



Extract from the report to the  
Public Accounts Committee on  
the 95 per cent objective set for  
secondary education

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## I. Introduction and conclusion

1. According to the Welfare Agreement from June 2006, which was entered into by a number of political parties represented in the Folketing (Danish parliament), at least 95 per cent of all young people should complete a secondary education by 2015 (and at least 85 per cent hereof should complete a secondary education by 2010). This is referred to as the 95 per cent objective. Secondary education is defined as, for instance vocational training or an upper secondary education. In the Globalisation Agreement from November 2006, the objectives set were defined as follows: 85 per cent and 95 per cent of a *youth cohort* should complete a secondary education by 2010 and 2015, respectively. This report is about the effort made to achieve the 95 per cent objective.

The current government has in its government platform retained the 95 per cent objective, but it has included also young people who complete a higher education without having completed a secondary education programme. This report is based on the former definition of the 95 per cent objective, as we have examined the effort made to ensure that more young people *complete* a secondary education.

2. The 95 per cent objective is underpinned by several initiatives laid down in various political agreements from 2006 and later. Total funds reserved in the agreements to ensure that more young people complete a secondary education amount to approximately DKK 7 billion. This amount includes DKK 2.6 billion to ensure achievement of the 95 per cent objective and DKK 4.4 billion reserved for the creation of more apprenticeships. The Ministry of Children and Education has the overall responsibility for the effort. Rigsrevisionen took the initiative to perform the examination of the 95 per cent objective as it represents an investment in the education system that will have a huge impact on the future growth and wealth of Denmark.

3. The 95 per cent objective is ambitious and it has already and will also in the future be faced with several challenges. First, increasing the percentage of young people who complete a secondary education from approximately 80 per cent in 2006 to at least 95 per cent in 2015 represents a special challenge. Second, the group of young people who have not completed a secondary education at this point in time primarily consists of young people who are ill equipped to complete a secondary education. Third, the vocational schools, which are critical for the success of the effort, have for years struggled with high drop-out rates. Initiatives launched have therefore mainly been directed at vocational training, although they have also to some extent addressed the educational guidance provided by the municipalities.

4. The parties to the Welfare Agreement and the subsequent Globalisation Agreement have agreed that the Ministry of Children and Education must report annually on progress made towards achievement of the 95 per cent objective. Reporting takes place on the basis of the ministry's extrapolation model. The model projects the percentage of a youth cohort that the ministry expects to complete a secondary education over the next 25 years. In this report, the results of the ministry's projections provide the basis for Rigsrevisionen's assessment of the development in the number of young people who complete a secondary education programme.

### More young people with a secondary education

Compared to 2005, additionally 15,000 young people should in 2015 complete a secondary education for the 95 per cent objective to be achieved.

A **youth cohort** is defined as all the young people leaving 9th grade within one year. The 2010 youth cohort is therefore made up of all the young people who completed 9th grade in 2010.

### Achievement of the 95 per cent objective

Determining whether at least 95 per cent of the 2015 youth cohort has completed a secondary education will not be possible before 2040.

The reason is that the ministry's extrapolation model operates with a time horizon of 25 years, i.e. not till 2040 can it be determined how many of the young people who leave 9th grade in 2015 completed a secondary education.

5. The objective of the examination is to assess whether the Ministry of Children and Education has worked towards achievement of the objective that at least 95 per cent of a youth cohort by 2015 complete a secondary education. The report answers the following questions:

- Which objectives set for secondary education is the Ministry of Children and Education steering the effort and initiatives towards?
- Has the Ministry of Children and Education any knowledge of the effect of the effort made to ensure that more young people complete a secondary education?

### MAIN CONCLUSION

The Welfare Agreement that was entered into by a number of political parties in 2006 determined that at least 85 per cent and 95 per cent of all young people should complete a secondary education by 2010 and 2015, respectively. Over the years, approximately DKK 2.6 billion has been allocated to achievement of this objective and approximately DKK 4.4 billion has been allocated to creating apprenticeships for the students at the technical schools.

Subsequently the parties to the agreement decided that the government should report annually on progress made towards achievement of the objective. Reporting takes place on the basis of the Ministry of Children and Education's extrapolation model. On the basis of past patterns of education, the model projects the percentage of a youth cohort can be expected to complete a secondary education at the latest 25 years after having completed 9th grade.

The Ministry of Children and Education's latest report shows that 85.6 per cent of the 2010 youth cohort is expected to complete a secondary education by 2035, at the latest. This means that the objective set for 2010 has been attained.

The extrapolation model is well suited to produce a long-term perspective on the educational level of the Danish population, but it is not providing any information on who and how many young people that can be expected to have completed a secondary education by 2011, for instance. In Rigsrevisionen's opinion the Ministry of Children and Education should possess more information on the actual short-term development, and the ministry should therefore supplement the data provided by the model with other data relevant to monitor young people and their educational status, like for instance data contained in the Youth Database (Ungedatabasen).

The earmarked funds have primarily been allocated towards increasing the number of young people who complete vocational training at the technical schools, where drop-out rates have been high. The Ministry of Children and Education's most recent extrapolation shows that an increasing number of young people will complete an upper secondary education rather than a vocational education. The fact that more young people complete an upper secondary education where the drop-out rate is lower than for vocational training, explains the positive development.

The Ministry of Children and Education is responsible for the management of the effort relating to the 95 per cent objective. In the opinion of Rigsrevisionen, the ministry has not been sufficiently focused on attaining the 95 per cent objective. The ministry has not elaborated a concrete plan for the effort that indicates the performance required from the various elements of the effort and initiatives to ensure achievement of the objective. Nor has the ministry any knowledge of whether the initiatives have had the intended effect and thereby contributed to achievement of the 85 per cent objective set for 2010.

**The Ministry of Children and Education's management of the effort must be more focused if the 95 per cent objective is to be achieved. Rigsrevisionen recommends that the ministry should operationalize the 95 per cent objective and in the future set objectives for the various elements of the effort and initiatives – individually or group based – in order to assess also in what way the initiatives contribute to achievement of the objective and to ensure follow-up on the effect of the initiatives.**

**It is Rigsrevisionen's overall assessment that an improved level of knowledge of the effect of the effort and initiatives in combination with enhanced quality of data on the actual educational status of young people would put the Folketing in a better position to decide on possible adjustments of the effort.**

The main conclusion is based on the following audit findings:

*Which objectives set for secondary education is the Ministry of Children and Education steering the effort and initiatives towards?*

The Ministry of Children and Education is aiming to ensure that at least 95 per cent of a youth cohort complete a secondary education, but the ministry has not set any additional objectives for the effort, nor for elements of the effort or initiatives, to ensure that more young people complete a secondary education.

Rigsrevisionen recommends that the Ministry of Children and Education in the future should formulate objectives for the individual initiatives or groups of initiatives – both in relation to the long-term objective to ensure that at least 95 per cent of a youth cohort complete a secondary education, and in relation to short-term objectives, like for instance the targets set for the number of apprenticeship agreements.

The Ministry of Children and Education has stated that setting sub-objectives for the performance requirements in relation to the individual elements of the effort would clarify the expectations to the effort and results.

*Has the Ministry of Children and Education any knowledge of the effect of the effort made to ensure that more young people complete a secondary education?*

The Ministry of Children and Education has evaluated a number of initiatives and follows the development in secondary education through monitoring of apprenticeships, education guidance activities and the drop-out rates at the vocational schools.

Yet, the Ministry of Children and Education is unable to link the development in secondary education with the initiatives launched. Rigsrevisionen therefore concludes that the ministry has no knowledge of the effect of the initiatives in respect to achievement of the 95 per cent objective.

By means of the extrapolation model, the Ministry of Children and Education monitors the development in the percentage of young people who complete a secondary education. The model reflects the perspectives of the development, but in order to manage the effort, these should be supplemented with information on the actual development.

In the future, the Youth Database will provide the Ministry of Children and Education with an opportunity to monitor whether the 15 to 29 age group is completing an education and if so, where. Rigsrevisionen therefore recommends that the ministry should actively use this information on the young people's current and actual educational status to follow up on and continuously adjust the effort.