



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**
Danida

**HOW-TO NOTE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF “THE WORLD WE SHARE”
HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

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This note is one of 12 notes developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark to ensure the implementation of the strategy for development cooperation “The World We Share”

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How-to note for implementation of "The World We Share" Human Rights and Democracy

1. Purpose of the note

This note aims to provide specific guidelines on how to implement Denmark's strategy for development cooperation "The World We Share", the Government's Priorities for Danish Development Cooperation 2021-2025 and the four-year plans. The two overall purposes of the note are:

- **To create consistency** between strategy, policy, planning and budgeting as a shared framework of reference for the implementation of "The World We Share" and its objectives.
- **To set the framework** for prioritising, selecting and deselecting in adherence to the principles of *Doing Development Differently*, which call for taking a holistic and adaptive approach.

The main target group for this note is employees at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for implementing "The World We Share". Furthermore, it may serve to inform external partners. The note will be available on the Aid Management Guidelines site as an internal guidance document. Specifically, the note is intended as a reference document in programming (including in Programme Committee meetings and on the Council for Development Policy (UPR), as well as in the monitoring (e.g. in appraisals and reviews), in the dialogue with partners, and in the work with international norms and standards.

In principle, the note will remain valid for the duration of "The World We Share", and will be revised as required in response to changing contexts and priorities. The political priorities in the Finance Act will always have primacy to this note. The note complements the other thematic How-to-Notes and should therefore be read together with the other notes.

2. Context

Promoting human rights and democracy is an important part of addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and inequality, and hence essential to creating a more peaceful, just, secure, resilient, equal and sustainable world. In Denmark's strategy for development cooperation "The World We Share"ⁱ, human rights and democracy are the very foundation of Danish aid, and hence both a means and an end in its own right. This note clarifies how our human-rights-and-democracy work will be carried out as defined within five thematic areas in "The World We Share": 1) Democracy, human rights and free civil societies in the era of digitisation, 2) Rights and dignity of marginalised groups, 3) Gender equality, girls' and women's rights, 4) Meaningful participation of young people, and 5) Effective, democratic and accountable states. "The World We Share" establishes that Danish development cooperation must focus on fragile countries and regions, including areas affected by nearness to conflict, which account

for a growing share of world population living in extreme poverty. Accordingly, the note takes into account that development intervention will be increasingly carried out in fragile political systems, where human rights and democratic values are under pressure.

The note concentrates on the programming and normative work that is directly aimed at strengthening human rights and democracy. Gender equality is an essential aspect of human rights, which takes centre stage in "The World We Share". Accordingly, gender equality features in the note both as a thematic priority and as a cross-cutting issue. Good governance is a priority across sectors, and is hence addressed in other thematic how-to notesⁱⁱ. The framework for prioritisation, selection and deselection springs from the principles of 'Doing Development Differently'. This note sets out the thematic and geographical scope of Danish-sponsored interventions, describing and analysing the Danish approach. It may serve as a reference document in the prioritisation and planning of programming and monitoring, in dialogues with partners, in multilateral negotiations and in the work with international norms and standards.ⁱⁱⁱ

3. Definitions and scope

Our understanding of democracy and human rights

Promoting human rights and democracy, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is stated as an objective in Denmark's International Development Cooperation Act.^{iv} The UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are woven into the states' international human-rights commitments, and it is crucial for Denmark that efforts to achieve the goals become so too. The Danish government's duty to contribute includes SDG 16 on securing peace, justice and strong institutions, as well as SDG 5 on gender equality as a general foundation for sustainable development that also furthers the other SDGs.^v Accordingly, as part of Agenda 2030, Denmark subscribes to the across-the-board principle of 'Leaving no one behind', which entails prioritising those countries, groups and people who are most vulnerable and most lagging in having their rights and needs fulfilled.^{vi}

Definition of key concepts:^{vii}

Human rights

Denmark works within the legal human-rights framework defined by, among other instruments, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the various UN human-rights conventions and the European Convention on Human Rights. Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Individuals are rights holders, and no-one must be left behind. States respecting and upholding human rights is a precondition for healthy and stable democracies.

Democracy

Democracy and democratic values are both a form of government and a way of life.^{viii} Denmark's development cooperation takes a holistic approach to democracy. It is both a form of government based on rule of law and a tripartition of power into an executive, legislative and judicial branch. At the same time, we strengthen democracy as a way of life by promoting democratic conversation and culture,

participation in decision-making and inclusion. Moreover, Danish democracy work is rights-based, involving the state, civil society, other democratic institutions and the private sector.

Good governance

Good governance helps build institutions and uphold rights.^{ix} Among its characteristics are popular participation, listening to citizens, transparency, accountability, rule of law, equality, efficiency and corruption control.^x Accountable and transparent public institutions are an end in its own right,^{xi} but also a means of delivering on rights to the most vulnerable people. Good governance must be addressed across thematic areas of intervention and improve the framework for sustainable growth and employment, climate action and equal access to, for instance, healthcare, education and water.^{xii} Support for decentralisation is an important part of good governance.

The human-rights-based approach

Danish development cooperation takes a human rights-based approach (HRBA). This means that human-rights standards determine both the overall objective of our interventions and the principles for programme implementation with emphasis on participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency. The work covers both the capacity of duty-bearing authorities to secure human rights and rights holders' ability to claim their rights. Special attention is paid to those who are most vulnerable and furthest behind in having their needs and rights fulfilled. The HRBA must be an integral part of the context analysis when preparing projects and programmes.

Gender equality

To Denmark, gender equality means that everyone, regardless of sex or gender, has equal rights and opportunities. Denmark works for greater gender equality by, among other ways, becoming more mindful of the gender roles, norms and expectations to which people in a given society are subjugated, whether

Denmark's work in the field of human rights and democracy is based on the following principles in keeping with the Doing Development Differently approach:

Human rights, democracy and gender equality are goals in their own rights, but at the same time a foundation for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The work is broad in scope, as it covers the whole spectrum of state, civil society, other democratic institutions and the private sector with emphasis on local ownership.

The work is holistic and interrelated across normative, multilateral and bilateral undertakings in order to boost the effect in all three domains.

Interventions must fit the context to identify the opportunities for promoting rights and strengthening democratic processes and institutions.

There is focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised people who lag the most in having their rights and needs fulfilled. Efforts are particularly intense in fragile countries, whether affected by conflict or in a post-conflict situation.

A transformative approach to gender equality is pursued, seeking to change fundamental social and gender-based norms and power structures to address inequality.

consciously or subconsciously, and which inhibit gender equality and equal opportunities. Danish development cooperation will pursue gender equality across thematic and geographical areas of intervention, and also maintain targeted pro-equality activities, for instance, in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), education, peace and security. Denmark will promote national legislation and policies that protect the rights of women and girls with a view to bringing about concrete changes in gender relations and in the underlying power structures that pose a barrier to genuine equality.

4. Approach to human rights and democracy

Going forward, Danish interventions will, to a large extent, take place in fragile contexts with autocratic or hybrid regimes. Here, promotion of human rights and democracy is particularly at risk of clashing with authority. This makes it essential to take an adaptive approach that is more in tune with locally defined problems and political dynamics. We need to focus and adjust our interventions to the society concerned, continuously scanning for potentials for positive change and for political opportunities for promoting rights and democratic values. In fragile contexts, without the structural conditions for democracy being visibly in place, this may call for pragmatism and compromise.

It is important to map out Denmark's comparative advantages to determine which role we may play most effectively in the context at hand. Based on an ongoing context analysis and local ownership, we must go – both thematically and geographically – wherever new opportunities or challenges arise. We shall still aim to work more flexibly and adaptively with an emphasis on innovative solutions and, for example, monitoring of learning and follow-up research.

There is a need for stronger coherence between development interventions in the field and normative work in multilateral bodies, including resolutions, Universal Periodic Review mechanisms, etc.^{xiii} This can be done by coordinating more closely between Danish country representations/interventions, multilateral and specialist entities, as well as by giving greater priority and more powers to contact groups and task forces. An example is the planned annual human-rights consultations with a regional focus between relevant embassies, country offices, home offices and UN representations with the aim of enhancing understanding and synergy between bilateral, regional and multilateral processes. The interventions of Denmark and the UN may also become more explicitly based on outputs from international human-rights mechanisms. The processes of the Universal Periodic Review and the Voluntary National Review may offer occasions for dialogue at the country level.^{xiv} The linkage between interventions can also be reinforced through greater and more proactive use of strategic secondments in the field of human rights and democracy (HRD).

Ongoing learning, experience and innovation from programmes in support of good governance and human rights should be fed into other thematic programming processes (say, on climate) and vice-versa. Learning and capacity-building throughout the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be boosted using existing networks, such as the Human Rights Network and the Gender Focal Point Network. It may also take place by setting up learning forums or thematic groups across offices and units, making sure that professionals at priority representations allocate sufficient time to learning. Experiences gathered from interventions implemented by civil-society partners should be utilised more broadly, particularly in

contexts without the presence of Danish development cooperation. This applies to, for instance, interventions within the HRD framework appropriation of the Finance Act, Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with Danish NGOs, funds open for applications, and various networks. For instance, as regards the strategic partnerships, there are plans to hold dialogue meetings with a focus on rights.

Modalities

Danish interventions are implemented under various modalities, which are briefly presented below. They will be elaborated upon in the subsequent thematic sections.

Bilateral interventions are at the heart of our work with human rights and democracy. There might be a special HRD component in bilateral development programmes in countries engaged in an expanded partnership with Denmark, when this makes a tangible difference in the context. There could also be a general emphasis, across different thematic interventions, on human rights, strengthening of civil society and accountable institutions. Danish representations play a crucial role in promoting the HRD agenda through local policy work and programming, which must be based on national ownership, local solutions, capacity development and coordination with other donors. Development interventions interact closely with the political dialogue at the country level, both bilaterally with our partners and through the multilateral cooperation in each country, particularly within the EU sphere. The national-level dialogue is an important instrument of diplomacy to promote priorities and analyse political dynamics on an ongoing basis. Good partnerships with governments and authorities in recipient countries are essential to strengthen good governance. Bilateral interventions should be conceived holistically in interaction with normative work and multilateral engagements in order to boost the effect in all three domains.

Multi-bi cooperation (earmarked donations to multilateral organisations) is growing as a share of Danish aid. This is especially so in fragile contexts with emphasis on promoting human rights and good governance as part of conflict management, peacebuilding and security. This type of support can make for more coordinated and efficient intervention within the so-called HDP nexus (Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding). Furthermore, it may provide Denmark with access and insight into the context in a particular country or region. Continued learning from this type of aid will be important going forward.^{xv}

Multilateral cooperation plays a central role, particularly through the UN and EU. Denmark is in favour of implementing the UN Secretary General's vision in 'Call to Action on Human Rights' and is active in discussing critical country cases in the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly. Denmark works for a rights-based and integrated approach to peace and security with emphasis on prevention and peacebuilding, alongside a focus on human rights in UN peacekeeping work in general.^{xvi} The point is to connect the work within the three UN pillars, namely Human Rights, Peace and Security, and Development, in order to draw more attention to human rights throughout the UN, including in its fieldwork. Danish membership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2023-2024 and its expected membership of the UN Security Council in 2025-2026 will be used to promote a rights-based approach to peace and security.^{xvii} Denmark will continue to participate in Beijing+25 and Generation Equality, including as co-leader of the Beijing+25 action track on SRHR and follow-up to the ICPD ICPD+25 Conference.

Denmark supports UN organisations that have a normative mandate in the HRD field.^{xviii} Danish funds should go towards active promotion of human rights and democratic governance in close dialogue with the organisations, for instance through more vigorous use of the contact groups and involvement of country representations. In the multilateral development banks, Denmark will continue to work for good governance, gender equality and, whenever relevant, SRHR featuring prominently in the banks' strategy work, country programming and project proposals.

Denmark is in favour of **strong EU leadership** on human rights and democracy. Denmark has contributed to the passing of the ambitious EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) and been among the driving forces behind establishing the EU's global sanctions regime against gross human-rights violators. Denmark works for the EU speaking up against human-rights violations in specific countries. Denmark supports the earmarking of EUR 6.36 billion under the EU's new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) for thematic programmes, including human rights and democracy, and continues to be actively engaged in the Global Team Europe Democracy initiative. In light of the objective of increasing EU involvement in Africa, Denmark is in favour of the EU focusing more on rights-based technological development. In the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Council, Denmark will carry on efforts to keep human rights and democratic governance high on the agenda and complain when other member countries fail to live up to their human-rights obligations. Through financial support for reform of the European Court of Human Rights, Denmark contributes to reducing the long processing times.

The EU cooperation sets the framework for normative work, while the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation is valuable too. In addition, Denmark participates in interregional cooperation on shared agendas. An example worth highlighting is the Convention against Torture Initiative together with Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco. Another is the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance with 34 countries. In the OSCE, Denmark is active in the Ministerial Council's negotiations on the promotion of human rights and democracy, just as Denmark supports the OSCE's independent institutions, including the election observation missions of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Civil-society support features prominently in the promotion of democracy and human rights. It encompasses support for local, Danish and international organisations, including human-rights organisations working in areas such as protection of indigenous peoples, strengthening of political parties, anti-torture and rehabilitation activities, as well as freedom of religion and belief, ombudsman institutions, NGOs and social movements. Diverse and independent civil societies are supported through a wide array of Danish and international civil-society organisations, for instance through Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with Danish organisations, and, as a novelty, now also forging thematic partnerships regarding human rights and democracy.^{xix} Small and medium-sized civil-society actors also receive grants from funds that are administered by entities external to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which ensures deep popular roots and inclusion in Danish development cooperation.

5. "The World We Share": five thematic priorities

Each of the five thematic priorities for the promotion of human rights, gender equality and democracy must be adapted to the context and resources at hand. The work on these issues will be boosted both in the normative domain and in programme interventions. It may take the shape of Danish contributions to international and civil-society organisations, as well as to bilateral development programmes, whether it be in countries with expanded or targeted partnerships with Denmark, at the national or at the regional level. Wherever Denmark's comparative advantages can deliver special added value, we will support bilaterally through interventions managed by the embassy, civil-society partners, multilateral partners and possibly others.

Geographical scope

In geographical terms, programmes are prioritised in all countries that have an expanded partnership with Denmark, in those societies where democracy and human rights are most under pressure, and in those areas that hold potential for positive change. Human-rights priorities can also be pursued where Denmark is considered able to deliver special added value and positive change, e.g. in the fight against torture and corruption, and for freedom of religion or belief. These criteria suggest an emphasis on: Africa (Sahel, East Africa and Horn of Africa), the Middle East and North Africa (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco) as well as Eastern Europe (Ukraine and Georgia).

How do we work in countries with authoritarian regimes?

In principle, we work with the state and local authorities in all interventions at the country level. In some contexts and circumstances, this can be problematic or unfeasible. This is particularly so where authoritarian regimes work against democratic values and human rights, or where we do not recognise the incumbent regime. However, it also occurs despite our wish to maintain good cooperation with the current government, when we still want to object to, say, torture or other human-rights violations in the country concerned. The development policy of focusing on fragile countries means that aid is increasingly being delivered in contexts with authoritarian regimes, since undemocratic institutions and practices are one dimension of fragility.¹ Instead, in such cases, we work through civil society or international organisations capable of circumventing the regime. Human rights can be strengthened by, for instance, building capacity to hold authorities accountable to the population and for their international obligations. Another course of action could be to raise people's awareness of their rights and how to defend them.

Monitoring the authorities' human-rights violations should be a part of Danish support. It also improves the chance of early warning regarding new conflict dynamics and cycles of violence. Human-rights monitoring is often the sole credible source of knowledge about conflict situations or under authoritarian regimes. It may also assist in later prosecution for gross human-rights violations and in transitional-justice processes.

Priority 1: Democracy, human rights and free civil societies in the era of digitisation

Thematic scope

Our contribution to free and fair elections as well as to the democratic role of parties and parliaments will be channelled through support for Danish organisations, like the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), as well as general co-financing of multilateral organisations, like the EU and UNDP. Election observation is supported through the EU and by having a Peace and Stabilisation Response (PSR). Likewise, parliamentary networks and their capacity can be supported via relevant partners, while several interventions can be linked to election cycles and legislative bodies, e.g. to foster women's and young people's political participation, or peace and reconciliation dialogues, in which regional organisations like the AU and ECOWAS can be involved. Whenever relevant, we will commit ourselves to limited contributions to wider joint interventions aimed at strengthening election cycles and parliaments along with other bilateral and particularly multilateral partners, although, as a rule of thumb, we shall refrain from implementing our own programmes in these areas. Nonetheless, elections may still be at the heart of our diplomatic and political work at the country level.

We support diverse and independent civil societies and popular movements in order to further the democratic way of life and counterbalance the power of the state. This entails support for, for instance, human-rights advocates and promotion of freedom of religion or belief, workers' rights, free media, open debate, freedom to form opinions and freedom of expression, both offline and online. Democracy is increasingly unfolding on the internet. Accordingly, civil society must become better at mastering digital technologies, both to mobilise people and to resist fake news and other manipulation (so-called digital resilience). We need to push for authorities, businesses and civil society working together for responsible and safe development and utilisation of the democratic potential of digital technologies. This applies particularly to the participation of women and young people both offline and online.

Modalities of engagements and partnership

Support for strengthening of civil society is a main priority both in Denmark's normative work and as a specific programme component. This is the case in bilateral development programmes at the country level, in regional programmes, such as Denmark's Eastern Neighbourhood Programme and the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme, as well as in multilateral bodies, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund, where a great deal of activities are implemented directly by, or in cooperation with, civil-society organisations. It is a priority to increase support for human-rights advocacy, digital resilience, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression and of the media. The ambition is to invest strategically in partners who are already present in global hotspots of systemic marginalisation, ill-treatment, oppression etc.

Rights in the labour market

Denmark supports workers' rights, trade unions and the struggle for decent jobs and living wages, namely through a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Danish Labour Market Consortium, through projects with Danish organisations and local NGOs in Africa, through our cooperation with the ILO and its Better Work Programme, which seeks to improve working conditions in garment and footwear industries worldwide, including issues related to gender equality.

We will support movements, including organised workers and employers, that advance the aforementioned aims, but also take a critical approach to civil society and work with local change agents capable of pushing for a positive and transformative development. We will work with informal networks and activists, and not just through established civil-society organisations. This also calls for us to take the lead and pioneer new forms of partnership that are built on informal organisation and network-based cooperation.^{xx} This has also been built into the Strategic Partnership Agreements, which are increasingly encouraging and widening the scope for this type of support.

The technological development poses both some of the greatest challenges and the greatest opportunities for democracy and human rights. Therefore, digital aspects should be part and parcel of Danish interventions and programmes aimed at boosting democratic processes and upholding human rights. Denmark should make the most of its strong suit in digital technology, using the global momentum and leadership brought about by the Danish Tech for Democracy initiative, which is conducted in close cooperation with civil-society actors and businesses, to help set an agenda in favour of a human-rights-based approach to digital technologies in our development cooperation.

Globally, the HRD agenda should be pursued by contributing to international organisations, including EU and UN bodies, as well as coalitions such as the Convention Against Torture Initiative, International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA) and the Freedom Online Coalition, whether it be through core contributions, specific programme interventions or normative work. Danish participation in the Global Team Europe Democracy initiative serves as a leverage and magnifying glass for Danish programme interventions, and contributes to the EU's coordination and stature as regards the democracy agenda.

Fighting torture in Palestine

In Palestine, Denmark has taken a leading role, among a wide circle of like-minded countries and within the EU, in linking together development-oriented and political interventions against torture. Denmark supports several civil-society organisations working against torture, cooperate with DIGNITY Danish Institute Against Torture, and has posted JPOs to the OHCHR country office in Palestine. Since Denmark has been elected as co-chair of the local Human Rights Platform, we have set out to create momentum for the abolition of torture through advocacy and dialogue with the authorities. It helps that Denmark is at the forefront in this field globally.

Policy dialogue

The high-level engagements in favour of democracy, human rights and free civil societies must carry on under the aegis of the UN and EU, within coalitions and in policy work at the country level. High-level participation in international summits concerned with democracy and human rights must be prioritised. This refers, for instance, to the US Summit for Democracy II, which is scheduled for late 2022 or early 2023, where Denmark is highly engaged in the 'year of action' launched at the US Summit for Democracy in 2021. Other relevant top-level gatherings include the Freedom Online Conference (FOC) Ministerial Meeting, the Global Conferences of the Media Freedom Coalition and SDG 16+ events.

Priority 2: Rights and dignity of marginalised groups

Thematic scope

Marginalised groups' participation, inclusion and access to justice will be promoted by prioritizing a human-rights-based approach to development work, both across all programme interventions and through targeted programme interventions. ^{xxi} A careful analysis of the context and stakeholders must ensure systematic concern for the rights and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in keeping with the LNOB principle and the do-no-harm principle (see the how-to note on poverty and inequality).

Development interventions should help fight discrimination, stigma, persecution and rights violations in police custody targeting minorities, including LGBT+, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, persons affected by HIV/AIDS, faith-based minorities and marginalised religious communities. This is done by enhancing the capacity of civil society and change agents to proclaim and stand up for these people's rights, as well as the capacity of the state to deliver in this regard. On the basis of our strong commitment to environmental issues, we will work to spread human rights and the principles of inclusion, participation and transparency in global and national climate and environmental interventions. This applies particularly to the rights of indigenous peoples, who are often marginalised and vulnerable, yet play an important role in protecting biodiversity and countering climate change.

Modalities of engagements and partnership

We will continue to prioritise normative flagship issues in which Denmark is recognised for its role. This concerns work in favour of, for instance, gender equality, abolition of torture, indigenous peoples and faith-based minorities. In these areas, Denmark is taking on important responsibilities at the global level and in multilateral bodies, while efforts at the regional and national level are channelled through support for regional programmes and partner organisations, e.g. DIGNITY Danish Institute Against Torture, IWGIA and faith-based development and relief-aid organisations domiciled in Denmark.

Cooperation with faith-based actors and networks on the rights of religious minorities.

One of the tenets of Danish development cooperation is to partner up with those who are best at bringing about development and change. In several local contexts across the world, this is manifested in Denmark's cooperation with faith-based development organisations, particularly on the rights of religious minorities. This is implemented through strategic partnership with selected faith-based organisations.

This work will focus on including the most vulnerable and excluded groups, enabling them to exert influence on decision-making processes and on their own lives and societies in a meaningful and informed manner. Support for giving such people a voice is also an important aspect of Denmark's approach to fighting poverty (see the how-to note on poverty and inequality).

Danish support for LGBT+ persons in Uganda

LGBT+-persons remain a marginalised group in many countries. They are, and will continue to be, an important target group in our interventions for equality. We support LGBT+ persons having equal access to the services that we finance through our partners, and we favour addressing their sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR) too. In addition to the ongoing bilateral dialogue about human rights with priority countries, many embassies work to widen the space for civil society, conducting a continuous dialogue with the (local) authorities to this effect. For instance, in May 2020, Danish diplomatic pressure on Uganda, combined with close cooperation between Danish and Ugandan civil society, contributed to 20 arrested LGBT+ persons getting a fair trial.

Policy dialogue

Dialogue in favour of marginalised groups, in keeping with the LNOB obligations, must continue under the aegis of the UN, EU, OSCE and European Council, in international coalitions and in policy work at the country level. This is done, for instance, by boosting the participation in political processes of women, environmental and human-rights activists, faith-based actors, the civil society and indigenous peoples. Such activities are increasingly taking place digitally, which calls for a special focus on securing broad-based online participation in political processes, including on civic cyberspace. An example of this is Danish support for the UNmute initiative, which enhances the digital participation of civil society in UN processes.

Priority 3: Gender equality, girls' and women's rights

Thematic scope

Gender equality and girls' and women's rights are a cross-cutting priority to be mainstreamed into all humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions to an even greater degree than at present. At the same time, separate activities targeted at promoting gender equality are important. Denmark will continue to work within both a programmatic and a normative track. There is special emphasis on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls and marginalised groups, including on sexual and gender-based violence, as well as on women's political and economic participation, also through educational interventions.

Furthermore, there will be greater focus on girls', women's and marginalised groups' rights and protection in humanitarian crises and fragile contexts. Since gender inequality is often a fundamental cause of fragility, the equality of women and girls may contribute to building resilience. While crises and conflicts

may well reinforce existing social and gender norms that erect barriers to girls' and women's rights, they can also create opportunities to confront such norms and tear down barriers.

Modalities of engagement and partnership

We will form alliances with like-minded countries to bolster our position even further. Moreover, we will address gender equality and SRHR in the bilateral policy dialogue with partner countries. We will use our partnerships in negotiations so as to build our argumentation on hands-on knowledge from the field. We wish to ensure that partner organisations and their target groups get a voice in the international arena.

Support for implementation of the women, peace and security agenda will also be a top priority based on Denmark's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, and as a general theme in our national security policy. This involves advocating for women's rights to full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes, conflict prevention and protection of women and girls in situations characterised by conflict. This will take place both in bilateral dialogues and in multilateral forums, such as open debates and informal meetings under the aegis of the UN Security Council and the UN Peacebuilding Commission. The guidance note on Women, Peace and Security chart the course of our meaningful implementation of Resolution 1325 in our aid programmes and in our peace and stabilisation programmes. Denmark also supports and contributes to the EU Gender Action Plan III, which sets ambitious targets for gender equality in EU's development interventions.

Along the programmatic track, we will analyse and identify the fundamental gender equality challenges in humanitarian, development and peace work, and mainstream the gender equality perspective into all interventions and partnerships, including with the private sector. Issues of gender and gender equality should also be considered in interventions concerning access to clean energy for cooking, climate adaptation and environmental management. Women's and girls' specific roles in planning and implementing work regarding clean energy, climate adaptation and nature are a *sine qua non* for creating sustainable results.

Denmark will build on partnerships with governments, civil society, multilateral organisations and the private sector, and work for national legislation and policies that uphold and promote girls' and women's rights. Special attention will be paid to SRHR, including access to contraception, comprehensive sexuality education, safe abortion, prevention of teenage pregnancies and child marriages, as well as assistance in regard to sexual and gender-based violence. Through partnerships with Danish and international organisations as well as with development banks, advocacy is supported along with advice to authorities on how to improve the legislative framework in this area. At the same time, support is provided to local women's organisations, young volunteers and other civil-society actors seeking to change norms at the community level. The aim over time is to bring about genuine gender equality by contributing to lasting, transformative changes in the fundamental causes of inequality between men and women, including structural and systemic barriers, power structures, social and gender norms^{xxii} that disregard girls' and women's rights and potentials, making for unequal starting points. Thus, we shall work for a transformative and intersectional gender perspective along with like-minded countries and organisations.^{xxiii} See the how-to note on social sectors and social safety nets for more information on Danish work regarding gender equality and sexual and reproductive health, rights and education.

Partnership with Burkina Faso focusing on the rights of women and girls

In the new strategic framework for Denmark’s partnership with Burkina Faso for 2021-2025, women’s and girls’ rights are highlighted as a cross-cutting priority. Systematic efforts advance the right to self-determination, women’s role in political decisions, access to family planning, health and comprehensive sexuality education. In two regions of Burkina Faso (Boucle du Mouhoun and Plateau-Centrale), for instance, a project is combatting child marriage and female genital mutilation by contesting the social and gender norms underlying gender-based violence, and by building the capacity of various actors to say no. Ultimately, the project aims to improve the role of young girls in the communities by challenging cultural values that uphold child marriage and legitimise gender-based violence.

We are well-positioned to create a new departure if we continue to advance the transformative approach to equality (see Box 1 below) in global partnerships, negotiation rooms, programme implementation and across professional disciplines. Fundamental issues of equality, gender roles and power relations need to be analysed and incorporated into all development work. Among other requirements, interventions must be evidence-based, adapted to the context, and take place in consultation with key stakeholders, not least those directly affected. The ‘gender-transformative’ and the ‘gender-responsive’ approach do not preclude one another, since gender-responsive interventions may help change norms over time. Conversely, Denmark does not accept a gender-blind or a gender-sensitive approach in our interventions.^{xxiv}

Box 1. Approaches to gender-equality interventions

Gender-blind approach	Gender-sensitive approach	Gender-responsive approach	Gender-transformative approach
Ignores gender disparities and reproduces or exacerbates existing discriminatory norms.	Acknowledges inequalities between the genders, although without addressing them effectively.	Identifies symptoms of inequality, targets interventions at the different needs of women, men, girls and boys, and promotes gender equality through practical and strategic measures.	Explicitly and actively seeks to change fundamental social and gender norms and power structures in order to overcome the symptoms of inequality in the starting point.

Danish support for a transformative approach to gender equality through education

Denmark promotes gender equality in and through education, as we not only work for girls gaining greater access to school, but also set store on Danish-funded efforts including gender analyses. This is to ensure the quality and educational contents as regards learning methods, curriculum and the social environment in schools, internally among the students and between students and teachers. We do this, for instance, by seeking to have gender-equality interventions incorporated into education sector plans and into education provided during humanitarian crises.

Policy dialogue

Denmark will take on leadership in the normative area in terms of advocacy for women's and girls' rights, including SRHR, also in international negotiations. We will contribute towards progress for equality, women's and girls' rights and SRHR whenever we see an opportunity for this, specifically at the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Commission on Population and Development, the World Bank Group Development Committee and in negotiations of the European Council's conclusions. As a minimum, we must ensure the preservation of progress already achieved. In this regard, Denmark always works closely with like-minded countries, not just within but also outside the EU. This is in order to obtain the greatest possible impact. We will pursue the women's rights, peace and security agenda under Denmark's expected membership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2023-24 and of the UN Security Council in 2025-26.

We began the year 2021 by taking over the chairmanship of the global 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies'. This alliance between states, UN bodies and civil-society organisations work to stop gender-based violence, genital mutilation and child marriages, and to foment access to healthcare, legal and social assistance to girls and women. We take the lead in the struggle for good intentions being translated into concrete action. This happens, among other ways, by entering into constructive dialogue with the humanitarian organisations with a view to addressing structural barriers to gender equality and SRHR.

Danish support for a transformative approach to gender equality in Somalia.

Denmark's work for the most marginalised groups in Somalia targets women, girls and children in particular. They are subjected to genital mutilation, gender-based violence and child marriage. Children in Somalia are also being increasingly recruited as soldiers, especially by Al-Shabaab. Denmark's strategic cooperation with UNICEF encompasses both normative legislation and activities to change harmful practices, focusing on social and gender norms. One-stop centres have been set up across the country, where girls and women subjected to genital mutilation and gender-based violence gain access to clinical, legal and psychosocial advice. Denmark also supports psychosocial assistance and reintegration of former child soldiers in local communities, and works at the policy level to advance such an agenda.

Priority 4: Meaningful participation of young people

Thematic scope

Young people are important agents of change. When they participate in development interventions, it has a bearing on all Danish priorities. It leads to empowerment of young people working for human rights and democracy. Young people have never been more active in the development of their societies. A growing number of them are organising in and leading civil society organisations and movements in the areas of climate, health, democracy, etc. Danish civil-society support is characterised by its strong focus on youth, which starts from the principle that development must be carried out with, for and by young people.

Civil society, rights and young people in the Middle East and North Africa

Rooted in partnerships between civil-society organisations in Denmark and selected countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme has, since 2003, supported the promotion of human rights and democracy. The new programme phase (2022-2027) has the overall vision of contributing to “a better life for young people” in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan. It is both about creating real jobs to counter high youth unemployment and about young people being heard, enjoying their rights and taking an active part in the affairs of society. With young people as a separate target group, the programme encompasses support for media freedom, protection of human-rights activists, efforts to abolish torture, promotion of gender equality, and more.

Modalities of engagements and partnership

Denmark has good experience of organising youth-based entities into democratic communities, of cooperating on young people’s meaningful participation, of empowering change agents and creating the leaders of tomorrow. We should make the most of that in our development cooperation. It is important that our interventions bring about meaningful youth participation and contribute to young people gaining influence on their own future. Likewise, interventions aimed at promoting youth participation in peace and security work will be prioritised. Among the specific youth interventions to be supported is mobilisation of young climate activists, for instance within the Strategic Partnership Agreements with Danish NGOs.

Young people's voice in UN resolution

In 2021, two Danish UN youth delegates took up their chairs to negotiate the UN's biennial youth resolution on behalf of Denmark in the UN Third Committee. In cooperation with the global youth advisor and the Danish UN mission, the youth delegates wrote proposals for amendment and argued for more progressive language around gender, gender equality and young people's meaningful participation. Denmark was alone in being exclusively represented by youth delegates talking and negotiating from start to finish. The youth delegation programme, in which eight young people are chosen to represent Danish youth in the UN, is undertaken by the Danish Youth Council (DUF) and financed through the allocation for networks and funds open for applications.

Policy dialogue

Denmark is considered a pioneer of meaningful youth participation in the UN. We shall continue efforts to keep it that way by focusing on strong advocacy for genuine involvement of young people in institutional processes within both the UN and the EU. However, we need to 'walk the talk', i.e. to back up our advocacy words with action. We do so by incorporating Danish youth delegates at UN events, where they must, as much as possible, join in preparations and negotiations, speak on behalf of Denmark, and meet with core partners. We will also continue to work closely with the UN Youth Envoy on boosting the youth agenda in the UN and championing young people's right to participate in political processes.

Through the EU, Denmark should actively promote meaningful youth participation in the EU's development cooperation. Denmark must work for the upcoming EU Youth Action Plan putting the accent on Danish priorities, such as young people's democratic participation, climate, peace and security. Moreover, alongside like-minded partners, we shall insist on the youth issue remaining high on the EU agenda.

At the national and bilateral level, specific initiatives, such as youth delegates and youth panels, will advance our efforts to have the youth dimension mainstreamed into our development cooperation. Starting from the core principle that development should be carried out not just *for*, but also *with* and *by* young people, young people's right to participation and a say in their society will be integrated into our country engagements. Moreover, young people's involvement in development cooperation lays the groundwork for dialogue and cooperation with youth organisations in Denmark.

Priority 5: Effective, democratic and accountable states

Thematic scope

Promoting effective, democratic and accountable states is an important part of addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and inequality, and also of boosting sustainable development.^{xxv} The ability of authorities to respect human rights effectively and accountably and to deliver healthcare, education and protection of their own citizens is crucial to the legitimacy of states. This is why we work

systematically for the authorities, particularly in fragile areas, becoming capable of delivering basic necessities, such as food, water, education and health services.

Moreover, we will prioritise the ability of authorities to uphold human rights and deliver services, such as social protection, and public goods, such as nature conservation, in a transparent and accountable manner that 'leaves no-one behind' (LNOB). We will also support non-state actors and international organisations in building capacity to hold states accountable and work directly with ministries of justice, courts of law and police, for instance through our Peace and Stabilisation Fund, as appropriate to the context. Moreover, we strengthen accountable states through various country programmes, e.g. in Niger, Palestine and Somalia, including within other thematic areas than human rights.

Danish support for human-rights institutions

In Somalia, Denmark supports human rights being anchored in local and national processes and institutions and defended through civil-society organisations. Denmark is at the forefront of helping to build the Somali government's capacity to meet its international commitments, especially as regards the protection of women, girls, displaced people and persons with disabilities.

We will take advantage of the opportunities provided by digital technologies to foster good governance, including greater transparency and participation. Furthermore, we will meet the needs of authorities for instruments to manage the impact of digital technologies on society, including in relation to the social role of private businesses. Across the world, digital solutions are mushrooming in the public sector, and we will work for this digital transformation to be based on the principles of rule of law and human rights. This is particularly important in countries with weak states.

Supporting a human-rights-based approach to digitisation

Through the Finance Act's HRD framework appropriation, support is given to the Danish Institute for Human Rights and its work to have state actors take a human-rights-based approach to good governance. Some of the activities are assessing the human-rights consequences of digitalisation, pointing out shortcomings in legislation, and supporting national institutions in including digital human-rights violations in their monitoring, reporting, complaints processing, information etc. Thus far, work has begun in Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Niger and Kyrgyzstan.

In principle, we will not engage in bilateral cooperation on public financial management, public-sector reform or major interventions in the judicial system. These areas are to be supported primarily through core contributions to multilateral organisations and development banks. However, we will offer legal aid through civil-society funds to poor and marginalised groups, as we are currently doing in Uganda and Burkina Faso, among other countries.

Decentralisation is a frequent instrument in peace accords and reconciliation in many post-conflict situations. Therefore, whenever possible, we will use decentralisation as leverage and to link development and peace work (the D and the P in the HDP nexus). We will promote the effectiveness and

accountability of authorities through targeted good-governance projects that advance decentralisation and local participation in decision-making. In some countries, this can be done through programmes focusing on the overall decentralisation framework and on specific sectors like water or health. We will support overall processes to decentralise the state, as appropriate to the context. In all cases, we shall make sure that our interventions are in keeping with national policy-making and systems for devolution, and that the latter are substantiated by local experiences.

Decentralisation in Kenya: the political glue of the social contract and leverage for better public services

‘Devolution’ can be understood as ‘democratic decentralisation’, because it is driven by popularly elected local parliaments and extensive autonomy to manage local resources. It is often the glue holding society together in post-conflict situations, because it has the potential to ensure that various ethnic and local interests are looked after on an equal footing. This was the case in Kenya after the violent upheaval in 2007-2008. Devolution became a cornerstone of the new constitutions introduced in 2010, which secured peaceful power-sharing with strong local-governance, fiscal and administrative autonomy. There was also a clear development dividend from devolution, which brought noticeably more resources to the poorest and most marginalised regions, such as Wajir and Turkana. As an important development partner of Kenya, Denmark has supported the devolution process since 2010, partly to enhance the general good-governance capacity of local governments, including to deliver better primary health services, partly to strengthen local democratic civil-society organisations that hold local governments to account.

Anti-corruption must be addressed across sectors and initiatives, also in relation to renewable-energy projects and delivery of services, say, in healthcare. A do-no-harm approach must ensure that our work does not exacerbate corruption. Furthermore, we shall fight corruption programmatically through civil-society partners and anti-corruption institutions at the country level, as appropriate. Systematic learning and operationalisation of our anti-corruption approach will be needed, especially in fragile contexts, where efforts to achieve political stability entail a high risk of corruption. The launch of selected pilot projects (e.g. anti-corruption in the security sector) should be considered.

We will continue to engage in initiatives to raise more revenue in low-income countries. The area of taxation will mainly be supported through dedicated funds, e.g. through the World Bank and IMF, which have comparative advantages and expertise in this regard.^{xxvi}

Modalities of engagements and partnership

Multilateral institutions play an important role in supporting the effectiveness and accountability of states. The work encompasses fairer and better managed tax systems to avoid losing revenue through tax evasion and avoidance. Denmark supports tax reforms through the IMF and the World Bank. A strategic framework for future support in the area of taxation is expected to be formulated in 2022. Danish cooperation with the UNDP is a centrepiece of our support for effective, democratic and accountable states. Denmark’s earmarked contributions are targeted at the UNDP’s thematic funding window for ‘Governance for Inclusive and Peaceful Societies’. The work for good and democratic governance,

conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes will feature as a core priority in the new Strategic Partnership Agreement with the UNDP for 2022-2025. Denmark has also supported the UNDP in this field through secondments.

We will develop the capacity of authorities to uphold human rights and deliver services transparently and accountably as an element that cuts across the various thematic programmes. We will also support actors in a position to hold states to account, such as national human-rights and ombudsman institutions (see also Priority 1). Targeted assistance as well as programmes focused on specific sectors, say, health in Kenya, must enhance the capacity of local governance to guarantee citizens access to fundamental public services in an effective and accountable manner. In contexts affected by conflict, the HDP nexus will often provide a relevant framework for supporting local governance, including interventions for conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding. Promoting accountable and inclusive local decision-making processes as well as cooperation with faith-based actors may help bring about more equal access to resources and peaceful conflict management, which increases social cohesion and hence sows the seeds of restoring trust in and identification with the state.

The overall problem of corruption in partner countries will be addressed in close cooperation with the private sector. Whenever relevant, representations will designate anti-corruption networks with Danish companies for the purposes of knowledge sharing. In programming terms, we shall maintain our support for selected international organisations through our global anti-corruption programme (the formulation of a new programme period is expected in the autumn of 2022), and for selected anti-corruption initiatives at the country level (e.g. in Ukraine).

Policy dialogue

Denmark will continue to advocate for effective, democratic and accountable states through multilateral institutions and forums, including the development of international norms and standards regarding anti-corruption, as well as anti-corruption dialogue with partner countries. We shall carry on working for digital technologies to strengthen democracy. Denmark must seek to expand transatlantic cooperation, so that the US and EU stand together in influencing technological progress in a more responsible, safe and democratic direction.^{xxvii} Through the EU, Denmark will contribute to promoting global rules for digital development based on democratic values and human rights.^{xxviii}

ⁱ [Strategies and Priorities \(um.dk\)](#)

ⁱⁱ The note should be read together with the thematic how-to notes on: Mitigation and energy; Climate adaptation, environment and nature; Irregular migration and a fair and humane asylum system; Poverty and inequality; Peacebuilding and stabilisation; Job creation and sustainable growth; Civil society; Denmark as a humanitarian actor; Social sectors and social safety nets; and the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus (HDP).

ⁱⁱⁱ The note is published on the Aid Management Guidelines site. In principle, it will remain in force as long as "The World We Share", but will be updated as needed. The political priorities laid down in the National Budget Act will always rank above this note.

^{iv} [Legal foundation of Danish development cooperation \(um.dk\)](#)

^v Democracy and accountable governance contribute directly to SDG 10 on inequality and indirectly to a number of other goals, including SDG 1 on eliminating poverty, by giving voice and influence, and by strengthening accountable governance and the capacity of states to deliver greater equality and participation in decision-making.

^{vi} See the how-to note on the fight against poverty and inequality for more about the principle of 'Leaving No-One Behind'.

^{vii} Definitions of concepts related to human rights and democracy are contentious and subject to debate both in Denmark and internationally. This note does not seek to contribute to the scholarly debate or to suggest an official interpretation of the concepts, but to clarify the understanding adhered to in Danish development cooperation.

^{viii} In the Danish context, Hal Koch and Alf Ross are prominent advocates for these two approaches, see [Democracy Canon \(in Danish\) \(uvm.dk\)](#)

^{ix} [UNOHCHR \(2022\). OHCHR and Good Governance.](#)

^x See, for instance, [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(2009\). What is Good Governance?; OECD \(2022\). Glossary of Statistical Terms: Good Governance.](#)

^{xi} Finn Tarp et al "Does foreign aid harm political institutions", 2016 and Antonio Savoia and Kunal Sen "Governance as a global development goal? Setting, measuring and monitoring the Post-2015 Development Agenda", March, 2014, as well as "The contribution of democracy aid to democracy is relatively modest, but positive and statistically significant." (Democracy Aid – Are There Any Effects? – [EBA](#))

^{xii} See, for instance, 'Good enough governance', [Microsoft Word - Grindle Good Enough Governance Nov02.doc \(gsdrc.org\)](#)

^{xiii} See the evaluation of Danish support in the human-rights field published in 2018.

^{xiv} [UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX - Human Rights Recommendations \(ohchr.org\)](#)

^{xv} [Multilateral Study \(um.dk\)](#)

^{xvi} Interventions related to peacebuilding, the role of women and young people, climate, security and development should be increasingly used to prevent conflict and promote human rights by shining a spotlight on monitoring and early warning of violations of human rights, women's rights, inclusion of civil society and minorities, as well as young people's and human-rights activists' need for protection. Within the UN Peace and Security Pillar, Denmark will still be able to foster political and rights-based solutions to conflict by supporting, for instance, the human-rights components of UN peace operations and special political missions, by promoting human rights during political transitions and by building capacity at the SRSR level as well as in the UN country teams.

^{xvii} Membership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) will enable promotion of rights-based conflict resolution, while membership of the UN Security Council will make it possible to advocate for integrating human rights into the Council's work and to influence negotiations on the mandates of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Moreover, Denmark can still deepen its engagement in the UN's implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), a human-rights framework for conflict-affected contexts, which is working with regional partners, such as the G5-Sahel Joint Force and the AU.

^{xviii} Including the OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

^{xix} See also the how-to note on support for civil society.

^{xx} See the how-to-note on support for civil society

^{xxi} See the how-to note on fighting poverty and inequality for more about the definition and understanding of marginalised groups.

^{xxii} Human Development Perspectives 2020: Tackling Social Norms a Game Changer for Gender Inequalities, UNDP, [GSNI | Human Development Reports \(undp.org\)](#)

UNICEF-UNFPA Technical note on gender norms [GP-2020-Technical-Note-Gender-Norms.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

World Bank, Using the Behavioral Sciences to Fight Global Poverty and Reduce Inequality, [Mind, Behavior, and Development \(worldbank.org\)](#)

DFID, 2016 [Shifting social norms to tackle violence against women and girls - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

SIDA: [gender-equality-in-practice_298.pdf \(sida.se\)](#)

World Bank, [Lessons from the Field: understanding the impact of social norms on women's employment in Jordan \(worldbank.org\)](#)

^{xxiii} SIDA: Ongoing evaluation of gender-mainstreaming [Gender-mainstreaming-webb.pdf \(openaid.se\)](#)

Promundo, UNWOMEN, SIDA-funded: [Understanding How to Engage Men in Gender-Transformative Approaches to End Violence Against Women | Promundo \(promundoglobal.org\)](#)

Oxfam: Making gender-transformative humanitarian action a reality: [Making Gender-Transformative Humanitarian Action a Reality | Oxfam Canada](#)

Canada: [Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality - Toolkit for Projects](#)

Plan International: [Our Gender Transformative Approach: Tackling the root causes of Gender Inequality | Plan International \(plan-international.org\)](#)

Care International: Measuring Gender Transformative Change: https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/working_paper_aas_gt_change_measurement_fa_lowres.pdf#:~:text=Executive summary-What do we mean by gender-transformative change%3F,serve to reinforce gendered inequalities.

UNICEF and UNFPA: Technical note on gender-transformative approaches: <https://www.unicef.org/media/58196/file>

^{xxiv} The figure is binary in its reference to gender, and is exclusively intended to facilitate understanding of the concepts.

^{xxv} See the how-to note on fighting poverty and inequality.

^{xxvi} Denmark has signed the Addis Tax Initiative Declaration from 2015, which stipulates, among other provisions, that DKK 200 million must be allocated to this purpose by 2025.

^{xxvii} This is already taking place through, for instance, the recently established EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC), which makes it possible to exert influence on global democratic technology standards.

^{xxviii} The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a shining example of how EU norms can become the global standard. A proactive attempt to repeat this could take place as regards future regulations such as the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Acts.