

Denmark's Global Climate Action



Summary for policymakers

Global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced significantly if we are to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Denmark has ambitious climate targets for its territorial emissions. But Denmark also has a very high climate footprint outside the Danish borders which is not regulated by current goals or benchmarks. Denmark can, potentially, have a significant influence on emissions outside of its territorial borders. In a recent analysis on Denmark's global climate action, the Danish Council on Climate Change (DCCC) recommends establishing a climate target for international transport, a benchmark for the climate footprint of Danish consumption, and a benchmark for climate finance for developing countries.

Global climate action needs to accelerate significantly to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement

Climate change is occurring faster than most scientists expected just a few years ago, and we are already very close to a 1.5-degree Celsius increase in the global average temperature compared to pre-industrial levels.[i] Global climate action needs to accelerate significantly if the world is to meet the Paris Agreement's objective of keeping the temperature increase well below 2 degrees Celsius, aiming for 1.5 degrees Celsius.[ii] The more the temperature increases, the greater the likelihood that the world will surpass tipping points, which can irreversibly accelerate climate change and its impacts.

Danish climate policy has primarily focused on reducing territorial emissions

Danish climate policy focuses on the territorial climate targets for 2025 and 2030 that are written into the Danish Climate Act.[iii] According to the Act, Denmark has to reduce its territorial emissions by 50 to 54 percent in 2025 and 70 percent in 2030 compared to the level of emissions in 1990, and Denmark must be at net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. The national climate targets contribute to maintaining sustained political focus on climate action. However, Denmark can do much more to combat climate change by setting targets to reduce Denmark's negative global climate footprint, and by enhancing the country's positive global influence. For example, Denmark currently has no targets to reduce its climate consumption footprint and emissions related to its share of international aviation and shipping. These emissions are not accounted for in Denmark's territorial greenhouse gas emissions.

A significant share of Denmark's climate impact and potential to promote the green transition lies outside Danish borders. Therefore, the DCCC recommends that Denmark set targets and benchmarks for its global climate impact to ensure political action in this domain. Such targets should complement domestic climate targets and should be considered as a supplement to them, not a replacement.

The DCCC identifies ten global focus areas in Danish climate policy

The DCCC has identified ten key global focus areas in which Denmark can influence global greenhouse gas emissions. The ten focus areas have been funnelled into four main subjects: 1) International transport, 2) Imports, 3) Exports and green technology, and 4) Climate finance and support. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The ten focus areas represent Denmark's positive and negative climate influence outside Danish borders. The arrows in the figure indicate the direction of influence, which can go both ways in all cases. For instance, climate funding and support mostly flow out of Denmark, but global financial flows also affect Denmark. The figure should not be seen as an exhaustive list of global action areas for Denmark, but it illustrates the areas where there is significant potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions abroad.

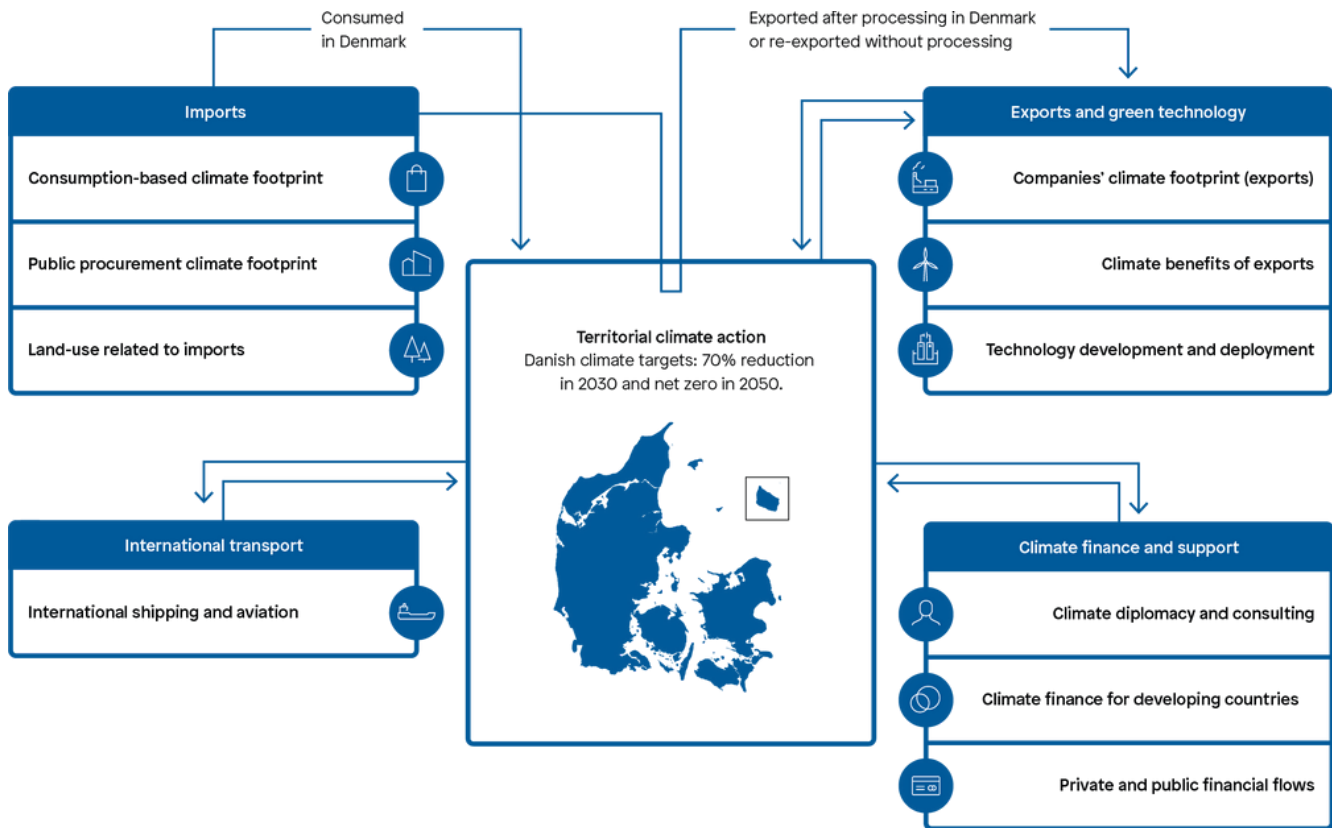


Figure 1 Denmark's global climate impact
Source: The Danish Council on Climate Change



New climate target for international air and maritime transport

The DCCC recommends a climate target for emissions from fuels bunkered in Danish ports for international aviation and shipping. The DCCC recommends a target of net-zero by 2050 at the latest, with interim targets starting from 2035. Fuels bunkered in Denmark for international air, sea and river transport are those reported to the UN according to UN accounting rules. These emissions are not included in Denmark's territorial greenhouse gas emissions inventory at the moment. The climate target will help to ensure sufficient political action nationally or within the EU to meet the climate ambitions of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).[iv] The target can be established independently from national targets or by incorporating emissions from international bunkers into national targets. The latter approach has been adopted by the United Kingdom and has been recommended to the French government by the French Climate Council.[v]



The Danish consumption-based climate footprint must be reduced

The DCCC recommends that Denmark establish a benchmark for Denmark's consumption-based climate footprint in the government's long-term global climate strategy. A benchmark in the global climate strategy is less binding than a target in the national Act but it still provides political guidance. Denmark's consumption-based climate footprint is estimated at 63 million tonnes CO₂e per year, corresponding to 11 tonnes per capita. As such, it is among the highest in the EU. [vi] Consequently, Denmark cannot be considered a frontrunner in this area. It is problematic that there are currently no political objectives to reduce the substantial climate footprint resulting from the Danish consumption. A benchmark can lead to greater political focus on this area. A benchmark for the consumption-based climate footprint could be set to align with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement. The benchmark should be complemented by an additional benchmark for emissions resulting from public procurement.



Denmark should set a benchmark for climate finance for developing countries

The DCCC recommends that Denmark establish a benchmark for its climate finance for developing countries after 2025. The benchmark should reflect Denmark's fair contribution to the revised global climate finance target for developing countries, to be set within the framework of the Paris Agreement by no later than 2024.

References

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- [ii] UNEP, *Emissions Gap Report 2023*, November 2023
- [iii] Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities, *Climate Act, 2020*, (https://en.kefm.dk/Media/1/B/Climate%20Act_Denmark%20-%20WEBTILG%C3%86NGELIG-A.pdf)
- [iv] IMO, *RESOLUTION MEPC.377(80) - Adopted on 7 July 2023 - 2023 IMO STRATEGY ON REDUCTION OF GHG EMISSIONS FROM SHIPS*, 2013, (<https://www.wcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Documents/Resolution%20MEPC.377%2880%29.pdf>);
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