

Certainty on asylum is elusive in Denmark

COPENHAGEN

Its approach is admired across Europe, but internal debates haven't ceased

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Britain's government is joining the rest of Europe in taking a stricter stance on asylum, turning to the country that has become something of a migration role model: Denmark.

Right-wing parties across Europe have sought for years to limit migration, often arguing that too many migrants could overwhelm public services and fracture social cohesion. Denmark stands out, though, because here it was a center-left government that doubled down on strict rules. Asylum flows have steadily fallen, and the Danish Social Democrats have retained national power.

But as Keir Starmer's Labour government in London takes notes, unveiling a plan last month that openly borrows elements of Denmark's policy, the way the Danish approach has worked on the ground offers reasons to proceed carefully. The political gains that the approach seemed to offer now show some signs of cracking, and policies meant to limit the entry of asylum seekers may come at a social cost.

Lars Lokke Rasmussen, the moderate politician who was prime minister when Denmark adopted many of its strictest policies, said immigration policy was about both limiting big flows of potential refugees and welcoming needed foreigners.

"They should just recall that we need this balanced approach," said Mr. Rasmussen, who is now the Danish foreign minister. "It's not black and white. It's a colorful world, and it comes with a lot of nuances."

Over the years, but especially since the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015 sent a flood of newcomers into Europe, the Danish government has enacted policies to make life challenging for asylum seekers, trying to discourage them from coming.

Danish officials say the nation wants to slow the flow of new asylum seekers so it can adjudicate their cases carefully and thoroughly integrate the people whom it does accept, even as it still takes a large number of documented migrants. The point, they say, is to avoid pressures that rapid migration has put on other societies, including homelessness, while maintaining public support in a society with high taxes and generous welfare policies.

Copenhagen pioneered a number of policies that Britain hopes to emulate. Some were largely symbolic, like threatening to confiscate the jewelry and valuables of would-be refugees to pay for

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