



Country Issue: Denmark



The Relaunch of Europe

Mapping Member States' Reform Interests

Europa

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Institut für Europäische Politik (Institute for European Politics, IEP) is one of the leading foreign and European policy research centres in the Federal Republic of Germany dedicated to the study of European integration.

Further information on the project can be found here:

www.relaunch-europe.eu

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THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

MAPPING MEMBER STATES' REFORM INTERESTS

The Relaunch of Europe. Mapping Member States' Reform Interests (RelaunchEU) is a project conducted by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) on behalf of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) that surveys the implementation prospects for twelve concrete reform proposals. It covers the policy areas of Social Union, Economic and Monetary Union and Defence Union as well as asylum and migration policy and the EU's institutional set-up. Furthermore, it analyses the support for flexible integration and the positioning towards the five scenarios presented in the European Commission's »White Paper on the Future of Europe« of spring 2017. It covers the positions of national governments and of relevant progressive political parties, which received a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the previous European or national elections.¹

The study follows two main objectives: (1) It demonstrates the scope of action for prompt reforms of the EU in the selected policy areas while also taking into account which member states would, under certain conditions, be willing to implement the specific proposals. (2) It empirically determines which member states could belong to an avant-garde group willing to deepen integration.

Researchers from think tanks and research institutions in the member states of the EU-27 compiled information to determine the position of governments and progressive political parties towards the twelve reform proposals. This qualitative analysis reflects the country experts' views and is based on documents such as coalition agreements, government or party programmes, position papers, press releases, interviews, op-ed pieces, and official documents. It presents a snapshot of the discussions within the governments and parties. In order to keep the country issues short, internal debates and deviating opinions cannot be covered in detail. Positions are subject to change, especially following elections and the formation of new governments. The snapshot was taken at the end of September 2017. More recent developments could not be included. Notable exceptions are the country issues of Austria and Germany, which were updated following the latest coalition negotiations.

The study's results are published in English on the website www.relaunch-europe.eu. It presents maps for every actor and reform proposal, 27 country issues and an analytical paper. The paper compares the positions of all actors in all member states of the EU-27 on the twelve concrete reform proposals and presents five flagship-projects, which bear the chance for a relaunch of Europe.

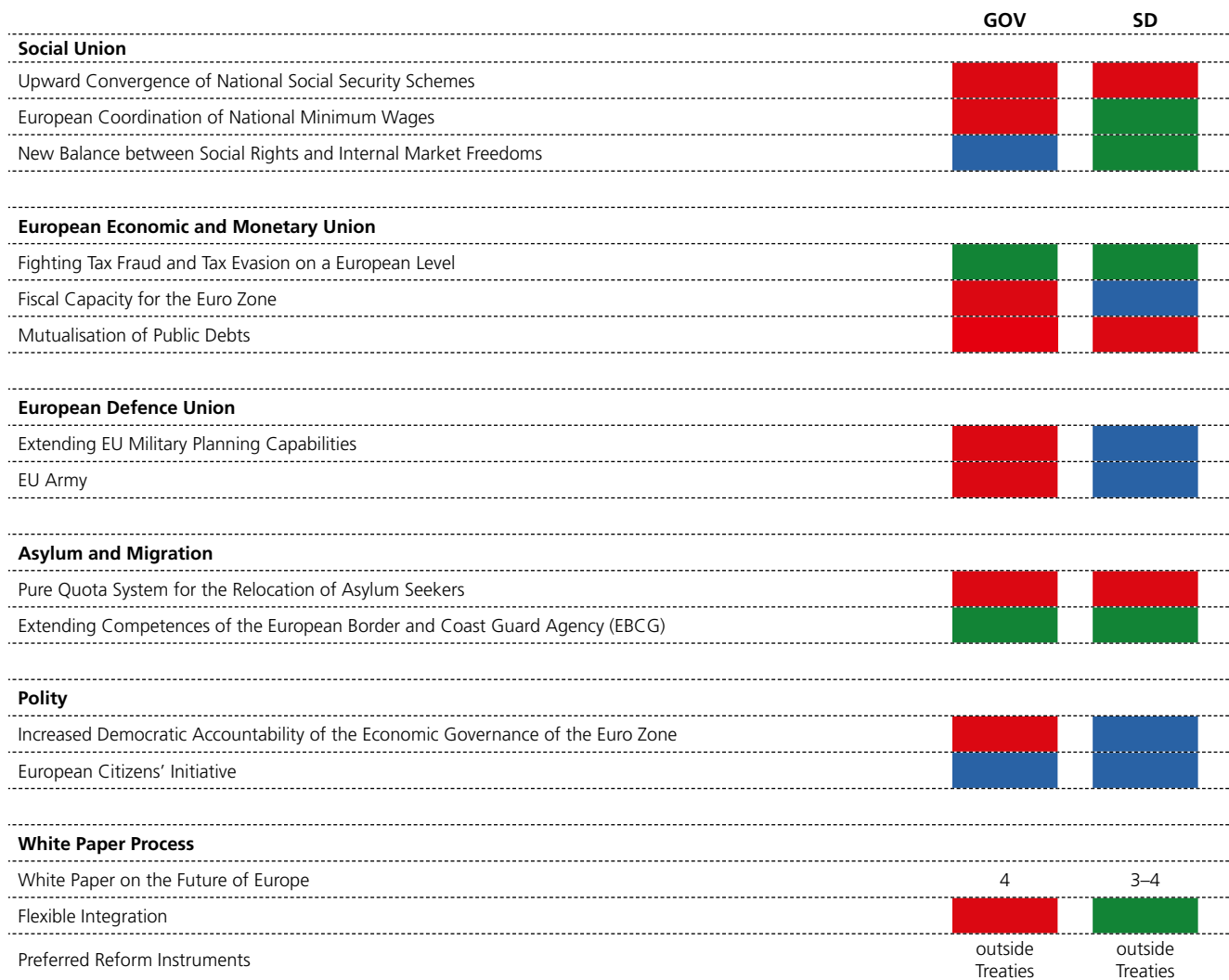
¹ If a party fulfills this criterion, but is not a relevant actor in the national public debate anymore, it was deleted from the sample based on the judgement of the projects' country expert.

DENMARK

Since the last general election in June 2015, Denmark has been governed by a minority coalition government, including the centre-right *Venstre* party which joined forces with the Liberal Alliance and the *Konservative Folkeparti* in November 2016.

However, with 53 out of 179 seats, it depends on the support of the anti-immigration *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People's Party) to pass legislation. The progressive party *Socialdemokratiet* (SD) is with 26.3 % of the votes in opposition.

Support of the Danish Government and the SD for Deepening EU Integration



Legend

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| ■ support for | GOV National Government | 1 – Scenario 1: »Carrying on« |
| ■ support under conditions | SD Socialdemokratiet | 2 – Scenario 2: »Nothing but the single market« |
| ■ against | | 3 – Scenario 3: »Those who want more do more« |
| ■ neutral | | 4 – Scenario 4: »Doing less more efficiently« |
| | | 5 – Scenario 5: »Doing much more together« |

SOCIAL UNION

The idea of a social union is highly unpopular both within the government and SD. They are both rather sceptical towards EU level policies that would lead to **upward convergence of national social security schemes**. This reluctance is due to reservations about national sovereignty, the high importance assigned to the principle of subsidiarity, and Denmark's universal welfare system where social benefits are substantially higher than in most EU states. The government fears that convergence of social standards across the EU would lead to downward pressure on Danish standards. The government is against a **European coordination of national minimum wages**, as currently, no national minimum wage exists in Denmark. Due to the »Danish model« of wage bargaining between labour unions and employers' associations, the government actively opposed the Commission's 2016 suggestion to include European minimum wages in the European Pillar of Social Rights. In response, the Commission reformulated the provision concerning wages and included a reference to the respect for the autonomy of the social partners and member states' freedom of choice concerning the process of defining wages. Historically, SD was against minimum wages, but the chairperson of the parliamentary group declared the party's support for a more labour-friendly EU, including minimum wages for all member states, non-euro zone members included, in order to prevent »social dumping«. This position did not receive any opposition from inside the SD. The party criticises that the internal market has been prioritised and preserved to an extreme extent at the expense of social rights, resulting in tough rivalry among unskilled workers. Therefore, it supports a **new balance between social rights and internal market freedoms**. SD mentions a social protocol as a possible solution, since such an attempt is perceived as a formal progress of great importance to the affirmation of social rights. The party's whip in parliament also underlined the necessity of limiting the freedom of movement to avoid the misuse of national welfare systems. Nonetheless, new social rights improving the conditions for unemployed European workers may not result in any additional financial obligations for national governments. In general, the strengthening of social rights in the internal market is discussed in terms of principles rather than rights. The government has not expressed a clear position towards rebalancing social rights and internal market freedoms. It values the economic benefits of the common market as being very high and promotes its completion in the energy sector and digital economy as well as structural reforms to increase Europe's competitiveness. It therefore rather supports the status quo, but might be in favour of strengthening social rights as long as these reforms do not impede the economic benefits for Denmark.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

The Danish government and SD are in favour of **fighting tax fraud and tax evasion on a European level**. The

government's support stems from the conviction that the problem needs to be addressed regionally or globally. SD stresses that binding European collaboration in this area is »critical«. The government and the progressive party unequivocally support more transparency and a ban of letterbox companies. The government is in favour of a common consolidated tax base for corporate taxation as well as a Europe-wide minimum corporate tax rate. It would prefer a broader tax base than the one proposed in the draft regulation for a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB). However, core competences for taxation need to remain on the national level and European harmonisation should be considered with caution. SD goes even further and proposes a »European Solidarity Pact« to avoid a race to the bottom in corporate taxation. Concerning the ban of letterbox companies and improved transparency, the party proposes increased reporting obligations for multinational companies (above 400 million euro of annual revenue) and pressuring member states to register the real owners of businesses, exchange information, and blacklist and sanction tax havens as well as EU states that do not cooperate in information exchange. The proposal for the pact also includes a Europe-wide minimum corporate tax rate, but does not specify its level. Furthermore, the party supports an upper limit for taxation – without giving further details – and a financial transaction tax with a rate of 0.1 % for shares and bonds and 0.01 % for derivatives. The government does not support the creation of a **fiscal capacity for the euro zone**, but is in favour of establishing a broad investment model instead of differentiating between euro zone and non-euro zone countries. As Denmark is not part of the euro zone, the topic does not feature prominently on the political agenda. Thus, the SD has not taken an official stance as of yet. The government has expressed its support for prolonging the European Investment Fund (EFSI) until 2020 if it undergoes close evaluation showing that it actually creates growth. Extra provisions should be financed through re-mortgaging within the EU budget, but the budget's overall spending ceiling should not be touched. The EFSI should allocate funds on market-driven terms. Both actors are against the **mutualisation of public debts** within the EU. In relation to the debate on debt relief for Greece, such ideas have been characterised as »unreasonable« and »preposterous«. The government states that economic liability should continue to lie with the nation state. Due to the clear opposition, there is no debate on the technical details of possible instruments. These positions have to be seen against the backdrop of Denmark's excessive deficit procedure from 2010 until 2014 which it overcame through national efforts.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION

In 2016, the Danish foreign minister quickly opposed the Commission's proposal to create EU headquarters for executive military mission and operations. The government is against **extending EU military planning capabilities**, wanting to avoid parallel structures to NATO. Consequently, Denmark did not participate in the Council decision establishing a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)

for non-executive European missions in 2017. In addition, the SD has no common position on establishing EU headquarters. Since 1993, Denmark has been standing outside of the Common Security and Defence Policy, but the government and the SD support the disposal of the Danish opt-out in this area. A new referendum on Danish participation in EU policies is not on the political agenda, especially following the failed referendum on opting-in to Justice and Home Affairs. Thus, the government is also against an **EU army**. It considers the EU's role in security and defence to be complementary to NATO capabilities and supports better cooperation between NATO and EU. Denmark has no interest in (financially) supporting an EU army. SD is in general supportive towards EU military cooperation, but has not taken a clear stance on the proposal to create an EU army.

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

In 1993, Denmark also opted out of Justice and Home Affairs. Thus, it was not automatically part of the relocation scheme for refugees in 2015 and did not choose to take part in it either. With regard to a **pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers**, the government and the SD agree that migration policy has to remain the competence of Folketinget – the Danish parliament; however, both are interested in the EU having stricter controls at its external borders, preferably through an asylum procedure taking place outside the EU. The SD previously adopted a hard line towards migrants and supported many of the government's recent initiatives. However, it appears to have altered its position recently, admitting that Denmark should take in more refugees to fulfil its responsibility as part of the EU. The SD spokesman on EU matters proposed a new asylum system in which refugees are sent to third countries (Africa is mentioned specifically), where asylum seekers would stay in EU-managed camps while their cases are processed in Europe. Thereafter, asylum seekers who have been granted asylum should be distributed among the EU states according to a distribution plan. In general, the government has taken a positive stance towards a common European solution. The coalition agreement includes a vague proposal for a new joint asylum system, to be established between like-minded countries and involving third countries. The minority government needs backing from the Danish People's Party to implement its policies. This party seeks to opt-out of the Dublin system and has rejected attempts to establish a joint European asylum system. Both SD and the government believe that a strong and effective control of the Schengen area's external borders is very important and they support **extending competences of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)**. However, they have expressed the desire to retain at least some authority over the conduct of border controls at the national level. The government supported the Regulation (EU) 2017/458 on the reinforcement of checks against relevant databases at external borders and helps to control the external borders by deploying ships and airplanes. It also supports bilateral assistance at the European borders instead of supranational efforts.

SD is in favour of border co-operation, Frontex, and proposes to »markedly increase« the size and scope of the organisation in order to combat the trafficking of people. Sea rescue is included in the SD proposal for a new asylum system, as refugees should be picked up by sea and brought to a third country while their asylum cases are processed in Europe. It stresses the need to set aside more money in the EU budget.

POLITY

On **increased democratic accountability of the economic governance of the euro zone**, neither the government nor the SD has discussed proposals for a European economic government or a European finance minister. The government will most likely oppose such measures as it has expressed concerns on deepening integration, e. g. in fiscal matters. The government declared that a financial union with a common fiscal policy is not considered a solution to the problems of the EU. Neither the government nor SD has a specific position towards a reform of the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)**. However, on a national level the introduction of a Danish Citizens' Initiative requiring 50,000 signatures to be debated in Folketinget was discussed in 2016.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS

The »**White Paper on the Future of Europe**« has not been thoroughly discussed in Denmark. The government has been reluctant to officially endorse one of the five scenarios presented by the Commission, but published a declaration showing a tendency to support scenario 4, »doing less more efficiently«. It demands to pay greater attention to policy areas such as migration, counter-terrorism and the internal market that are best dealt with at the supranational level and reject further integration in more domestic areas such as social policy. The SD supports the idea of an EU that does less but more efficiently (scenario 4), but at the same time also clearly endorse the idea of **flexible integration** (scenario 3). They wish to have the possibility to opt-out from certain policy areas in the future, whilst partaking in the integration process in other areas such as combatting tax fraud, climate change and social dumping. Venstre does not support any kind of flexible integration. As Denmark is not a member of the euro zone and opted out of key EU policies, Venstre wants to prevent Denmark from drifting further away from the EU core.

Legend

Actors Covered by the Study in each EU Member State

- *National Government*: including its members from one or more political parties, the Head of State or Government, relevant executive ministers and administration.
- *Progressive Parties*: They include all parties that are represented either in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) or that are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and have gained a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the last national or European elections. They also include La République en Marche (REM) in France.

Concrete Reform Options in Different Policy Areas

Social Union

1. *Upward Convergence of National Social Security Schemes* to provide Europe-wide protection against social risks and to ensure a decent standard of living for EU citizens.
2. *European Coordination of National Minimum Wages* to ensure a decent income within the EU to prevent in-work poverty, to promote social convergence and to avoid social dumping across the EU.
3. *New Balance of Social Rights and Internal Market Freedoms* to compensate the current precedence of internal market freedoms over national social rights.

European Economic and Monetary Union

4. *Fighting Tax Fraud and Tax Evasion on a European Level* for a fair allocation of tax burdens among natural and judicial persons.
5. *Fiscal Capacity for the Euro Zone* to provide stabilisation against economic shocks through public expenditure in the euro zone.
6. *Mutualisation of Public Debts* to tackle the problem of a sharp increase in public debts in some member states as a result of the euro zone crisis.

European Defence Union

7. *Extending EU Military Planning Capabilities* also for executive military missions and operations.
8. *EU Army* establishing a permanent multinational military force under European command.

Asylum and Migration

9. *Pure Quota System for the Relocation of Asylum Seekers* which would replace the Dublin system.
10. *More Competences for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)* expanding the current EBCG tasks in terms of »shared responsibility« between the EBCG and national authorities.

Polity

11. *Increase Democratic Accountability of the Economic Governance of the Euro Zone* to make its institutions more responsive to EU citizens.
12. *European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*: revision of the ECI regulation to make the instrument more citizen-friendly and effective in order to strengthen the participative democracy in the EU.

White Paper Process

13. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe* by the European Commission presents five possible scenarios for the future course of European integration.
14. *Flexible Integration*: limiting the application of certain rules to certain EU member states.
15. *Preferred Reform Instrument*: Treaty reform, reforms inside or outside the Treaties.

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