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Who will take Copenhagen?



These three women from three left-wing parties will compete to lead the capital in this election

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Editor´s note



Not that long ago, a friend who is an old-timer international in Denmark (almost native-level Danish, Danish citizenship, Danish kids, etc.) told me that election time in Denmark is tough for immigrants, because suddenly high-profile politics turn into a very hostile, international-knocking, vote-seeking machine. Like many things in life, you have to see it with your own eyes before you believe it. How is it possible, I asked myself, that this incredibly accountable political class turns into a monster?

Then I saw the parties and institutions start attacking immigrants daily. Ministers, party members, and deans suddenly found the origin of all the problems in Danish society: internationals, or, as they say, immigrants. "It's the immigrants' fault," they said, that Danish universities are losing quality and that the welfare state is going bankrupt. Which is strange, because I am pretty sure that, before the election, we heard the exact opposite.

Surprisingly, most of the attacks came from places you wouldn't expect: parties like the Social Democrats, and figures like university directors. Right-wing parties (with the exception of Danmarksdemokraterne and Dansk Folkeparti) were far less hostile and focused on other topics such as jobs, salaries, and the cost of living.

Let me be one hundred percent clear: the government and parties have every right to decide whatever line they want on immigration. From the very beginning of civilization, deciding what to do with the borders of a community - including who gets in, and under what conditions - has been one of the most important prerogatives of any society. It would be foolish to ask a country to renounce that, and it simply wouldn't happen. The point is not the legitimate right of Danish politics to deal fully with immigration policy. The point is the way they are doing it.

Over the last weeks, we saw the (former) Immigration Minister tell us that "it matters where immigrants come from," while wearing a swimming suit to, in his words, celebrate the last swim of the season. Then we saw the new Immigration Minister, who on a daily basis does not miss a chance to attack the only component of the country with no one to represent or defend it: internationals. We saw universities like Roskilde saying that RUC should be "for young people from Zealand and Denmark, not for Bangladesh or other places," and others, like Syddansk University, openly and officially refusing the publication of an article in their magazine because the author was Bangladeshi.

All these examples - a small share of the sum total - were not about controlling immigration policy. They were about losing control and attacking the weakest part of society just to follow trends or chase votes. And this is many things, but it is not Danish.

A high influx of internationals may eventually change some traits of Denmark if integration and inclusion do not work. Sure, it can happen. Yet, from what we have seen over the last months, the most un-Danish behaviour has come not from internationals, but from many Danish parties, politicians, and prominent figures.



Bernardo Basilici Menini

More news for a lower price

The Copenhagen Post has introduced new subscription plans for its online daily newspaper. As an individual customer, sign up before the new year to get four weeks for 4 DKK, and afterward pay 59 DKK per month.

New company subscriptions have also been launched. The quarterly plan costs 59 DKK per user per month for five employees, billed four times a year, and is designed for teams who want to try the service. The annual plan costs 49 DKK per user per month for five employees, billed once a year, offering a total saving of 600 DKK compared with the quarterly plan.

Ritzau and The Copenhagen Post have entered into an agreement under which The Copenhagen Post has been producing Danish News in English for the many embassies that subscribe to the service. From now on, The Copenhagen Post will handle customer relations and sales of Danish News in English, which is aimed at embassies and internationals with a special interest in Danish politics, Denmark's image abroad, and major Danish news.

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PRESSE NÆVNET

The Copenhagen Post

You don't need to binge-watch *Borgen* to understand Danish democracy.

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Vote Radikale Venstre - The Danish Social-Liberal Party on November 18th.

Copenhagen & Frederiksberg Social-Liberal Party B

Social Democrat top candidate Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil

"The Social Democrats need a generational change, and the cost of living in Copenhagen must be reduced."

Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil is a multiple-time minister and one of the most prominent members of the Social Democrats. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen personally chose her as the party's lead candidate. She faces a difficult task: trying to retain Copenhagen for the Social Democrats while other parties on the left aim to take the position.

Bernardo Basilici Menini and Samantha Siedow

The competition in the upcoming local election in Copenhagen will take place entirely on the left.

No one expects the right-wing parties to have a real chance of gaining a majority or nominating the mayor.

According to polls, three parties are expected to win the most seats in Rådhuspladsen: the Social Democrats (A or S, as the party uses both symbols), the Socialist People's Party (SF), and the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten). Currently, the mayor is from the Social Democrats, who are facing a decline in support and, for the first time in history, may not be the party to nominate the mayor.

The person expected to prevent this is Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil. Former minister for Social Affairs and Housing and for Children and Education, and former member of Parliament, she is 48 years old. She began her political career in the Red-Green Alliance before joining the Social Democrats in 2008.

What are the priorities for Copenhagen?

"First and foremost, we face the same problem as the rest of the Western world: prices have gone through the roof. We need to act here and now, also at the municipal level. One of our priorities is to establish free universal childcare in Copenhagen. This aims to reduce the rising cost of living, especially for young people and families. Living in Copenhagen is particularly expensive for families with children. Many young people are just entering the housing market, often with lower salaries, and at the same time need larger housing to accommodate their children. By addressing childcare costs, we can make a significant difference for families in the city."

What is the vision that you have for Copenhagen over the next years?

"First and foremost, it is important that people are not forced to leave the city due to the rising cost of living. The most pressing issue in Copenhagen is that it has become too expensive for many to live here."

Internationals living in Copenhagen: what are the challenges they bring?

"I think one important issue in Copenhagen is that expats tend to be concentrated in certain areas of the city. This is something that should be avoided. And I'm not just talking about areas like Nordvest. On one hand, it can be nice to live close to people who share the same culture and speak English as their main language. On the other hand, it creates challenges. One example is what we see in schools."

"For example, internationals often move frequently. This makes the schools unstable, as it is difficult to determine how many children will be in a classroom. A year later, the composition of the class could be completely different. This instability affects the quality and planning of education in those areas. Therefore, one of our priorities is to ensure a more even distribution of expats across the city."



Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil is the frontrunner for Socialdemokratiet (The Social Democrats) in the 2025 local elections in Copenhagen.

You mentioned that Nordvest is not the only area where the concentration of non-Danish residents can create challenges. Are there other examples?

"Ørestad is another area where many expats live, as it is often the easiest place to enter the housing market. Even though it is a nice neighborhood, problems exist there as well. This large influx of people is driving housing prices very high in the area. The point is that we would like to have a more balanced population mix so that schools and daycare can function more smoothly, housing remains affordable, and other challenges are reduced."

The Social Democrats, your party, are facing a decrease in their popularity in Copenhagen. Why?

"I think the rising cost of living in Copenhagen is a problem that many people see as unresolved. Since most people consider this the city's biggest issue, and because the Social Democrats have been responsible for Copenhagen for more than a hundred years, this problem affects the party very strongly. Even though high living costs are a challenge in cities across Europe, people naturally look to local politicians and ask: if you haven't solved this problem, how can we trust you to address it in the future?"

Which brings us to another point: the Social Democrats are arguably the most important party in Denmark's history. How can the party remain attractive after so many years in power?

"We know that the longer a party stays in power, the harder it becomes to present itself as fresh and appealing. It is challenging, especially because we have helped create one of the most vibrant cities in Europe, yet some problems remain unsolved. Naturally, people blame us for those issues after being in power for so long, and I understand that."

What can be done to address this?

"I think it is important for the party to undergo a generational change so we can tackle today's problems. It has taken us too long to renew our political class, and I believe this is why we started out with low support in this campaign. But change is possible." ◆

Lead candidate for SF Sisse Marie Welling

"Copenhagen is a multicultural city. We should treat that as a strength – not a problem."



Sisse Marie Welling is the lead candidate for SF (Socialist People's Party) in Copenhagen's 2025 local elections.

Considered the rising star in the 2025 municipal elections, Socialistisk Folkeparti's top mayoral candidate, Sisse Marie Welling, has a real chance of leading Copenhagen as the first non-Social Democrat ever.

Tristan Fender

Sisse Marie Welling is 39 years old, was born in Aarhus and lives on Amager with her husband and their two children. She has spent 15 years in local politics, and the last eight as Mayor for Health and Care. As lead candidate for SF, the Socialist People's Party, she is running for mayor with a campaign centred on housing, integration, family policy and green development. Her political vision begins with one idea: the city needs to regain more power over its own future.

Safety beyond policing

Welling opened by addressing what she believes makes a city truly work. "To me, what makes a great city is not just diversity, but the fact that no matter who you are or where you're born, you should feel safe," she said.

"People tell me again and again that they feel safe living in Copenhagen," she said, adding: "You should feel safe to express who you are, to find a home you can afford, to leave your children at kindergarten knowing they're well cared for. You should trust that the air you breathe is safe, and that the choices you make as a citizen matter." This, she argued, is at the core of what defines Copenhagen as a livable city: a place where security comes from stable housing, strong public services and the feeling of belonging.

"We have to get the power back!"

Housing is the issue Welling returns to most often. She believes the municipality's power over the housing market has weakened over time, leaving too much influence in the hands of private developers and investors. "We need to get the housing market under control," she said. "Right now, we don't have much say in what kind of housing is built. We have to take the power back. If we don't, we can't make it affordable."

She argues that the city's growing housing crisis has been shaped by forces beyond the municipality's reach. Large investment firms and pension funds have played a major role in driving up prices, pushing many people out of the market. This, she said, particularly affects internationals who are not allowed to buy property immediately after moving to Denmark and therefore often end up renting at the top end of the market. "For many expats who move here, they can only rent some of the most expensive apartments because they're not allowed to buy," she said, adding: "We need to make sure it's not the market that decides apartment prices, but the city. That's the only way we can make Copenhagen affordable."

How Copenhagen lost control

Copenhagen currently only requires developers to make 25 percent of new housing developments affordable units. Welling believes this is far from enough. "It's so hard to get housing in the city," she said. "It has to be easier. Right now, people from outside Denmark have very few options. Much of the market is closed to them."

She argues that the municipality needs more authority to intervene directly in how and what is built. That includes the power to reclaim cheaper rental apartments bought up by investment companies and ensuring that every new development includes a meaningful share of affordable units. She also wants to expand access to shared ownership models, so ordinary people can buy into the city's housing market without needing the wealth of a large investor.

For Welling, housing is ultimately a political question: "We have to take the power back as a city. Right now, Parliament holds the power. It has to be given back to us."

A city that works for families

She often talks about how parents should not have to choose between paying the rent and giving their children a secure start in life. "All parents should have peace of mind when they drop off their children," she said. "We need enough skilled adults in daycares so every child is seen and heard."

Welling wants to introduce free school lunches from kindergarten through the final school year, arguing that no child should go hungry and that parents should be able to spend their mornings on something other than packed lunches. In addition, she wants to make school days shorter and give kids fewer tests, so they have more free time out of school.

For international families, Welling believes these measures make a big difference. Stable, accessible childcare and schools make it easier to integrate into the local community and create a sense of belonging. "It's about daily life," she said. "It's what makes families want to stay."

Integration through daily encounters

Welling's approach to integration is grounded not in national rhetoric but in everyday contact. To her, one of the most important things is making it easier to integrate in Copenhagen. She believes that integration happens most effectively in schools and libraries rather than in formal policy programs. "In my daughter's class, about a third of the children are learning Danish as a second language," she said. "Teachers sometimes treat that as a problem. But it's normal. We know they'll catch up. So why make it an issue?"

Her idea is to make the city more multilingual in small but meaningful ways. Libraries, for example, should offer more children's books in multiple languages so parents and children can share the same stories at home. She also wants the municipality to recognise the city's growing cultural diversity as an asset rather than a barrier. As she put it, "Copenhagen is a multicultural city, and we should treat that as a strength – not a problem."

Green spaces and health

Welling has served as Mayor for Health and Care since 2018, and her campaign also places heavy emphasis on green urban planning and health. Priorities are planting more trees along roads, creating parks between housing blocks, and expanding access to natural areas with water and beaches.

Welling has also been vocal about improving women's health, particularly postpartum care. Too many women, she said, experience complications after giving birth and do not get enough support.

Local openness and national fear

Welling draws a sharp line between how Copenhageners and national politicians view international residents. She said she doesn't believe the negativity comes from Copenhagen itself. "Here, we're used to having foreigners as colleagues, neighbours and our children's classmates," she said. "That takes away the fear."

She believes that much of the fear expressed at the national level comes from older debates, particularly those dating back to the 1970s when immigration began to reshape some communities. "That's what people remember, but that's not what's happening now." She also frames the national debate as political theatre. "This discussion isn't new," she said. "It's more than 20 years old. It's not about the people moving here now – it's about old problems and fears." ◆

UPCOMING EVENTS 2025/26
FOR INTERNATIONALS IN GREATER COPENHAGEN

4 NOV 17.00-18.00
CHILDREN & LANGUAGE
ONLINE

6 NOV 17.00-19.30
YOUR VOTE, YOUR VOICE
CPH CITY HALL

24 NOV 17.00-19.00
BUYING REAL ESTATE IN DENMARK
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

27 NOV 17.00-19.00
COMMUNITY CAFÉ
TO BE ANNOUNCED

4 DEC 17.00-19.00
WELCOME TO COPENHAGEN
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

2026

19 JAN 16.30-17.30
KICK-START YOUR ACTIVE LIFE
ONLINE

19 FEB 17.00-19.00
WELCOME TO COPENHAGEN
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

26 FEB 17.00-19.00
BUYING REAL ESTATE IN DENMARK
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

3 MAR 16.30-17.30
CHILDCARE & EDUCATION
ONLINE

12 MAR 17.00-19.00
WELCOME TO COPENHAGEN
ONLINE

24 MAR 16.30-17.30
CPH'S LIBRARIES & CULTURE HOUSES
ONLINE

14 APR 16.30-17.30
CHILDREN & LANGUAGE
ONLINE

APR
VOLUNTEER NIGHT 2026
TO BE ANNOUNCED

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Lead candidate for Enhedslisten Line Barfod

"I want a Copenhagen for everyone, not just for the rich."

Enhedslisten (Ø) was the big surprise in 2021's local election, winning the most votes in Copenhagen. This time around, a new "competitor" has emerged, Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF). Enhedslisten's strong political positions make it difficult to secure the mayorship. The party would need an exceptional result to achieve this, and Line Barfod is the frontrunner in that effort.

Tina Jimmy Dastur

Whether she's on her way to a city council meeting or a debate at Christiansborg, Enhedslisten's mayoral candidate this month's local elections, Line Barfod, is rarely seen without her bicycle.

This election season, the two-wheeler will be a priority for Barfod, just like it was in her 2021 campaign. "I want a green, liveable city, where the easiest way to get around is by bike," she said.

This election, making Copenhagen a frontrunner in the green transition will be central to her campaign to ensure the capital is a city for the many, not for the few. She will also be running to make Copenhagen a city that everyone can afford and enjoy by introducing rent caps on housing, lowering the ticket prices to DKK 10 for public transport (bus, train, and metro), and making school meals free for children.

A career politician, Barfod has represented Enhedslisten (Ø) as a member of the Danish Parliament between 2001 and 2011, and most recently served on the board from 2018 to 2021.

On the political spectrum, Enhedslisten (The Red-Green Alliance) identifies as a left-wing party rooted in social justice, internationalism, and the belief that the development of the city must benefit climate and the environment.

Green advocacy has long been a defining marker of the party and for her part, Barfod has campaigned to make Copenhagen a bike-friendly city. First, after her party took over responsibility for bike traffic in Copenhagen in 2014 and again in 2022, when she took over as Copenhagen's Mayor for Technology and the Environment.

More cycles, fewer cars

Barfod is especially critical of cars crowding Copenhagen's inner-city streets and has been vocal about shelving the number of parking spaces in the city.

"The problem is, we have too many cars in Copenhagen. More than 70 percent of people living in Copenhagen don't have a car, but the cars take almost 60 percent of the space in Copenhagen," she pointed out. "If we get even more cars, they will need even more space."

In 2021, Barfod ran for election to close down a third of Copenhagen's parking spaces, but the intention, she insists, was not to make it impossible to have a car in Copenhagen – something political opponents accused her of.

"The intention is that those who need a car should be able to have a car, like those who need to go to work in a car and can't go by public transport or bike, and those who are disabled. And those who can manage with bikes, buses, and metros can do that," Barfod explained.

More public housing, fewer private rentals

With rents in Copenhagen spiralling out of control, Barfod believes an overhaul of the housing market is necessary to make it more affordable for ordinary wage earners.

Recently, her party put forward a proposal to introduce a rent ceiling in newly built and existing constructions, put a stop to the construction of expensive private rental homes, and allocate 75 percent to public and cooperative housing in new residential areas.

"I think what's important is that you decide what you want to build," she said, adding, "If you want affordable housing, you have to build affordable housing. Copenhagen has tried for decades to build very expensive housing and the result is expensive housing, not affordable housing."

Barfod says it is "absurd" that private equity funds and powerful companies charge 10,000 DKK per month as rent for nothing but a room in an apartment and 20,000 DKK for a one-room apartment that can't even fit a double bed.

"All the housing we already have was built for the last three decades. That's very expensive. We have to freeze the rent. For all the housing where you can rent an apartment that's been built before 1991, there is a limit to how high the rent can be. And it should be the same in all the other apartments you can rent. We need to get back control of housing in Copenhagen," she said.

A little more conversation, a little less hypocrisy

Coming from a party that prides itself on being internationalist, Barfod stresses the importance of greater social inclusion for internationals, even as she admits there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

"I don't think there's a quick fix. We need to bring a lot of people together – universities, employers, organisations – because people are here for very different reasons. Some are here for a short term, others hopefully for life. So we have to find different solutions," she reasoned.

To find a sense of community, she advised internationals to join an association: "Denmark is known to be the country of associations. We say that if three Danes come together, we make an association."

Simultaneously, she encourages participation in Danish politics – a view that is in the minority today, given the growing anti-immigrant sentiment at the national level.



Line Barfod is the frontrunner for Enhedslisten (The Red-Green Alliance) in the 2025 local elections in Copenhagen

"I want people to be part of democracy. I mean, democracy is threatened by what is going on in the world. The number of democratic countries is going down right now. The confidence in politicians, in public media is going down. So we need a lot more people to engage with democracy. We need to talk together, learn from each other, and discuss how we can work together. That is the best way to keep up democracy," she stressed.

More community, less exclusivity

Barfod envisions a community-focused, democratic Copenhagen that is created in conversation with Copenhageners.

She reiterates her hope for a city with more green areas where residents can sit in the sun with friends and enjoy life without having to spend through their noses for it. A city where residents can visit recycling stations and get toys for their children, pots and pans for their kitchens, lamps and chairs for their apartments for free and chat with their neighbours over a cup of coffee while they're at it.

"I want a Copenhagen for everyone, not just for the rich," she insisted. ◆

Radikale Venstre is running its election campaign in 10 languages

Radikale B

In an exclusive interview with The Copenhagen Post, the national leader of Radikale Venstre, Martin Lidegaard, announced that the election campaign will not be conducted only in Danish.

Julie Llopes and Romy Tarantino

Radikale Venstre will run its campaign across Denmark in 10 different languages to include internationals in the local elections taking place on November 18.

The Danish Social Liberal Party (Radikale Venstre) will have its traditional election posters hung up in Polish, Romanian, Ukrainian, German, Turkish, English, Farsi, Hindi, Norwegian, and Spanish.

The party's national leader, Martin Lidegaard, announced this in an exclusive interview with The Copenhagen Post.

"We have two purposes: the first is to see as many international residents as possible participate in the elections. They live in Denmark, they are citizens of their municipalities, and it's extremely important that they use their rights just as Danes do, that they have equal rights," Lidegaard said.

"The second is to show them that they are welcome. Hundreds of thousands of people have decided to move to Denmark, to bring their lives and expertise. We cannot function as a country without them. Both private companies and the public sector would not be able to operate."

"Yet too many parties seem eager to narrow Denmark down, to make it a place only for ethnic Danes," the leader of Radikale Venstre added.

This is understandable as a political stance for right-wing parties. But in recent weeks, even parties on the left, like the Social Democrats in government, and universities, have become tougher on internationals. "Unfortunately, we can see this clearly. They are trying to copy the right-wing radical parties, and I don't understand why," Lidegaard added.

According to the Radikale Venstre leader, "We should distinguish between two discussions. On one side, we have refugees, and it's fair to debate how many we should welcome. On the other hand, we have internationals who come here to work and want to contribute to society with their families."

Is Danish society mature enough to face this discussion?

"From the polls we have, yes. Many Danes are aware that the debate we need to have about internationals now is completely different from the one we had a few years ago. I don't see many Danes afraid of internationals coming to Denmark to help us. Politicians seem much more afraid, and some of their statements may harm our ability to attract qualified international labor," Lidegaard noted.

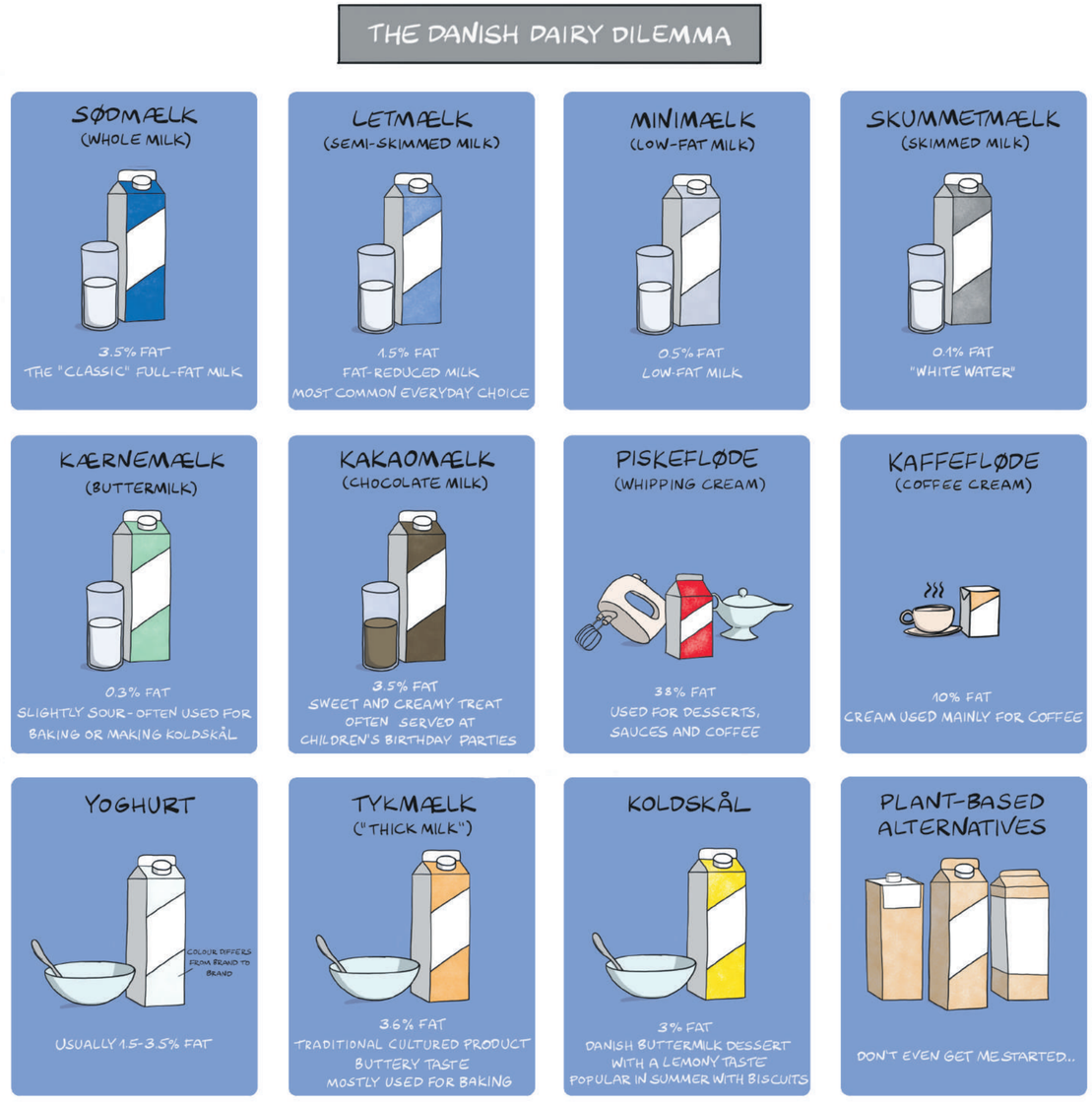
The point, the Radikale Venstre candidate added, is that "we should be grateful to the internationals who come here to help. Together with seniors who continue working beyond retirement age, they are the reason we have a financial surplus at the state level that allows the government to plan so many measures." ◆



The national leader of Radikale Venstre, Martin Lidegaard. Photo: Marie Hald.



Radikale Venstre posters for the ongoing campaign.



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Venstre:

“If you move away because you can’t find a job, it’s a waste of talent.”

Samantha Siedow

Copenhagen Mayor for Employment and Integration Jens Kristian Lütken of Venstre (the Liberal Party of Denmark) said the city risks losing skilled graduates and workers if it doesn’t improve housing, employment, and integration.

Lütken, 43, is from Viborg and has been involved in Copenhagen politics for more than ten years. He oversees programs related to employment, integration, and city planning, including initiatives affecting labor markets, social services, and international residents.

Lütken said retaining skilled international graduates is a challenge for the city’s workforce, and that Denmark risks losing talent without improved employment pathways. “When you graduate, it can be difficult to find a job, and then you move to another place, which I think is a complete waste of talent,” Lütken said. While maintaining a conservative stance on citizenship, Lütken said he believes Denmark should simplify work permits for skilled internationals. “I think we could be much more open to all those, also non-EU citizens working here,” Lütken said.

Lütken also said many foreign families struggle to find employment for spouses and to navigate the Danish school system. “We also need to work with and make both our kindergartens and schools more friendly for internationals,” he said, advocating for expanded programs in language support, cultural orientation, and inclusive school initiatives.

Addressing these language and cultural barriers, Lütken argued, is essential to retaining internationals and supporting Copenhagen’s economy. “We can see most of the growth we get in this country is actually from foreigners who choose to live and work here,” Lütken said. “If we want to continue keeping up as a city and country, we have to be better at keeping internationals in the country.”

International residents now make up roughly 20 percent of Copenhagen’s population, many from other EU countries, Asia, and North America. Lütken stressed that the city must adapt to meet the needs of this diverse population, including housing, transport, education, and cultural services.

Transport and infrastructure are high on Lütken’s agenda. Unlike many candidates who focus mainly on cycling, he advocates prioritizing both drivers and cyclists and supports expanding Copenhagen’s metro network to connect growing neighborhoods and business hubs. Improved transport, he said, makes the city more livable for both locals and internationals.

Housing, he noted, is another pressing challenge. Lütken supports constructing new apartments and converting underused office spaces into residential units, reflecting the rise in remote work since the COVID-19 pandemic. “We need to build more because there’s a huge demand for housing in Copenhagen, both domestic demand and for internationals coming in,” he said.


Jens Kristian Lütken is the frontrunner of Venstre (The Liberal Party of Denmark) in Copenhagen.

On civic participation, Lütken encouraged residents to engage in the municipal election. “We need to take pride in this city and vote, it’s very easy to get influence in this city because it’s easy to talk to politicians and get your voice heard,” Lütken said. ◆

Conservatives:

“More parking, more metro, and a cleaner city.”

Romy Tarantino

Jakob Næsager, Member of Det Konservative Folkeparti (C) and current Mayor for Children and Youth, is the party’s leading candidate in Copenhagen for the upcoming municipal elections. Since 2010, he has served on the City Council. Following the 2021 election, he became Mayor for Children and Youth – a position that has placed him at the heart of issues central to families and education. The Conservative People’s Party of Denmark is a traditional centre-right, bourgeois political party that aims to protect the freedom and cultural heritage of the Danish people and enforce a strict rule of law.

For Næsager, he maintains “that Copenhagen has to work in everyday life. As a Conservative, I focus on three things: more parking, more metro, and a cleaner city.”

Næsager has made the ‘parking guarantee’ a defining issue for his platform, and wishes to reintroduce free Sunday parking. For him, the issue goes beyond convenience. It’s about ensuring the city “functions safely both on weekends and weekdays.”

Transportation is a recurring theme in Næsager’s campaign; he believes that expanding the metro is key to ensuring a more functional and connected Copenhagen. “I’m very proud of the metro in Copenhagen,” he said. “We have the ambition that no one should live more than 600 meters from the nearest metro station. We want seven new metro lines in the next 25 years to reach Rigshospitalet, Bispebjerg, Bellahøj, and Brønshøj-Husum - so all of our hospitals are accessible.”

Beyond transportation, Næsager wants Copenhagen to remain open and inclusive - particularly for the international community. A review of the housing market is necessary if the capital city hopes to attract foreigners. “Half of the apartments in Copenhagen are not accessible for people who move to Copenhagen,” he said. To address this, he supports major housing expansion plans. “We want to build apartments for 100,000 more people in the next 25 years. We can’t close Copenhagen only for Copenhageners.”

As the current Mayor for Children and Youth, Næsager envisions an educational environment promoting inclusion for internationals new to the Danish school system.

He points to existing schools with “an international milieu, where a lot of people speak English,” and sees language as a bridge between Danish and international pupils. More broadly, Næsager advocates for Copenhagen to be one of the best cities to be a child and young person in, his website states.

Another key point of Næsager’s campaign is having a “climate-ready Capital.” “We have to secure Copenhagen from heavy rain, so the basements and roads are not overswept,” he said. “We have to act now.” Næsager’s climate proposals include accelerating cloudburst tunnels, strengthening storm surge protections around Amager and the harbor, and stopping overflow into Copenhagen’s waterways.


Jakob Næsager, frontrunner for Det Konservative Folkeparti (The Conservatives) in Copenhagen.

For Næsager, politics is about long-term planning. “We have to think right now what city we would like to have in 20 to 25 years,” he said. Maintaining an authentic Copenhagen is the end goal: “I want Copenhagen to be original.” ◆

EXPLORE

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Indonesia / Denmark
1950 - 2025



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Building a sustainable future together

Indonesia and Denmark mark 75 years of partnership and cooperation

Interview with H.E. Indonesia's ambassador to Denmark, Siti Nugraha Mauludiah.

Jesper Skeel

H.E. Indonesia's ambassador to Denmark, Siti Nugraha Mauludiah, recently spoke in Copenhagen about the long-standing relationship between Indonesia and Denmark. She reflected on the shared values that connect the two nations and the growing potential for cooperation in areas such as sustainability, culture, and education.

Although the two countries could hardly be further apart geographically, one an immense tropical archipelago, the other a compact Nordic state, the ambassador sees surprising common ground between them. Both societies, she said, are shaped by a deep respect for nature, a strong sense of community, and a belief that prosperity must go hand in hand with sustainability.

"If our relationship were a person, at 75 years old, it would be mature and wise, but still curious and full of energy," Ambassador Mauludiah said with a smile. "Denmark and Indonesia have built bridges of trust, but there is still much untapped potential between us."

Shared foundations

Indonesia's 17,000 islands have created a nation of seafarers and farmers, where the ocean connects rather than divides. Denmark's history is also anchored in the sea, and its farmers have long been central to the country's success. Ambassador Mauludiah said this parallel heritage gives both nations a shared understanding of balance, between people and planet, innovation and preservation.

"Indonesia's islands have taught us to live with diversity and to respect nature," she said. "Danes have the same respect for the sea, the land, and their communities."

She described both countries as practical and forward-looking, driven by curiosity and a quiet determination to find workable solutions.

"Denmark is known for its leadership in green technology, and Indonesia can learn a lot from that," the ambassador said. "At the same time, Indonesia brings experience in managing diversity and scale, lessons that come from being the world's fourth most populous nation."

Partnership and progress

This year marks 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and both sides are using the occasion to look forward rather than back. In April, Denmark and Indonesia signed a new Plan of Action, a five-year framework designed to deepen cooperation in renewable energy, education, maritime safety and good governance.

Ambassador Mauludiah described it as a "dual highway of cooperation," where Danish expertise in sustainability meets Indonesian potential and resources.

"These two lanes merge beautifully," she said. "Our partnership is not only about business; it's about finding practical solutions that benefit both people and the planet."

She added that the agreement reflects a shared commitment to translating ambition into tangible results, from offshore wind projects to new renewable energy investments. It also highlights how a developed and an emerging economy can learn from one another and create mutual value.

Culture, warmth and connection

Beyond trade and technology, Ambassador Mauludiah is equally focused on the cultural connections that bind the two countries. She often describes Indonesia as a "tropical version of hygge," a place where hospitality, warmth and togetherness define daily life.

"We share with Danes the same love for togetherness and the simple joys of life," she said. "Ours just come with a little more sunshine, sambal and smiles."

Indonesia's cultural diversity is extraordinary, home to more than 1,300 ethnic groups and over 700 languages. Rather than viewing this as a challenge, the ambassador sees it as the country's greatest strength.

"Diversity is not something we tolerate; it's something we celebrate," she said. "It is what makes Indonesia strong."

The national motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, "Unity in Diversity," captures this spirit of harmony across faiths, languages and traditions. She hopes more Danes will experience that sense of connection for themselves, beyond Bali's beaches or Komodo's islands. Personal encounters, she said, are what truly deepen understanding between nations.

"Indonesia is warm and welcoming," Ambassador Mauludiah said. "It's a place where people care for each other, and I think Danes will feel that immediately."

In her view, the distance between Denmark and Indonesia is geographical rather than cultural.

"Despite being so far apart, we speak a similar language of values," she said. "Both countries believe in respect, responsibility and the wish to build a sustainable future together." ◆



H.E. Indonesia's ambassador to Denmark, Siti Nugraha Mauludiah.

Scan to hear a podcast with the ambassador.

Photos: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

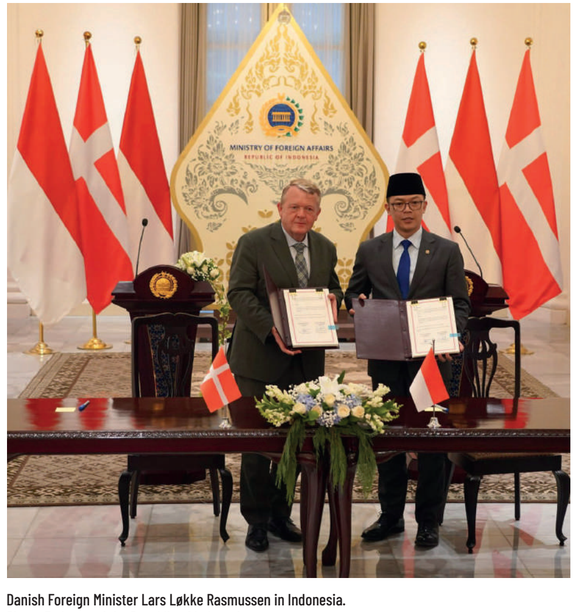


"Save the date" for Indonesian Festival, 23 May 2026".

Denmark Strengthens Partnership with Indonesia

During his recent visit to Indonesia, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen reaffirmed Denmark's commitment to supporting Indonesia's green transition and strengthening bilateral ties across energy, trade and diplomacy.

David Laungaard Lose



Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen in Indonesia.
Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

Lars Løkke Rasmussen described Indonesia as "a country that wants to move forward and sees Denmark as a serious partner." He emphasised that the visit highlighted both nations' shared interest in sustainable growth and global cooperation.

"There is great respect for Danish solutions in green energy, circular economy and maritime technology. The visit confirmed that we must be present where growth and change are happening," said the minister Løkke Rasmussen.

Marking 75 years of diplomatic ties

The visit marked 75 years of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Indonesia - a milestone celebrated through a renewed Plan of Action and the extension of the two countries' energy partnership.

"We have agreed on a new plan of action and extended our energy partnership, making Denmark a central partner in Indonesia's green transition," said Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

"The visit also advanced concrete business agreements within energy and maritime technology, while laying a solid foundation for the coming years of cooperation," the minister elaborated.

Expanding cooperation on green energy

Energy and climate were central themes of the visit. Indonesia, one of Southeast Asia's largest economies, is undergoing a major transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

The opportunities lie in the fact that we can complement each other. Denmark has the solutions to many of the challenges facing Indonesia – from energy and waste to maritime and digital solutions. The challenge is that competition for attention is fierce. China, the Gulf countries and others are also in the game. That is why we must be present, be relevant and dare to think about both values and interests in the same sentence," said Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

He noted that the partnership extends beyond climate policy to issues of global stability and independence:

"Green transition is no longer just about the environment - it's also about security and resilience.".

He also pointed out that Indonesia's climate adaptation efforts are the focus of Denmark's annual Children's Development Fund (Børnenes U-landskalender) this year, showing how collaboration extends from policy to public engagement, the minister explained.

Strengthening ties with ASEAN

While in Jakarta, Lars Løkke Rasmussen also met with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the regional organisation representing ten Southeast Asian nations. He said Denmark's ambition is to deepen its partnership with the bloc through closer political dialogue and trade cooperation.

"ASEAN is becoming an increasingly important player in the world economy, and Denmark must be part of that development. We will work for an upgraded, equal partnership that improves access to cooperation, trade and dialogue," said the minister.

He added that the stability of Southeast Asia remains strategically important for Europe: "It is in Denmark's interest that the region stays open, stable and connected with Europe."

Competing for attention

Looking ahead, Lars Løkke Rasmussen sees both opportunities and challenges in expanding the partnership with Indonesia. While Denmark offers strong green, maritime and digital solutions, he acknowledged the global competition for influence in the region.

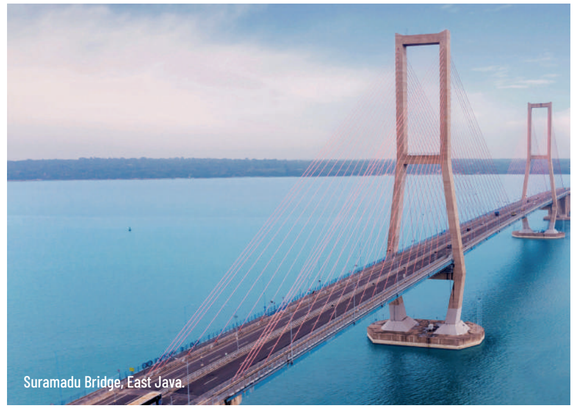
"The opportunities lie in complementing each other. But the competition for attention is tough - China, the Gulf states and others are also active," said Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

He argued that Denmark must remain visible and relevant by combining values with strategic interests. "We need to be present, be relevant and dare to think in terms of both values and interests," he concluded. ◆

Danantara Indonesia:

Strengthening national Resilience through strategic investment

Danantara Indonesia unites government investments to boost national resilience, strengthen state-owned enterprises, attract global investors, and support sustainable growth in key sectors such as energy, digital infrastructure, AI, and food security.


Suramadu Bridge, East Java.

Danantara Indonesia

Global uncertainty presents significant challenges to the world economy, driven by the political and economic dynamics of major nations, food crises, and climate change. High dependence on global supply chains increases the risk to national economic stability. Therefore, strengthening national resilience is crucial to ensuring Indonesia's independence and competitiveness on the international stage.

In facing these challenges, the state has a responsibility to ensure the welfare of its people, maintain economic resilience, and uphold social stability. President Prabowo Subianto emphasizes the importance of more focused and integrated state asset management to enhance efficiency and optimize national resources. In line with this vision, Danantara Indonesia was created to consolidate the government's investments, which are currently distributed across various institutions, in order to establish stronger synergies and transform them into a driving force for national economic growth.

By adopting a professional approach and implementing good corporate governance principles, Danantara Indonesia is committed to optimizing the role of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as the backbone of national development. We strive to be a key player in creating a professional, accountable investment ecosystem focused on sustainable economic growth that delivers tangible benefits to society.

As a primary catalyst for attracting global investment, Danantara Indonesia plays a crucial role in supporting economic transformation and strengthening Indonesia's competitiveness on the global stage. By becoming a trusted global investment partner, we are committed to increasing investor confidence and attracting international capital to drive development in strategic sectors such as industrial downstreaming, AI and digital infrastructure, energy self-sufficiency, food security, and fisheries. Through strong risk management and adaptive strategies to global economic dynamics, Indonesia is ready to collaborate with the international investment community and build a robust and sustainable investment ecosystem.

Our Ecosystem

· Danantara Indonesia is built upon three main pillars with distinct yet complementary mandates:

· BPI Danantara: Carries out the state's strategic mandate in managing SOEs and coordinates both the Operational and Investment Holdings to ensure that operations and investments are aligned and effectively executed.

· Danantara Asset Management: Manages the operational activities of SOEs to generate long-term economic and social value, enhance competitiveness, and support national development.

· Danantara Investment Management: Strategically manages SOE dividends and assets to deliver sustainable returns, expand investment capacity, and strengthen economic resilience in priority sectors.

Waste-to-Energy Projects

Danantara Indonesia reaffirms its strategic commitment to actively address the national waste challenge through sustainable investments in Waste-to-Energy (WtE) projects. This initiative stands as one of Danantara Indonesia's key pillars in supporting Indonesia's sustainable development agenda and achieving its Net Zero Emission target by 2060.

Rosan Roeslani, CEO of Danantara Indonesia, emphasized during the National Coordination Meeting on Waste-to-Energy (WtE) on September 30, 2025, "Waste management in Indonesia is a strategic challenge that demands extraordinary solutions. With 35 million tons of waste generated each year—most of which remains unmanaged—we face significant risks to the environment, public health, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions."

The primary goal of WtE is to ensure proper waste management and environmental recovery, as successfully implemented in major cities around the world, with electricity generation serving as an additional benefit. Each Waste-to-Energy (WtE) facility with a processing capacity of 1,000 tons per day can generate approximately 15 MW of electricity—enough to power around 20,000 households. This WtE technology can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 80 percent compared to conventional landfills, while also saving up to 90 percent of land use.

Beyond its environmental benefits, the WtE projects open doors to regional economic growth and job creation. Each project is estimated to generate around 4,000 jobs during the construction phase and approximately 300 long-term jobs during operations—serving as an engine for local GDP growth through construction, technology, and logistics supply chains. It also enhances surrounding land value and strengthens tourism appeal by creating cleaner, healthier cities.

With supportive policies, solid financing structures, and a proven global track record of WtE technology adoption, Indonesia is at a strategic juncture to become Southeast Asia's hub for green investment. Danantara Indonesia welcomes partnership opportunities with both local and international investors to participate in WtE projects across various provinces.◆

Sustainability and community building shape the future of Indonesia's tourism

David Laungaard Lose

Indonesia's tourism industry is entering a new chapter - one focused on sustainability, creativity, and community empowerment. According to Ni Made Ayu Marthini, Deputy Minister for Marketing at the Ministry of Tourism, the goal is to make travel in Indonesia not only beautiful but beneficial for both people and the planet.

For her, tourism is no longer just about attracting visitors; it is about ensuring that local communities, ecosystems, and economies grow together.

"Tourism must bring economic benefits, but it must also nurture the environment that sustains it," she explains.

A collaborative model for shared responsibility

Indonesia's sustainable approach is built on what Ms Marthini called the ABCGM model, a collaboration between Academia, Business, Community, Government, and Media. She described it as the foundation for a more inclusive tourism industry, where all actors share responsibility for progress.

"Tourism is not a single-sector effort. It depends on collective ownership - from policymakers to local communities," says Ni Made Ayu Marthini.

Community cooperatives are a key example of this principle in action. Across the country, these cooperatives manage small-scale tourism projects - such as guesthouses, cultural tours, and eco-initiatives - while ensuring profits stay within local economies. They fund education, infrastructure, and environmental protection, and they give residents a tangible reason to protect their surroundings.

"They connect national strategy with local action," Ni Made Ayu Marthini explains.

Turning sustainability from idea to action

Sustainability, Ms Marthini stressed, has been integrated into every level of Indonesia's tourism strategy. Through frameworks such as the CHSE standards (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability) and the Sustainable Tourism Destination Guidelines, destinations are now evaluated on measurable environmental and social criteria.

"It is not enough to talk about sustainability. We must be able to measure it. That means looking at how destinations handle waste, protect water resources, and involve local communities," Ni Made Ayu Marthini explains.

Other initiatives, such as the Clean Tourism Movement and the Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Council (ISTC), ensure that policies become practice. The movement supports waste management and climate resilience, while the council certifies destinations that meet international green standards.

"We are learning to see tourism as part of a larger ecosystem. The focus is on balance between visitors, locals, and the environment," says Ni Made Ayu Marthini.

Partnerships and creativity driving sustainable growth

According to Ms Marthini, collaboration, both international and local, is key to ensuring that tourism supports sustainability and innovation alike.

She pointed to initiatives such as the Indonesia Investment Forum Copenhagen 2024, organized with Denmark and the Confederation of Danish Industry, as examples of how trade, the green transition, and tourism can reinforce each other. "Partnerships allow us to share knowledge and strengthen capacity. Denmark has shown that sustainability can become part of everyday life - and that is a lesson we are taking to heart," she says.

At home, Indonesia's creative economy is giving shape to this new tourism vision. Film, design, gastronomy, and crafts are now central to how the country tells its story: "Creative industries bring culture to life. They let visitors experience our identity - to see, taste, and feel Indonesia."

A key element in this approach is the network of Tourism Villages (Desa Wisata), where local communities manage tourism directly. These villages combine cultural preservation with entrepreneurship, creating jobs while maintaining authenticity. "Tourism Villages show that development can be both local and sustainable," she added.

Looking ahead

Indonesia aims to establish itself as a global leader in meaningful and sustainable travel. The government is investing in digital infrastructure, education, and capacity building to support communities and small enterprises.

Ms Marthini believed that success lay in empowerment rather than expansion. "The future of Wonderful Indonesia is about giving people the tools to grow," she said. "When communities thrive, the environment and the industry follow."

She added that the long-term vision was simple but ambitious - to ensure that tourism remains a force for good. Ni Made Ayu Marthini concludes: "Our future is one where every journey supports both people and the planet. That is what makes Indonesia truly wonderful."◆




Toba Lake, North Sumatera
Photo: Jerry Aurum/Wonderful Indonesia

INDONESIA'S SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY 2025-2029

Goal

Strengthen Indonesia as a global leader in sustainable and inclusive tourism while aligning development with the country's Golden Indonesia 2045 vision.

Framework

Part of the national medium-term development plan (RPJMN 2025-2029) and coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in partnership with regional governments and the creative industries.

Key priorities

- Promote community-based tourism that empowers local residents and distributes economic benefits more evenly across regions.
- Integrate creative economy sectors such as gastronomy, design, film, and crafts into destination development.
- Apply national CHSE standards (Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability) to all major tourism destinations.
- Improve destination governance and human resource capacity through training and education.
- Foster international cooperation and green investment to support climate-friendly tourism infrastructure.

Implementation tools

Programs such as the Clean Tourism Movement, Tourism Villages (Desa Wisata) initiative, and the Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Council (ISTC) serve as vehicles for on-the-ground implementation and certification.

Outlook

By 2029, Indonesia aims to achieve balanced growth across ecological, social, and economic dimensions, positioning tourism as a driver of innovation, resilience, and cultural preservation.

Copenhagen Zoo strengthens Indonesian partnership to protect wildlife and empower communities

The Danish zoo deepens its long-term cooperation in Indonesia, linking conservation, research, and local livelihoods.



Simon Bruslund and Hariyawan Wahyudi
Photo: Copenhagen ZOO



Photo: Copenhagen ZOO



Photo: Copenhagen ZOO

The Copenhagen Post

> "It is a cultural learning process. When people understand that birds and animals are part of their everyday environment, they begin to protect them naturally"

Copenhagen Zoo has built a long-term partnership in Indonesia that links Danish expertise in conservation with local knowledge and education. The cooperation focuses on wildlife protection, community engagement, and capacity building.

"For us, Indonesia is special. It is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots and one of the most threatened," explains Simon Bruslund, Director of Global Development at Copenhagen Zoo.

For more than 11 years, the zoo has worked in Baluran National Park in East Java. The park is home to endangered species such as the Javan leopard and Javan warty pig. Copenhagen Zoo has supported the breeding and reintroduction of several of these species.

The partnership operates under a five-year memorandum of understanding with the Indonesian government. It includes research, environmental education, and training for park staff and students.

Simon Bruslund explains that one of the main strengths of the partnership is local ownership: "We share knowledge about breeding, species management, and research. At the same time, we learn from our Indonesian partners. It is not a one-way transfer of knowledge but a partnership."

The cooperation benefits from continuity and mutual respect, which have built long-term credibility with local and national institutions. "We are not an organisation that comes and goes," Simon Bruslund said. "We have now been engaged there for 15 years, and that makes a difference when working with communities and authorities."

Another key strength is its link between science and society. Copenhagen Zoo supports a scientific journal that helps young Indonesian researchers publish in English. "Many Indonesian scientists publish only in Bahasa. By helping them reach an international audience, their work becomes part of global conservation science," says Simon Bruslund.

A change in mentality

Both Simon Bruslund and Hariyawan Wahyudi agree that public awareness and participation have grown in recent years. "We now see more local investors, government agencies, and citizens who take part in nature protection. That's encouraging," says Simon Bruslund. Hariyawan Wahyudi added that younger Indonesians are more open to environmental issues. "They travel more and share information on social media. It helps create new awareness about wildlife."

However, challenges remain. Illegal wildlife trade, deforestation, and enforcement challenges continue to threaten many species. "We can raise awareness and support our government partners, but we are not the police. The organised trade in wildlife is still a major problem. Tackling that often requires more decisive law enforcement," says Simon Bruslund. Copenhagen Zoo supports the Indonesian authorities on this topic by gathering data and intelligence, particularly related to international trade in protected Indonesian species.

Economic limitations also shape how much local communities can do. "Many people care about nature but need income. That is why we focus on alternative livelihoods such as birdwatching or ecotourism. If people can earn a living while protecting nature, it becomes sustainable," Hariyawan Wahyudi explains.

He said creating these opportunities takes time and education: "People will protect what they understand and value. If we can show that nature can provide both meaning and income, they will protect it on their own."

Supporting Local Communities

Copenhagen Zoo's work goes beyond research and breeding programmes. It aims to connect conservation with local livelihoods by working closely with Indonesian NGOs and communities.

Through partners such as BISA Indonesia and the Biodiversity Society, Copenhagen Zoo supports several community initiatives that build local stewardship for nature.

One of these shared projects is SafeNest Indonesia, which encourages villagers to create safe areas for wild birds to return to.

"In Copenhagen, people see birds nesting on balconies and in gardens. In Indonesia, birds have disappeared in many places because of trapping. Through SafeNest, we show that coexistence is possible, and people become proud to protect their wildlife," says Simon's colleague Hariyawan Wahyudi, Indonesia Programme Leader for Copenhagen Zoo.

The project has led to measurable results. After just one year, hundreds of nests were found in settlement areas and farmland near villages that previously had almost no birdlife. The initiative uses education and local leadership to change how people see their local wildlife.

"It is a cultural learning process. When people understand that birds and animals are part of their everyday environment, they begin to protect them naturally," Hariyawan Wahyudi explains. Several villagers who once trapped birds now act as wildlife guides and conservationists. Simon Bruslund explains that this shows how quickly attitudes can change when people are involved directly:

"Many of the people we work with used to trap birds. They did it for a small income or as a hobby, not to destroy nature. When they realise their actions are harmful, they change. It can happen faster than anyone expects."

Copenhagen Zoo and its partners also support environmental education, including school workshops, citizen science events, and the Indonesian Bird Atlas, a project that gathers nationwide data on bird species. Copenhagen Zoo sponsors the "Indonesian Big Year" event, which encourages birdwatchers to record sightings for use in scientific research.

"These activities connect local knowledge with global data. It helps researchers, park managers, and policymakers make better decisions about which areas need protection most," says Simon Bruslund.

Industry Partnerships and Future Dialogue

Copenhagen Zoo has also advised the palm oil producer United Plantations, which is partly Danish-owned. The company established a biodiversity section that restores degraded land and reduces pesticide use. "It's not perfect, but it shows that sustainable palm oil production is possible," says Simon Bruslund.



Photo: Copenhagen ZOO

The cooperation is based on research and transparency rather than consultancy. Copenhagen Zoo shares its results openly so that other companies can apply the same methods. "Our goal is not to make a profit. We publish everything in open access so that the approach can be copied elsewhere," says Simon Bruslund.

Social media and corporate engagement have also become tools for awareness. "Even wealthy Indonesians who once hunted now take wildlife photos," said Hariyawan Wahyudi. "Photography and social media help create new values about nature." He added that collaboration with responsible companies can support these values. "When the private sector sees the benefits of biodiversity, they can make long-term improvements that go beyond one project."

His colleague Simon Bruslund says the key to success is staying engaged. "Conservation is a long process. It's about building institutions and people's trust. Dialogue is always better than no dialogue. That is how we move forward."◆



Photo: Copenhagen ZOO

From Indonesia to Jutland: Finding Balance at The LEGO Group

From Indonesia to Jutland, Anggana Mahendra shares how joining The LEGO Group reshaped his family's life and view on life in Denmark as an international.

David Laungaard Lose

When Anggana Mahendra left Indonesia to join the LEGO Group in Denmark, he wasn't just changing jobs. He was changing his family's future.

Now, as Head of SAP Governance and Enablement, he reflects on the move from Asia to Scandinavia, the cultural lessons learned along the way, and how Denmark's work-life balance reshaped his perspective.

Could you start by introducing yourself and your role at The LEGO Group?
My name is Anggana Mahendra, and I'm from Indonesia. I moved to Denmark in January 2022, so it's been almost four years in the region now. I work at The LEGO Group as Head of SAP Governance and Enablement, focusing on IT management and system processes.

What inspired you to apply for a job in Denmark?
There were several reasons. After working in Malaysia for more than eight years, I wanted a change — something that would allow me to make a bigger impact in a truly global company. When The LEGO Group reached out, I was both surprised and excited, because relocation from another continent is rarely straightforward.

It felt like the right time for a new challenge. Another motivation was my family. I wanted a place where my children could have good opportunities and a strong education. Denmark is known for that, and it seemed like a great environment to settle down as a family.

What surprised you most about living and working here?
The first big surprise was definitely how smooth things are — from taxes to daily routines. The second surprise was how relaxed the school system is compared with Indonesia or Malaysia. My children are much happier here because there's less pressure and more focus on well-being.

The third surprise — or maybe a cultural shock — was the way decisions are made in Danish workplaces. People like to talk to many colleagues before deciding anything. It's very inclusive, but it takes time! In other countries, decisions can be faster, but here collaboration really matters.

How was the transition from Indonesian to Danish work culture?
I've worked in several countries during my 20+ year career, so we are used to adapting. Still, the transition here was different because of Denmark's strong focus on work-life balance.

In Asia, it's common to work evenings or weekends. Here, people value time off. I sometimes have to stop myself from opening my laptop after hours. When I see new colleagues from Asia doing the same — working weekends — I remind them that there will always be pressure at work, but you don't need to sacrifice your personal time to prove yourself.

How has your international background helped you in your role?
Having worked across cultures teaches you to listen and understand before reacting. Sometimes communication styles differ — a direct comment might sound harsh to someone from Asia, but it's just normal feedback in Denmark.

I try to encourage my team, especially those from Asia, not to take disagreements personally. In Danish workplaces, debates are about ideas, not people. Once the meeting ends, everyone moves on — that's something I had to learn myself, and now I help others with it too.

What about life outside of work?
Outside of work, I mostly spend time with my family and the Indonesian community here in Jutland. We have a group called the "Indonesian Muslim Society in Denmark (IMSD)", supported by the embassy. Indonesians living in Aalborg, Aarhus, Herning, and Kolding meet once a month. We rotate the location and share food, ideas, and experiences. It helps us stay connected to home while adapting to life here.


Anggana Mahendra

What advice would you give to others considering moving to Denmark?
I always ask people about their motivation first. Moving to another country is a huge step — new culture, new food, new weather. Don't move only for the salary; Denmark offers great benefits like healthcare and education, but motivation should go beyond money.

If someone truly wants to make a global impact — for example, by working with international companies like The LEGO Group, Novo Nordisk or DSV — then Denmark is a great place. But it's important to understand the challenges too: cultural differences, food, and the need to adapt.

If you move with children, make sure you really want to stay for several years, so they can settle into local schools. Relocating again too soon can be tough for them.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to live and work here. It's been a big learning experience — both professionally and personally. Denmark offers a calm, balanced life, and The LEGO Group provides an inspiring, inclusive workplace. ◆

Danish companies look to Southeast Asia

Danish companies increasingly target Southeast Asia, with Indonesia as a key market. Strong demographics, green initiatives, and local partnerships drive growth, while DI supports firms navigating bureaucracy, workforce development, and investment opportunities.

David Laungaard Lose

Southeast Asia is drawing increasing attention from Danish companies looking for stable growth and diversification. With strong demographics, improving infrastructure, and governments focused on attracting green investment, countries such as Indonesia are becoming key destinations for Danish business expansion.

To support that shift, the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) has opened DI's regional office for Southeast Asia in Ho Chi Minh City. The regional office helps Danish companies establish themselves in the region, including markets such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines.

"The countries in the region are seeing strong growth, and we are experiencing increasing demand from our members who want to enter the market and diversify their activities and risk. Indonesia is a good example of where the opportunities are - a large, stable market with a young population and strong political focus on sustainability," says Sanne Lyng Marsland, Head of DI Asia Hub.

Indonesia as a Regional Example
With 281 million inhabitants and steady GDP growth of about 5 percent, Indonesia is Southeast Asia's largest economy. It combines a growing middle class with an expanding manufacturing sector and ambitious green targets.

According to Oxford Economics, the region may grow by up to 6 percent annually through 2029 - faster than both Europe and the United States.

"Indonesia is an interesting country for many Danish companies to look towards. The domestic market is big, the workforce is strong, and the government is open to international cooperation. That combination makes Indonesia a key example of what the region can offer," says Thomas Skov-Hansen, General Manager, Partnership at DI.

Danish exports to Indonesia reached 2.1 billion kroner in 2024, up almost 50 percent from 2023. Machinery, food products, and chemicals lead exports, while imports mainly consist of palm oil, processed materials, and textiles.

Navigating Local Conditions
Doing business in Southeast Asia remains complex, and Indonesia is no exception. Companies must navigate bureaucracy, licensing rules, and regional differences between provinces. "The system can be difficult to navigate at first. That's why local guidance is essential," says Sanne Lyng Marsland.

According to Sanne Lyng Marsland and Thomas Skov-Hansen, it may take months to register a company, and regulations differ from European norms. Tax procedures, import rules, and land laws can challenge first-time investors. Although reforms have improved transparency, corruption and administrative delays still occur.

To help Danish firms, DI has partnered with a large regional and local partner, which provides step-by-step assistance - from legal registration to HR and accounting.

"We offer support for setting up companies, handling administrative tasks such as legal assistance, HR outsourcing, and accounting, and we also provide advice on mergers, acquisitions, and due diligence. Having a reliable partner on the ground saves time, and companies can focus on their key business activities and operations," says Sanne Lyng Marsland.

Workforce Potential
The region's workforce is one of its greatest advantages. Indonesia's median age is below 30, and about two million young people enter the labour market each year. The government invests heavily in vocational and digital skills to support industrial and green transitions.

"Many employees are motivated and eager to learn. That makes it easier for Danish companies to build local teams and grow sustainably," explains Sanne Lyng Marsland.


Photo: DI

Her colleague Thomas Skov-Hansen elaborates: "There is a need to develop and strengthen technical education in the region, and DI is therefore establishing partnerships - and plans to do so in Indonesia as well - to strengthen technical education. This is best achieved by getting schools and the business community to work together."


Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

According to Thomas Skov-Hansen, "It's a long-term investment," but he explains that it creates a workforce that understands international standards and can operate at a high level. Language differences also matter. English proficiency remains low outside major cities, so some companies employ bilingual coordinators or provide language courses. "That small step can make a big difference in productivity and quality," he elaborates.

> "Many employees are motivated and eager to learn. That makes it easier for Danish companies to build local teams and grow sustainably,"

Long-Term Outlook
As global supply chains diversify beyond China, Southeast Asia is becoming an essential hub for trade and production. DI expects more Danish companies to follow the first movers into Indonesia and Vietnam.

"We're seeing a clear shift. It's not about moving activities out of China. It's about balancing risk and building a stronger global footprint," Sanne Lyng Marsland explains.

Sanne and Thomas are inviting Danish companies already established in or with an interest in Indonesia to join an informal roundtable discussion in Jakarta on the 2nd of December. "Our goal is to make it easier for Danish companies to succeed here. Southeast Asia isn't just a place to outsource - it's a region to grow with," Sanne Lyng Marsland concludes. ◆

Indonesia's badminton passion:

"It's a matter of life or death"

David Laungaard Lose

In Indonesia, badminton is not just a sport.

For millions of Indonesians, it's part of everyday life, and the country's top players are treated as superstars. That's how Danish badminton expert and former national team player Joachim Fisher described it after experiencing the passion firsthand. "When they win, the whole country celebrates. When they lose, people are genuinely sad. Badminton means everything to them," he said.

For decades, Indonesia has been one of the world's most successful badminton nations, producing countless champions. According to Fisher, both structure and national culture are behind that continued success: "They have proud traditions and have always had great champions. In recent years, they've even established their own innovative national league outside the international calendar, where they have changed the normal setup for tournaments. Huge investments are being made, and the enthusiasm among fans is enormous," said Fisher.

The Indonesia Open in Jakarta is, according to many players, one of the most intense tournaments in the world, not because of prize money, but because of the atmosphere. "It's the craziest tournament to play. The crowd is absolutely ecstatic, you have to experience it to understand it," said Fisher.

Jonatan Christie: "I'm just grateful"

One of the brightest stars in modern Indonesian badminton is Jonatan Christie, who earlier this year won the Denmark Open in Odense.

For the 27-year-old, the victory was both emotional and symbolic. "I'm very happy and very grateful because God helped me a lot in this match so that I could become the champion at the Denmark Open," said Christie. He called Denmark "a comfortable place to play," especially because of the calm surroundings and the enthusiastic Danish audience: "Odense is a quiet city, but the crowd is always passionate. It's a really nice place to compete." As for the competition level, he added: "All the best players came to compete in this tournament, so there's really nothing more to say about their quality."

A new phase for Indonesian badminton

Christie saw his victory as part of a transition period for Indonesian badminton.

"I hope that my result at the Denmark Open will make me more confident and allow me to play more enjoyably in the next tournaments," he said. He acknowledged that Indonesian badminton was currently adjusting to internal changes: "I fully believe that Indonesia will remain one of the world's badminton powers. I believe that Indonesia will remain one of the badminton powers in the world," he explained.

A superpower in constant motion

When people talked about Indonesian badminton, words like technique and elegance often came up. Fisher pointed out that Indonesia's creative and fluid playing style had long been admired around the world, even in Denmark. "Indonesian players have a special rhythm and elegance. At our national team practice in Fenmark, we sometimes said, "Let's play like the Indonesians." That said a lot about their quality," Fisher noted.

Although China had dominated the badminton world for many years, Indonesia remained one of its true superpowers. "They've always been in the top three globally, along with China, Japan, and Korea. On the men's side, Denmark has been the only Western nation able to really challenge them," said Fisher. But great expectations also brought pressure.

"The whole country expects their players to win. Sometimes that pressure becomes too much. Not every athlete can handle the weight of an entire nation's expectations," Fisher explained.

A bright future if balance is maintained

Fisher had no doubt that Indonesia would continue to be among the world's elite.

"They'll keep producing stars like Christie. They already have young players breaking through in major tournaments."

He highlighted Gregoria Mariska Tunjung and Putri Kusuma Wardani as promising women's singles players and the men's doubles pair Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri as one of the best in the world. At the same time, he warned that keeping top players healthy would be key.

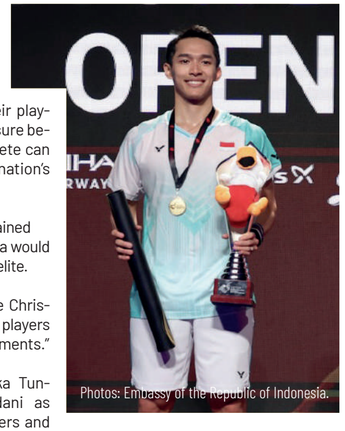
"We see the same in Denmark with Viktor Axelsen. As players get older, staying injury-free is crucial. If Christie can stay fit, he's definitely one of the favorites for Olympic gold," Fisher concluded.

A country where badminton is far more than a sport

For Fisher, badminton in Indonesia represented far more than a sport, it was deeply woven into the country's national identity.

He described a culture of immense pride and respect surrounding the game, where players were treated as national heroes and every match carried emotional weight. Even small details, such as how names were written or results reported, were taken seriously by fans who lived and breathed badminton.

The sport was followed with the kind of intensity usually reserved for matters of national importance, reflecting how deeply it ran through Indonesian society. "There's a massive audience of fans who followed it as if it were a matter of life and death." ◆



Photos: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

> "The whole country expects their players to win. Sometimes that pressure becomes too much. Not every athlete can handle the weight of an entire nation's expectations,"


Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

Serving Suggestion: Arrange both smørrebrød on a wooden board, garnish with fresh herbs and a lemon wedge. Perfect for a cultural food showcase or light lunch!

Indonesian-Danish fusion recipes

Rendang Smørrebrød & Tempe Orek Smørrebrød

RENDANG SMØRREBRØD

Ingredients (2 servings)
2 slices dark rye or whole grain bread - 100 g cooked rendang beef, shredded or sliced thinly - 1 tbsp mayonnaise or aioli (optional) - A few leaves of fresh lettuce - 2–3 slices of tomato or pickled cucumber - Fried shallots or crispy onions for topping - A few fresh coriander leaves or parsley for garnish

Instructions
1. Lightly toast the rye bread. 2. Spread a thin layer of mayonnaise or aioli on the bread. 3. Place lettuce leaves evenly on top. 4. Add the shredded rendang. 5. Garnish with tomato or pickled cucumber slices, fried shallots, and coriander. 6. Serve open-faced — no top bread — like a traditional smørrebrød.

Tip
Use leftover rendang for convenience; serve slightly warm or at room temperature.

TEMPE OREK SMØRREBRØD

Ingredients (2 servings)
2 slices rye or sourdough bread - 100 g tempe orek (sweet-spicy stir-fried tempeh) - 1 tbsp cream cheese or hummus (optional base) - A few slices of cucumber or pickled red onion - Fresh microgreens or scallions, thinly sliced - Sesame seeds (optional garnish).

Instructions
1. Toast the bread slices. 2. Spread cream cheese or hummus as a smooth base. 3. Spoon a generous portion of tempe orek on top. 4. Add cucumber or pickled onion for freshness. 5. Sprinkle microgreens and sesame seeds. 6. Serve open-faced with a squeeze of lime for extra brightness.

Tip
The sweet-spicy tempe pairs beautifully with tangy Scandinavian flavors.



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Liberal Alliance:

"The liberal society is the only one that offers freedom for diversity."

Samantha Siedow

Liberal Alliance Member of Parliament Alexander Ryle, the party's leading candidate in Copenhagen's upcoming municipal election, says his campaign will focus on reducing bureaucracy, expanding housing and keeping the capital open to international talent while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Liberal Alliance is a Danish political party that advocates for free-market economics, lower taxes, and individual liberties. Founded in 2007, the party positions itself as a classical liberal force, emphasizing personal responsibility, limited government, and economic growth through deregulation and entrepreneurship.

Ryle, 34, has represented the Greater Copenhagen constituency in Parliament since 2022. The son of a Danish mother and an American father, with British grandparents, Ryle says his multicultural background has shaped his political outlook. "I have always believed that the unique characteristics and diversity that different people and cultures contribute make life more interesting to live," he said on his page on the Liberal Alliance's website. "In my opinion, the liberal society is the only one that offers the freedom for diversity that I value so highly."

Housing affordability is a key focus of Ryle's campaign. He argues that building more homes is essential to stabilize prices and points out that about one-fifth of Copenhagen's housing stock is non-profit – a level he deems sufficient. "I don't think it's the municipality's main task to provide cheap homes that are funded by tax money to 20% of people living in Copenhagen," he said.

He cautioned against limiting new development. "If we don't build new houses, then we become a closed club for people who can already afford to live here," he said. Ryle supports taller buildings and improved traffic planning to reduce congestion, saying car routes should go around the city rather than through it.

Ryle's own international background has influenced his views on integration and labor. He said Copenhagen should remain open to skilled workers and international residents. "It doesn't matter if you're born here or if you came yesterday, you should be welcomed," he said.

He supports the EU's internal market for enabling free movement of labor but expressed caution about immigration from outside the EU. "Some of those people would also come from North Africa, the Middle East, some countries where statistically a lot of them will not come up here and contribute with jobs," he said. "They will primarily come here to get a welfare check." Ryle said Liberal Alliance could do more to engage international residents. "We're not doing enough," he said. "I think it's actually difficult to get reach of expats."



Alexander Ryle, lead candidate for Liberal Alliance in Copenhagen.

With the municipal elections approaching, Ryle says his priorities are reducing bureaucracy, promoting growth, and maintaining Copenhagen as a city that is both efficient and livable. "I'm not afraid of things we don't know," he said. "We should embrace the opportunities that come from openness, innovation, and diversity – but we must also make sure the system remains fair and sustainable." ◆

Moderaterne:

"It's hypocritical to praise internationals locally but talk them down nationally."

Tristan Fender

Ellen Emilie is 23 years old, studies Emergency and Risk Management, and is now running as Moderaterne's lead candidate in Copenhagen. She represents a generation that loves the city but feels increasingly pushed to its edges by rising housing costs and limited affordable options. "I'm running because young people need a real say in the planning of our city," she said. "We're being pushed further away from the city we call home. We can and need to do better."

"We need to do everything in our power to lower costs," she said. "When you build accessible student and youth homes, they can't be this expensive. One way to do this is to build them so they can be reused afterwards. If developers know they can sell them after a period of time, they can accept lower costs from the start."

Current rules only allow temporary student housing to exist for 10 years. She wants that extended to 15. "Ten years isn't long for investors. Extending this time would help lower monthly costs for residents." She also supports quicker, more flexible construction. "We should use temporary student housing to relieve pressure while planning longer-term builds or converting underused spaces," she said.

Another theme that Emilie brought up was how hard it can be for newcomers to access housing without the right network. "Even as a Dane, I can't get into some lists," she said. "Waiting lists should be open, not based on knowing someone. Otherwise you create closed clubs." New arrivals often don't know where to turn when faced with unfair costs or sudden moves. "We need to make it easier to understand your rights and challenge landlords when something's wrong," she said.

"I'm pretty liberal economically," she said. "We can't change the structure, but we can use it smartly. Buying up big shares of housing or imposing rigid rent caps sounds simple, but when the state decides who gets in and at what price, you become the bad guy, and you still haven't fixed the supply." Instead, she wants a mix of incentives and stronger regulation. "We should make it attractive to build more homes while stopping things like professional Airbnb hollowing out the rental market. It's fine to rent out your home for a few weeks, not use it as a hotel."

National politics has grown sharper in its rhetoric around immigration. Ellen Emilie doesn't shy away from that. "There are so many international residents in Copenhagen who help pay for the services we all use," she said. "It's hypocritical to praise internationals locally but talk them down nationally."



Ellen Emilie, lead candidate for Moderaterne (The Moderates) in Copenhagen.

For Ellen Emilie, this election is not just about party politics. It is about a shift in who gets to shape the city. "Copenhagen is a young city," she said. "Decisions about its future should include young people, not just talk about them. I want a greener, more open, more affordable city. One where students and internationals aren't left on the margins." And to those who can vote: "Participate. Vote. Join a party. Share what works and what doesn't. Your perspective helps us make Copenhagen better." ◆

Aarhus Mayor Anders Winnerskjold (S)

"Be confident in bringing your family here."

Julie Llopes

At 33 years old, Anders Winnerskjold is the youngest mayor in Aarhus' recent history. An achievement that tops a political career started two decades ago, when he joined the Social Democratic Youth of Denmark at 13. By 2018, he started holding a seat on the City Council and became Councilor for Social Affairs and Employment in 2022. He was finally appointed as mayor on October 4, 2024, following the resignation of Jacob Bundsgaard.

Winnerskjold has made the housing market one of his main campaign topics. "I think it's hard to find affordable housing in Aarhus," he said. He wants one in every four new homes or apartments to be an "almen boliger", Denmark's publicly funded, non-profit housing units. Under this model, excessive owner-profits would be prevented and keep rents within reach.

Winnerskjold wants to make the job search easier for newcomers and ensure that internationals living in Aarhus see it as a place where they can build a life. "Be confident in bringing your family to Aarhus," he said, pointing to the importance of international schools, kindergartens, and staff programs.

To support internationals, he is working to provide both practical support and create social initiatives for "a vibrant city where there's activity." Integration must be a two-way effort: "I can make it easier with welcoming events. But I can't force anyone to invite their international colleague over for dinner - even if I think people should still do it."

Another one of Winnerskjold's key ambitions is to introduce school meals in Aarhus' public schools. "We know that a good meal is key for all children in terms of staying focused in class," he said. The cost of these meals would be around 400 to 450 DKK a month, but Winnerskjold stresses, "I want to keep the pressure as low as possible," meaning that low-income families could pay a reduced rate.

With Aarhus growing rapidly, the question of rising energy demands has become increasingly important. Liberal Alliance's lead candidate suggested transforming the Studstrup wood-based power plant into a nuclear power plant. An idea that Winnerskjold said he is against. "I just think it's not relevant in Denmark." Instead, he suggests the development of heat pumps drawing on the Earth's internal heat.


Anders Winnerskjold (Social Democrats), 33 years old, has been the mayor of Aarhus since 2024.

Among his other priorities, Winnerskjold noted the cost of city bus tickets should be lowered.

Winnerskjold said that the city's strength has to do with the social fabric that holds it together: "We have a great social system. If you get sick, you get help. If you need support for your kids, you get help." He plans to make sure that Aarhus remains a city where people can thrive at every age - "a good place to be as a child, as a young person, and as an adult." ◆

We contacted Nicolaj Bang (C), the main opponent to Winnerskjold, for an interview. He did not reply.

Odense Mayor Peter Rahbæk Juel (S)

"Odense's success also depends on internationals."

Tina Jimmy Dastur

Odense's sitting mayor since 2017, representing Socialdemokratiet (S), Peter Rahbæk Juel's political journey kicked off in the 1990s when he joined Danmarks Socialdemokratiske Ungdom and Frit Forum as a student.

In 2006, he was elected to the Odense City Council. By 2013, he had become his party's political spokesperson in the council. Today, he is its longest-serving member.

Now running for a third term, Juel is focused on future-proofing Odense's development. His campaign prioritises improving welfare services, creating more job opportunities, expanding the city's green spaces, and strengthening community life.
"Odense has been through a huge transition in the last 10 years. We were among the cities hit hardest by the financial crisis that broke our old industrial structure," he said. The crisis was instrumental in changing the face of business in Odense, making it more tech-driven – an approach mirrored in the new Odense University Hospital project, which is intended to strengthen the collaboration between research and healthcare.

While large-scale development is a priority for the mayor this election season, he says it must not come at the cost of Odense's green ambitions. "Scale-wise, Odense is a big city, but it's also a place where you can relax. It's a strategic point for me to preserve this green standard," he said, adding that the municipality will work toward carbon neutrality by 2030.

His 2030 ambitions also include creating 30,000 private sector jobs by 2035. Many of these, he maintained, must be filled by internationals: "We need the best and brightest minds to help us fulfil our vision of the city."

Over the last decade, Odense has been strengthening its international community by attracting foreign talent and supporting their families' integration. A key marker in this effort came earlier this year with the opening of International House Odense – a one-stop shop for job seeking advice, networking opportunities, and community events.

"I participated in the opening ceremony and was thrilled to meet 700+ internationals," Juel said, adding that it signalled that Odense is "a globally prepared city where internationals not only get help in an expat capacity but also as citizens of Odense".

He believes that supporting internationals will go a long way in promoting inclusion across society and consequently, in helping Odense achieve its goals: "If we want Odense to have success, internationals in Odense also have to have success – not only in their studies and jobs but also as a family."


Peter Rahbæk Juel (Social Democrats) has been the Mayor of Odense since 2017.

His welcoming take comes at a time when discourse on immigration among Social Democrats in Parliament has grown increasingly heated. While he expresses reservations about refugees and immigrant communities, he makes it clear that he holds a different opinion on internationals who come to study and work.

"It's important for me to say that being a citizen of Odense is not just for those of us who are born here." ◆

We contacted Lars Christian Lilleholt (V), the main opponent to Rahbæk Juel, for an interview. He declined to be interviewed.

Aalborg Mayor Lasse Frimand Jensen (S)

"It's important for me that there is easy contact for our residents to their mayor."

Tina Jimmy Dastur

When Lasse Frimand Jensen was elected mayor of Aalborg in 2023, he made history as the city's youngest mayor at 37 years old. This month, as he contests local elections to retain his seat, he also carries the weight of continuing a century of uninterrupted Social Democratic leadership in Aalborg Municipality.

The son of the former Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, Frank Jensen, Aalborg's young mayor wears his love for Aalborg on his left shoulder with a tattoo of the city's coat of arms – a reflection of his commitment to his city and people, and his youthful brand of politics.

"I don't sit in my office and just have a feeling of how the city is," he said. "I'm out there speaking to people. It's important for me that there is easy contact for our residents to their mayor. And that goes for the international community as well."

This election season, empowering Aalborg's internationals, strengthening the welfare system, accelerating climate action, and improving community life for residents are among the mayor's top priorities.

On climate, Jensen is serious about lowering CO2 emissions. He references a bold project the city is undertaking to capture carbon expelled from industrial chimneys and use it to create sustainable aviation fuel for Copenhagen Airport, Aalborg Airport, and Scandinavian Airlines. Simultaneously, Jensen wants to implement eco-friendly policies at the grassroots level across areas like transport, energy, and waste.

Another issue central to the mayor's campaign is finding the right balance between attracting and retaining international students. "To bridge the gap, we have been working on unbiased recruitment, where we've asked for job applications without mention of names, nationality, and age so that we can focus on competencies," Jensen explained. He also highlighted the city's Danish Employability Program as an initiative in this retention effort. As part of it, students are enrolled in intensive Danish language classes, and made to visit companies and attend workshops on Danish work culture.

Beyond international students, Jensen is focused on inviting more skilled international talent to his city.For many politicians, the expat card is a convenient political tool during election season. But for Jensen, internationals have long been integral to his vision for his city.
In 2013, he ran a political campaign in English. In 2015, he established International House North Denmark to help internationals integrate seamlessly into professional and sociocultural life in Aalborg.


Lasse Frimand Jensen (S) has been the mayor of Aalborg since 2023.

Ten years later, he is still pushing for better integration. "In the latest budget, we've agreed to allocate 15 million DKK to support our international school and expand its capacity, so we can accommodate 240 children on the waiting list. We also gave more money to International House so they can better help partners and spouses of families," he said.

Through such initiatives, Jensen hopes to bring more diversity to Aalborg because "the more diversity we have, the more creativity we have, and the more creativity we have, the more growth we have." ◆

Jan Nymark Thaysen (V)

"If Aalborg wants to be a big city, we need internationals."

Samantha Siedow

Aalborg's Jan Nymark Thaysen (V) says the North Jutland city stands at a crossroads. As aging demographics and economic pressures mount, he believes growth, internationalization and sustainability must define the city's future.

Thaysen, 54, a member of Venstre (The Liberal Party of Denmark), currently serves as Aalborg's Deputy Mayor for Urban and Rural Affairs. He has been named Venstre's lead candidate for the 2025 municipal election, where he will run for mayor of Aalborg, one of Denmark's largest cities.

Venstre, despite its name, is a center-right party that supports free markets, lower taxes, and individual freedoms while maintaining the country's welfare state. It leans pro-business and rural, with a moderate position on immigration.

He says Aalborg's rising municipal expenses, particularly for elderly care, make it urgent to expand private sector job creation. Residents aged 65+ make up almost 20 percent of Aalborg Municipality's population.

"We need to invest in creating more private jobs in Aalborg Municipality," he said. "We are too few to take care of all the elderly and therefore we are simply dependent on an international workforce."

Nearly 50 percent of Aalborg's university graduates leave the city within two years, representing a worrying trend for a city that is already in desperate need of workers, according to Thaysen. "I want to keep students here, to use their knowledge in Aalborg and stay to work here," he said.

Like other cities, Aalborg's retail heart has hollowed out. "We have all these empty boutique windows," he said. "I want to see a pleasant and rich life in Aalborg's city center." To revive it, Thaysen wants to turn vacant shops into cultural centers and create more entertainment and art performances in multiple languages.

He believes Aalborg's energy and growth are driven by its international residents - over 18,000 of whom call the city home.

"It's a wealth to have a multiethnic society, composed of different nationalities," Thaysen said. He pushed for expansion of the Skipper Clement International School, which recently received new budget support.

"One of the first things you ask, if there are international workers looking to relocate, is 'what about school for our children,'" Thaysen noted. Thaysen's platform prioritizes sustainability, aiming to plant one million trees each year and establish new natural areas.

"We need to make sure that we are one of Denmark's greenest municipalities," he said. "We have to remember that there is something we have to leave to our future generations. And we have a great obligation to take care of the natural values we have."



Jan Nymark Thayse, Venstre's (The Liberal Party of Denmark) lead candidate in Aalborg.

A self-described liberal, Thaysen promotes cutting bureaucracy, improving conditions for entrepreneurs, and creating Denmark's best business municipality. He advocates fewer fees, faster case processing, and "obvious reasons for establishing a business" in Aalborg.

According to him, none of it will succeed without international talent. "if we want to be a big city. Instead of just being a big country town, then we need the international advantage," Thaysen said. ◆

Frederiksberg Mayor Michael Vindfeldt (S)

"I do not align with my party's national policy on immigration."


Michael Vindfeldt, 44, of the Social Democrats, has been the mayor of Frederiksberg since 2022.

Bernardo Basilici Menini

Frederiksberg is the fifth-largest city in Denmark by number of international voters, roughly 10 percent of the population. Four years ago, after decades of Conservative rule, a center-left coalition won and appointed the city's first Social Democratic Mayor, Michael Vindfeldt. The 44-year-old mayor is now running again in the upcoming election.

What are the main points of the agenda for the next few years?
One of the most important things we had to deal with last term was solving the economy and cutting some expenses. This is very crucial to me because I will never compromise on the financial situation.

In terms of city development?
We call ourselves the green heart of the capital, but I want to make Frederiksberg even greener. Today, Frederiksberg has more than 10,000 trees, and I want to plant an additional 500 over the next four years. We also want to open more public spaces for sports, as is happening with the development of the Forum.

What are the plans for Forum?
In Frederiksberg, there isn't enough space for sports. If you have children, or if you're an older person who wants to play hockey or take part in other activities, it's quite hard to join a team because there simply isn't enough room. That's why we're partnering with a private investor to buy the Forum and transform it into a sports center. It will offer facilities for gymnastics, athletics, basketball, karate, and possibly padel.

Do you think voters will reward or penalize you for prioritizing the budget?
Even if I'm punished for fixing the economy and for cutting expenses, it was still the right thing to do. In your own household, if your finances aren't in order - if you spend more than you make - then nothing else really matters. In Denmark, we have rules stating that if a municipal council acts irresponsibly, the national government can take control of the municipality. That will not happen while I'm mayor.

Internationals living in Frederiksberg: what are their main issues?
Many of the issues are the same as those that affect all residents of Frederiksberg: how we keep the city green and how we maintain good schools and kindergartens. But there are still areas where we can improve for internationals. For example, not all of the municipality's websites and services are available in English yet.

The housing problem: Prices are skyrocketing.
It is very difficult to find a place to live because housing prices are far too high. Our main project to address this is connected to the hospital, which will be closing. The municipality has purchased that area, and it will be developed into a "city within the city," with new housing and facilities. Part of these new apartments must be non-profit, so that more people can afford to live in Frederiksberg.

Your party, the Social Democrats, wants more restrictive policies on immigration at the national level.
I do not fully align with my party's national policy on immigration. We face significant challenges in ensuring we have enough workers. It seems unreasonable to send home people who have proven that they want to be part of our community. ◆

Michael Brautsch (C)

"Frederiksberg couldn't manage without international workers, but we have a language problem."

Tristan Fender

Michael Brautsch isn't a career politician. A theologian and philosopher by training, he worked in finance and television before entering politics. His path began in 2017, when the Conservative Party – long dominant in Frederiksberg – asked him to help with their campaign. He started as "just one of 13 conservatives, by far the largest group in the town hall. But I was just sort of a nobody," he recalled. Brautsch was asked to take over after the historical defeat. "Frederiksberg Conservatives had governed for 112 years straight. We had never not been the ones in power," he explained. "Then suddenly we lost."

Elder care: "98th out of 98"
Another core issue is elderly care. "We received a report that Frederiksberg is now number 98 out of 98 municipalities in satisfaction," Brautsch said. The municipality spends around one billion DKK a year on elder care, he notes. He also brings up the problem of instability in home care. "It's not nice for old people when a different person visits them every day. Often they can't understand them because they don't speak Danish well," he said. "You sit in your apartment, you can't move around, you can't say anything."

However, Brautsch doesn't blame foreign workers – he praises them. "We couldn't manage without them," he said. "But we do have a language problem. Elderly people can't just have a conversation in English. It has to be Danish. So we need a balance: we can't set the barrier too high, because then there won't be enough hands. But we can't let people sit isolated, either."

Language and integration
Frederiksberg has a significant international population. About 10 percent of voters are foreign nationals. Many receive free language education, but courses are often fast-tracked. Brautsch recognized a cultural challenge: "In small countries like Denmark, we constantly hear other languages. Danish is difficult. But if you work in elderly care or service, language is essential." When asked about whether Denmark is too accommodating in English, he paused. "We have to balance those things," he said. "We can't just say everything must be in Danish at the town hall. If we do that, no one will want to work here. Denmark depends on foreign workers. That's one of the reasons our economy is so strong. But we also have to remember our language. It's a catch-22 situation."


Michael Brautsch, lead mayoral candidate for Det Konservative Folkeparti (The Conservatives) in Frederiksberg.

Immigration, culture, and democracy
Brautsch is clear on where he sees the line: "If you want to come and contribute and live by our rules – not our religion, but our rules – then welcome," he said. "But if you work against democracy, human rights, or create subcultures that go against our culture, that's a problem." He believes Denmark is open-hearted – but expects contribution. "As I tell my children, we have to do things together. You have to help. That's how we look at society."◆

Capital Region's chairman Lars Gaardhøj:

"We should have equal quality in public healthcare everywhere."

Lars Gaardhøj has been chairman of the Capital Region for four years. Now the Social Democrats' lead candidate is running to head the newly created Region Østdanmark. He is facing the challenge of uniting two healthcare systems into one – without leaving anyone behind.

Tristan Fender

As chairman of the Capital Region since 2021 and Social Democratic lead candidate for the new Region Østdanmark, Lars Gaardhøj stands at the centre of one of the country's biggest structural changes in years: the merger of the Capital Region and Region Zealand. "I'm 50 years old now, so I'm not so young anymore," he said."My political career started a long time ago. I actually tried to run for the Folketing in 2007. Then in 2009, I was asked to run in the regional elections – and I got elected."

At the time, he was juggling politics with family life. "It was the same summer my wife and I had twins, and we already had a two-year-old son. I didn't really have a campaign, just a few posters. But I got the last seat in the Social Democratic group."

From there, he found his political focus. "The regions are primarily about health politics," he explained. "Back then there was a big debate about private hospitals. That was my motivation at the time." In 2021, after Sophie Hæstorp Andersen stepped down to run for lord mayor of Copenhagen, Gaardhøj became chairman of the Capital Region. "I was lucky, or maybe clever, or maybe good at it," he said. "Now I've been chairman for a bit more than four years." This election, however, is different. A new region is being created – and with it, a new healthcare structure.

A merger driven by inequality
The merger of the Capital Region and Region Zealand is designed to address what Gaardhøj calls "a growing inequality" between urban and rural healthcare. "Over the years, the Capital Region has been the biggest in population, while Zealand has a big geography," Gaardhøj explained. "It has been difficult for Zealand to recruit doctors, while for the large hospitals in the Capital Region it has been very easy. That difference has been growing." The result is a two-speed system. "The health service you get in the Capital Region is just stronger than the one in Zealand," he said. "That's unfair – we have a publicly funded healthcare system. It should be the same quality everywhere."

New health councils and fairer access
The reform also brings new governance tools. "We will make six health councils where regional and municipal politicians work together," Gaardhøj said. "They will share responsibility for strengthening the health service in their area." The councils will play a key role in equalising access. "Right now, there's more funding in big cities. These councils will be able to get more resources to areas where the health service is on a lower level. Over the coming years, it will be more equal – and I think that's right."

Five promises for the new region
Gaardhøj wants to ensure doctors are distributed more fairly across the new region. "Right now, how the doctors are scattered over the geography is uneven, it's unfair. We have to do that in a more reasonable way," he said. He also plans to continue reducing waiting times for treatment. "After COVID and the nurses' strike, waiting times skyrocketed. We've lowered them back to pre-COVID levels. We will continue focusing on that, because waiting for treatment affects your work, your family, your life."
Improving emergency response times is another focus. "In the Capital Region, almost 100% of ambulances arrive within 15 minutes in high emergencies. In parts of Zealand, response times are lower. That has to improve." He also wants to strengthen psychiatry, which he says has been "under-prioritized for decades." The goal is better and faster care, especially for children and young people. "Waiting times are too long – and it's even worse in rural areas due to a lack of specialists."

Finally, Gaardhøj stresses the importance of good working conditions. "If we want to succeed with all these ambitions, we need the best workplaces in Denmark," he said. "A merger brings a lot of structural and IT annoyances. If people get frustrated, they'll leave. We need to keep them."

His larger goal is sustainability. "We have a shortage of workers and an ageing population. We need more treatment close to where people live and more preventative care. The reform should reshape the healthcare system so it remains sustainable."

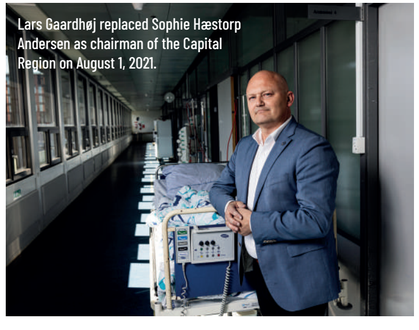
About funding: "I'm not worried"
Asked whether funds will be diverted from the capital to rural areas, Gaardhøj was clear. "I'm not worried about that," he said. "We're still a small country. It's not like sending money abroad. If one hospital or area needs support, we can do that." He acknowledged that some in the capital might fear longer waiting times. "To be honest, that could happen," he said. "But remember, the Capital Region has the most doctors in the country. If we go down a bit and Zealand rises, I don't think it will be a big problem."

International nurses and foreign workers
One of the most sensitive issues in the healthcare sector is staffing – particularly the recent government decision to cut residence permit applications for many international nurses outside the EU. "It's a difficult and tricky situation," Gaardhøj said. "It was right to open for work permits to get nurses from abroad. But then too many came at once." The Capital Region took in the most international nurses. "We tried to get them on board in a good way," he said. "I've met with many, especially from Iran but also other countries. The rules are so tight. I've tried to tell the government to make this more pragmatic, because we need internationals."

The government's decision, he said, reflects capacity limits. "They opened too much and had too many come. We couldn't absorb them. It was unfair to bring people here without being able to integrate them properly." But Gaardhøj emphasized Denmark still relies on international healthcare workers. "We are an open society and economy. A lot of the wealth created in Denmark is thanks to foreigners working here. Many hospitals and companies couldn't run without them."

On voting rights and contribution
The current parliamentary debate over restricting voting rights for foreigners living in Denmark also touches a nerve for him. "I think it's a strange perspective," he said. "People come here, work, pay taxes – so of course they should vote."

"I welcome foreigners," he added. "Copenhagen and many hospitals couldn't run without them. You should keep that in mind before taking away rights." As the elections approach, Gaardhøj's candidacy is tied closely to the success of the reform. "This is a huge change," he said. "But it's also an opportunity to create a fairer, more sustainable healthcare system for everyone in eastern Denmark."◆


Lars Gaardhøj replaced Sophie Hæstorp Andersen as chairman of the Capital Region on August 1, 2021.

GUIDE to the 2025 local elections

Municipal and regional elections will be held in Denmark on 18 November. Around half a million international residents are eligible to vote. This guide explains everything you need to know about the elections.

Romy Tarantino and Julie Llopes

On Tuesday, November 18, voters across Denmark will go to the polls for local and regional elections. These elections, held every four years, decide who will lead the municipalities and regions, Denmark's local "parliaments" that make key decisions affecting daily life.

According to the Ministry of the Interior and Health, 481,768 non-Danes will be eligible to vote on November 18. International residents currently make up around 15 percent of all eligible voters, and their influence on the elections could be significant.

Who can vote?
To vote in a municipal or regional election, a person must be at least 18 years old, live in Denmark, and reside in the municipality or region holding the election. Danish citizens automatically qualify, as citizens of the European Union, Norway, Iceland, and the United Kingdom do. Residents from other countries can also vote if they have lived in Denmark for at least four years before election day.

So, most of the internationals can vote in the upcoming elections.

These rules differ from parliamentary elections, such as the upcoming Folketing election in 2026, where only Danish citizens with a permanent address in Denmark can vote.

How to vote in the municipal and regional elections
For the next municipal and regional elections in Denmark, the first step is to know where and when to vote. This information is shown on your voting card (valgkort).

A voting card is a paper card sent by your municipality to your address shortly before election day. All eligible voters will receive their card at least five days before the election. Even though there are two elections, you will receive only one card.

If you have the right to vote but have not received your card on time, or if the information on it is incorrect, contact your municipality. You can still vote on election day without your card if you bring another ID, such as a health card, driver's license, or passport.

Once at the polling station go to the voting table indicated on your card and give it to the election official. You will receive one ballot for the municipal election and one for the regional election. If you only want to vote in one election, return the unused ballot or leave it blank.

Vote in the booth privately. Mark one cross next to the candidate or party of your choice. If you make a mistake, ask the polling supervisor for a replacement ballot. Fold your ballot to keep your choice secret and place it in the ballot box. Election officials are available if you have questions. If you want to know the candidates running in your municipality or region, you can check www.valg.dk. You can vote in advance in any municipality from Tuesday, 7 October to Friday, 14 November. Check each municipality's website for locations and opening hours.

Voting for the kommune
Denmark has 98 municipalities (kommuner), each of which will have a municipal council elected by the residents. The councils handle local matters such as schools, social services, childcare, culture, technical services, or municipal finances. After the election, the council chooses a mayor (borgmester) and a deputy mayor (viceborgmester) and decides how to distribute seats on its committees. These committees prepare decisions and, in some cases, can make decisions on their own in specific areas.

In larger municipalities, including Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, and Aalborg, there are department mayors (rådmænd). These full-time politicians are responsible for specific areas, acting like ministers within the municipality. In smaller municipalities, committee chairs carry out similar responsibilities. Municipal councils vary in size, with an odd number of seats ranging from 9 to 31, except for Copenhagen, whose City Council has 55 members.

Voting for the region
Denmark is also divided into four regions (regioner), which are mainly responsible for healthcare, regional development, and certain education and transport tasks. Following recent reforms, the regions and their council sizes are: Region Nordjylland (25 members), Region Midtjylland (31), Region Syddanmark (31), and Region Østdanmark (47).

The new Region Østdanmark was formed by merging Region Sjælland and Region Hovedstaden. The new council will prepare its work in 2026 and officially start on 1 January 2027. So, elections for Region Østdanmark will take place now for the first time.

The head of each regional council is called the regional council chair (regionsrådsformand) and is elected by council members. Like municipalities, regional councils have committees for areas such as health, finance, and regional development. These are led by council members and play a key role in running the region efficiently.

The highest concentration of international voters
Copenhagen tops the list of cities with the largest number of international residents eligible to vote. Around 103,000 foreign citizens can vote in the municipality, from a total population (including those not eligible to vote) of 667,000. This represents roughly 15–20 percent of all voters. Frederiksberg has just over 11,000 international voters.

Surprisingly, Copenhagen may not be the municipality where internationals have the greatest impact. In Ishøj, close to the capital city, 4,744 internationals can vote out of a total population of 24,384, giving them a higher share of the electorate.

In Aarhus, international voters are 29,568 within a population of approximately 373,000. Odense has 14,842 international voters among 211,000 residents, while Aalborg counts 12,443 internationals in a population of 224,000. International voters may also play a decisive role in smaller municipalities, such as Høje-Taastrup, where 9,885 internationals live among 60,000 residents; Horsens, with 9,420 among 98,000; and Gladsaxe, with 7,998 out of 70,000 residents.

ELECTION FACTS

98 + 4 Elections will be held in all of Denmark's municipalities, as well as in the four regions. In the last elections, there were five regions, but after this election, Hovedstaden and Sjælland will merge into one.

481,768 The number of foreign nationals (official definition) eligible to vote. If people with dual citizenship were considered foreign nationals, the number of foreigners who could vote would be much higher.

4,744 International voters in Ishøj. With a population of **24,384**, this may be the municipality with the highest %age of foreign residents with the right to vote.

1981 The year when internationals were allowed to vote for the first time. At that time, only **2.7 %** of the population was non-Danish (currently, it is around **16.3 %**)

9,165 Candidates ran in the 2021 local elections. Of these, **5.7** % were either immigrants or descendants.

7.5 % The election rate of candidates with only foreign citizenship. For Danes, it's **27 %**, and for descendants of immigrants, **35 %**.

85.74 % The average turnout in the Danish general elections since **1971**. For the EU Parliament elections, it's **53.78 %**.

67.98 % The average turnout in the local elections since **1970**, excluding 2001 (**85 %**), when the general elections took place on the same day.

Highest number ever
The number of non-Danish voters has reached an all-time high, both in absolute figures and as a share of the electorate, according to data from the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Digitalization, and Danmarks Statistik.

For the 2009 municipal elections, only 232,741 non-Danes were eligible to vote. Over the past 16 years, the number of international voters has more than doubled, and for the first time, more than one in ten voters is a non-Danish citizen.

International candidates
In the 2021 local elections, 9,165 people ran for a seat on a municipal council. Of these, 5.7 percent were either immigrants or descendants of immigrants, according to Danmarks Statistik, but only 1.7 percent held foreign citizenship. The first group includes people with an international background who have since become Danish citizens and hold a Danish passport. Among all candidates, fewer than 2 in 100 were non-Danish citizens.

What about those who were actually elected? Around 27 percent of Danish candidates won a seat in 2021, compared to roughly 20 percent of internationals with Danish citizenship. Only 7.5 percent of candidates with solely foreign citizenship were elected. These figures are similar to previous elections.

Interestingly, the highest election rate in 2021 was among candidates who were descendants of immigrants, at 35.4 percent. More than one in three descendant candidates won a seat, according to Danmarks Statistik. ◆



Foreigners face much higher unemployment than Danes

In 2025, foreigners are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed than Danes.

Matteo Bottero

New figures based on data from Statistics Denmark show that foreigners in Denmark face a significantly higher unemployment burden than Danish citizens. Combining data on the number of unemployed and the working-age population (18–64 years), foreigners are almost three times as likely to be unemployed as Danes.

In the second quarter of 2025, about 5.3 percent of foreigners in the working-age population were unemployed, compared to 1.9 percent among Danes. While the overall level of unemployment in Denmark remains low by international standards, the disparity between foreign and Danish residents is markedly wide.

Although foreigners make up just 14 percent of Denmark's working-age population, they account for 32 percent of all unemployed persons nationwide. The disproportionate share highlights a persistent imbalance in the country's labour market, where among the 3,082,403 Danish citizens of working age, only 57,842 (1.9 percent) are unemployed, while among the 519,232 foreigners, 27,285 (5.3 percent) are jobless. (Own calculations based on published data from Statistics Denmark, 2025, 2nd quarter.)

Majority of foreign unemployment among non-Western nationals

Among all unemployed foreigners, 67 percent are from non-Western countries, while 33 percent come from Western countries. Within that Western group, roughly one third are from EU-27 countries (excluding the UK).

The concentration of unemployment among non-Western nationals indicates that this group bears the majority of the foreign unemployment burden.

Based on the data used, 'Western' countries include all EU member states plus Andorra, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Vatican. Countries not included in this list are defined by Denmark as 'non-Western'.

Regional concentration in and around Copenhagen

The capital region is marked by a particularly high share of unemployed foreigners.

In the City of Copenhagen, foreigners account for 34 percent of all unemployed residents, slightly above the national average of 32 percent.

In the surrounding Copenhagen-area municipalities, foreigners represent a majority (52 percent of all unemployed persons), underscoring that foreign joblessness is especially pronounced in the metropolitan region.

Measuring the burden across the full working-age population

Unlike the official unemployment rate published by Statistics Denmark – 2.9 percent in August 2025 – which measures joblessness among those in the labour force (employed or active jobseekers), the figures represent the unemployment-to-population ratio, that is, the share of unemployed people within the entire adult working-age group.

This approach provides a broader perspective on how widespread unemployment is within Denmark's population, regardless of labour-force participation. It highlights the relative burden of unemployment between Danes and foreigners, even though it does not directly measure how difficult it is to find a job.

Possible reasons behind the gap

Several factors may help explain why foreigners face higher barriers to access the labour market and, consequently, a higher unemployment burden than Danes.



Matteo Bottero is an expert in EU law and policy, labor mobility, migration law, and human rights. He has held academic positions at the University of Copenhagen, the European University Institute, Dublin City University, and KU Leuven.

Language remains a major barrier: Danish proficiency is essential for most jobs, and limited skills can confine newcomers to temporary or low-skilled positions.

Discrimination and employer preferences play an important role. Research shows that applicants with non-Western names receive fewer job-interview invitations, and cultural differences or unfamiliarity with workplace norms can further discourage some employers from hiring foreigners.

The composition of immigration is another factor. While many EU citizens come to Denmark for work or study, a larger share of non-Western immigrants arrive as refugees or through family reunification, groups that statistically face greater difficulty entering stable employment.

Unrecognised qualifications and geographic clustering add to the challenge. Many immigrants struggle to have their foreign degrees or professional experience accepted, and large concentrations of foreigners in Copenhagen intensify competition for available jobs. The relatively young age profile of the foreign population also means more people in the age groups typically affected by higher unemployment.

Structural implications for labour market integration

Although the factors discussed above may help explain some of the differences, they fall short of accounting for the persistent disparity. The gap highlights a structural mismatch in labour market integration between immigrants and Danes and signals a clear inequality in economic and social outcomes.

Addressing this imbalance requires sustained attention from policymakers, social partners, private actors, and the civil society at large to better understand the mechanisms behind unequal labour market participation. A more comprehensive understanding of these structural factors can help inform initiatives aimed at improving employment opportunities for all population groups, to ensure that the promise of equal opportunity truly extends to all who call Denmark home. ◆

Most Danes believe immigrants fare worse than they actually do

Aalborg University research shows Danes consistently underestimate success in employment and education, and overestimate their crime rate. Misconceptions exist across political lines, including among left-leaning citizens and those with positive attitudes toward immigration.

The Copenhagen Post

A study from Aalborg University shows that the Danish population consistently underestimates how well non-Western immigrants and their descendants perform in employment, education, and crime.

The findings apply across the political spectrum, including among Danes with positive attitudes toward immigration of people from non-Western countries. The research indicates that even left-leaning citizens assume immigrants fare worse than the data shows. In other words, it's not a perception coming also from the right.

The findings

The survey, based on data from 1,812 ethnic Danes, asked respondents about immigrants from countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. Respondents were asked to estimate employment rates, educational participation, and crime levels.

The results show significant misconceptions. Respondents estimated that 44 percent of immigrant women are employed, while the actual figure is 52 percent. They believed 48 percent of young immigrant men are in education, compared with 56 percent in reality. They estimated the crime rate among young men at 17 percent, far higher than the actual 3.5 percent.

Associate Professor Karen N. Breidahl, one of the researchers behind the study, said: "It is not surprising that people critical of immigrants think they are worse than they are, but the most interesting thing here is that even people with extensive knowledge about immigration, and those who are positive, also believe the situation is significantly worse than it is."

The study used a new method to measure misconceptions, giving respondents factual information about ethnic Danes' performance in the same areas before asking them to evaluate immigrants. Researchers said this approach provides a more precise picture of misconceptions than previous studies.

No improvements

The study also found that many Danes have not noticed improvements among non-Western immigrants in recent years. On the other hand, crime rates have fallen from 5.4 percent to 3.7 percent between 2012 and 2020, and employment among immigrant women has increased significantly.

The researchers said the findings pose a challenge for democratic debate. "A healthy democratic debate relies on facts rather than misinformation. When even the left wing and those who support more immigration believe things are worse than they are, there must be knowledge that is not reaching the public," Breidahl said.

Misconceptions, the study notes, could influence policymaking and lead to public spending on measures addressing problems that are less severe than widely believed.

The survey, conducted in autumn 2021 through YouGov, included 2,015 respondents, with 1,812 ethnic Danes in the final dataset. The research examined misconceptions about employment, education, crime, democratic values, and social conditions, and was published in the journal Scandinavian Political Studies in 2025. ◆



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