

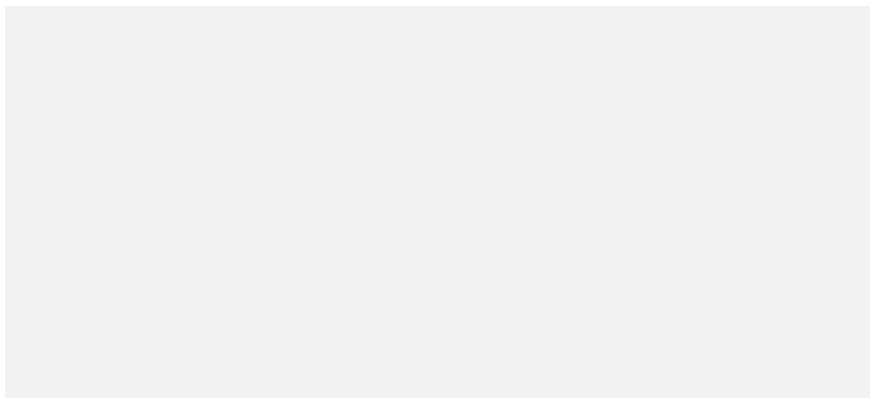
Briefing for the FEMM Committee Mission to Denmark

15 - 17 May 2023



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This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's rights and Gender Equality.

AUTHORS

Martina SCHONARD,
Juliane Dorothea MÜLLER, trainee,
Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, DG IPOL

ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE

Martina SCHONARD

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Sybille PECSTEEN de BUYTSWERVE

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Policy departments provide in-house and external expertise to support EP committees and other parliamentary bodies in shaping legislation and exercising democratic scrutiny over EU internal policies.

To contact the Policy Department or to subscribe for updates, please write to:

Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs
European Parliament
B-1047 Brussels
Email: poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

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1. INTRODUCTION

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. The Danish Constitution (*Grundlov*), adopted in 1849, is one of the oldest Constitutions in the world. Inspired by Montesquieu's division of powers, it replaced absolute monarchy with constitutional monarchy. Its particularity resides in the fact that it has never been amended but rewritten every time an amendment was adopted. The current version in use is the one of 1953. The Parliament (*Folketing*) is unicameral and has a multi-party structure. The Head of State is the Monarch and the Government is led by a Prime Minister.

The country is a unitary State organised on a decentralised basis. It has three levels of governance: central, regional and municipal. Prior to 2007, the Danish territorial organisation consisted of the State, the Counties and the Municipalities. A major reform, the so-called 'Structural Reform', was agreed in 2004 and resulted in the dissolution of the Counties, the creation of **five regions (regioner: Nordjylland, Midtjylland, Syddanmark, Sjælland and Hovedstaden)** and the reduction of the **municipalities (kommuner)** from 271 to **98** in 2007. It also modified the division of powers among the different levels of governance. Only municipalities are considered local authorities.

Besides, Denmark has two special autonomous regions: the Faroe Islands and Greenland which are not members of the European Union (EU). Greenland is recognised as having the Overseas Countries and Territories status at the EU level. In addition to the overseas agreement, Greenland has a number of agreements with the EU such as the Fisheries Agreement.

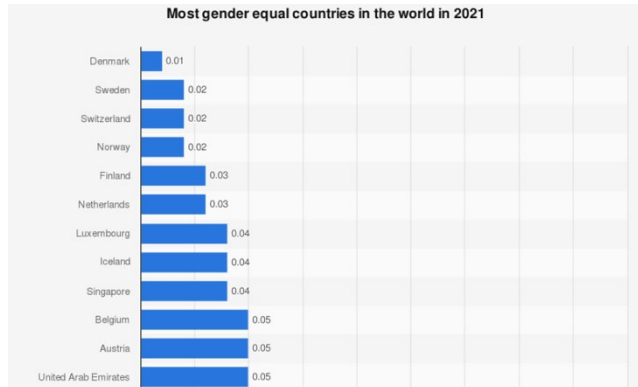
Local self-government is enshrined in the Constitution (section 82), albeit there is no indication of how it should be organised. Local and regional authorities are responsible for matters of their interest which are not expressly conferred to the State. The regions and the municipalities do not hold legislative powers and must act within the confines of the applicable law. There is no hierarchy between the regions and the municipalities.

The municipalities depend on the **Local Government Act** and are under the responsibility of the local council with the mayor at its head. Each municipality decides upon its management structure and the organisation of the different departments and units. The regions depend on the **Regional Government Act**. Each of the five regions is governed by a regional council with the chairperson at its head and is required to establish a business committee and a contact committee. Similarly to the municipalities, the regions decide upon their own structure and organisation.

Supervision over the local and regional authorities is performed by the State Administration monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior. Both entities are elected for four years.

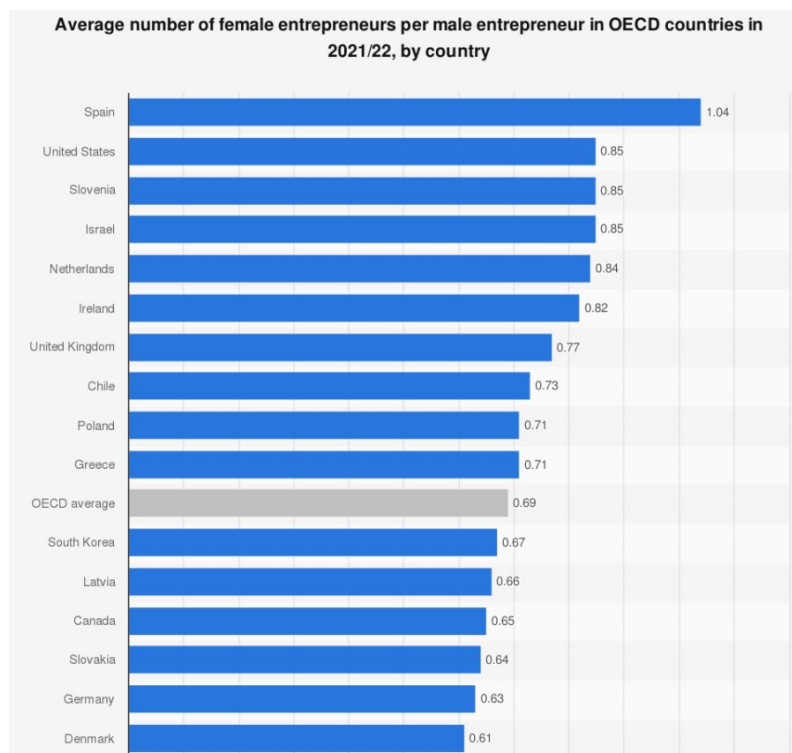
2. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN DENMARK

2.1. General Data



According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Denmark ranked as **the most gender-equal country**. The GII measures inequality in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market.¹

Although Nordic culture is generally characterized by a **higher level of equality** compared to many other developed countries, **the proportion of women entrepreneurs is not necessarily higher than that of men**.² In Denmark, the proportion of male entrepreneurs is higher than that of female entrepreneurs. In 2022, **only 7% of women** in Denmark were considering starting a business, **while 16% of men** were considering it.³ The proportion of employed women in Denmark who are either self-employed with employees or are own-account workers is **one of the lowest among OECD countries**.⁴ In 2021/22, the ratio of female entrepreneurs to male entrepreneurs in **OECD countries was 0.69 on average**. Denmark's score is **0.61**, placing it **at 17th among OECD countries**, well below Spain, the United States, Slovenia, and the Netherlands.⁵



¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1221060/most-gender-equal-countries-in-the-world/>

² Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf>

³ <https://www.statista.com/topics/10604/female-entrepreneurship-in-nordic-countries/>

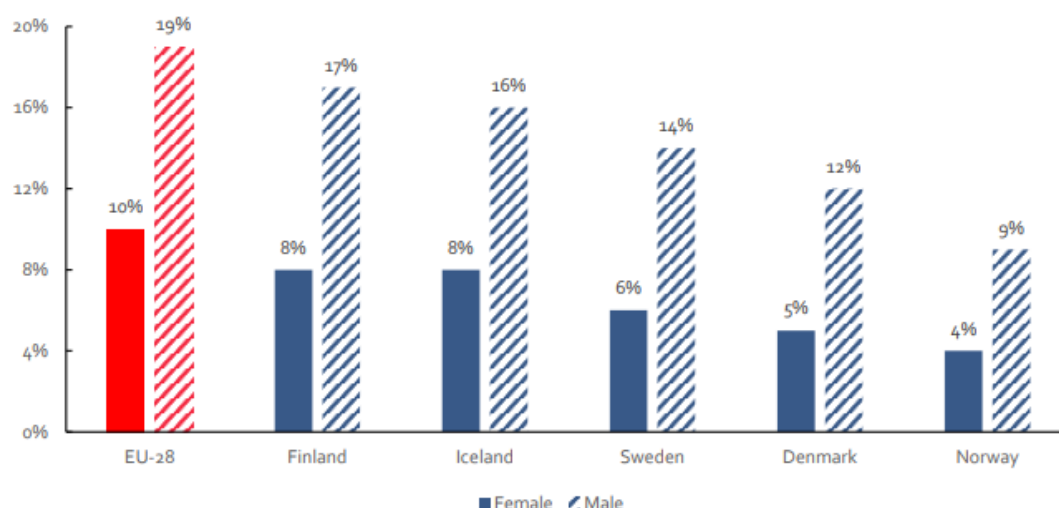
⁴ Panel A: Eurostat (2017), Labour Force Survey, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1368499/female-male-entrepreneur-ratio-oecd/>

2.2. Comparing Denmark to Europe

The latest report from the European Commission exists from 2014 and shows that **the proportion of female entrepreneurs in Nordic countries is lower compared to the European Union**. The entrepreneurship rate is calculated based on the percentage of the total active labour force population who are entrepreneurs. **On average, the female entrepreneurship rate in the EU is 10 percent, which is higher than that of all Nordic countries.**⁶ In Europe, 80% of women entrepreneurs are either solo-entrepreneurs or own-account workers. In Denmark, 87% of women entrepreneurs fall into this category, while 7% have only one employee.⁷

Figure 3-3: Percentage of entrepreneurs in total active labor force (entrepreneurship rate), by gender in 2012. Source: European Commission (2014)



Denmark has one of the lowest rates of self-employment among the ranked economies in the European Union, according to Eurostat data from 2016, despite being one of the fastest-growing groups of entrepreneurs globally.⁸ Denmark ranks third to last in terms of new business ownership, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor GEM 2019/2020. The scarcity of women entrepreneurs in Denmark has caught the attention of various stakeholders, including the non-governmental organization Danish Entrepreneurship Association. Its director has commented, that the current situation is unsustainable and that the country needs more entrepreneurs, especially women, to foster a prosperous society.⁹

⁶ European Commission, Directorate for Enterprise and Industry, Statistical Data on Women Entrepreneurs in Europe (2014) doi:10.2769/34288

⁷ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/71c8f9c9-en/1/3/2/3/1/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/71c8f9c9-en&csp=c77fdcc6651b7163c3d749c5dfe65cc1&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book>

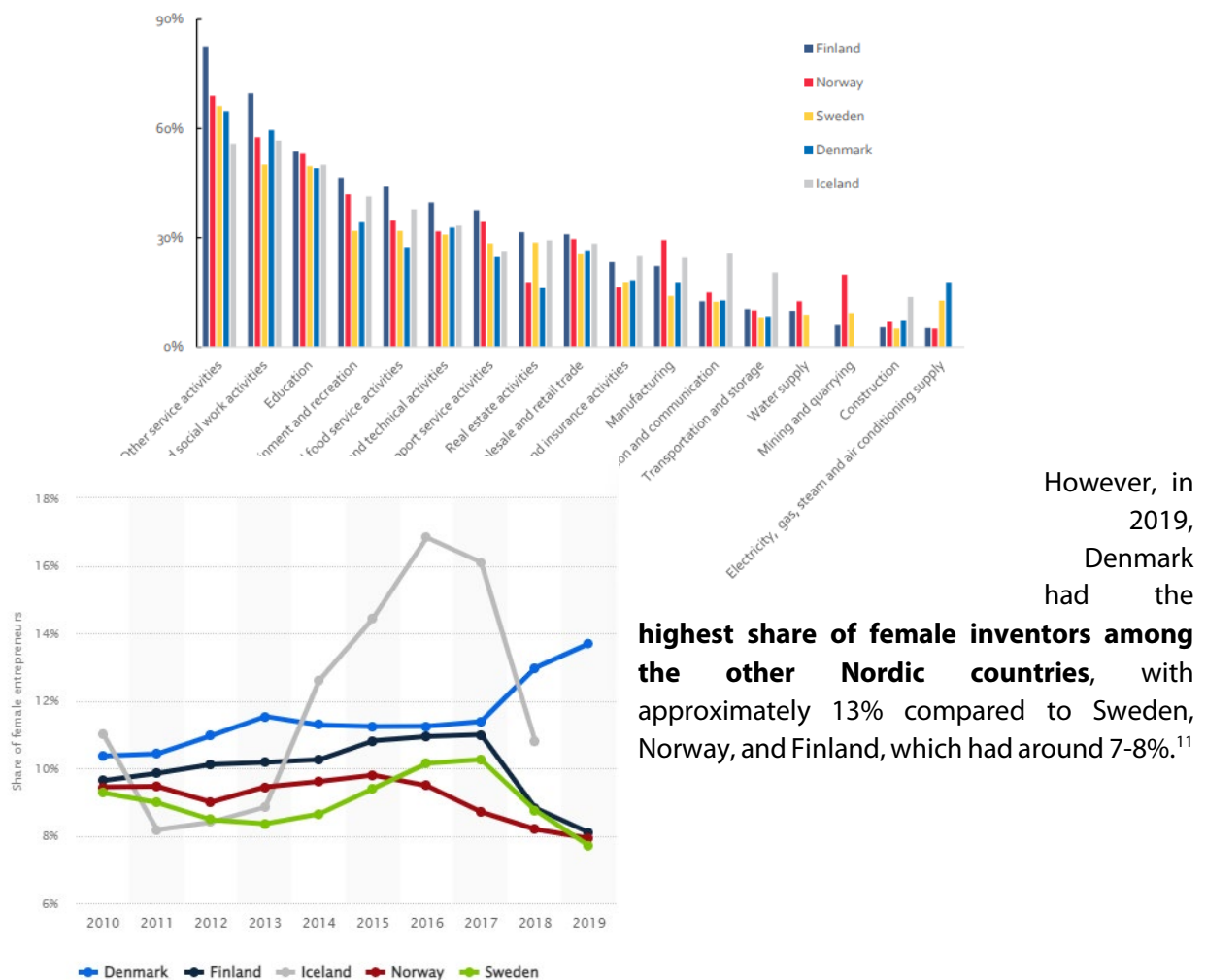
⁸ OECD/European Union (2017), "Inclusive entrepreneurship trends and policies in Denmark", in *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2017: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship*, OECD Publishing, Paris. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264283602-20-en>

⁹ GEM, GEM 2019 / 2020 GLOBAL REPORT <https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/gem-2019-2020-global-report>; Halabisky, D. (2018), "Policy Brief on Women's Entrepreneurship", *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Papers*, No. 8, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dd2d79e7-en>

2.3. Female Entrepreneurs by Industry

The sectors with a significant percentage of female entrepreneurs tend to overlap **with industries where a substantial proportion of the labour force is female. According to a statistic**, the female representation of employees and/or the entire workforce across the top five industries with the highest share of female entrepreneurship demonstrates the following: **human health and social work activities, education, arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food service activities and other service activities**. It appears that women tend to start ventures in fields where they are already well-represented, and in Denmark, the majority of the industries analysed have a higher number of women in employment and/or the workforce than as entrepreneurs.¹⁰

Figure 3-6: Percentage of female entrepreneurs in various industries in 2017. Source: Statistics Norway, Statistics Finland, Statistics Sweden, Statistics Iceland and Statistics Denmark.



However, in 2019, Denmark had the highest share of female inventors among the other Nordic countries, with approximately 13% compared to Sweden, Norway, and Finland, which had around 7-8%.¹¹

Details: Denmark; Finland; Iceland; Norway; Sweden; OECD; 2010 to 2019; 15-64 years

© Statista

¹⁰ Grünfeld L., Sigrud H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf>

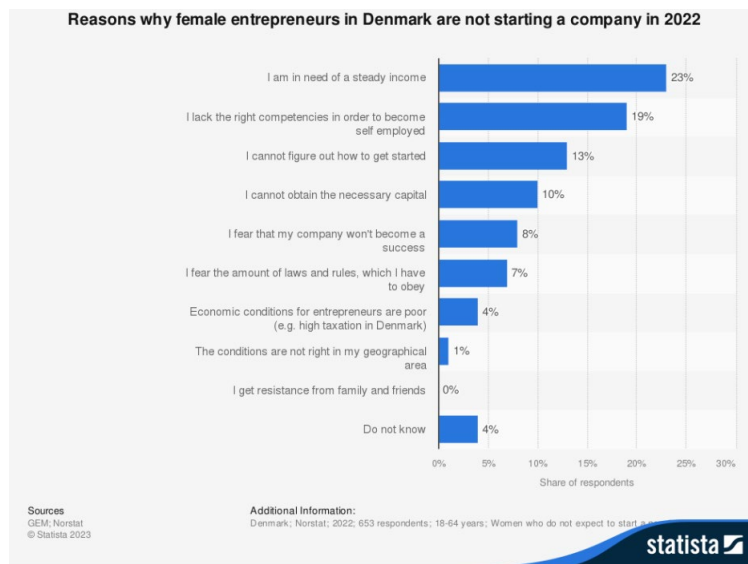
¹¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1366501/female-inventors-nordic/>

2.4. Age of Female Entrepreneurs

30% of female entrepreneurs are between the ages of 30-40, and another 30% are between 40-50, according to a Danish annual study on entrepreneurship called "Iværksætterbarometer". The study has observed a shift in the age range of Danish entrepreneurs over the past two decades. In 1996, a significant proportion of both male and female entrepreneurs started their ventures between the ages of 27 to 32. However, in 2017, the majority of entrepreneurs were older when starting their businesses. The study suggests that this shift may be due to contemporary firms being more prevalent in scientific service sectors that require entrepreneurs with higher education qualifications. Therefore, it is natural for entrepreneurs to be older when establishing a company.¹²

¹² <https://ehsj.dk/content/ydelser/ivaerksaetterbarometer/156b4de7-6e7c-4bdf-9447-c1741731f5f2/>

3. CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN DENMARK



Danish women entrepreneurs face significant challenges, such as **higher vulnerability in self-employment, the lack of entrepreneurship education tailored for women, managing the demands of caregiving and entrepreneurship, financial obstacles, and systemic biases in decision-making frameworks and political prioritization** of industries with underrepresentation of women.¹³

According to a statistic from 2023, the majority of women in 2022 cited **the**

need for a steady income as the main reason for not pursuing entrepreneurship. This was followed by a belief that they lacked the necessary skills and competencies to become self-employed.¹⁴

In general, **women seem to be less inclined to take entrepreneurial risks**, and Denmark is no exception, with only 22% of women compared to 36% of men expressing a preference for starting their own business over being employed. By way of comparison, in the US, 57% of women and 70% of men express a preference for taking on entrepreneurial risk.¹⁵

In most nations, potential gains are a significant factor in evaluating risks. **Typically, women earn lower profits from self-employment compared to men.** While the disparity in Denmark was considerably smaller than the OECD average in 2011/12 (20% compared to 33%), it has grown in recent years, unlike in many other countries.¹⁶

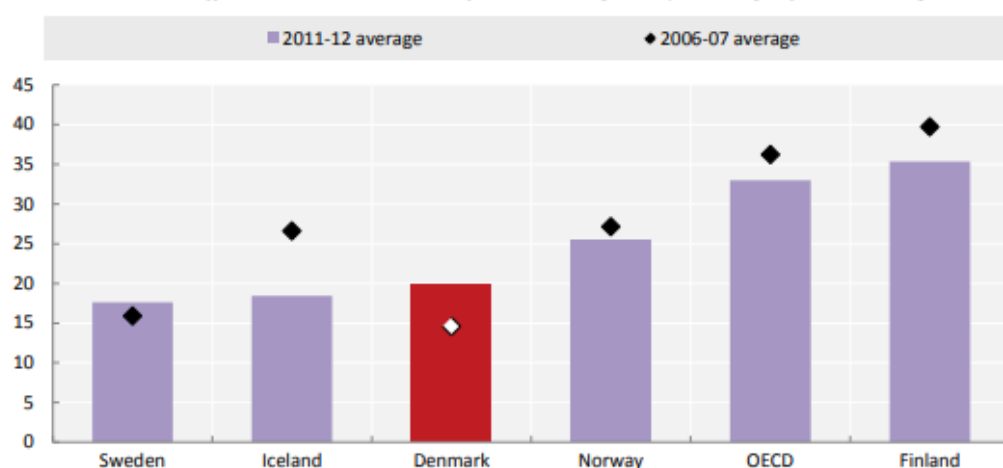
¹³ Neergaard, H. and A. Weber Carlsen (2018), "When women leave corporate career to enter entrepreneurship in Denmark", Paper presented at the ISBE conference, Birmingham, 7-8 November 2018; Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1208503/reasons-for-not-starting-businesses-among-females-in-denmark/>

¹⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/business-stats/EaG-Denmark-Eng.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/business-stats/EaG-Denmark-Eng.pdf>

Figure 5. Gender gap in self-employment earnings
Difference between male and female earnings as a percentage of male earnings



Source: OECD based on Labour Force Surveys.

3.1. Lack of Training and Education

In 2014, the European Commission reported that **significantly more men than women receive entrepreneurship education and go on to establish businesses during and after graduation.**¹⁷ Like many OECD countries, Denmark also **exhibits a gender gap in terms of access to training for creating and growing a start-up**, although Denmark's share is above the OECD average.¹⁸

An OECD study found that Danish women tend to complete degrees in academic disciplines that may not provide them with the necessary skills for entrepreneurship. **Consequently, many women feel that they lack the competencies required to start a business.**¹⁹ In 2020, the Danish Chamber of Commerce reported that 32% of Danish women perceive a lack of the competencies needed for a business start-up.²⁰

A study conducted by researchers in Denmark found that male graduates are more likely to have entrepreneurial aspirations than female graduates. The study tracked students for five years after graduation and asked about their career intentions, revealing that **19% of male students wanted to become entrepreneurs, compared to 13% of female students.** These findings suggest that there are fewer women than men who aspire to be entrepreneurs.²¹

¹⁷ European Commission, Directorate for Enterprise and Industry, Statistical Data on Women Entrepreneurs in Europe (2014) doi:10.2769/34288

¹⁸ <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/business-stats/EaG-Denmark-Eng.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/business-stats/EaG-Denmark-Eng.pdf>

²⁰ Danish Chamber of Commerce (2020), "Danske kvinders iværksætteraktivitet er blandt de laveste i OECD [The entrepreneurial activity of Danish women is among the lowest in OECD]", March 2020

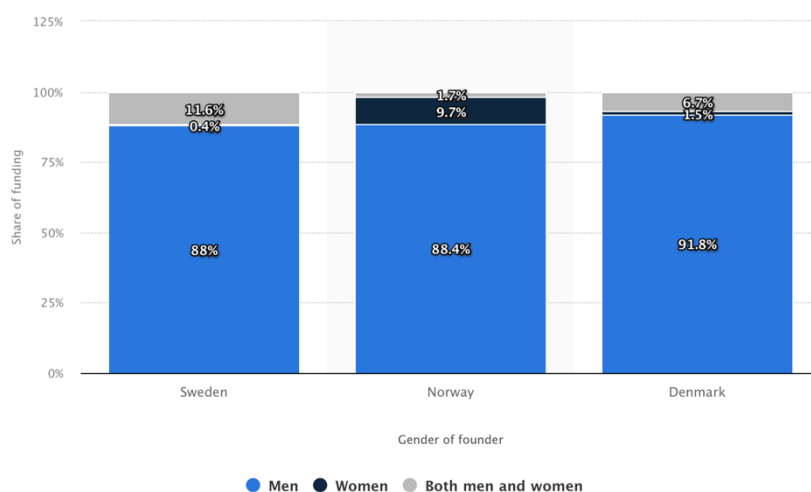
²¹ Britta Boyd & Simon Fietze & Kristian Philipsen, 2015. "Entrepreneurial Intentions and Behaviour of Students Attending Danish Universities," Working Papers 9, University of Southern Denmark, Centre for Border Region Studies.

Women often **have limited access to role models and smaller social networks**, which can **contribute to their lower rates of entrepreneurship and fewer high-growth companies**. Studies have shown that women respond better to female role models and are more likely to become entrepreneurs if they grow up in an environment with other female innovators in the same field. **The lack of access to same-sex role models for women can result in the loss of potentially impactful inventions.**²²

Women often encounter challenges in succeeding in a male-dominated entrepreneurial culture, which can be attributed to biases against women in the market. Research suggests that these differences are due to social interactions and attitudes that discourage the emergence of women-led entrepreneurial projects. **The culture of start-up environments dominated by men can discourage women from participating** and limit their access to funding and growth opportunities.²³

3.3. Financial Challenges

In 2022, 10% of women reported that they are unable to start their business due to a **lack of necessary capital**.²⁴ Studies have shown that female entrepreneurs **face difficulties in raising as much capital as their male counterparts**, which may be attributed to a lower preference for risk and a higher fear of failure among women. To compensate, **female entrepreneurs rely on a more diverse range of funding sources** than male entrepreneurs, with angel funds constituting a greater percentage of their funding.²⁵



This disparity in funding sources may also be due to gender biases among financial institutions. In 2021, statistics revealed that **91.8% of startup funds were distributed to men**, and only **1.5% were given to women**, with the remaining 6.7% distributed to both men and women.²⁶

²² Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf> p. 3

²³ Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf> p. 3

²⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1208503/reasons-for-not-starting-businesses-among-females-in-denmark/>

²⁵ Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf> p. 4

²⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1368540/funding-startups-scandinavia-gender-founder/>

3.4. Framework Conditions

According to the leading Danish daily newspaper, Politiken gender imbalances in Denmark have remained unchanged over the past decade, and **entrepreneurship policies remain mostly gender-neutral**, which disregards any differentiation between support needs for men and women. **This approach overlooks the invisibility of women entrepreneurs in an increasingly gender-imbalanced society.**²⁷

3.4.1. Prioritization of Rapid Growth

According to Grünfeld, Hernes and Karttinen (2020) entrepreneurship policies in Denmark **prioritize rapid-growth enterprises**, which may not benefit **women entrepreneurs who tend to grow their businesses at a slower rate and prefer to collaborate with other firms rather than hiring employees.**²⁸ Traditional measures of economic contribution and firm growth do not adequately capture the incremental growth in turnover and job creation resulting from such collaborations. Furthermore, traditional financial institutions may not fully understand the needs of entrepreneurs in liberal professions and may decline financing as a result.²⁹

Women entrepreneurs often prefer steady and measured growth, relying on self-financing, and have been found to be successful in crowdfunding. However, the focus on rapid-growth enterprises can be a barrier to these alternative approaches. Policymakers may need to consider alternative measures of success and support for women entrepreneurs, including collaboration-based and self-financed ventures, to foster more inclusive economic growth.³⁰

3.4.2. Caregiving Responsibilities

Women in Denmark **enter business ownership to achieve flexibility and work/life balance, as they continue to assume the primary role of caregiver.** Entrepreneurship is viewed as a way to conciliate family and professional demands. Framework conditions provided by society, therefore, play a crucial role in enabling women to participate in professional activities, including entrepreneurship. **Poorer framework conditions for entrepreneurs than employees can discourage women from starting a business.** Denmark's **social support mechanisms**, such as sickness benefits, parental leave, and public childcare, apply **almost equally** to employees and entrepreneurs in Denmark:³¹

²⁷ Politiken (2018), "Der er 110 år til ligeløn: Se, hvor lidt ligestillingen har rykket sig i ti år", 23 June 2018, <https://politiken.dk/indland/art6600323/Se-hvor-lidt-ligestillingen-har-rykket-sig-i-ti-%C3%A5r>.

²⁸ Grünfeld L., Sigrud H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf>

²⁹ Constantinidis, C., A. Cornett and S. Asandei (2006), "Financing for women owned ventures: Impact of gender and other owner- and firm-related variables", Venture Capital, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 133-157, Leitch, C., F. Welter and C. Henry (2018), "Women entrepreneurs' financing revisited: taking stock and looking forward", Venture Capital: An International Journal of Entrepreneurial Finance. Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 103-114, doi:10.1080/13691066.2018.1418624; Abouzahr, K., F. Taplett, M. Krentz and J. Harthorne (2018), "Why women-owned startups are a better bet", <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2018/why-women-owned-startups-are-better-bet.aspx>

³⁰ Constantinidis, C., A. Cornett and S. Asandei (2006), "Financing for women owned ventures: Impact of gender and other owner- and firm-related variables", Venture Capital, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 133-157, Leitch, C., F. Welter and C. Henry (2018), "Women entrepreneurs' financing revisited: taking stock and looking forward", Venture Capital: An International Journal of Entrepreneurial Finance. Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 103-114

³¹ Grünfeld L., Sigrud H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf> p. 49

- Self-employed people in Denmark can receive daily unemployment benefits if they cannot work due to sickness, provided they live and pay taxes in Denmark.
- Entrepreneurs can receive sickness benefits for short-term illness if they have voluntary insurance.
- After two weeks of illness, the entrepreneur can receive daily unemployment benefits.
- If the company is less than six months old when the entrepreneur falls ill, the daily unemployment benefits are calculated based on income from previous employment.
- A female entrepreneur is entitled to maternity allowance if she has worked for at least six months out of the last 12 months.³²

Some studies, however, suggest **that entrepreneurs may not always be able to fully benefit from these mechanisms in practice**, resulting in reduced maternity and parental leave payments compared to their employed counterparts.³³ **More than half of female entrepreneurs feel that the maternity leave system fails to meet their needs, and 11% have postponed having children or choose not to have them at all.**³⁴ Although these studies are the most recent available, it is important to note that they are not very recent. It is important to note, however, that a more recent OECD report confirmed these findings, not specifically for Denmark but for the Nordic countries as a whole.³⁵

³² Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf>

³³ Grünfeld L., Sigrid H. & Karttinen E., Menon Economics (2020) Female Entrepreneurship in the Nordics <https://www.menon.no/wp-content/uploads/2020-Female-entrepreneurship.pdf> p. 49

³⁴ Arenius, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2006). Similarities and differences across the factors associated with women's selfemployment preference in the Nordic countries, *International Small Business Journal*, 24(1), 31-59

³⁴ Neergard, H., & Thrane, C. (2011) The Nordic Welfare Model: barrier or facilitator of women's entrepreneurship in Denmark? *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 3(2), 88-104.

³⁵ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/71c8f9c9-en/1/3/2/3/1/index.html?_csp=c77fdcc6651b7163c3d749c5dfe65cc1&itemContentType=book&itemIGO=oecd&itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fpublication%2F71c8f9c9-en

4. PROGRAMMES FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

Denmark has a **national action plan** aimed at enhancing conditions for women entrepreneurs, but only **a few specific policies or initiatives** have been introduced for them since 2014.³⁶ However, **various support programs have been established** in recent years to assist women entrepreneurs in the Nordic region, including Denmark. **The Copenhagen School of Entrepreneurship (CSE)** is a student organization at Copenhagen School of Business that offers an incubator and accelerator program. CSE has developed a specific initiative, called the RISE Program, to inspire female students to start businesses. It is an exclusive talent program with 15 spots available. As the largest entrepreneurship university in Denmark, CSE plays a significant role in supporting aspiring entrepreneurs.³⁷

With Purpose: An accelerator program that helps women founders in the Nordics build, run, and grow their businesses.³⁸

Nordic Female Entrepreneurship: An initiative by Nordic Innovation to map challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in the Nordics and find ways to lessen the gap. The initiative aims to increase the number of female applicants to national programs for small and medium-sized enterprises and raise awareness about funding opportunities.³⁹

Entrepreneur Denmark: A project funded by the REACT-EU fund that focuses on helping entrepreneurs launch their products and businesses successfully, with a particular emphasis on supporting sustainable businesses and skilled female entrepreneurs.⁴⁰

Mors Business Network: A community of 'mum' entrepreneurs that offers networking meetings, entrepreneurship workshops, webinars, and conferences across Denmark.⁴¹

Women in Tech Programme: A three-stage strategic program designed to help female entrepreneurs launch, grow, and scale tech businesses in Denmark.⁴²

³⁶ <https://www.tillvaxtanalys.se/in-english/publications/pm/pm/2014-04-30-initiatives-to-promote-womens-entrepreneurship-----an-international-survey-of-knowledge-about-measures-in-denmark-the-netherlands-norway-great-britain-and-germany.html>; https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/71c8f9c9-en/1/3/2/3/1/index.html?_csp=c77fdcc6651b7163c3d749c5dfe65cc1&itemContentType=book&itemIGO=oecd&itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fpublication%2F71c8f9c9-en

³⁷ <https://cse.cbs.dk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RISE-Programme-Folder-for-web-1.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.wpurpose.org>

³⁹ <https://www.nordicinnovation.org/programs/nordic-female-entrepreneurship>

⁴⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/projects/boosting-women-entrepreneurship-success-rates-denmark>

⁴¹ <https://www.wegate.eu/danish-network-helps-women-entrepreneurs-balance-family-and-business/>

⁴² <https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252508139/Denmark-takes-another-step-towards-empowering-women-in-tech>

5. INSTITUTIONS

The Danish Chamber of Commerce (Dansk Erhverv) is a professional business organization headquartered in Børsen, Copenhagen, with additional offices in Aarhus and Brussels. It was formed on January 1, 2007, following the merger of Dansk Handel & Service and the Chamber of Commerce (formerly known as Handelskammeret, HTSI). The organization primarily caters to the service industry, including retail and wholesale, transportation, consulting, tourism, and hospitality sectors.

As an employers' organization, the Danish Chamber of Commerce negotiates various collective agreements within multiple industries. It is a member of The Confederation of Danish Employers (DA) and offers advisory services in areas such as HR and corporate issues. The organization aims to make Denmark the best country in the world to do business in and strives to facilitate easier business operations for its members.

Moreover, the Danish Chamber of Commerce is a powerful lobbyist for the Danish business community. It advocates for its members' interests in regional, national, and international political systems.⁴³

Brian Arthur Mikkelsen currently holds the position of CEO at The Danish Chamber of Commerce. He previously served as a member of the Conservative People's Party and was a former Minister. From September 21, 1994, to June 21, 2018, Mikkelsen was a member of the Danish Parliament (Folketinget).⁴⁴

The Danish Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of female entrepreneurship and has conducted research on the topic. According to their 2020 report, 32% of Danish women perceive that they lack the competences needed for business start-up. The Danish Chamber of Commerce highlights female entrepreneurs in their reports, such as the 2022 report featuring 25 female entrepreneurs.⁴⁵

The Danish Business Authority⁴⁶ provides companies with a framework for creating development and growth projects in the country. It supports business development through secretarial services to the Danish Business Promotion Board, the EU Structural Funds and the municipal business houses.

It also runs the Business Guide - a digital platform that provides guidance on start-up, operation, and development of a business and exhibits the business support system's offers to companies.

Female Founders House is a unique co-working space in Denmark created by Nordic Female Founders in collaboration with property and facility services company Jeudan. Opening in June 2022 at Bredgade 45B, Copenhagen1, the 1,500-square-meter space is designed to support women entrepreneurs and foster a strong community. The facility offers 120 office spaces, meeting rooms, lounge areas, a yoga room, and more, all with a focus on women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. Nordic Female

⁴³ <https://www.danskerhverv.dk/engelsk/> ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danish_Chamber_of_Commerce

⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Mikkelsen

⁴⁵ Danish Chamber of Commerce (2020), "Danske kvinders iværksætteraktivitet er blandt de laveste i OECD [The entrepreneurial activity of Danish women is among the lowest in OECD]", March 2020; Dansk handelskammer rapport om 2022 kvindelige iværksættere <https://www.danskerhverv.dk/siteassets/mediafolder/dokumenter/04-politik/2022/dansk-erhverv---kvindelige-iværksættere-2022.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://erhvervsstyrelsen.dk/udvikling-og-vaekst-i-hele-danmark>

Founders, founded in 2020 by Mia Wagner and Anne Stampe, aims to make it easier for women to become and remain entrepreneurs in Denmark.⁴⁷

Business House⁴⁸

There are 6 Business Houses in Denmark spread in the regions. The Business Houses help companies through specialized guidance, workshops and programs to develop their business.

Mia Wagner is the co-founder and CEO of the Nordic Female Founders.⁴⁹ She co-founded the organization with Anne Stampe Olesen in November 2020.⁵⁰ Mia is a lawyer, conflict mediator, and one of the four investors in the Danish version of Dragon's Den, called "Løvens Hule".⁵¹ She has previously served as a defense attorney, partner in Wagner Attorneys, and CEO of the family-owned company Freeway.⁵² Mia co-founded Nordic Female Founders with Anne Stampe Olesen to focus on gender equality in the Danish economy and secure more investment for female entrepreneurs.⁵³ Mia is also a board member of The Danish Investment and Export Fund, The Danish Chamber of Commerce, and Unicef Denmark.⁵⁴

Dansk Iværksætter Forening (DIF) is a non-profit organization that has been advocating for better conditions for Danish entrepreneurs since 1985. The organization focuses on supporting and promoting entrepreneurship in Denmark. DIF provides a platform for entrepreneurs to network, share knowledge, and access resources to help them succeed.¹ The organization also offers various events, workshops, and training programs to help entrepreneurs develop their skills and grow their businesses. DIF's mission is to create optimal conditions for entrepreneurs in society.⁵⁵

DTU Skylab is the Innovation Hub of the Technical University of Denmark (DTU). It is located at the main campus of DTU in Lyngby DTU. Skylab is a 5,500-square-meter facility that provides resources and facilities for start-ups and projects. The innovation hub aims to promote innovation and entrepreneurship among DTU students and researchers. DTU Skylab offers prototype workshops, co-working spaces, and access to a network of mentors and investors. The facility also hosts various events, workshops, and training programs to help entrepreneurs develop their skills and grow their businesses.

⁴⁷ <https://nordicfemalefounders.dk/hvem-er-vi/female-founders-house;> <https://www.holmrisk8.com/nordic-female-founders/>; <https://www.linkedin.com/company/nordic-female-founders/>

⁴⁸ https://ehhs.dk/content/ydelser/erhvervshus-hovedstaden/a62fbc23-89a7-4292-b3a5-023f251df381/?pk_vid=5783188ad006827c1683276451d30208

⁴⁹ <https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/s04-e01-mia-wagner-co-founder-ceo-at-nordic-female/id1527013035?i=1000553202277>; <https://copenhagendemocracysummit.com/2023/speakers/2775/mia-wagner-judge>

⁵⁰ <https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/s04-e01-mia-wagner-co-founder-ceo-at-nordic-female/id1527013035?i=1000553202277>

⁵¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Dxb0r0jhVo;> <https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/s04-e01-mia-wagner-co-founder-ceo-at-nordic-female/id1527013035?i=1000553202277>

⁵² <https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/s04-e01-mia-wagner-co-founder-ceo-at-nordic-female/id1527013035?i=1000553202277>

⁵³ <https://nordicfemalefounders.dk/kontakt/teamet>

⁵⁴ <https://copenhagendemocracysummit.com/2023/speakers/2775/mia-wagner>

⁵⁵ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/dansk-ivaerksaetter-forening_woodupp-vil-skabe-en-international-virksomhed-activity-6785835816368300032-dqne/?trk=public_profile_like_view&originalSubdomain=dk; <https://www.d-i-f.dk>

DTU Skylab is a state-of-the-art innovation hub that provides assistance to develop start-ups and projects.⁵⁶

Mette Kaagaard became the CEO of Microsoft Denmark on January 1, 2023. Prior to this role, she was the Managing Partner for Risk Advisory at Deloitte Denmark.⁵⁷ Mette has over 20 years of experience in leadership, digitalization, and technology.⁵⁸ Her career path includes positions such as Managing Director at Conscia Denmark (2020-2021), Executive Vice President at KMD (2015-2020), and CEO at Schultz Holding (2008-2015).⁵⁹ Additionally, she has held various leadership roles at Microsoft Denmark, including Head of Marketing & Operations (COO, CMO) and Director of the Consumer & Channel Group.⁶⁰

Sophie Bohr Grønbaek is the co-founder and CEO of Undo, an insurtech startup based in Copenhagen.⁶¹ With a background in neurobiology and consulting, Sophie approached the insurance industry with a fresh perspective.⁶² She and her co-founders built Undo from scratch, focusing on understanding what customers, particularly younger ones, were looking for when buying insurance.⁶³ Undo aims to challenge traditional insurance experiences by offering simple explanations, transparent products, and quick replacements through automated smartphone solutions. As of August 2020, Undo had reached 18,000 customers and received a new round of funding (35 million Danish kroner) from its investor and partner, Tryg. The company has also developed a unique car insurance policy.⁶⁴

Melissa Hartelius Berntsen is the co-founder and CEO of Klub Venus, a sex-positive vibrator store and online community based in Denmark.⁶⁵ The mission of Klub Venus is to break down taboos surrounding sex, sexuality, and self-love.⁶⁶ Melissa's personal journey involved overcoming challenges with body image and eating disorders, which led her to explore self-love and sexual empowerment. Through Klub Venus, she aims to create a safe and open space for people to discuss and explore their sexuality, promoting self-acceptance and body positivity.⁶⁷ Melissa holds a degree from KEA - Copenhagen School of Design and Technology.⁶⁸

Nima Tisdall is the co-founder of Blue Lobster, a tech startup that connects local fishermen directly with consumers and businesses in Denmark.⁶⁹ The platform aims to support sustainable fishing

⁵⁶ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dtuskylab/about/>;

https://z-upload.facebook.com/dtuskylab/photos/?ref=page_internal

⁵⁷ <https://news.microsoft.com/da-dk/2022/11/30/mette-kaagaard-bliver-ny-adm-direktor-i-microsoft-danmark/>

⁵⁸ <https://finans.dk/erhverv/ECE14641867/mette-kaagaard-bliver-ny-topchef-for-microsoft-danmark/>

⁵⁹ <https://news.microsoft.com/da-dk/2022/11/30/mette-kaagaard-bliver-ny-adm-direktor-i-microsoft-danmark/>

⁶⁰ <https://news.microsoft.com/da-dk/2022/11/30/mette-kaagaard-bliver-ny-adm-direktor-i-microsoft-danmark/>

⁶¹ <https://nordicfintechmagazine.com/developing-digital-insurance-products-for-the-next-generation-sophie-m-bohr-groenbaek-ceo-at-undo/>; <https://www.f6s.com/member/sophiebohrgroenbaek>

⁶² <https://www.f6s.com/member/sophiebohrgroenbaek>

⁶³ <https://nordicfintechmagazine.com/developing-digital-insurance-products-for-the-next-generation-sophie-m-bohr-groenbaek-ceo-at-undo/>

⁶⁴ <https://blog.digitalhubdenmark.dk/undo-challenges-the-traditional-insurance-experience-with-innovative-and-technolo/>

⁶⁵ <https://dk.linkedin.com/in/melissa-hartelius-berntsen-77bb88184>;

<https://theorg.com/org/blazar-capital/org-chart/melissa-hartelius-berntsen>

⁶⁶ <https://www.girltalk.dk/viden/medier/podcasts/melissa/>

⁶⁷ <https://podcasts.apple.com/br/podcast/sex-og-selvkaerlighed-ft-melissa-hartelius-fra-klub-venus/id1436816534?i=1000548433112>

⁶⁸ <https://dk.linkedin.com/in/melissa-hartelius-berntsen-77bb88184>

⁶⁹ <https://www.obama.org/photo-essay-nima-tisdall/>

practices by allowing fishermen to sell their catches at fair prices, making low-impact fishing economically viable.⁷⁰ Born to a Nepalese mother and a Danish father, Nima was inspired to create Blue Lobster after witnessing local fishermen being forced out of business by large industrial fisheries and fishmongers.⁷¹ Her work with Blue Lobster has earned her recognition on Forbes' "30 Under 30" list and as a European Leaders fellow with the Obama Foundation.⁷²

⁷⁰ <https://dk.linkedin.com/in/nimatisdall>

⁷¹ <https://thepeersproject.com/ep-193-nima-tisdall/>

⁷² <https://tedxdalbergcatalyst.com/speaker/nima-tisdall/>; <https://www.forbes.com/profile/nima-tisdall/>

6. THE ROLE OF THE EU FUNDING IN SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN DENMARK

6.1. Recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe (REACT-EU)⁷³

The **Recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe (REACT-EU)** extends the crisis-response and crisis-repair measures delivered through the coronavirus response investment initiative (CRII) and the coronavirus response investment initiative plus (CRII+), and constitutes a bridge to the long-term recovery plan. The programme supports investment projects that foster crisis-repair capacities and contribute to a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy, including support for maintaining jobs, short-time work schemes and support for the self-employed. It can also support job creation and youth employment measures, healthcare systems and the provision of working capital and investment support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

REACT-EU is not a new funding source, but a top-up to 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund allocations. These can be used until end 2023, as was already the case for the original allocations.

It is delivered under [shared management](#). Local authorities call for projects adapted to their specific needs.

It has a total budget of 50.62 billion Euro⁽ⁱ⁾ (current prices) under the Programme NextGenerationEU for the period 2021-2027.

Project Entrepreneurship Denmark⁷⁴:

Entrepreneurship Denmark is supported by the Danish Business Promotion Board, the EU Social Fund and REACT-EU. The support makes it possible to invest in the skills and development of Danish entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship Denmark offers tailor-made workshop courses within the vast majority of competence sets and themes that have something to do with start-up, operation and development of entrepreneurial companies.

6.2. NextGenerationEU⁷⁵

NextGenerationEU is the EU's €800 billion temporary recovery instrument to support the economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and build a greener, more digital and more resilient future.

The Commission's inaugural NextGenerationEU issuance took place in June 2021. To find out more about the first year of the programme and its impact on international capital markets, read the Commission's policy brief "**The EU as an issuer: the NextGenerationEU transformation**".

⁷³ https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/react-eu_en

⁷⁴ <https://xn--ivrkstterdanmark-vobd.dk/content/ydelser/ivaerksaetterdanmark/dbeb5e27-84bb-4b62-9919-03f428f2e213/>

⁷⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/eu-borrower-investor-relations/nextgenerationeu_en#:~:text=NextGenerationEU%20is%20the%20EU%27s%20%E2%82%AC,took%20place%20in%20June%202021.

The centrepiece of NextGenerationEU is the **Recovery and Resilience Facility** - an instrument that offers grants and loans to support reforms and investments in the EU Member States for a total of **€723.8 billion** in current prices.

Part of the funds – up to **€338 billion** – are being provided to Member States in the form of grants.

Another part – up to **€385.8 billion** – funds loans to individual Member States. These loans will be repaid by those Member States. Should Member States not request the full envelope of loans available under the facility, the remaining amount of loans will be used to finance REPowerEU, a programme to accelerate the EU's green transition and reduce its reliance on Russian gas.

Funds under the Recovery and Resilience funds are being provided to Member States in line with their national Recovery and Resilience plans – the roadmaps to reforms and investments aimed to make EU economies greener, digital and more resilient.

6.3. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the European Union (EU)'s main instrument for investing in people and supporting the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). With a budget of almost EUR 99.3 billion for the period 2021-2027, the ESF+ will continue to provide an important contribution to the EU's employment, social, education and skills policies, including structural reforms in these areas.

The Fund will also be one of the cornerstones of EU socio-economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has reversed gains in labour participation, challenged educational and health systems and increased inequalities. The ESF+ will be one of the key EU instruments helping Member States to address these challenges.

As part of cohesion policy, the ESF+ will also continue its mission to support economic, territorial and social cohesion in the EU – reducing disparities between Member States and regions.

AN EXAMPLE OF A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY THE EU⁷⁶

PROJECT 2023-03-07

Boosting women entrepreneurship success rates in Denmark

Mia Hjorth Hansen is an entrepreneur who struggled to launch her business, until she got involved in the 'Entrepreneur Denmark' project. Funded by the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) fund, the project empowers individuals to become entrepreneurs by providing business guidance, economic support, and tailored competency development to ensure their companies' survival and growth.

While working in the restaurant business, Mia identified a gap in the market for an acidic, non-alcoholic drink to help balance the food. So, she invented her own alcohol-free product and set up her company, AIM THIRST. She said, *'As a start-up business you can't afford to bring in consultants to help you with everything'*.

'Entrepreneur Denmark' focuses on helping entrepreneurs like Mia, assisting them in launching their products and businesses successfully – and in overcoming common challenges.

⁷⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/projects/boosting-women-entrepreneurship-success-rates-denmark>

The project strengthens the broad group of entrepreneurs involved with tailored competency development to ensure the companies survival and development, focusing on helping both green and sustainable entrepreneurship and skilled, female entrepreneurs.

The project also targets gender equality in the workplace. The self-employment rate for women in Denmark was only 4.9 % in 2016, which was less than half the rate for men (10.2 %). One of the ways to deliver gender balance in business leadership is to increase the number of female founders — that means supporting women entrepreneurs.

Mia was pleased with the support 'Entrepreneur Denmark' gave her and said, *'It's nice to be able to do more myself.'* Through the project's business courses, Mia received guidance on how to promote her company on social media, making her business more competitive. Mia said, *'The EU project has expanded my skillset [...] I've learned how to transition from being on social media as a normal user to being there as a business.'*

The project has also helped Mia to balance her personal life with her professional responsibilities, and she is thankful to 'Entrepreneur Denmark' for supporting her and her start-up business, *'I think it's awesome that something as large as the EU is supporting little me.'*

So far 'Entrepreneur Denmark' has supported 4 400 entrepreneurs. The project's focus on attracting and supporting female entrepreneurs has also been a success, as 52 % of the 'NextStep' course attendees are women.

Looking to the future, the project is helping Mia to pursue her aspirations for her business through attracting repeat customers. She said, *'I need to spend more time on the customers. Therefore, I need a business partner and to get that I need guidance, which I am lucky to be able to get through Entrepreneur Denmark.'*

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