



4R Country Profile for **DENMARK**

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RANK

- Very low rank society – one of the most egalitarian work cultures and societies in the world.
- Although there are exceptions, most Danish organizations across industries have a flat structure.
- The ‘Law of Jante’ is part of Danish culture – everyone (including managers) is expected to be modest and not think that you are better than the rest of us.
- Ranks are blurred and not very visible.
- Status and power is soft, not displayed – most Danes know, but we don’t show.
- No ‘Sir’, ‘Mr.’ or ‘Ma’am’ but instead first name, also when addressing your boss.
- Titles are not considered that important – people are respected for their skills and competence, more than for their title and rank.
- The interaction between managers and employees is generally relaxed and informal.
- Managers typically use a consensus-driven, coaching management style, including and involving employees – big motivation for most employees to be involved.
- Decision-making processes vary – sometimes managers listen to employee input and then make the decision, other times teams make collective decisions.
- Often, decisions are made at meetings through discussions and input from all participants – challenging each other is expected, even when a manager takes part in the meeting.
- Many Danish managers are not subject experts – don’t have all the answers and rely on input from employees.
- It’s normal to question or add more info to a suggestion made by your boss – not seen as a lack of respect.
- Typically considered OK that employees email a superior who isn’t their immediate manager – and that managers email employees in other teams.
- School system has little competition and few exams – more emphasis on group work and helping each other.
- Not used to being publicly ranked at school or at the workplace – liking what you do is typically a stronger motivator than ‘being the best’.
- Not that many visible differences between groups of people – even though recent decades have brought more diversity in terms of ethnicity and nationality, the Danish society is still relatively homogeneous.
- Many Danes agree that everyone, across gender, ethnicity, race, ability etc., should have equal rights and opportunities – but there are conflicting opinions on whether this goal is fully achieved in real life.



RESPONSIBILITY

- Preference towards being proactive and self-driven – better to start something new yourself than wait for the manager to give you a new task.
- Having responsibility is typically seen as very positive – will give you recognition and informal status and rank.
- You do not have all the responsibility just because you have high rank – responsibility is often delegated.
- It's normal for employees to actively seek responsibility.
- Most Danes grow up in a culture, education system, family, and society where everyone has opinions – and it's (mostly) appreciated when you speak up at work, also without being asked to.
- Many meetings with a lot of talk and discussions.
- Curiosity and adopting a 'learning-by-doing' approach is encouraged from a young age.
- Shared responsibility of tasks – sometimes who has responsibility is blurred.
- Task and responsibility can be both formally and informally delegated.
- Most employees prefer a lot of freedom and autonomy ('Freedom Under Responsibility') – and prefer to figure things out for themselves, instead of getting detailed instructions from the manager.
- Managers often expect team members to decide among themselves who does what – it's generally accepted that colleagues give tasks to other colleagues.
- Team members are expected to make sure that everyone is involved, rather than focus on their own achievements.
- Time is seen as linear and structured, calendars and planning (often quite long-term) seen as important.
- Punctuality is valued – business meetings and other appointments start on time and are expected to end on time as well.
- Managers often do not follow up on tasks before the deadline – 'No news is good news'.
- It's up to you as an employee to come back to the manager if you have questions or need feedback.
- If a manager follows up on employees' tasks frequently and in detail, it can be seen as a lack of trust in them.
- If you as an employee do not hear from your manager, you assume they think you are doing a good job.
- Deadlines are firm and are supposed to be met – if you discover any problems or cannot meet a deadline, you are expected to inform your manager.



RISK

- The Danish society is individual-oriented in the way that people are only expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family.
- The Danish welfare state provides a wide range of tax-funded benefits like healthcare, education, social benefits, and elderly care to all citizens.
- Crime and violence levels are relatively low and most neighborhoods are safe to live in.
- The Danish 'flexicurity' labor market model means that it's quite easy for employers to lay people off – but if you are laid off, an active labor market policy combined with social security will help you along.
- The social and financial consequences if you lose your job are, for most people, relatively small.
- Danish society works against class divisions – you learn at school that everyone is equal and the tax system creates a high level of income redistribution.
- It's okay to fail – it shows you take initiative.
- Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities (ideally, at least) – the process is evaluated, not the person.
- Very low risk in open dialogue and speaking up before thinking things through – 'thinking out loud' is normal.
- Big risk to *not* speak out if you make a mistake, cannot meet a deadline, etc. – seen as a breach of trust.
- It's okay to say 'I don't know', even as a manager.
- Colleagues are expected to share business knowledge and information openly with each other.
- You are expected to share your opinion, to be critical, to challenge suggestions from colleagues – as long as you 'go for the ball, not the man'.
- The preferred Danish communication style is very direct and explicit – and if you mean 'no', you are expected to say no directly.
- At the same time, Danes can be seen as conflict-avoidant/passive-aggressive – heated or emotional discussions are not common.
- Negative feedback is typically kept one-on-one.
- Positive feedback is also often kept one-on-one – if your manager praises you in front of a group of colleagues, many Danes would find it awkward.
- Low risk in using jokes and humor, it's often part of informal jargon among colleagues.
- Denmark has been a 'monoculture' for centuries and there is a strong focus on everyone being equal – this can make it uncomfortable for some Danes to discuss diversity dimensions like gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, especially among the older generations.



RELATIONSHIP

- Very low relationship-oriented and high trust society – by default, you trust other people, even if you do not know them personally.
- You start from 100% trust – but then you can lose it (if you do not stick to your agreements, for example).
- Not considered necessary to build up personal relationships before getting down to business, not much wining and dining etc.
- Many Danes prefer to get straight to the point and focus on the task rather than the people they're working with – a strong focus on saving time, being efficient.
- General trust in people, contracts, systems, authorities.
- Denmark is one of the least corrupt countries in the world – trying to 'work the system' is not common.
- Not all agreements need to be in writing – you trust that people will do what they say they will do.
- Considered OK to mingle across departments and ranks at work, for instance at lunch in the canteen.
- Big distinction between work and private life, seldom socialize with colleagues after work.
- Work-life balance is seen as very important – many employees leave the workplace at 4 pm or earlier, and staying late at the office is typically not encouraged.
- Many Danes build their 'circle of friends' in their younger years – finding local Danish friends can be a challenge for expats in Denmark.
- Privacy is considered important and Danes generally prefer quite a large personal space.
- You typically do not show up unannounced, not even to friends or family – planning is also considered important in private life.
- Jokes/humor and 'hygge' (the Danish way of having a cozy time together) are seen as important.
- Many Danes believe that joking with everyone about everything is acceptable, also in a work context – sometimes colleagues from the older generations have a harsher humor than their younger colleagues.
- Irony and sarcasm can sometimes be used to cover up criticism – can be hard for non-Danes to decode.
- There is a consensus that we should not take ourselves too seriously and 'selvironi' (a Danish word for having a sense of humor about yourself) is widely used.
- Dress code can vary across industries, but typically it's quite relaxed.
- Gifts are not an important part of business life and if given, they should be small – if invited to a colleague's home, bringing flowers or a small gift is common.



How to Use the 4R Model

The 4R Model is a tool to help you:

1. Gain knowledge about the differences between your culture and the culture(s) you are working with
2. Analyze what is at stake in cross-cultural contexts
3. Navigate and adapt your work style to achieve effective results in your cross-cultural collaboration.

When applying the 4R Model in your intercultural business context, it is important to use it in a culturally intelligent way.

We would highly recommend you to take part in one of C3 Consulting's intercultural trainings to be able to effectively interpret and use the 4R Model or this 4R country profile. For more info on our intercultural trainings, please contact us at kontakt@c3consulting.dk, so we can find the best training solution for you.



How to Use This 4R Country Profile

Our 4R country profiles are developed and updated regularly in collaboration with highly qualified country specialists.

Please note, however, that the country profiles describe general patterns in the relevant countries' cultures – you cannot use them as checklists for understanding your own individual global colleagues, employees, or business partners.

In addition to national cultures, many other factors can influence our values and behaviors at work – such as:

- Differences in age, gender, ethnicity, race, and other identities
- Regional cultural differences, industry cultures, corporate cultures, and roles in the organization
- Personality and individual preferences

You can use our 4R country profiles as signposts for navigating – but always be ready to adjust and nuance your knowledge if your experience points in another direction.

Want More Inspiration on How to Work Effectively Across Cultures?

Get in touch:

+45 6017 0817

kontakt@c3consulting.dk

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