



News from the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman

The Ellebæk Centre for Foreigners is in better condition but there is still a need for improvement

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'Much has been done to improve the material conditions at Ellebæk in recent years. Though the work on the outside areas is not completed, conditions have improved markedly. Beyond this, there may be grounds for continuing to focus on the tone of communication.' So says Parliamentary Ombudsman, Niels Fenger, following a monitoring visit to the Ellebæk Centre for Foreigners in North Zealand. The centre is used to detain foreign nationals pursuant to the rules of the Danish Aliens Act and the Danish Return Act.

In connection with a previous visit to Ellebæk in 2019, the Ombudsman's visiting team found that the centre's corridors and accommodation rooms were very worn and that the solitary confinement cells were in poor condition. The Ombudsman recommended that the condition of the centre be improved so that the detainees would have adequate material conditions.

When visiting Ellebæk recently, the visiting team found that thorough renovations have been carried out, and that by far the majority of the accommodation units are in good condition.

The outdoor areas have also been improved in recent years; however, the Ombudsman recommended that focus remains on continuing this task. The detainees have access to playing fields together with the centre's staff. In addition, they can go outside for fresh air on their own, but this takes place in small enclosures with walls and top made of a rigid metal mesh, and there is no roof to protect against rain or direct sunlight.

The detained foreign nationals at Ellebæk come from many different countries and speak many different languages. It is therefore important that interpreters are used in all circumstances when needed – the Ombudsman also recommended the centre's management to ensure this.

It also emerged during the visit that – despite management having focused on the issue – there may be episodes where staff talk among themselves or to the detainees in an unprofessional or ‘harsh’ way. The Ombudsman therefore recommended a continued focus on the staff’s way of talking.

Apart from the Ombudsman and members of his staff, participants in the visits were National Director Maria Ventegodt and Senior Researcher Peter Vedel Kessing from the Danish Institute for Human Rights together with CEO Rasmus Grue Christensen and Senior Medical Officer Marie Brasholt from DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture.

Read [the Ombudsman’s closing letter for the Prison and Probation Service](#) (in Danish only).

Further details:

Parliamentary Ombudsman Niels Fenger, tel. +45 42 47 50 91

Senior Head of Department Morten Engberg, tel. +45 33 13 25 12

FACTS

The Ellebæk Centre for Foreigners houses, among others, foreign nationals who have been detained pursuant to the rules of the Return Act while they wait to be sent out of the country. As a main rule, they are subject to the same rules as people in remand custody in the Danish Prison and Probation Service’s other institutions.

Read more on [Ellebæk Centre for Foreigners on the website of the Danish Prison and Probation Service](#) (in Danish only).

The purpose of the Ombudsman’s monitoring visits is to help ensure that people attending or residing in institutions are treated with dignity, consideration and in accordance with their rights. Many of the visits are carried out in cooperation with DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

Read more about [the Ombudsman's monitoring visits](#).