



# Closing implementation gaps – A review of the transformation of implementation in Danish employment policy

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# Objectives of the paper

1. Describe the genesis and design of the new implementation structure
2. Did central decision-makers succeed in gaining more control over local implementation?
  - Review of the implementation by local jobcenters, external service providers and unemployment insurance funds.



# Implementation challenges in employment policy

1. Ambiguous or unclear objectives
2. Coordination problems
3. Local autonomy and discretion
4. Policy legitimacy
5. Socio-economic conditions

# Reducing the gap between policy intentions and implementation in Danish employment policy

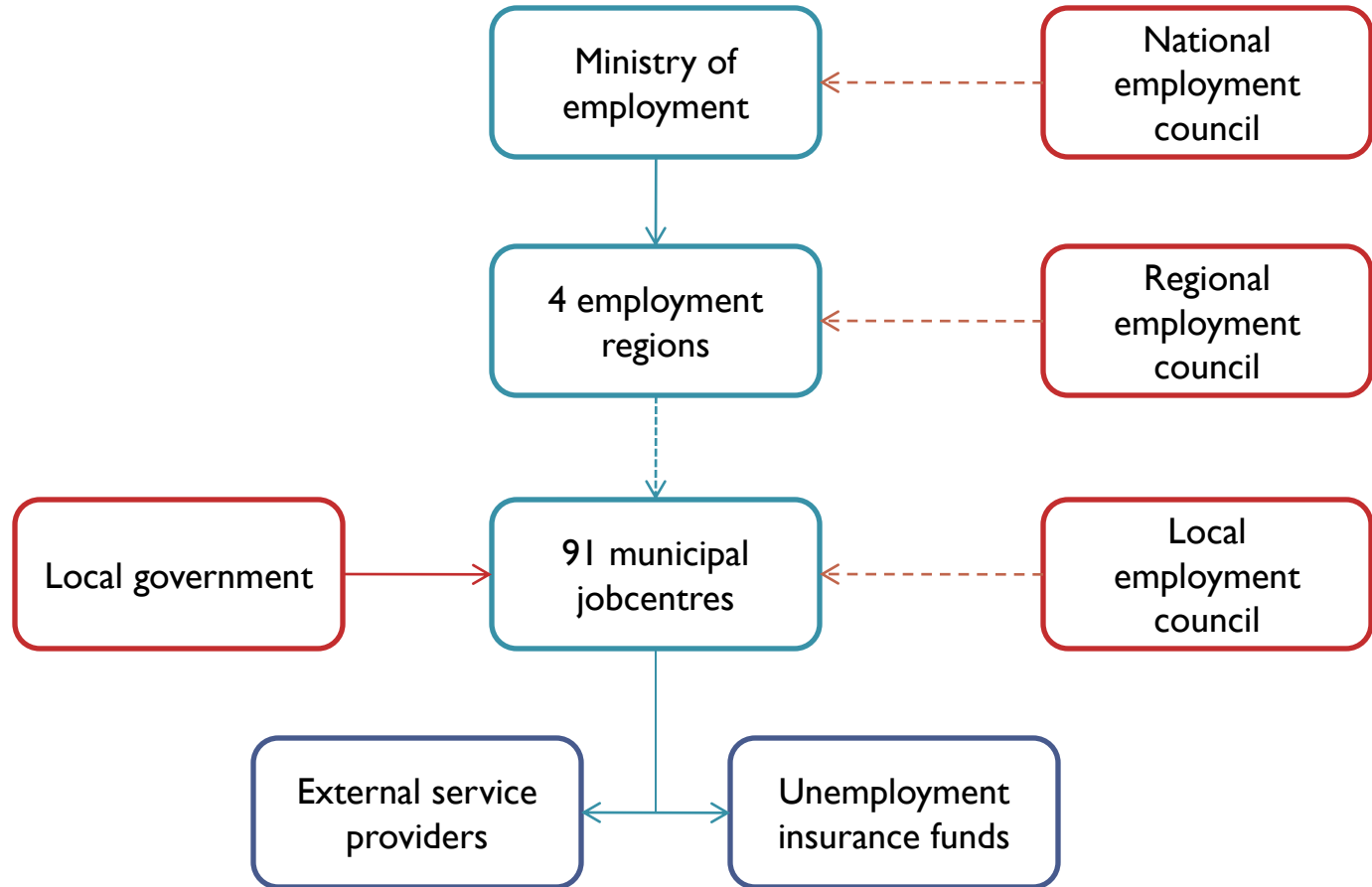
## Leading Civil Servants:

*“There is a long road from political agreements on labour market reforms to the practical implementation in the frontline [...] The distance between the political decision and frontline staff implies, therefore, a risk that the intentions behind the reforms are not fully implemented”* (Clausen and Smith 2007: 75).

## Minister of Employment:

“So that we have confidence that the rules decided by the Parliament are complied with [...] No Minister can live with having to answer for something he or she has no control over. We must have consistency between central and local priorities [...] **There must be compliance top down**”

# Institutional design of Danish employment policy



# Instruments used to standardise implementation

- Profiling (five/three match categories)
- Contact interviews
- Simplified instruments
- Specific deadlines
- Benchmarking
- Performance reviews
- Local employment plans
- Incentive schemes

# Conclusions

- The gap between policy objectives and local implementation has been narrowed down:
  - Explicit, clear and unambiguous **policy objectives**: Work first + making work pay
  - Explicit “solution” to **coordination problems**: One ministry + municipal jobcenters ÷ social partners
  - Reduced **autonomy and discretion** of implementing agents: procedural specifications + separating employment services from benefit administration + benchmarking and performance management + incentive mechanisms
  - Low **legitimacy** of government policies among implementing organisations but loyal implementation
  - Favorable **socio-economic conditions** for work first and making work pay

# Conclusions, cnt.

- Top-down evaluation
  - Mission (almost) accomplished: Reinforcement of national democratic control + less unexplained variation in local implementation + greater predictability and transparency for jobseekers
- Bottom-up evaluation
  - Less adaptation, experimentation and innovation
  - More bureaucracy and less job satisfaction