



DANISH BUSINESSES ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO DELIVER ON THE GLOBAL GOALS

Delivering through partnerships



Confederation of Danish Industry



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On August 22, 2018, the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) hosted the inaugural meeting of the SDG High Level Advisory Board, which consists of CEOs from 26 leading companies within sustainability. The purpose of the Board is to advise on sustainable business development and on how Danish companies can contribute even more to meeting the Global Goals.

During the meeting, DI stated that Danish companies are among the best in the world when it comes to contributing positively to fulfilling the Global Goals. This led Global Compact Director Lise Kingo to comment that she hears the same assertion in many places around the world, but she has yet to see a country back up their claims with data.

Kingo's challenge is important and well taken. DI will aim to demonstrate that Danish Businesses are in fact among the very best – if not the best – at contributing to achieving the Global Goals.

This brief paper explains how Danish companies are uniquely positioned to deliver on the Global Goals as a direct result of the Danish labour market model.

At the UN General Assembly 2019, it is DI's ambition to document the performance of Danish Companies towards the Global Goals through a systematic assessment of the contribution of the Danish private sector to the Global Goals.

The 17 Global Goals

Committed to the Global Goals

In 2015, the world's leaders adopted the 17 Global Goals, charting an ambitious global plan towards 2030. With this agreement, the world's leaders committed to a comprehensive political and universal agenda to eliminate hunger and poverty and to support sustainable development towards 2030.

Denmark is clearly committed to achieving the Global Goals, both nationally and globally.

At national level Denmark has already achieved a lot

At the *national* level, Denmark possesses quite unique conditions for fulfilling the Global Goals. This is especially due to the fact that the Danish economy is predominantly based on sustainable economic growth, high employment rates, a high level of prosperity, gender equality, a high level of social welfare, effective environmental protections, high energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, a large degree of freedom, a high level of public trust and an open democracy with respect for human rights.

Denmark No. 2 in the world

According to Bertelsmann Stiftung's SDG Index, Denmark is number two, surpassed only by Sweden in first place, when it comes to realising the Global Goals at the national level, which is why it is often said that the Global Goals were grown in the Scandinavian back yard.

Denmark's high ranking in relation to national fulfilment of the Global Goals also means, however, that the gap to be realised in Denmark in relation to the global achievement of the goals is in fact limited.

Therefore, the focus is to a great degree on how Denmark in general and Danish companies in particular can contribute to fulfilling the goals *globally*.

Denmark's action plan for the Global Goals

Like most other countries in the world, the Danish Government has launched an action plan for Denmark's commitment to the Global Goals. With this action plan, the Government wishes to contribute to the global achievement of the Goals by engaging at the national as well as the global level. The vision is to maintain a free, wealthy and secure society in Denmark while at the same time making a significant difference in the world.

Among other things, the action plan supports that Danish businesses engage in the Global Goals by focusing on both new business opportunities as well as growing expectations with respect to sustainability. At the same time, the action plan is a platform for cross-sectoral partnerships for the Global Goals.

Companies are essential to achieving the Global Goals

In the sustainability elite

The achievement of the Global Goals is dependent on the efforts made by businesses. Companies must contribute with their creativity, innovation and financial muscle. It is up to companies to deliver the new solutions needed to ensure clean water, sustainable energy and food for all. The goals cannot be achieved without engagement from the private sector.

That is why it is interesting to zoom in on how Danish companies are positioned to deliver the required sustainable solutions.

Danish companies No. 1 in sustainability

According to the IMD (2018), Denmark ranks in first place when it comes to companies' prioritisation of sustainable development. In addition, Danish companies place in the top three in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as well as accounting practices and ethical standards.

Additionally, according to the World Economic Forum, Denmark is the fourth most innovative country in the world, to a large extent because of its innovative companies and sophisticated design solutions.

Finally, Denmark is among the top ten when it comes to public-private partnerships supporting technological development.

Sustainability is an integrated part of the mindset of Danish business

These examples constitute a coherent image of Danish businesses leading on key parameters for sustainable development. And they show that sustainability is indeed an integrated part of the mindset of Danish business.

SDG High Level Advisory Board

As part of the project "UN Global Goals - From Philanthropy to Business" the Confederation of Danish Industry has, in collaboration with the Danish Industry Foundation and Global Compact Network Denmark, established the SDG High Level Advisory Board. The Board consists of leaders from 26 companies, NGOs and other stakeholders as well as the participation of HRH Crown Princess Mary. The first meeting took place on August 22, 2018 at Industriens Hus.

The global agenda for more sustainable development in the world is a mega-trend that an increasing number of Danish companies are working on. The purpose of the SDG High Level Advisory Board is to facilitate close dialogue among a group of influential companies and individuals in Denmark that work on sustainability issues. The Board will also function as an expert panel for the project and for the Confederation of Danish Industry's other activities within the realm of sustainable business development.

World champions in partnerships

“To implement this plan (Agenda 2030) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals we need to broaden the circle of action to include Governments, bilateral and international organisations and international financial institutions. Partnerships with civil society, the business community and others are critical to success.”

António Guterres
U.N. Secretary-General

Partnerships for the goals are a prerequisite for success

There is general unanimity that achieving the Global Goals depends on our ability to collaborate in developing the solutions that are needed to reach the targets of the global sustainability agenda. No sector or group can solve the global challenges alone. Therefore, there are many who point to *SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals* as being the essential goal, as it is the precondition to achieving the others.

Danish companies emerge from a societal culture with a strong tradition of cooperation. This is a great starting point for participating in partnerships that contribute to innovation and the new solutions that are necessary for achieving the Global Goals.

The Danish model is world renowned for its cooperative character

The Danish labour model is world renowned for being based on, and underpinning, trust-based cooperation. Denmark regularly receives delegations from abroad that wish to discover how our particular Danish social model works in practice. Most recently, French president Emmanuel Macron has sought inspiration in Denmark in relation to the reforms he wishes to implement in France.

And they find a great deal of inspiration in our model based on *trust, balance and cooperation*.

Trust is a Danish speciality

If the strength of Danish society has one focal point it is in the concept of *trust*. This concept encompasses a great deal: That Danes trust one another. That citizens trust the authorities. That the private sector trusts the public sector and considers it a necessary prerequisite for doing well. That there exists a mutual trust between employers and employees which has made the Danish labour market one of the least regulated labour markets in Europe. For Danish companies this means that there is basically trust between potential partners – also between those from different sectors.

A balanced society is the cornerstone of the Danish model

Balance is another key word in the Danish social model. Through free trade, our companies continually contribute to economic growth in the society. Through our welfare society, we ensure that the economic growth benefits all social groups in a sustainable manner. This link between growth and balance between businesses and the rest of society is key to the Danish social model and Danish business. At the same time the

A strong tradition of co-operation and partnerships

concept of balance goes hand in hand with the Global Goals – namely, that development must be sustainable.

Finally, there is the key word, *cooperation*. Our special agreement-based labour market where employers and employees agree on wage and work conditions is founded on trust-based cooperation, which makes it possible for both businesses and society to be flexible and innovative. Our strong tradition of cooperation goes back to 1899 when the Danish agreement-based labour market system was established. Hence, Danish companies have over one hundred years of experience in entering into partnerships with actors from other sectors.

Cooperation, considerations towards a balanced society and trust-based dialogue are thus key elements in the Danish model and are today the foundation for Danish companies having a natural and positive approach to partnerships – also within the area of sustainable development.

Danish companies participate in partnerships for sustainable development

Many different actors in Danish society already participate in an engaged pursuit of the Global Goals. In addition to companies, this includes investors, municipalities, and civil society, as well as research and educational institutions. One of the fundamental strengths is that the many and various actors collaborate on reaching the goals collectively. This happens in more and less formalised partnerships across the public, private and civil sectors.

A unique partnership

GAIN Nordic Partnership is a good example of a Danish platform that brings businesses, NGOs, research institutes and the public sector together in innovative partnerships focused on sustainable food solutions aimed at the world's developing countries.

GAIN Access to Better Dairy is a partnership between the Danish company Arla Food Ingredients, Gain Nordic, the DanChurchAid and the Confederation of Danish Industry. The partners cooperate on the development of a nutritionally rich yoghurt aimed at poor and nutritionally vulnerable populations in Ethiopia. The partnership has joined forces with a number of Ethiopian dairies to develop a nutritious dairy product with added nutrients to help in the fight against malnutrition. The product is introduced with a low price so that it is affordable to the poorest groups, while at the same time being produced in the local value chain, thereby creating local jobs.

The partnership is a good example of how different actors can be brought together and collectively contribute to fulfilling the Global Goals – in this case SDG2 - Zero Hunger.

Unique Danish position for innovative partnerships

Offering sustainable solutions

There is no doubt that Danish companies possess valuable prerequisites for participating in the innovative partnerships that are so crucial for the success of the ambitious sustainability agenda.

Good match between Danish key strengths and Global Goals

At the same time, there is a good match between the key strengths of Danish businesses and the Global Goals. Danish companies have many years of experience with providing sustainable solutions that contribute to solving global challenges, for instance in the areas of water, food and sustainable energy.

Let's take sustainable energy as an example.

Denmark is world champion in green energy

Denmark has a strong focus on becoming a green and sustainable society. In 2017, the World Energy Council once again named the Danish energy system as the most sustainable in the world, while the World Economic Forum puts Denmark in the top five in the world according to the Energy Transition Index 2018.

Not so long ago Denmark's energy supply was exclusively based on fossil fuels. Today, 30 percent of Denmark's energy is renewable and the target is to reach 50 percent by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050. A large part of the renewable energy comes from wind power, a field in which Denmark is a world leader. Over 40 percent of the electricity in Denmark comes from wind power and Denmark is a powerhouse in the development of wind technology solutions, the use of which is being rapidly adopted around the world.

Riding the technological wave

In relation to this, most observers agree that innovative technological solutions will play a significant role in the achievement of the Global Goals. In this area, too, Danish companies enjoy good prerequisites. According to Akademiet for de Tekniske Videnskaber (2018) (the Academy of Technological Sciences) seven out of ten of their members use the Global Goals in their day to day work and almost half include the Global Goals in their organisational strategy. Danish technology companies and research environments have thus to a great degree adopted the Global Goals and they push the business community towards greater sustainability.

Well positioned for global export

Finally, it is relevant to highlight that Danish businesses enjoy a strong position in global competitiveness when it comes to pushing Danish sustainable solutions onto the world market.

Danish companies are global

Denmark is a small, prosperous and open economy where companies are good at seizing global opportunities and competing in global markets. That Denmark today is a prosperous society is due in large part to the fact we have been good at trading with other countries. Danish companies are

Growing global demand for sustainable solutions

innovative and skilful in seizing new opportunities so that they can win international sales.

A particular Danish strength in global competitiveness is our companies' ability to make their products stand out. High quality, brand strength, design and the use of new technology are characteristics that make Danish products special. Danish companies rarely offer low price products. However, they offer high quality, long-term solutions. And for that there is increasing demand, in line with the growing need for sustainable solutions that can meet global challenges.

Good Danish prerequisites for meeting global demand

Danish companies thus have valuable prerequisites for being able to meet growing international demands for sustainable solutions that arise as a consequence of increased international focus on the Global Goals.

From Philanthropy to Business

– aims to inspire more to work strategically with the Global Goals

Many small and medium-sized enterprises in Denmark wish to engage and work more focused with the sustainability agenda. However, they have difficulty getting started.

That is why the Confederation of Danish Industry, in collaboration with the Danish Industry Foundation, has launched an ambitious project to inspire and motivate even more Danish companies to work strategically with the Global Goals and translate them into business results and more jobs.

21 leading Danish companies, representing a broad section of the Danish business community, are participating in the project. The project enables the companies to use the Global Goals to enhance their business. The companies, all of whom are established leaders in sustainability, will subsequently become Danish show cases of how to achieve business results through addressing some of the most important challenges facing our world.

The project works on developing a model on how companies can work strategically with the Global Goals. The tools for the model will be developed on an ongoing basis and made available for other companies, and promoted through regional and national conferences and seminars. Other companies are invited to follow the project at sdgforretning.dk and on LinkedIn: [DI – Fra Filantropi til Forretning](#).

The project is a clear signal to the world that the Danish business community takes the global challenges seriously. And at the same time, it has the ambition and determination to pursue the major business opportunities in achieving the Global Goals at the global level.

To be continued

"We have been challenged to back up our claim that Danish businesses are probably the most sustainable businesses in the world. In all humility - we accept this challenge. We accept it not only because we believe it to be true, but because the Global Goals are important challenges of our generation."

Karsten Dybvad
CEO, Confederation of Danish Industry

Unique position, probably the best in the world

In Scandinavia we have demonstrated that, nationally, we can deliver sustainable solutions like no other region. At the same time, many observers point out that SDG17 – Partnerships for the goals – is probably the most important goal as it constitutes the fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of the remaining 16 goals.

In Denmark, partnership is a discipline for which we possess the best prerequisites for participation. At the same time, there is a good match between the key strengths of Danish businesses and the Global Goals. Finally, Danish companies are among the most globalised in the world. We are simply good at selling our sustainable solutions internationally.

Overall, this constitutes an image of Danish companies in a unique position for contributing positively to achieving the Global Goals.

But there is a lack of documentation

But currently – neither in Denmark nor globally – there exists no coherent framework for companies to measure and compare their contribution to achieving the Global Goals

DI will map the contribution of Danish companies to the Global Goals

The Confederation of Danish Industry has therefore decided to map and assess the contributions of Danish companies to the sustainability agenda, partly in order to document our own contribution to the Global Goals and partly – and perhaps more importantly – to highlight our contribution and thereby inspire and motivate more businesses to develop sustainable solutions that can meet the major global challenges we face.

Because there is a need for inspirational pioneers

Because if the Global Goals are to be met by 2030, it is crucial that the critical mass of the world's companies actively commit to delivering sustainable solutions. In this context there is a need for pioneers who can inspire others, including by documenting their own contribution to meeting the targets.

