

Denmark's Global Climate Action



Strengthening the global framework
of the Danish Climate Act

English Summary

Introducing the Danish Council on Climate Change

The Danish Council on Climate Change is an independent body of experts who advise the Danish government on how to transition to a climate-neutral society, thereby ensuring that, in the future, we can live in a country with very low emissions of greenhouse gases while retaining our level of welfare and development. Each year, the Danish Council on Climate Change assesses whether the government's climate efforts have demonstrated that Danish climate targets are likely to be met. The Council also contributes to the public debate and regularly prepares analyses and recommendations for climate efforts.

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1 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.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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.



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).⁴ 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.⁵

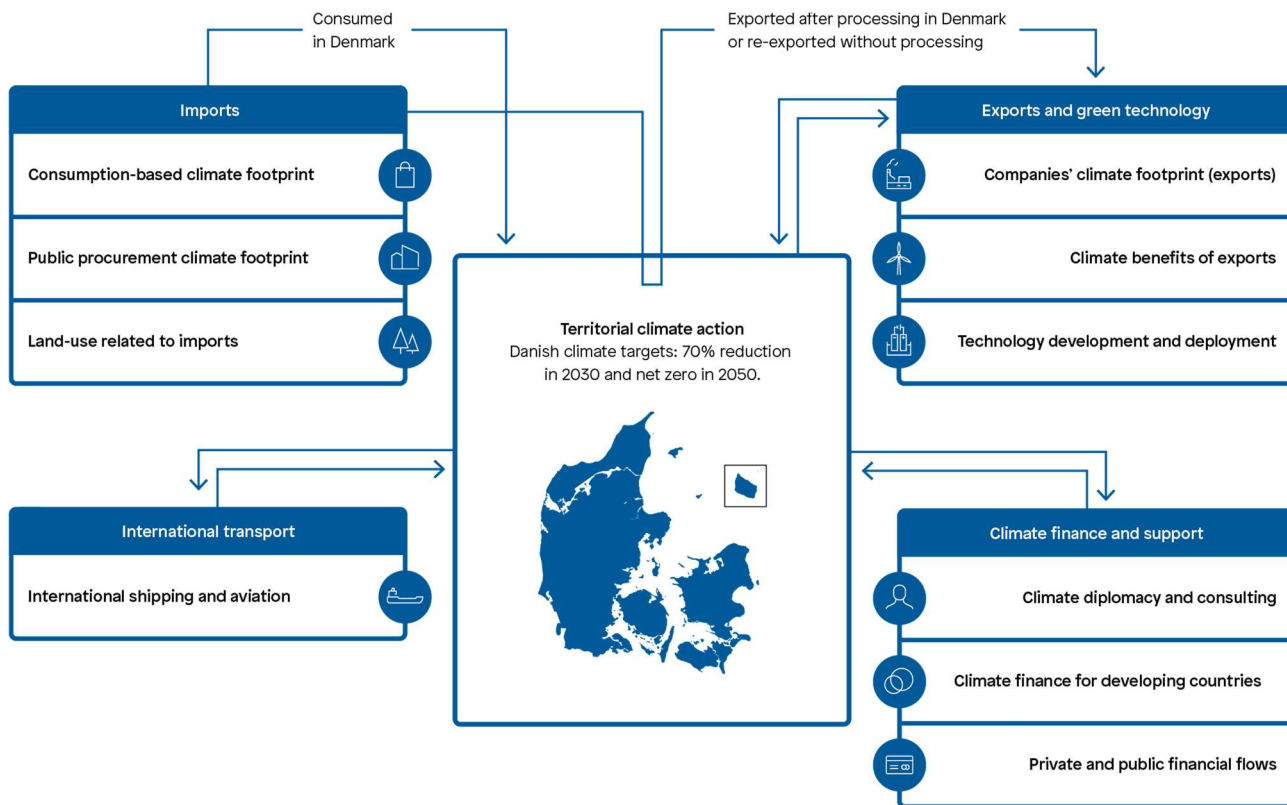


Figure 1 Denmark's global climate impact
Source: The Danish Council on Climate Change

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.⁶ 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.

2 Introduction, conclusions and recommendations

2.1 Introduction to Denmark's possibilities for global climate action

Global emissions are rising

In order to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, global emissions must be nearly halved by 2030 compared to 2010.⁷ Instead of falling, global emissions continue to rise, and the latest estimates show that even if the world's countries meet their 2030 climate targets, the global average temperature will rise by 2.5-2.9 degrees Celsius by 2100.

Today, Denmark primarily contributes to meeting the Paris Agreement's temperature goal through territorial reduction targets and through international climate finance and support. The territorial targets cover emissions occurring within Danish borders, and the Danish Climate Act contains territorial climate targets for 2025, 2030, and 2050. The targets commit Denmark 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 for Denmark to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest, in light of the Paris Agreement's 1.5 degree goal. This is stated in the Danish Climate Act.⁸

Denmark's climate targets are only consistent with the 1.5-degree goal under certain conditions

The DCCC's analysis of *Denmark's Climate Targets from 2022* shows that Denmark's current territorial climate targets are only aligned with the 1.5-degree temperature goal of the Paris Agreement under certain conditions.⁹ Put simply, the Danish targets are only Paris-aligned if you allow a 1.5-degree overshoot, use the median temperature estimate of the climate model applied, and grant the same emissions per capita to Denmark as the rest of the world, despite Denmark's significant historical and economic responsibility.

If these conditions are not met, Denmark's territorial climate targets will not be in line with the 1.5-degree temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. The analysis by the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change of the EU's upcoming 2040 goals and carbon budget for 2030-2050 shows a similar result for the EU as a whole.¹⁰ The results call for more action.

Denmark can do more to reduce global emissions

The urgent need to rapidly reduce global emissions calls for Denmark to do more to reduce its overall impact on greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. This can be achieved through more stringent territorial climate targets, and by increasing Denmark's contribution to reducing emissions in other countries and in international waters and airspace. International climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, regulate countries' territorial emissions but not the emissions that countries can be considered to be jointly responsible for outside their territories. This raises a dilemma because in principle, rich countries can solve their territorial climate challenges or parts of them by exporting emissions to other countries, which then struggle to achieve their climate targets. As a developed country (in accordance with the classification in the UNFCCC), Denmark should not only take responsibility for emissions within its own borders but also consider how to reduce the Danish climate footprint abroad.

The global approach is relevant and potentially very effective. This is because Denmark shares responsibility for many global emissions, including through Danish consumption and imports, and because Denmark has an opportunity to reduce emissions in other countries through exporting green technology, for example. However, it is important that increased global climate action must not weaken actions to reduce emissions domestically.

Denmark has a significant global climate footprint

Denmark can make a substantial contribution to the goals of the Paris Agreement by influencing emissions beyond Danish borders. For instance, Denmark has a consumption-based climate footprint that is 50 percent higher than the territorial emissions, and a large share of this comes from imported goods and services. As a large shipping nation,

Denmark has as large climate footprint from this sector but also has the potential to lead the way to net-zero. Furthermore, Denmark has opportunities to export green technology and knowledge, and to play a significant role in international climate cooperation.

Denmark has both a positive and a negative potential for impacting greenhouse gas emissions abroad. On the one hand, Denmark can reduce its negative impact on the climate. For example, Denmark can attempt to limit emissions from the Danish share of international transportation, imported biomass, and Denmark's consumption-based climate footprint.¹¹ On the other hand, Denmark can increase its positive contribution to other countries' climate action. This includes climate finance, climate diplomacy and government-to-government co-operation, as well as transfer of technology and know-how to assist other countries in reducing their emissions and adapting to climate change.

Denmark's global climate footprint is illustrated in Figure 2.

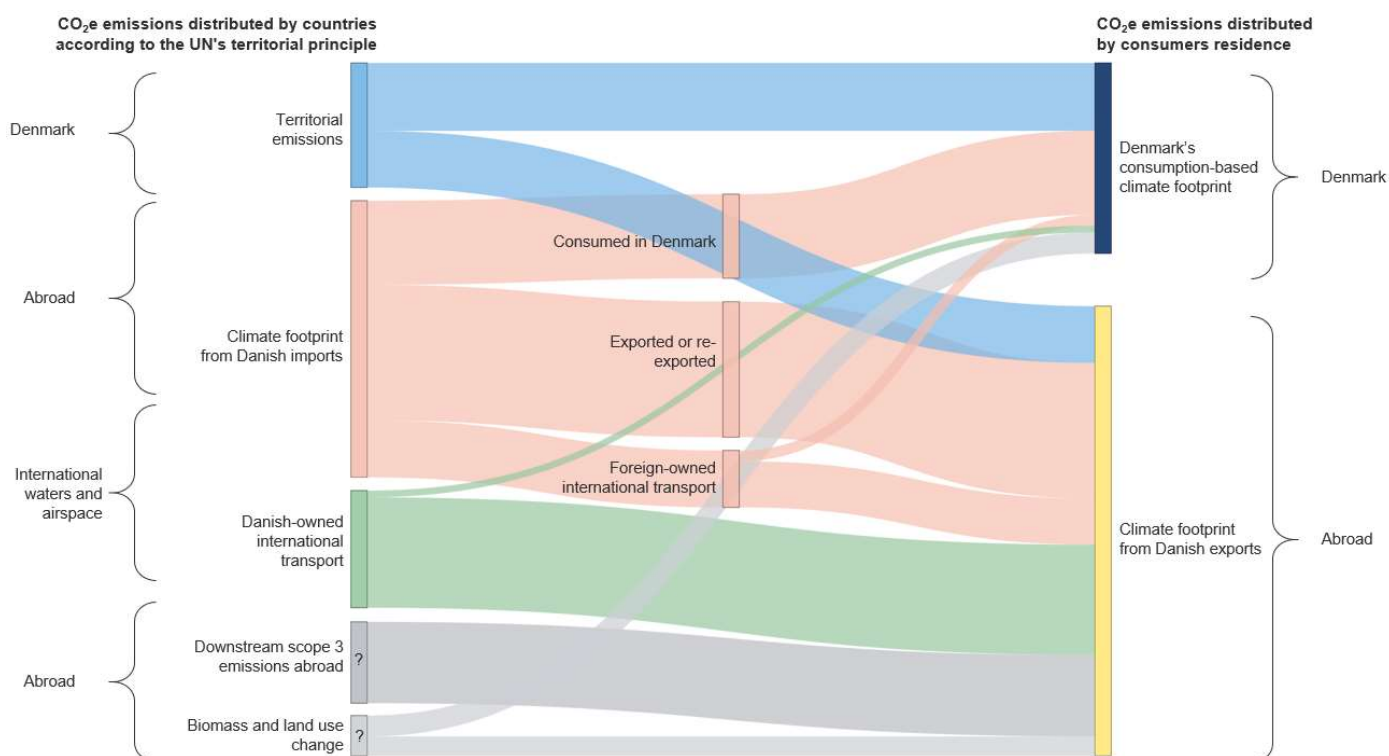


Figure 2 Denmark's global climate footprint

Note 1: The figure is an illustration of the relationship between Denmark's global climate impact channels. The sizes of the various connections should be seen as indicative. Not all numerical values in the figure are measured in the same year, which means that the values cannot be simply summed up. Furthermore, there is uncertainty about the sizes of the grey columns. The figure is based on the transport sector as the emitting sector. The emitting sector is defined as the sector where the emissions take place.

Note 2: "Biomass and land use change" cover emissions from biomass and iLUC (indirect land-use change), reported for 2020 based on the Danish Energy Agency's *Global Report* from 2022. The climate footprint from biomass is calculated based on the consumption of wood pellets and chips for electricity and district heating, calculated via a discounting of net CO₂ uptake. Figures for the climate footprint of biomass and changed land use are reported for the year 2021.

Note 4: The downstream scope 3 emissions abroad from Danish-produced goods are currently not accounted for in the Danish Energy Agency's *Global Report*, and the size of these emissions is therefore unknown and could be larger or smaller than shown in the figure.

Source: The Danish Energy Agency, *Denmark's Global Climate Impact – Global Report*, 2023.

2.2 Conclusions and recommendations on climate targets and benchmarks

Danish targets for international transport can help strengthen global climate action

According to the UN climate panel, the IPCC, global CO₂ emissions must peak in this decade and reach net-zero around the middle of this century to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees by 2100.¹² Therefore, emissions from international transport also need to be significantly reduced. However, with unchanged emissions intensity and expected growth in international transport, the share of total global emissions from international transport is expected to increase drastically.¹³ Recently, in the UN's international shipping and aviation organisations (IMO and ICAO), parties have reached an agreement to achieve or strive for net-zero emissions for the sector by or around 2050, and the area is also regulated within the EU. However, there is a need for individual countries to take responsibility and lead the way towards net-zero emissions.

Denmark has a possibility to influence emissions from bunker fuels used for international aviation and shipping. Through technology development, Denmark can demonstrate the pathway to net-zero by developing and producing sustainable green bunker fuels, enhancing energy efficiency, and limiting international transport through taxes and other regulations, including regulating the climate impact caused by aircraft contrails. The proceeds from taxes on international transport can help finance the transition to green fuels.

Million tonnes CO₂e

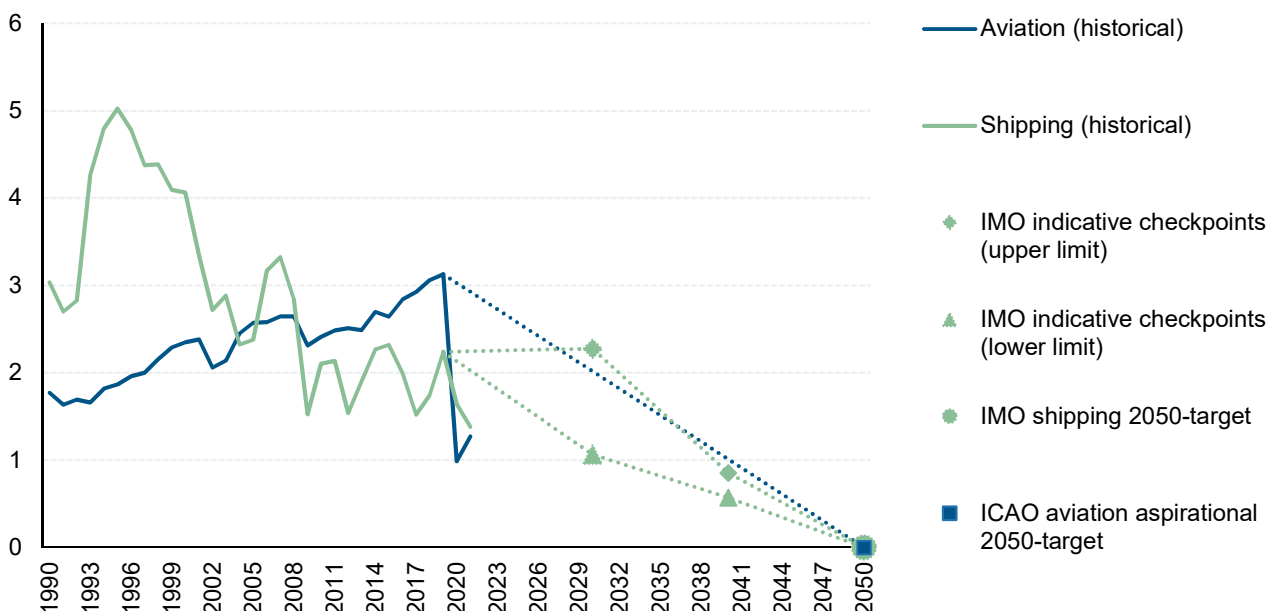


Figure 3 Historical emissions from bunker fuels used for international aviation and shipping reported by Denmark to the UN in 2023, along with an illustration of the UN organisations' climate targets applied to this

Note: The dashed lines represent potential linear reduction paths toward the targets. They commence in 2019, with subsequent years being significantly impacted by Covid-19. Therefore, it is expected that emissions will not remain at the low level.

Source: UNFCCC, National Inventory Submissions 2023, Denmark¹⁴; IMO (2023)¹⁵; ICAO (2022)¹⁶.

The DCCC recommends setting climate targets in the Danish Climate Act for emissions from bunker fuels bunkered in Denmark ports and used for international aviation and shipping. These emissions are reported annually in Denmark's greenhouse gas inventory to the UN. The target can be set either as a separate net-zero target by 2050, or as part of Denmark's territorial climate targets, as in the United Kingdom, where international aviation and shipping is included in the UK's sixth carbon budget covering the years 2033-37.¹⁷ This approach has also been recommended to the French

government by the French Climate Council.¹⁸ The DCCC recommends setting interim targets from 2035 and every five years thereafter towards 2050. The specifics of the targets on the road to net-zero are beyond the scope of this analysis. However, Figure 3 illustrates how Danish emissions from bunker fuels used for international aviation and shipping should develop if they follow IMO and ICAO climate ambitions.

A climate target for bunker fuels used for international aviation and shipping can provide a national incentive to support this development and signal to the world that Denmark will live up to the ambitions of the international shipping and aviation organisations. Any residual emissions from flights and ships concerning the target could be compensated by extra reductions in other domestic sectors or by negative emissions.



Denmark should reduce its consumption-based and public procurement climate footprint

Denmark has one of the highest per capita consumption-based climate footprints in the EU.¹⁹ In 2021, a Danish citizen emitted on average 11 tonnes of CO₂e, contributing to a total Danish consumption-based climate footprint of 63 million tonnes of CO₂e. This does not align with the Danish ambition of being a frontrunner. Focusing on the consumption-based climate footprint can ensure that Denmark does not reduce its territorial emissions simply by increasing its imports related to Danish consumption. Currently, there are no political targets and only few requirements or regulations to lower Denmark's consumption-based climate footprint. Setting targets and a direction for Denmark's consumption footprint could increase political focus on reducing global emissions.

The DCCC recommends that the government set a benchmark for the consumption-based climate footprint in its long-term global strategy. Compared to a climate target, a benchmark is less binding: for instance it is written into a strategy rather than the Climate Act. The DCCC proposes a benchmark for the consumption-based climate footprint rather than a target, because it is difficult to control the carbon content of Danish imports.

A benchmark could be set every five years, projecting ten years ahead. The benchmark could be aligned with the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. Based on the Danish Energy Agency's projection of Denmark's consumption-based climate footprint, which relies on scenarios from the IPCC to achieve different temperature goals, limiting the global temperature increase to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius would require a reduction of 50-60 percent by 2035 compared to 2020. This is illustrated in Figure 4. However, the DCCC has not conducted a detailed analysis of what the specific benchmark should be. To account for inaccuracies in the overall assessment method, the benchmark can be supplemented by indicators that track the climate footprint from the most important product categories, and these can be monitored continuously.

A significant share of the consumption-based climate footprint comes from the public sector. The public sector in Denmark procured goods and services for over EUR 50 billion in 2021. Public procurement is associated with CO₂e emissions of 16 million tonnes. At the same time, the public sector's climate footprint has significantly increased in recent years, and is unlikely to decrease unless there is additional political action. Therefore, the DCCC also recommends setting a benchmark for the climate footprint of public procurement. This should be followed by specific guidance for municipalities, regions, and the state.

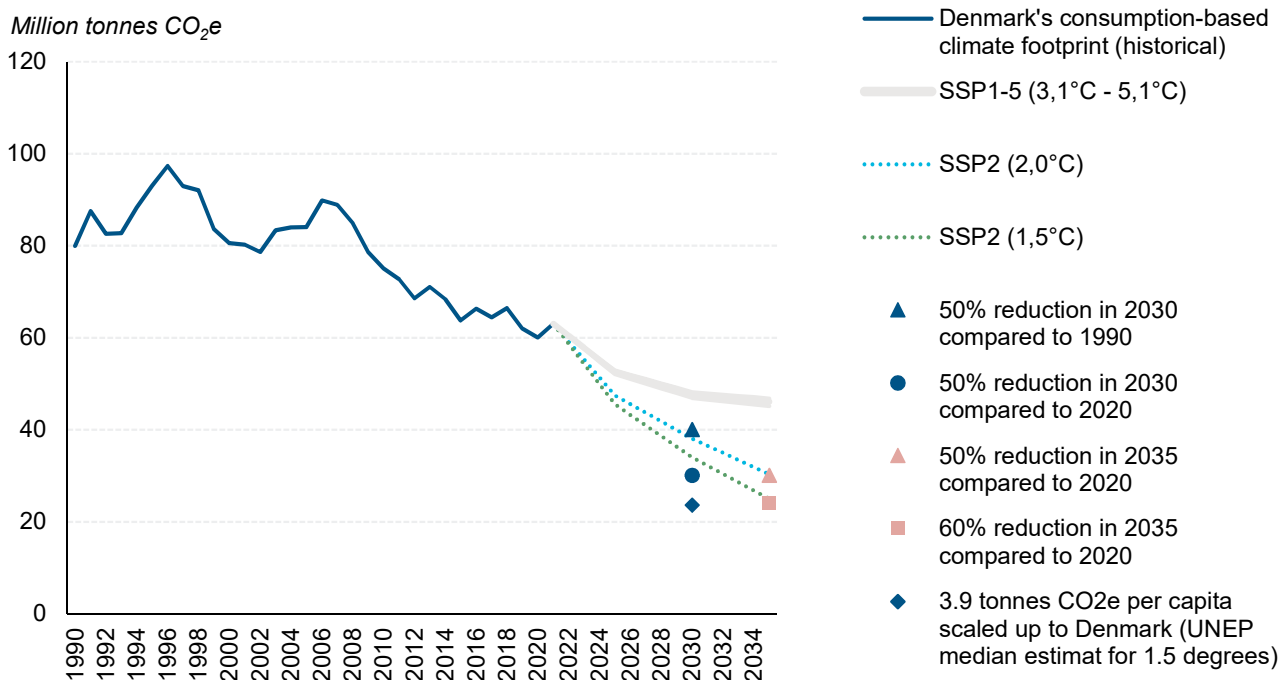


Figure 4 Denmark's historical and projected consumption-based emissions, as well as possible benchmarks

Note 1: The Danish Energy Agency's projection is based on a forecast of Danish consumption combined with a forecast of international emissions from seven scenarios regarding the development in other countries. The Danish consumption forecast is based on a "frozen-policy" approach, without accounting for new measures in the climate and energy sectors after 1 January 2022. The scenarios for other countries are based on the five Shared Socio-economic Pathways (SSPs) described by the IPCC, where global temperatures rise between 3 and 5 degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2100. Additionally, two variants of the SSP2 scenario have been created, where the global temperature rise is limited to 1.5 and 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2100. As Danish emissions and the Danish economy remain constant across the scenarios, the difference in the consumption footprint in the scenarios is solely due to different developments abroad.

Note 2: The figure presents various possible levels for a benchmark based on recommendations from other Danish organisations, suggesting a 50 percent reduction by 2030 compared to 1990 and 2020, as well as the DCCC's assessment of a level between 50 and 60 percent by 2035 compared to 2020. Additionally, it illustrates how high the consumption-based climate footprint must be if all Danes emit 3.9 tons of CO₂e per person in 2030, which is the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) median estimate for allowable emissions in the 1.5-degree scenario.

Source: Danish Energy Agency (2023)²⁰; Statistics Denmark, Statistikbanken (FRDK120 - accessed 30/8-2023); UNEP, Emissions Gap Report 2023, 2023; UN, World Population Prospects 2022, 2022.

There should be a benchmark for Denmark's climate finance for developing countries

The Paris Agreement obligates Denmark to provide financial support to developing countries, thereby supporting them in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and increasing their resilience to climate change. Quantifying the climate effect of Denmark's climate finance is challenging, but it is possible to track the size of the financial support. Denmark has good control over the amount provided and through which financial instruments and channels it is distributed.

The DCCC recommends setting a benchmark for the annual size of Denmark's climate finance in the long-term global climate strategy, measured in monetary values. A benchmark for climate finance will provide greater assurance that Denmark provides adequate climate finance for developing countries.

The benchmark can be set in accordance with the revised goal for global climate finance for developing countries, which is planned to be established under the auspices of the Paris Agreement by no later than 2024. The benchmark should be based on Denmark's fair contribution to the Paris Agreement's collective climate finance goals and align with the agreements and regulations in force at any given time.



Climate diplomacy and consulting can strengthen and accelerate the green transition globally

Based on Danish climate diplomacy and experience with the green transition, Denmark has good opportunities to exert a positive influence beyond its national borders. For instance, through climate diplomatic efforts, Denmark can influence relevant stakeholders, primarily governments and multilateral organisations, to make more ambitious climate policy decisions. Furthermore, Denmark can contribute to strengthening and accelerating a green transition in other countries through direct collaborations with state, regional, and local authorities.

There is significant potential in Denmark's climate diplomatic and capacity building efforts. Denmark is already collaborating with 24 of the world's largest economies on green energy transition.²¹ The Danish government has also through diplomatic efforts engaged in, and initiated, voluntary partnerships with potential to drive progress in areas requiring further global action. For instance, in 2021, Denmark was involved in founding the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA), aiming to set an end date for oil and gas production or contribute to reducing oil and gas production.²² Denmark was also a co-founder of the *Declaration on Zero Emission Shipping by 2050*, which successfully advocated for a goal on net-zero emissions for the shipping sector by or around 2050 in the International Maritime Organization (IMO).²³ It is crucial for such initiatives to be followed by concrete actions by the Danish government and other governments, leading to real reductions.

The DCCC assesses that Denmark has a positive global climate impact in its climate diplomatic and consultancy efforts. Therefore, the DCCC recommends that ambitious efforts in this area be continued.



Denmark's financial flows should support the green transition.

The Paris Agreement establishes a long-term financial goal of making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.²⁴ It is paramount in achieving the national and international climate goals that financial flows support, rather than undermine, the green transition.

The IPCC assess in its sixth synthesis report that there is limited progress towards redirecting global financial flows, and notes that annual green investments globally need to be increased three to six times from the current level by 2030, solely to meet the Paris Agreement's temperature goal.²⁵ While there is a lack of climate finance, extensive subsidies are still given to fossil energy sources.²⁶

Many efforts are being made to redirect Danish financial flows. For instance, the Danish Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) has set a climate goal that their investment portfolio is to achieve net-zero emissions by 2040. At the same time, a report from the Danish Central Bank indicates a decrease in the climate footprint of Danish pension and insurance companies.²⁷ However, several reports also show that Danish banks and pension funds continue to finance the expansion of fossil fuel production.²⁸ This is despite the International Energy Agency (IEA) stating that there is a need to refrain from exploiting new oil, coal, and gas reserves if the Paris Agreement's 1.5-degree target is to remain achievable.²⁹

The DCCC recommends that Danish efforts to redirect financial flows continue. As part of the long-term global climate strategy, it would be beneficial for the Danish government to clearly describe how Denmark will comply with the Paris Agreement's long-term goal to redirect financial flows. This could include a definition of how Denmark understands the Paris Agreement's long-term financial goal, which financial flows and actors are most crucial, and how to strategically work on redirecting financial flows within the selected areas.

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