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Introduction

The number of foreign citizens employed in Aarhus has doubled during the period 2014–24¹. This development testifies to a labour market that requires international labour, not only highly educated personnel and specialists, but also both skilled and unskilled workers. Multiple studies indicate that the positive development of employment in Denmark is already primarily powered by international labour^{2,3}, and this trend is expected to continue going forward. Forecasts suggest that the shortage of labour will remain an issue in the immediate future, given the small year groups entering the labour market at the same time as an increasing number of senior citizens and larger year groups are entering retirement. In the future, it will therefore be necessary to recruit and affiliate international labour. Denmark is already dependent on international labour, and the shortfall in domestic labour is predicted to increase over the coming years.

Aarhus has a long tradition of people pulling together on the internationalisation of the city. The City of Aarhus, commercial and labour market organisations, education institutions and a variety of other operators have long been working together to boost conditions for international citizens in Aarhus. Over the years, their work has been developed and strengthened such that today, international citizens have access to a range of offers from both public and private sectors. However, studies reveal only limited awareness of these offers among Aarhus-based enterprises and their international employees^{4,5}, and operators in the area are likewise seeking a better coordinated contribution.

In order to be able to provide a better reception for international workers, several operators in Aarhus highlight the importance of systematising and

professionalising fundraising for the work with internationalisation.

Aarhus City Council has therefore established a committee comprising two city councillors and several representatives from the business community and other relevant organisations. The committee has been tasked with developing existing and new initiatives which, together, have the potential to boost the city's work with internationalisation.

The work of the committee is summarised in the present strategy which, in the immediate future, will form the framework for the consolidated input for international labour in Aarhus.

The ambition and target figures of the strategy

The ambition of the strategy is for:

Aarhus to attract and retain international labour so as to assure the qualified workforce necessary to maintain both the welfare society and the competitive strength of private enterprises.

In order to secure the necessary workforce for enterprises and the field of welfare, the strategy has the specific goal of ensuring that in the period 2025–30, Aarhus increases the number of foreign citizens in full-time employment by 1,500 annually, i.e. by 7,500 in total.

This target figure thus assumes that the number will increase by more than 40 per cent in relation to the figure as at January 2024 (16,641). The objective is based on an employment projection

¹ From 8,060 to 16,703. Source: Jobindsats.dk

² Growth in employment primarily powered by international labour, *Dansk Erhverv*, 2023

³ The value generated by foreigners totalled DKK 282 billion in 2023, *DI*, 2024

⁴ Expat survey, Silverlining Research, 2021

⁵ International Labour, Silverlining Research, 2024

and is likewise an expression of the goal of the strategy of ensuring that the share of foreign citizens in full-time employment in Aarhus exceeds the national average.

The strategy target figures

- An annual increase of 1,500 in the number of foreign citizens in full-time employment in Aarhus in the period 1 January 2025 to 1 January 2030, i.e. a total increase of 7,500 during the period. Of these, 5,000 are to be skilled/unskilled workers, and 2,500 workers with short-, medium- or long-term courses of higher education. The target figure is equivalent to an increase of more than 40 per cent in relation to the current status.
- In 2030, Aarhus is to be positioned above the national average regarding the share of international labour in the total workforce (2024, approx. 12.5%; predicted 2030: approx. 14.5%).

The objective demands that the work to encourage internationalisation shift up a gear, and that the best of the current initiatives be reinforced and developed further – as well as being supplemented with new ones. Taken together, they are to promote the recruitment, reception and affiliation of international labour.

The target group for the strategy

To date, the international strategy has focused on highly educated and specialist international labour. Through this strategy, the target group is to be expanded to include skilled and unskilled workers as well. This is because forecasts at national level and a survey of enterprises in Aarhus indicate broad demand for international labour in the immediate future, where enterprises will likely lack labour across all levels of education – skilled/unskilled workers in particular^{6,7}. In addition, emphasis will be placed on the accompanying family because this aspect plays an important role in defining whether the accompanying family thrives. Furthermore, there is also potential for tapping into the competences of accompanying partners. Finally, the target group also encompasses international students, given that this group accounts for a significant proportion of international citizens in Aarhus. As international students have already chosen to settle in Aarhus, and as job opportunities can encourage international citizens to stay in the city for longer than anticipated⁸, the potential exists to find employment for them both during and after their periods of study.

The target group for the strategy

- Unskilled/skilled international workers
- Highly educated international workers
- Accompanying family
- International students

⁶ DK2030 – Denmark equipped for the future, Danish Ministry of Finance, 2023: 144–45

⁷ International Labour, Silverlining Research for the City of Aarhus, 2024: 19

⁸ Expat-survey, Silverlining Research for the City of Aarhus, 2021: 9

Greater synergy through the establishment of an umbrella

Aarhus is already rich in operators offering a variety of opportunities for international citizens. On the basis of input received from operators primarily in Aarhus, and of results from the international labour survey (2024), the expat survey (2021) and the study city survey (2023), the committee is, however, of the opinion that the impact of the various offers can be optimised. For example, there is demand for more coordinated and consolidated work to promote internationalisation with a view to achieving synergy effects to a much greater extent. There are likewise challenges in communicating the work sufficiently and highlighting the separate initiatives and their value to both enterprises and the city's international population. In addition, there is a shortage of both competences and resources for supporting fundraising for initiatives. The committee therefore recommends establishing an umbrella as a principal initiative in the strategy. The intention is for this umbrella, in partnership with the existing operators, to contribute to development, visibility, fundraising and coordinated safeguarding of interests with regard to the city's work with internationalisation and the specific initiatives it contains.

Furthermore, the committee recommends ten initiatives under the headers of "Visibility",

"Language and culture", "Stronger communities" and "Broader target group". In the same way as the umbrella, the initiatives recommended have been identified on the basis of input received from operators primarily in Aarhus, supplemented with results from surveys. The umbrella and the recommended initiatives are presented in more depth in the "*Description of recommended initiatives*" on page 5.

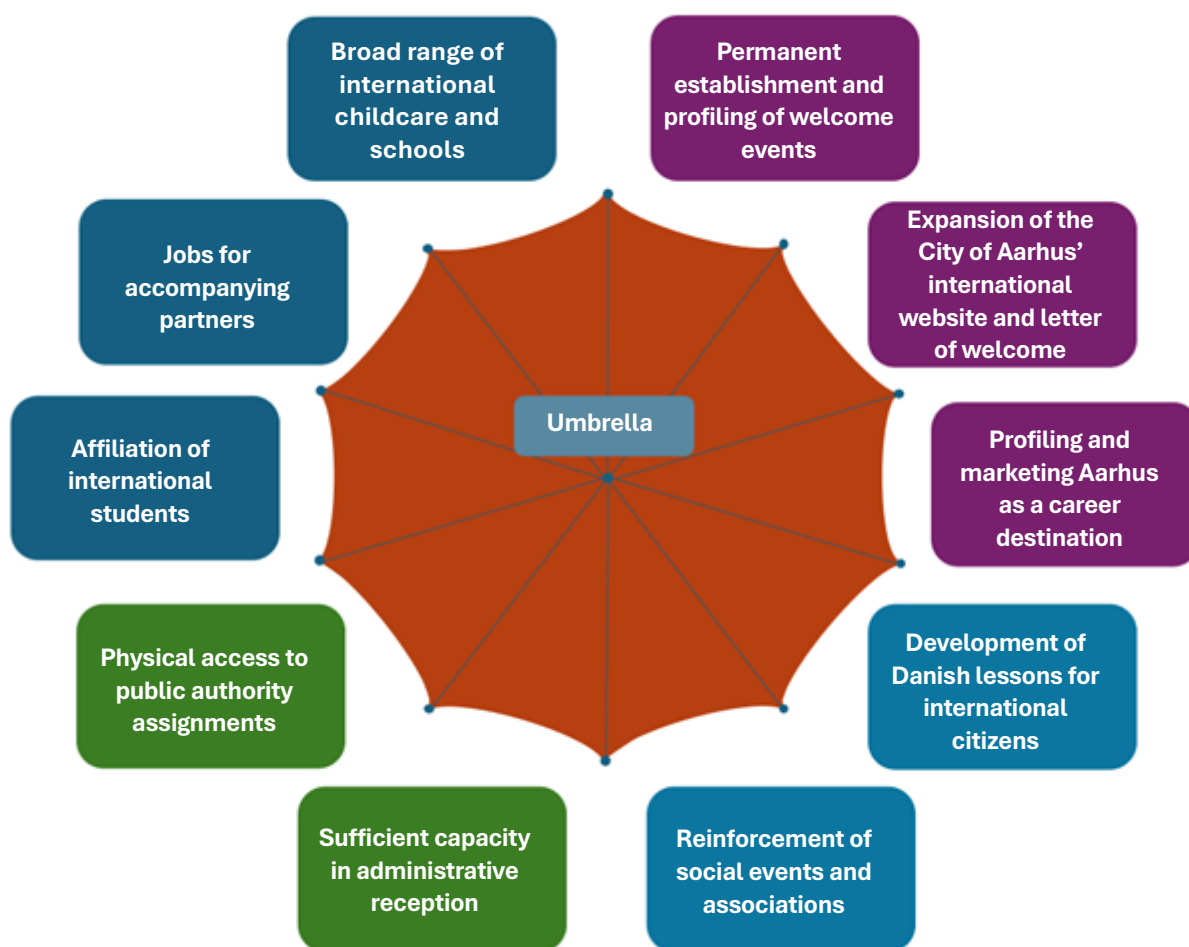
Follow-up on the strategy

The intention is to follow up continuously on the results generated by the strategy, including achievement of the goal of 7,500 more foreign citizens in full-time employment in 2030 compared with January 2024. Drawing on data from the website jobindsats.dk, a status report will be submitted every spring – as soon as the data are available – stating whether or not 1,500 more foreign citizens have entered full-time employment over the past year. In addition, work will be done to identify how large a proportion of the international workforce comprises skilled/unskilled workers, and how many workers have short, medium or long courses of higher education. At the same time, annual follow-up will establish where Aarhus is positioned in relation to the national average regarding the share of international labour as a percentage of total employment (2024: approx. 12.5%; anticipated 2030: 14.5%) and the share of fruitless recruitments among the four largest cities in Denmark.

Description of recommended initiatives

The following section presents the principal initiative of the strategy “Establishment of an umbrella for the work with internationalisation”, which the committee recommends be accorded its own, separate financing. This is followed by a description of the other initiatives recommended in the strategy, as well as the financing the committee recommends be earmarked for each of them. The recommended umbrella and its interaction with the other initiatives recommended is presented visually in Figure 1. The umbrella and the initiatives have been identified on the basis of input received from operators primarily in Aarhus, the international labour survey (2024), the expat survey (2021) and the study city survey (2023).

Figure 1. Visual presentation of the umbrella and its interaction with initiatives.



Establishment of an umbrella for the work with internationalisation

As a key precondition for shouldering the work with internationalisation in Aarhus, the working committee recommends establishing an umbrella for the city's numerous international initiatives. The committee considers the umbrella to be the most important element in the strategy, which is to support the existing operators in their work to renew and shoulder the work with internationalisation by creating the best possible

synergy between existing offers, and by contributing to the development of new, relevant offers. The umbrella is to have the following key focus areas:

A unifying function

It is essential that the umbrella function as a unifying body for the numerous providers, and that it focus on generating synergy between the various operators and their offers. In addition, the umbrella is to contribute to clarifying which operators exist and which initiatives they run, to assist both the international workers and operators interested in same. This coordinating role should likewise contribute to identifying initiative gaps and possible operators.

Improved communication and visibility

Aarhus is considered to have a range of well-functioning offers for international citizens, which are provided by different operators. A general challenge, however, is how aware international citizens are of these offers. It is therefore expected that improved profiling will contribute to greater uptake of the offers, which can play a significant role in the well-being of the international workforce. For this reason, the umbrella is to focus on improving the communication and profiling of the city's offers in partnership with relevant operators.

Fundraising for projects

A key area of focus has to do with supporting operators in raising funds for financing the city's work with internationalisation and contributing to further development with the emphasis on synergy between operators. Ideas for project applications can be launched on the initiative of either the operators themselves or the umbrella. However, it is essential that the operators own the projects, while the umbrella can support the operators in obtaining funds for projects of relevance to reinforcing the conditions for recruiting and affiliating international labour. The actual operation of the projects will be the exclusive preserve of the operators. As a part of the fundraising, the umbrella is to focus on building relations, entering into partnerships, and assisting with the formulation of project applications.

Coordinated safeguarding of interests

The umbrella is to coordinate the safeguarding of interests of relevant subjects among relevant operators in order to deal with irregularities in legislation, structures, etc.

For the umbrella to have the desired effect and shoulder the city's work with internationalisation, it is crucial that the umbrella be viewed as a unifying body in the best interests of all parties, supporting the operators' initiatives through its focus areas. The consistent theme of the work of the umbrella is to boost the operators and support them in obtaining external funding. The organisational foundation of the umbrella will be defined in connection with the tendering of the assignment. The ongoing financing of the umbrella after the initial three-year period is also to be sought and described by the operator.

Provider: Unknown (the assignment will be put out to tender among both private and public sector operators).

New initiative.

Table 1. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Umbrella for the work with internationalisation
Estimated financing:	DKK 2,000,000 annual for three years ⁹ , after which it is assumed that the initiative will be self-financing.

⁹ Based on a secretariat with two full-time staff, as well as funds for launching minor activities.

Profiling

A particular focus area of the strategy is to boost awareness of the city's offers among the international workforce, and information initiatives should therefore also be strengthened to ensure that international citizens have access to the information they need¹⁰. In this way, even more international citizens can benefit from relevant offers prior to arrival, on arrival and once they have become more settled. The following initiatives are therefore recommended:

1. Permanent establishment and profiling of welcome events

The Aarhus City Welcome event is held every year in September at Dokk1, where international citizens can have face-to-face meetings with operators in the fields of job mediation, the labour market, schooling, childcare options, networks and communities, sports and leisure programmes, voluntary work, Danish lessons, etc. Participants are generally satisfied with the event, and the committee recommends that making Aarhus City Welcome a permanent event with a grant, profiled via a broad range of channels (including on the international website and in the letter of welcome, cf. supplementary initiatives below).

The committee likewise recommends examining the extent to which, and how, it might be possible to establish and subsequently profile events such as Newcomers' Info Evenings and the theme-based hybrid events where international workers, their family members and international students are welcomed to the city and provided with information about issues such as language, work and digitisation, as well as associations, social communities and Danish culture. The hybrid events can also be accessed online prior to arrival. It should likewise be established whether the Expat Reception can be profiled more clearly.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Citizens' Service), Erhverv Aarhus and Aarhus University, *et al.*

Further development of existing initiative.

Table 2. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Permanent establishment and profiling of welcome events
Estimated financing:	DKK 200,000 annually to make Aarhus City Welcome, Newcomers' Info Evenings and the theme-based hybrid events permanent.

2. Expansion of the City of Aarhus' international website and letter of welcome

The committee suggests that the City of Aarhus modernise and expand its website with the emphasis on pre- and onboarding, for example with straightforward visual checklists of administrative processes for international citizens, but also with an overview of – and an introduction to – the city's associations and communities. This recommended initiative is one of several that support recognition from Aarhus-based

¹⁰ Ibid. 38

enterprises that communication in English from the public sector is important in attracting and affiliating international labour¹¹.

In order to improve the profiling of the offers, and as a supplement to an updated international website containing information about onboarding and life in Aarhus, the committee suggests sending a digital letter of welcome to newly arrived international citizens. This letter should contain an overview of relevant information about subjects including the Danish Tax Agency (SKAT), banks, accommodation, parental leave and the like. The letter could also be sent again when newly arrived citizens have settled in and may benefit from a reminder about the offers available. In order to include less digitally adept international citizens, the letter of welcome could also be distributed in hard-copy format.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Citizen's Service)

Further development of existing initiative.

Table 3. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Expansion of the City of Aarhus' international website and letter of welcome
Estimated financing:	DKK 375,000 for revision of the website and preparation of letter of welcome, and subsequently DKK 80,000 annually for operation/updating.

3. Profiling and marketing Aarhus as a career destination for international citizens

There is still work to be done to profile and market Aarhus as an international career destination. Most of the initiatives in this strategy can be applied in this context as examples of how Aarhus is working with internationalisation. Emphasis should be placed on the umbrella's focus on improving the communication and visibility of the city's international offers in partnership with relevant operators. In addition, the committee suggests continuing to prioritise existing initiatives via ambassadors and the like, where the umbrella can allocate funds to operators on an *ad hoc* basis. It would also be beneficial to maintain VisitAarhus' focus on commercial tourism within the city's positions of strength, in that a large proportion of the highly educated workforce that moves to Aarhus has proved to consist of people who have previously participated in conferences, etc. in the city.

Providers: The umbrella in partnership with relevant operators.

Further development of existing initiative.

Table 4. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Profiling and marketing Aarhus as a career destination for international citizens
Estimated financing:	DKK 500,000 annually for the umbrella's focus on communication and profiling, and as a supplement to the work currently being done by the providers.

¹¹ Ibid. 38

Language and culture

Denmark has a good deal to offer international workers, but there is one area in which the country is repeatedly ranked at a record low level in surveys^{12,13}. Multiple surveys from InterNations Expat Insider reveal that many international citizens find it difficult to make friends with Danes. For example, in 2023 the majority of respondent expats resident in Denmark stated that it was hard to make Danish friends (66%, compared to 36% at global level)¹⁴.

A common assessment among Aarhus-based enterprises is that language skills and cultural understanding are key preconditions for the well-being of international workers and their families in their everyday lives, and for their desire to remain in Aarhus¹⁵. The strategy should therefore contribute to establishing stronger communities through focus on language skills, social events and associations. The following initiatives are therefore recommended:

4. Development of Danish lessons for international citizens

Knowledge of the Danish language is an important aspect of both onboarding and affiliation with Denmark and the Danish labour market. The committee therefore suggests prioritising and developing Danish lessons – via a separate working relationship among language centres and employers/education institutions – focused on communication of language lessons financed by the City of Aarhus, as well as the opportunity to participate in courses at workplaces/education institutions and/or during working hours. It may be beneficial to market and, where necessary, initiate offers for Danish lessons online prior to arrival in Denmark.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Social Conditions and Employment) in partnership with language schools and other relevant operators, including enterprises and education institutions.

Further development of existing initiative.

Table 5. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Development of Danish lessons for international citizens
Estimated financing:	To be held within the existing financial framework, given that it is an integral part of the working relationship with the two new suppliers of language lessons in the City of Aarhus.

5. Reinforcement of social events and associations

There is already a long list of specific examples of social events and associations that contribute to promoting affiliation with Aarhus and Denmark. The committee recommends developing these offers and expanding them to a larger group via marketing and profiling. Raising the visibility of these events can likewise be used in recruiting initiatives for Aarhus.

¹² Expat Insider, InterNations

¹³ Hard to find friends among Danes, CPH post, 2023

¹⁴ Expat Insider, InterNations, 2023

¹⁵ International Labour, Silverlining Research for the City of Aarhus, 2024: 12, 44

Provider: Existing suppliers in cooperation with the umbrella.

Further development of existing initiative.

Table 6. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Reinforcement of social events and associations
Estimated financing:	DKK 250,000 annually.

More flexible reception

In order to achieve the ambition of the strategy, it is essential to operate well-functioning reception of international citizens at Dokk1, with the assistance of International Citizen Service, for instance. The administrative reception of international citizens is particularly important, because it is here they receive their CPR (personal registration) number, MitID, etc. which are in many ways a precondition for entering into society. When asked, Aarhus-based enterprises mention “smooth onboarding” as the key parameter for recruiting international labour¹⁶. A smooth, flexible reception with sufficient capacity is therefore crucial in ensuring that international workers get off to a strong start in Denmark. The following initiatives are therefore recommended:

6. Sufficient capacity in administrative reception

As a consequence of the rising number of international citizens in Aarhus – and, in particular, of the forecasts of a continued increase – the committee recommends continuously ensuring sufficient capacity in the administrative reception of the group and the general infrastructure for international citizens, including day-care institutions, schooling, etc. When registering international citizens as newly arrived in Denmark, the citizens have to be physically present, and special processing is required for the issuing of their CPR numbers and MitID services. As the Citizen’s Service office does not work with a guaranteed service level at present, it is crucial to establish how sufficient capacity can be assured in the administrative reception. The estimated financing depends on assuring sufficient capacity in the administrative reception, with an assumed waiting time for all arrivals of 2–6 working days, rather than today’s level of up to 4 weeks.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Citizen’s Service and Children and Young People).

Further development of existing initiative.

Table 7. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Sufficient capacity in administrative reception
Estimated financing:	DKK 1,500,000 annually for arrivals (registration as newly arrived, allocation of CPR number and doctor) and capacity for new issuing of MitID.

7. Physical access to public authority assignments

The working committee recommends examining whether, in the long term, it might be possible to establish a physical entrance such as Just Ask! at Dokk1, which forms the basis for 360-degree guidance and assistance, and where representatives of the authorities are regularly present and able to advise

¹⁶ Ibid. 28

international citizens about relevant public authority assignments such as day-care institutions, job ventures and so on.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Citizen's Service)

New initiative.

Table 8. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Physical access to public authority assignments
Estimated financing:	DKK 500,000 as a trial programme for one year.

Broader target group

To date, the international strategy has focused on specialist international labour. Through this strategy, the target group is to be expanded to include skilled/unskilled labour as well, given that forecasts indicate a significant shortage of labour within these areas in 2030. The specific initiatives will thus be adapted for a broader target group where relevant. International students are likewise important, because this group accounts for a large proportion of international citizens in Aarhus and the potential exists to find work for them during and after their periods of study. Finally, it is important to international workers accompanied by their families that their partners receive support in seeking and retaining employment¹⁷. For international workers with children, it is important for Aarhus to have capacity for the different groups of children and to ensure that a broad range of international childcare and schooling offers is open to them. For this reason, the strategy contains a significant focus on developing the work with internationalisation to encompass a broader target group, and the following initiatives are therefore recommended:

8. Affiliation of international students

There are between 6,000 and 7,000 international students in Aarhus. These people have already chosen to move to Aarhus and so, all else being equal, it should be easier to encourage them to stay, assuming that it is possible to generate a sense of affiliation at social level and with regard to the labour market. The committee recommends that this be done via the following initiatives:

- **Improved transition to the labour market** for international students. An initiative (at a physical location) that commences while international citizens are studying but which continues after graduation, where international students/graduates can participate in workshops, job seeking networks, mentor networks, company visits and so on.
- **Establishment of a mentor network** among international citizens in employment. The mentors undertake to assist international students and disseminate knowledge of the Danish labour market.
- **Improved links to enterprises** for international students. Enterprises to prepare employment of international graduates while the students are still studying, via study jobs and commercial candidate processes.
- **CEO pledge**, where management teams at enterprises undertake to ensure that their businesses work with diversity through the inclusion of international students.
- **Shared social events** for Danish and international students so that international students have a better chance of establishing social relations with Danes.

¹⁷ International Labour, Silverlining Research for the City of Aarhus, 2024: 12

Provider: A broad circle of operators including the City of Aarhus, education institutions, Studenterhuset, DestinationAarhus and enterprises/organisations – with the umbrella as the coordinator.

Both a new initiative and further development of existing ones.

Table 9. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Affiliation of international students ¹⁸
Estimated financing:	<p>DKK 385,000 annually for Improved transition to the labour market, Establishment of a mentor network, Improved links to enterprises and the CEO pledge.</p> <p>Shared social events can be held within existing financial frameworks.</p>

9. Jobs for accompanying partners

Surveys show that a key factor for affiliation to Denmark is the opportunities for accompanying partners to find work¹⁹. To improve support for those accompanying partners who would like to find work, the committee suggests that the job initiative in Job in Aarhus/The International Employment Unit be developed and consolidated – through an ambassador model, for example. There is potential to bring into play those competences that accompanying partners bring with them. In addition, international workers generally expect that their employers will help their partners find a job²⁰. For this reason, it is likewise recommended that enterprises work together to a greater extent to assist accompanying partners in finding work and commit to inclusion of this group – via the CEO pledge, for example, as mentioned above in the context of international students. In addition, the committee suggests examining how offers for unemployed graduates, such as The Green Academy, Potential in Action, and TalentMatch, can be developed and expanded for international self-sufficient citizens such as accompanying partners.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Social Conditions and Employment), The Green Academy, enterprises, and similar operators.

Further development of existing initiative.

¹⁸ Several of the initiatives should be viewed in the light of an InterReg-application, which can likewise contribute funds for the affiliation of international students.

¹⁹ International Labour, Silverlining Research, 2024: 9, 45

²⁰ Dream Destinations and Mobility Trends, Boston Consulting Group, 2024: 20

Table 10. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Jobs for accompanying partners
Estimated financing:	<p>A framework of DKK 385,000 annually will be set aside to cover:</p> <p>DKK 50,000–100,000 annually for partner initiatives/events associated with, for example, the CEO pledge or an Ambassador model.</p> <p>DKK 15,000–25,000 per participant per process. NB The Green Academy, Potential in Action, TalentMatch, etc. for self-sufficient international citizens cannot be financed by the Department for Social Conditions and Employment, so auto-financing or another form of financing will be required.</p>

10. Broad range of international childcare and schools

With a view to being able to recruit and affiliate international workers with families, it is essential to offer a broad range of international childcare arrangements and schools. The target group is extremely varied, and while the needs of some will be covered by municipal reception classes, others will prefer an IB-certified international school such as Aarhus International School. The committee recommends investigating whether there is a market for – and the possibility of – establishing additional international childcare offers and schooling positioned between reception classes and IB-schools, for example in the form of a municipal international school and/or a Cambridge-certified international private school. A decision will subsequently be made regarding financing for establishment and operation in the event that the investigation points towards the establishment of a new international child-care and/or schooling offer.

Provider: City of Aarhus (Children and Young People) in partnership with relevant external operators.

Further development of existing initiative.

Focus areas: Recruitment, reception and affiliation.

Table 11. Estimated financing.

Initiative	Broad range of international childcare and schools
Estimated financing:	<p>The investigation of the market and opportunities for additional international schooling offers can be kept within existing budgets. A decision will subsequently be made regarding financing for establishment and operation in the event that the investigation points towards the establishment of a new international schooling offer.</p>

Table 13. Overview of estimated financing for establishment of the umbrella and other recommended initiatives

		2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Establishment of an umbrella for the work with internationalisation		2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	0	0	0	6,000,000
Profiling								
1	Permanent establishment and profiling of welcome events	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	1,200,000
2	Expansion of the City of Aarhus' international website and letter of welcome	375,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	775,000
3	Profiling and marketing Aarhus as a career destination	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	3,000,000
Language and culture								
4	Development of Danish lessons for international citizens	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Reinforcement of social events and associations	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	1,500,000
More flexible reception								
6	Sufficient capacity in administrative reception	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	9,000,000
7	Physical access to public authority assignments (trial programme)	500,000	0	0	0	0	0	500,000
Broader target group								
8	Affiliation of international students	385,000	385,000	385,000	385,000	385,000	385,000	2,310,000
9	Jobs for accompanying partners	385,000	385,000	385,000	385,000	385,000	385,000	2,310,000
10	Broad range of international childcare and schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		6,095,000	5,300,000	5,300,000	3,300,000	3,300,000	3,300,000	26,595,000

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