



Unlocking the Net Zero Potential Perspectives of Denmark's Future Leaders

January 2025



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Foreword

Compared to the rest of the world, young professionals in Denmark feel much better equipped to implement green initiatives in their organisations.

What can the world learn from a small nation, such as Denmark, when it comes to empowering young people to drive initiatives to tackle climate change?

We surveyed young people aged 18 to 35 living in Denmark and 48 other countries from around the world to understand critical differences between the level of influence that young people have over climate action.

Findings from our survey reveal that, on a global level, only 10% of young professionals believe they have the right tools, autonomy and empowerment from leadership to drive initiatives to support their organization's climate ambitions.

By contrast, in Denmark an overwhelming 63% of respondents feel equipped to lead their organisation onto a greener path. Similar to its European peers, Denmark is committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2050, and has set legally binding targets to achieve this.

However, despite clear political visions, Denmark's youth are increasingly concerned about the steps needed to achieve net zero and are increasingly motivated to start driving action themselves. The Leaders 2050 network supports these ambitions, with a mission to equip the next generation – in Denmark and globally – with the insights and skills needed to drive a better tomorrow.

The network aspires to foster knowledge sharing, strengthen individual and collective skills, and builds a strong foundation of professional networks.

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Mads Raahede



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Personal reflections on progress on climate, sustainability and social impact

In Denmark the majority (53 %) [KN1] of those we surveyed felt optimistic about the current progress being made on climate, sustainability, and social impact matters. This is c. 36 % points higher than the rest of the world and even c. 14 % points higher than the rest of Europe.

Why are so many young people so much more optimistic in Denmark? The more positive outlook may be driven by the fact that young people in Denmark feel like they have much more autonomy over driving action (63 % agree) [KN2] and have leadership structures in their workplaces that support them.

Although 44% of Danish participants cited that their personal lives have been affected by climate and sustainability, many more (75%) noted that their jobs and workplaces have been impacted.

There may be a number of reasons for why young people feel much more affected in their work lives rather than their personal lives. In particular, it may reflect additional work requirements from, for example, new reporting requirements, but also in softer forms, such as campaigns to limit food waste and vegetarian days in work canteens.

53 %

In Denmark the majority (53 %) of those we surveyed felt optimistic about the current progress being made in climate, sustainability and social impact.

75 %

of respondents indicated that their work has been impacted by climate and sustainability changes.



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Organisational perspectives on climate, sustainability and social impact

Despite Danish young professionals being more optimistic than their European and global peers on achieving ESG ambitions, they are wary of the challenges in overcoming organisational barriers. 81 % of survey respondents believe the cost of decarbonisation and a lack of will by senior leaders to take action to be the greatest barriers to achieving net zero. This emphasizes the need for robust commitment from leadership and ambitious financial strategies to pave the way for organisations to effectively drive meaningful change in sustainability practices.

As an organisation, having a strong ESG strategy is essential to navigating the evolving landscape of climate, sustainability, and social expectations. Survey results reveal that Denmark performs relatively well in this regard. Indeed, 56 % of young people surveyed noted that their organisations have already fully embedded ESG into their business strategies.

Despite strong progress, there is a continued need for organisations to ensure that they proactively address the

multifaceted challenges of making progress on climate and sustainability matters. In particular because many fewer respondents noted that their organisations have any large impact externally. Only 38% agreed that their organisation was 'contributing to net zero and national climate action plans' and only 25% agreed that their organisation was 'delivering social impact for the community and planet' (25 %).

A key consideration is therefore to look at what the drivers of change will be in the future. One in three (31 %) young Danes expect that 'mitigating risk and meeting reporting requirements' will be the most significant factor, followed by the incentive to 'drive financial performance' (19 %) and 'building brand and reputation' (19 %).

These factors reflect that young people see climate-friendly initiatives as not just organizational 'requirements', but also key elements that contribute to an organisation's bottom line, a way of establishing a better work environment, and a way of attracting top talent.



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Youth engagement and sense of responsibility

At the forefront of climate action is the critical need to foster accountability and ensure meaningful engagement across all generations.

In Denmark, the survey reveals that that vast majority of young professionals (81 %) feel a sense of professional responsibility for promoting climate, sustainability, and social impact agendas within their organisations.

The survey also demonstrates that, in contrast to the rest of the world (45 %), a large number of young professionals in Denmark feel empowered to support and deliver on this responsibility (63 %).

Although the (relatively) strong result in Denmark is something to be celebrated, there is still a way to go. Indeed, 25 % of those surveyed do not feel like they can drive changes despite feeling the responsibility to do so. Therefore, there is a clear demand for tools and opportunities that would better enable individuals to support the ESG strategy of their organisations and drive meaningful change.

The younger generation's heightened concern about their workplaces' commitment to climate change, sustainability, and social impact extends to the point where they would contemplate leaving a job.





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In Denmark, over 75 % of those surveyed said they would leave their current role if their organisation failed to live up to their personal values, demonstrating a growing importance of aligning organisational values with personal values.

Organisations that demonstrate a strong commitment to ESG principles not only attract, but also retain top talent, driving a positive impact on both workplace culture and the broader societal and environmental landscape – 75 % of the young professionals surveyed in Denmark would consider a company's ESG credentials / reputation when looking for a job.

There are concrete, actionable initiatives that organisations can prioritise to highlight their commitment to the sustainability agenda, enhance employee satisfaction, and overall organisational performance in the long run. In Denmark, 42 % of young professionals in Denmark ranked 'access to external networking' or 'better learning and development opportunities' as the top tools that would better enable them to support the ESG strategy of their organisation.

Establishing forums, such as Leaders 2050, that bring like-minded young people together can therefore help drive progress through idea sharing, knowledge building and a louder collective voice.

75 %

of the young professionals surveyed in Denmark would consider a company's ESG credentials / reputation when looking for a job.

42 %

of young professionals in Denmark ranked 'access to external networking' or 'better learning and development opportunities' as the top tools that would better enable them to support the ESG strategy of their organization.



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This report offers valuable insights, both globally and locally in Denmark, into young professionals' perspectives on climate action and sustainability. Here Denmark stands out as a model for empowering young professionals to drive meaningful change through ESG practices. Although many are optimistic, there are concerns about organisational barriers and ESG strategies, highlighting the need for leadership commitment and better support. Addressing these can help to attract talent and drive positive impact.

Networking communities, such as Leaders 2050, were highlighted as playing a particularly crucial role in empowering young professionals through knowledge sharing and skills development. This underscores the critical need to empower young professionals, to increase meaningful engagement across generations and support organisations to meet their climate and sustainability goals.

What is the Leaders 2050 network?

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Our vision

A cross-firm professional network led by KPMG for future leaders in all sectors who have an interest in Net Zero, clean growth and sustainability, with a focus on diversity and inclusion.



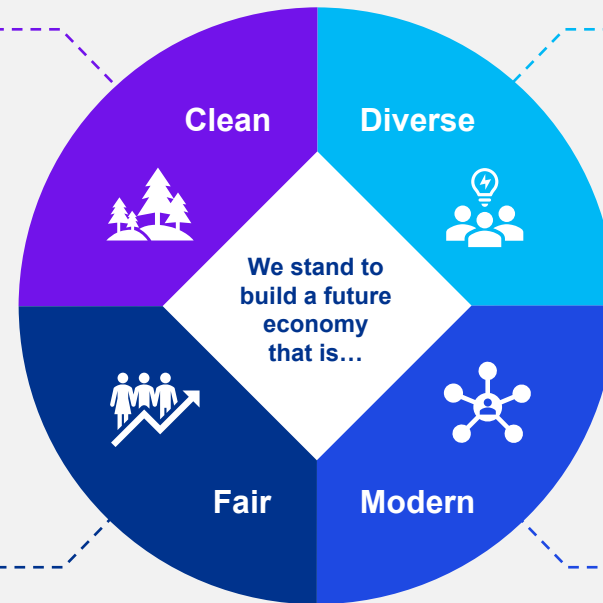
Our purpose

Building the skills, networks and purpose that future leaders need to drive towards a Net Zero future.

The principles below will be embedded into all Leaders 2050 events and activities

We help future leaders find purpose by engaging with and driving the low carbon transition

We promote inclusion of all social groups, industry sectors and low carbon technologies



We recognise the social and equity challenges of Net Zero and prioritise the 'just transition'

We support digital, smart and collaborative approaches to help drive engagement and change

Our global presence

Leaders 2050 network is in operation in 25 regions across the globe and has been active in Denmark since 2023.



Sign up for the Leaders 2050 network [here](#)



Methodology

For this report, the network has gathered survey responses and engaged in informative discussions with the members of the Leaders 2050 network in Denmark to better understand the youth perspective on the journey to net zero.

The network has gathered survey responses globally from 259 respondents between the age of 18 and 35 years (33 respondents residing in Denmark). The sample included individuals from various demographics, with considerations given to gender parity, age and regional diversity.

Globally, the survey respondents represent a diverse range of industries and sectors, with approximately 85 % being working professionals and 13 % being students. 68 % of global respondents currently work or study on climate, sustainability and social impact topics/project.

To ensure robust insights on the organisational context and capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on ESG-related activities and practices, the survey encompassed individuals working in

organisations of varying sizes, ranging from small businesses to large corporations.

The Leaders 2050 network aims to continuously broaden the awareness of personal and organisational perspectives on the progress on climate, sustainability and social impact issues and youth engagement through our surveys and dialogues with network members.

With this report, we strive to deliver valuable insights into the awareness and implementation of ESG principles across different professional settings.

68%

Of global respondents currently work or study on climate, sustainability and social impact topics/project



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