

Danish Policies

The main goal of COP15 is to secure a global climate change agreement in order to limit negative man-made effects on the climate system for future generations. In Denmark we have experienced that global change often starts on a local level.

How can global change start locally?

The success or failure of climate and energy initiatives often rests with the individual. Usually it is the day-to-day decisions of local people that ultimately determine if an initiative will be successful. The Danish initiative EcoCities is a local way of encouraging lasting climate and energy improvements. Six Danish municipalities have been designated EcoCities to exemplify the way in which municipalities can address global climate and energy challenges. Designated EcoCities have fulfilled 10 climate-friendly criteria and made special efforts in key areas of energy saving.

The EcoCities initiative therefore calls for broad involvement of the general public, backed by local policies to ensure a green future for the cities. The goal is to engage other municipalities in climate and energy efforts by sharing valuable know-how acquired by the EcoCities and their inhabitants.

How big is your water footprint?

During COP15 all the water served to delegates will come directly from the tap. Today, clean water is taken for granted in Denmark due to progressive water policies. Denmark's long campaign to improve water quality has involved many separate initiatives such as cleaning waste water and sewage, regulating and reducing the use and discharge of fertilizers from agriculture, and banning the use of chemicals that contaminate groundwater. Today there is a growing awareness of the water footprint that individual consumers and businesses leave behind. For instance: it takes up to 10 litres of water to produce one plastic bottle of less than one litre in capacity! That is the main reason why COP15 has chosen tap water over the normal conference solution.

What is "The Danish example"?

Climate change is nothing new. What is new is that on a global scale countries are now recognizing the need to take action before it is too late. Like many other nations around the world, Denmark is focusing on how to help prevent further climate changes by introducing "green" policies on many levels.

On a national level, energy and environmental policies have served Denmark well over the last 25 years. In that period Denmark's economy has grown by around 75% – with almost unchanged energy consumption. The Danish example is drawn from experience. The figures show that with a persistent and active energy policy focused on increasing energy efficiency, it is possible to maintain high economic growth while reducing the dependency on fossil fuels and safeguarding the environment.

For the business community, climate change represents an impending market shift – one that will both alter existing markets and create new ones. The most recent initiative to accommodate the market shift is the Danish business climate strategy. The Danish business climate strategy includes growth potentials in multiple sectors resulting from climate change, and both international and national demands for reductions in CO2 emissions. And just like EcoCities and water management, it proves the point that to bring about change, action is often required at local level to have a global impact.