

Annual Reporting , 2012 from the Danish Bar and Law Society

Education on the Danish system of justice

In 2009 the Council of The Danish Bar and Law Society as part of the Councils Rule of Law Programme adopted an objective to launch a teaching resource on the Danish system of justice. The project has been carried out by The Danish Bar and Law Society in cooperation with the publishing house SYSTIME in 2012 with generous financial support from the foundation Dreyers Fond.

The teaching resource is targeted at the subject Social Studies at the upper secondary school level. It will be published in the early 2013 as an internet-based book that consists of text, video interviews and a number of exercises and assignments enabling the pupils to take an active part in the training. Additionally the schools will have the opportunity to invite a lawyer as a guest teacher through The Danish Bar and Law Society.

The People's Meeting "Folkemødet" on Bornholm 2012

The Danish Bar and Law Society participated in the official "People's meeting" in June 2012. The People's Meeting "Folkemødet" situated on the Danish Island Bornholm is a unique platform with open debates where politicians informally meet citizens, business people and organizations . Established in 2011 The People's Meeting takes place every year in June and lasts for three days.

Folkemødet is a Danish counterpart to the famous Swedish Almedalveckan.

In 2012 The Danish Bar and Law Society hosted a stand with numerous activities including among other things a citizens advice bureau offering free legal advice and a moot court displaying the functioning of criminal courts followed by a debate on the use and purpose of punishment. The People's Meeting has shown to be a suitable event for promoting the work of lawyers and the Bar and Law Society and the events attracted attention both from the general public and from politicians attending the meeting. The Danish Bar and Law Society is planning to attend the People's Meeting again in 2013.

Scrutiny of legal aid regime hamstrung because of lack of funding

A report issued by the permanent judicial council under the Ministry of Justice in June 2012 has disappointingly been unable to resolve the present problems with the Danish legal aid schemes. The major problem with the existing scheme has been a lack of funding to provide adequate free legal aid to low income citizens both in relation to expenses related to court procedure and to pre trial legal advice.

The work of the committee has been restrained by the official mission given to the council stating that all proposals had to be within the existing level of funding. Though financial accountability is needed during times of crisis the Danish Bar and Law Society strongly argued that the need for improving legal aid schemes calls for both reforms and supply of additional public funding. To back its position the Danish Bar and Law Society together with the Association of Danish law firms commissioned a study from the independent consultancy firm Copenhagen Economics on the general economical importance of well functioning legal aid schemes. The study, based on pure economic rationale, manifestly backs up the legal arguments favoring efficient legal aid schemes.

Publication of disciplinary rulings – consumer protection or modern pillory?

Under Danish Law the rulings of the Disciplinary Board of the Danish Bar and Law Society may be published on the Boards homepage in so far as the Board finds the lawyer in breach of the applicable ethical standards. The rulings are published for one year. The rules of publication are based on a balancing of the interests of the lawyer in question against the general interest of the consumer. However, this balance is threatened by private initiatives establishing databases of lawyers, accountants, doctors etc. showing information on their merits and disciplinary sanctions. The emerge of such initiatives thrives on the growing use of the internet as the source of publication since it is easy by simple computer programming to monitor, copy and promulgate rulings published on the web by for instance the Disciplinary Board.

In Denmark such compilation of information on lawyers etc. has been launched both by a private company and by one of the largest news corporations trying to boost their reader services. The Danish Bar and Law Society has tried to ensure that data protection rules are not violated by the initiatives and has argued that unlimited use of information meant to be publicly accessible only for a certain time period may lead to a modern pillory and may in term lead to further consideration of the use of internet publication of such information.

Citizens Advice Bureaus

In 2012 the Danish Bar and Law Society obtained means of support from Dreyers Foundation to develop a new website that provides an overview of Denmark's more than 80 citizens advice bureaus. The citizens advice bureaus (also known as legal aid offices) are staffed by local lawyers who provide oral advice in all types of cases on *pro bono* basis. Advice may be obtained anonymously and is open to all regardless of income.

Typically the advice aims at putting the person seeking advice in a position to evaluate whether a claim is legitimate and legal in nature. The advice includes not only legal issues but also the practical and economic feasibility of proceeding with a case.

In order to facilitate the advice in the citizens advice bureaus the Danish Bar and Law Society has - in addition to running the website and also supported by the Dreyers Foundation - made tablets available to the bureaus, who has applied. More than half of the 88 citizens advice bureaus have received a tablet.