



Extract from the report to the
Public Accounts Committee on
the Danish-Arab Partnership
Programme

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I. Introduction and results

1. The report is about the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme. Rigsrevisionen initiated the examination in September 2009 at the request of the Danish Public Accounts Committee.

2. The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme was launched by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003 and is a Danish foreign policy effort directed at countries in the Arab region. The purpose of the programme is twofold:

- to establish a basis for improved dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Denmark and the Arab region.
- to support existing local reform processes in the Middle East and North Africa.

3. The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme has a bilateral track and a multilateral track that are designed to promote the objectives of the programme in different manners; the bilateral track consists of concrete projects and programmes established between Denmark and countries in the Arab region. The bilateral track includes, in addition to support to bilateral projects and programmes, also support to regional projects and programmes involving support to several countries in the MENA region (**M**iddle **E**ast and **N**orth **A**frica).

The multilateral track aims to strengthen the Danish efforts in multilateral fora and thereby contribute actively to reform processes in the region. The multilateral track is designed to impact the efforts made by international and multilateral bodies, especially under the EU, to support reform processes in the Arab region. Some of the multilateral fora have also reserved funds for concrete projects in the countries in the region.

4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided to focus on three themes:

- fundamental freedoms and good governance
- development of knowledge-based societies
- promotion of gender equality and women's participation in social, political and economic life.

The focal areas have been selected on the basis of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which identified these three themes as the most essential for the region. The UNDP is the UN's global development programme.

5. The overall objective of the report is to answer the following questions put forward by the Danish Public Accounts Committee:

- How have grants to and payments made by the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme developed since 2003 broken down on the two purposes of the Programme?
- What are the results of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme so far?
- What effect has the initiative had measured against the objectives set for the programme?

- How has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensured coherence between the bilateral track and the multilateral track?
- How has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensured coherence between the initiative and other development aid?
- Has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the extent required adapted the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme in accordance with lessons learned?

6. Rigsrevisionen has examined the results of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme based on two external assessments of the Programme dating back to 2006 and 2009, respectively, and a review of 12 projects and programmes, and multilateral efforts.

Combined the 12 projects and programmes represent grants/commitments worth DKK 223 million, which is approximately 37 per cent of the total grants/commitments for the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme in the period 2003-2009.

The audit covers the period 2003-2010 – however, limited to 2003-2009 as regards grants/commitments and payments.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme has, in spite of occasionally difficult conditions, achieved results that have helped establish a basis for improved dialogue, understanding and cooperation, and have supported existing local reform processes in the region. It is still too early to assess the long-term effects of the initiative.

The Ministry's performance management can be improved to ensure that the results of the initiatives launched are being documented and, thereby facilitating assessment of the effect of the initiatives in the longer term.

In 2010, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked out a strategy on the objectives of the programme along with guidelines for the project design and reporting on the bilateral efforts. This is intended to improve the quality of the Ministry's performance management. The Ministry should have laid down clear guidelines and procedures for the implementation of the programme sooner. The Ministry should also, at an earlier point in time, have communicated the strategy and overall objectives to the Danish and Middle Eastern partners involved in the projects and programmes established under the Programme. This overall assessment is based on the following findings:

Grants/commitments and payments

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has kept the total budget for the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme. The development in grants/commitments and payments in the period 2003-2009 is a reflection of the fact that the Programme was in its initial phase in the years 2003 to 2005. As from 2006, the annual grants/commitments and payments have been around DKK 100 million. Funds are used mainly for bilateral initiatives.

- It is not possible to break down grants/commitments and payments on the two purposes of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, as they are often entwined in the projects and programmes that are being implemented. Most of the grants/commitments concern bilateral efforts. Well over three per cent of the grants/commitments are relating to multilateral initiatives.

- The years 2003 to 2005 represent the initial phase of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme with grants increasing from DKK 1.6 million in 2003 to DKK 124.1 million in 2005. Payments increased from nil in 2003 to DKK 54.9 million in 2005. Since 2006, total annual grants/commitments have been approximately DKK 100 million and payments have similarly been approximately DKK 100 million.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has since 2006 managed the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme so that annual commitments amount to approximately DKK 100 million and payments amount to approximately DKK 100 million also.
- In total, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has provided grants/commitments in the amount of DKK 597.8 million and made payments in the amount of DKK 471.2 million in the period 2003-2009.

Results and effect

Numerous of the activities that have been implemented under the two tracks of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme have produced results relating to the three themes. Rigsrevisionen has, however, in relation to the bilateral track established that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could improve its performance management. It is still too early to assess the long-term effect of the efforts made under the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme.

- A review of the two external assessments and the 12 projects and programmes has shown that numerous of the activities implemented under the bilateral track have supported the objectives set for the projects and programmes, and created lasting results in the form of, for instance the establishment of new partnerships between Danish and Arab organisations. The activities have promoted young people's participation in society, gender equality and development of the media sector. But other activities have not achieved the results expected, which, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is due to the fact that the projects are being implemented in a region characterized by relatively rigid political structures and the general conditions for the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme have changed.
- The performance management conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the bilateral efforts under the Programme can be improved. For instance some of the sub-objectives set for the initiatives were not clearly defined, which made it difficult to assess the results achieved. In other cases, planned activities had not been implemented, but it did not appear clearly from the completion report whether these planned activities were essential for the achievement of the overall objectives of the respective project or programme.
- With respect to the multilateral track, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made an active effort in a number of multilateral fora to promote dialogue and support reform processes in the region.
- It is still too early to assess the outcome of the efforts made under the two tracks in relation to the two overall objectives, i.e. to establish a basis for improved dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Denmark and the Arab region, and to support existing local reform processes in the Middle East and North Africa.

Coherence between the bilateral track and the multilateral track

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has tried to ensure coherence between the two tracks by making the three themes of the initiative the pivotal point of the two tracks. Furthermore, the Ministry has attempted to utilize the experience gained in connection with the bilateral track in its efforts to influence multilateral organisations' support of reform processes. The Ministry should also have explained in more detail the connection between the bilateral track and the multilateral track on a practical level.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that the two tracks are meant to supplement each other and create synergy, and the Ministry considers it relevant to ensure that the two tracks are coordinated. The strategy paper prepared by the Ministry should have stated more precisely how the Ministry works to create synergy between the tracks in order to clarify the connection between the bilateral track and the multilateral track on a practical level to partners involved in activities under the Programme.
- Since 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has become more aware of the importance of knowledge sharing and coordination of the bilateral and multilateral activities in compliance with the recommendations of the analysis from 2006; the two tracks are focused on the same themes, and concrete lessons learned from the bilateral track are being used to improve the Ministry's position in negotiations in multilateral fora, like for instance in the EU.

Coherence between the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme and other development aid

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has ensured coherence between the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme and other development aid to the extent considered relevant.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that it has not been the intention to ensure direct coordination between the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme and other development aid.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has in connection with other development aid provided to Muslim communities in, for instance Somalia, utilized experience gained from activities pursued under the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme.
- Unlike other development aid, the primary purpose of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme is not to reduce poverty, and in the opinion of Rigsrevisionen, the general exchange of experience and knowledge sharing that is already taking place in the Ministry is considered adequate.

Adaption of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme

Rigsrevisionen is of the opinion that the adaption of the Programme made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the basis of lessons learned has been satisfactory. However, the Ministry should at an earlier point in time have laid down guidelines for project design and reporting, which could have improved the performance management. Furthermore, the Ministry could have been clearer in its communication concerning the strategic framework that was determined after the initial phase. Rigsrevisionen finds it positive that the Ministry has recognized the importance of documenting the results and effect of the efforts made.

- The two external assessments of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme in 2006 and 2009, respectively have both contributed to making the initiative more focused, and the Ministry has been determined in its effort to implement the recommendations derived from the external assessments.
- The Danish Parliament (the Folketing) adopted a proposal - V80 - concerning the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (parliamentary session 2005-06) on the basis of the analysis of the initial phase of the Programme carried out in 2006. V 80 has subsequently constituted the strategic framework for the implementation of the initiative.
- The Ministry should have laid down specific guidelines for project design and reporting sooner. The strategy set out for the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, which was based on the analysis from 2006, could have been communicated more clearly to the Danish and Middle Eastern partners that are involved in the implementation of projects and programmes under the initiative.
- It is Rigsrevisionen's assessment that the Ministry has recognized the importance of documenting the results and effect of the efforts made which is reflected in the fact that the Ministry has tightened the guidelines and launched a study designed to assess the impact of participation in the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme on dialogue and mutual understanding.