

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Denmark is a unitary republic which has a two-tier system of local government resulting from the 2007 local government reform. In 2013, a new reform of the state territorial administration established one central office in Åbenrå and 8 regional representations. The country is subdivided into 5 regions and 98 municipalities. The capital city, Copenhagen, has a special administrative and political structure, as do three other major cities.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

A new Danish action plan on implementing the SDGs was adopted in June 2021, in which the government has indicated new actions such as status assessments on all SDGs, legislative screenings, an annual progress report and increased focus on the Leave No One Behind agenda. Its drafting has been debated with the multiple stakeholders at the same time as the 2021 VNR.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **Ministry of Finance** is responsible for coordinating the national implementation of the SDGs. Efforts are mainly coordinated through the **inter-ministerial SDG work group** and bilaterally between the Ministry of Finance and line ministries. The Parliament has created the non-partisan 2030 Network to ensure SDGs are present in all progress made, and this encouraged the Parliament to establish a working group to measure progress. The **2030 Network** has created the multi-stakeholder **2030 Panel** which is consulted by the national government.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

In 2017, the Ministry of Finance held an initial meeting with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, businesses, municipalities and regions, youth organizations and academia to discuss the process leading up to the HLPF. Denmark's second VNR, published in 2021, largely focuses on developments at the national and subnational levels and has broadly included them in the drafting process. Civil society actors, the private sector, organizations, academic institutions, **municipalities and regions** have contributed cases and insights regarding their work in support of sustainable development and the SDGs. The **Minister of Finance** met with the **2030 Panel** to discuss the Danish Government's future implementation of the SDGs and efforts thus far on the VNR report and the Danish Government's action plan. Also, the VNR draws on existing data and knowledge from independent studies and reports such as the "Our Goal" report by Statistics Denmark and the 2030 Panel, published in 2020. Finally, the Ministry of Finance also established an electronic mailbox (verdensmaal@fm.dk), where stakeholders could send input on the government's action plan. This has given businesses, municipalities, regions, organizations and others an opportunity to contribute to the policy development process.

1.3 MONITORING

Since the 2017 VNR, **Statistics Denmark** has developed a system for SDG follow-up built around the **Danish National Reporting Platform**. As part of the action plan, the government produces an annual progress report, which is public and sent to the Parliament. The first progress report was presented in 2018 and the next report will be released in 2022. Additionally, yearly status reports are foreseen with the new action plan.

As a complementary initiative, the multi-stakeholder 2030 Panel has taken the initiative to create the world's first supplementary

1. See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16013Denmark.pdf> (2017); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279532021_VNR_Report_Denmark.pdf (2021)

national indicators for the SDGs. The baseline project, “Our Goals”, which comprises representatives from all stakeholder groups, is the product of extensive work owned by the 2030 Panel and implemented by Danish Statistics. The National Danish Indicators consist of 197 indicators that will serve as a supplement to the existing global SDG indicator framework and are directly relevant for Denmark. The national indicators will – together with the other indicators – be measured every year, and thus serve as a baseline as well as an indicator of the status of implementing the SDGs in Denmark.

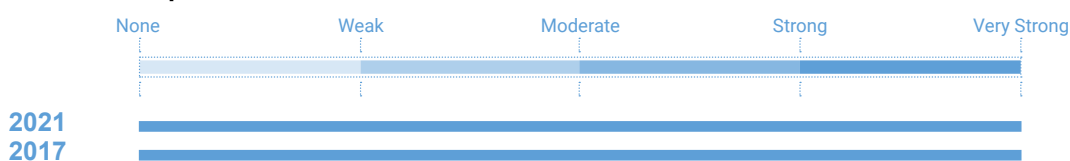
2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Danish Regions and Local Government Denmark (KL) participate in the 2030 Panel.

Municipalities and regions participated in both 2017 and 2021 VNR processes. Indeed, for the 2021 VNR the Ministry of Finance established contact through KL with a number of municipalities that are particularly active in implementing the 2030 Agenda. In November 2020, the Ministry of Finance held a preliminary meeting with KL, after which the Ministry engaged in dialogue with the municipalities regarding the possibility of preparing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) offering any advice and support along the way.

2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: In the 2021 VNR there is a specific section compiling contributions from regions and municipalities, and one from the 2030 Panel (in which Danish Regions and KL participated). The Danish Ministry of Finance established contact through KL with a number of municipalities that are particularly active in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the UN's SDGs.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: The Associations of Danish Regions and Local Government Denmark are part of the “2030 Panel”, which has an advisory role close to the Parliament, CSOs and business sector.

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments’ annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

As in 2017, in the 2021 VNR there is a special subsection dedicated to regions and municipalities as important partners in the implementation of the SDGs: it is entitled “Regions and Municipalities” (11 pages overall). It highlights the role of KL.³ It also highlights the role of Danish Regions that safeguards regional government interests. Also, an excerpt of Gladsaxe Municipality’s VLR – the first-ever VLR from a Danish municipality – is presented. It also includes the contributions made by other Danish municipalities: Copenhagen, Sønderborg, Guldborgsund, Vejle and Aarhus, as well as a contribution from the 2030 Panel, in which LRGs’ views are reflected through the LGAs’ participation. References to regions and municipalities can be found often throughout the report.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

Here are some examples mentioned in the 2017 VNR:

► Regions and municipalities have integrated the Agenda 21 within their planning strategies. For example, the municipality of Gladsaxe involves citizens in developing environmentally sustainable solutions.

3. KL is the national association of Danish municipalities and represents all 98 Danish municipalities. KL is primarily an interest group that safeguards the interests of the municipalities at a national and EU level.

- ▶ The municipality of **Sønderborg** adopted a 4-17-42 approach,⁴ in which the four pillars of social, economic, cultural and environmental are coupled with the SDGs and 42 key features.
- ▶ 10 municipalities are involved in the Green Generation project, which involves public awareness initiatives, developing “green” curricula, and increased cooperation between different municipal departments, mainly the departments of environment and education.
- ▶ The **North Denmark Region** is the first Climate Region in Denmark. The regional council has committed itself to reducing CO2 emissions by 2% each year until 2025. Each year, the North Denmark Region produces a climate accounting to show the amount of CO2 emissions produced by the regions’ services and activities.

Examples of Danish regions and municipalities, and their associations, abound in the 2021 VNR.

- ▶ All five regions in Denmark state they work with the SDGs. Some have chosen to formulate explicit and targeted SDG action plans, while others have chosen to integrate the SDGs into existing development strategies and plans.
- ▶ **KL**’s actions in favor of the SDGs include communicating with municipal priorities concerning the SDGs at a national government level; participating in national-level collaborations to strengthen focus on the SDGs across Danish society; collecting and sharing knowledge and best practices between municipalities; spreading the use of the Danish SDG indicators; conducting surveys and supporting research on the SDGs, for instance co-founding a PhD study on local collaboration on the SDGs at the municipal level; and offering physical and digital platforms for dialogue such as conferences, webinars, networks, etc.
- ▶ In a recent survey, nearly nine out of ten municipalities say they have decided to work with the SDGs. 24% have implemented local SDG strategies or action plans while 74% have incorporated the SDGs into existing strategies.
- ▶ Some Danish municipalities even conduct local monitoring efforts, e.g. tracking progress on six cross-sectoral goals in **Gladsaxe Municipality** and tracking progress through the VLR.
- ▶ **Copenhagen**, by setting sustainability requirements in the organization of mega-events (such as the co-hosting of the UEFA European Championship in 2021), creates important incentives for the development of innovative and sustainable solutions.
- ▶ **Sønderborg** City Council recently approved a 2021-2024 Sustainability Policy and associated baseline.
- ▶ **Guldborgsund Municipality** is taking the SDGs as a basis for policy making, e.g. in helping people to restart their working life, building an SDG school and the plantation of new trees.
- ▶ **Vejle Municipality** has actively pursued the SDGs for a number of years, and particularly through its resilience strategy.
- ▶ **Aarhus** City Council explicitly addressed the SDGs in its budget reviews of the last two budget agreements.
- ▶ Local SDG committees involving participation from civil society have been established in the municipalities of **Aalborg**, **Aarhus** and **Odense**.
- ▶ In connection with the latest municipal elections, the civil society organizations UNA-DK and Nyt Europa collected SDG promises from local political candidates. For the upcoming elections, UNA-DK will assist municipalities in preparing for VLRS and local SDG implementation.
- ▶ Other examples tackle specific policy areas. For instance, as a tool for ensuring socioeconomically diverse cities and lower housing prices, Danish municipalities have the right to require 25% social housing in new residential development, which means the construction of affordable housing for citizens with normal and low incomes. They have engaged with the organization Global Seniors with regards to safe and sustainable cities which are able to accommodate the needs of older generations.

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRS)

Gladsaxe published a VLR in 2021.⁵

4. ‘4-17-42’ is an approach to building and monitoring learning city development in Sønderborg, included in its LLL strategy with an emphasis on sustainability. ‘4’ stands for Sønderborg’s four political commitments to environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability. ‘17’ represents the city’s commitment to the UN’s seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. Sønderborg places special emphasis on quality education for all (Goal 4), sustainable energy (Goal 7) and global partnerships for sustainability (Goal 17). ‘42’ represents the forty-two features of a learning city as defined in UNESCO’s Key Features of Learning Cities.

More details here: https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Alex-Howells-Educationalplanning-in-cities-Building-a-monitoring-and-evaluationframeworkfor-lifelonglearning.pdf&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1625156883556000&usg=AOvVaw3zLfNoGdkp3vIKxjemjh_S.

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279532021_VNR_Report_Denmark.pdf (2021)

5. See: https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/gladsaxe_2021.pdf

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Since 2016, the SDGs have been integrated into the national bill pertaining to the budget for development cooperation indicating which SDGs are addressed by each budget allocation. As stated by the 2017 VNR, the municipalities account for 70% of public consumption. Each year the government negotiates the budget for the following year with and for the municipalities and regions. An agreement was reached with local governments and regional governments to cooperate to achieve the SDGs and integrate SDGs in policymaking. The 2021 VNR states that the implementation of the action plan and sustainable development in general is funded by budget allocations as approved by Parliament in the annual budget negotiations for the coming fiscal year. As such, every ministry and government agency is responsible for the allocation of sufficient resources. In the field of development cooperation, there is an SDG Investment Fund for Developing Countries that specifically targets SDGs 1, 2, 6, 7 and 9: eradicating poverty, ending hunger, securing clean water, sustainable energy as well as industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Municipalities and regions administer 64% of public expenditures, ranking Denmark third in economic decentralization according to international figures from the OECD.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: The tasks of the regions, governed by elected politicians, include health, psychiatry and social services, public transport, education, environmental and nature protection and regional development, making the regions highly relevant for national SDG implementation. The municipalities are responsible for delivering welfare and developing local communities within a number of public sector areas that are related to the SDGs, e.g. health care, social service, employment, primary schooling, child care and economic development. Since January 2019, the regions have seen their role reduced in the implementation of structural funds programmes (the European Regional Development Fund – ERDF and the European Social Fund – ESF) and in business development.⁶

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

In the last four local government elections, the share of women was rising, although there was a small decline in the last election in 2017. Women participation at the local level is very similar to that of the general elections. The share at regional elections is somewhat lower, but nonetheless increased from 28% in 2005 to 33% at the latest elections.

3.2 COVID 19

Danish Regions is fully involved in all COVID-19 issues related to health issues and the regions are compensated for all expenses related to COVID-19.⁷

4. SDG INDICATORS⁸

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		33.3 (2018)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		0.001 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		100 (2015, Copenhagen)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		9.9 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		-

6. Answer of the association of Danish Regions to the GTF Survey in 2021.

7. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

8. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/dnk>