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“Promoting Spatial Development by Creating COMMon MINdscapes – COMMIN”

Denmark

English language version

I. Constitution, government and administration

1. Constitutional System

- 1.1 General description and key data of the constitutional system
- 1.2. History of the constitutional system
- 1.3 Main specifics of the constitutional system
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1.1 General description and key data of the constitutional system

The constitutional Act is the Foundation of Danish Democracy. In the Constitutional Act, you can read about the distribution of power in society. About the Danish Parliament, Folketinget, the democratically elected assembly which passes Acts, that apply to us all. About the Danish Government, which must ensure that the Acts are complied with by us citizens and by the public authorities which must ensure that, for example, we have good schools, hospitals and libraries. About the Courts, which are independent of the Government and Parliament because they have to pass judgement in conflicts between citizens and between public authorities and citizens. The Constitutional Act also sets out

the rights you enjoy as a citizen. We call them constitutional rights or human rights. One type of constitutional rights includes freedom of expression, the right to assemble and demonstrate for your opinions and the right to set up associations and to be a member of an association. The Constitutional Act also ensures that you have the right to be a member of a political party and to be politically active, even if this conflicts with the opinions of the Government or the majority. These rights are intended to ensure that democracy can function. The rules in the Constitutional Act on referenda and elections to Parliament, for example, would not be worth much if we were not entitled to discuss political issues and express our opinions. The other type of constitutional rights includes the rules on personal freedom, ownership and the inviolability of the home. These rules are intended primarily to protect citizens against infringement of their rights by the State. If you are arrested by the police, for example, you are entitled to have a judge decide on your case within 24 hours. If the public authorities want to examine your home, your private papers or your PC, they generally require the permission of a judge first. And if the public authorities want to take your house to demolish it in order to build a motorway or railway across the site, you are entitled to receive compensation equivalent to the value of the house and the site. The Constitutional Act thus sets limits on how the State may interfere in our private lives. The Constitutional Act is intended to guarantee a stable framework for political life and the political struggles for power. It is also intended to guarantee that citizens' rights are not infringed. Both of these elements are guaranteed by the Constitutional Act being more difficult to amend than other Acts. The Danish Constitutional Act has only been amended a few times since it was passed more than 150 years ago. The language in many of the sections of the Act has not been modernised since then.

Source: http://www.folketinget.dk/pdf/Min_Grundlov_eng.pdf

1.2. History of the constitutional system

The first Danish Constitution was signed on June 5, 1849. The constitution has been amended a few times since then, in 1866, 1915 and in 1953.

Source: <http://www.folketinget.dk/BAGGRUND/00000048/00440513.htm>

1.3 Main specifics of the constitutional system

The most important political organs are the Folketing and the Government. The Folketing consists of 179 members, two of whom are elected in Greenland and two in the Faroe Islands. The remaining 175 members are elected in Denmark.

The nominated candidates are elected on the basis of proportional representation, but the candidates run in individual single constituencies, and so most of those elected have a local connection reminiscent of those elected by majority voting in individual constituencies.

135 of the 175 members of the Folketing are elected on the basis of the votes cast for them in the local constituencies, while the remaining 40 members are chosen with a view to ensuring an overall proportional representation of the parties to which the candidates are linked. It is possible to run without belonging to the political parties, but only in once instance (1994) has a candidate succeeded in gaining election in this manner.

The voting age is not specified in the Constitution, but is decided in a special Act that must be approved by referendum. The voting age since 1978 has been 18. Immigrants without Danish nationality do not have the right to vote for the Folketing, but since 1989 they have been able to vote and had the right of election in local elections.

Source:<http://www.denmark.dk/en/menu/AboutDenmark/GovernmentPolitics/Constitution/TheFolketing/>

The government

The Government is appointed by the Queen and consists of the Prime Minister and the other ministers each with their own Department; individual ministers can be without a specific Department (i.e. without portfolio).

The choice of Prime Minister and other ministers is determined by the party composition in the Folketing. The government appointed may not have a majority of the Folketing against it. A newly appointed government begins working without necessarily having achieved a positive vote of confidence from the Folketing.

Source:
<http://www.denmark.dk/en/menu/AboutDenmark/GovernmentPolitics/Constitution/TheGovernment/>

The courts

The independent courts constitute part of the distribution of power. Cases are generally dealt with in the first instance by a local or city court, and appeals against the judgements of the city courts can be made to one of the two High

Courts. A few big cases and cases touching on administrative matters and certain other categories are dealt with by one of the two High Courts in the first instance.

The highest court is the Supreme Court (Højesteret), which only deals with cases that have already been dealt with by one of the two High Courts.

In the Danish court system there is no provision for special procedures or court organisation for administrative cases. These are dealt with by the ordinary courts.

Nor is there a constitutional court. Constitutional questions must be decided by the court that is otherwise dealing with the case, and in the final instance the question can be decided by the Supreme Court. Danish courts have been very reluctant to have recourse to the Constitution, and it was not until 1999 that the Supreme Court rejected a politically important Act as being contrary to the Constitution.

The judges are appointed by the Queen. The independence of the judges in carrying out their duties is ensured by section 64 of the Constitution, according to which in the performance of their duties judges shall be governed solely by the law. In contrast to other state appointed employees, judges cannot be dismissed administratively; they can only be dismissed by a court judgement.

In 1999 the administration of the courts was transferred to an independent state institution, the Court Administration. An independent committee has been established which recommends the Ministry of Justice to appoint judges. These recommendations have so far been complied with.

Source:

<http://www.denmark.dk/en/menu/AboutDenmark/GovernmentPolitics/Constitution/Courts/>

1.4 Fundamental principles of the political and the administrative system

The Danish Planning Act was changed in 2005 in connection with a reform of the local government structure. The local government reform entered into force January 1 2007. With the reform, the former 271 municipalities transformed into 98 big municipalities. The counties have been replaced by 5 administrative regions. The competences of the state and the municipal level have been strengthened while the regional level has gotten a more strategic function without any direct planning competences.

2. The Political system

2.1 General description, history, and key data of the political system

2.2 Levels and specific aspects of the political system

2.1 General description, history, and key data of the political system

The political system is divided between the central state organization and the municipal organization.

The Danish electoral system is extremely complex but briefly it builds on the principle of election by proportional representation. The system is constructed in a way which allows for the regional affiliation of the candidates (135 seats in the Folketing obtained by election in 17 multimember constituencies) and also for the mathematical accuracy of a proportional division of seats in relation to votes for the parties (40 supplementary seats). Thus the Folketing is composed of 175 Members elected in Denmark proper as well as two Members elected in the Faroe Islands and two in Greenland.

You can also learn more by reading:

<http://www.ft.dk/doc.aspx?samling/20061/menu/00000005.htm>

2.2 Level and aspects of the political system

aspect level	organ(s)	authority/function	Task
National level	The Folketing (parliament)	The highest decision-making body of the country	Legislation and state taxation
National level	Government	Govern the country	Domestic and international policy
Regional level	Regional council	The highest decision-making body in the region, elected in direct elections.	Health care, regional development, Public transport etc no taxation possibility
Local level	Municipal council	The highest decision-making body in the municipality, elected in direct elections.	Education, care of the elderly, physical planning, streets, water, sewage, etc. Municipal taxation

3. Administrative system

3.1 General description, history, and key data of the administrative system

3.2 Levels and specific aspects of the administrative system:

3.1 General description, history, and key data of the administrative system

Denmark has a long-standing and unique tradition of a decentralised public sector where the majority of the welfare tasks are dealt with by the municipalities. In order to ensure that the municipalities are also capable of handling more responsibilities in the future, larger municipalities were introduced on 1 January 2007. The number of municipalities in Denmark was reduced from 271 to 98.

Each of the five regions is led by a Regional Council with 41 members, elected by the people every four years.

Responsibilities of the State after 1 January 2007:

- Police, defence, legal system
- Foreign service, Official Development Assistance
- General planning within the health care sector
- Education and research except primary school and special education
- Activation of the unemployed with insurance in joint job centres with the municipalities, unemployment insurance, working environment and overall employment policy
- Taxation and collection of debt to the public authorities
- Social services: National knowledge and special counselling organisation (VISO)
- The general road network and the state railway
- General nature, environmental and planning tasks
- Certain cultural measures
- Business economy subsidies
- Reception of asylum applicants

Responsibilities of the Regions after 1 January 2007:

- Hospital service, including hospitals. psychiatry and health insurance as well as general practitioners and specialists

- Regional development, i.e. nature, environment, business, tourism, employment, education and culture as well as development in the fringe areas of the regions and in the rural districts. Secretarial service for the regional growth fora.
- Soil pollution
- Raw material mapping and planning
- Operation of a number of institutions for exposed groups and groups with special needs for social services and special education
- Establishment of transport companies throughout Denmark

Responsibilities of the Municipalities after 1 January 2007:

- Social services: Total responsibility for financing, supply and authority
- Child care
- Primary school, including any special education and special pedagogical assistance for small children
- Special education for adults
- Care for the elderly
- Health care: Preventive treatment, care and rehabilitation that do not take place during hospitalisation, treatment of alcohol and drug abuse, home care, local dental care, special dental care and social psychiatry
- Activation and employment projects for the unemployed without insurance in job centres run jointly with the state (10 pilot municipalities undertake the task for the unemployed with insurance on behalf of the state)
- Integration and language education for immigrants
- Citizen service regarding taxation and collection in cooperation with state tax centres
- Supplies and emergency preparedness
- Nature, environment and planning: E.g. specific authority and citizenrelated tasks, preparation of local plans and plans regarding waste water, waste and water supply
- Local business service and promotion of tourism
- Participation in regional transport companies
- The local road network
- Libraries, schools of music, local sports facilities and culture

You can also learn more by reading:

http://www.im.dk/publikationer/government_reform_in_brief/index.htm

3.2 Levels and specific aspects of the administrative system

level	aspect	institution(s)	authority/function	tasks
national level		ministries	decides in individual cases within their own areas of responsibility	are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the state, each within their own area of responsibility
regional level		administrative regions	administers the regions areas of responsibility	Health care etc.
local level		municipal administration	Administers the municipality's areas of responsibility	schools etc.

II. Planning System

Introduction

The Danish Planning Act was changed in 2005 in connection with a reform of the local government structure. The local government reform entered into force January 1 2007. With the reform, the former 271 municipalities transformed into 98 big municipalities. The counties have been replaced by 5 administrative regions. The competences of the state and the municipal level have been strengthened while the regional level has gotten a more strategic function without any direct planning competences.

The Ministry of the Environment has described the new Danish planning system anno 2007. The publication is called "Spatial planning in Denmark "(pdf, 5.38 MB). It is warmly recommended to read this document to get a thorough picture of the the Danish planning system.

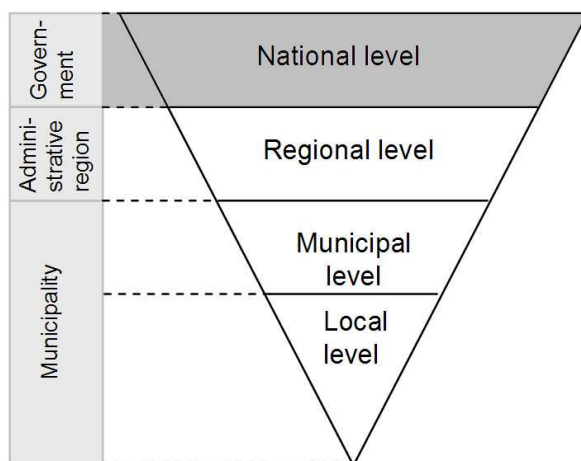
The **new Planning Act** in Denmark entered into force in of June 2007 (in Danish). In October 2007 it was also published in English (pdf, 282 KB)

The following articles can provide you with an introduction to the new planning context in Denmark:

- "Reform of the Planning Act " (doc, 1.52 MB)
- "From regional planning to municipal planning " (doc, 69 KB)
- "Regional spatial development plans " (doc, 1.50 MB)

You can also learn more by reading "The 2006 national planning report - in brief" at:

http://www.skovognatur.dk/Udgivelser/2006/The_national_planning_report.htm



National level

The Minister for the Environment may influence decentralized planning through national planning initiatives. The state may veto the planning of municipalities. Regional planning authorities uphold national interests. Planning decisions may be appealed to the Nature Protection Board of Appeal. Only the legal issues in planning decision may be appealed.

Regional Level

The regional planning authorities are responsible for the regional planning which is strategic planning, not a zoning plan.

Municipal and local Level

The municipal councils are responsible for comprehensive municipal planning, detailed local planning and permits for construction and changes in land use in rural zones.

1. Planning System in General

1.1 History of the planning system

1.2 Basic principles

1.3 Objectives and scope

1.6 Main instruments

1.7 Significance of transnational and trans-border aspects

1.8 Current and upcoming changes

1.1 History of the planning system

The rules on national planning were introduced in 1974 and strengthened substantially by the 2007 local government.

1.2 Basic principles

Decentralized responsibility

Denmark's 98 municipal councils have great responsibility for planning in towns and in the countryside. In the first half of the 4-year local election period, each council adopts a political strategy for municipal planning and decides how it will revise the municipal plan. The municipal plan adopted then comprises the framework for preparing local plans and processing cases, including those based on other legislation.

Local plans are prepared regularly when needed. The municipal council has to adopt a local plan before initiating major development projects.

Public participation

The Planning Act involves the public in the planning process at the municipal, regional and national levels. Before a municipal plan, a regional spatial development plan, a national planning directive or a national planning report may be adopted, a proposal and a report on the premises of the proposal must be published. Property owners, neighbours, nongovernmental organizations, public authorities and others then have at least 8 weeks to submit their objections, comments, proposals or protests.

The Planning Act stipulates minimum rules on public participation. The planning authority decides whether it should distribute more material for discussion, arrange citizens' meetings, establish working groups, create electronic citizens'

panels or the like. The municipalities experiment with various ways of involving the public, nongovernmental organizations and other organizations in the planning process. For example, several municipalities have prepared a policy on community democracy. Other municipalities are experimenting with discussing strategy and development potential more informally before the formal planning procedure begins.

Universal public access to plans and data

The Danish National Portal on the Environment provides access to numerous data on land use, nature and the environment. All plan proposals and plans are uploaded onto a planning portal (www.PlansystemDK.dk) so that anyone can investigate which plans govern a specific property or district.

Veto, dialogue and cooperation

The Minister for the Environment, on behalf of the government, is required to veto municipal plan proposals that contradict national interests. Regional councils may veto municipal plan proposals that contradict the regional spatial development plan. The municipalities may object to the plan proposal of a neighbouring municipality if the proposal is important for the objecting municipality's development. Municipalities in Greater Copenhagen may object to municipal plan proposals from any other municipality. The aim is to coordinate local, regional and national interests through dialogue and partnership.

Greater Copenhagen, coastal areas and retail trade

The Planning Act includes special rules on planning in Greater Copenhagen, coastal areas and retail trade:

- Planning in Greater Copenhagen is intended to maintain the main principles of the finger city structure (see pp. 14–15).
- Coastal areas are to remain free of development that can be located elsewhere.
- Planning for retail trade is intended to promote a varied supply of retail shops in town centres.

Responsibilities

The Minister for the Environment establishes a comprehensive framework for regional spatial development planning and municipal planning through national planning reports, overviews of national interests in municipal planning, national planning directives, dialogue and other means. The Minister ensures through such means as a veto that municipal planning complies with overall national interests.

The regional councils prepare regional spatial development plans that describe a vision for the region. This is a new type of strategic plan that captures the overall spatial development of the region and is closely linked with the business development strategy prepared by the regional economic growth forums.

The municipal councils summarize their objectives and strategy for development in a municipal plan, which comprises a framework for the detailed local plans and for processing individual cases pursuant to the Planning Act and numerous acts governing other sectors.

1.3 Objectives and scope

The Planning Act ensures that the overall planning synthesizes the interests of society with respect to land use and contributes to protecting the country's nature and environment, so that sustainable development of society with respect for people's living conditions and for the conservation of wildlife and vegetation is secured.

Spatial planning especially aims towards:

- appropriate development in the whole country and in the individual administrative regions and municipalities, based on overall planning and economic considerations;
- creating and conserving valuable buildings, settlements, urban environments and landscapes;
- the open coasts continuing to comprise an important natural and landscape resource;
- preventing pollution of air, water and soil and noise nuisance; and
- involving the public in the planning process as much as possible.

Goals for spatial planning

The 2006 national planning report contains the Government's five goals for spatial planning in Denmark.

1. Rural and urban areas should be distinct.
2. Development should benefit all of Denmark.
3. Spatial planning should be based on respect for the identity of cities and towns, nature, the environment and the landscape and townscape.
4. Spatial planning and investment in infrastructure should be closely integrated.
5. Spatial planning should be comprehensive.

1.6 Main instruments

For a more thorough description of the main instruments with pictures and figures – read ([link to PDF-spatial planning in Denmark](#)) → COMMINg soon!

1.6.1 National planning

The rules on national planning were introduced in 1974 and strengthened substantially by the 2007 local government reform. National planning is expressed through reports, binding instructions, guidelines and intervention in municipal planning for themes and projects of international, national or regional interest.

National planning reports

After each election to the Folketing (parliament), the Minister for the Environment submits a national planning report to be used in regional spatial development planning and municipal planning. The report further covers the special planning considerations for Greater Copenhagen. The report is submitted as a proposal with potential alternatives, and public debate is solicited before the Minister publishes the report on behalf of the Government. The Folketing traditionally debates the national planning report. The latest reports include visions and perspectives for topical planning themes followed up by an action plan, including projects with municipalities and the private sector.

Overview of national interests

Every 4 years the Minister publishes an overview of national interests in municipal planning. This includes the interests and considerations arising from politically adopted decisions in the form of legislation, action plans, sector plans, national planning decisions and agreements between public authorities. The Minister published the first overview in November 2006. The rules on national planning were introduced in 1974 and strengthened substantially by the 2007 local government.

Reports on nature and environment policy

The Minister for the Environment publishes one or more reports at least every 4 years that describe the state of the environment in Denmark and Denmark's policy on nature and the environment. Nationwide environment, business, labour market and consumer organizations are involved in this process. The Minister also submits a report on Local Agenda 21 work to the Folketing.

Reports on retail trade planning

The Minister submits a report on planning for retail trade every 4 years to the Folketing.

National planning directives

The Minister may establish binding rules on the content of planning. In this way, the Government may promote both specific projects and a certain direction of development. National planning directives may be used to locate a specific activity crucial to society and thereby supersede municipal and local planning. Examples of national planning directives include designating new summer cottage areas in the coastal zone, determining the path for natural gas pipelines and electrical transmission lines and locating national testing stations for wind turbines. Similarly, the Minister may establish rules for the planning of specific activities by issuing a circular. An example is planning for the erection of new wind turbines. The Planning Act requires the Minister to establish specific rules for planning in Greater Copenhagen. This is being done through a national planning directive on the Finger Plan 2007 (see pp. 14–15).

Veto and orders

The Minister must veto a municipal plan proposal on behalf of all government ministers if the proposal contradicts national interests. This veto must be declared during the period of public comment, and the municipal council is prohibited from adopting the proposal until the Minister agrees to the content of the proposal. A committee of state civil servants assesses each municipal plan proposal during the period of public comment to coordinate the state's viewpoints. The Ministry's regional environmental centres in Aarhus, Odense and Roskilde coordinate and declare any veto. Any state authority may veto a local plan proposal based on the special responsibilities of this authority. The authority and the municipality must then reach agreement or let the Ministry's regional environmental centre decide.

The Minister may order a municipal council to prepare a plan with a specified content. In special cases, the Minister may assume the authority granted to municipal planning authorities and decide a specific planning dispute. These options are used very rarely: when special national interests necessitate intervening in municipal autonomy.

Instruments used in national planning

- Special rules in the Planning Act
- National planning reports

- National planning directives for Greater Copenhagen
- Other national planning directives
- Vetoes and orders
- Overview of national interests in municipal planning
- Information and guidance

1.6.2 Regional spatial development planning

The 2007 reform of local government structure created a new type of plan. The new regional councils are preparing regional spatial development plans that will present strategic visions of the development of each region. Regional spatial development plans are a collective project between the municipal councils, businesses, the regional council and the other actors in each region.

Regional plan for spatial development

A regional spatial development plan comprehensively describes a desired future spatial development for each administrative region's cities and towns, rural districts and small-town (peripheral) regions and for:

- nature and the environment, including recreation;
- business, including tourism;
- employment;
- education and training; and
- culture.

A map will illustrate the general content of the plan. The regional council may make proposals for municipal and local planning in the administrative region. Municipal plans must be in accordance with the regional spatial development plan. Regional councils publish a plan proposal during the first half of the 4-year regional and local election period while the municipalities prepare their strategies for municipal planning. These two processes are related, and close dialogue can produce synergy.

The regional spatial development plan describes:

- the relationships between future spatial development and the state and municipal spatial planning for infrastructure; the context for any cooperation between the administrative region and public authorities in adjacent countries on spatial planning and spatial development;
- and
- the action the regional council will take to follow up the plan.

Cohesion with other plans

The regional spatial development plan should ensure cohesion with:

- the business development strategy of the regional economic growth forum;
- the employment strategy of the regional employment council;
- the development strategies of local action groups within the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013;
- the Local Agenda 21 strategies of the administrative region and the municipalities; and
- other regional strategies and plans, such as for education, training and culture.

1.6.3 Municipal planning

A municipal plan summarizes and concretizes the overall political objectives for the development of a municipality. The municipal council establishes a policy for the development of towns and cities and for the countryside. The municipal plan links national planning and the provisions of local plans on the use and development of each district and between national planning and the specific administration of rural zones. The rules on strategy for planning have strengthened the strategic aspect of municipal planning and the political interest of local communities in municipal planning.

Strategy for planning

The municipal council publishes a strategy for municipal planning within the first 2 years of the municipal election period. This includes the municipal council's political strategy for development and information on the planning occurring since the last time the municipal plan was revised.

The strategy for planning also concludes with a decision on revising the municipal plan. The municipal council may choose to revise the entire municipal plan or to revise parts of the plan, such as for a theme or a district, and adopting the rest of the plan as it is. The strategy for planning is subject to public comment for at least 8 weeks.

Municipal plan

A municipal plan includes:

- a general structure with overall objectives for development and land use in the municipality;
- guidelines for land use; and
- a framework for the content of local plans for the specific parts of the municipality.

The plan includes a report describing the premises of the plan. The municipalities vary widely in their planning practice. Some municipalities closely link the municipal budget and targets for providing services; others adopt a plan solely covering land use.

General structure

The general structure uses maps and text to show the municipal council's objectives for development and land use. The general structure summarizes the content of the municipal plan and can be a gateway to the detailed content of the plan.

Guidelines for land use

The guidelines of the municipal plan concretize the objectives of the general structure. The guidelines cover all the themes stipulated by the Planning Act. The guidelines may differ substantially. For example, they may designate types of land to be protected, such as special habitats, or they may determine location principles or criteria, such as principles for urban service delivery.

Framework for local planning

The framework for the content of local plans is the link to local planning and is decisive for the municipal council's competence in preparing local plans. The framework describes what a local plan can and should decide for individual areas to promote a cohesive urban structure and the overall municipal objectives. The framework often illustrates future opportunities. The municipal plan determines which areas in rural zones may be transferred to urban zones or summer cottage areas. The framework may determine the chronological order for converting land to urban functions and to summer cottage areas.

Municipal plan proposal

After publishing the strategy for planning, the municipal council may prepare a proposal for revising the municipal plan in accordance with the strategy. The proposal may cover: the municipal plan for the entire municipality; a special theme such as retail trade, urban regeneration, business, transport or housing; or part of the municipality, such as one or more urban districts or villages, old harbour districts or the town centre.

Public participation

Proposals are published and debated for at least 8 weeks before being adopted.

National and regional sector plans

The municipal plan may not contradict: the description of the desired future spatial development in the regional spatial development plan; national planning directives; a water resource plan, a Natura 2000 plan or action plans for implementing these plans; or a raw materials plan.

National interests

The Minister for the Environment is obligated to veto municipal plan proposals that contradict national interests.

1.6.4 Local Planning

Local plans are the foundation of Denmark's spatial planning system. Local plans concretize the political strategy and objectives of the municipal plan. A municipal plan provides a comprehensive overview of the development of a municipality and the plans for housing, workplaces, transport, nature and environmental protection and other matters, whereas local plans stipulate how a district may be developed and used. Local plans are legally binding for property owners.

The content of local plans

A local plan establishes rules on how land may be developed and used. A local plan can ensure that the many diverse interests in a local plan area are weighed and discussed. A local plan is flexible. It may regulate numerous factors related to use, the size and location of buildings, roads and paths and the architectural features of an area. A local plan gives property owners the right to develop and use property in accordance with the local plan. Property owners are not generally entitled to compensation for any perceived loss of property rights. A local plan solely regulates future conditions and does not require that the property owner act. In special cases, the municipal council may expropriate private property to implement a local plan.

Property owners may not act in contradiction to a local plan. After a public hearing including neighbours, a municipal council may grant exemptions from a local plan if this does not contradict the principles of the plan as expressed in provisions related to purpose and use.

The matters a local plan regulates often involve many contradictory interests. The interests of property owners may differ from those of their neighbours, and local and national interests may clash. Local planning ensures that the various interests can be expressed before the final local plan determines how an area is to be regulated. The strength of local plans is that they state what is permitted and what is not. The property owner and others know how much latitude they have to act, and neighbours know what to expect.

1.7 Significance of transnational and trans-border aspects

International cooperation

Developments and spatial planning in nearby countries and the rest of the EU increasingly influence Denmark. Public authorities cooperate internationally through: EU collaboration between ministers responsible for spatial planning with working groups on regional policy, urban development and environment; cooperation in the Baltic and North Sea regions on various EU-financed projects; and cooperation between Nordic ministers.

1.8 Current and upcoming changes

The Danish Planning Act was changed in 2005 in connection with a reform of the local government structure. The local government reform entered into force January 1 2007. With the reform, the former 271 municipalities transformed into 98 big municipalities. The counties have been replaced by 5 administrative regions. The competences of the state and the municipal level have been strengthened while the regional level has gotten a more strategic function without any direct planning competences.

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