support person to help them with everyday tasks they have to be watched for several days in their home to prove they really need support.



They were watched even in the shower.

The privacy of this person was not respected at all.

Sadly, there are too many people in Denmark who:

- Have similar bad experiences;
- Are afraid to express themselves freely;
- Feel their rights are not respected.



What Denmark should do to make things better

Amongst others,
Amnesty International asks Denmark to:

1. Stop using systems that target people who are already left out because of things like their race, age or disability. People should not have more checks based on this information.
2. Make frequent checks on the systems used by the company in charge of social benefits to check that they respect the rights of all people.
3. Make sure people's personal information online is used in a right and fair way.
4. Stop using people's personal information and social media to make conclusions about their situation.



5. Give people clear information about why their request for social benefits was rejected.

Or why they were selected for further checks.



6. Give people clear information and support on what to do if they feel that their rights are not respected.

7. Give training to people who check who gets social benefits to help make sure that people are treated equally and fairly.



8. Make the system accessible so that all people can apply for social benefits without problems.

For example, people with disabilities and older people.

9. Make sure that people who cannot use technology can apply for social benefits in other ways.



More information

You can find more information
about the work we do
at Amnesty International
on our website at: www.amnesty.org.

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This easy-to-read text is written by sayiteasy.eu

