

Folkebevægelsen mod Ensomhed

YSI - Denmark - Country case 2

1. Basic information

The network “Folkebevægelsen mod Ensomhed” is a nation-wide movement fighting loneliness. It was formed in 2015 by the organisation DanAge, with the purpose of bringing loneliness on the agenda and end the taboo surrounding it. Today the network consists of over 70 organisations, municipalities, and companies. The movement in itself is not an organisation but rather a network, therefore, they only have one employee, which coordinates and creates networks between the organisations. The key objective and aim with the movement is to get more people to talk about loneliness and create more forums to meet new people. By engaging the civil society they hope to reach more people.

The movement started because DanAge found that their own initiatives were not enough in dealing with loneliness for their target group (elders). They needed more collaborative partnerships and a common agenda in dealing with the more than 210.000 Danes that often feel lonely. Therefore, the movement’s ambitious vision is by 2020 to halve that number. The vision was set in order to have a common aim throughout the different organisations. In attaining this they created the national campaign: “Denmark eats together”. In 2016 the movement made a study which showed that 20% of those who eat alone 5 days a week, would like someone to eat with. The purpose of “eating together” is to make it easier for those who feel lonely to accept the invitation and meet new people. The event is organised by the participating organisations all around Denmark and they can apply for funds to organise the events. This is coordinated by “Folkebevægelsen mod ensomhed” and economically supported by the Nordea Fund. The campaign is covered by all the big national Danish media companies, including DR, TV2, Information, Politiken, Berlingske etc.

The campaign is running on its second year and has been successful in engaging the organisations and also in reaching the organisations' own target groups. It has helped to raise awareness about loneliness and last year roughly 1000 dinners were held.

It is, however, difficult to predict if the vision will succeed by 2020 - the baseline measures are first available in 2018.

In addition to the national campaign, the individual organisations have different initiatives and activities. DanAge has local departments all around Denmark in which they have activities for the elders. They among many other things have single-groups, knitting-groups and dinner-clubs. All of these activities share the purpose of meeting new people (DanAge).

The organisation KAB - a customer owned administrator of nonprofit affordable housing in Denmark - also has different activities in their local departments for the residents, and they have an annual "Well-being meeting". At the meeting they share ideas and thoughts on how they can increase the residents' well-being in the local housing departments through different activities (KAB). According to Project manager for the movement, Marie Asserhøj, the housing organisations are in general very important to activate in the fight against loneliness, since they have access to people with a very small social circle.

For the younger crowd, the organisation "Højskolerne" has different local activities with focus on dialogue and networking e.g. communal eating, concerts etc. (Højskolerne).

For an overview of the different organisations, go to:

<http://modensomhed.dk/om-folkebevaegelsen/>

In the future, the movement has different plans on the agenda. They first of all wish to, through pilot projects, gain even more knowledge about loneliness and also how to reach the people suffering from it. They also hope to cooperate and engage with more municipalities on the matter.

2. Role of the public sector and recommendations

The movement is not supported by the public sector. As aforementioned, it is a network of organisations - each pay a membership fee to be part of the movement and the “Denmark eats together”-initiative is supported by the private Nordea fund.

In 2016 the Danish Health Authorities published a report on health risk factors in the danish population. The report showed that loneliness causes severe societal consequences, among these are; higher death rate, more hospitalisations and higher sickness absence. This report can also be the reason that more municipalities joined the movement - the municipalities pay membership fees like the other organisations. Engaging municipalities in the movement can act as a link between the citizens and the different initiatives the organisations have. Municipalities are in contact with a lot of citizens through for example social workers and can potentially play a big role in reducing loneliness by generating attention on the problem and communicating the different initiatives put in place to combat the issue. They can also be helpful in detecting the citizens in danger of loneliness and what the danger signals are.

The positive role the municipalities can play in both knowledge sharing and detection can, therefore, have a real impact in reducing loneliness. Thus, it is recommendable that municipalities take a greater part in this issue.

3. Sources

- Much of the information in this case derives from 2 separate interviews with project manager for the movement, Marie Asserhøj.
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