

Denmark

Voluntary National Review 2021: Progress on Sustainable Development Goals, 2017-2021

In 2021, Denmark presents the second Voluntary National Review. Globally, Denmark is at the forefront of sustainable development according to the SDSN and has successfully implemented numerous Sustainable Development Goals, but there are still important challenges to face. Further action is needed.

The VNR is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and prepared by combined work of all ministries and stakeholders in the Danish society. A significant improvement of the second VNR relates to the inclusion of two independent assessments of the progress on each SDG by government officials as well as civil society actors. It also includes uncensored chapters written by actors of the parliament, civil society, the private sector, organizations, academic institutions, municipalities, and regions. Another new element of the VNR is a peer review process with Norway.

The review also builds on newly established institutional mechanisms and research. In 2018, Statistics Denmark launched a unique statistical database that allows for monitoring of the development of the SDGs. This work provides a necessary tool for the follow-up of the assessments.

According to the assessment of the government, Denmark is in a strong position in relation to many SDGs, especially in terms of health and well-being, education, sustainable energy, peace, justice and strong institutions. Denmark's key challenges relate to responsible consumption and production as well as climate action, and further attention is needed to improve life in the ocean and life on land. As a nation with an ambitious green agenda, Denmark feels significantly responsible contributing to the green transition as well as assuming global responsibility and collaborate on long-term sustainable solutions with other countries.

Recovery from COVID-19

The foundation of the Danish Recovery and Resilience Plan is to utilize the need to stimulate the economy to support and frontload investments in the green transition.

While the funds will help stimulate the economy and support jobs and companies in the short run, they will also contribute to speeding up the green transition in the medium to long run. This effort is crucial to meet Denmark's ambitious climate target of lowering greenhouse gas emissions in Denmark by 70 per cent in 2030.

Leaving No One Behind

The SDGs are not fulfilled until they are fulfilled for everyone. While the Danish welfare state constitutes a good starting point for equal opportunities, some vulnerable groups are still subject to discrimination and less able or even unable to participate in society.

While the agenda is receiving increasing attention, more remains to be done. The Danish government is working actively with the agenda, where initiatives include, but are not limited to, improvement of labor market conditions for vulnerable groups, due diligence, and LGBTI rights. Denmark is committed to not only include, but also empower. An example of this approach is the initiative "Children First", which seeks to ensure better conditions for equal opportunities in childhood.

Engagement and Commitment

The VNR is based on two fundamental principles of transparency and involvement, which is reflected in the scope of stakeholder engagement. The VNR demonstrates how civil society, the private sector, organizations, academic institutions, municipalities, and regions continue to integrate the SDGs into their core strategies.

The SDGs are increasingly anchored among actors in society, of whom the government has received knowledge, inspirational material, and valuable recommendations for the preparations of the new national Action Plan and the VNR as well as specific input for policy initiatives. Several meetings, hearings, and conferences have provided platforms for necessary mutual exchange and increased awareness.

The Next Step is Further Action

Denmark is currently working on new policy initiatives in a new national Action Plan, which will be launched in the coming months. The 2022 progress report will review the progress on each national goal following the Action Plan. Both large

and small steps have been taken, and these will be followed by even more in the coming years, where the government continues to integrate sustainability in political initiatives, and stakeholders in society continue to contribute on all levels. A significant example is the decision to conduct a screening process of all legislative proposals with respect to their impact in terms of the 2030 Agenda.