

## Portrait of the new Integration minister

November 27<sup>th</sup> 2001, after winning the election right-wing parties led by prime minister Anders Fog Rasmussen formed new cabinet called **Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration**. Since then the cabinet was run by three ministers, last of which, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, had to resign her post after making headlines for, among other things, her illegal practice in processing of application for the citizenship lodged by stateless Palestinians. And she did it in the election year, which in advance did not look very promising for the ruling coalition.

(Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration is responsible for dealing with all legal and administrative issues concerning asylum, resident permissions and citizenship)

However, the long expected change has come and 8<sup>th</sup> of March Denmark got a new minister in this cabinet, Søren Pind. Søren Pind belongs to the young generation of "Venstre's" politicians (he is forty one), making his appearance in politics already in 1991 when he announced his candidacy for the parliament election as Venstre's candidate in Bornholm. In 1994 he joined the "Borgerrepræsentation" and in 1997, after graduating from the law school, he became the youngest Danish Mayor assigned technical section in the Copenhagen municipality. Since 2007 he has been a member of the parliament. He is married to Marie-Louise P and father of Theodore and Johan-Emil.

Was the minister change for better or for worse? Well, it depends on who is asked. For most ID Zone readers, especially those who will stay in Denmark, the new minister might not be the one they would vote for. For things seem to have changed from the day one. Already on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March he stated that

*When people come to Denmark to become Danish citizens they come to become Danish, not to change Denmark. And he adds in the same breath that the time for the Integration has run out. He will instead insist on Assimilation. However, a few days after this initial statement it turned out that the assimilation is not what most people in Denmark would prefer. Gallup polls reveal a different picture - 54% of Danes prefer multicultural society and 60 % says that foreigners have to be integrated rather than assimilated (only 29% would opt for the assimilation).*

Well, remember, this is the election year and the time will show whether the new minister ought to listen to the people or is visionary on some points after all. Or perhaps, he is simply being anxious in an old fashioned xenophobic way.

**By Vladan Cukvas (ID Zone 2011)**