

Information on a new legislative amendment with impact on the migration of health care workers in Denmark

The Danish healthcare system is in a significantly better place than it was a few years ago. It has become easier to retain and attract Danish nurses. At the same time, Denmark has received many applications in recent years from nurses educated in countries outside the EU/EEA - people that wish to come to Denmark to work as a nurse after they have obtained Danish authorization.

The number of foreign nurses applying for authorization in Denmark, currently exceeds the number of available employments for adaptation and training purposes. And far from all of these nurses succeed in finding and completing such an employment.

It is the nurses' own responsibility to find employment for adaptation and training purposes that meets the applicable requirements.

Nurses have to pass the '*Prøve i dansk 3*' (Danish 3 Exam), with a minimum grade of 10 in oral communication, 7 in reading comprehension and 7 in written communication before they can start an employment for adaptation and training purposes. In other words, a high level of language proficiency is required.

If a nurse is unable to obtain such an employment, he/she will not be able to obtain Danish authorization, and therefore not allowed to work as a nurse in Denmark.

If a nurse arrives in Denmark on a residence permit granted for the purpose of obtaining Danish authorization (authorization stay), and do not succeed in obtaining and completing an employment for adaptation and training purposes within three years, the nurse and his/her family will no longer have legal residence and will not be able to stay in Denmark.

Approximately 1.700 people from countries outside the EU/EEA have had a residence permit granted for the purpose of obtaining Danish authorization as a nurse in Denmark from 2019-2024. In comparison, only 200 of these people have obtained Danish authorization as a nurse (as of January 1 2025). Currently, there are approximately 1.350 nurses in Denmark on an authorization stay.

Background on the legislative amendment

The Danish Patient Safety Authority (Styrelsen for Patientsikkerhed) allows applicants for nursing authorization to begin the authorization process once the authority has assessed, inter alia that the applicant's education is comparable to the equivalent Danish nursing education. Once a nurse's education has been approved and permission granted to begin the authorization process, the nurse is able to obtain a three-year residence permit granted for the purpose of obtaining Danish authorization in Denmark.

In recent years, however, the number of foreign nurses that are coming to Denmark, exceeds the number of available employments for adaptation and training purposes, which is a requirement for obtaining Danish authorization.

The Danish parliament has therefore passed a legislative amendment to establish a quota system, aimed at establishing a more demand-driven model for authorizing healthcare professionals from outside the EU/EEA. The quota system is intended to ensure alignment between the number of foreign healthcare professionals entering Denmark to obtain Danish authorization and the number of available employments for adaptation and training purposes.

With the quota system, a cap is set on the number of authorization applications that the Danish Patient Safety Authority can receive each year from applicants who are citizens in a country outside the EU/EEA.

The quota system does not apply to individuals covered by the special process for specifically requested healthcare professionals.

Once the quota for a specific group of healthcare professionals is reached, the digital application system at the Danish Patient Safety Authority will close for this group, and will only reopen when the quota is removed or increased, based on the demand for foreign educated people from this specific group of healthcare professionals.

As of October 7th the legislative amendment has come into effect, and nurses from outside the EU/EEA can no longer apply for Danish authorization. The initial quota of 0 for nurses will be effective until 2027.

When the legislative amendment comes into effect already submitted, but not yet completed, nursing authorization applications to the Danish Patient Safety Authority will also be rejected.

Already submitted, but not yet completed, applications for a residence permit granted for the purpose of obtaining Danish authorization as a nurse in Denmark, will also be rejected once the bill becomes effective.

Should the demand for foreign nurses in Denmark increase in the future, the quota will be increased or raised, and applications for Danish authorization will once again be accepted.