



# Denmark Report

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## Sustainable Governance Indicators 2022

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## Executive Summary

Democracy functions well, and governance is credible and transparent in Denmark. Public trust in government and public administration is high. Comparatively, Denmark stands out for its ability to combine strong economic performance (as measured by per capita income) with a relatively equal distribution of income and low poverty rates. The Danish welfare state is extensive both in terms of its provision of services and social safety net. Though this translates into a high tax share, employment rates are high. Overall, Denmark has shown that it is possible to combine an extensive welfare state with a well-functioning economy.

The economy has performed very well in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented decline in activity, but this activity has recovered swiftly as restrictions have been lifted. Economic activity now exceeds its pre-pandemic level, and activity and employment are close to capacity. The debate has recently turned to labor shortages and the risk of an overheated economy. While key macroeconomic indicators are favorable, there are challenges including the labor market integration of immigrants, the provision of welfare services (e.g., education, social care and healthcare) to adequate and satisfactory standards, and how to reach ambitious climate policy goals.

In an attempt to strengthen the incentive structure, and boost labor supply and employment, previous governments have had strong reform agendas. These agendas aimed to overhaul the structure and design of the social safety net (e.g., pensions, early retirement, social assistance and disability pensions), labor market policies and the tax system. Increasing the labor supply and achieving higher employment is an objective in itself, but also improves public finances through lower government spending and higher tax revenue. This reform strategy obtained broad support in comparison to alternative strategies involving tax increases or spending cuts. These reforms contribute to ensure the fiscal sustainability of current welfare arrangements, and Denmark is among the frontrunners in terms of addressing the challenges to fiscal

sustainability arising from an aging population. However, challenges remain and the focus has shifted toward so-called 2nd generation reforms aimed at boosting employment further without increasing inequality. Lately, climate change policy has moved up the political agenda and there is broad political support for ambitious climate policies.

All of the previously mentioned reforms were based on work by parliamentary commissions, an important policy instrument in a country with a strong consensus tradition that has mostly been governed by minority governments.

The country's significant strengths notwithstanding, several issues are high on the political agenda. First, Denmark ranks among the top OECD countries with regard to educational expenditure, but scores lower on various indicators of educational performance. Recently, this led to educational reforms that increased curricular demands and improved teacher training.

Second, the public sector (mainly municipalities) has experienced increased strain in relation to the provision of services. Many citizens have found that standards lag behind their expectations, but tight finances have made it difficult to improve services. Nonetheless, the new Social Democratic government, in power since June 2019, has found sufficient budget slack to transfer more money to the municipalities and regions.

Third, immigration and the integration of immigrants remains controversial. The general trend, which has broad parliamentary support, has been toward stricter immigration rules. Moreover, the social assistance scheme has been changed, including the residence and employment requirements, and a cap on total support, which particularly affects migrants from low-income countries outside Europe. This issue has gained in importance and there is currently a discussion about how to attract labor.

Finally, Denmark's engagement in international politics remains a disputed issue. The country's position vis-à-vis the European Union also remains a contested issue. It is an implicit political arrangement that all essential EU decisions are put to a referendum.

## Key Challenges

Being a small and open economy, Denmark has a long tradition of meeting the challenges posed by international integration and globalization, and has shown a capacity to enact needed reforms to reconcile an extensive welfare state with a well-functioning economy. Comparatively, Denmark is favorably positioned with regard to adaptability and the enactment of political reforms to address challenges, despite sometimes delaying and deferring such reforms. A tradition of open dialogue, cooperation and broad-based reform goals contribute to the country's adaptability. Trust between different actors and societal groups, often referred to as "social capital," has also been an important factor. However, to remain among the leading industrialized nations, Denmark must continue to monitor its policies and institutions. Additional changes and reforms will be necessary.

The following briefly lists areas of crucial importance to Denmark and outlines where policy initiatives are needed:

First, the challenge of maintaining a high employment rate remains relevant, particularly in a context of rapid technological change (e.g., automatization), globalization and migration. A key question in this debate is whether the extent to which the education system is sufficiently equipped to supply the type and quality of education needed by the private sector. The labor market possibilities for low-skilled workers is a particular challenge.

Second, the economy's growth potential is an issue given the low level of productivity growth. In addition, given the relative size of the public sector, improving government efficiency and productivity will be an important task. There is considerable political debate about how to square the risk of a labor shortage with strict immigration laws.

Third, although inequality is low and social cohesion is high, in comparison to other OECD countries, Danish society is trending toward greater disparity and inequality. A particular challenge involves the integration of immigrants and other marginalized groups into the labor market, which is often difficult due to insufficient labor market relevant qualifications.

Fourth, while the long-term financial viability of the welfare state, despite an aging population, has been strengthened by a series of recent reforms, fiscal challenges remain due to increasing demands on welfare services in general

and healthcare in particular. When designing welfare policies, it is important to balance concerns for equality and social insurance with incentives for education and work. The hallmark of Danish society has been its ability to reconcile low inequality and an extensive public sector with a well-functioning economy that supports high income levels. Reconciling these objectives remains an ongoing challenge.

Fifth, Denmark, with its small yet open society, has a long tradition of being an active participant and partner in international frameworks for political cooperation. At the same time, there is a strong desire in the country to maintain an “arm’s length distance” to certain issues so as to underscore Denmark’s independence while at the same time to keep the country from being marginalized in international forums. As a result, the Danish debate on the European Union has always been somewhat fragmented and not always comprehensible to foreign observers. The four Danish opt-outs included in the Maastricht Treaty are illustrative of this. European Monetary Union membership has remained a very delicate subject since the referendum in 2000. Denmark is not a member, but pursues a tight, fixed exchange rate policy with the Danish krone pegged to the euro. This peg has proven very credible, as is reflected in a very small (and in some periods negative) interest rate spread to the euro area. Denmark is, in this sense, a shadow member of the euro area, although it is not directly represented in the supranational executive bodies. The recent referendum on justice and home affairs cooperation confirmed Denmark’s “sideline” participation in EU cooperation.

Overall, both the previous and current governments have set ambitious strategic targets. Various policy plans signal a political awareness of the country’s structural problems. Dealing with these challenges remains a work in progress.

## Party Polarization

The 2019 election produced a parliament in which 10 parties are represented. The coronavirus pandemic has had a small but palpable polarization effect on the left and right within parliament. This has been most visible in the discussion concerning governmental prerogatives to fight the pandemic ensured by the Law on Epidemics (Epidemi loven) which, in the early stages of the pandemic, granted the government near-absolute power over restrictions such as curbing the right to assemble. This legislation was modified in March 2020 to allow parliament greater control over restrictions.

Two recent scandals in the country have also fueled polarization. The first concerns the decision to kill the country's minks in response to fears that they might carry a harmful mutation of COVID-19 that would potentially endanger vaccination programs – a decision that lacked a clear legal justification. The second scandal involved the former Minister Inger Støjberg, who was impeached after being found guilty of unlawfully separating married asylum-seekers.

Despite these polarizing events, the two blocs are not monoliths. On the left, debates continue over how restrictive immigration laws should be, how ambitious climate policies should be, and whether to implement a CO2 tax or not. The municipal elections in November 2021 showed that the governing social democratic party lost voters in the four major cities, while the leftist Unity List saw gains in all the major cities and is now the largest party in Copenhagen.

On the right, the Danish People Parties, a populist right-wing party, imploded during the municipal election, which resulted in the resignation of its chair. At the time of this writing, the new chair has yet to be nominated and the process is highly politicized. While the liberal party, Venstre, has until recently been the leading opposition party, polls place the Conservative party ahead of Venstre in terms of voter support. While the political landscape has become more fluid, research shows that, despite polarization effects among parties in parliament, super-majorities are still the order of the day across all policy areas. (Score: 9)

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen og Jørgen Elklit (red). Det demokratiske system. 4. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

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Green-Pedersen, Christoffer, and Asbjørn Skjæveland. "Blokpolitik og nye politiske emner. Hvordan går det med samarbejds mønstrene i Folketinget?." *Politica: Tidsskrift for Politisk Videnskab* 52.3 (2020).

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# Sustainable Policies

## I. Economic Policies

### Economy

Economic Policy  
Score: 9

The pandemic and the containment policies imposed triggered an unprecedented decline in economic activity that has recovered swiftly as restrictions have been lifted. Compared to many other similar countries, Denmark has been suffered less in terms of the pandemic's health and economic consequences. Economic policy during the pandemic – which includes the specific emergency measures and more traditional policies – have thus largely been successful in ensuring a quick recovery. It should be noted that Denmark entered the pandemic without any major economic imbalances, and sound public finances made it possible to act swiftly without raising concerns about the sustainability of public finances. By mid-2021, economic activity reached its pre-pandemic level, and the focus is now on a shortage of labor and a risk of overheating. The economic debate is increasingly focused on measures to increase labor supply.

Citation:

Andersen, T.M., S. Holden, and S. Honkapohja, Economic developments and policies during the Covid-19 crisis – Nordic experiences Nordic Economic Policy Review, 2022.

Danish Economic Councils, The Danish Economy, Various issues. Latest issue: Autumn 2021.

### Labor Markets

Labor Market  
Policy  
Score: 9

The Danish “flexicurity” labor model, which refers to the fact that Danish employers can easily respond to broader economic dynamics by hiring and firing employees as needed while the country's social safety net, active labor market policies that incentivize active job searches, and the provision of training to help workers find employment help keep people in the labor market. Unemployment is low and structural barriers, including qualifications, are the main barrier to further reductions in unemployment. Concern about

labor shortages has increased due to the fast and somewhat unexpected recovery of the Danish economy after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

This has prompted a political discussion about lifting some of the restrictions on labor movement for individuals from outside the EU. Social democratic Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has recently signaled a willingness to propose legislation designed to remove barriers to attracting labor from non-EU countries. There is also a policy discussion about whether the level of unemployment benefits for college graduates should be reduced to that received by incumbent workers, in order to incentivize job search activity.

Since the minimum wage is relatively high, it is difficult for individuals with limited qualifications to find stable jobs. The question of whether the economic incentives to work are sufficiently strong – “does it pay to work?” – remains a contested issue. Social assistance and tax reforms have been implemented in an effort to increase the benefits of employment, although the focus more recently has shifted toward the impact these reforms have on inequality. A commission has been appointed to consider so-called 2nd generation reforms that would increase employment without increasing inequality.

Citation:

Andersen, T. The Danish labor market, 2000–2020. IZA World of Labor 2021: 404 doi: 10.15185/izawol.404.v3Danish Economic Councils, The Danish Economy, Various issues. Latest issue: Autumn 2021.

Reformkommissionen, 2021, Erkendt, forsøgt løst, uløst, København.

## Taxes

Tax Policy  
Score: 8

The extensive welfare state is funded through a tax share equivalent to about 50% of GDP. This is among the highest within the OECD, although it should be kept in mind that unlike many other countries, all transfers in Denmark are considered taxable income. The tax structure differs from most countries in that direct income and indirect (VAT) taxation serve as the predominant taxes, while social security contributions play a modest role.

Large and small tax reforms have been implemented over the years following an international trend of broadening tax bases and reducing marginal tax rates (implying less progression). Decreasing income tax rates have largely been offset by broadening the tax base, especially by reducing the taxable value of negative capital income (the majority of house owners have negative capital income because of mortgage interest payments). In 2004, an earned income tax was introduced to strengthen work incentives. An important issue in policy design is tax competition. This has led to the reduction of some excise taxes in



order to reduce “border” trade. Corporate tax rates have also been reduced, from 50% in 1986 to 22% at present, although the tax base has been broadened.

Environmental taxes have also been increasingly used, and the current debate is on a “green” tax reform that includes a CO<sub>2</sub> tax intended to support environmental objectives. There are economic arguments in favor of a uniform CO<sub>2</sub> tax, but that conflicts with other objectives in relation to employment and keeping specific sectors from having to carry too large of a burden.

A recurrent issue in tax debates has been the role of the so-called tax freeze introduced in 2001, which, among other things, included a freeze on property taxes (the taxation of the user value of owner-occupied housing based on the current value of the house). This tax freeze contributed to a house price boom prior to the financial crisis. In 2017, a “house-tax” reform was approved, but its implementation has been postponed until 2024. The new tax system is based on a new assessment system for property values and the statutory tax rate will be lowered. A number of transition rules are associated with the reform to ensure that incumbent homeowners do not experience an increase in tax on their property.

Further reductions in labor taxation are often discussed, but political views differed regarding whether they should target low-income or high-income groups (lowering the top marginal tax rate). The current parliamentary situation makes it less likely that the income tax system will be reformed.

Citation:

Andersen, T.M., J. Bentzen, S.E. Hougaard Jensen, V. Smith, and N. Westergaard-Nielsen og, *The Danish Economy – In a global perspective*, DJØF, 2017.

Ekspergruppen for en grøn skattereform, 2022, *Grøn skattereform - første delrapport*, København.

Danish Economic Councils, *The Danish Economy*, Various issues. Latest issue: Autumn 2021.

## Budgets

Budgetary Policy  
Score: 9

Budget policy is guided by fiscal norms: i) the actual budget deficit must not exceed 3% of GDP, ii) public debt must not exceed 60% of GDP and iii) the planned structural budget balance must not display a deficit greater than 0.5%. These norms are part of EU rules and Danish budget law.

Fiscal policy has been satisfying these norms, with exceptions for the emergencies allowed as a consequence of the pandemic. The government is running a budget surplus, while the structural budget balance is close to zero and debt is low at 35% of GDP. Compared to other EU member states, Denmark’s public finances are in good shape.

Analyses from both the Ministry of Finance and the Economic Council show that the criterion for fiscal sustainable public finances is satisfied. This is largely the result of several reforms aimed at increasing the labor supply and employment by increasing the retirement age (both early retirement and public pensions), reducing the early retirement period (from five to three years), and various other reforms regarding disability pensions, social assistance and grants for higher education studies. Critical for these assessments is the continued political support for increasing the retirement age in concert with longevity, as is stipulated by the so-called indexation formula.

Citation:

Danish Economic Councils, The Danish Economy, Various issues. Latest issue: Autumn 2021 report.

Ministry of Finance, Økonomisk Redegørelse, August 2021

### Research, Innovation and Infrastructure

R&I Policy  
Score: 8

Among OECD countries, Denmark has the fourth highest ratio of public R&D spending to GDP and the seventh highest submission rate of patent applications. The target of 3% of GDP investment in R&D remains the same.

The World Economic Forum ranked Denmark third (out of 141 countries) in terms of competitiveness on its 2021 Global Competitiveness Report. Denmark stands out in terms of modern skills, a robust labor market and widespread ICT adoption, but has reduced its investment in R&D. The report also noted that relaxing the country's barriers to hiring foreign labor could help improve its labor market efficiency.

Noting the country's strong and widespread IT skills among its labor force, the 2020 report named Denmark as one of the most prepared countries with regard to digital transformation. The government's digital policies have also enhanced productivity by minimizing transaction costs in relation to the public sector and by creating markets for digital solutions more broadly.

Citation:

World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2020. (accessed 13 December 2020). [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2020.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2020.pdf)

World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2021. (accessed 20 February 2022). <https://www.imd.org/centers/world-competitiveness-center/rankings/world-competitiveness/>

Stabilizing  
Global Financial  
System  
Score: 8

## Global Financial System

Regulation of the financial sector is continuously changed in accordance with EU rules and regulations to increase financial sector resilience, and reduce the risk exposure and likelihood of a public bail-out of financial institutions. Systemically important financial institutions are subject to specific requirements. The financial supervisory authority plays an important role and has been increasingly proactive. A systemic risk council monitors and surveys developments in the financial sector.

It remains an open question as to whether Denmark should participate in the European banking union in which case the larger (systemic) financial institutions will fall under the supervision of the European Central Bank (ECB). The previous government's view was that Denmark should join the banking union, but the leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, suggested that a referendum on the issue should take place. A promise that has been reaffirmed by the new government led by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

The credibility of financial institutions has deteriorated because of an aggressive interpretation of tax rules and the whitewashing of money by major Danish banks such as Nordea and Danske Bank.

Citation:

Kraka Finanskrisekommission, 2014, Den danske finanskrise – kan det ske igen?; København.

Folketingets EU-oplysning, Bankunion. <https://www.eu.dk/da/fakta-omeu/politikker/oekonomiskpolitik/banker>.

Rangvid, J. m.fl. 2013, Den finansielle krise i Danmark – årsager, konsekvenser og læring, report from government appointed commission.

“Løkke om bankunion: Vi skal skynde os langsomt.” <http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/loekke-om-bankunion-vi-skal-skynde-os-langsomt>

“Pyha, Bankunionen er sparket til hjørne,” <http://www.business.dk/finans/pyha-bankunionen-er-sparket-til-hjoerne> (Accessed 23 October 2016).

“Regeringen genovervejer EU's bankunion,” <http://www.altinget.dk/artikel/regeringen-genovervejer-eus-bankunion> (Accessed 5 November 2017).

Folketingets EU-oplysning, Bankunion. <https://www.eu.dk/da/fakta-om-eu/politikker/oekonomiskpolitik/banker> (Accessed 11 October 2018).

“Løkke hælder til dansk ja til bankunionen – Socialdemokratiet kræver folkeafstemning,” <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2018-11-04-lokke-haelder-til-dansk-ja-til-bankunionen-socialdemokratiet-kræver> (Accessed 8 November 2018).

“Frederiksen lover folkeafstemning før dansk deltagelse i EU's bankunion,” <https://jyllands->

[posten.dk/politik/ECE11692741/frederiksen-lover-folkeafstemning-foer-dansk-deltagelse-i-eus-bankunion/](https://posten.dk/politik/ECE11692741/frederiksen-lover-folkeafstemning-foer-dansk-deltagelse-i-eus-bankunion/)  
(Accessed 22 October 2019).

## II. Social Policies

### Education

Education Policy  
Score: 7

Education spending in Denmark is among the highest in the OECD, but educational outcomes are vividly discussed. Traditionally, Danish pupils have not scored well on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) problem-solving tests. However, Denmark made some progress in the 2015 PISA results, scoring above the OECD average in science, mathematics and reading. This was an improvement over the past where Denmark's overall score was around the OECD average. Though there remains scope for improvement.

These improvements are partly attributable to recent reforms, including reforms to the primary and lower-secondary school systems. A major reform in 2013 granted more discretionary power to the school principal to allocate teacher resources and keep pupils in school for more hours. Longer school days, more assisted learning, lessons in Danish and math, and the teaching of foreign languages (English made compulsory from level 1, German and French from level 5) were also part of the policy.

The government set the target that 95% of young Danes should complete a general or vocational upper secondary education program. According to the most recent forecasts, this goal is close to being reached (the prediction is 93% for the current cohort). However, it should be noted that the goal is formulated in terms of education level achieved 25 years after having left primary school, in which sense the target is not very ambitious.

One problem is the fact that immigrant students score markedly lower than Danish students, a problem particularly pronounced among boys. However, second-generation – particularly female – students perform relatively better than first-generation students. Efforts are made through an “allocations mechanism” designed to ensure a more socioeconomically diverse student body in upper secondary education contexts.

Vocational and university education has also been on the political agenda, but challenges remain both in relation to the intake of students and lifelong

learning issues. Universities have been under pressure to shorten the length of study and channel students into educational programs oriented toward business. Recent efforts have been aimed at ensuring a more geographically balanced access to educational institutions, but the extent to which this measure will compromise quality is subject to debate.

Since 2016, the education sector has been affected by the so-called reprioritizing contribution (omprioritetsbidrag), which has reduced the education budget by 2%. The new Social Democratic government has announced that it would end this annual saving target and transfer the money back to the education system, although the precise mechanism has not yet been determined.

Citation:

OECD. Education Policy Outlook Denmark, 2020 (<https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Denmark-2020.pdf>)

Ministry of Higher Education and Science <https://ufm.dk/aktuelt/pressemeddelelser/2019/regeringen-stopper-omprioriteringsbidraget-pa-uddannelse>.

Regeringen stopper omprioriteringsbidraget op uddaannelse (<https://ufm.dk/aktuelt/pressemeddelelser/2019/regeringen-stopper-omprioriteringsbidraget-pa-uddannelse>)

Ministry of Finance, “Velfærd først – tryghed, tillid og en grøn fremtid: Finansforslaget 2020, Oktober 2019,” <https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspejce-2020> (accessed 15 October 2019)

OECD, “PISA 2012 Results in Focus,” <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf> (Re-accessed 10 October 2018).

Udvalg for Kvalitet og Relevans i de Videregående Uddannelser, 2014, Høje mål – fremragende undervisning i de videregående uddannelser, København.

“Aftale til 2,5 milliarder til voksen- og efteruddannelse,” <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/aftale-til-25-milliarder-til-voksen-og-efteruddannelse-paa-plads> (Accessed 7 November 2017).

## Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion  
Policy  
Score: 8

Inequality and poverty are low by international comparison, but have been increasing in recent years. While reforms of various welfare benefits have increased work incentives, they have also reduced incomes for some groups. Employment rates are high for men and women, but a distinguishing feature of the welfare model is that most people who are not in employment are entitled to some form of social transfer. Somewhat simplified, the debate is split between those arguing that the welfare state significantly undermines work incentives and those arguing that most unemployed people are unable to work due to various issues (e.g., social problems or a lack of qualifications) that make it difficult/impossible for them to find jobs.

Most social transfers have recently been reformed with a greater focus on employment. The aim of these reforms is to strengthen the incentive to work, but it may result in poverty for those failing or unable to respond to these incentives. The reform of the disability pension scheme implies that the disability pension cannot be granted to individuals below the age of 40 (except for cases of severe or permanent loss of work capability). Instead, the focus has shifted to using and developing an individual's remaining work capabilities. Likewise, the social assistance scheme has been reformed with a particular focus on improving the educational attainment of young workers (people below the age of 30). For other age groups, the system now offers more flexibility and individualized solutions. Eligibility for social assistance depends on both a residence requirement (with immigrants needing to have been resident in Denmark for nine out of the last 10 years) and a work requirement (225 hours paid work within the last year). Moreover, there is an upper cap on total support (social assistance, housing supplement, child supplement). Immigrants not satisfying the residence requirement receive the lower so-called introduction benefit.

Finally, assessed in terms of life satisfaction, Denmark scores very well in various international comparisons, sometimes ranking as the happiest country in the world.

The present government aims to strengthen measures aimed at improving social inclusion and decreasing inequality and child poverty in particular. A temporary benefit supplement has been introduced for families with children that are affected by the upper cap on total support or receive the "integration" benefit. Moreover, the government has decided to increase municipality and regional funds for various welfare and educational programs.

Citation:

"Stort fald i antal modtagere af kontanthjælpsydelse," <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/nyt/NytHtml?cid=25774> (Accessed 7 November 2018).

"10 Most Happy Countries Around the World," <https://www.wonderslist.com/10-most-happy-countries-in-the-world/> (accessed 7 November 2018).

"Politisk forståelse mellem Socialdemokratiet, Radikale Enstre, SF og Enhedslisten: Retfærdig retning for Danmark," <https://ufm.dk/ministeriet/regeringsgrundlag-vision-og-strategier/regeringen-mette-frederiksen-forstaelsespapir> (accessed 15 October 2019).

## Health

Health Policy  
Score: 8

All Danish citizens are entitled to healthcare, regardless of economic circumstance. Services are offered free of charge, and elected regional councils have governed the sector since 2007. Though there is a formal health tax, the government determines this as part of its overall tax policy, and the

regions must follow a budget that is determined in annual budget negotiations with the Ministry of Finance.

In 2019, life expectancy in Denmark was at 81 years, which is slightly above the OECD average, but below that of comparable countries. The life expectancy of women is somewhat higher than that of men. Life expectancy is on an upward trend. There has been a marked decline in smoking in Denmark in recent years, but obesity rates have increased. The social gradient in health remains strong, and there has been a growing focus on the issue of inequality in longevity.

Recently, there has been much public debate about the quality of hospital services. Increasing prices for medicine are putting pressure on efforts to finance healthcare. Cancer treatment has become a priority, as it is an area in which Denmark lags behind similar countries.

The establishment of large centralized (rather than regionally administered) hospitals has been contested and various problems in relation to, for example, electronic patient records remain unresolved. The debate continues concerning bringing some basic healthcare activities closer to the population via local healthcare centers, and the government has taken steps in this direction.

The pandemic has severely affected the healthcare sector, and there is a large backlog of patients waiting for treatment. The country faces challenges related to staffing shortages, the need to reduce accumulated overtime hours, and pay issues for nurses in particular. Nurses in the country rejected a decision resulting from collective bargaining in 2020 that led to the government intervening in order to bring an end to the conflict. A so-called wage structure committee has been appointed to analyze pay structures within the public health sector.

Citation:  
OECD, Health at a glance 2020," (accessed 27 November 2021).

Ministry of Finance, Finanslovsforlaget, August 2021. [https://fm.dk/media/25143/hverdagen-tilbage-nu-ser-vi-fremad\\_web-a.pdf](https://fm.dk/media/25143/hverdagen-tilbage-nu-ser-vi-fremad_web-a.pdf)

## Families

Family Policy  
Score: 9

By international comparison, Denmark performs well in terms of its family policy. Day care centers, preschools and kindergartens provide both parents the flexibility needed to work. In fact, female employment in Denmark is among the highest among OECD countries. Comparative research also shows that men do more household work than men in many other countries. Danes

regard day care and preschool facilities as an indispensable public service. The system of parental leave, in connection with childbirth, is relatively generous and men also have parental leave rights.

Municipalities are in charge of day care facilities which may be either public institutions or private. These facilities contribute to a better work-life balance. Social parties and business play a role too. The government is proposing an increase in the number of employees per child resulting in a proposal that increases spending by DKK 1.4 billion until 2024.

The great majority of children attend day care facilities in Denmark. In 2017, about 70% of children aged two and under were in day care, the highest rate in the OECD. About 95% of children aged three to five attended some kind of preschool institution. There is a user payment (means tested) for day care, but it does not cover the full cost, and the system is thus tax-subsidized.

Citation:

Ministry of Finance: Finanslovsforslaget, August 2021. ([https://fm.dk/media/25143/hverdagen-tilbage-nu-ser-vi-fremad\\_web-a.pdf](https://fm.dk/media/25143/hverdagen-tilbage-nu-ser-vi-fremad_web-a.pdf))

## Pensions

Pension Policy  
Score: 9

The Danish pension system is well-structured in accordance with the World Bank's three-pillar conceptual framework. The first pillar is a tax-financed universal base pension with means-tested supplements. This pillar includes Denmark's ATP pension scheme, which is a mandatory-funded defined-benefit scheme. The second pillar comprises occupational pensions agreed as part of collective agreements (and firm specific pension schemes), and they are contribution-based schemes. Contribution rates are in the range 12-18% for most employees. The third pillar involves tax-subsidized pension arrangements (tied until retirement) offered by insurance companies, pension funds and banks as well as other forms of savings (for most households in the form of housing wealth).

The combination of the different pillars of the pension scheme ensures protection against low income for the elderly (distributional objective) as well as a pension which is reasonable in relation to the income earned when the pensioner was active in the labor market (high replacement rates). The Danish pension scheme has for several years ranked in the top of the Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index. The main challenges involve the complexity of the system, the possible disincentive effects on savings and retirement arising from the means testing of public pensions, and the problem of citizens outside the mandatory labor market pensions (the "residual" pension group).



Statutory ages in the pension system (in public pensions for early retirement and age limits for payment of funds from pension schemes) are established by legislation. Recent reforms – the 2006 welfare reform and the 2011 retirement reform – increased these ages considerably to cope with the aging population.

First, the retirement age (early retirement and pensions) has been gradually increased and the early retirement period reduced from five to three years. Second, the statutory pension/retirement age is linked (indexed) to developments in life expectancy at the age of 60 such that the expected pension period will become 14.5 years (17.5 including early retirement) in the long run (currently the expected pension period is between 18.5 and 23.5 years). The statutory retirement age is increased every fifth year (with a 15 years lead time). The latest increase in 2020 (applying from 2035) implies a statutory pension age of 69.

A particular challenge involves how to allow people to opt out of the labor market if their health or ability to work makes it impossible to postpone retirement in concert with the general upward trend in the pension age. There are three options: the first involves taking early retirement, which is a contribution-based system allowing the eligible to retire in a window of three years prior to the statutory pension age, the second involves receiving a senior pension, which depends on the assessed work capability, and the third involves receiving an early pension, which was recently introduced and allows those with a long career behind them the option of retiring one to three years earlier.

Citation:

Ministry of Employment. Ny ret til tidlig pension (<https://bm.dk/arbejdsomraader/aktuelle-fokusomraader/ny-ret-til-tidlig-pension/>)

Pensionskommissionen, 2015, The Danish Pension System – Internationally Praised but not without Problems (Det danske pensionssystem – internationalt anerkendt, men ikke problemfrit), Copenhagen.

## Integration

Integration Policy  
Score: 7

On 1 July 2020, there were about 814,000 immigrants and descendants of immigrants living in Denmark, or 13.8% of the population (9% immigrants, 5% descendants). Roughly two-thirds of immigrants are from non-western countries.

Immigration rules have been tightened since the 2002, including the family reunification rule introduced in 2004. Since peaking in 2015, immigration from countries outside the European Union has fallen, while immigration from within the European Union for work remains very important.

The employment rate of immigrants and their descendants aged 16 to 64 is low compared to other groups, though it has been increasing. As a consequence, there is a substantial employment gap, taking into account the age distribution. Immigrants from non-Western countries have an employment rate 22% lower than that of ethnic Danes in 2020 (for descendants the gap is 16%). The gap is higher for women (24%) than for men (19%). For immigrants from Western countries, the gap is about 11% (for descendants about 6%). Though the gaps in employment rates should be viewed in light of high employment rates in Denmark for both men and women, the high qualification requirements for securing a job, and the high minimum wage.

An increasing share of immigrants report being more integrated and having more Danish friends, with fewer saying they have experienced discrimination. In addition, many more immigrants than ever before now speak Danish. Half of all male refugees are in work within three years after arrival, and the children of refugees are integrating into Danish schools faster than in the past.

Concerning educational achievements, immigrants and their descendants – especially girls – are making progress. For the age group 25 to 34 years old, 80% of women with Danish ethnicity and 67% of women with a foreign background, and 73% of men with Danish ethnicity and 49% of men with a foreign background have completed secondary education.

There is broad political support for tight immigration policies and various measures have been introduced to reduce immigration (also for family unification) in recent years. The conditions of temporary residency permits are being reassessed and the scope for temporary residents to return is being discussed. These measures should be viewed together with changes to the social safety net and reduced transfers to immigrants.

Denmark has stopped receiving so-called quota refugees through the United Nations, even though some municipalities had declared that they were ready to receive more. The Social Democratic party has committed itself to a strict immigration policy, which allowed it to capture votes from the Danish People's Party. However, the other parties in the "red" block, especially the Social Liberals, are in favor of a more liberal immigration policy.

Though immigration policy was broadly expected to be the main topic in both the European Parliament election in May 2019 and the June 2019 general election, climate change turned out to be the focus. This perhaps reflects the fact that there is greater agreement on climate change issues.

Another controversial issue has been the question of attracting qualified workers from abroad, which is arguably more a labor market policy issue. The rules for this type of immigration are debated in the context of the currently low unemployment rate.

Finally, the government has proposed that asylum-seekers should be housed in facilities outside the EU throughout their application process. This proposal has been met with criticism from the African Union and the EU.

Citation:

African union. Press Statement on Denmark's Alien Act provision to Externalize Asylum procedures to third countries (<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210802/press-statement-denmarks-alien-act-provision-externalize-asylum-procedures>)

“Hvor mange kommer, og Hvorfra?” <http://refugees.dk/fakta/tal-og-statistik/hvor-mange-kommer-oghvorfra/>  
(Accessed 21 October 2017).

Statistics Denmark, Statistikbanken (<http://uim.dk/tal-og-statistik/tal-og-statistik-om-integration>)

### Safe Living

Internal Security  
Policy  
Score: 8

The security forces and police are responsible for internal security, which is under the remit of the Ministry of Justice. Cooperation between the police and defense intelligence services was increased after 9/11. International cooperation with Western allies has also increased.

Denmark is not a violent society. The homicide rate is low, and Danes normally trust the police. However, burglaries are not uncommon and crimes related to drug use, especially in the bigger cities, have increased. Recently, gang crime rates have increased, including shooting incidences. Terrorist events at home and abroad have increased tensions. Denmark has opted out of the justice and home affairs cooperation within the European Union (since 1993), a position that was reaffirmed by referendum in 2015. Subsequent negotiations led to an agreement with Europol, which allows Denmark to take part in police cooperation. It remains to be seen how satisfactory the agreement will be, although there is no broad support for reopening the issue.

Following the large influx of refugees and asylum-seekers in 2015, the government reintroduced border controls, a policy that will be continued by the new government, despite being contested by some groups. Denmark does not support a common EU agreement on the distribution of refugees. The question of continuing national border controls continues to be discussed.

In an opinion poll in November 2015, 27% answered very likely and 54% answered likely on the possibility that a terror attack will occur in the next few

years. The same poll showed that an overwhelming majority thought that a fundamentalist Islamic group was most likely to carry out such an attack. Recently, there have been a number of attacks, including bombings, in the Copenhagen area, which have been linked to Swedish gangs. The current Social Democratic government has therefore introduced new temporary border checks at the bridge tunnel that connects Copenhagen and Malmø in Sweden, and ferry connections between the two countries.

Eurobarometer, Spring 2015. [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb83/eb83\\_first\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb83/eb83_first_en.pdf) (Accessed 21 October 2017).

“Iran attempted political assassination in Denmark:PET,” <https://www.thelocal.dk/20181030/iran-attempted-assassination-in-denmark-pet> (accessed 7 November 2018).

“Grænsekontrollen har nu kostet mindst 1,25 milliarder kroner,” <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/graensekontrollen-har-nu-kostet-mindst-125-milliarder-kroner> (assessed 16 October 2019)

Finance Ministry, Finanslovsforslaget 2020. <https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspjece-2020> (accessed 16 October 2019).

## Global Inequalities

Global Social  
Policy  
Score: 9

Assisting developing countries has broad support. Denmark is one of only five countries in the world to contribute more than the UN target of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to development assistance. Some of the funds have been redirected to address the increasing inflow asylum-seekers.

Denmark is increasing its focus on those regions in the Middle East and Africa where many refugees originate. Denmark will not reduce its humanitarian aid. In May 2016, 40% of Danes felt that it was very important to help people in developing countries and 49% felt that it was fairly important. During the great influx of refugees in September 2015, 30% of the Danish population supported giving more development aid, 35% the same amount, 28% less. Overall, there is still relatively strong support for development aid in Denmark.

The government’s development strategy for 2021 prioritizes the following items: an increased focus on environmental issues and migration, which includes returning illegal migrants to their home countries; mobilizing private capital to increase development aid; increasing support for multilateral efforts targeting women and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights. About 70% of Denmark’s official development aid (ODA) is bilateral, the remaining 30% is multilateral.

Development policy is not a high priority in policy debates.

Ministry of Development. Regeringens Udviklingspolitiske Prioriteter.  
(file:///Users/rkl/Downloads/Regeringens%20udviklingspolitiske%20prioriteter%202021.pdf)

### III. Environmental Policies

#### Environment

Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 9

Denmark is considered to be a front-runner in terms of its environmental policy. According to the 2022 Climate Change Performance Index of the Climate Action Network Europe, Denmark is the highest ranked country. Climate and environmental policies have taken center stage in recent policy discussions, and a wide range of aspects concerning sustainable living and production have been discussed.

Denmark is doing relatively well when it comes to renewable energy, as more than 30% of the country's primary energy supply comes from renewable sources, which is high in international comparison. Water usage is relatively low in Denmark compared to other OECD countries.

While carbon dioxide emissions measured on the basis of Danish production have been reduced by about 20% since the mid-1990s, the reduction is only about 5% when measured in terms of consumption. There is broad agreement on targeting a 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 relative to 1990 levels.

Denmark has set a number of rather ambitious goals, including that of achieving fossil-free energy production by 2050. Several sub-targets have been set to reach this goal. While the long-term goal is for Denmark to be independent of fossil fuels by 2050, the government has also called for green realism in environmental policy and there are signs that some environmental goals will be softened. In June 2018, all parties in the Folketing approved an energy agreement, which aimed to produce 100% of electricity consumed in Denmark from renewable sources by 2030. As such, three large offshore windfarms were planned, taxes on electricity were to be reduced and money was also budgeted for promoting green transport (e.g., electric cars).

In 2020, Denmark committed to a 2030 target of a 70% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction compared with 1990 levels and to reach climate neutrality by 2050. There are ongoing political discussions on how to reach this target, including CO<sub>2</sub> taxes and investments in new technologies.

## Citation:

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, PRESS STATEMENT, Copenhagen, 25 January 2008 Launch of the Environmental Performance Review of Denmark, By Mr. Lorents Lorentsen, Environment Directorate.

Regeringen, 2017, Energi, forsyning og klima, <https://www.regeringen.dk/regeringens-politik-a-%C3%A5/energi-forsyning-og-klima/> (accessed 7 December 2017).

Climate Action Network Europe, “The Climate Change Performance Index. Results 2022,” <https://www.ccpi.org> (Accessed 20 February 2022).

Rockwool Fondensforskningsenhed, 2014, Measuring Denmark’s CO2 emissions. Copenhagen.

Environmental Performance Index. Country profile: Denmark. <http://www.epi.yale.edu/epi/country-profile/denmark> (accessed 7 October 2015, re-accessed 23 October 2016).

EU Environmental infringements, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/statistics.htm> (Accessed 20 October 2017).

Ministry of Environment and Food, Sammen om en grønnere fremtid, <https://mfvm.dk/nyheder/nyhed/nyhed/sammen-om-en-groennere-fremtid/> (Accessed 9 October 2018).

“Dansk Energi roser partierne bag ny energiaftale for at tage ansvar og gøre danskernes strøm grønnere og billigere til gavn for både økonomi og samfund.” <https://www.danskenergi.dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelse/energiaftale-gor-groennere-danmark-elektrisk> (Accessed 7 November 2018).

“Politisk forståelse mellem Socialdemokratiet, Radikale Enstre, SF og Enhedslisten: Retfærdig retning for Danmark,” <https://ufm.dk/ministeriet/regeringsgrundlag-vision-og-strategier/regeringen-mette-frederiksen-forstaelsespapir> (accessed 15 October 2019).

## Global Environmental Protection

Global  
Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 9

When it comes to international efforts, Denmark is actively promoting environmental protection through the European Union, relevant UN bodies and global conferences, including the Conference of the Parties (COP) under the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The European Union has become an important international actor in this area with its focus shifting toward global warming, thus targeting reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and higher energy efficiency levels.

In Denmark, global environmental protection is broadly perceived as an international issue. Being a front-runner in this regard is also broadly seen as important in inducing global action. Danish civil society is very active in pressuring politicians with regard to environmental protection policy issues. In domestic policy discussions, there is increasing debate about whether current policies are sufficiently ambitious, with particular focus being placed on alternative energy sources and reductions in CO2 emissions.

The global P4G platform, which was initiated by the Danish prime minister, held a summit in Copenhagen in October 2018, with more than 800 participants developing public-private partnerships aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In October 2019, the C40 World Mayors Summit took place in Copenhagen. The organization brings together representatives from 90 cities around the world that are leading the way on achieving the Paris Agreement goals at the local level. The group is also working to reduce air pollution in cities.

Citation:

Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities. Klimaoprogram 2021. ([https://kefm.dk/Media/637728248910613865/Klimaprogram\\_2021\\_a.pdf](https://kefm.dk/Media/637728248910613865/Klimaprogram_2021_a.pdf))

Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities. Køreplan for et Grønt Danmark. 2021 ([https://kefm.dk/Media/637687027970573761/Gr%C3%B8n\\_K%C3%B8replan-a.pdf](https://kefm.dk/Media/637687027970573761/Gr%C3%B8n_K%C3%B8replan-a.pdf))

P4G Copenhagen Summit 2018: Accelerating partnerships, <https://p4gsummit.org/> (Accessed 7 November 2018).

C40 World Mayors Summit, The Future We Want, Copenhagen 9th-12th October 2019, <https://c40summit2019.org/#> (Accessed 17 October 2019)

# Robust Democracy

## Electoral Processes

Candidacy  
Procedures  
Score: 10

The basic rule for candidacy procedures is laid out in section 30 of the Danish constitution: “Any person who is entitled to vote at general (parliamentary) elections shall be eligible for membership of the Folketinget, unless he has been convicted of an act which in the eyes of the public makes him unworthy to be a member of the Folketinget.” It is the unicameral parliament (Folketinget) itself, which, in the end, decides whether a conviction makes someone unworthy of membership. In practice, political parties play an important role in selecting candidates for elections. It is possible to run in an election in a personal capacity, but extremely difficult to be elected that way. Given the relatively high number of political parties, it is reasonably easy to become a candidate for a party. There is also the possibility of forming a new party. New parties have to collect a number of signatures to be able to run, corresponding to 1/175 of the number of votes cast at the last election which is currently approximately 22,000 signatures.

Citation:

The Constitutional Act of Denmark of June 5, 1953, <http://www.eu-oplysningen.dk/upload/application/pdf/0172b719/Constitution%20of%20Denmark.pdf> (accessed 15 April 2013).

Henrik Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret I: Institutioner og regulering. Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers’ Forlag, 2005.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen og Jørgen Elklit (eds.) Det demokratiske system. 4. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

Media Access  
Score: 9

Denmark is a liberal democracy. According to section 77 of the constitution, freedom of speech is protected: “Any person shall be at liberty to publish his ideas in print, in writing, and in speech, subject to his being held responsible in a court of law. Censorship and other preventive measures shall never again be introduced.” Freedom of speech includes freedom of the press. Denmark ranks 4th out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index for 2021.

The penal code sets three limits to freedom of speech: libel, blasphemy and racism. The independent courts interpret the limits of these exceptions.



The public media (Denmark's Radio and TV2) have to fulfill programming criteria of diversity and fairness. All political parties that plan to take part in elections, have the right to equal programming time on the radio and on television. Private media, mostly newspapers, tend also to be open to all parties and candidates. The trend decline in newspapers has implied a concentration on a few national newspapers, which has reduced media pluralism. However, all newspapers are, for instance, open to accepting and publishing letters to the editor. Likewise, all parties and candidates have equal possibilities of distributing pamphlets and posters. Finances can be a limiting factor, however, with the larger parties having more money for campaigns than smaller parties.

Straffeloven [The Penal Code], [http://www.themis.dk/synopsis/docs/Lovsamling/Straffeloven\\_indholdsfortegnelse.html](http://www.themis.dk/synopsis/docs/Lovsamling/Straffeloven_indholdsfortegnelse.html) (accessed 15 April 2013).

Reporters Without Borders, "Press Freedom Index 2019." <https://rsf.org/en/denmark> (Accessed 20 February 2022)

Zahle Henrik, 2001, Dansk Forfatningsret 1.

Voting and  
Registration  
Rights  
Score: 9

According to section 29 of the Danish constitution, "Any Danish subject who is permanently domiciled in the Realm, and who has the age qualification for suffrage as provided for in sub-section (2) of this section shall have the right to vote at Folketing elections, provided that he has not been declared incapable of conducting his own affairs."

According to section 31 of the Danish constitution, "The members of the Folketinget shall be elected by general and direct ballot."

More specific rules are laid down in the election act. The election act stipulates that "franchise for the Folketinget is held by every person of Danish nationality, who is above 18 years of age, and permanently resident in the realm, unless such person has been declared legally incompetent." The rule on legal competence applies to the Folketing (section 29 of the constitution), but – according to a parliament decision in 2016 – not to local, regional or European Parliament elections. Any person above the age of 18 (since 1978) and "permanently resident in the realm" is entitled to vote.

Folketinget, Parliamentary Election Act of Denmark, [http://www.ft.dk/~media/Pdf\\_materiale/Pdf\\_publicationer/English/valgloven\\_eng\\_web\\_samlet%20pdf.ashx](http://www.ft.dk/~media/Pdf_materiale/Pdf_publicationer/English/valgloven_eng_web_samlet%20pdf.ashx) (accessed 16 April 2013).

Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 1.

"Umyndige udviklingshæmmede kan ikke sådan lige få stemmeret til folketingsvalg," <https://www.mm.dk/tjekdet/artikel/umyndige-udviklingshaemmede-kan-ikke-saadan-lige-faa-stemmeret-til-folketingsvalg> (accessed 7 November 2018).

"2.000 danskere er frataget stemmeret." <https://politiken.dk/indland/art5793960/2.000-danskere-er-frataget-stemmeret> (Accessed 7 November 2018).

Party Financing  
Score: 8

Political parties are financed by membership fees, support from other organizations/corporations and state subsidies. Traditionally, the Social Democratic Party has received support from the labor movement and the Conservative Party and Liberal Party have received support from employers' organizations. A law enacted in 1990 made such contributions voluntary, implying that members of these organizations who do not want their membership fees used to support political parties can opt out.

Private sources that contribute more than DKK 20,000 should be made public, although the amount donated can remain confidential. It is possible to circumvent this requirement by making multiple donations below the threshold limit to local political party branches. There are also, repeatedly, reported examples of other indirect ways by which supporting parties have circumvented this rule. The Danish branch of Transparency International has criticized these rules for failing to achieve sufficient transparent.

Public support for political parties is becoming more important. The party groups in the parliament (Folketinget) receive financial support (recently increased) for their legislative work, including staff costs. Further, the parties receive electoral support depending on the number of votes won.

There is an ongoing case regarding the possible use of EU money to fund political activities in Denmark unrelated to the European Union by the Danish People's Party. An investigation conducted by OLAF, the European Commission's Anti-Fraud Office, concluded in October 2019 that €83,047 should be paid back. Since OLAF has no power to prosecute, the case was sent to the Danish State Prosecutor for Serious Economic and International Crime. The case is under consideration within the Danish court system.

Citation:

Partistøtte på grundlag af deltagelse i seneste folketingsvalg, <http://valg.sim.dk/Valg/Partistoette/Folketingsvalg.aspx> (Accessed 8 October 2015).

Transparency International Danmark, "Privat Partistøtte," [http://transparency.dk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Policy-Paper\\_Privat-partist%C3%B8tte\\_elektronisk-version.pdf](http://transparency.dk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Policy-Paper_Privat-partist%C3%B8tte_elektronisk-version.pdf) (accessed 20 October 2014).

Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 1, pp. 159-160.

"EU's svindeljægere overdrager DF-sag til Bagmandspolitiet," <https://www.msn.com/da-dk/nyheder/krimi/eu-svindeljægere-overdrager-eu-sag-med-df-til-bagmandspoliti/ar-AAIReWw> (accessed 17 October 2019).

Popular Decision-Making  
Score: 5

According to the constitution, one-third of the members of the Folketing can request that an adopted bill be sent to a referendum. A majority of those voting, representing not less than 30% of the electorate, can reject the bill. There are some bills that are exempt from referendums, including those on

finance, appropriation, civil servants, salaries and pensions, naturalization, expropriation and taxation. There are no provisions in the constitution for regional or communal referendums, such referendums can only be consultative.

The constitution allows for the delegation of powers to international authorities provided such a move is supported by a five-sixth majority in the parliament. If there is an ordinary majority in the parliament, but less than five-sixth, the bill must be submitted to the electorate. For rejection, a majority of voters, representing at least 30% of the electorate, must reject the measure.

According to constitution, changing the qualifying age for suffrage also requires a referendum. Since 1978, the voting age has been 18.

A change in the constitution itself requires confirmation by a referendum. First, such an amendment must be passed by two parliaments with an election in between. Then it must be confirmed by a majority of the voters representing at least 40% of the electorate. This very stringent procedure makes it difficult to change the constitution.

The use of referendums in Denmark is mostly for EU-related decisions, including membership in the European Communities (1972) and subsequent for treaty reforms. In the latest referendum on justice and home affairs cooperation within the European Union (2015), a majority voted “no.” The use of referendums is controversial. Many have questioned whether referendums are a vote on the question in case, or a public vote of confidence in the government or state of the national economy.

There are no provisions in the Danish constitution for popular initiatives, but by law a “citizens’ proposal” has recently been introduced. If a proposal for a law secures the support of 50,000 voters, the proposal must be debated by the parliament. Though the parliament remains free to reject the proposal (Law of 26 December 2017).

Citation:

The Danish Constitutional Act of June 5, 1953, <http://www.eu-oplysningsnigen.dk/upload/application/pdf/0172b719/Constitution%20of%20Denmark.pdf> (accessed 26 April 2013).

Peter Germer, *Statsforfatningsret*. 5. udgave. Copenhagen: Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, 2012.

Palle Svensson, “Denmark: the Referendum as Minority Protection,” <http://www.folkestyre.dk/english/White%20Papers/SVENSSON1.htm> (accessed 26 April 2013).

Finn Laursen, “Denmark and the Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty: How a Referendum was Avoided,” in Finn Laursen, ed., *The Making of the Lisbon Treaty: The Role of Member States*. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 237-258.

“Om borgerforslag,” <https://www.borgerforslag.dk/om-borgerforslag/> (Accessed 7 November 2018).

### Access to Information

Media Freedom  
Score: 9

Denmark is a liberal democracy. According to section 77 of the constitution, freedom of speech is protected: “Any person shall be at liberty to publish his ideas in print, in writing, and in speech, subject to his being held responsible in a court of law. Censorship and other preventive measures shall never again be introduced.” Freedom of speech includes freedom of the press. Denmark ranks 4th out of 180 countries in the Global Press Freedom Index for 2021. Recently, a report from Roskilde University found that a strong norm of non-interference and acceptance of media independence helps media freedom thrive in Denmark (Schrøder et al 2021)

The penal code sets three limits to the freedom of speech: libel, blasphemy and racism. The independent courts interpret the limits of these exceptions.

Public media outlets (Denmark’s Radio and TV2) are required by law to meet diversity and fairness criteria in their programming. All political parties planning to take part in elections have the right to equal programming time on the radio and on television. Private media, mostly newspapers, tend also to be open to all parties and candidates. The decline in newspapers has led to a concentration of a few national newspapers, which has reduced media pluralism. However, all newspapers are, for instance, open to accepting and publishing letters to the editor. Likewise, all parties and candidates have equal opportunity to distribute pamphlets and posters. Finances can be a limiting factor, however, as larger parties have more money to spend on campaigns than do smaller parties.

Citation:

Schrøder, K. C., Blach-Ørsten, M., & Eberholst, M. K. (2021). Denmark. I N. Newman, R. Fletcher, A. Schulz, S. Andi, C. T. Robertson, & R. K. Nielsen (red.), Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021 (s. 74-75). Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021>

Reporters Without Borders (<https://rsf.org/en/ranking/2020>)

Reporters Without Borders (<https://rsf.org/en/ranking>)

Straffeloven [The Penal Code],

Zahle Henrik, 2001, Dansk Forfatningsret 1

Media Pluralism  
Score: 9

There are currently about 35 daily newspapers in Denmark. This includes six daily (Politiken, Jyllands-Posten, Berlingske, Børsen, Kristeligt Dagblad and Information), two main tabloids (BT and Ekstra Bladet) and several smaller regional newspapers, as well as an increasing number of online news sites.

Most private publications tend to be conservative or liberal in political philosophy. Left-wing views tend to be underrepresented in editorial pages, but in straight news reporting most newspapers tend to deliver fairly wide-ranging and diverse coverage. The main newspapers regularly include letters to the editor that do not reflect the paper's own views. So, in practice, there is a high degree of pluralism of opinions in Danish newspapers. A vibrant civil society contributes to this. The dailies Jyllands-Posten (right-wing/liberal) and Politiken (social democratic/liberal) are run by the same publishing house, but with independent editorial policies and owned by separate foundations. Only one local paper, Skive Folkeblad, is owned by a party, the Social Liberal Party.

The public media (mostly radio and TV) are independent and have editorial freedom. Satellite and cable TV are increasingly creating more competition for public media. In addition, a number of local oriented radio channels exist. Internet access is widespread and not restricted. Denmark ranks among the top five countries in the world in respect to households having internet access.

All newspapers are active on the internet and are moving more toward paid content. Danes increasingly get their information digitally via social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat. The readership of print media has declined substantially in recent years. But traditional print media and TV still play an important role in public debate.

Citation:  
Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Media Development in Denmark. 2020.  
([https://mediernesudvikling.kum.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/dokumenter/medier/Mediernes\\_udvikling/2020/Overblik\\_og\\_perspektivering/Summary\\_and\\_discourse\\_2020.pdf](https://mediernesudvikling.kum.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumenter/medier/Mediernes_udvikling/2020/Overblik_og_perspektivering/Summary_and_discourse_2020.pdf))

Access to  
Government  
Information  
Score: 9

The Access to Public Administration Files Act (1985) stipulates that, “any person may demand that he be apprised of documents received or issued by an administration authority in the course of its activity.” Exemptions to this framework include, among other matters of criminal justice, access to an authority's internal case material, and material gathering for the purpose of public statistics or scientific research. The law further describes files that “may be subject to limitations,” related to state security, defense of the realm, protection of Danish foreign policy and Danish external economic interests. This list is rather detailed and open-ended. The act stipulates that requests must be dealt with quickly. If no decision has been made within 10 days, authorities must inform inquiring parties as to why their request has been delayed and when they can expect a decision.

The revised Access to Public Administration Act 2014, approved by a broad majority in parliament, has been criticized for reducing access to documents

prepared by government officials in the process of preparing new government policy.

The parliamentary ombudsman can review the decisions by administrative authorities over the disclosure of information. The ombudsman cannot change decisions, but can make recommendations, which are normally followed by the authorities.

Citation:

Act No. 572, 19 December 1985, The Danish Access to Public Administration Files Act, <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/compliance/C2008-28/response/DKAccessToPublicAdministrationFilesAct.pdf> (accessed 16 April 2013).

“Danish Government Seeks to protect decision documents,” <http://www.freedominfo.org/2013/02/danish-government-seeks-to-protect-decision-documents/> (Accessed 16 April 2013).

“Danish Parliament Adopts Controversial FOI Changes,” <http://www.freedominfo.org/2013/06/danish-parliament-adopts-controversial-foi-changes/> (accessed 20 October 2014).

Helle Krunke, “Freedom of Information and Open Government in Denmark,” <http://ojs.imodev.org/index.php/RIGO/article/view/9/70> (Accessed 16 October 2017).

“12 European Countries Sign First International Convention on Access to Official Documents, 19 June 2009,” <http://www.freedominfo.org/2009/06/12-european-countries-sign-first-international-convention-on-access-to-official-documents/> (accessed 16 April 2013).

### Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights  
Score: 9

According to section 29 of the Danish constitution, “Any Danish subject who is permanently domiciled in the Realm, and who has the age qualification for suffrage as provided for in sub-section (2) of this section shall have the right to vote at Folketing elections, provided that he has not been declared incapable of conducting his own affairs.”

According to section 31 of the Danish constitution, “The members of the Folketinget shall be elected by general and direct ballot.” More specific rules are laid down in the election act. The election act stipulates that “franchise for the Folketinget is held by every person of Danish nationality, who is above 18 years of age, and permanently resident in the realm, unless such person has been declared legally incompetent.” The rule on legal competence applies to the Folketing (section 29 of the constitution), but – according to a decision made by parliament in 2016 – not to local, regional or European Parliament elections. Any person above the age of 18 (since 1978) and “permanently resident in the realm” is thus entitled to vote.

Citation:

Folketinget, Parliamentary Election Act of Denmark,

[http://www.ft.dk/~media/Pdf\\_materiale/Pdf\\_publicationer/English/valgloven\\_eng\\_web\\_samlet%20pdf.aspx](http://www.ft.dk/~media/Pdf_materiale/Pdf_publicationer/English/valgloven_eng_web_samlet%20pdf.aspx) (accessed 16 April 2013).

Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 1.

“Umyndige udviklingshæmmede kan ikke sådan lige få stemmeret til folketingsvalg,”  
<https://www.mm.dk/tjekdet/artikel/umyndige-udviklingshaemmede-kan-ikke-saadan-lige-faa-stemmeret-tilfolketingsvalg> (accessed 7 November 2018).

“2.000 danskere er frataget stemmeret.”<https://politiken.dk/indland/art5793960/2.000-danskere-er-fratagetstemmeret> (Accessed 7 November 2018).

Political Liberties  
Score: 9

The Danish constitution protects the political rights and liberties, including freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of assembly. Elections are free. The government is accountable to the elected parliament.

Freedom House usually gives Denmark top scores for civil liberties and political rights. Problems in Denmark mostly concern ethnic tensions, especially involving the country’s Muslim population, and alleged abuse of power by the police.

Recent human rights reports from Amnesty International include critiques concerning the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, such as the return of asylum-seekers, individual cases of denied asylum, the “management of asylum cases which fails to insure the best interests of the child, and the detention of asylum-seekers and vulnerable persons while awaiting deportation.”

The 2015 – 2016 report from Amnesty International mentioned a recent judgment by the Eastern High Court that the police had unlawfully removed and detained protesters during an official state visit by Chinese officials in 2012. A new investigation of this case has been started, as new information has become available.

Citation:

Amnesty International Annual Report: Denmark 2016/2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/denmark/report-denmark/>

Amnesty International, Denmark 2017/2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/denmark/report-denmark/> (Accessed 3 October 2018)

Amnesty International, Denmark: Human Rights in Review: 2011-2015. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur18/2332/2015/en/> (accessed 8 October 2015).

Non-discrimination  
Score: 8

Denmark is traditionally an open and liberal society, and has been at the forefront in ensuring the rights of sexual minorities, for example. Basic rights are ensured by the constitution and supplemented with additional laws focused on specific areas, including ethnicity and the labor market. Citizens can file

complaints concerning issues of discrimination to the Board of Equal Treatment or opt to bring discrimination cases before the courts.

Discrimination can take various forms and can be perceived differently depending on position, history and social context. Gender-based discrimination in the labor market relates primarily to wages, but also, more generally, to hiring and career options. There are clear horizontal and vertical gender divisions in the labor market, and women are overrepresented in public sector jobs related to welfare and underrepresented among leaders of various types. Much of the pay disparity between men and women can be explained by these factors, but there remains a wage differential of 1-3% that may be attributed to other factors related to gender discrimination. Rules for parental leave have been expanded to extend the right (and duty) of fathers to take paternity leave and for all employers (since 2006) to contribute to the financing of parental leave schemes. A recent law aiming to induce men to take on a larger parenting role changes how parents can split such leave.

Cases of discrimination in the labor market are frequently reported in the press. These include, for example, reports of ethnic markers such as a person's name influencing whether or not a person has a difficult time finding a job. There can be several reasons explaining why people are treated differently or have different options in the labor market; to date, there is no thorough academic analysis that has attempted to examine and evaluate the various causes in the Danish case in order to assess the extent of discrimination in the Danish labor market.

Indirect discrimination can take various forms. Rules and regulations are one notable area. Whereas rules and regulations are general and apply to all citizens, they can also effectively target particular groups. For example, Denmark's requirement of residency for social assistance (which, if not fulfilled, lowers the amount of assistance) that is offered to immigrants from outside the European Union. While formally treating all immigrants equally, the scheme de facto impacts immigrants from low-income countries with a low employment rate in particular.

Immigration laws have been tightened several times since 2001. While previous parliaments were often split on these changes, parliamentary majorities have in recent years supported a tightening of immigration policy. Consequently, the recent shift in the position of the Social Democratic Party is significant. The current Social Democratic government has liberalized a few minor aspects of Danish immigration policy, but has continued to maintain the overall strict policy.



## Citation:

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2014 – Denmark, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/denmark-0#.VEa2JOSEi70> (accessed 21 October 2014).

United States Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 – Denmark, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper> (accessed 21 October 2014).

Lønkommissionen, 2011, Betænkning, København

### Rule of Law

Legal Certainty  
Score: 9

Denmark has a long tradition of a rule of law. No serious problems can be identified in respect to legal certainty in Denmark. The administration is based on a hierarchy of legal rules, which of course gives administrators certain discretion, but also a range of possibilities for citizens to appeal decisions. Much of the Danish administration is decentralized and interpretation of laws, rules and regulations can vary from one municipality or region to another. Acts passed by the parliament, as well as administrative regulations based on these acts, are all made public. They are now widely available on the internet. Openness and access to information, and various forms of appeal options, contribute to strengthening legal certainty in administration.

## Citation:

Henning Jørgensen, Consensus, Cooperation and Conflict: The Policy Making Process in Denmark. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2002.

Judicial Review  
Score: 10

There is judicial review in Denmark. The courts can review executive action. According to the constitution, “The courts of justice shall be empowered to decide on any question relating to the scope of the executive’s authority.” The judiciary is independent even though the government appoints judges, as explained in detail below. Moreover, “in the performance of their duties the judges shall be governed solely by the law. Judges shall not be dismissed except by judgment, nor shall they be transferred against their will, except in such cases where a rearrangement of the courts of justice is made.”

Administrative decisions can normally be appealed to higher administrative bodies first, and after exhaustion of these possibilities, to the courts. The legal system has three levels with the possibility of appealing lower level judgments to high courts and eventually to the Supreme Court.

## Citation:

Henrik Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 2: Regering, forvaltning og dom. Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers’ Forlag, 2004.

Appointment of  
Justices  
Score: 10

The Danish constitution (sections 3, 62 and 64) states that “judicial authority shall be vested in the courts of justice ... the administration of justice shall always remain independent of executive authority ... [and] judges shall be governed solely by the law. Judges shall not be dismissed except by judgment, nor shall they be transferred against their will, except in such cases where a rearrangement of the courts of justice is made.”

The judicial system is organized around a three-tier court system: 24 district courts, two high courts and the Supreme Court. Denmark does not have a special Constitutional Court. The Supreme Court functions as a civil and criminal appellate court for cases from subordinate courts.

Formally the monarch appoints judges, following a recommendation from the minister of justice on the advice of the Judicial Appointments Council (since 1999) to broaden the recruitment of judges and enhance transparency. In the case of the Supreme Court, a nominated judge first has to take part in four trial votes, where all Supreme Court judges take part, before he or she can be confirmed as a judge.

Citation:

Henrik Zahle, *Dansk forfatningsret 2: Regering, forvaltning og dom*. Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 2004, p. 88.

“Dommerudnævnelsesrådet,”

<http://www.domstol.dk/om/organisation/Pages/Dommerudn%C3%A6vnelsesr%C3%A5det.aspx> (accessed 17 April 2013).

Corruption  
Prevention  
Score: 10

Denmark is among the least corrupt countries in the world and ranks first (together with Finland and New Zealand) on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index 2021. Norms against corruption are strong and the risk of media exposure is high. In the past, there were occasional cases of a local government official accepting “services” from business in exchange for contracts with the municipality, but such cases are rare. There have also occasionally been cases of officials using their representation accounts rather generously. Again, such cases are rare. A court case in 2017 led to the conviction of several employees of the IT vendor Atea A/S for bribery and embezzlement. The employees had offered electronic devices to government employees, some of whom were convicted for accepting these devices.

Citation:

Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2021,  
<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021> (accessed 20 February 2022)

# Good Governance

## I. Executive Capacity

### Strategic Capacity

Strategic  
Planning  
Score: 9

Government policies have traditionally been consensus driven. This applies both to parliament, as most governments have been minority governments, and in relation to negotiations involving organizations and the political system, most notably in relation to labor market issues.

Major reforms in Denmark are usually prepared through committees or commissions established to produce reports outlining issues and options. In recent years, commissions have played an essential role in the policy formation process, including Strukturkommissionen (infrastructure commission), Velfærdskommissionen (welfare commission), Arbejdsmarkedskommissionen (labor market commission), Skattekommissionen (tax commission), Produktivitetskommissionen (productivity commission) and Dagpengekommissionen (unemployment insurance commission).

The Ministry of Finance plays a central role in initiating and coordinating strategic planning. This role is most clearly seen in the formulation of overarching strategic policy plans (usually with a horizon of about 10 years), such as the government's 2010, 2015, 2020 and, most recently, 2025 plans (Wanna et al 2017). A new plan is expected to be formulated in the near future. A primary focus of these plans has been to develop public expenditures and revenues so as to ensure that policy decisions are consistent in a medium- to long-run perspective.

In addition, it is quite common to appoint expert groups to prepare inputs for important policy discussions and reforms. The members can be experts, representatives of organizations or civil servants. The culture of professionalism in ministries has also improved.

Some reforms in the public sector – including healthcare, active labor market and social policies, and tax administration – have been criticized for being inadequately prepared. For example, tax authority reforms have been criticized for being excessively focused on cost savings, which results in less effective tax administration and a reduced ability to enforce tax compliance. The current government has allocated funds to tackle these problems. The government has also made claims to pursue decentralization despite the underlying tension between such decentralization and the overarching welfare state objective of ensuring that the population receive equal treatment.

Citation:

Wanna, John, Lotte Jensen, and Jouke de Vries, eds. *The reality of budgetary reform in OECD nations: Trajectories and consequences*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017.

Niels Ejersbo og Carsten Greve, *Modernisering af den offentlige sektor*. Copenhagen: Børsen, 2005.

Finance Ministry, *Finanslovsforslaget 2020*. <https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspejce-2020> (accessed 15 October 2019).

Nørsgaard, Asbjørn Sonne, Poul Erik Mouritzen, and Jørgen Grønnegaard Christensen. *De store kommissioner: Vise mænd, smagsdommere eller nyttige idioter*. Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2009.

Expert Advice  
Score: 8

Denmark's political administration draws to some extent on in-house expertise. For most policy areas, however, policymakers rely on advising councils or expert committees. On a more permanent basis, the Danish Economic Council plays an important role as an independent institution, as politicians heed its recommendations. Since 2007, the number of chairmen of the Economic Council have increased from three to four and the responsibilities of the chairmen (independent experts) have been expanded. They now also head the Environmental Economic Council and the productivity council (meeting EU requirements), and act as the fiscal watchdog (related to the Budget Law). The chairmen prepare reports that are then discussed by members representing unions, employers, independent experts, the central bank and the government. The reports typically garner media attention. The chairs are non-partisan and usually serve for several years before returning to academia.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen, Peter Munck Christiansen og Marius Ibsen, *Politik og forvaltning*. 3. udgave. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2011.

Website of the Danish Economic Councils: [www.dors.dk/](http://www.dors.dk/) (accessed 20 April 2013).

Det Økonomiske Råd 1962-2012 – Et jubilæumsskrift, De Økonomiske Råd, København.

### Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise  
Score: 8

The Danish Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is relatively small. It normally has a staff of about 80, spread between three groups (i.e., academics, technical and administrative staff), the academic group being the largest.

The office is divided into two main sections, one dealing with foreign policy and the second with domestic political and economic issues. There is also a law division and an administrative division. The High Commissioner for the Faroe Islands and the High Commissioner for Greenland also fall under the PMO. The prime minister's portfolio tasks include the North Atlantic area (e.g., Greenland and the Faroe Islands), the press, constitutional law and relations with the Royal Family.

Given its small size, the PMO does not have the capacity to evaluate the details of all laws. But some officials are seconded from important line ministries to give the PMO a certain capacity. This capacity has been strengthened since the 1990s.

There is a strong tradition of so-called minister rule (*ministerstyre*). A minister is in charge of a certain area, but the cabinet is a collective unit and is supposed to have only one policy focus, for which the prime minister has the overall responsibility. Coordination takes place through special committees. Most important is the government coordination committee which meets weekly. Other committees are the committee on economic affairs, the security committee and the appointment committee. There is also a tradition of two-day government seminars once or twice per year where important government issues are discussed.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has created the Political Secretariat to ensure improved coordination and control across ministries. This has been criticized by the opposition, who argue that there is no tradition in Denmark for political appointees filling important posts in ministries, but has been defended by the prime minister, who argues that it ensures the government's policy line will be respected. The official description of the Political Secretariat on the PMO's website states that it has "a special focus on the government's priority projects and policy development, and is working to strengthen the strategic direction of the government and increase internal coordination between ministers and special advisers."

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen, Peter Munk Christiansen og Marius Ibseb, *Politik og forvaltning*, 4. udgave, Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2017.

The Prime Minister's Office Organisation, [http://www.stm.dk/\\_a\\_2749.html](http://www.stm.dk/_a_2749.html) (Accessed 17 November 2020).

Line Ministries  
Score: 9

The norms of “minister rule” and the portfolio principle (where ministers are in charge of certain areas) give the line ministries a fair amount of autonomy. The line ministries also have the most technical expertise. However, coherent government policy requires interdepartmental coordination, and since most Danish governments are coalition governments, this is particularly important. The prime minister has a special position given his/her constitutional prerogatives as the person who appoints and dismisses ministers and, under the present government, the prime minister’s role in coordinating affairs has been strengthened.

Major issues and strategic considerations are dealt with in the government coordination committee (regeringens koordineringsudvalg) that involves the prime minister and other key ministers. The standing committees are also important coordination devices. In addition, there are ad hoc coordination meetings between the leaders of the parties constituting the governing coalition. For minority and coalition governments, informal contact with other parties are an important in policy formation process.

The current Social Democratic government, which has been in power since June 2019, is a minority single-party government. It depends on three parties – the Social Liberals, the Socialist People’s Party and the Unity List – for parliamentary support. However, it can also seek broader agreements during the legislative process.

The Ministry of Finance plays an important role whenever financial resources are involved. No minister can go to the finance committee of the parliament (Folketinget) without prior agreement from the Ministry of Finance. The position of the Ministry of Finance has been strengthened by the Budget Law that has established a clear top-down approach for the budget process.

Apart from coordinating the preparation of next year’s finances, the Ministry of Finance is also involved in formulating general economic policy and offering economic and administrative assessments of the consequences of proposed laws.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., Politik og forvaltning, 4. udg., 2017.

“Regeringen indgår aftale om ny budgetlov,”  
<http://www.fm.dk/nyheder/pressemeddelelser/2012/03/regeringen-indgaar-aftale-om-ny-budgetlov/>  
(Accessed 10 October 2015)

Cabinet  
Committees  
Score: 9

Policy preparation tends to take place in cabinet committees (regeringsudvalg) involving a smaller number of ministers. The number of such committees has varied over time. Currently, the following standing cabinet committees exist: the government coordination committee (chaired by the prime minister), the economy committee (chaired by the finance minister), the security committee (chaired by the prime minister), the appointments committee (chaired by the prime minister), the government's EU implementation committee (chaired by the minister of employment) and the committee for green transition (chaired by the minister of energy, utilities and climate). The latter committee was formed by the new Social Democratic government of Mette Frederiksen.

This system was strengthened under the previous liberal-conservative government in the early 2000s and there are parallel committees of high-level civil servants.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., Politik og forvaltning, 4. udg., 2017.

Oversigt over faste regeringsudvalg,[http://www.stm.dk/\\_a\\_1848.html](http://www.stm.dk/_a_1848.html) (accessed 17 October 2019).

Ministerial  
Bureaucracy  
Score: 9

Coordination through the cabinet is collegial, and officials largely carry out interdepartmental coordination through negotiations between their affected ministries, often via interdepartmental committees or working groups. There is a certain degree of congruence between such interdepartmental committees and cabinet committees, with different ministries leading on different issue areas. The PMO plays an important role, especially for issues that involve the parliament. Important ministries include the Finance Ministry, the Justice Ministry and the Foreign Ministry, which gets involved in security.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christiansen, Peter Munk Christensen and Mariun Ibsen, Politik og forvaltning. 4. udgave. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2017.

Informal  
Coordination  
Score: 8

Given that Danish governments are typically either minority or coalition governments, informal contact and coordination is important. The country's consensus-driven political tradition means that this also applies to contacts with interest groups, particularly employer and employee organizations that play an important role in shaping labor market and collective bargaining issues. Tripartite agreements are a frequent phenomenon in this context. Informal mechanisms can help boost the efficiency of formal meetings while important decisions must, of course, be confirmed in more formal settings. At the political level, informal mechanisms are probably more important than formal ones.

Digitalization for  
Interministerial  
Coordination  
Score: 8

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen, Peter Munk Christiansen og Marius Ibsen, Politik og forvaltning, 4. udgave, Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2017.

Denmark ranks first in the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) for 2021. The index summarizes indicators on Europe's digital performance and preparedness for digital transformation. The index is based on connectivity, human capital, use of internet services, integration of digital technology, digital public services, the EU ICT sector and its R&D performance, and research and innovation. Digital public services are fairly advanced in Denmark, which offers digitalized tax reporting, digitalized social transfer claims, and digital contact to public institutions and agencies. The advanced state of digital transformation in the country proved helpful during the pandemic as many activities were not severely affected by physical containment restrictions or were easily shifted from a physical to a virtual platform (e.g., education/teaching).

Citation:

European Commission, "The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi> (Accessed 20 February 2022).

Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, "Strategy for Denmark's Digital Growth," [file:///C:/Users/Finn/Downloads/Digital%20growth%20strategy%20report\\_UK\\_WEB.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Finn/Downloads/Digital%20growth%20strategy%20report_UK_WEB.pdf) (accessed 4 October 2018).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Danish Government presents 'Digital Growth strategy,'" <https://investindk.com/insights/the-danish-government-presents-digital-growth-strategy> (Accessed 4 October 2018).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Denmark once again the most digital country in the EU," <https://investindk.com/insights/denmark-once-again-the-most-digital-country-in-the-eu> (Accessed 4 October 2018).

Per Byrge Sørensen, Forvaltningsret med et digitalt perspektiv. København: Karnov, 2017.

### Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application  
Score: 8

For all proposed legislation and administrative regulations there is an explicit requirement for impact assessments to determine economic consequences for state and local governments, administrative consequences, effects on business and environmental impact. The relation to EU legislation must also be assessed.

Thinking about consequences starts during the initial consideration of a new law or regulation (screening stage) and continues while the content and degree of new measures are considered (scoping stage). A detailed RIA is then worked out during the final stage (assessment stage).



When new legislation is based on EU legislation the impact assessment will be included in the document (samlenotat) that goes to the European Affairs Committee in the parliament. According to a rough estimate, about 40% of new Danish legislation is based on or related to EU regulations.

In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on evidence-based policies in areas such as labor market and social policies, for example. Evaluations have been explicitly integrated into policy formulation processes and, in the case of labor market policies, some experimental studies regarding activation programs have been drawn upon.

Citation:

Prime Minister's Office (Statsministeriet), Cirkulære om bemærkninger til lovforslag og andre regeringsforslag og fremgangsmåden ved udarbejdelse af lovforslag, redegørelser, administrative forskrifter m.v., No. 159, 16. september 1998,

<https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0900.aspx?s21=cirkul%C3%A6re+om+bem%C3%A6rkninger+til+lovforslag+og+andre+regeringsforslag+og+fremgangsm%C3%A5den&s19=159&s20=1998&s22=10|&s113=0> (accessed 20 April 2013).

Ministry of Finance, Vejledning on konsekvensanalyser, Maj 2005,

<http://www.lovprocesguide.dk/sw2104.asp> (accessed 20 April 2013).

Ministry of Finance, "Ny EU-regulerings økonomiske konsekvenser for den offentlige sektor,"

[http://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2004/budgetredegørelse-2004/7-ny-eu-regulerings-oekonomiskekonsekvenser-](http://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2004/budgetredegørelse-2004/7-ny-eu-regulerings-oekonomiskekonsekvenser-for-den-offentlige-sektor/)

[for-den-offentlige-sektor/](http://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2004/budgetredegørelse-2004/7-ny-eu-regulerings-oekonomiskekonsekvenser-for-den-offentlige-sektor/) (Accessed 2 May 2013).

Maibom, J., M. Svarer and M. Rosholm, 2014, Can active labor market policies combat youth unemployment, *Nordic Economic Policy Review*, 215-262.

Quality of RIA  
Process  
Score: 9

The ministry in charge of preparing a specific piece of legislation or regulation includes relevant stakeholders in the RIA process, such as affected ministries and interest organizations. If, for instance, a proposal is expected to involve costs for business, the Ministry of Business would be consulted. The ministry would also consult with business interests. The proposal to be submitted to the legislature would list all departments, agencies and organizations that had been consulted. The rules require the assessment to be written in non-technical language in order to ensure public accessibility. The tradition of involving interest organizations – especially in the labor market – was seen clearly during the pandemic when numerous tripartite agreements were achieved without delay.

There is a strong tradition of publishing impact assessments as reports or special publications. In addition, parliamentary committees and members of parliament can request further information and documentation.

Citation:

Cirkulære om bemærkninger til lovforslag og andre regeringsforslag og om fremgangsmåden ved udarbejdelse af lovforslag, redegørelser, administrative forskrifter m.v. <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=20940> (accessed 3 May 2013).

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen, Peter Munk Christiansen and Marius Ibsen, *Politik og forvaltning*. 4th edition. Copenhagen. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2017.

Sustainability  
Check  
Score: 9

The RIAs have to cover all consequences, whether they be positive or negative, of an economic, administrative and environmental nature, affecting the state, municipalities, regions, business, citizens and relations to the European Union. This includes questions of sustainability. Sustainability is a central concern in government policy and includes economic, fiscal as well as environmental sustainability.

Citation:

Cirkulære om bemærkninger til lovforslag og andre regeringsforslag og om fremgangsmåden ved udarbejdelse af lovforslag, redegørelser, administrative forskrifter m.v. <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=20940> (accessed 3 May 2013).

Quality of Ex  
Post Evaluation  
Score: 7

Existing regulations of RIAs do not require ex post evaluations. Such evaluations are part of the ongoing political process. Political agreements either explicitly or implicitly settle policies for some period. Though various events and developments may require subsequent action, which would provide a chance for citizens, media outlets and policy entrepreneurs to advocate policy reforms. This happens regularly in the Danish political system and very often the government or the opposition will suggest new policies. Expert committees are often appointed to analyze the issues. Most significant policies are regularly debated and policy reforms are common.

The annual budget preparation is one occasion for evaluating policies. The parliament's Rigsrevision (auditor general) also issues an annual report, which may lead to policy reforms. In some cases, an assessment is made an explicit part of a political agreement (e.g., labor market policy).

Citation:

Vejledning om konsekvensanalyser Maj 2005 (afsnit 3.2, 7.1 og 7.2 revideret i 2018). <https://modst.dk/media/19528/vejledning-om-konsekvensanalyser-maj-2005-afsnit-3-2-7-1-og-7-2-revideret-i-2018.pdf> (Accessed 10 October 2018),

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al, Politik og forvaltning, 4. udg. Reitzels Forlag, 2017, p.300.

### Societal Consultation

Public  
Consultation  
Score: 9

There is a long tradition of involving economic and social actors at all stages of the policy cycle, sometimes even in the implementation phase. Both formally and informally, there are valuable contacts between the government and main interest organizations (e.g., trade unions, employers, various business organizations and NGOs) as well as heads of major companies. This is also formalized in terms of the Economic Council, where the large organizations are represented.

Interest organizations provide important information for politicians and civil servants. Corporatism still plays a role, although it has changed over the years.

Recent examples of tripartite cooperation between the government, labor unions and employers include initiatives to improve the integration of immigrants into the labor market, and lifelong learning. Engaging societal actors is a way for the government to gain information and create legitimacy for adopted policies.

Citation:

Henning Jørgensen, *Consensus, Cooperation and Conflict: The Policy Making Process in Denmark*, 2002.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*. 4. udg., 2017.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

### Policy Communication

Coherent  
Communication  
Score: 8

Effective communication is increasingly important for policymakers, and communication strategies and media attention have become important aspects of politics, and political survival depends on efficient communication. The PMO plays an important role in communication, but many ministries have upgraded and employ media advisers.

There are only a few examples of ministers speaking out on issues that were not in accordance with the government's policy. In such cases, the prime minister will act swiftly and a corrective statement will follow from the minister in question – or he or she will most likely be replaced.

The nature of coalition governments, which are typical in Denmark, can occasionally create problems in policy communication. This may arise both due to different viewpoints within the coalition and the need for the different government parties to communicate their views and visions, especially as the next election approaches.

Citation:

Henning Jørgensen, *Consensus, Cooperation and Conflict: The Policy Making Process in Denmark*, 2002.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*. 4. udg., 2017.

### Implementation

Government  
Effectiveness  
Score: 8

The Danish government administration has a reasonably good track record in terms of implementing its agenda. Budget arrangements – including the Budget Law – lay out a clear framework for how regions and municipalities operate in this regard.

As the public sector is relatively decentralized, local governments (i.e., regions and municipalities) are responsible in large part for implementing measures and services. While the decentralized nature of welfare services is designed to

allow for differences across geographical regions, this is often contested by those citing the welfare state objective of ensuring equal treatment for all. Since regional and municipal governments interact more directly with citizens, they also must deal with the public's expectations regarding the level and quality of such services, even though they often have little scope of action. The degree of freedom afforded to municipalities has shifted back and forth over the years, and there have been some who have suggested that the regions, which are primarily responsible for healthcare services, should be done away with and their responsibilities taken over directly by the central government.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*, 4. udg., 2017, chapter 2.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. udg., Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

Finansministeriet, *Velfærd først – tryghed, tillid og en grøn fremtid*. Finanslovsforslaget 2020, Oktober 2019. <https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspejce-2020> (Accessed 17 October 2019).

Ministerial  
Compliance  
Score: 9

Denmark has parliamentary rule. The government can be forced to retire any time if in the minority in parliament. The prime minister is the leader of the government, and he or she does not allow ministers to pursue interests that are not compatible with the declared goals of the government. Close scrutiny by parliament, including by parliamentary committees and an attentive press, seldom allows rogue ministers to behave this way for long. The prime minister can both fire and promote ministers, so there are incentives to do what the prime minister expects. It is not unusual for ministers to be replaced. Party members can of course revolt against a prime minister, but this happens rarely in Denmark. There is a high degree of party discipline.

Citation:

Carsten Henrichsen, *Offentlig Forvaltning*. 2. ed. Copenhagen: Forlaget Thomson, 2006.

Monitoring  
Ministries  
Score: 8

For sensitive political issues, the prime minister has a strong incentive to monitor line ministries. Yet when it comes to less important issues or details, he or she has neither the time nor the means for close monitoring. The prime minister's control is indirect. It is exercised through the members of the cabinet. Non-implementation will quickly become a political issue.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård et al. *Politik og forvaltning*. 4. ed., 2017.

Monitoring  
Agencies,  
Bureaucracies  
Score: 8

Executive agencies have some autonomy, but given the formal norms of minister rule, the minister is ultimately responsible for what happens in the agencies. It is therefore in a minister's political interest to monitor activities closely.

The work of the agencies is often based on specialized expertise; as long as an issue is not politicized, the minister will normally defer to the decisions made by the agencies.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., Politik og forvaltning. 4. udgave, 2017.

Task Funding  
Score: 8

Danish municipalities account for 50% of the country's total tax spending but raise only about 30% of total tax revenue via municipal taxes. The difference is made up of funding from the state (bloktilskud). In addition, there is an equalization arrangement that reallocates funds from richer to poorer municipalities. There are annual negotiations with both the municipalities and regions about the financial framework agreement. Since municipalities act independently – though coordinated via their organization (Kommunernes Landsforbund) – municipal budget decisions have not always been consistent with the overall targets set by the Ministry of Finance. This implied for some years that expenditure growth exceeded targets. The Budget Law, which went into effect in 2014, stipulates tight control over spending that include municipalities being potentially subject to financial sanctions. The sanctions have both an individual and collective element. If the sum of expenditures exceeds the agreed upon target, state funds will be reduced by an equivalent amount. Sixty percent of this reduction is levied on those municipalities that have exceeded expenditure targets and 40% is borne by all municipalities (the amount is distributed according to population size). The new system has been very effective, and municipalities have been well within targets in recent years. Since 2002, municipalities have participated in a so-called tax freeze that prevents taxes (e.g., income and building sites) from being increased. If one municipality increases one tax, this needs to be matched by a decrease in another municipality.

Many municipalities face a very tight financial situation and have had to reconsider the use of their resources with regard to core activities, such as child- and old-age care, and education. The current Social Democratic government has responded to this situation by increasing transfers to municipalities and regions for welfare and education so that local authorities can meet public expectations.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christiansen et al., Politik og forvaltning, 4. udg., 2017.

Andersen, T.M., J. Bentzen, S. E. Hougaard Jensen, V. Smith and N. Westergaard-Nielsen, The Danish Economy in a global perspective, Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2017.

Finansministeriet, Velfærd først. Finanslovsforslaget 2020, Oktober 2019.  
<https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspejce-2020> (accessed 18 October 2019).

Constitutional  
Discretion  
Score: 8

Section 82 of the Danish constitution dictates that “The right of municipalities to manage their own affairs independently, under state supervision, shall be laid down by statute.”

The constitution thus assumes some autonomy of municipalities, but leaves it to parliament to determine the scope. Indeed, compared to other similar countries, the Danish public sector is relatively decentralized. The parliament can, at any time, change the scope of local autonomy and its organization. In recent years there has been a tendency to curtail the effective discretion of lower layers in the public sector, in particular the municipalities.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christiansen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*, 4. udg., 2017.

Carsten Henrichsen, *Offentlig Forvaltning*, 2006.

National  
Standards  
Score: 9

National laws set standard with varying degrees of discretion for local authorities. The central government can supervise whether standards are met through benchmarks and tests and can require that performance indicators be published, such as hospital waiting lists, school performance results, and so on. Here, too, an active press plays a role in exposing problems, and the central government, which is ultimately responsible politically, can intervene by setting stricter standards or transferring extra money to certain activities. Rhetorical action, such as shaming underachievers, is also sometimes part of the strategy. An important recent example includes the proposals made to introduce minimum standards for various public services, a move that aims to reduce variation across the municipalities.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al, *Politik og forvaltning*. 4th ed., 2017.

Effective  
Regulatory  
Enforcement  
Score: 8

Public administration in Denmark features a number of checks and balances to ensure compliance with rules and regulations. It is difficult for the government to favor specific interest groups, and any such effort would most likely be noticed by the media and thus potentially exploited by the opposition in the parliament.

The clearest example of effective grassroots pressure has been the change in environmental policies, which has led to changes in viewpoints across all political parties.

The tradition of coalition and minority governments, and tripartite consultations are further mechanisms that ensure the effective and relatively unbiased enforcement of regulations.

It should also be noted that many regulations are based on EU legislation. When it comes to the implementation of EU directives, the Danish record is quite good compared to other EU member states.

### Adaptability

Domestic  
Adaptability  
Score: 9

Being a small and open economy, Denmark has a long tradition of participating in international cooperation. The most wide-ranging form of international/supranational cooperation is Denmark's membership of the European Union. Since joining in 1973, an elaborate system of coordination within government administration has developed. It involves all affected ministries and agencies, and often also interest organizations. In parallel, the European Affairs Committee in the parliament (Folketinget) has become an efficient democratic control of Danish-EU policy. Denmark speaks with one voice in Brussels.

Citation:

Finn Laursen, "Denmark: in pursuit of influence and legitimacy," in Wolfgang Wessels, Andreas Maurer and Jürgen Mittag (eds.), *Fifteen into one? The European Union and its member states*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 92-114.

Rasmus Brun Pedersen et al., "Dansk europapolitik og det danske EU-koordinationssystem." in Jørgen Grønnegård and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. ed., Reitzels, 2016, pp. 248-284.

International  
Coordination  
Score: 9

Despite being a small country, Denmark prioritizes the provision of and contributions to global public goods, and Danish politicians are proud to promote Danish values internationally.

Climate change and development aid are high on the domestic agenda, and the government tries to play an active international role in these areas. Denmark also has a long tradition of working to strengthen the United Nations. Denmark is among the countries that contribute the highest percentage of GDP to development aid.

As an EU member state, Denmark's possibilities increasingly depend on the European Union. Since the European Union in recent years has adopted a relatively "progressive" environmental policy and has tried to exercise international leadership, there is no conflict in this area.

There is a long tradition for Nordic cooperation within various policy areas. The Nordic Council of Ministers is the official inter-governmental body for cooperation in the Nordic region. The council takes various initiatives and there are regular council meetings where representatives of the Nordic governments meet to draft Nordic conventions and other agreements.

## Citation:

Carsten Due-Nielsen and Nikolaj Petersen, eds., *Adaptation and Activism: The Foreign Policy of Denmark 1967-1993*. Copenhagen, DJØF Publishing, 1995.

Martin Marcussen, *Den danske model og globaliseringen*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, 2010.

Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (eds.) *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2017*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2017.

### Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring  
Score: 8

Given the size of the country's public sector, monitoring and management within it is crucial. Tight public finances have placed additional focus on efficiency and productivity in the public sector. This has fueled a public management and governance strategy that includes the use of contracts, results-oriented salaries, measurements, evaluations and efficiency reports.

Significant efforts have been undertaken to digitalize public administration, including those services involving direct interaction with citizens. Annual tax reporting is digitalized and most communication utilizes the e-boks system. Denmark ranked first in the United Nation's 2021 e-Government Development Index.

There is an ongoing debate on the need to reduce bureaucracy. Efforts to simplify labor market and social policies have been proposed recently, though this is likely a cyclical phenomenon, as policymakers often respond to specific cases of bloated bureaucracy that are reported in the media.

## Citation:

Niels Ejersbo og Carsten Greve, *Moderniseringen af den offentlige sektor*. Copenhagen: Børsens Forlag, 2005.

"90-årig mand taber sag: Glemte at tjekke sin e-Boks – og så faldt hammeren," <http://www.bt.dk/danmark/90-aarig-mand-taber-sag-glemte-at-tjekke-sin-e-boks-og-saa-faldt-hammeren> (Accessed 17 October 2016).

UN E-government development index, <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Reports/UN-E-Government-Survey-2016>, Accessed December 1st 2016. (Re-accessed 17 October 2017).

United Nations E-Government Survey 2018, <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Research/UN-e-Government-Surveys> (Accessed 7 October 2018).

Statsminister Mette Frederiksens tale ved Folketingets åbning 2019, <https://dansketaaler.dk/tale/statsminister-mette-frederiksens-tale-ved-folketingets-aabning-2019/> (Accessed 18 October 2019).

Institutional  
Reform  
Score: 8

The last major reforms within the public sector were the structural reform of 2007 and the 2012 Budget Law, which became effective in 2014. The key element for the government's effort to make the public sector more efficient has been the 2% across-the-board budget reduction (omprioriteringsbidrag),



with the savings being reallocated to new initiatives. It is unclear whether this has actually resulted in improved efficiency and productivity.

While the structure and role of municipalities, and especially the regions, is a subject of ongoing debate, there is no indication that major structural reforms will be undertaken in the near future. The current Social Democratic government is focused on improving performance within the existing structure and has dropped the annual 2% across-the-board budget reduction target. It has also increased funding for municipalities and regions.

Citation:

Ejersbo og Greve, *Modernisering af den offentlige sektor*, Børsens forlag, 2005.

The Danish Government, *Denmark's National Reform Programme*, May 2011. [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp\\_denmark\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp_denmark_en.pdf) (accessed 27 April 2013).

Lene Dalsgaard and Henning Jørgensen, *Kvaliteten der blev væk: Kvalitetsreform og modernisering af den offentlige sektor*. Copenhagen: Frydenlund, 2010.

Carsten Greve and Niels Ejersbo, *Udviklingen i styringen af den offentlige sektor*. Baggrundspapir til Produktivitetskommissionen.

<http://produktivitetskommissionen.dk/media/142136/Baggrundsnotat%20af%20Greve%20og%20Ejersbo.pdf> (Accessed 22 October 2014).

Statsministerens tale ved Folketingets åbning, 2. oktober 2018, [http://fo.stm.dk/\\_p\\_14739.html](http://fo.stm.dk/_p_14739.html) (Accessed 7 October 2018).

Statsminister Mette Frederiksen's tale ved Folketingets åbning 2019, <https://dansketalen.dk/tale/statsminister-mette-frederiksen-tale-ved-folketingets-aabning-2019/> (Accessed 18 October 2019).

## II. Executive Accountability

### Citizens' Participatory Competence

Citizens get most of their information on government policy developments through television, radio, newspapers, news websites and social media. Government documents are, as a rule, freely accessible via the internet, and published work is also often free. Documents can further be read in public libraries, easily accessible across the country. Mail from the public is nearly exclusively going to Digital Post mailboxes. These are now mandatory for businesses and for citizens (with a few exceptions for the latter). Already most public services require online applications using a so-called easy ID (MitID). There is ongoing discussions about whether the information provided is comprehensible to most citizens, given the technicalities and complexities involved.

Political  
Knowledge  
Score: 8

Election campaigns serve the purpose of presenting and debating the policies of the government as well as the opposition. A very high turnout during national elections (84.5% in the 2019 election) suggests a high degree of interest and enough knowledge to consider voting important. In the EU context, Danes are considered among the most knowledgeable about EU issues (partly due to the use of referendums), but turnout at elections for the European Parliament are much lower than for national ones (66.08% in 2019). European Parliament elections tend to be perceived as second order elections. The issues most important for voters, including healthcare, social services, pensions and education, are largely national issues.

Citation:

Lise Togeby et al., *Power and Democracy in Denmark. Conclusions*. Århus: Magtudredningen, 2003.

“Voter turnout data for Denmark,” <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=DK> (accessed 8 October 2015)

“Denmark mandates digital postboxes,” <http://www.itnews.com.au/News/365479,denmark-mandates-digital-postboxes.aspx> (accessed 22 October 2014).

Open  
Government  
Score: 9

All governmental agencies have websites where a lot of information is made publicly available. When new policy initiatives are suggested or approved, the responsible ministers will usually hold press conferences allowing the media – print, online and TV – to inform citizens and debate the proposals. TV2’s dedicated news program, TV2 News, is very good at covering new policy events, and broadcasts several programs during the week in which well-informed journalists and experts debate the news. Important parliamentary debates are covered by the media and sometimes directly broadcast by TV channels. Furthermore, Denmark has the “access to public administration files act” of 1985, which replaced the Public Records Act of 1970.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen og Jørgen Elklit (red.), *Det Demokratiske System*. 4. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

THE DANISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACT, <https://dfcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2016-02-29-Ombudsmand-The-Act-of-Public-Administration-1985.pdf> (Accessed 18 October 2019)

### Legislative Actors’ Resources

Parliamentary  
Resources  
Score: 8

Parliamentary committees have staff, as do political parties. The parliament also has its own library and recently opened a (small) unit offering consultation on economic issues. In 2020, the total number of parliamentary staff was about 480 (full-time equivalent), which is not huge. More than a

quarter of staff are secretaries, a little less than a quarter are academic staff, followed by security personnel and IT staff. In general, the members of parliament depend a lot on the government for information and expertise. To gather information, they ask written and oral questions of ministers, and use hearings, independent sources as well as contacts within interest organizations and think tanks. There is, however, no tradition in Denmark for major independent investigations initiated by the parliament. This can weaken its power vis-à-vis the government. Party discipline is also a strong factor in Danish politics, which can weaken individual members' possibilities.

Citation:

Anders Henriksen, "Folketinget er for svagt i forhold til regeringen," *Politiken*. 24 August 2010. <http://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/article1042660.ece> (accessed 26 April 2013).

Året der gik i Folketinget: Beretning om Folketingsåret 2015-2016. [http://www.ft.dk/~media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/aarsberetning/aaret-der-gik-i-folketinget-2015\\_16.ashx](http://www.ft.dk/~media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/aarsberetning/aaret-der-gik-i-folketinget-2015_16.ashx) (Accessed 19 October 2017).

Året der gik i Folketinget: Beretning om Folketingsåret 2016-2017. [https://www.ft.dk/~media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/aarsberetning/aaret-der-gik-i-folketinget-2016\\_17.ashx?la=da](https://www.ft.dk/~media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/aarsberetning/aaret-der-gik-i-folketinget-2016_17.ashx?la=da) (Accessed 7 October 2018).

Folketingets administration, [http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/Folketingets\\_administration.aspx](http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/Folketingets_administration.aspx) (Accessed 1 December 2016).

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske System*. 4. udg. Chapter 4. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

Obtaining Documents  
Score: 9

Parliament is entitled and granted access to most government documents. There are internal ministry documents, however, that are not made available. This is occasionally criticized by some politicians, especially from the opposition. However, ministers and ministries know that it is politically important to heed parliament requests. Documents may be stamped confidential, but, in general, most committee documents are publicly available.

Citation:

Henrik Zahle, *Dansk forfatningsret 1: Institutioner og regulering*. Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 2005.

Folketinget, *Håndbog i Folketingsarbejdet*. Oktober 2015. [http://www.ft.dk/dokumenter/publikationer/folketinget/haandbog\\_i\\_folketingsarbejdet\\_2011.aspx](http://www.ft.dk/dokumenter/publikationer/folketinget/haandbog_i_folketingsarbejdet_2011.aspx) (accessed 22 October 2014).

Summoning Ministers  
Score: 10

Committees regularly summon ministers for meetings, called consultations (samråd). These meetings are key elements of how the Danish parliamentary system works. Consultations play an important role in the legislative process for members of parliament. At the same time, the meetings are where the parliament exercises control over the government.

Summoning  
Experts  
Score: 9

Citation:

Henrik Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 1: Institutioner og Regulering, 2005.

Henrik Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 2: Regering, forvaltning og dom, 2004.

Normal committee meetings take place behind closed doors. However, committees can decide to hold open meetings – including ones without the minister present – and invite experts from outside, as well as civil servants and representatives from interest organizations to explore and discuss issues. Such meetings are also open to the press.

Committees may also decide to conduct larger hearings, occasionally in cooperation with other organizations. Such hearings normally take place in the room in which the former second chamber of the Danish parliament, the Landsting, met until it was abolished by the new constitution in 1953. To learn more about the issues they legislate, members of parliament also go on study trips and take part in conferences.

Folketinget, Håndbog i Folketingsarbejdet. October 2015.

[http://www.ft.dk/Dokumenter/Publikationer/Folketinget/~media/Pdf\\_materiale/Pdf\\_publicationer/Folketinget/H%C3%A5ndbog%20i%20folketingsarbejdet\\_web\\_7%20MB.pdf.ashx](http://www.ft.dk/Dokumenter/Publikationer/Folketinget/~media/Pdf_materiale/Pdf_publicationer/Folketinget/H%C3%A5ndbog%20i%20folketingsarbejdet_web_7%20MB.pdf.ashx) (accessed 24 April 2013).

Task Area  
Congruence  
Score: 8

The committee structure largely corresponds to the structure of ministries. The Ministry of Social Affairs, for instance, corresponds to the social affairs committee in the parliament (Folketinget). The Ministry of Taxation corresponds to the fiscal affairs committee in the assembly. Other committees, for instance, deal with energy, defense, culture, environment, healthcare and education, and have strong ties to the applicable minister.

A few committees do not have a direct parallel, such as the European Affairs Committee. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for coordinating EU policy, the European Affairs committee will have consultations (samråd) with all ministers that take part in European Council meetings, and seek a mandate for upcoming negotiations in the council. This may create internal coordination problems in the parliament, between the European Affairs committee and the committees dealing with the substance of EU legislation (fagudvalg).

Citation:

Folketinget, Håndbog i Folketingsarbejdet. Oktober 2015.  
[http://www.ft.dk/dokumenter/publikationer/folketinget/haandbog\\_i\\_folketingsarbejdet\\_2011.aspx](http://www.ft.dk/dokumenter/publikationer/folketinget/haandbog_i_folketingsarbejdet_2011.aspx) (Accessed 22 Oktober 2014).

Finn Laursen, "The Role of National Parliamentary Committees in European Scrutiny: Reflections based on the Danish Case," in Katrin Auel and Arthur Benz, eds. *The Europeanisation of Parliamentary Democracy*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, pp. 110-125.

## Media

Media Reporting  
Score: 8

Media play an important role in the democratic process and, through editorial choice, the media has an important influence on agenda-setting. Among media outlets, there is an increasing tendency to catch the interest of the public by simplification or personalizing the stories reported, and emphasizing an element of conflict. There is also a tendency to favor senior politicians and government representatives. Weaker actors, such as representatives of immigrants or ethnic minorities, get less coverage, although immigration stories have become important in recent years and are now regularly reported.

In addition to daily news programs, some television and radio stations offer more analytical in-depth programs, which can be quite informative. It is worth mentioning that the education of journalists has improved in recent years. Overall, the Danish media focus more on national rather than international news, including EU issues.

Traditional media face increasing competition from alternative news sources (e.g., news websites and social media) and their financing is declining due to falling advertisement revenue. Policymakers are increasingly using social media (e.g., Twitter) to make policy statements and frame the debate.

Media access to internal government documents has been a sensitive issue because of changed legislation regarding the access to such documents (offentlighedsloven). The new law entered into force 1 January 2014. The two most critical aspects of the new law are the possibility of the government denying access to internal documents exchanged between a minister and experts (Article 24) and between a minister and a member of the parliament (Article 27). Despite criticism from the Danish Association of Journalists that the exemptions are too extensive, the law remains in force.

The funding of public TV and radio has been debated for some years, and – as a result the funding of the main operator Danmarks Radio (DR) – is being changed from a near-universal license fee to financing via general taxation.

Citation:

Peter Munk Christiansen og Lise Togeby, *Magten i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

“Fakta om ny offentlighedslov,” <http://www.politiko.dk/nyheder/fakta-om-ny-offentlighedslov> (accessed 23 October 2014).

“Ny offentlighedslov – ny praksis for journalister,” <http://www.aabenhedstinget.dk/ny-offentlighedslov-ny-praksis-for-journalister-2/> (accessed 23 October 2014).

Dansk Journalistforbund, Udtalelse fra DJ's delegeretmøde: Styrk offentlighedsloven, <https://journalistforbundet.dk/nyhed/udtalelse-fra-djs-delegeretmode-styrk-offentlighedsloven> (Accessed 7 October 2018).

Jørgen Grønnegård Christiansen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. udg. Chapter 7. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

## Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party  
Decision-Making  
Score: 8

The political parties have a membership structure and are democratic organizations. Parties have annual meetings where policies are determined and leaders elected. These meetings are open to the press and covered widely. Four of the political parties represented in the Danish parliament – the Liberal Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Social Liberal Party and the Conservative Party – have existed for more than 100 years and have all regularly participated in government. Since they are either in power or have the prospect of being in the next government, they have a strong interest in proposing plausible and coherent policies, and it is fair to say that they do so. This is reinforced by the fact that most governments are minority governments and the country's tradition of consensus-driven policies. There is a strong tradition of broad compromise and agreement, and daily politics is less partisan than in some other countries.

Newer parties (e.g., the Danish People's Party, Alternative and since June 2019 the New Right) may be more tempted to propose popular, even populist, policies. However, parties that aspire to participate in future governments have to moderate their views. The Danish People's Party provided the necessary parliamentary support for the liberal-conservative minority government (2009 – 2011) and the subsequent three-party government (2015 – 2019). In this way, the Danish People's Party has managed to promote some of the party's core issues (e.g., elderly and immigration policy). Since 2019, the Social Democratic Party has formed a minority government with the support of the Unity List (left-wing party), Socialist Peoples' Party and the Social Liberal party.

Citation:

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. udg., Chapter 3. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

Websites of the Danish political parties currently represented in the parliament (Folketinget) in order of representation after the June 2019 election:

The Social Democratic Party: [www.socialdemokratiet.dk](http://www.socialdemokratiet.dk)

The Liberal Party: [www.venstre.dk](http://www.venstre.dk)

The Danish People's Party: [www.danskfolkeparti.dk](http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk)

The Social Liberal Party: [www.radikale.dk](http://www.radikale.dk)

The Socialist People's Party: [www.sf.dk](http://www.sf.dk)

The Unity List: [www.enhedslisten.dk](http://www.enhedslisten.dk)

The Conservative Party: [www.konservative.dk](http://www.konservative.dk)

The Alternative: <http://alternativet.dk/>

The New Right: <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/>

The Liberal Alliance: <http://liberalalliance.dk>

Association  
Competence  
(Employers &  
Unions)  
Score: 9

Given the corporatist tradition in Denmark, especially with regard to labor market issues, the country's major interest organizations are regularly involved in policymaking. The most recent examples include initiatives focusing on the employment of immigrants and lifelong learning. This policy setting enforces discipline on organizations. Although they promote their special interests, they also have to bring them into a realistic political setting to have influence. This consensus tradition is most clearly seen in the labor market, where organizations have a tradition of settling issues to avoid political interference (the so-called Danish Model), and tripartite agreements are often made.

Citation:

Peter Munk Christiansen og Lise Togeby, *Magten i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2005.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen og Jørgen Elklit (eds.). *Det demokratiske system*. 3. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2013.

Association  
Competence  
(Others)  
Score: 8

In accordance with the corporatist tradition, major interest organizations are often members of committees and commissions tasked with preparing legislation. They provide information for the government and legitimacy for the policies adopted, thereby facilitating implementation. Some civil society organizations may find it more difficult than the larger labor market organizations to get access to the government. Despite occasional criticism of the role of experts and commissions, they remain important.

Citation:

Peter Munk Christiansen og Lise Togeby, *Magten i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen og Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det Demokratiske system*. 4. udg. 2016.

### Independent Supervisory Bodies

Audit Office  
Score: 10

The national audit office, Rigsrevisionen, is an independent institution under the authority of parliament. It examines the soundness of state accounts and assesses whether institutions have applied funds in the best possible ways. The Rigsrevisionen may initiate investigations on its own initiative, and at the request of the State Auditors (Statsrevisionerne), the parliamentary audit office. The work is made public via various reports, some of which also attract quite a lot of media attention. Its work is highly respected and can lead to policy action. This was seen recently, for instance, with the report on the principles for the valuation of housing underlying the tax levied on housing

values (ejendomsværdiskatten). The issue of valuation of real estate for tax purposes remain a political issue in connection with the government's 2025 plan.

Citation:  
Hentik Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret, 2.

Website of national audit office: <http://www.rigsrevisionen.dk/> (accessed 20 October 2020).

Ombuds Office  
Score: 10

In 1955, Denmark became the third country in the world, after Sweden and Finland, to introduce the institution of the ombudsman. The ombudsman is appointed by parliament and the office is an independent institution. Distinguished law professors have held the position of ombudsman, especially in the early years. Criticisms from the ombudsman normally lead to a change in practice or policy.

Citizens can complain to this office about decisions made by public authorities. In 2017, 5,912 cases were concluded; 22% of the cases were concerned with social affairs and 19% involved issues with children.

Citation:  
Henrik Zahle, Dansk forfatningsret 2.

Web site of the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman: <http://en.ombudsmanden.dk/> (re-accessed 8 October 2018).

Folketingets Ombudsmands Beretning 2017, <http://beretning2017.ombudsmanden.dk/> (Accessed 8 October 2018)

Data Protection  
Authority  
Score: 9

Denmark has an independent data protection authority (Datatilsynet), which monitors the implementation and enforcement of data protection rules. The authority also deals with complaints, and gives advice to government institutions and companies. The council has a chairperson and six other members appointed by the minister of justice. The council first of all takes decisions about cases of a principal nature concerning personal data and the law concerning public institutions treatment of personal information.

The agency takes part in international cooperation, including in the European Union, and monitors the handling of data in relation to Schengen and Europol cooperation.

Since 25 May 2018, when the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) entered into force, the Datatilsyn's director represents Denmark in the new European Data Protection Board (EDPB).

Citation:  
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