

Expert Panels on Sustainable Development

The 2030 Panel is an advisory body established by the Danish Parliament's Cross-party Coalition for the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Network. The 2030 Panel consists of 25 strong and diverse stakeholder profiles designated by the 2030 Network as representatives of key players in the Danish society by virtue of their personal capacity and experience with implementation and fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) nationally and globally. Sara Krüger Falk, Director of Global Compact Network Denmark, is Chairman of the 2030 Panel.

The aim of the Panel is to anchor the SDGs broadly within the Danish society and to support and provide advice for possible SDG solutions, that enables Danish politicians to act faster and in partnerships based on knowledge. The diversity of the 2030 Panel ensures a broad perspective to the subject in matter, although all panel members are not necessarily able to contribute to or have positions on all SDG subjects due to their different areas of expertise. This is also the case in the below mentioned key changes/lessons learned in the Danish implementation of the SDGs, which the 2030 Panel wishes to highlight:

Key changes/lessons learned

- ❖ **Primary strengths of the Danish society:** In a global perspective, *Denmark is perceived as a good performer in achieving Agenda 2030* and several SDG-rankings put Denmark in top positions. Primary strengths of the Danish society are a strong sense of community, high level of trust and a general agreement on the importance of sustainability. Regarding the structural aspects of the Danish approach to sustainability, Denmark has a universal healthcare and educational system, a social security system, cooperation among social partners, responsible businesses, clean and efficient energy production, and personal freedom.
- ❖ **Cross-sectoral dedication to the 2030 Agenda:** In Denmark we find a strong dedication to the 2030 Agenda from all parts of Danish society which is also emphasized by the very nature of the 2030 Panel. The education system from primary school up to university level have started incorporating the SDGs into their curricula. Civil society organizations have incorporated the 2030 Agenda into their strategies and are engaging a large portion of the Danish population in festivals, events, and debates. Kids- and youth organisations are showing a great responsibility and engagement in the 2030 Agenda as agents of change. The 2030 Agenda has seen an increasing presence in Danish media. Together with other initiatives this has led to three out of four Danes having heard or seen the SDGs in 2020¹. The Danish business sector has widely adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and is turning them into business objectives. Surveys show that up to two thirds of businesses in Denmark work strategically with sustainability - across sectors, sizes, and geography.² Companies are developing new sustainable solutions or bringing existing technologies, services and goods to new and underserved markets or parts of the population and working to improve the sustainability of their entire value chain. Also, Danish municipalities and regions have adopted the 2030 Agenda with close to 9 out of 10 municipalities answering that they have decided to work with the SDGs in a recent survey. All (5 out of 5) regions in Denmark work with the SDGs.
- ❖ **Wide data coverage:** Another Danish strength is a wide data coverage for different aspect of the Danish society that allows to measure and document different sustainability initiatives' impact on society. This also implies that initiatives are continuously monitored by data published with a relatively short time lag. Furthermore, the Danish data system makes it possible to follow-up on initiatives across different sectors, as data are interlinked. To anchor the SDGs within a Danish national context and to support monitoring and assessment of the SDGs, the 2030 Panel has taken the initiative to create the *worlds first supplementary national indicators for the SDGs*. The baseline project "Our Goals" – comprising representatives from all stakeholder groups - is the product of extensive work owned by the 2030 Panel and implemented by Danish Statistic. The National Danish Indicators consist of 197 Danish indicators, that will serve as a supplement to the existing global SDG indicator framework. The national indicators will – in line with the other indicators – be measured every year, and thus serve as a baseline as well as an indicator of the status on implementing the SDGs in Denmark. This gives the Danish Government and other actors working with the SDGs a unique opportunity to take concrete action towards ensuring a full implementation of the SDGs in 2030. The project is unique in many ways. First and foremost, it is the world's first set of national indicators, hopefully serving as an inspiration to other countries. Furthermore, the project has been made by including the opinions of different sectors, ensuring a broad ownership. Lastly, the national indicators

¹ <https://www.verdensmaal.org/nyheder/kendskabet-til-verdensmaalene-slar-igennem-i-danmark>

² Danish Industry, "Lokalt Erhvervs klima" (Note: Based on responses from 9,446 companies).

make the SDGs even more relevant in a Danish context and thus hopefully engages more Danes in the work with the SDGs. It is the hope of the 2030 Panel, that Denmark includes these national indicators in a robust monitoring model that ensures timely reviews of the SDGs and targets, and measures progression towards concrete objectives and specific and measurable targets.

- ❖ **“Build Forward Better”:** The COVID-19 pandemic has plunged the world into an economic, health and social crisis, and recovery will be a key political challenge in the years to come, also in Denmark. For the 2030 Panel it is important that the way out of the crisis is not a "return to normal". Denmark should seize *this opportunity to accelerate political action and “Build Forward Better”*. The pandemic has forced us to change practices in many sectors and the Panel finds that we now have a golden opportunity to rethink and rebuild all sectors of the Danish society in the light of the SDGs. This requires that the SDGs play a role in their own right at the national political level and become agenda setting, which the Danish National Audit Office (Rigsrevisionen) concluded in a report in October 2020 have not been the case in Denmark until now, i.e. during 2015-2020 and prior to the COVID-19-pandemic: *“Rigsrevisionen finds that so far, the ministries’ work with the SDGs has been based on their assessment that their general activities and policies already embrace the SDGs. Rigsrevisionen’s study shows that the ministries have only in exceptional cases taken new initiatives or made particular plans to realise the SDGs. It is Rigsrevisionen’s assessment that the ministries’ and Statistics Denmark’s reporting has not been well suited to inform the recipients of progress made against achievement of the SDGs in Denmark. As a consequence, neither the Government nor the public has easy access to information about progress made towards realisation of the UN SDGs in Denmark.”*³. Fortunately, a new Danish action plan on implementing the SDGs is **on its way**, in which the government has indicated **new actions such as status assessments on all SDGs, law screenings, an annual progress report and increased focus on Leaving No One Behind**. It is the hope of the 2030 Panel, that Denmark will seize this opportunity to “Build Forward Better” in light of the SDGs by launching an action plan which contains real and concrete actions – and indicates specific and measurable target. With an ambitious action plan, Denmark will mark itself as an international frontrunner and hopefully inspire others to act alongside us.
- ❖ **The five P’s of the 2030 Agenda:** When taking a closer look at the five P’s of the 2030 Agenda, the 2030 Panel can positively conclude that Denmark is performing relatively well on People, Prosperity, Partnership and Peace. This is partly a result of some of the strengths of the Danish society mentioned above and partly due to the direction taken by Danish society over the past years. Regarding the fifth P, Planet, Denmark is performing well in some aspects of this area; however, *other aspects can be considered challenging*. The Panel finds it positive, that Denmark historically has been at the forefront of developing environmental policies and in 2020 the Danish Parliament adopted a Climate Law - with broad cross-party support - with a target of 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 relative to 1990 levels; and a goal that energy production should be fossil free by 2050. Nevertheless, the 2030 Panel evaluates that Denmark has challenges fulfilling SDG13, SDG14 and especially SDG12 as the Danish level of consumption and the use of resources is very high. If all people in the world had the same rate of consumption as in Denmark, we would need more than four times the global resources every year. Even though 95% of the Danish consumers find it important that products are produced responsibly, it still needs to become a popular project. If Denmark should meet SDG12 it is therefore important to change the structural framework and the public sector should take the lead of responsible consumption by setting high standards for products - as the public sector is responsible for 17% of the Danish GDP - encouraging producers to produce more sustainable products. Moreover, a framework should be created, ensuring that Danish companies abroad show social responsibility with respect for the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights and the OECD’s guidelines for multinational companies. Hence addressing the challenges Denmark faces in performing well on the fifth P, Planet, requires both strengthened waste management, increased recycling, reduced food waste, focus on biodiversity, reduction of CO₂-emissions and responsible consumption. Gender equality is also an area for further improvement. Thus, at the overall level the 2030-Panel finds it important that the Danish approach to implementing the SDGs is addressing those SDGs where Denmark needs to pay particular attention and do better. Denmark has an opportunity to excel in the areas where there is need for improvement today, but to accomplish this it is important that the Danish objectives for achieving the SDGs are ambitious - also in a Danish context.
- ❖ **Leaving No One Behind:** In accordance with the 2030 Agenda’s Leaving No One Behind principle, an ambitious SDG implementation should aim to give all an equal opportunity to participate in society without distinction of any kind, such as gender, race, ethnic origin, handicap, religion, belief, age, sexual orientation, residence, or other status. In a national Danish context this requires active and ambitious actions to reduce gender-related inequalities as well as inequalities for ethnic or religious minorities, people with disability and people on the margins of society due to very low income,

³ Danish General Auditor’s office (Rigsrevisionen), Report on the Danish ministries’ work with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Denmark, Report no. 1/2020, abstract in English, page 4, available at <https://uk.rigsrevisionen.dk/audits-reports-archive/2020/okt/report-on-the-danish-ministries-work-with-the-un-sustainable-development-goals-in-denmark>. Full report in Danish available at <https://rigsrevisionen.dk/revisionsaeger-arkiv/2020/okt/beretning-om-ministeriernes-arbejde-med-fn%e2%80%99s-verdensmaal-i-danmark>

homelessness, or other factors. Hence, it is the hope of the 2030 Panel, that reducing inequality plays a central role in Denmark's implementation of the SDGs in order to embrace the ambition of leaving no one behind. As the Leaving No One Behind principle is a *principle* it should cut across all SDGs and targets. This includes introducing systematic analysis in the Danish ministries, identifying which vulnerable groups are left behind and should be lifted as well as increased focus on intersectionality and empowerment by systematically consulting marginalized groups as key actors who can contribute with valuable knowledge and insight into existing barriers, needs and relevant solutions.

- ❖ **The international perspective:** The Panel finds it important that the Danish efforts to achieve the SDGs do not have a one-sided focus on domestic conditions as climate and environmental challenge and many other challenges have a cross-border nature. It is important that we achieve the SDGs within the Danish borders, but we must also believe in the importance of contributing internationally and support other countries achieving the SDGs. As for now, Denmark has a high impact on climate, environment, natural resources, and people in other countries through global value chains and procurement. Denmark imports a high amount of goods produced in other countries and there is a need to focus on reducing production and negative impact in global supply chains. Denmark's status as a small trading nation with an open economy means that the Danish CO₂ emissions related to consumption and imports far exceed the emissions that take place within Denmark's borders. If we should create a new sustainable reality, we must also deal with our impact on the climate and the social risks that arise from the goods and services that are in demand in Denmark but produced in the rest of the world. It is, therefore, the hope of the 2030 Panel that Denmark will promote sustainability in global value chains to be a leader of climate action and the SDGs, and that the Danish implementation of the SDGs will have a strong focus on bringing sustainable solutions to the countries that need them most as well as making Denmark a global advocate for the SDGs and for ensuring the necessary financing for the 2030 Agenda globally. This includes adopting a holistic approach in implementing the SDGs and developing mechanisms that enable a horizontal perspective, where the SDGs and implementation efforts of each goal are also held up against each other to identify synergy and contradictions.
- ❖ **Broad partnerships:** It is a prerequisite for a successful implementation of the SDGs that all types of actors work together. In Denmark, there is a unique tradition for engaging with stakeholders for instance in the Danish business community. Cooperation between companies and their stakeholders is increasingly recognized as necessary for realization of the SDGs and the long-term profitability of companies. This may be a positive side effect from the Danish labour market model, which is based on a division of responsibilities between the government, the employers' organisations and the labour organisations. The government collaborates with the two sides of the industry on such aspects as unemployment benefits, industrial injury insurance and education. This collaboration, called tripartite negotiations, fosters willingness and ability to engage in constructive dialogue across industry interest and is often considered as a source of trust and cohesion in the Danish society. Moreover, the current Government's "Climate Partnerships" exemplifies an open and strong culture of cooperation in Danish politics. It could very well be extended to include several types of actors and to other areas that support the SDGs, for instance partnerships on education, welfare, sustainable value chains and ethical trade as well as gender equality. The 2030 Panel itself also exemplifies the willingness to cooperate on the realization of the 2030 Agenda. The 2030 Panel hopes that this strong culture for partnerships will be further developed in the Danish SDG implementation, with a priority to launch pilot projects and sectoral collaborations on responsible and ethical sourcing in sectors with special challenges.
- ❖ **Inclusion of youth:** The SDGs are a contract between generations – promising the Danish youth a better and more sustainable future in 2030. Whereas Denmark has a strong tradition of involving youth, the 2030 Panel finds that this could be further strengthened in relation to the SDGs. The SDGs forms the future of the young generation and thus the youth should also play a central role in the implementation of the SDGs in Denmark. This could also ensure a broader support for the SDGs among the Danish youth population. Furthermore, a huge amount of the Danes are volunteers in associations all around Denmark. Incorporating them in the implementation, will ensure a broad public support for the SDGs.
- ❖ **Education:** Across generations people must be supported in gaining the skills and courage required for contributing to the sustainable solutions of the future. It is the hope of the 2030 Panel that the Danish implementation on the SDGs will focus on initiatives that support people's knowledge, action skills and hopes - specifically by ensuring that teaching in sustainability is strengthened. This is emphasized by a new study from the Nordic Council which concludes that Denmark is lagging behind the other Nordic countries when it comes to focus on sustainability and SDGs in primary and lower secondary education⁴. Nevertheless, more than 1 Million Danish students recently signed a pledge that called for more focus on sustainability in the Danish educational system⁵. Moreover, several analyzes find that there is a great shortage

⁴ <https://www.norden.org/da/node/50089>

⁵ <https://uddannelsesforfremtiden.dk/vision>

of employees with green competencies in Denmark. This is partly due to the fact that almost 70 per cent of the people in Denmark working with green transition are from a group of employees who in the future will be in short supply, namely either skilled labor, unskilled labor or people with a short higher education⁶. The 2030 Panel therefore finds it important that integration of sustainable development in the Danish educational system is prioritized and strengthened.

The 2030 Panel's contribution to realizing the SDGs

As earlier stated, the aim of the 2030 Panel is to anchor the SDGs within the Danish society and to support and provide advice for possible SDG solutions, that enables Danish politicians to act faster and in partnerships based on knowledge. However, along the way the strong partnership, trust and compromises in the group has also proven to give insights to the Government on actions and priorities as well as mutual inspiration among the members of the 2030 Panel.

The 2030 Panel plays a crucial role in mobilizing various stakeholder groups such as civil society, the private sector, academia, government organizations, the trade unions, municipalities, regions, consumers, and youth. Especially, the dialogue around Danish challenges in implementing the SDGs has proven to be very fruitful for all members of the 2030 Panel and the organisations they represent. The challenges that Denmark is facing cannot be solved by government alone – we therefore need to create a space for dialogue and solutions. When looking at the challenge of waste going to landfill we need to involve consumers, municipalities, regions and business in order to find common solutions. Solutions will not reveal without a better understanding of our various roles and positions. Hence, the Panel can be understood as a platform for dialogue around challenges as well as sharing of good cases that can be repeated and copied by others. We hope that this can inspire far beyond Denmark. We also hope that a common approach can inspire better cross boarder collaboration and sharing of good cases.

The Panel has, among other things, launched the world's first open SDG development project that aims to establish inclusive supplementary baseline of indicators on the status of the SDGs in Denmark. The so-called "Our Goals" project, carried out in collaboration with Statistics Denmark is implemented to motivate, measure and facilitate political action towards the 2030 Agenda in a national context. Denmark is often ranked high on the SDG indexes, but in order for Denmark to raise the bar and improve annually the Panel wanted to create a national baseline and dialogue on local challenges as well as solutions. The project involved a missive mobilization of citizens in defining challenges at local level and indicators selected were all accessible data that statistics Denmark collect annually. All 197 Danish indicators can be revisited until 2030.

During COVID-19 the 2030 Panel has been an active voice to promote and motivate the "Building Forward Better" mindset politically and in the public debate. It is especially in times of crisis that we have the opportunity to rethink and choose new pathways, and the Panel's goal is to convince and qualify Danish politicians to dare to choose the sustainable pathway out of the crisis.

The Panel also works to promote the SDG agenda through:

- Interaction and dialogue with ministers – especially the Minister of Finance, responsible for the SDGs - and civil servants.
- Information on the SDG agenda to spread and promote ownership widely in the Danish society.
- Participation in SDG debates, events and campaigns.
- A specific working group on education whose purpose is to anchor knowledge and learning about the SDGs as a part of the Danish educational system.
- Identifying and distributing the yearly SDG award given to a person/corporation who has made an extraordinary effort to promote the SDGs in Denmark.

⁶ <https://concito.dk/nyheder/fremtidens-groenne-arbejdsmarked-stoebeskeen>, <https://concito.dk/nyheder/manglende-kompetencer-fremtidens-arbejdsstyrke-truer-danmarks-groenne-styrkeposition> & <https://www.ac.dk/publikation/2021-04-danmark-mangler-99000-faglaerte-i-2030>