Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
Copenhagen, Denmark

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Background

• DIHR is Denmark’s National Human Rights Institute (NHRI), funded largely by the state but with legal and functional independence

• Domestically, DIHR monitors Denmark’s human rights performance, participates in reporting on relevant issues and actors in the public and private sectors, and presents materials and arguments to the Danish government

• Internationally, DIHR leads other NHRIs and works with other organizations, such as UN bodies and NGOs, to coordinate on planning, tracking, and achieving human rights goals
Sustainable Development Team

- I interned with the Sustainable Development team, a subset of the Human Rights and Development Department in the International section.

- The SD team conducts work related to the Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda.
My work responsibilities

• At first, readings on DIHR and NHRIs, the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), relevant UN bodies and resolutions, and other subjects; training in Economic, Social, and Cultural rights
  • Familiarity with these was/is key to getting (and remaining) informed on everything relevant to Sustainable Development

• Provided background research, literature review, and notes to help SD team advisers complete their research publications and guidance papers

• Throughout the summer I helped clean up old presentations and make a set of new presentations on various “themes” related to the SD team’s work

• Later on, I did background research for and wrote the first two chapters of an upcoming SD team publication on Means of Implementation (MoI) for the 2030 Agenda
  • Chapter One: Data, Monitoring and Accountability
  • Chapter Two: Domestic Resource Mobilization
Impact of my work

• My background research and notes helped advisers complete a number of guidance papers, including one where my findings helped DIHR identify concrete ways in which their conceptual models and advocacy have influenced the work of other NHRIs around the world.

• The SD team now uses presentations I made to explain technical and conceptual aspects of Sustainable Development to government officials, independent watchdogs, human rights advocates, etc. at international conferences, and to train new SD team members.

• The MoI publication had been in the works for months but was only embryonic when I arrived; my chapters will serve as a stylistic and structural guide for future work and according to one of my supervisors was key for getting the team to put the writing process back on track.
Other workplace aspects

• DIHR in general was very friendly, and the SD team in particular did a great job making me feel welcomed right away

• The SD team socialized quite a bit outside of work (which is apparently uncommon for Danish workplaces); boat rides, meals at each others’ homes, drinks, and other activities were a nice addition to my internship

• Along with the other IIP interns from Princeton, I worked with a few other interns and student assistants, mostly Masters and law students from a range of countries: Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Nepal, Tunisia, Canada, France, the US, just to name a few
Rewarding experiences

• Completing valuable work and driving progress on difficult projects like the MoI publication was rewarding in and of itself; but being recognized for it by senior advisers in an organization as impactful as DIHR was incredibly gratifying.

• I learned how complicated frameworks like those related to the 2030 Agenda can really be, and how challenging it is to ensure that all relevant parties are coordinating effectively to achieve shared goals.

• All this put together showed me what a career in human rights and development might be like— and it’s very different than what I thought it would be before my time at DIHR.
Copenhagen

- For a small city, Copenhagen has a lot to offer, and the work-life balance at DIHR left plenty of time to explore
Copenhagen