

# THE MATTER MAGAZINE

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APPLE AND CARROT CAKE



LAST WEEK IN DENMARK



#THEFORGOTTENGOLD MOVEMENT



A TALE OF TWO MERMAIDS

NOVEMBER 2025 - WWW.THE-INTL.COM



**A LIFE REBUILT ABROAD:  
THE STORY OF ANNA'S SELF-MADE SUCCESS**

# THE POWER OF YOUR VOTE

Why the right to vote matters, and how this November reminds us that every voice can shape a community.

**WELCOME TO OUR** November issue. This month always feels like a turning point - not a dramatic one, just a moment where the year slows down enough for us to look around and consider what truly matters. And there is a lot worth paying attention to right now.

Before we delve into this month's central theme, I would like to highlight the strong lineup of articles our writers have been working on. You'll find our regular cultural perspective pieces from writers who live and observe Danish life from many homes around Denmark. We continue sharing real stories that reflect the everyday challenges and victories of people living in Denmark. Our #theforgottengold movement coverage continues to shine a light on voices and histories that deserve more visibility. And for those focusing on their next professional steps, we feature career articles offering practical advice, guidance, and honest reflections. Alongside these, you'll also find many more thoughtful pieces from our team, each shaped by lived experience.

## WHY YOUR VOICE IN NOVEMBER MATTERS

This November brings something significant: Denmark's local and regional elections on Tuesday, 18 November. These elections influence everyday life - schools, health services, childcare, public transport, community planning, and more. For many internationals, these elections are one of the few opportunities to vote. Even if you are not eligible to vote, you can still participate by staying informed and engaged.

The right to vote, and the responsibility that comes with it, is something deeply personal for me. And it goes back to the first time I ever cast a ballot.

## MY FIRST VOTE: SOUTH AFRICA, 1994

I was eighteen when I cast my first vote. It was 1994, and South Africa was holding its first fully democratic election. Nelson Mandela, or Madiba as we lovingly



LYNDSAY JENSEN

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**“YOU MUST SUPPORT THE  
VISION OF A FREE SOUTH AFRICA.  
GO OUT AND VOTE.”**

**NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA (MADIBA)**

called him, had been released from prison. For the first time in our nation's history, every South African over eighteen, regardless of background, had the right to vote.

I remember the long line. I remember the faces, the conversations, the quiet focus. Many had waited their entire lives for this moment. I was proud to vote for leaders I respected, including Madiba, but even more important was knowing that I was part of a moment that would change the country forever.

That day taught me something important: voting is not a small act. It is powerful. It is meaningful. And it carries the weight of possibility.

### WHY THIS MONTH FEELS SIGNIFICANT

Living in Denmark now, I think of that first vote often - especially during election years. The circumstances are different, of course, but the principle stays the same: having a voice matters.

The local elections here shape the places we live, the services we rely on, and the direction our communities take. And this year, we are seeing more internationals stepping into the political arena than ever before.

### INTERNATIONALS RUNNING IN DENMARK

In the Last Week in Denmark section, we highlight the growing number of internationals running for local office. It's a noticeable shift, and it raises meaningful questions:

Why now? What has changed? What motivates people with international backgrounds to put themselves forward?

I've followed debates, read candidate profiles, listened to interviews, and watched discussions unfold online. Many internationals are no longer standing on the sidelines; they want to be part of shaping decisions that affect their neighbourhoods and their daily lives.

This says something important about Denmark today. Communities here are increasingly diverse, and people from different backgrounds make substantial contributions in many areas of society. It makes sense that they would also want representation in local decision-making.

### A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO VOTING

Because local elections in Denmark can be confusing - especially if you didn't grow up with this system - Last Week In Denmark has included a clear guide on this issue:

- Who can vote?
- How to vote?
- What do municipal and regional councils do?
- The parties involved?
- What issues often shape the election conversations?

**It's practical, simple, and meant to help you feel prepared.**

### STORIES, REPRESENTATION, AND PARTICIPATION

Across all our articles this month, cultural pieces, real stories, #theforgottengold movement writing, career articles, and election coverage - one idea keeps showing up: participation matters.

A community becomes stronger when the people living in it take part, ask questions, share experiences, and stay informed. Whether you cast a vote this November or follow the results from the outside, you are contributing to a larger conversation.

### LOOKING AHEAD TO 18 NOVEMBER

If you are voting on 18 November, I hope you take a moment to acknowledge what that vote represents - your voice, your presence, your influence in shaping the place you call home. And if you cannot vote, your engagement still matters. Following the debates, talking to friends and colleagues, and learning how the system works are all important forms of participation. We will all those running the best of luck!

When I think back to that first historic vote in South Africa, I remember how it felt to realise that my voice was part of something larger. That feeling has stayed with me my entire life. And I believe everyone deserves the chance to feel that their voice counts.

Thank you for reading this issue, for supporting our writers, and for taking part in these conversations. I hope the articles in this edition give you insight, useful information, and a renewed sense of how powerful your voice can be - on election day, and every day.

Warm Regards,

Lyndsay Jensen  
**Editor-in-Chief & Founder**



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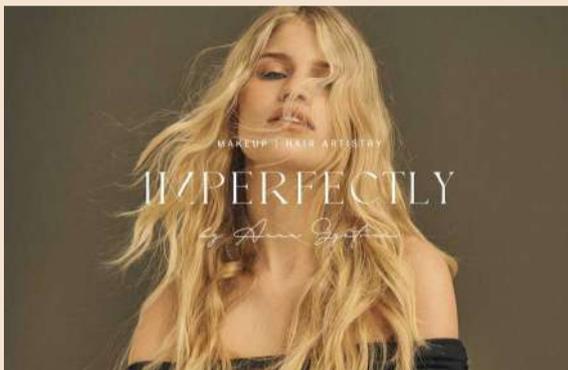
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# ANNA'S PURSUIT OF BALANCE AND CREATIVE FREEDOM IN DENMARK



HENRIK ADAMSEN PHOTOGRAPHY



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HENRIK ADAMSEN PHOTOGRAPHY

Hungarian-born creative Anna Gyetvai reflects on her nine-year journey through Denmark's fashion, beauty, and family landscapes - from small-town beginnings to building her own business in the capital.  
Writer: Lyndsay Jensen / Photographs: Various

**FOR AS LONG** as she can remember, Anna has been curious about life beyond Hungary.

"Ever since I was a teenager, I was actively looking for opportunities to move abroad," she says. "It fascinated me that, at the same moment, people across the world live their everyday lives so differently."

After graduating from fashion school and spending several years working as a designer, Anna began applying for international roles. Her opportunity arrived when she discovered Bestseller's International Business Trainee programme - a competitive entry route into one of Denmark's best-known fashion companies.

"I gave the application my absolute best," she recalls. Out of more than a thousand applicants, only 21 were selected. Anna was one of them.

In 2016, she moved to Brande, a quiet town in central Jutland. It marked the beginning of her Danish story - one that would take her from the rural heartland to the country's creative capital.

## BETWEEN UTOPIA AND REALITY

Anna's introduction to Denmark was almost cinematic.

"During my trial for Bestseller, before I got the job, it felt like I'd woken up in a utopian dream - a Nordic design house in the forest, people respecting and uplifting each other, 30 degrees and sunshine," she recalls. "We sat on a rooftop covered in plants watching the sunset. It was magical."

But once she officially relocated, the picture changed. "The empty streets, the constant rain, the darkness - it was tough," she says. "Small-town life was nothing like I had imagined. It was isolating, expensive, and quiet. I had to adjust very quickly."

Those early challenges, she says, shaped her. "It wasn't what I expected, but I learned a lot from that experience."

## A COUNTRY IN CHAPTERS

Over the years, Anna's life in Denmark has unfolded across regions and phases of personal growth.

"I started in Brande, a town of 7,000 people, moved to Aarhus a year later, and then to Copenhagen in 2024," she explains. "Each move changed me."

Of the three, Copenhagen feels the most natural fit. "When we moved here, I felt relieved - like I didn't have to explain or apologise for being international anymore," she says. "There's no special treatment; everyone's just part of the mix."

Even though the capital moves faster than Jutland or Aarhus, Anna finds it balanced. "Compared to other major cities, Copenhagen is still peaceful," she says. "There are more opportunities here for people like me, though they can still be hard to access without the right network."

## A TURNING POINT AND CREATING HER OWN OPPORTUNITIES

After more than a decade in fashion - including five

years at Bestseller, Anna faced a major career setback.

"I went through nearly two years of unemployment in Aarhus," she says. "It deeply challenged my sense of identity. I'd always worked, so suddenly not being able to find a job was very difficult."

That period coincided with significant life changes: the pandemic, the arrival of her two children, and the emotional strain that came with it. "My husband was already travelling regularly to Copenhagen and convinced me I'd be happier there," Anna says. "So instead of leaving Denmark altogether, I decided to give it another try."

That decision led to reinvention. "When opportunities weren't coming my way, I decided to create my own," she says. "I started a small Instagram account where I shared makeup tutorials and creative looks. Slowly, that led to unpaid shoots, then paid clients - and three years later, it's almost a full-time business."

## BREAKING INTO THE DANISH CREATIVE SCENE

Establishing herself in Denmark's beauty and fashion industries took time.

"It's been a long process," Anna says. "Both industries are competitive, and every opportunity I've had came through persistence."

Along the way, she's met both support and resistance. "I've worked with incredible people - fellow



artists, clients, creative teams,” she says. “But I’ve also seen how not every leader wants to nurture others.”

Those experiences pushed her toward independence. “When I worked in Hungary, I was in my early twenties and probably didn’t come across as a threat,” she explains. “Now, in my mid-thirties, I feel most comfortable being my own boss and setting my own standards.”

Her business gained structure after she completed her training at the Nicci Welsh Academy in Copenhagen. “That course gave me both technical skills and business knowledge,” she says. “It pushed me to value my work properly, raise my prices, and build confidence. That made all the difference.”

#### **FREELANCE LIFE AND FAMILY BALANCE**

Anna’s current professional life mixes commercial campaigns, editorial shoots, and bridal work. But as a freelancer, she never knows exactly what the week will bring.

“I usually find out what I’m doing a few days or a week in advance,” she says. “There can be long stretches without work, which is stressful, and then suddenly everything happens at once.”

She describes one particularly intense week: “I traveled from Copenhagen to Randers for a shoot, then to Aarhus and Herning for other projects, staying in different hotels each night. By the weekend, I was back home with my family, washing brushes

and preparing for a bridal client. It was exhausting but rewarding.”

Her husband, Conrad, also has an unpredictable schedule as a successful stand-up comedian. “We manage everything through a shared Google calendar,” she says. “When a new job comes in, we immediately check what’s possible. Sometimes I have to decline offers, because being present with my children matters more.”

With no family nearby, Anna and Conrad have built their own support system. “We rely on babysitters and friends when needed,” she says. “It’s not easy, but when we’re all four together, we really value that time.”

#### **MOTHERHOOD AND PERSPECTIVE**

Motherhood has transformed Anna’s priorities - and her approach to work.

“I don’t worry about small things anymore,” she says. “I try to avoid unnecessary drama. My work and my family need calm energy from me.”

Therapy, she adds, helped her maintain emotional balance. “Clients often say I have a peaceful energy,” she smiles. “That’s one of the nicest things to hear.”

Still, raising children abroad can be challenging. “Sometimes I envy friends who have parents nearby to help with childcare,” she says. “It’s something only people raising kids away from their home country truly understand.”

**“SOMETIMES I HAVE TO TURN JOBS DOWN BECAUSE BEING WITH MY CHILDREN MATTERS MORE. MY WORK AND MY FAMILY BOTH NEED CALM ENERGY FROM ME.”**

Travel, shared with her husband, has become a vital way to recharge. “When we travel, I feel inspired again,” Anna says. “It gives me new creative energy and reminds me why we work so hard.”

#### **FINDING HER RHYTHM IN DENMARK**

Now settled in Copenhagen, Anna feels her life and career are finally aligned. “I love the balance we have here,” she says. “I feel safe, my children are in a school system that encourages independence and creativity, and we have a calm rhythm as a family.”

At the same time, she feels a deep connection to Hungary. “When I walk through Budapest or my hometown, surrounded by mountains, vineyards, and old buildings, something stirs in me,” she says. “It touches a part of who I am - even if my life is somewhere else now.”

This sense of duality defines much of her experience. “Both places are part of me,” Anna says. “And I’ve learned to be at peace with that.”



HENRIK ADAMSEN PHOTOGRAPHY



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**“WHEN OPPORTUNITIES WEREN’T COMING MY WAY, I DECIDED TO CREATE MY OWN. WHAT STARTED AS A SMALL INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT SLOWLY GREW INTO MY FULL-TIME CAREER.”**



AUSRA BABIEDAITĖ RASIMAS

**ADVICE FOR OTHER CREATIVES**

For internationals looking to build creative careers in Denmark, Anna’s advice is practical.

“It can be hard to know where to start,” she says. “If you’re young and outgoing, go out - meet people at events and in creative spaces around Copenhagen. Networking happens naturally here. If you’re more introverted, start online through Facebook groups and collaborative projects.”

She also stresses the importance of location. “Move somewhere that fits your personality,” she says. “I loved city life in Budapest, so it was unrealistic to think I’d thrive in the countryside. But every stage taught me something.”

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Anna’s ambitions today balance creative growth and family life. “I want to contribute more financially while continuing to do what I love,” she says. “Equality in our home matters to me - but so does joy in my work.”

Her dreams are both personal and professional: “Buying an apartment, traveling as a family, doing a magazine cover, working on a major brand campaign, mentoring others, staying healthy, managing finances better - and keeping our love strong,” she lists. “Those are the things I think about most.”

After years of uncertainty, Anna has found clarity. “My role as a mother and my ambitions can work together,” she says. “That’s the only sustainable way forward for me.”

**A LIFE BUILT ON HER OWN TERMS**

Looking back, Anna points to her earliest professional years in Denmark as some of the most formative. “My first job here was special,” she says. “I had a mentor and manager who genuinely wanted to lift others up. They taught me that real leadership is about helping people grow.”

That example has stayed with her. “If I can influence someone’s success, I will,” she says. “There’s space for everyone. I’d like to help create a more supportive creative community - one where people treat each other with respect.”

Nearly a decade after arriving in Denmark, Anna has created a life shaped by persistence, creativity, and hard-earned calm.

From her early days in a quiet Jutland town to her thriving creative studio in Copenhagen, she has built a career - and a way of life defined by independence and self-direction.

“I’ve learned to build a life that truly feels like mine,” she says. “And that, to me, is success.”

**Based in Copenhagen, Anna works as a professional Hair and Make-up Artist across editorial, commercial, and bridal work. Connect with her on Instagram [imperfectly by anna](#) or through [imperfectlybyanna.com](#)**

# #THEFORGOTTEN GOLD MOVEMENT

This month, **Aamna Tauheed** gives an overview on Denmark's overlooked skilled internationals, as part of our #TheForgottenGold Movement, she amplifies their voices as she shares their stories.

**THE FUTURE OF** internationals has once again become a hot topic in Denmark. The new amendments to the rules for foreigners by the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration have caused uncertainty and ambiguity among those living in the country. Adding to this problem are layoffs and redundancies occurring across both national and international companies, affecting many international employees.

The highly competitive Danish labour market makes it very challenging for international talent to establish themselves and find career success. They are skilled and have substantial work experience, yet they often remain invisible in the Danish job market. According to a 2018 report by Dansk Industri, Denmark ranks near the bottom among 68 countries that are difficult for internationals to settle in. Despite the outward promotion of cultural diversity, the lack of inclusivity and limited job opportunities have made Denmark a "difficult country for internationals" to live and succeed professionally.

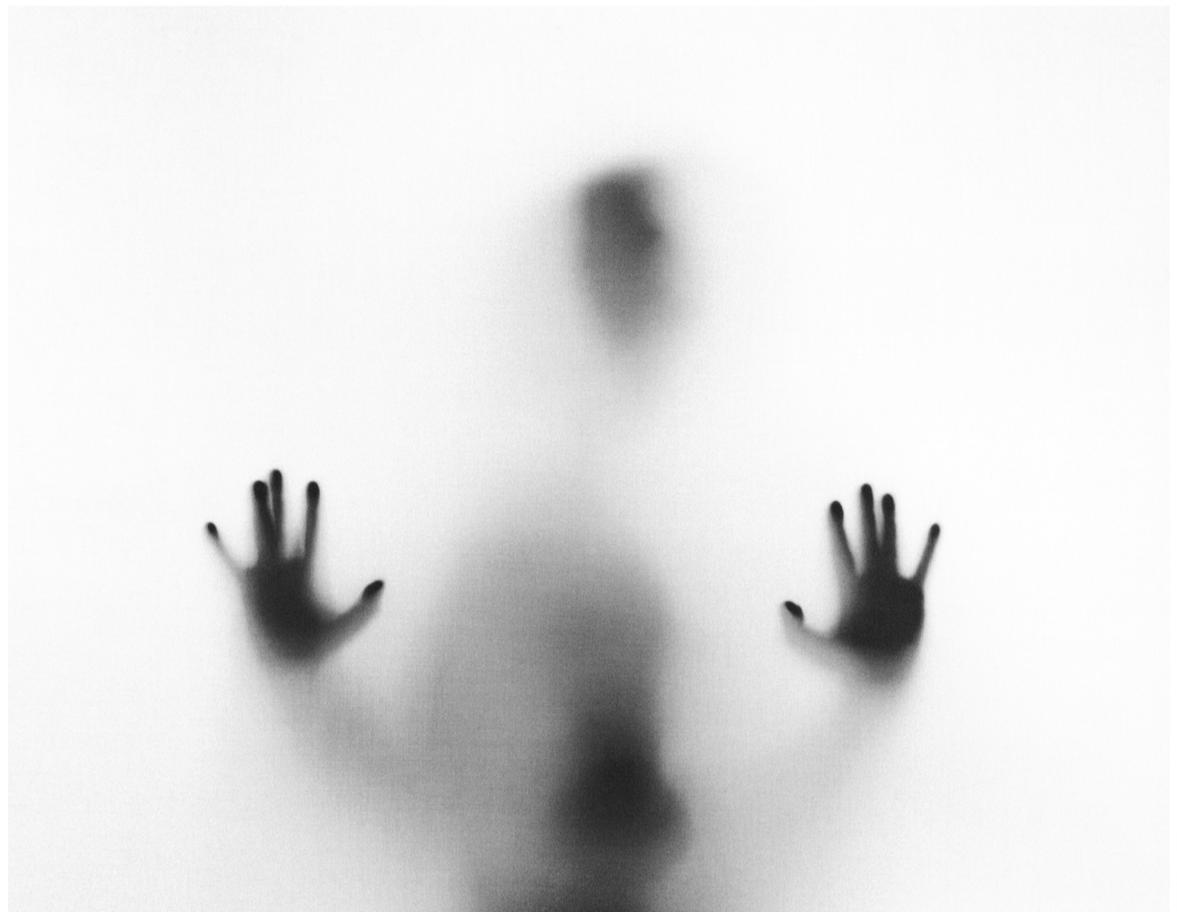
Considering the country's current mood, this month, The International has once again chosen to raise a more impactful voice for skilled internationals through #TheForgottenGold movement. Talented internationals are the faces of this movement, and their stories reveal patterns of systemic exclusion in the job market, financial and social barriers, and the tight approach of both government and companies that leads many to consider leaving the country, which is known for its "hyggeligt" (warm and cosy) nature.

## **DENMARK: A NEW HOME FOR STRUGGLING PROFESSIONALS**

Many internationals, who moved to Denmark with hopes of starting a new life and building careers, have been struggling for years to find professional opportunities in the Danish job market. Despite learning the local language and making significant efforts to integrate into Danish society, most remain unemployed and feel isolated.

Jen Jul is an artificial intelligence generalist with a Master of Business Administration (MBA). A native American, she has lived in Denmark for nine years and has been struggling to succeed professionally. Despite her education and decades of professional experience in the business sector, she has been unable to secure a job in Denmark related to her field.

"I did everything right, from learning Danish to adopting a new culture, but Denmark still refuses to accept me. Multilingual, educated and skilled people like me have given everything to this country but received nothing except cold shoulders and closed



UNSPLASH



JEN JUL

**"The Forgotten Gold," fits for skilled internationals who silently carry the weight of invisibility in the Danish environment"**

doors. We don't fit into the Danish boxes because we differ from the imaginary picture companies created for their next hire."

Initially, she believed that finding a job in Denmark as an international required more effort and patience than in her home country. However, months later, her mailbox told a different story.

Jen shared her story for #TheForgottenGold movement in the July edition of The International. She also explained why she believes the term, "The Forgotten Gold," fits for skilled internationals who silently carry the weight of invisibility in the Danish environment. For this movement, she said, "#TheForgottenGold movement is more than a hashtag on digital media. It's a voice that demands better hiring practices, integration policies, and greater awareness of the challenges that international talent living in Denmark faces."

## **THE VOICE OF AN OVERLOOKED CULTURAL ANALYST FROM ITALY**

Giada Oliva's journey as an expat from Italy in Denmark mirrors Jen's. She is a cultural analyst and researcher who moved to Denmark to study and develop her career after finishing her education. After earning a degree in Applied Cultural Analysis from the University of Copenhagen, she expected to join



GIADA OLIVA

**“Sometimes, I feel exhausted and struggle to sustain my motivation in Denmark, which I consider a land of opportunities.”**

Denmark’s renowned innovation sector. Instead, she found herself cleaning tables and serving coffee in a café to make ends meet.

Her story is similar to that of many international students who come to study at Danish universities, eager to build successful careers here. Sadly, most end up stuck working in hospitality after graduation, due to the challenges of navigating a highly competitive job market. The recruitment system often fails to recognise their potential and skills, leaving them feeling ignored and unwelcome by companies.

Despite her dedication and efforts to find a job in the Danish job market, Giada feels isolated and unable to progress professionally: “Sometimes, I feel exhausted and struggle to sustain my motivation in Denmark, which I consider a land of opportunities. You never know whether you’ll get a job tomorrow or next year.”

**THE TIGHT-FISTED APPROACH OF THE DANISH JOB MARKET AND GOVERNMENT**

In the Danish job market, finding an opportunity and securing a job that matches your skills is more

difficult for internationals. Many feel trapped in a cycle of hope and rejection, which takes a mental toll and leads to isolation in a country that values hygge (cosiness) and inclusivity.

Aasavari Joshi, the subject of October’s #TheForgottenGold article, is a human resource consultant with a master’s degree in Global Development. She shared insights on her professional challenges in Denmark:

“The frustration of not hearing back, being ghosted by companies, and waiting to be in the right place at the right time takes away the motivation I came to Copenhagen with. If the ‘right time’ still hasn’t arrived after over a thousand applications and 150 coffee meetings, maybe it is time to consider the problems in the system. They have closed their doors and washed their hands of internationals.”

Tanmay Singh Madan is an account executive and has a master’s degree in Creative Business Processes. “After three months, I was laid off due to restructuring in the company, and that decision affected my legal status. I have two months to find a job related to my profession. After spending eleven years and mastering the local language, I am still temporary for Denmark,” said Tanmay while sharing his story as one of the “Forgotten Gold” and discussing the impact of immigration rules on internationals.

Aside from professional challenges, the threat of the “temporary visa status” is another threat hanging over many internationals. Along with financial, professional, and social struggles, the tight grip of immigration rules for internationals is another hurdle in achieving the dream of a life in Denmark.

Tanmay and Aasavari’s stories highlight the harsh paradox faced by internationals who spend years in Denmark trying their best to add value to Danish society and the job market, yet remain outsiders in the eyes of the government, the social system and the professional sphere.

**THE SYSTEMIC GAP: BIG TALK, LITTLE ACTION**

While Denmark promotes diversity and inclusivity, it gives the impression of a country that values internationals but still struggles to provide systemic support for them. Companies that clearly state in their policies that they value talent regardless of



TANMAY SINGH MADAN

**“After spending eleven years and mastering the local language, I am still temporary for Denmark.”**

gender, region, or ethnicity still close their doors to international talent. These consistent patterns in the practices of both the government and companies in Denmark suggest that integration and cultural diversity are often just talk. The reality, however, is different, which is why many talented internationals consider leaving Denmark due to a lack of opportunities there. On the other hand, new policy developments set by the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration also indicate the ministry’s future intentions toward foreigners.

#TheForgottenGold movement by The International represents the voice of all internationals who came to Denmark with hopes of contributing and adding value to society. Don’t let internationals feel neglected; treat them as “partners” rather than “outsiders”. Systemic and social support gives the international talent the courage to thrive socially and professionally; otherwise, retaining them in the country will be one of Denmark’s biggest challenges in the future.

**INTERVIEWEES AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL PROFILES**

- [Jen Jul](#) is looking for a job in the business sector
- [Giada Oliva](#) is looking for an entry-level job in the research sector
- [Aasavari Joshi](#) is looking for a job in human resources in the corporate sector
- [Tanmay Singh Madan](#)



AASAVARI JOSHI

**“The frustration of not hearing back, being ghosted by companies, and waiting to be in the right place at the right time takes away the motivation I came to Copenhagen with.”**

**ABOUT THE WRITER**

Aamna Tauheed is a Denmark-based copywriter and communications specialist with a strong background in business communications. Passionate about storytelling, she writes compelling content that amplifies brands and drives positive change.



# SEASONAL JOBS IN DENMARK

Leslea Petersen's guide to lighting up your job search this winter.



UNSPLASH

**IT MAY BE** darker longer, but I love this time of year as my neighbours are already lighting up their windows and balconies with Christmas lights! For you, job seeker, the arrival of winter doesn't have to mean slowing down your job search or losing your sparkle! It is actually a great time to look for seasonal or temporary employment.

Seasonal work isn't just about earning extra cash during the colder months, it also gives you valuable experience, expanding your network, and maybe even securing long-term employment opportunities.

## HOW BUSY IS THIS SEASON?

Peak visitor months are obviously over the summer period when tourists arrive in their thousands. Hotel occupancy is at its highest but the next busiest time is in December. Visitors flock to the major cities for the Christmas markets and Tivoli, and who can blame them, it's a magical time of year. It also creates opportunities for reliable, flexible workers to jump into temporary roles and if you are already in Denmark, then what are you waiting for?

Employers value flexibility, hard work, and availability for seasonal work, far more than formal qualifications. It's a perfect time to modify your CV to one page and just highlight what is necessary to fulfil a more physical role if you end up working in a warehouse or in a delivery job. In the short-term, you will also develop new skills and make local connections that can last well beyond the season.

**“WINTER WORK OFFERS MUCH MORE THAN SHORT-TERM INCOME - IT'S A CHANCE TO BUILD LOCAL EXPERIENCE AND MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS.”**

## WHERE ARE THESE WINTER JOBS?

I covered some ideas in the last issue but here's a brief reminder of where to look. Hotels, cafés, and restaurants are obvious choices with the many visitors over the festive period, and they need extra staff for the busy dining and event season, with roles ranging from waiters and baristas to kitchen helpers. Remember, this is party season!

Online shopping in Denmark means delivery companies, warehouses, and packaging centres are flooded with orders from November through January. These jobs are ideal for those who want a practical, temporary job that offers flexible shifts.

For English-speaking students, these jobs are often a natural fit. Employers might be looking for part-time and weekend coverage, so these roles lend themselves perfectly to the student schedule. Even if you aren't studying hospitality or logistics, a strong performance in these roles can lead to year-round contracts to support your student funds and it is great to have a role on your CV in a Danish organisa-

tion. Shows a good work ethic.

## HERE'S MY TOP TIPS FOR LANDING A WINTER JOB

Danish work culture encourages even temporary staff to contribute ideas and take initiative. This means seasonal work can act as an informal trial period, where your attitude and effort matter more than your CV. If you show reliability and motivation, employers will offer continued part-time or full-time positions after the season ends.

Look as soon as you can and sign up for any temporary work on job portals and search for organisations that are hiring specifically in the areas you can contribute to.

Find organisations that accept unsolicited applications. Create an opportunity for yourself by telling them what you can do. Make it easy to hire you.

Be flexible, like I said previously, staff that can work weekends, evenings or during the holidays will have a better chance.

Highlight those soft skills! Emphasise reliability, good communication skills (languages if it will be a plus) and open to acquiring new skills.

Learn some Danish basic phrases like “tak for hjælp” (thanks for helping) and follow Brooke Fossey in this issue for guidance, she's doing a great job helping us all be more confident in speaking Danish. Any Danish words or phrases you can learn will always be a bonus.

## A WARM START IN THE COLD MONTHS

For students and job seekers just starting your job search journey, winter work offers much more than short-term income. It's a chance to build local experience, make new connections, and explore different industries from the inside. It also means you get out of the door, earn some cash and hopefully, have some fun working over the most magical time of the year!

## ABOUT THE WRITER

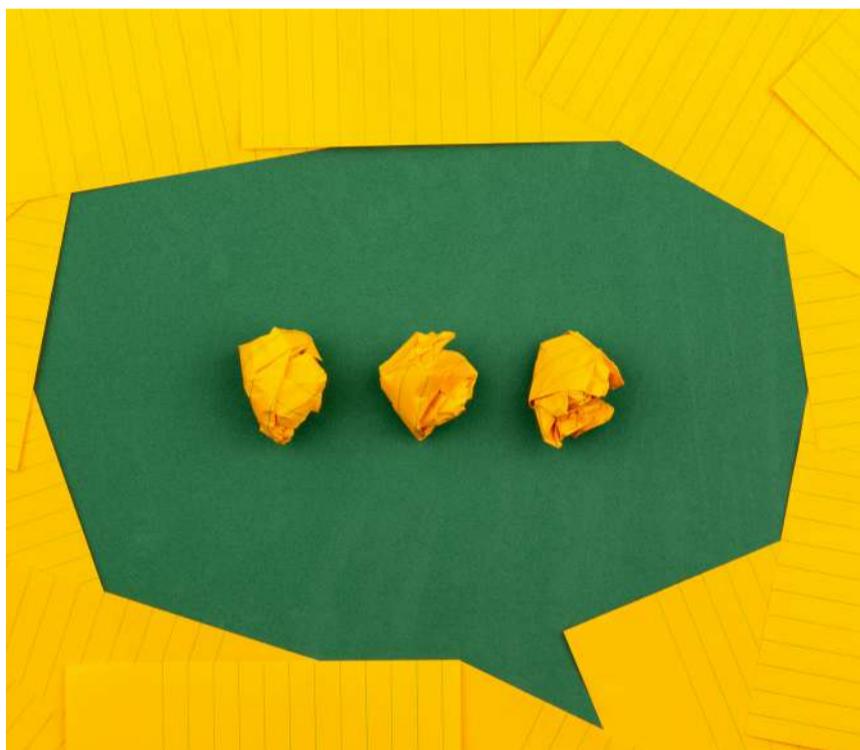
**Leslea Petersen is the CEO of English Job Denmark**, helping professionals and businesses retain international talent.

With 20+ years in communications, she is passionate about diversity, recruitment, and supporting inclusive workplaces.



# WHEN WORDS HURT WITHOUT MEANING TO

Words have meaning even when we don't realise. **Anna Pawlowicz** explains how it affects the message we want to deliver.



UNSPLASH

**"I DIDN'T MEAN** it like that."

We've all said it. When someone points out a word or phrase that lands wrong, our instinct is to defend our intent. Maybe we said, "That idea's insane," or "I'm totally blind to that problem." These expressions slip out easily because they're everywhere.

But language is powerful. It doesn't just describe the world - it shapes how we see people in it. Even when there's no bad intent, the words we use about disability can quietly reinforce the idea that difference equals deficiency.

## WHAT ABLEISM SOUNDS LIKE

Ableism is a type of social prejudice that refers to discrimination, bias, or stereotypes about disability – whether physical, cognitive, or mental. But ableism isn't just found in buildings without ramps. It also hides in our everyday speech.

Ableist language is when we use disability-related words as metaphors for something negative, funny, or extreme. Words like "crazy," "lame," "crippled," or "OCD" are so common that we barely notice them. Yet when they're used this way, they turn real experiences into punchlines or insults.

None of this means that everyone who uses such language is unkind. It simply means we live in a culture that has long treated disability as a problem. And when our language follows that pattern, we keep that story alive – often without meaning to.

## INTENT MATTERS. BUT THE IMPACT LASTS LONGER

If you live with a disability, hearing your reality used casually to describe something bad or undesirable can sting. It can send the quiet message that your identity is something to avoid, fix, or laugh about.

This isn't about policing speech or walking on eggshells. It's about self-awareness. When we notice the stories our words tell, we get the chance to rewrite them.

The good news is: it doesn't take much to change how we speak. Once you notice ableist language, it's surprisingly easy to replace it with something more accurate, kind, or creative. Here are a few examples:

Common phrase	Why it stings	A kinder swap
"That idea is insane."	It links mental illness with chaos.	"That idea is surprising / extreme / hard to believe."
"I'm so OCD about cleaning."	It trivialises a serious condition.	"I like things neat / I'm very particular."
"He's wheelchair-bound."	It suggests imprisonment or limitation.	"He uses a wheelchair."
"She turned a blind eye."	It equates blindness with ignorance.	"She ignored / overlooked it."

These are small, ordinary swaps – but they add up. They make conversation safer and more respectful, and they remind everyone listening that disability isn't a metaphor. It's simply a part of human diversity.

## LANGUAGE AS INCLUSION IN PRACTICE

We often think of disability inclusion as something formal, like hiring policies, ramps in buildings, or captions in Zoom calls. But language is where true inclusion begins. It's the bridge between our intentions and other people's experiences.

When we take care with our words, we show care for the people who hear them. That's what makes language such a powerful tool: it can wound, or it can welcome.

Language evolves – and we evolve with it. Every time we choose words that reflect respect and curiosity, we make daily life a little easier for someone who's used to being misunderstood.

Inclusion doesn't start with a big statement or a perfect vocabulary. It starts with listening, learning, and a single choice: to make our words part of the change.



UNSPLASH

## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Anna Pawlowicz is the Founder and CEO of HumanKind**, a consultancy driving disability inclusion in workplaces and society. Inspired by her son's experience with disability and autism, she is passionate about building more inclusive communities.



# WINTER HYGGE

As the days grow shorter, **Monika Pedersen** shares tips on hygge, health, and community to brighten the winter months.



UNSPLASH

**THE CLOCKS HAVE** shifted, and the days are shorter, yet the beauty of the autumnal colours of the yellow, orange, and red leaves prevails and provides a lovely creative and artistic activity to perform with children. As the days pass, the wind hastens its gusts, the temperature drops, and the time for winter hygge begins.

## WHAT IS HYGGE?

Hygge is the Danish term for being cosy. It is about creating a harmonious atmosphere at home with warm and harmonious lighting, comfortable surroundings created by cuddly textiles, warm drinks and delicious comfort treats, and the general endeavour to create wellness during the long winter days to keep one's spirits buoyant. It is a very Danish approach, but one that is well tested and proven to keep the Danes cheerful through the very long winter.

## WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

Unlike the Danes, many internationals are not used to the darkness and the dreariness of the winter here in Denmark. There is often a sinking feeling when one must get up in the dark, have no light until almost 9 o'clock in the morning, and then return home from school in the dark. Days are very short, and the darkness seems to last forever! This is a trying time for everyone, especially international fami-

lies who are new to the experience. Thus hygge is one means of survival!

## MORE SURVIVAL TIPS

Equally important at this time of year is taking essential vitamins such as vitamin D to boost the immune system and ward off the inevitable coughs and colds that spread through schools. Vitamin C also plays a key role in keeping the body fit and energised, while vitamin B supports mental clarity and focus during the long, dark months. It is quite common to notice students becoming less lively as winter settles in.

**“HYGGE IS ONE MEANS OF SURVIVAL DURING THE LONG, DARK DANISH WINTER.”**

A well-balanced, nutritious diet is just as vital. As tempting as it may be to indulge in sugary treats, these should be balanced with plenty of vegetables, fruit, and protein-rich foods to provide the energy needed to stay warm, healthy, and alert. This is especially important for children, whose immune systems are not yet strong enough to fend off the seasonal bugs that inevitably appear.

Appropriate clothing is another essential factor. Children are still expected to play outdoors, and fresh air remains important even in the colder months. A proper rain set and wellies, as well as a snow set and snow boots, are must-haves. Many parents overlook the fact that smart clothing choices are key to keeping their children warm and healthy.

It is not uncommon to see pupils arriving at school in canvas shoes, thin jackets, and without hats, scarves, or gloves, only to learn, after a few bouts of illness, the value of proper winter wear.

Despite the inhospitable weather, it is still important to wrap up and, whenever the conditions allow, get outside for some exercise. As inviting as it may be to stay indoors, physical activity is vital to maintaining energy levels and keeping serotonin up, helping to avoid the winter slump and the lure of becoming a 'couch potato'.

## A TIME TO CELEBRATE

November is not without its charms, with celebrations such as the Harvest Festival, Thanksgiving for the American community living in Denmark, and the beginning of Advent. These occasions offer international schools a wonderful opportunity to support their communities away from home while sharing in moments of togetherness.

At many schools, parents host a Thanksgiving supper, bringing a taste of home to Denmark. There is also the chance to create Advent candle holders to mark the four Sundays leading up to Christmas — a creative evening where parents and students come together to make candle arrangements and enjoy traditional Danish treats such as æbleskiver and gløgg.

Æbleskiver are small, round, doughnut-like pancakes, typically warmed, dusted with icing sugar, and served with strawberry jam. They are best enjoyed alongside a glass of gløgg, a warm, spiced, orange- and red wine-based drink that brings both comfort and a touch of festive cheer.

## TRADITIONS

These traditions help to broaden a child's experiences while living abroad and provide them with the hope and energy to stay motivated in the coming months. It is always a blessing that Christmas and other cultural festivities are around the corner to keep life exciting and enchanting.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Monika Pedersen is an international educator** with extensive leadership experience across the UK, Germany, and Denmark. She brings deep expertise in international and Danish school systems, with a continued passion for teaching and learning.



# THE ØRESUND BRIDGE

**Mariano A. Davies** examines the Øresund Bridge as a remarkable fusion of engineering innovation, ecological sensitivity, and cross-border collaboration in Scandinavia.



**THE ØRESUND BRIDGE** (“Øresundsbron”) has linked Denmark and Sweden since its inauguration on 1 July 2000 and has recently celebrated 25 years in use. The Øresund Link consists of approximately 8 kilometres of bridge, 4 kilometres of tunnel and a 4-kilometre artificial island - a total of 15,9 kilometres. It forms part of the everyday lives of thousands on both sides of the Øresund crossing between these two countries.

## THE BRIDGE

Four pylons and 80 pairs of stay cables create the iconic silhouette of Øresundsbron over the Øresund. The bridge is a 7.845-metre combined railway and motorway bridge with a double-track railway on the lower deck and a four-lane motorway with shoulders on the upper deck.

It is divided into three sections with two approach bridges supported by piers and a high bridge suspended by pylons with stay cables over the Flintrännen navigation channel.

The high bridge features a 490-meter free span, making it one of the world's longest cable-stayed bridges for both motorway and railway. The west approach bridge (3.014 metres) stretches from the artificial island of Peberholm to the 1.092-metre-high bridge. On the eastern side, the 3.739-metre east approach bridge connects with Lernacken on the Swedish side.

The stay cables are arranged in an even-angled pattern for stability and are located outside the roadway for protection against collisions. To prevent oscillations in certain wind conditions, vibration dampers are installed. The pylons (203,5 metres tall)

taper upwards, giving an appearance of strength and balance.

## PEBERHOLM

Peberholm is the green island in the middle of Øresund, spanning 130 hectares, and was established between 1995 and 1999 - using dredging material (approximately 9 million m<sup>3</sup>) from the construction of the tunnel trench. Its name refers to Saltholm, the natural neighbouring island to the north (“salt and pepper”).

Peberholm was created as part of the Øresund Bridge, serving as a transition point between the bridge and the tunnel. The island was constructed to enable the shift of traffic from the bridge—where train and car traffic operate on two levels—to the tunnel portal on the island's western side, where traffic enters the Øresund Tunnel on a single level side by side.

The island is surrounded by stone embankments (approximately 2 million m<sup>3</sup>). No landfill or soil from the mainland was added (just from the tunnel), and nothing was planted by human hands. The island was left barren, allowing all species to migrate naturally from either Denmark or Sweden. Since Peberholm's establishment, nature has been left to evolve freely, making it an exciting natural experiment that has developed rich biodiversity. The island has transformed from a barren area into the green island with an impressive and unique variety of flora and fauna.

Peberholm has been a “Natura 2000” site since 2000, and its nature is considered particularly valuable from a European perspective. Øresund Bridge

therefore strives to preserve its strong biodiversity.

The Øresundsbro Consortium's original strategy of allowing nature to develop without human intervention proved highly successful. Within just a few years, the barren area became home to an impressive variety of plant and animal life. The number of plant species found on Peberholm is now estimated to be around 600 with approximately 30 bird species nesting there annually.

## THE TUNNEL

The tunnel is essential to avoid disruption to air traffic to and from Copenhagen Airport and to ensure that large ships can pass through the Øresund Strait. It is equipped with modern technology for ventilation, lighting and safety, making it a secure and reliable connection for both car and train traffic.

The Øresund Tunnel was built from 20 tunnel elements that were manufactured at a tunnel factory in Denmark and then submerged and placed in extension of each other in a dredged trench on the seabed under the Drogden shipping channel. Each tunnel element is 176 metres long, 9 metres high, 40 metres wide and weighs 55.000 tons. The 3.510-metre-long immersed tunnel is complemented by two portal buildings, each 270 metres long.

The approaches to the two motorway tubes have light filters in the ceiling to provide drivers with a smooth transition between daylight and the electric light in the tunnel. Every 88 metres, there are 1,2-metre-wide escape doors from the road tunnels to the service and escape tube. Furthermore, each motorway tube has a total of 80 jet fans. Their main function is to expel smoke and heat in the event of a fire, but also to keep the air clean in all situations.

The toll for this crossing is only collected on the Swedish side. The cost of the project in 2000 was DKK 30 billion (approx. DKK 53,2 billion in 2025) and took five years to complete. In 2024, the annual profits were the highest ever at DKK 1,6 billion.

**“25 YEARS CONNECTING  
TWO NATIONS ACROSS  
THE ØRESUND.”**

## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Mariano Anthony Davies, President & CEO of Oxford Business Services ApS,** brings 40+ years of international executive experience. A British citizen in Denmark, he is a seasoned leader, advisor, and fluent English–Danish communicator.



# WINTER ESCAPES WITHIN REACH

Travelling is always a good idea but winter sometimes makes it challenging if you're not a ski bunny and just want something simple yet inspiring. This month, **Ophelia Wu** suggests a few nearby cities that have something to offer to everyone.

**WINTER HAS A** way of making you feel adventurous, explorative and nostalgic. Streets take on a quiet charm, shops glow from within, and the air is sharp enough to make every breath feel deliberate. It is the season for moving slowly, seeing more, tasting more, and sometimes, simply letting a new city take over your senses. From the canals of Amsterdam to the rugged landscapes of Iceland, winter travel is a different kind of indulgence within a few hours' reach from Copenhagen — especially if you want to stay away from ski holidays and chalets. There's so much to explore near us.

## AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS: HISTORY, WELLNESS AND LUXURY

Amsterdam in winter has a subtle romance. The city is celebrating its 750th anniversary this October, and there is a feeling that every canal and bridge is part of something larger than itself. Fun fact: Amsterdam was built on wooden pilings — I did not know that, and I was honestly shocked and in awe.

To mark its birthday, [Amsterdam in Motion](#), a new multimedia experience, tells the story of Amsterdam's past, present and future. Museums are a quiet refuge from the cold. With the [Amsterdam Card](#), which includes public transport and access to over 100 museums, you can move between the [Ar-tis Groote Museum](#), the [National Maritime Museum](#) and galleries without worry, leaving more time for wandering or watching frost form on the canal edges during a boat tour. Strolling through tree-lined canals and cobbled streets, you realise Amsterdam at 750 still knows how to surprise.

Stay at the [Inntel Hotel Landmark](#) in Oostenburg, "Little Berlin," with wellness rooms featuring private saunas and jacuzzis in industrial, concrete rooms overlooking a panoramic view of Amsterdam East. [Pillows Grand Boutique Hotel Maurits at the Park](#) is a modern, sophisticated luxury hotel in a 1908 building that once housed a science university, offering concierge service, refined comfort, and a guaranteed best night's sleep. Don't miss out on the chef's table dinner at [VanOost](#), led by chef Floris van Straalen, featuring local and seasonal ingredients and delicate Japanese and French-inspired dishes.

## ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS: BOLD AND MODERN

Rotterdam is a city that does not apologise for being itself. The [Fenix Museum](#) tells the story of migration in the Netherlands from inside a historic 1923 harbour warehouse, once the world's largest transshipment building. Fashion lovers should not miss the [Iris Van Herpen exhibition](#), showcasing



MAIN IMAGE: CHRISTMAS SHOPPING IN GHEENT. CREDIT: STAD\_GENT-DIENST\_TOERISME\_PHOTO\_BY\_BAS\_BOGAERTS

the boundless creativity that material exploration enables. For something lighter, the Dutch Pinball Museum adds nostalgia and playfulness. Don't miss out on the historical pinball machines collection.

Hotels like [Supernova](#) and the world's first [Coffee Hotel](#) are easy and fun. Designed for mingling, they feel lived-in and open to the neighbourhood. Rotterdam in winter has a quiet confidence. You can spend a morning in a museum and an afternoon wandering streets where modern architecture meets history, without feeling hurried as the city unfolds around you.

## FLANDERS, THE NORTHERN REGION OF BELGIUM: COASTAL HIKES AND WINTER WARMTH

Belgium might not always be a winter destination, but Flanders in winter has its own beauty. From De Panne to Nieuwpoort, the sea meets the wind in a way that is bracing and almost theatrical. Hiking along the coast makes you aware of every sense.

When temperatures drop, warmth comes from the kitchen. Traditional dishes like beef stew or vol-au-vent with fries feel like small celebrations of winter. Belgian Christmas and winter beers add another festive layer, especially at the [Christmas Beer Festival](#) in Essen near Antwerp. Ghent's [Christmas market](#) fills 150 huts with mulled wine, waffles and crafts, while the winter pop-up bar at the [Castle of the Counts](#) turns a medieval fortress into some-

thing alive with warmth.

In Antwerp, the [Royal Museum of Fine Arts \(KMSKA\)](#) spans seven centuries. From October to January, Donas, Archipenko & La Section d'Or highlights Marthe Donas, a pioneer of early abstraction. Ghent's [Museum of Fine Arts \(MSK\)](#) features Stephan Vanfleteren's marine photography, tracing the light and motion of the sea across centuries.

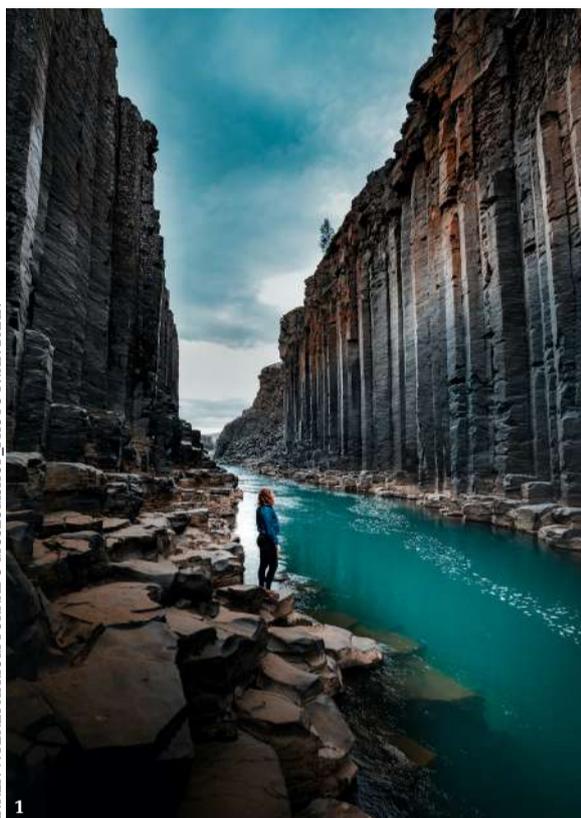
## FLORENCE, ITALY: WHERE ART AND APPETITE MEET

Florence's Renaissance past still shapes its rhythm, and every dome, piazza and painting feels like a continuation rather than a memory. Winter brings a slower grace. You can stand in front of Botticelli at the [Uffizi](#) without a crowd, or linger in Santa Croce and feel the quiet weight of genius around you.

Cross the Ponte Vecchio into the Oltrarno and you'll find craftsmen still working by hand, cafés serving proper coffee, and a sense that art extends into daily life. When you have had your fill of frescoes and marble, climb to San Miniato al Monte for a view that explains why the Renaissance had to happen here.

Base yourself at [La Gemma](#), a new family-run hotel that combines intimacy and modern sophistication, with concierge service and calm elegance. Its restaurant, Luca's, led by Michelin-starred chef Paulo Airaud, reimagines classic Florentine flavours with light, contemporary touches. In Flor-

1. STUPLAGIL, CANYON ICELANDIC EXPLORER 2. RAETZKE, ELBPHILHARMONIE 3. AMSTERDAM IN MOTION. FOTO JITSKE NAP 4. PONTE\_VECCHIO\_FIRENZE 5. VISBY CATHEDRAL- GOTTLAND.COM 6. THE FONTENAY\_POOL\_INNEN 7. FENIX\_ATRIUUMFORNADO-MUSEUMSHOP\_PHOTO IWAN BAAAN



ence, beauty is served, tasted and quietly lived.

**ICELAND: LANDSCAPES THAT DEMAND TIME**

Iceland in winter is not for the faint-hearted; it asks for patience. A quick weekend in Reykjavík is easy, but a longer journey reveals its beauty — pauses in small towns, hikes along frozen trails and vast, shifting landscapes of cliffs, glaciers and waterfalls that change your sense of scale.

Microbreweries offer warmth against all that wilderness. After a long hike, a local brew in a small bar reminds you of comfort and community. Winter in Iceland is about contrasts: cold air and hot springs, silence and sudden sound, starkness and intimacy. It asks you to move slowly, as if learning the world again.

**HAMBURG, GERMANY: MODERN COMFORTS AND URBAN DISCOVERIES**

Hamburg is easily reached by train from Copenhagen and offers winter travel without fuss. Staying at The [Fontenay](#) is indulgent in the right way, whether for a family break or a romantic getaway. Nestled beside the Outer Alster and surrounded by parkland, it is ideally placed for exploring the northern port city.

Beyond its calm surface, Hamburg is full of character. Visit the UNESCO-listed [Speicherstadt](#) and Kontorhausviertel, home to the [Chilehaus](#), the world's largest warehouse district, where Gothic red-brick façades meet the modern lines of Hafencity and the Elbphilharmonie. From the [Elbphilharmonie Plaza](#), the view stretches across cranes,

canals and winter light. Nearby, St. Pauli hums with live music, quirky bars and the easy energy that defines the city.

When you need a pause, take a harbour boat tour, stroll through [Planten un Blomen](#), explore [Miniatur Wunderland](#), or stop by [Brücke 10](#) for a freshly made fish roll with harbour views. Hamburg is cultured and creative, a winter city alive in every sense.

**GOTLAND, SWEDEN: TIMELESS CHARM BY THE BALTIC SEA**

Gotland feels slightly out of time. Visby, a UNESCO World Heritage city, is steeped in history yet alive with creativity. The [Gotland Museum](#) opens a window to the island's past, while the Cathedral stands as the world's first official Pride church — a symbol of inclusivity rooted in tradition.

Craft and culture thrive year-round. Visit [Stuk](#) for locally made art, [Studio Pink](#) to watch glass being blown, or [Blåse Kalkbruk](#), an industrial museum by the coast where a small train leads to an old quarry and a café overlooking the sea. Step back in time at [Stavgård Viking Farm](#), a reconstructed Iron Age village that brings ancient crafts to life.

Stay at [Kalk Hotel](#) in Visby for limestone elegance,

or [Grå Gåsen](#) in the south for boutique comfort near the sea. Dine at [Lilla Bjers](#), an organic farm-to-table haven, or taste local spirits at [Boge Bränneri](#). Gotland in winter is quiet, soulful and rich in stories still unfolding.



**ABOUT THE WRITER**

**Ophelia Wu is a Copenhagen-based fashion consultant, journalist,** with a career spanning Hong Kong, London, and beyond. She brings her passion for fashion, beauty, and interiors to brands worldwide while embracing the Scandinavian lifestyle.



# SWEAT NOW, FEAST LATER?

This month, **Alexandra Beck** explores the myth of “holiday burn-off” workouts.



UNSPLASH

**AS THE HOLIDAYS** approach, many of us start joking: “I’ll need an extra run before Christmas dinner,” or “better burn this cake off tomorrow.” You won’t see flashy “turkey burn” billboards in Denmark - but the idea still sneaks into conversations. The unspoken rule is that indulgence must be “balanced out” with punishment in the gym.

But here’s the thing: food doesn’t need to be earned. Exercise isn’t a tax office, and your plate isn’t a crime scene.

## FOOD IS NOT A PRIZE OR A PENALTY

Calories are not confessions, and burpees are not penance. Food is culture, joy, and fuel - it brings families together and keeps traditions alive. When

we talk about “burning it off,” we accidentally attach guilt to something that should also bring pleasure.

And guilt is a terrible training partner. It makes exercise feel like punishment rather than empowerment.

## WHY WE REALLY TRAIN

The point of training isn’t to undo a plate of risalamande. It’s to build strength, preserve mobility, improve mood, and protect our long-term health. Those benefits aren’t cancelled out by a single festive dinner. Progress comes from consistent effort across the whole year, not a frantic December workout spree.

## THE CALORIE MATH MYTH

Yes, energy balance matters - but not meal by meal. No single “extra workout” will undo Christmas lunch. You’d need hours of intense training to match even one Danish julefrokost. And honestly, who wants to burpee through the holidays?

Zoom out instead: if you stay active and mostly balanced week after week, a few indulgent days won’t derail anything.

## SMARTER STRATEGIES FOR THE SEASON

So how do you keep your balance without guilt?

- **Stick to your routine.** Keep your strength and cardio sessions going because they make you feel strong, not because you “owe” them.
- **Eat before the feast.** Skipping meals all day backfires - you’ll arrive starving and overdo it. A protein-rich breakfast sets you up better.
- **Choose what you love.** You don’t need every cookie. Go for your favourites and savour them.
- **Move for joy.** A winter walk, dancing at the party, even snowball fights - it all counts.
- **Stay hydrated.** Sometimes what feels like “I need another slice” is just thirst.

## WHY MINDSET MATTERS

If you always connect workouts to guilt, you’ll never love them. But when you see exercise as building power and confidence, you’ll stick with it. That’s what really changes your body and health - not a desperate December “burn-off.”

## ENJOY THE FEAST, KEEP THE RHYTHM

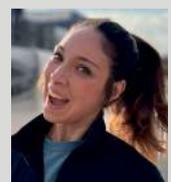
Think of the holiday season as a cymbal crash in an orchestra. Loud and joyful, yes, but the music continues underneath. Your steady rhythm is the year-round training, decent nutrition, and active lifestyle. That rhythm matters far more than one feast.

So, sweat because it makes you stronger. Feast because you’re celebrating life. And remember: one risalamande doesn’t erase your fitness, just as one salad doesn’t make you fit.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

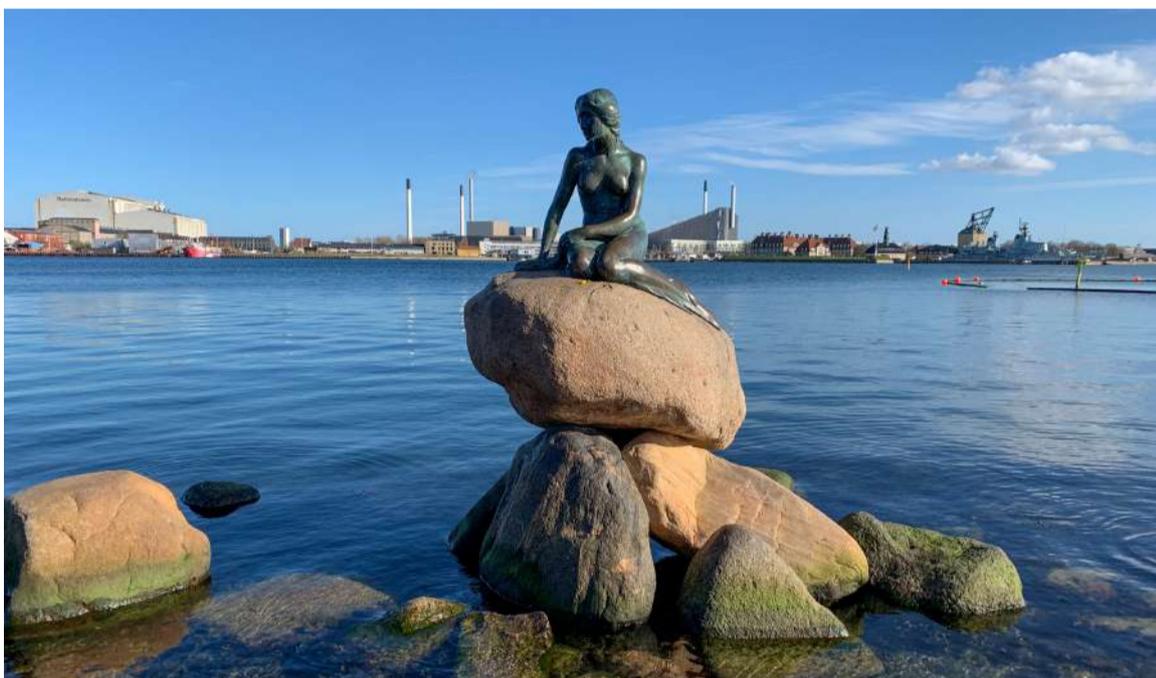
**Alexandra Beck** is a Swiss/Brit personal trainer and nutrition coach in Copenhagen, helping people of all ages find fun and consistency in fitness.

A former communications professional, she now brings energy, and community magic to every workout.



# A TALE OF TWO MERMAIDS

Jess Hearne explores Copenhagen's iconic sisters: The Little Mermaid and her modern counterpart.



JAKE FLETCHER

**ON THE EDGE** of Copenhagen's harbour sits a delicate bronze figure gazing wistfully out towards the ocean, immortalising Hans Christian Andersen's famous tale of love and loss – the Little Mermaid. But few visitors realise that, just a short walk away, is her sister – distorted, defiant and unmistakably modern. On Langelinie Allé sits the Genetically Modified Little Mermaid, serving as a provocative counterpoint to her famous fairytale sibling, reflecting the complicated beauty and unease of our contemporary world.

## THE LITTLE MERMAID

Den Lille Havfrue, as she is known in Danish, was sculpted by Danish-Icelandic artist Edvard Eriksen and first unveiled to the public on 23rd August 1913. Commissioned by brewer Carl Jacobsen after he was captivated by a ballet performance of the famous fairytale, the Little Mermaid we see today is modelled on the face of Ellen Price and the body of the sculptor's wife, Eline, as the former wished not to pose in the nude. She may not seem imposing at first glance, but she is the embodiment of a narrative that stretches from a darkly poetic fairytale to the modern tourist circuit. From her perch on a granite rock at the harbour's edge, she stands as a sentinel and a symbol to the city of Copenhagen.

The story that inspired her creation tells of a mermaid princess who sacrifices her voice in favour of legs, and subsequently suffers unspeakable pain in her transformation to human form. The sculpture immortalises her sense of longing, depicting her quietly gazing out to sea – a creature stuck between land and water, torn between desire and defeat.

Over the years, the Little Mermaid has had to en-

sure more than just the passage of time. Vandalism has been an unfortunate recurring theme: often the target of political activism, her head has been removed, her arm has been sawn off and she has been covered in paint. However, each time, she has been expertly restored and returned to her peaceful place on the same granite rock.

Visitors often express disappointment at first glance: comments often heard from tourists include critiques of her size, location and lack of surrounding activity. But perhaps her small stature and location are the point – a fragile figure among the bustle of the harbour, she demonstrates that even the smallest of us have the power to make a lasting impact.

## THE GENETICALLY MODIFIED LITTLE MERMAID

A stone's throw away sits a lesser known yet no less intriguing sculpture: the Genetically Modified Little Mermaid. Created by Danish artist Bjørn Nørgaard as part of a larger ensemble titled The Genetically Modified Paradise, the figure is bold, unsettling and intentionally provocative.

Unveiled in 2006, the series also includes contorted figures of Adam, Eve, Mary Magdalene, Christ and an unnamed pregnant man, circling a sandstone arch with a nine-metre-high statue of the Madonna. Cast in bronze and sitting atop a rock in the same pose as the original, the sculpture was designed to criticise genetic modification and the superficiality of vanity. Unlike her sister, the Genetically Modified Little Mermaid has managed to so far avoid being vandalised. Perhaps, as Nørgaard says, it's because, ["she's already fighting against the order of nature;](#)

[any further modification would be superfluous."](#)

With her elongated limbs, multiple tails, distorted features and tormented expression, she has been described by some as a gloomy, metaphorical reflection of a post-modern society. Far removed from her sister's aura of nautical romanticism, the Genetically Modified Little Mermaid is a commentary on genetic manipulation, identity and the uneasy intersection of myth, science and spectacle.

## A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

For visitors who only know of the first mermaid, the second holds the power to startle. The original offers a serene, classically beautiful vision of longing on the edge of the sea, yet her sister holds up a mirror to modern unease. Walking the short distance between the two is like moving from one chapter of a story to the next: the first is rooted in literary tradition, and the second in contemporary critique.

The elder sister invites you to pause and reflect; the younger challenges you to look deeper and reconsider. The first pays homage to Copenhagen's maritime identity and Hans Christian Andersen's cultural influence, whereas the second speaks to the uneasy marriage of history and modernity, reminding us that even the most familiar things can appear different with a fresh perspective. By visiting both, you realise that the story of Copenhagen is a tale of two sisters: the magical fairytale and the dynamic modern age.

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## ABOUT THE WRITER

Jess Hearne is an Irish Content & Communications Specialist based in Copenhagen. With a background in history and socio-political studies, she works with clients across many areas, while pursuing passion projects in feminist history and film psychology.



# DENMARK'S POLITICAL PARTIES: YOUR GUIDE

As the election is coming up, **Mark Søderberg** gives you an essential guide to Denmark's political parties.

AS AN INTERNATIONAL tliving in Denmark, it can be hard to keep track of all the political parties. Over the last decade, many new parties have formed, politicians have changed affiliations, and the current government has established a new paradigm, where centrist balance is key.

Here's our comprehensive guide to the key policies and proposals of the parties in the Danish parliament. Each has a designated letter on the ballots, so we'll take them in order.

On the graph you can see the percentage distribution of the 2022 election. The electoral threshold in Denmark is 2%, so parties below this threshold do not make it into Parliament.

## A - THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SOCIALDEMOKRATIET)

Established in 1871 as one of the four 'old parties' representing workers, they've frequently been in power and are chiefly responsible for the formation of the Danish welfare model. They are currently the biggest party in parliament, and regarded by some as the only party with a credible candidate for Prime Minister - Mette Frederiksen.

### Key policies

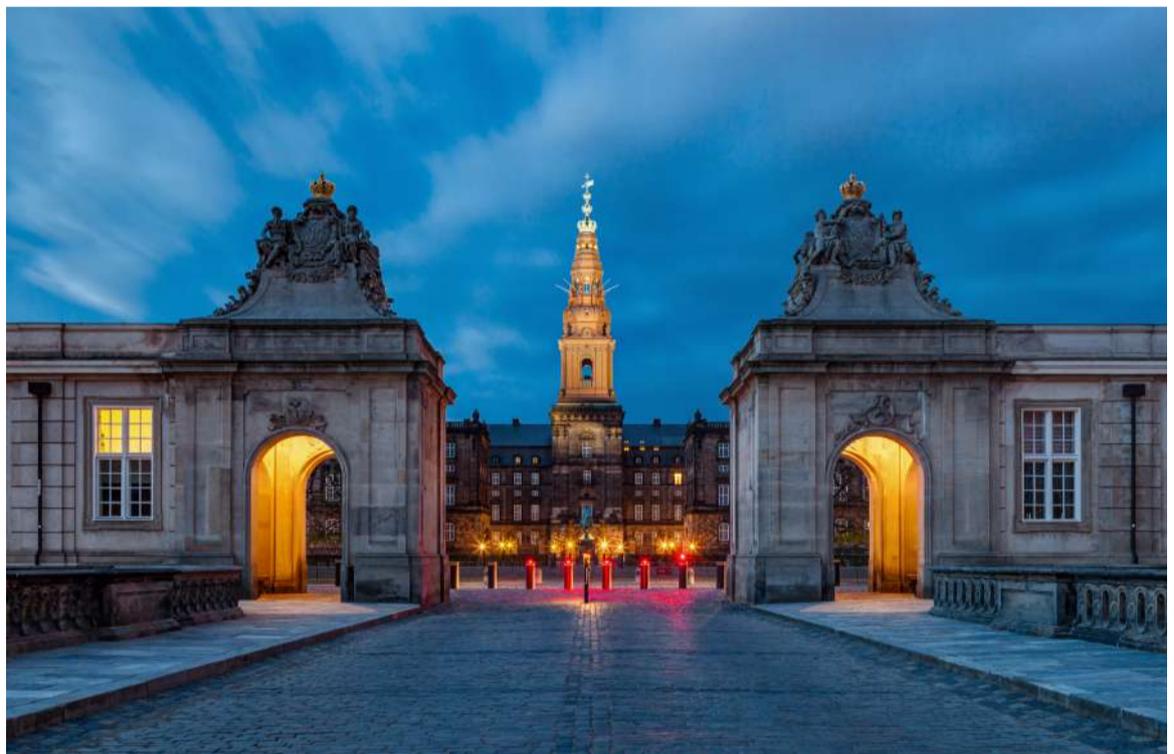
- Earlier pensions for manual labourers
- Focus on vocational education
- Support Ukraine and commit 5% GDP to defence.
- Increase state surveillance
- Overall critical stance towards immigration

## B - THE SOCIAL LIBERALS (RADIKALE VENSTRE)

Another of the four 'old parties', they have been a key centrist party in Danish politics, historically supporting different governments. In the last election, they received a historically low number of votes, after which Martin Lidegaard became the new party leader. It currently holds 6 seats in Parliament.

### Key policies

- Focus on internationals, easing entry requirements and work permits
- Wants Denmark to absorb more CO2 than it emits by 2040
- Use public-private partnerships in a green transition
- CO2 taxes and regulations on agriculture and transportation
- Lower taxes on income and businesses
- Better opportunities for employee stock options and crowdfunding



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## C - THE CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE'S PARTY (DET KONSERVATIVE FOLKEPARTI)

Originally called The Right, they historically represented landowners and townspeople. In 2015, they received a historically low 3,8% of the votes and ever since they've fought to regain their former position, currently holding 10 seats in Parliament.

### Key policies

- Reduce taxes on work, inheritance, cars and housing
- More police and stricter punishment
- More doctors throughout the country
- Ban smoking in schools and increase the price of

cigarettes

- Create a tier system to attract foreign workers by categorizing countries into a 'traffic light' system.

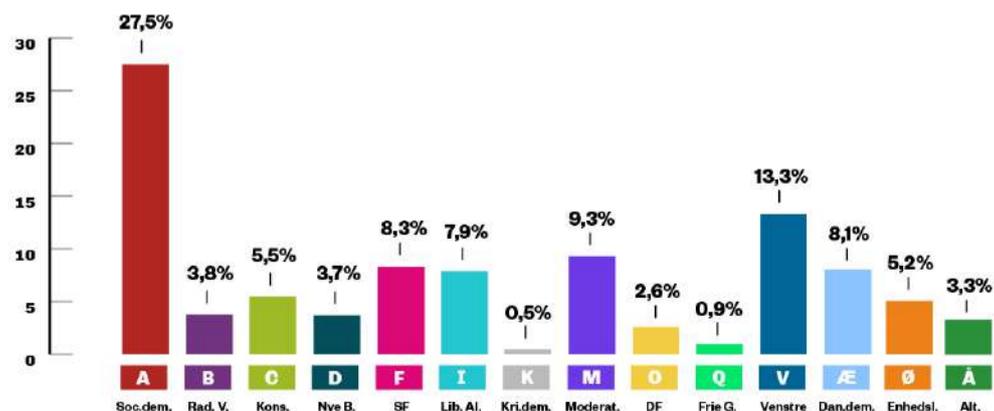
## F - THE GREEN PARTY (SOCIALISTISK FOLKEPARTI)

Established as a reformist socialist party in 1959, they have traditionally not been a governmental party. The party has pursued a role as a party of influence under the leadership of Pia Olsen Dyhr. It currently holds 15 seats in Parliament.

### Key policies

- More personnel for child care

## FOLKETINGSVALG 2022: PROCENTFORDELING



FT.DK

- Free therapy for children and young adults
- Denmark should be CO2-neutral by 2040
- Reduce agriculture in designated 'nature' areas
- Reduce inequality with an asset tax and more corporate taxes
- Ease family reunification rules and stop sending refugees back to politically unsafe countries.

#### H - THE CITIZENS' PARTY (BORGERNES PARTI) - LARS BOJE MATHIESEN

The Citizens' Party was created in January 2025 by Lars Boje Mathiesen, who remains its only member of parliament.

##### Key policies

- The state should play a smaller role in people's lives
- It should be easier and cheaper to own a car
- Foreigners should be deported if they commit a crime
- Reduce taxes, bans and bureaucracy
- Introduce policies based on the principle of 'common sense'.

#### I - THE LIBERAL ALLIANCE (LIBERAL ALLIANCE)

Since Anders Samuelsen's takeover of The New Alliance in 2009, the party has established itself as the most libertarian party in Denmark. They have gained recent popularity by utilising social media, and currently hold 15 seats in parliament.

##### Key policies

- Lower taxes and reduce the public sector
- Decrease social benefits
- By law, every time a law is made, two laws should be removed
- Deny citizenship to people with anti-democratic opinions
- Lower the salary threshold for work permits
- A commission should look at the possibility of using nuclear energy

#### M - THE MODERATES (MODERATERNE)

The Moderates were established by Lars Løkke Rasmussen in 2022. He is currently the Foreign Minister in Mette Frederiksen's government, having secured 12 seats in the 2022 election, and proposes centrist policies.

##### Key policies

- Introduced the "top-top-tax", an additional 5% tax for people making more than 2,5 million kr. a year
- Strategies to strengthen startups through corporate tax reductions
- Wants to attract international workers by removing bureaucratic procedures for employers and introducing a nationwide union contract instead
- Wants a mandatory "civic duty" for all young people

#### O - THE DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY (DANSK FOLKEPARTI)

The party was established in 1995, when Pia Kjaersgaard led a breakaway from the libertarian anti-immigration party The Progress Party. The party thrives on populist sentiment, particularly concern-

ing Muslim immigration. The current party leader, Morten Messerschmidt, presides over a parliamentary group of 7 seats.

##### Key policies

- Borders should be closed to migrants and asylum seekers
- It should be much more difficult to get citizenship
- More police and tougher punishments for crime
- Better conditions for senior citizens, including a higher pension
- Opposes the EU and wants to seek alternatives
- Against "woke" ideology and cancel culture

#### V - THE LIBERAL PARTY (VENSTRE)

Established in 1870 as the final of the four 'old parties' and originally representing farmers, the party has often led right-wing coalition governments. In recent years, they've experienced internal struggles and leadership issues, but are still the second largest party with 23 seats. Party leader Troels Lund Poelsen is the current Defense Minister.

##### Key policies

- Free access to fertility treatment for a second child
- Wants a "working duty" for foreigners to either work or study
- Seeks tougher punishments for crimes committed by foreigners
- Suggests massive investments in green growth

#### Æ - THE DANISH DEMOCRATS (DANMARKSDEMOKRATERNE)

Established in 2022 by Inger Støjberg, former Minister of Integration for the Liberal Party under Lars Løkke Rasmussen. Støjberg developed harsh anti-immigration positions, and was ultimately excluded from her party after she was impeached and convicted by the Supreme Court for illegally separating couples of asylum seekers where one party was under 18. After being punished, she established a new party and it's now Denmark's third-largest, with 16 seats.

##### Key policies

- Maintain lower social benefits for asylum seekers and immigrants
- Tougher punishments for gang-related crime
- Seeking to improve conditions in rural areas
- Is strongly critical of a CO2 tax on agriculture
- Opposes the government's establishment of solar power in Jutland

#### Ø - THE RED-GREEN ALLIANCE (ENHEDSLISTEN)

The Red-Green Alliance was established in 1989 as a union of the Left Socialists, the Danish Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party. It has historically been a protest party without governmental influence, but has backed Social Democratic governments in recent years. Currently led by Pelle Dragsted, their Parliamentary group has 9 members.

##### Key policies

- Taxation to focus on reducing inequality
- Climate neutrality by 2040 with high CO2 taxation

- Strengthen public transport and stop fossil car sales
- Stop privatization of welfare services
- Make migration to Denmark easier

#### Å - THE ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVET)

The Alternative was established in 2013 in an experimental spirit by the former Social Liberal Uffe Elbæk. The main thrust of the party was to break the so-called bloc politics - where left and right coalitions had become the only alternatives - in favor of a more pluralistic parliamentary culture, where working across the aisle was commonplace. After Elbæk left as party leader in 2019, the party has struggled with leadership and gone through a few iterations. Franciska Rosenkilde has been the party leader since 2021, and currently has 6 seats in Parliament.

##### Key policies

- Supports Universal Basic Income
- Wants to legalize cannabis
- Improve conditions for asylum seekers, including a de facto residence permit after 18 months of residence
- Increase taxes on real estate and financial transactions
- A differentiated corporate tax with incentives for sustainable development
- Immediate action on climate policy

#### NORTH ATLANTIC SEATS

The North Atlantic countries each get two seats in the Danish Parliament.

For Greenland, it's Naleraq (Greenlandic independence) and Inuit Ataqatigiit (socialistic).

For the Faroe Islands it's Sambandsfólkurinn (liberal-conservative) and Javnaðarflokkurinn (social democratic).

#### INDEPENDENTS

Five people in the Danish Parliament are currently outside of political parties, because they defected or were excluded from their former parties. They include:

- Peter Seier (co-founder of the terminated New Right party)
- Mike Fonseca (excluded from the Moderates following a scandal involving an underage girl)
- Teresa Scavenius (excluded from The Alternative due to personal differences)
- Jon Stephensen (excluded from the Moderates due to allegations of sexual misconduct)
- Jeppe Søe (co-founder of the Moderates, then defected).

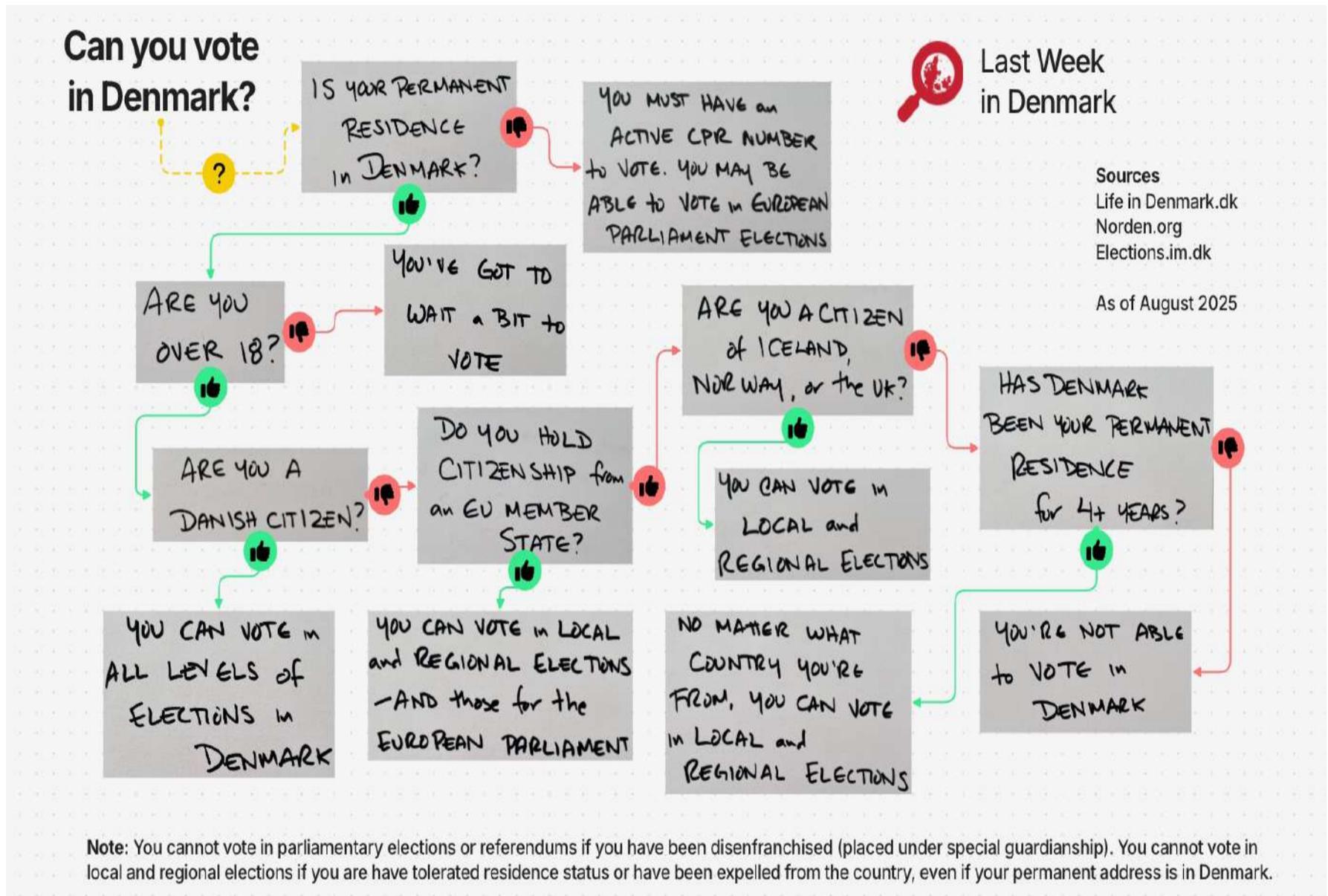
#### ABOUT THE WRITER

Mark Søderberg is a journalist and podcast producer with a philosophy background, exploring politics, art, and culture. He enjoys shaping compelling stories and relaxing through jazz piano and competitive blitz chess in his spare time.



# CAN YOU VOTE IN DENMARK?

Laura Matheson's diagram explains whether, as an international, you are able to vote in Denmark.



Last Week in Denmark

Sources  
Life in Denmark.dk  
Norden.org  
Elections.im.dk

As of August 2025

IF YOU ARE unable to view the image, please read the alternative description below.

**1. Is your permanent residence in Denmark?**

- If no, you must have an active CPR number to vote. You may be able to vote in European Parliament elections.
- If yes, go to question 2.

**2. Are you over 18?**

- If no, you've got to wait a bit to vote.
- If yes, go to question 3.

**3. Are you a Danish citizen?**

- If yes, you can vote in all levels of elections in Denmark.
- If no, go to question 4.

**4. Do you hold citizenship from an EU member state?**

- If yes, you can vote in local and regional elections – and those for the European Parliament.
- If no, go to question 5.

**5. Are you a citizen of Iceland, Norway, or the UK?**

- You can vote in local and regional elections.
- If no, go to question 6.

**6. Has Denmark been your permanent residence for 4+ years?**

- If yes, no matter what country you're from, you can vote in local and regional elections.
- If no, you're not able to vote in Denmark.

**Note:** You cannot vote in parliamentary elections or referendums if you have been disenfranchised (placed under special guardianship). You cannot vote in local and regional elections if you have tolerated residence status or have been expelled from the country, even if your permanent address is in

Denmark.

Sources  
[Lifeindenmark.dk](http://Lifeindenmark.dk)  
[Norden.org](http://Norden.org)  
[Elections.im.dk](http://Elections.im.dk)

As of August 2025

**ABOUT THE WRITER**

Laura Matheson is a writer, editor, and facilitator who delights in knowing just enough about a lot of things. Passionate about connecting people with stories, ideas, and each other, she bridges worlds from Vancouver to Denmark.



# STARTUP POLITICIAN SHAKES UP COPENHAGEN

**Sebastian Florian** introduces one of the internationals representing the Moderates (Moderaterne). Nico Blier-Silvestri is standing as a candidate for Copenhagen Municipality.



NICO BLIER-SILVESTRI

**COPENHAGEN IS AN** international city. Roughly a quarter of its population is non-Danish, and in some neighbourhoods, this climbs to 40%. Yet this sizable minority is barely represented in the city's local councils. Some are now attempting to change that.

Originally from France, Nico Blier-Silvestri has lived on three continents, worked for major companies in the Netherlands, Ireland and India before settling in Denmark in 2012 with his Danish-Italian wife, and their two children.

He joined me on a call, in between busy investor meetings, with one arm in a brace - a casualty of his other passion: rugby.

## POLITICAL MISSION SHAPED BY EXPERIENCE

Nico is full of energy and has a reputation for speaking his mind. His stated political goal is to attract and retain the best talent for an inclusive and successful Copenhagen.

But he'd also like to highlight some of the practical absurdities that internationals face when moving here: "In the past 13 years, I've hired thousands of internationals in Copenhagen. But it's very difficult to move here. You can't get an apartment until you have a contract, but you can't have a contract before you get a CPR number, and you need an address for a CPR number. It's like a Catch-22 from hell".

After many years in Denmark, he's seen firsthand many of the challenges people face. So his

second motivation is more personal: the feeling of being unheard. "I sometimes feel voiceless in this country, in this city," he says. "There's an attitude of: you're so lucky to be here, but I'm not lucky, I live here, I pay taxes here. It should be more: we are lucky to have you."

Nico points out that the fight for talent is increasingly global, and countries that make life easier for skilled internationals win. He mentions the Netherlands, where he felt a greater appreciation for the international workforce.

## TAKING THE POLITICAL LEAP

Having made Denmark his permanent home, Nico decided to confront these issues politically. Though he considers himself more left-leaning, he joined Moderaterne, announcing his candidacy for Copenhagen's local council on Constitution Day: "I see Moderaterne as a startup, with growing pains. There's a lot to build, they stand to the left on some things, to the right on others. They're the most pro-European party in Denmark, and overall, what they stand for, I believe in".

Nico wants to inform internationals that they can vote in the local elections and explain why they should. More than that, he argues, they must recognize their own collective power: "Trustpilot, Unity, Peakon, these companies would not exist in their current form without internationals. And on a larger scale, imagine telling Novo Nordisk or Mærsk that, starting tomorrow, they must give up every international worker."

## INTEGRATION, LANGUAGE AND TAXES

To better understand his community, Nico conducted a LinkedIn survey, asking respondents about their demographics, ties to Denmark, and frustrations. Responses raised recurring issues such as housing, language, and discrimination.

Nico is not happy with what he calls the "one-dimensional measure of integration" so often applied: speaking the language. "I've been told repeatedly that I'm not integrated because I don't speak Danish," he says. "Yet I have a Danish wife, two Danish children, and I pay taxes."

He argues that integration is currently framed by rejecting those who lack certain abilities. He argues for a more inclusive approach: participation in the workforce, contributions to the economy, and raising families.

## CAMPAIGN LIKE A STARTUP

Rather than make grandiose promises, Nico wants

to focus on smaller, solvable problems. He runs his political campaign like a startup: "I would rather sit down, talk to people, and pick three to five problems. They might not be big, but they can actually be solved. Then approach them as we do in startups: make a project, iterate, and fix it."

He mentions Aula, the mandatory school app for parents, which is only available in Danish. For newcomers, this can be very difficult, he says: "Why not add a small flag icon so it's available in English, German, Italian, or Spanish? It's not a massive change, but it would make parents feel included and more involved in their kids' lives."

Nico also wants to import the "town hall" tradition from the startup world: open discussions where Copenhageners can identify issues together. "I'm not saying I have all the solutions. Right now it's really more about listening to people," he says. "And if people believe that I can be the right person to have their voice heard, then vote for me."

Whether a political campaign in Denmark can be run like a startup is an open question. What is certain is that more internationals are beginning to step forward, dedicating time and energy to improve their adopted city. That, surely, is a welcome form of integration.

[Nico's political profile page](#)

Nico is most active on his [LinkedIn account](#).



DANIEL STORCH

## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Sebastian Florian is an engineer, reporter, and editor** at Last Week in Denmark, where he connects people through stories that celebrate our multicultural society. Based in Copenhagen, he brings spirit and curiosity to journalism and projects.



# STANDING UP FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

**Ali Lewis** introduces one of the internationals representing the Socialistisk Folkeparti (The Green Party), Almina Nikontovic is standing as a candidate for Frederikshavn Municipality and the North Denmark Region.

**ALMINA NIKONTOVIC IS** one of life's natural cheerleaders. "I always say to people, 'You can do it!' But somebody needs to be standing on the other side helping you to get through," she says. Almina, who is the only regional candidate for SF from Frederikshavn Municipality and also the municipality's only international candidate, has first-hand experience of how vital that support is. Since arriving in Denmark at the age of 13, a refugee of the war in Bosnia, she's devoted herself to helping others.

"My father decided that we needed to flee Bosnia", Almina remembers. The family's original plan was to join relatives in Sweden, but changing rules meant Denmark would become home. Almina still remembers the exact date - 1st March 1993 - having travelled by bus through Europe. The family lived in asylum centres around Frederikshavn for three years, not knowing if they would be allowed to remain in the country and unable to work, before they were finally granted residence.

Almina is profoundly grateful to Denmark, saying the country "empowered" her: "You lose everything in one night - your life, your childhood, your friends, your school, your country. You see terrible things happen to people you love. But then you come to a place where everyone is nice and sweet and believes in you, opening the door for you and saying you can do it." She breaks down a little as she talks. "It's good tears," she says. "Because I remember how important it is that someone actually believes in you."

A key person in Almina's life was an inspirational Danish teacher who taught her in one of the asylum centres she lived in. He gave her the confidence to apply to a fast-track Gymnasium, learn Danish and apply to Aalborg University. "He said, 'You can do this! Trust me!'" she says. She started studying there at just 17. Too young to apply for an SU grant and with her parents unable to afford for her to live in the city, she travelled to campus every day on the bus.

## ENTERING POLITICS

Almina's two decades of experience working for Frederikshavn Municipality inspired her to run for the local council in 2018, and then, this year, for North Denmark Region. "I'm an international by heart," she says. "That's why all my adult life I have been working on the other side, welcoming internationals and young people, believing in them and saying they can also do it. I always stand for service, to help others."



ALMINA NIKONTOVIC



ALMINA NIKONTOVIC



ALMINA NIKONTOVIC

She stood for the Social Democrats (Socialdemokratiet), never expecting to win, and has been a local councillor ever since. She became independent in late 2024 and then joined the Green Party (SF) at the start of this year, feeling the party's policies aligned better with her own values. "A few parties approached me to ask if I would run, and I just laughed and said, 'You're crazy! I can't do that!'" she says. But someone said, "Yes, you can. You will need to take your time, learn many things, and you will have to adapt, but you can do it."

### ALMINA'S CAMPAIGN

This year, Almina is running for North Denmark Region for the first time, and she's ready to take on the challenge: "I need a lot of votes, but I will try and do my best," she says. "I want to make changes and ensure everyone here has the same possibilities"

Almina was inspired to run for the regional elections through her current municipality role, supporting young people in need, which she has held for the past three years. "Every day I meet young people falling between the cracks because their needs aren't being met," she says. "I can relate to the anxieties they have because I experienced that too. If they had the right diagnoses and the right support, it would make such a difference. Instead, they have bad experience after bad experience, and it hurts them. If I'm working at a higher level, for the region, I can make a change." Almina wants to see wait times for young people to see health specialists and get much-needed diagnoses reduced.

She also wants to improve access to healthcare facilities, pointing out the geographically large area that makes up North Denmark. "People living in more rural areas should have the same access to health care as people living in Aalborg," Almina says. "Elderly people need more focus too, and better hospital care".

In terms of Frederikshavn Municipality, Almina is passionate about attracting more skilled, qualified workers to the area. "We have a large elderly population," she says. "We need more people to settle down in Frederikshavn so companies have labor, we get families with children, we fill the schools and kindergartens. It's a great municipality. If you're living in a city and can't find work, come here. We need you!"

She also wants to support young people in the area: "They are our future and at the moment we have nearly 600 young people who are not in jobs or education. We need much more support for them because we need them."

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Almina also feels strongly about the importance of diversity in Denmark. She's looking forward to attending a Diversity Day in Frederikshavn the day after our interview. To her, diversity means valuing all kinds of differences, including people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people. "Diversity is building our society and giving possibilities to so many people in Denmark that they might not have in their own countries if they're internationals," she says. "Many countries don't value diversity. It's important to me that everyone has a place in our society and everybody has the right to be themselves."

Despite living here for over thirty years, Almina still identifies as firmly international. "I have two countries," she says. "In my heart, I'm an international. Everything about my origin story comes from another culture. I carry that with me, and I don't want to lose it. I've also given that to my daughter. It's extremely important. You can be very well integrated, and I am. I've been a Danish citizen since I was 18. It's good to be integrated, but you don't need to become assimilated. You need to keep your uniqueness when you come here, and remember your origins as well as why you

came here."

came here."

Almina is alert to the challenges internationals face: "You have so many things in your head: 'This is hard. I'm never going to make it. What did I do? Why did I come here? What about my children?' You have so much in your head, and it's ok to give that a place. But you also need to say to yourself, yes, it's hard. People who say it's not - I don't think they're telling the truth! But it's ok. Breathe. Take a step day by day."

What advice would Almina give to internationals who are struggling? "Find your network", she says. "Get a network of people who share your culture, if you can, but make a new network here, then build a bridge between them. The Danish language is important, but it's actually more important to get to know Danish culture. That can be a huge challenge."

Ever positive, Almina firmly believes, "When you have something you want to contribute, there is a place for it here in Denmark. It's a wonderful country to show yourself and be a part of society. You just have to get through the challenges in the beginning."

Almina is undaunted by the work ahead of her, running for the region and the municipality. "I like challenges and meeting new people," she says. "I like to evolve." And she believes in wearing her heart on her sleeve. "What you see is what you get with me," she laughs. "It doesn't get better or worse than that!"

[Follow Almina on Facebook](#)

### ABOUT THE WRITER

Ali Lewis is the reporting lead at Last Week in Denmark, a freelance writer, and content creator with a focus on music, feminism, and LGBTQI+ history. Originally from Scotland, she moved to Billund in 2024 with her family after a career in education.



# A NEWCOMER SHAPING LOCAL DENMARK

**Ali Lewis** introduces one of the internationals representing Socialdemokratiet (Social Democratic Party), Alina Racila is standing as a candidate for Tønder Municipality and the Southern Denmark Region.

**ALINA RACILA NEVER** intended to go into politics, or even live in Denmark! But life can take us in unexpected directions. Originally from Moldova's capital city, Chişinău, she came here on honeymoon back in 2014, really liked the country and decided to look for work here. However, with a Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy and Psychology, she knew she wouldn't be able to work in her field until she'd mastered Danish.

Undaunted, Alina and her husband moved to North Jutland, near Aalborg, and found jobs on a farm while attending Language School in the evening. A year later, with a baby on the way, they decided to move south to Tønder Municipality, where they still live, so they could have a house. It was "one extreme of Jutland to another," she says. There are still very few internationals in her area so learning Danish and making an effort to integrate were not optional.

Alina's journey in Denmark is one of hard work, determination and looking outwards. Having found her first maternity leave isolating, with her second child she did things differently. "It doesn't matter that you're an international - you have the same difficulties as a Danish new parent," she says. "I joined everything I could physically get to! Danish language for free? Yes! Clubs for free for newborn babies? Yes! Local associations? Yes! Opportunities to eat together with Danes? Yes, let's do it! You have a lot of possibilities in Denmark as an international. You just have to be interested in participating. Instead of asking why you should do things, ask, why not?"

"Why not?" feels like it's her life's motto, Alina laughs. It's an attitude that has led her to become fluent in Danish, embark on an undergraduate degree in nursing and establish a career as a health and social care assistant. She has also worked as a translator - she speaks English, Russian and Romanian as well as Danish - driving across Denmark to assist internationals here. "It's never going to be perfect or easy. It's going to be hard. I sent over a hundred CVs to different employers without any success," Alina remembers. "I knew that without the Danish language I was never going to get a job that allowed me to use my degree from Moldova, and that was my dream." At one point she juggled four hours of independent Danish study each day with working on a farm in the morning and evening and looking after her young child.



ALINA RACILA

## ENTERING POLITICS

"I never imagined I'd be in politics," Alina says. "But the more I've participated and learned, I realised that politics is a really big part of our lives. Politics determines the conditions of our daily lives in so many ways. Life here is so influenced by local and regional politics."

In 2018, Alina heard Mette Frederiksen, then the opposition leader, on the news saying that Denmark needed nurses and felt inspired. "Mette was my first real engagement with politics. I felt she was speaking to me as an international, not just to Danes," Alina remembers. "I realised the country needed the skills and qualifications I had." By then she had passed her Studieprøven, the test that provides en-

try to Danish university education, and was accepted to study nursing. "I was the only international on my course who had come here as an adult," she says.

Soon after that, Alina wrote to her local branch of the Social Democrats (Socialdemokratiet) asking how she could become a member of the party. "I started going to meetings, participating and asking questions," Alina says. "I was the only international there - I still am - but I really liked what was happening around me."

Alina stood for election to her local council in 2021 but didn't win. By then, she was heavily pregnant with her third child. As the votes were being counted, she was in labor! "It was probably for the best that I didn't win back then," she laughs.



ALINA RACILA



ALINA RACILA



ALINA RACILA

### ALINA'S CAMPAIGN

Several years ago, Alina's party asked her if she would stand again. Of course, she said, "Why not?" This time, she's standing not only as a local candidate in Tønder but also for the Region of Southern Denmark.

Alina's campaign is particularly focused on healthcare, children and families. She wants to ensure children, the elderly and immigrants have their needs met so they can thrive here as she has done. "My life experience, professional experience and studies make me believe I could be very helpful as a parent, specialist and international," she says. "I see situations from another angle that others might not see."

Some might argue Alina has integrated to the extent that she no longer has an international perspective. "I feel like I'm in the middle," she says. "If we imagine a bridge between two places, I'm on that bridge. I'm neither in an international bubble nor immersed in Danish society. I'm going back and forth on that bridge all the time in my work and daily life. I understand the challenges both Danes and internationals are dealing with."

### "I'M ON THE BRIDGE BETWEEN INTERNATIONALS AND DANES, MOVING BACK AND FORTH EVERY DAY."

In her daily life, Alina somehow finds time to volunteer with the Association of Moldovans in Denmark, and she is a board member of FOA Sønderjylland, which is responsible for the region's SOSU (Social og Sundhed) assistants. Besides everything else, Alina still works day to day as a SOSU. It all keeps her closely connected to the needs and concerns of a range of people across the country.

Alina feels the new regional health councils (Sundhedsråd), which will include elected representatives from the municipalities and will be tasked with implementing government initiatives, will allow her to make a significant contribution with her professional training. "They will allow different agencies to work together to ensure no one falls through the cracks,"

she says.

People working together is very much Alina's vision. "Danish society - and by that I mean everyone living here - must learn we don't achieve anything by separating ourselves from each other," she says. "We must look for what we have in common because there's so much more than we think. Everyone can and must contribute to society. We should raise

each other up so we all become stronger and better."

### FINAL THOUGHTS

"I'm someone who cannot shut up, but in a good way!" Alina laughs. Her determination to advocate for society's most vulnerable and make a difference is clear. "Politics is not about power, it's about opening up possibilities for other people," she says. "And getting internationals into local and regional politics is vital in order to make that happen. We need more of us to stand as candidates, and hopefully that will happen!"

[Follow Alina's Facebook campaign page](#)  
[Follow Alina on Tiktok](#)

### ABOUT THE WRITER

Ali Lewis is the reporting lead at Last Week in Denmark, a freelance writer, and content creator with a focus on music, feminism, and LGBTQI+ history. Originally from Scotland, she moved to Billund in 2024 with her family after a career in education.



# A NEW VOICE FOR A DIVERSE DENMARK

**Ali Lewis** introduces one of the international representatives of Moderaterne (the Moderates). Smita Salagare is standing as a candidate for Odense Kommune and the Southern Denmark Region.

**SMITA SALAGARE OFTEN** talks about “giving 100%” but when she talks about her journey in Denmark, it’s clear this isn’t just a neat catchphrase. She moved to Jutland in 2010 from Mumbai in India, accompanying her husband. In India, she was a dentist with a Master’s degree, nearly 10 years’ experience and an established professional reputation. In Denmark, she faced starting again.

Smita describes learning Danish as “intensive”. Dentistry requires the highest level of proficiency in the language. “I think I’m quite good at learning languages, but Danish is very different,” she laughs. “I used to go to sprogscole in Herning for 6-8 hours every day! They helped me a lot. They knew I was really keen, so they gave me a specific teacher to help me with pronunciation. I really struggled with the vowel sounds and spoke Danish with a strong Indian accent at first.”

Within a year, Smita had mastered conversational Danish, but still had to complete her dentistry exams in Danish at Copenhagen University. “If you don’t pass, you start again from zero,” she explains. “The whole process took 2-3 years, then I got a temporary license to practise, then a year after that a permanent job.”

Smita’s experience has reinforced her belief that learning Danish is vital in order to integrate. “Cultural barriers often go away if you know the language,” she says. “I thought if I took learning Danish very seriously, then other things would become easier, and that’s what happened. At first, my social group was entirely international, but then my neighbor started speaking to me in Danish, and my landlord started doing the same.”

“At points I was ready to give up,” she says. “I had a very good career in India with a private practice. I was teaching at a university too. There were points when I thought, ‘Why am I doing all this?’ I just wanted to be with my husband! But I’m very goal-oriented and very ambitious like that.”

## ENTERING POLITICS

In India, Smita was never directly involved in politics, but in Denmark, Smita found an awakened desire to get politically active. Driving hundreds of kilometres each week across Southern Denmark for her job, she saw first-hand how the healthcare system could be better. She also wanted to contribute to the country, however she could. “It was a big struggle to integrate here, but in the end, Denmark opened its arms and accepted my family.”



SMITA SALAGARE



SMITA SALAGARE



SMITA SALAGARE

“I was an outsider coming to Denmark from a very different country thousands of kilometres away,” she says. “My struggle made me see that if I could do it, others could. I had no one else I felt I could follow like that. I think I can help internationals see it is possible to integrate here if you keep a positive mindset.”

Moderaterne was the obvious choice, Smita says: “They are open to outsiders and internationals, skilled immigrants like me. I feel that connection with the party. Their programme is what I believe in - looking after the young and old. I feel connected with them.”

### SMITA'S CAMPAIGN

On the campaign trail, Smita has found that both Danes and internationals have responded well to her on the whole. “Someone said to me, ‘Why should we vote for you, an outsider?’” she recalls. “I said, ‘Why not me? I do everything a native Dane does and know the problems.’ On the whole, though, internationals relate to me because I’m integrated in this country and started from zero. I’ve worked really hard to get here, and they feel proud that I am representing them. And Danish people are happy because I’m integrated, paying taxes, and contributing to the healthcare system. Basically, I’m in between! I represent both groups.”

Smita has surprised people with her different approach to campaigning, focused on meeting people face to face. “In India, human relationships are much more important in politics than social media posts or TV debates,” she says. “You have to go on the road and meet the people. I’ve been told I’m more visible than some other candidates.”

“You’ll only see the diversity of Denmark if you meet people in person,” she says. “There are so many different types of immigrants here, and it’s important to hear what people’s lives are like and the

issues they face. That will only come across if you meet people”

Increasing international turnout at elections is something Smita is determined to achieve. “Only around 65% of people voted in the last elections, and the missing voters are the internationals and those from minority ethnic groups,” she explains. “It’s very important - we have a democracy and the democratic system only works if people’s voices are heard. Staying away from the system will not change the system. You have to be in it. And how? You have to vote. Denmark is an open, transparent country. I try to tell people that whenever I meet them. The change can be you.”

Smita’s campaign is focused on improving the healthcare system, schools and living situations for the elderly. “Healthcare is vital. COVID taught us that,” she says. “This is an advanced country, so the healthcare should also be advanced. I understand the issues because I work in the system. There is waiting time, and people often have to travel long distances to have procedures carried out.” As the mother of a seven-year-old son, she would also like to see further improvements in schools, with teacher-pupil ratios lowered. For the elderly, she wants better regulations to improve daily life, including more affordable meals and better care homes.

Smita feels strongly that internationals have so much to offer Denmark. “We are coming here legally, contributing, giving 100%, so respect from both sides is important,” she says. She stresses that internationals also have responsibilities: “You cannot make a parallel system. If you are coming here, you have to be a part of the system. You come, you learn, and then you earn. I think it’s fair enough for Denmark to expect internationals to do that.” Smita doesn’t underestimate the challenges: “It is more difficult if you’re from a non-EU country. It takes time, and people can lose hope in that process, but one should

**“STAYING AWAY FROM THE SYSTEM WILL NOT CHANGE THE SYSTEM. YOU HAVE TO BE IN IT. AND HOW? YOU HAVE TO VOTE.”**

not give up. It’s the system.” But her message is clear: everyone can integrate and have a successful life here.

She’d like to see changes to make the system easier to navigate, though: “There should be more guidance on how to integrate here. And more job opportunities. We should open the doors for people who want to be actively involved. We could be better at helping people to do that.”

### FINAL THOUGHTS

With such a busy day job, some might wonder how Smita will manage to juggle politics if she wins in November, but she has no doubts. “My husband always says, ‘You’re a smart woman and you’re very passionate!’” she says. “If I’m elected, it’s very important to me that I give 100%. And I have a lot of support from my family in that.”

Smita’s 7-year-old son has been an enthusiastic companion on the campaign trail! “If I have no childcare, I take him with me. He’ll say, ‘Are we going campaigning Mama?’ He’s so excited! He doesn’t understand politics and what I’m doing, but he likes going to different places, meeting and talking to people and seeing his mom doing something very active every day.”

And with that, Smita’s husband comes to remind her that she has to leave: she’s off to yet another event, meeting local people, shaking hands and listening to their stories. Every day is extremely busy, but she probably wouldn’t have it any other way!

### ABOUT THE WRITER

**Ali Lewis is the reporting lead at Last Week in Denmark, a freelance writer, and content creator with a focus on music, feminism, and LGBTQI+ history. Originally from Scotland, she moved to Billund in 2024 with her family after a career in education.**



# FROM ABROAD TO THE BALLOT

**Sudaay Tat Haznedar** introduces one of the international representatives of Venstre (Danmarks Liberale Parti). Maricel Frandsen is standing as a candidate for Lolland Municipality.

“**EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**,” a quote credited to Oscar Wilde, perfectly captures Maricel’s story. She never imagined living in Denmark, marrying here, or entering politics, yet all became part of her story.

While living in Singapore, a friend told her about Denmark’s au pair program. Maricel applied and arrived in Humlebæk in 2005, and started her journey as an au pair. Originally from the Philippines, she was excited for a new adventure and began life with a Danish family.

That same year, she met her future husband, Palle Nevad Frandsen, and in 2006, they married and built a life together in Lolland, a small island in southern Denmark near the German border. Before she married, she had already begun learning Danish in Helsingør. “I managed to finish two modules before I moved to Lolland,” she recalls.

Life in Denmark brought happiness, but her professional path was far from simple. “When I came to Denmark, I didn’t have a degree. I built my life here from the ground up, my family, my home, and my career,” Maricel shares. After language school, she enrolled in business school and completed the Sundhedsservicesekretær (Health Care Secretary) education while searching for an internship.

She graduated in 2013, found an internship at a clinic, worked as a substitute, and eventually became a permanent employee. Today, she has been a medical secretary in Rødby since 2016.

Her story is a powerful reminder of how networking and determination can open different doors in Denmark. “It’s so important to keep trying and to talk to people. The right connection can change everything,” she says.

Outside of work and family, Maricel spends time in her community. “I co-founded the Filipino Association Lolland-Falster (FALF), and I’m a board secretary in Inner Wheel Maribo, part of the international women’s organization Inner Wheel International,” she explains. She also volunteers as secretary at the Catholic Church, St. Joseph Parish, and when she has free time, she enjoys playing golf at Maribo Golf Club.

## ENTERING POLITICS

Maricel never wanted to be a politician, and it was not her plan. When she was first proposed to run for a local office, she rejected the idea. “I said no at first because I wasn’t interested, and politics felt far from my world,” she admits.



MARICEL FRANDSEN



MARICEL FRANSEN



MARICEL FRANSEN

But Maricel has always cared deeply about her community. She was actively involved in supporting the growing Filipino population in Lolland, helping organize activities and events through the Filipino Association. Friends and fellow community members started asking why she wouldn't consider becoming a candidate if she was already so engaged.

Encouraged by her community, Maricel began to think about what it would mean to have a Filipino voice on the council, someone who understands the challenges of moving to Denmark, learning the language, and finding work. "I realized I could make a difference if I were elected," she says.

Today, Maricel is candidate number 7 on the Venstre party's list for the upcoming local election. If she is elected, one of her focuses is clear: she wants to help the Filipino community navigate life in Denmark, such as the areas of education, employment, and integration.

"I don't have much experience in politics, but I want to help," she says, a simple statement that perfectly captures the heart of her campaign.

### MARICEL'S CAMPAIGN

"The road to success isn't easy, especially for foreigners like me," Maricel reflects. "We face challenges like language barriers, cultural differences, and sometimes even doubts about our place in society. Everyone handles these challenges differently, and that's why it's so important to have support and understanding along the way."

It was the belief that led her to run in the 2025 municipal election. "My profile is about foreigners," she says. "That's why I talk about helping newcomers settle down in Denmark, especially here in Lol-

land, where I live. I want to work for better integration and help build a community where everyone can feel at home."

Maricel has a long list of her ideas that she hopes to put into action if she is elected, but one of her top priorities is improving opportunities for foreign professionals, especially nurses, who often have a hard time when trying to work in Denmark.

"They face so many barriers: language, paperwork, recognition of their degrees," she explains. Maricel wants to support better access to education and create faster pathways into the workforce so skilled professionals can use their skills instead of starting over from scratch.

Integration is a priority for her as well. She believes that social participation is key to feeling at home in Denmark, and she wants to encourage newcomers to get involved in their communities. "Join local clubs, go to events, even try dancing or church if you like, just connect with people. It helps so much," she advises.

For Maricel, having a positive view is an essential thing here, no matter how challenging life as a foreigner can be. These values are education, integration, perseverance, and positivity, which form the heart of her campaign.

"We must build a Lolland where foreigners feel at home,

a place where people can build careers, families, and a future," she says. "I hope my story can inspire others: from nothing to something is possible."

She also highlights the importance of citizen participation and encourages everyone to vote. "It doesn't matter who you vote for; what matters is using your voice," she says, pointing to the upcoming November 18 election.

**"BE OPEN TO OPPORTUNITIES. TAKE EVERY CHANCE AS A STEPPING STONE TO YOUR DREAMS."**

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Maricel's message to others is simple but powerful:

"Be open to opportunities. Take every chance as a stepping stone to your dreams. We all have to start somewhere, and we learn more along the way. Don't give up because it's getting harder; instead, use it as a challenge — a challenge that you will overcome."

Before the election, Maricel will attend an information meeting for international candidates on November 11, organized by the International Community Lolland-Falster. She hopes this event will encourage more foreigners to learn about local politics and see how they can take part in shaping their communities.

Maricel remains hopeful that her candidacy can inspire others in the immigrant community to get involved, whether through politics, joining clubs, volunteering, or simply participating in the everyday life of their towns. She warmly invites everyone to attend the meeting. "Networking is not just for business," she says with a smile. "It's for building a life."

[Follow Maricel's Facebook campaign page](#)

[Follow Maricel's Instagram campaign page](#)

[Follow Maricel's TikTok campaign page](#)

### ABOUT THE WRITER

**Sudaay Tat Haznedar, is a Copenhagen based writer, coach in training, and runner.** Originally from Turkey, she moved to Denmark a year ago and now contributes to Last Week in Denmark, writing about international life and local stories.



# FROM NYC TO LOCAL POLITICS

**Sudaay Tat Haznedar** introduces one of the internationals representing Venstre (Danmarks Liberale Parti). **Keren Familia Christensen** is standing as a candidate for Thisted Municipality.



**IT IS A** long journey from New York’s skyscrapers and subways to Thisted’s quiet streets and open skies. That’s the path Keren Familia Christensen took when she decided to follow her heart and move to Denmark to start a new life.

She was born in Puerto Rico and raised in New York City, a place full of movement, noise, and millions of people. Her life changed after 9/11. She had just completed her degree in business economics and was ready for a new chapter. That chapter began when she met her Danish husband. “He lived in Aarhus at the time, and I used to travel back and forth. I thought of it as a charming small town,” she recalls.

Aarhus was where they imagined settling down. Keren was young and ready for adventure back then. But life is not always what we expect: “We were in love, we got married, and I was ready to move, but then my husband lost his job.” A new opportunity for employment came from Thisted, a quiet town in North Jutland. “Imagine when he told me it would be like Aarhus,” she laughs. Moving from New York to Thisted, from a city of 20 million people to just 13,000, was a shock. Everything was new: the language, the city, the people, the weather. But Keren did not give up, and she decided to rebuild her life from scratch.

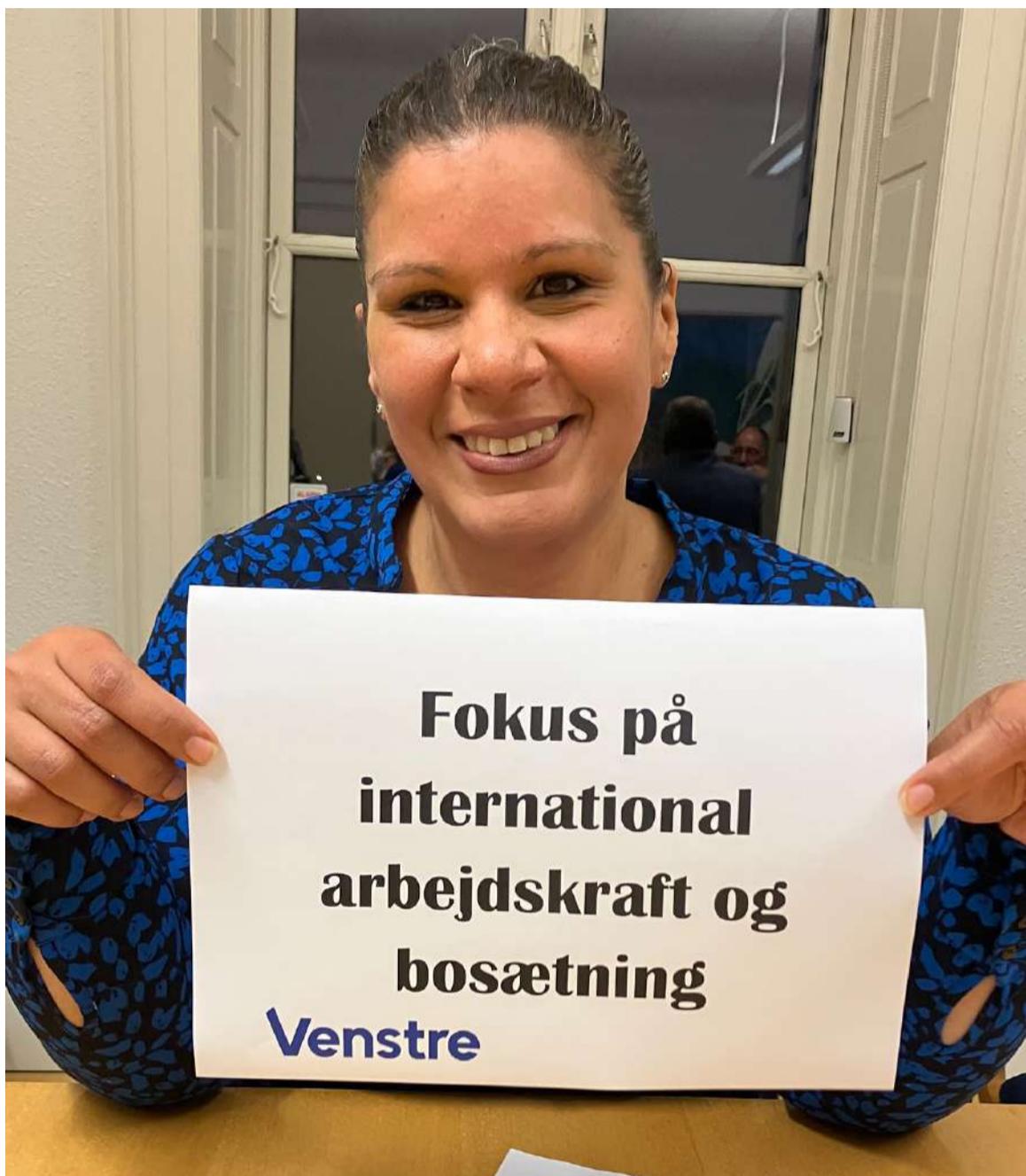
Keren began studying at the local trade school,

learning Danish, and working hard for smooth integration. Today, she works as a digital marketing specialist at Cimbria and has created a new home and life in Denmark.

## ENTERING POLITICS

Politics were never part of Keren’s plans. But in 2020, when the pandemic changed everyone’s lives, she co-founded Thy Internationals with a group of friends. “We had big dreams but no idea how to make them happen. Even opening a bank account was a challenge,” she says.

It began as a small initiative and gradually evolved into a vibrant community. Today, Thy Internationals



KEREN FAMILIA CHRISTENSEN

organizes 7–8 events every month and is supported by both the municipality and the region. It became the first organization in the area dedicated to helping internationals find their place and feel at home in local life.

“For the first time, here in Thisted Kommune, we internationals were invited into the political conversation,” Keren explains. “We were asked to give feedback and help plan how the kommune could support newcomers, and they listened.”

That dialogue led to a milestone: Venstre allocated funding in next year’s municipal budget to strengthen international integration, the first time such a step has ever been taken in Thisted.

“That pivotal moment showed me that political involvement can lead to real, tangible results, results that can improve things for those who come after us,” Keren says. “That’s what has driven me into politics: the belief that we can make tomorrow better through active engagement.”

Her vision was simple but powerful: to create a space where internationals and Danes could meet, share experiences, and lift each other up. “I always disliked the word foreigner and the stigma around

it,” Keren says. “I wanted to show how hard we work, how much we care, and how much we belong.”

That belief in inclusion and progress is what eventually led her to join Venstre, a party she saw as embodying values she aligned with— those of freedom, responsibility and growth.

#### KEREN’S CAMPAIGN

In the elections, Keren is running for the local city council in Thisted for Venstre. Her dream goal is to support both Danes and internationals in shaping Thisted’s future together. She has priorities that she really cares about, and she believes these changes can make everyday life better for the community.

As a mother and community builder, Keren knows how crucial it is to invest in children. She wants to protect and strengthen local schools and daycare centers, especially in smaller towns, so every child has a safe and supportive start in life.

“Education is the foundation of everything. I want to make sure our children have access to quality learning environments, no matter where they live in Thisted,” she says.

**“I REBUILT MY LIFE FROM SCRATCH IN THISTED — AND NOW I WANT TO HELP OTHERS FEEL AT HOME HERE TOO.”**

Keren believes that the way we treat our elderly says everything about who we are as a society. She wants to ensure that nursing homes and home care services have the necessary resources, staffing, and time to provide genuine, human-centered care.

“Our seniors deserve more than just basic care; they deserve dignity, warmth, and respect,” she states. “I will fight for better conditions in elder care so that no one feels forgotten.”

Affordable living is also on Keren’s list. She thinks that life can be easier if there are more subsidies for basic needs, such as heating and electricity, and also through investments in renewable energy like geothermal heating. She highlights that renewables are not only about sustainability but also about long-term stability, helping reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

“Politics should not be about vague promises or quick fixes. It should be about real, practical solutions that people can actually feel in their everyday lives,” she says.

“To me, balanced economics doesn’t mean choosing between saving money and caring for people; it means using smart investments to strengthen our community. When we help newcomers settle and thrive, we address Thisted’s real challenges: population decline, school closures, and labor shortages. Supporting each other, whether we’re born here or moved here, is how we grow together. A thriving Thisted is one where everyone feels at home, contributes, and belongs.”

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

Keren’s story isn’t only about moving between cities; it’s about growing roots in a new place and helping others do the same. She turned challenges into opportunities and dreams into action. For her, it’s more than a relocation; it’s a reinvention.

Now, as a candidate for Thisted’s local council, she wants to give something back to the town she calls home and help Danes and internationals shape its future together. “I know how hard it is to be new in Denmark,” she stresses. “That’s why I want to make it easier for others and make sure their voices are heard.”

Keren’s dream is for Thisted to be a place where everyone feels safe, connected, and proud to belong. “Danes may call us foreigners, but we are internationals and some of us are also New Danes, with pride in our hearts. We belong here. And our voices matter.”

[Follow Keren’s Facebook campaign page](#)  
[Follow Keren’s Instagram campaign page](#)  
[Follow Keren’s LinkedIn campaign page](#)

#### ABOUT THE WRITER

**Sudaay Tat Haznedar, is a Copenhagen based writer, coach in training, and runner.** Originally from Turkey, she moved to Denmark a year ago and now contributes to Last Week in Denmark, writing about international life and local stories.



# SURVIVING AS AN ACCOMPANYING PARTNER

Being an accompanying spouse in a new country can be exciting, but it is not without its challenges. **Natália Šepitková** discusses how to survive together.

**MANY INTERNATIONALS COME** to Denmark to support their partners in their career paths. They may hope to establish themselves in a new country quickly and start building their own careers, but that's not always the case. Sometimes they give up their well-established careers back home without clear prospects for career growth in a foreign country.

Meghna Nijhawan has her own experiences. She was born in New Delhi and studied in Chennai, India. Her background is journalism and communication, and she spent over a decade working in India's biggest news organisations. And then she moved to Denmark.

## **Did you follow your spouse to Denmark because of his job offer?**

Yes, I did. He worked in the regional office, and he got an opportunity to move to the HQ in Denmark. When we first found out that he had landed this role, we did a quick pulse check with colleagues who had also moved to Denmark from India. All of them told us that it would be challenging for the spouse to find a role.

Our initial thought was that maybe I would stay behind in India, and we would do a long-distance marriage. He could do this role for a couple of years and come back to India. But I just wanted to try out the job market in Denmark. While he was still getting his visa and his air tickets were being booked, I had applied for a role at Maersk. About 20-30 days later, I also landed the role, and I got my own work visa, my own ticket to Denmark.

## **That means you didn't struggle with finding a job as an international spouse.**

I think I lived in a bubble for two and a half years. I had heard of spouses struggling to find jobs, especially expats from non-EU countries, but I hadn't personally experienced that situation. But in late 2023, I was impacted by a company-wide layoff and reorganisation. That's when I started to live the nightmare of how difficult it is to find a job in Denmark.

I tried my hand at everything. I was volunteering, posting on LinkedIn, networking, customising my cover letter, and sending different CVs. Ultimately, I had to set up my own company to create employment for myself and pay my own bills. I think that was a heartbreaking experience, those seven, eight months when I was job seeking full-time. It taught me valuable lessons and gave me a good reality check of how things are in Denmark.



MEGHNA NIJHAWAN

## **Is Denmark providing sufficient support to international spouses?**

Denmark has several communities dedicated to internationals. But when I was unemployed, I was on LinkedIn sharing my story and struggles, I felt like no one was really catering to international spouses. No one is really sharing their stories, or highlighting the challenges that they face and the invisibility of it all; and the fact that most of them are highly skilled and talented, but no one is really looking at them as a talent pool.

I also felt there was no community specifically working with expat spouses from non-EU countries. And by non-EU, I don't mean America, Britain, or

Australia. I mean Indians, the Pakistanis and the Bangladeshis, and people from Africa and Latin America. We have our own cultural nuances. We are deeply connected to our families. Some of us are taking care of them, even financially. We come from a very different cultural setup compared to Denmark. There was no representation on stage or in the audience of people like us, which is why I co-founded the community Pillion Expats.

## **Tell me more about it.**

Pillion Expats aims to empower expat spouses by being the voice of non-EU expat spouses in Denmark. You cannot speak about internationals homogene-



MEGHNA NIJHAWAN

ously because people from different countries and cultures have other challenges. We support them by sharing all the professional insights we have on job seeking, setting up a company, networking, CV review, and what to include in a cover letter. We empower them through the information and content we create.

We host many online and offline events, offering workshops on networking, financial independence, and freelancing in Denmark, to inspire them to think beyond jobs and realise there are options. We also do a lot of one-on-one sessions with expat spouses. My co-founder, Asavari, meets people every week to understand their struggles, guides them, and creates a tailor-made plan. We do this completely pro bono.

#### **Do you think that women accompanying their partners have it even harder than men?**

Absolutely, there's no doubt about it. When you become an international couple, and if your accompanying partner is a woman who has had to give up or pause her career, it can set her back by many years. My first role in Denmark was a junior role. The reality is that I'm probably five or six years behind my career trajectory, and I've had to make peace with it.

When your accompanying partners are women who don't have careers, jobs or businesses, they're forced to be homemakers, managing the entire household. And of course, there's nothing wrong with it. But sometimes that's happening against their choice. And I see that a lot in my own community. These are women who've probably worked hard to build their careers. They could be the first or second generation of women who went to work and gained financial independence. But when they're in a situation as an expat couple in Denmark, we're setting them back by a generation, forcing them to stay at home. And that is happening in a country like Denmark, where women have been part of the workforce for decades. So, we collectively need to figure out a solution and develop initiatives for them.

I believe inclusive growth benefits everyone, not just us spouses. Happier, supported spouses contribute to the economy and help retain the leading spouse, ensuring the best talent stays here long term.



MEGHNA NIJHAWAN

#### **What is your advice for international spouses?**

First, create a strong community of your own. Don't reduce yourself to the label of a spouse, wife, or mother. Even if you don't have a job, aren't earning, and feel like your career is not progressing, try to build your own life and community in Denmark.

Then, pick up your hobbies again. This is the best country to do that. If you like reading, create your own book club; if you like dancing, have dance nights with your friends.

Create a life for yourself, not linked to your partner or your child. Because I think that is what will give you that sense of home, sense of "me", even when you don't have a job. And of course, you may need a job for financial reasons, but at least you don't feel a sense of identity loss when you don't have a career right away.

The third is to embrace networking. Network with people that you find interesting, don't look at it through a transactional point of view. If you meet someone who has had an interesting career journey, you can reach out to them for a coffee chat, not to get a job or a referral, simply out of curiosity. Have that same sense of curiosity when you meet people at events, webinars, or workshops.

#### **What can advance more opportunities for dual careers?**

There are a few things. More visibility, more spousal programmes in companies as part of relocation packages, and more spousal networking

programmes. I want to see more spouse-focused initiatives from the municipality, not just CV review or unpaid volunteer work, but internship programmes where they can work in Danish organisations and gain real work experience.

An acknowledgement of their presence in Denmark: it begins with collecting data on the challenges they face. Aside from having a CPR number, an international spouse who is unemployed is not part of the SKAT system, since they don't pay tax. They are also absent from the unemployment database because,

technically, if someone has never held a job, they cannot be classified as unemployed. Non-EU spouses are ineligible for unemployment support, leaving them invisible in any official records. If they don't officially exist, how can we even begin to address their challenges? Addressing this requires a collective effort to uplift their lives in Denmark.

#### **“DON'T REDUCE YOURSELF TO THE LABEL OF A SPOUSE, WIFE OR MOTHER.”**

#### **ABOUT THE WRITER**

**Natália Šepitková** is a Slovak freelance journalist and writer based in Aalborg, Denmark, with 15 years of experience across print, TV, radio, and digital media. She also shares stories about life abroad on her blog [mamavdansku.com](http://mamavdansku.com)



# “THERE’S NO COW ON THE ICE!”

Brooke Taylor Fossey's guide to ten Danish sayings that'll make you feel more at home in Denmark.



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**DANISH IDIOMS AND** sayings offer a fascinating window into the country's culture and humor – and nothing delights Danes more than hearing you use them. They also make learning the language feel fresh again, whether you're just starting out or you've hit a plateau. Learn a few, drop them into conversation, and see what kind of reaction you get!

Let's start with a familiar feeling. **At have sommerfugle i maven – to have butterflies in your stomach** – is used when you're nervous or excited. There's no dramatic backstory here, but it's an image that sticks. Even better: the Danish word for **butterfly**, sommerfugl, literally means “summer bird.”

When the wind picks up, you might hear someone say **det blæser en halv pelikan! – it's blowing a half pelican**. The expression dates to the 1950s, born from a bit of playful rhyme: **orkan** (hurricane) sounds like **pelikan** (pelican), and the joke took off.

Then there's the classic reassurance: **der er ingen ko på isen – there's no cow on the ice**, meaning “there's no problem.” Few Danes realise the saying has a Swedish origin, and that the full version ends with **så længe rumpen er i land** – “as long as the rear end is on land.” Suddenly, it makes perfect sense when you hear the whole saying!

Some idioms describe behavior in charmingly lit-

eral ways. **At gå som katten om den varme grød – to walk like the cat around the hot porridge** – means to beat around the bush. It's easy to picture someone circling a tricky topic the way a cat circles warm porridge, waiting for it to cool. Cats feature in plenty of Danish expressions: if you look terrible, you might **ligne noget, katten har slæbt ind** (look like something the cat dragged in), and if you buy something sight unseen and got swindled, you've **købt katten i sækken** (bought the cat in the sack).

Animals are everywhere in Danish sayings. **At slå to fluer med ét smæk – to kill two flies with one blow** – mirrors the English, “two birds with one stone.” **At sluge en kamel – to swallow a camel** – means to compromise or accept something unpleasant.

Some animals you need to look out for. **Der er ugler i mosen – there are owls in the bog** – suggests that something suspicious is going on. The saying originally used **ulver** (wolves) rather than **ugler** (owls); the sound changed as the expression spread from Jutland to Copenhagen.

Some idioms, though, are pure fun. **At gå helt agurk – to go completely cucumber** – means to go crazy or lose control, much like “to go bananas” in English. Why cucumbers? No one really knows, but the word **agurk** pops up again in **agurketid** (“cucumber time”), meaning the quiet summer period



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when little happens.

Sayings are often wonderfully visual. **At tage benene på nakken – to take your legs on your neck** – means to run away or hurry off especially if you've done something wrong, and **at få blod på tanden – to get blood on the tooth** – means to get a taste for something and want more, an image drawn from predators' eagerness for the hunt.

And if you ever **stå med håret (/skægget/flettingerne) i postkassen – stand with your hair (/beard/braids) in the mailbox** – you're in an awkward or powerless situation, stuck for everyone to see. On a brighter note, **at tage ja-hatten på – to put on your “yes-hat”** – means to approach something with positivity and an open mind.

Learning idioms is one of the most enjoyable ways to broaden your Danish and connect on a cultural level. Idioms bring texture to conversation and can make you feel surprisingly at home.

If you're ready to explore more, try looking up themed idioms like animals, body parts or foods. Københavns Sprogskole has excellent idiom collections, and the free dictionary app Den Danske Ordbog is perfect for digging into meanings and origins. You might just find that you're, as the Danes say, **fik blod på tanden** – eager for more.

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## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Brooke Taylor Fossey is a Danish language coach and content creator** based in Copenhagen. With a background spanning city planning, craft beer, and bagel-making, she now helps learners explore Danish language and culture on [@nearlydanishdame](https://www.instagram.com/nearlydanishdame).



# THE COST OF OVERCONSUMPTION

Overconsumption has become the norm, especially with all sorts of promotions and festive sales like Black Friday. **Natalia E.L. Madsen** discusses how that's taking a toll on the environment.

**NOVEMBER IS HERE** once again, and with it comes the usual tidal wave of Black Friday promotions. Originally an American post-Thanksgiving sales event, Black Friday has now grown into a global phenomenon. I fully understand that the allure of discounts is hard to resist, but Black Friday has come to symbolise something deeper and troubling for me, throwing our relationship with consumption, the environment and our sense of self-worth into sharp relief.

## THE ENVIRONMENTAL TOLL OF OVERCONSUMPTION

From a sustainability perspective, the environmental impact of overconsumption is immense. Electronics, fast fashion and cheap, plastic-heavy products, often the stars of Black Friday sales, are particularly problematic with their short life cycles and large environmental footprints.

Consider the fashion industry, responsible for about eight percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and the second-biggest consumer of water, according to the [United Nations Environment Programme](#). Yet, during Black Friday, clothing is among the most heavily discounted and impulsively purchased items. Similarly, the electronics industry relies on rare earth minerals, intensive energy use, and complex global supply chains, all of which contribute to environmental degradation and pollution.

The issue isn't just what we buy, but how much we buy and how quickly we discard. Landfills are overflowing with products that were once "must-haves," with e-waste growing at an alarming rate.

And let's not forget - overconsumption is not just an ecological crisis. Global supply chains for both fast fashion and electronics are known to be plagued by human rights violations, including forced labour, child labour, unsafe working conditions and excessive working hours.

## CAPITALISM AND THE ILLUSION OF WORTH

At the heart of Black Friday lies a deeper cultural narrative: that our value as individuals is tied to what we own. Capitalism thrives on this idea, encouraging us to measure success, happiness, and even identity through material possessions and by comparison to those around us. Ads don't just sell products - they sell lifestyles, aspirations and a sense of belonging.

This mindset is deeply ingrained in most of us, whether we know it or not. We are conditioned to believe that more is better, that new is superior, and that consumption is the path to fulfilment. But research tells a different story: beyond a certain point,



material wealth does not correlate with increased happiness. In fact, the constant pursuit of "more" can lead to stress, anxiety, and a persistent feeling of inadequacy.

## GRATITUDE, SUFFICIENCY, AND "THE GOOD LIFE"

So, what's the alternative? It begins with a shift in mindset, from the false perception of scarcity that companies keep trying to sell us, to the idea of sufficiency. In other words, shifting your goal from acquisition to appreciation.

Gratitude is a powerful antidote to overconsumption. When we actively take time to reflect on what we already have, we begin to see abundance rather than shortage. Gratitude fosters contentment, reducing our urge to compare and improving our mental wellbeing. It reminds us that joy doesn't come from having more, but from valuing what we already have.

Gratitude helps us embrace the idea of sufficiency; the belief that there is such a thing as "enough." In the sustainability arena, the concept of sufficiency challenges the dominant narrative that drives the pursuit of endless growth. It asks: how much do we really need to live well? At what point does abundance turn into excess?

Living a good life doesn't require constant consumption. It requires meeting our basic needs - food, shelter, safety - and nurturing our deeper wants -

connection, purpose, and peace of mind. When we embrace sufficiency, we free ourselves from the pressure to keep up, and we open space for more meaningful experiences and deeper connections.

## A CALL TO PAUSE AND REFLECT

This Black Friday, instead of asking "What should I buy?", perhaps you can ask "What do I truly need?" and "What am I grateful for?". Remember that Black Friday promises joy through acquisition, but it often delivers the opposite. The dopamine hit of a good deal fades quickly, leaving behind clutter and a sense of emptiness, maybe even regret.

By choosing to consume consciously, we not only reduce our environmental impact, but we can also reclaim our agency, redefine our values, and move toward a more sustainable and fulfilling way of life.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

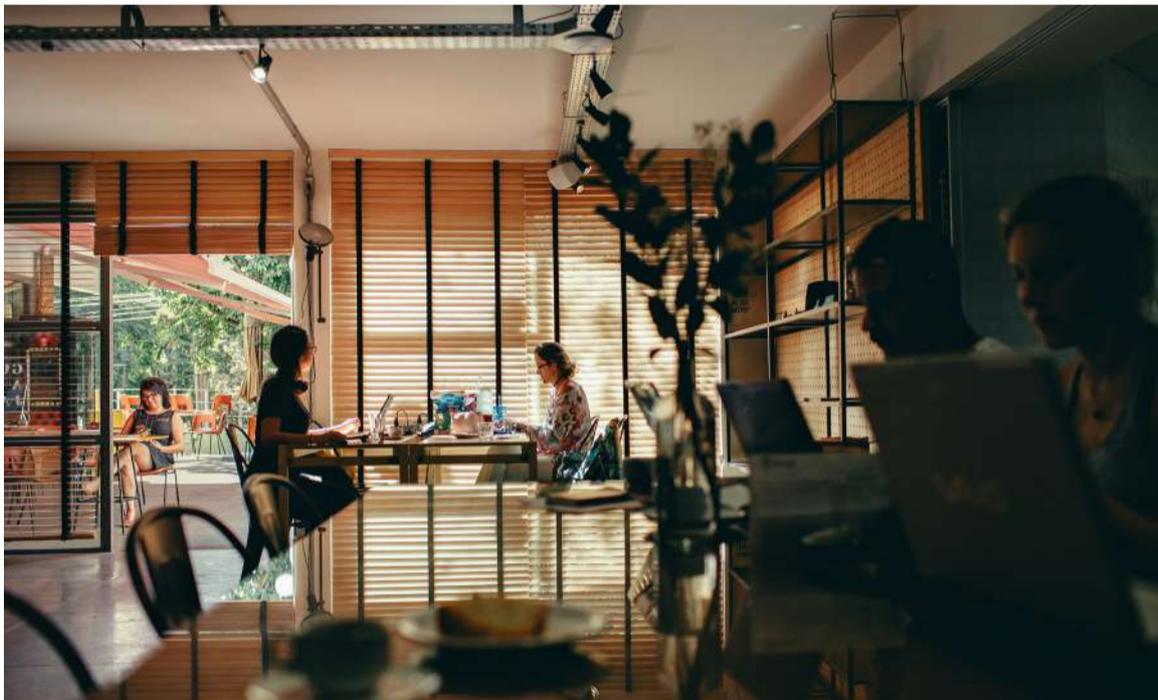
**Natalia E.L. Madsen** is a sustainability specialist passionate about inspiring action towards a greener future.

Bridging science and strategy, she champions sustainability to drive meaningful corporate change.



# COLLABORATION, NOT COMPETITION

This month, **Diana-Medrea Mogensen** discusses how to succeed in business through collaboration with other entrepreneurs.



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**COMMERCE BEGAN AS** collaboration. Long before global markets and online advertising, trade was built on exchange, one person's surplus meeting another's need. Bakers worked with millers, tailors with weavers, and the success of each depended on the reliability of the other. Competition existed, yet it remained secondary to trust. The marketplace functioned as a network, not a battlefield.

Over time, this story changed. Modern entrepreneurship began to glorify independence, speed, and scarcity: who gets there first, who sells more, who wins the client. The drama absorbed through television and social media transformed business into a kind of performance. In practice, most entrepreneurs, particularly small business owners, depend on connection to stay afloat. Shared suppliers, referrals, peer learning, and community belonging remain the true foundations of survival. This is why business networks, local groups, and cooperatives exist.

If competition is viewed not as a threat but as a resource, it becomes a tool for refinement and mutual growth. It can help us sharpen our offers, learn from others, and progress together rather than running side by side in isolation.

## FROM RIVALRY TO ECOSYSTEM THINKING

For anyone working independently, it is easy to see everyone in the same field as a rival. Denmark is a small market, and many entrepreneurs offer similar services to limited audiences. No one is truly winning, since the market is small, attention is divided, and resources are finite.

Imagine several jewellery makers sharing a studio and organising joint pop-ups, or a group of coaches creating a shared platform that showcases different approaches and price levels. Freelancers could pool their visibility by running combined campaigns or hosting workshops together. Collaboration does not erase individuality; it enhances it.

Every business operates within an ecosystem of overlapping skills, products, and audiences that can strengthen one another. Rather than struggling for the same small share of attention, collaboration allows the entire table to grow. A helpful shift in mindset is to replace the question "What are they doing that I am not?" with "What can we do together to cut costs, reach more people, or create something unique?"

## A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE GROWTH

Alignment with every entrepreneur is not possible, yet most can form partnerships that are practical and beneficial, even if temporary. One way to begin is by mapping your ecosystem in three circles.

Complementary partners are those whose work aligns with yours without overlapping. A coach might collaborate with a photographer, an event planner with a caterer, or a designer with a copywriter. Together they create fuller and stronger offers.

Parallel peers are individuals who work in similar areas but not in identical ways. Two coaches might focus on different topics, or two jewellers may serve distinct styles or audiences. Sharing knowledge

about pricing, suppliers, or customers helps everyone evolve.

Community connectors are networks, associations, and local hubs that can link you to potential partners and new audiences. These include erhvervscentre, co-working spaces, and industry associations.

Once you have identified these groups, begin with a small step. Suggest a joint event, exchange referrals, or design a seasonal collaboration. Collaboration does not need to become a long-term commitment; it can simply be a practical, mutually beneficial relationship.

## WHAT COLLABORATION LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

In Denmark, opportunities for collaboration appear as soon as you start to notice them. Some turn into ongoing partnerships, while others are one-time experiments. Every time you recommend a peer, co-host an event, or tag another business online, you extend visibility for both parties.

The entrepreneurs who stand out are rarely the most competitive; they are the most connected. They surround themselves with people who challenge their thinking, exchange ideas openly, and remind them that entrepreneurship was never intended to be a solitary pursuit.

Competition will always exist, since it encourages alertness and creativity, yet it does not have to create division. When we stop seeing one another as obstacles and begin recognising the web of opportunities between us, business returns to what it was meant to be: a shared endeavour.

Take an hour this week to map your ecosystem. Identify who complements you, who inspires you, and who you could reach out to today not to pitch, but to connect. Collaboration is not the opposite of ambition. It is one of the most effective and sustainable ways to grow, especially in small markets where nobody succeeds alone.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Diana Medrea-Mogensen is a Romanian-born entrepreneur, funding strategist, and educator** based in Denmark. She founded We Are Entrepreneurs to empower expats and underrepresented groups in building sustainable businesses.



# THE NEW DANES: WHO ARE THEY?

In a maze of politics, persistence and identity, **Kelly Draper Rasmussen** follows the newest citizens - uncovering what it now takes to truly become Danish.

**DANISH CITIZENSHIP IS** one of the hardest in Europe to earn. Every year, thousands of hopeful residents, refugees and expats make it through the maze of politics, requirements and persistence and emerge as “New Danes,” but who are they? And what does their journey say about how Denmark decides who truly belongs?

## GROWING NUMBERS AND TIGHTENING RESTRICTIONS

In the late 1970s, only a few thousand people a year became Danish citizens. Then came the millennium boom: over 19,000 new Danes in the year 2000 alone. The largest groups were Turks, Bosnians and stateless people, many fleeing war or upheaval. Eight of the top ten nationalities that year came from countries scarred by conflict.

By 2015, when Denmark introduced dual citizenship, another small wave followed. Once again, eight of the ten top groups came from conflict zones: some from entirely new wars that had broken out in the intervening years.

Since the 1990s, Denmark has amended its citizenship laws more than ten times, almost always to make them tougher. In the late 90s, minor offences like small fines were no obstacle. By 2017, even a speeding ticket could block an application, forcing people to wait another four and a half years before trying again.

That same year, Inger Støjberg, the Danish Minister for integration, immigration and housing, brought a cake to work to celebrate her department passing 50 laws tightening the rules around immigration. This controversial move sparked polarised discussion across Denmark and even within her own party, highlighting just how demanding the path to Danish citizenship has become.

## THE CLASS OF 2024

So, who managed to thread the needle last year? The 2024 cohort of new Danes was led by Britons. In fact, more Brits have become Danish citizens in the past five years than in the previous three decades combined, with only Pakistanis having near as many successful applications.

The rest of the top five included Germany, India and Ukraine. Demographically, most Pakistanis gaining citizenship were under 20, while most Brits and Germans were adults. For Ukrainians and Indians, the split was almost perfectly even between under and over 20s.

Overall, the gender balance was fifty-fifty. The biggest age group was those in their 40s followed by children under nine, a reminder that many families are putting down long-term roots.

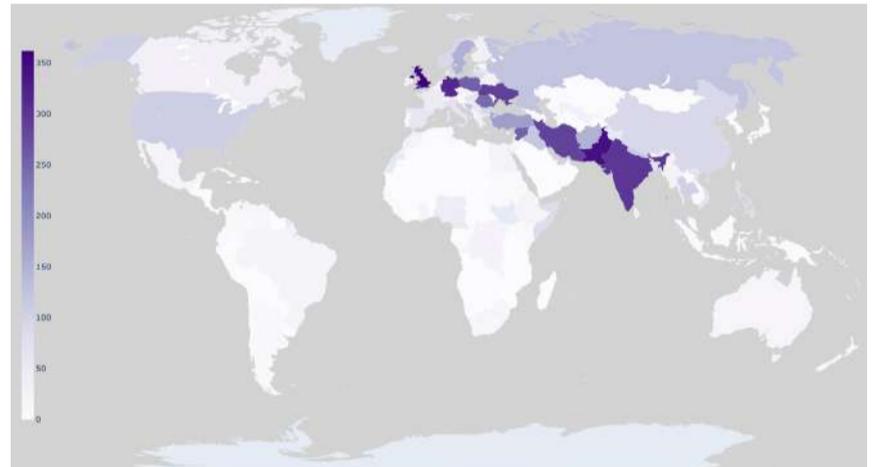
## THE DANISH PASSPORT: A BADGE OF HONOUR – AND BUREAUCRACY

Many Danish politicians boast of how difficult it is to get a Danish passport, pointing to countries where you just need to find a distant relative or pay a fee as cautionary tales. The list of requirements is formidable: long-term residence, a solid work record, proven Danish language skills, a clean criminal record, no debts to the state and a signed declaration of support for democracy, capped off with a literal handshake from a mayor, without gloves.

Applicants who meet all of this must still wait for Parliament to vote them in. Until recently, such votes happened twice a year, but not this year.

## THE POLITICS OF BELONGING

In recent years, a few would-be citizens found themselves questioned over old social media posts, ensuring their opinions weren’t “too extreme”. Although the individuals passed, the government is now considering making such interviews mandatory, suggesting it might be a “fairer” way to assess character than scanning people’s online histories if they have names that sound foreign.



SOURCE: STATBANK.DK/DKSTAT, DATA VISUALISATION BY AUTHOR

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen’s government has openly stated that immigration — particularly from the Middle East and North Africa — “has not worked.” A list of 16 non-EU countries whose citizens are thought to “integrate more easily” includes the UK and Ukraine. Interestingly, only those two, along with three EU nations, appeared in last year’s top ten citizenship list.

It raises an uncomfortable question: are Denmark’s famously strict rules so demanding that even those from so-called “favoured” countries are discouraged, while others - often from more precarious situations - find a way through sheer persistence?

Behind every number is a story: a British family making their post-Brexit home permanent, a Pakistani teenager growing up Danish, a Ukrainian mother starting again after war. The statistics may show how few succeed, but the human stories reveal something else: that despite the hurdles, many still see a Danish passport as a promise of safety, belonging and a future worth fighting for.

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## ABOUT THE WRITER

**Kelly Draper Rasmussen** is a Denmark-based data analyst who makes complex immigration and labour data accessible through her Data in Denmark newsletter. Her research has informed national policies and supports international communities.



# APPLE AND CARROT CAKE

**Natasha Liviero** infuses warm spices into this comforting cake that remains moist for days.



## APPLE AND CARROT CAKE (Makes 1 x 20cm cake)

### Ingredients:

100g granulated white sugar  
40g dark brown sugar (I used muscovado)  
1 orange zest  
140g flour, sifted  
6g baking soda  
2g salt  
6g cinnamon  
½ tsp ginger  
½ tsp nutmeg  
½ tsp all spice  
¼ tsp cloves  
60g neutral oil  
2 XL eggs  
50g apple sauce/Greek yoghurt  
120g carrots, peeled and shredded  
120g apples, peeled and shredded  
(I used Granny Smith apples for tartness)  
70g pecans/walnuts, roasted and roughly chopped

### Icing:

120g egg whites  
200g granulated sugar  
300g butter  
2 tsp cinnamon  
40g apple sauce  
Pinch salt  
16g orange liqueur/rum



### Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C and line the base of a 20cm springform cake tin. Grease the sides.
2. Add the sugars to the bowl of a stand mixer.
3. Add the orange zest and with your finger tips massage the zest into the sugar until fragrant.
4. Add the flour, baking soda, salt and all the spices and blend with a paddle attachment until evenly distributed.
5. In a jug, whisk together the oil, eggs and apple sauce.
6. Add the wet mixture to the flour mixture and mix until just combined.
7. Add the carrots, apples and pecans and mix until just combined.
8. Pour the batter into the prepared cake tin, smooth the surface and bake for 40 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.
9. Leave the cake to cool in the tin before removing and placing on a serving plate.
10. To make the icing, add the egg whites and sugar to the bowl of a stand mixer and whisk by hand until just combined.
11. Place the bowl over a pot of simmering water (the bowl should not touch the water) and gently whisk until it reaches 70°C.
12. Return the bowl to the stand mixer and whisk on high for 10 minutes.
13. On low speed, slowly add the butter. Once all the butter has been added, swap the whisk for a paddle attachment and beat on medium speed until silky smooth. Add the cinnamon and apple sauce and beat until combined.
14. Place the icing in a piping bag and pipe kisses over the surface of the cake.
15. Store the cake in an airtight container.

### ABOUT THE WRITER

**Natasha Liviero** is a South African pastry chef with Croatian heritage and a passion for European patisserie. She spends her days crafting recipes, sparring with her cats, and sharing her pastry journey on Instagram [@natashaliviero](https://www.instagram.com/natashaliviero).



# THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

Somatic therapist **Fiona L Smith** shares the important element that our bodies quietly ask for - pause, and discusses the power of it.



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AS THE YEAR draws to a close and the nights lengthen, many of us speed up just as nature slows down. Work deadlines and social commitments stack up while our bodies quietly start to ask for something else: rest and recovery.

This mismatch between what our biology needs in the colder months and what modern life demands is one reason so many people end the year feeling run-down. The immune and stress responses are closely linked and, when we're under pressure for too long, stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline suppress immune function; the body shifts into survival mode, diverting energy from repair and regeneration towards simply coping.

So, what if the "seasonal flu" or constant fatigue we associate with winter isn't random at all, but our body's way of showing that it's overloaded and overstretched? That it's time to pause, rather than keep pushing through?

Peter Levine defines trauma as 'too much, too fast, too soon' or 'too little, for too long.' Whilst our winter schedules aren't traumatic, they can still push the body to extremes.

In somatic terms, regulation is the art of listening to the body and understanding what it's signalling; learning when to slow down, how to settle and what brings you back into balance. Without that awareness, stress quietly accumulates under the surface and becomes chronic, showing up as irritability, anxiety, brain fog, poor sleep or tension.

The good news is that our bodies already know how to recover. Somatic practices help us access that intelligence through small, consistent pauses that reset the nervous system. We need ways

**"AS NATURE SLOWS DOWN, OUR BODIES ASK FOR THE SAME – NOT MORE PRESSURE, BUT MOMENTS OF RECOVERY."**

to come out of the hectic fight-flight of constant busyness and restore connection and calm. Here are three simple tools I use every day to help clients – and myself – restore balance and resilience.

### 1. THE PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH: YOUR BODY'S BUILT-IN RESET

Inhale fully through the nose, take a second short in-breath, then exhale slowly through the mouth through an invisible straw or as a sigh. The extended exhale activates the parasympathetic vagus nerve, lowering heart rate and blood pressure and signalling safety to the brain.

Just one or two of these breaths can interrupt a stress spiral. After you do this practice, pause and notice what happens – perhaps your shoulders drop, your jaw softens or your mind becomes clearer. Try this before a meeting, in traffic, if a social space feels "too much" or any time you feel overwhelmed.

### 2. GROUNDING AND ORIENTATING: FINDING SAFETY IN THE HERE AND NOW

When we get overwhelmed, the body and mind often disconnect from the present as we spiral into our to-do list or what went wrong earlier: Orientating brings us back. Start by noticing your contact with gravity: the sensation of your feet on the floor

and the support of the chair if you're sitting. Then, gently move your head, looking around the space – above, below, behind and in front. Name what you see and notice the colours, shapes and light.

The orientating response is hard-wired into our nervous system. Animals use it to check for safety; we can use it to re-establish presence. Orientating on entering a busy social space or after a long stretch at the computer helps the body remember that, right now you're here and you're okay. It's a quiet recalibration that releases tension and restores perspective.

### 3. FASCIAL SHAKING: RELEASING WHAT THE BODY HOLDS

When under stress, the body contracts. Fascia – the connective tissue that envelops every cell, muscle and organ – can become dense and rigid or stuck in patterns. Shaking helps release that stored tension and restore flow.

Stand with your feet hip-width apart, knees soft. Begin to gently bounce, letting the movement start in your ankles and knees and rise through your body. Allow your shoulders, arms, wrists and even your face to shake, as though you're bouncing on a trampoline without leaving the ground. As you shake, let the jaw go and allow any sound that wants to happen. Just two minutes can discharge a surprising amount of stress and leave you feeling lighter, clearer and more connected.

As nature slows down, build in these micro-pauses to allow both movement and rest. Our immune system thrives when the nervous system is regulated and we feel safe and steady. The power of pausing isn't about stopping – it's about noticing what the body needs and punctuating our days with moments of recovery.

When we give ourselves permission to pause, we don't lose momentum – we gain capacity. And that's what allows us not just to get through winter, but to move through it with vitality and ease.

### ABOUT THE WRITER

**Fiona L Smith is a Somatic Therapist, Coach & Nervous System expert** who supports women to heal from burnout & anxiety and reclaim ease and confidence. UK born, she lives in Rødovre with her family and loves walking, winter dips, and sunshine.





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**Deadline:** When filled

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You will develop and maintain great mobile applications that improve customer engagement.

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**Deadline:** When filled

**Contact:** [randi.christensen@sallinggroup.com](mailto:randi.christensen@sallinggroup.com)

To advertise your vacancy here, contact:

[info@englishjobdenmark.dk](mailto:info@englishjobdenmark.dk)

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**Location:** Copenhagen

**Deadline:** 21 November 2025

**Contact:** Ioannis at [ioannis.zargianakis@villacph.com](mailto:ioannis.zargianakis@villacph.com)

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You will go deep in understanding how and why different functions work as they do, and you can spot where AI and LLMs can make a difference, and where it can not. A great part of succeeding in this position will be your ability to implement tools and optimized processes, and you'll therefore also be responsible for AI and process training across the organization.

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**Contact:** David Granhøj Christoffersen, CRO and Co-founder  
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**Contact:** Stephan Lawaetz, Head of Project Management  
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## LABORATORY TECHNICIAN

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**Contact:** N/A

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