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MORE THAN A COOKIE SHOP:
BUILT WITH A FAMILY LEGACY IN MIND.

LOVE, PUBLICLY...

Why empathy, language, and responsibility matter more than ever before.

DEAR READERS,

VALENTINE'S DAY USUALLY invites us to think small and personal. Romantic love. Private moments. Quiet gestures exchanged behind closed doors. But this year, love feels bigger than that. It feels public.

The world feels tense. Conversations feel sharper. Empathy often seems to disappear the moment power or politics enter the room. Writing this as an international, I keep returning to the same thought: love today is less about sentiment and more about responsibility. How we speak matters. Who we respect matters. Who we dismiss matters. And right now, those choices feel impossible to ignore.

WHEN JOURNALISM AND FREE SPEECH ARE UNDER PRESSURE

Journalism has changed since I began my publishing journey in the 90s. News moves faster than reflection. Outrage travels further than nuance. Algorithms reward certainty and extremes, while care and complexity are often treated as weaknesses.

At the same time, freedom of expression itself is under strain in more places than we like to admit. Around the world, governments and powerful institutions are tightening their grip on speech. Laws that once protected resistance are being reinterpreted to punish it. Platforms and public squares are shrinking. Voices that once felt free to speak are increasingly muted - through legal pressure, social intimidation, or cultural backlash.

This matters because free speech isn't just a legal clause. It is the oxygen that allows journalism to function. It allows difficult stories to be told. When journalists face retaliation or the media is pressured into caution, the public loses access to honest reporting. And when that happens, trust erodes - quietly, but profoundly.

We won't look away. We won't cheer when journalists, voices, or movements are pushed off a stage they never asked to stand on. This moment in history calls for journalism that understands tone as power, context as responsibility, and humanity as non-negotiable.

WHEN COUNTRIES ARE SPOKEN ABOUT CARELESSLY

Recent comments from the USA President and his administration about Green-

land and Denmark unsettled me - not because political disagreement is new, but because of how casually places and people were spoken about.

When nations or territories are framed as assets, leverage, or deals to be negotiated, something essential is lost. Greenland is not an abstract idea. It is not a bargaining chip. It is a place where people live full lives, where culture, language, history, and identity are carried forward every day.

When language reduces a place to usefulness, dignity is the first thing stripped away. And once people are spoken about as objects, it becomes easier to ignore their voices altogether. That should concern all of us.



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“WE ARE NOT READY TO SIT AND BE QUIET. WE HAVE TO SPEAK UP.”

JANE FONDA, ACTOR AND ACTIVIST.

LIVING INSIDE THE CONVERSATION AS AN INTERNATIONAL

Living in a country you were not born in heightens your awareness of these moments. Being an international often means constant adjustment - learning new systems, reading unfamiliar social cues, and making an effort to show respect for the country you live in while making sure there is room for who you already are and what you bring to the table.

There is pride in that work, but there is also exposure that comes with vulnerability. Your presence can feel visible, sometimes questioned. That awareness shapes how global conversations about borders, ownership, and power land in your body. You listen more closely to who is being spoken about, rather than spoken with.

WHAT INTERNATIONALS ACTUALLY BRING

It matters to say this clearly: internationals do not arrive empty-handed. We bring professional experience shaped elsewhere. Education is formed in different systems. Cultural understanding that comes from navigating more than one world at once.

These are not inconveniences to be managed. They are contributions. They are value.

I often think about this in the context of a great recipe. A single spice has its own character, but when spices are combined thoughtfully, flavour deepens. Nothing is lost. Everything is intensified. Communities work the same way. When different backgrounds come together with openness and curiosity, the result is richer, more unbreakable, and more creative than anything produced in isolation.

THE DANGER OF NATIONAL SHORTCUTS

One of the most damaging habits in public discourse is our reliance on shortcuts. Danes are cold. Or welcoming. Americans are loud. Or generous. Entire countries are flattened into stereotypes and judged by their loudest voices or most extreme moments.

Many of us arrived somewhere new with assumptions, only to watch them dissolve through lived experience - through colleagues who challenged us, neighbours who surprised us, friendships that refused to fit the narrative.

No country is one thing. No culture can be captured by a single headline, a single administration, or a single news cycle. Judging a nation by its most visible conflicts is as limiting as judging a person by their worst day.

WHY DO WE CHOOSE POSITIVE STORIES

At *The International*, we are often asked why we focus on positive stories. The assumption is that positivity means avoidance or denial. It does not. It is a decision about what we amplify.

We believe stories of connection, contribution, creativity, and inclusion are not distractions from reality. They are part of it. In a media environment saturated with fear and fracture, balance becomes a form of integrity.

This does not mean avoiding difficult conversations. Honest journalism must still confront harm, inequality, and uncomfortable truths. But it can do so without dehumanising. It can challenge power without flattening the people affected by it.

CHOOSING LOVE, PUBLICLY

It is possible to critique language while still offering compassion. The United States is moving through a deeply divided and emotionally charged period. Many people there feel exhausted, uncertain, and unheard. That reality exists regardless of political position.

Sending love does not require agreement. It requires recognising shared humanity during moments of strain.

For me, love right now is intentional and public. It shows up in tone. In word choice. In refusing to reduce places like Greenland to talking points. It shows up in recognising internationals not as outsiders to be managed, but as people who actively shape the societies they move to.

It shows up in journalism that resists cynicism and insists that stories can still build rather than tear down.

This Valentine's Day, I want love to reach beyond romance. I want it reflected in how we cover stories, how we speak, and how we listen. Because when we choose dignity over dismissal, we make the world feel less hostile - and far more human.

Standing together in peace and love,

Lyndsay Jensen
Editor-in-Chief & Founder



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BAKING A LIFE, ONE COOKIE AT A TIME



PICTURE COURTESY OF: KIMICO FRYDENLUND

How a Houston-raised mother of four, Kimico Frydenlund, moved her family to Copenhagen - and why a small cookie shop made sense there.

Writer: **Lyndsay Jensen** / Photographer: [**Maja de Silva**](#)

RAISED IN HOUSTON, Texas, in a busy household shaped by proximity and routine. Siblings and cousins were constant presences, and family life unfolded in shared spaces. Kimico's mother worked as a nurse and raised the children alone for much of that time, setting a visible standard for responsibility and consistency.

"I grew up in a loving home surrounded by many siblings and cousins. My mom was a nurse and a single mother for much of my childhood. Watching her work hard and still provide us with a stable, comfortable life had a lasting impact on me."

That environment established expectations early on. Work was not optional. Structure mattered. Family came first. These principles would later influence how she approached parenting, career decisions, and international moves.

Houston itself also played a role. As one of the most diverse cities in the United States, it exposed her early to different cultures, routines, and ways of living. That diversity felt ordinary rather than exceptional, and it shaped how she viewed difference later in life.

FOOD, HOSPITALITY, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

What she remains most connected to from Texas

is not a specific place but a way of interacting. In Houston, hospitality is embedded in daily life. Food is central, social, and shared.

"Hospitality and food," she says. "I miss Southern charm - it simply doesn't exist here in the same way. Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the US, and the food culture reflects that."

Those early experiences continue to influence how she engages with people. Warmth, attentiveness, and directness are habits she carried with her when she moved abroad. They later became part of how she approached customer service and community life in Denmark.

CONSIDERING LIFE BEYOND THE US

Living outside the United States was something she had considered long before Denmark became part of her life. Australia was a serious option, and she had already begun imagining what it might mean to raise a family elsewhere. The idea felt possible, even if the details were unclear.

Denmark was not part of that early thinking. It entered her life through her relationship with Chris, whom she met online. Their connection developed easily despite living in different countries. Differences in nationality did not translate into differences in priorities.

Shared expectations around family life and long-term planning reduced uncertainty and made relocation feel practical rather than risky.

MOVING TO DENMARK WITHOUT A TRIAL RUN

Her first experience of Denmark came in 2013, when she moved there directly. There was no extended visit beforehand. The couple settled in Aarhus, where they married and began building their life together.

The transition was smoother than expected. Denmark's infrastructure stood out immediately. Public transportation was reliable. Parks and public spaces were accessible. Daily logistics felt organised and predictable.

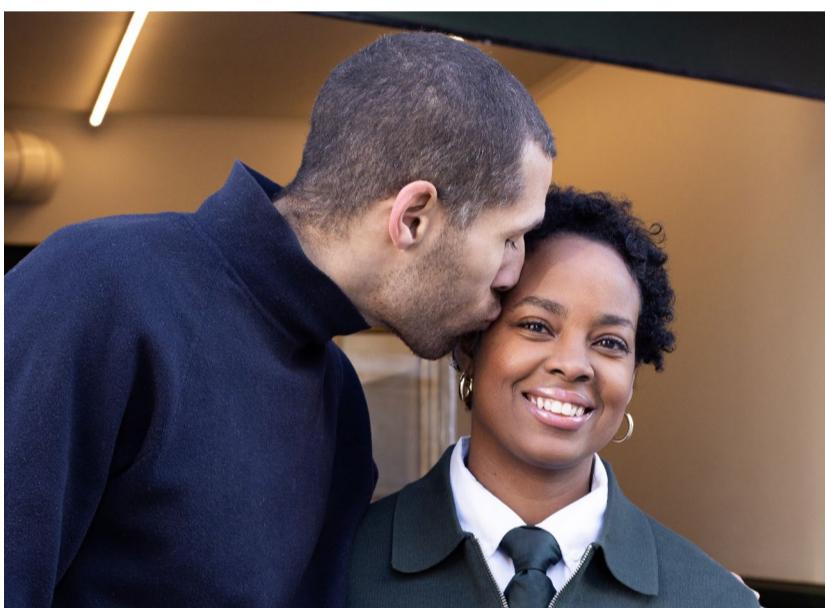
"What stood out immediately was how clean, efficient, and family-friendly everything felt."

That initial period in Denmark established a reference point that would later influence future decisions, even after the family returned to the United States.

BUILDING A LIFE BACK IN AMERICA

After their time in Denmark, the couple relocated to the US, where they spent eight years. During that period, their family grew, and professional respon-





“COPENHAGEN IS LITERALLY MY FAVOURITE CITY. WITH FOUR CHILDREN, IT FELT LIKE A BETTER ENVIRONMENT TO RAISE A FAMILY.”

sibilities expanded. It was also when she became a business owner.

She opened *Mico's Hot Chicken* during this time. The decision was driven less by food than by a desire for independence. She had always wanted to work for herself, and entrepreneurship offered that opportunity.

Running a restaurant required long hours and constant involvement. It also meant learning how to manage staff, systems, and financial risk. The experience provided structure and income stability, which later made another international move possible.

DECIDING TO RETURN TO DENMARK

In 2023, the family moved back to Denmark, this time settling in Copenhagen. The move included four children, one of them a newborn. Unlike the first relocation, this decision was made with experience and clarity.

She had already lived in Denmark and understood how daily life functioned. Copenhagen, in particular, had become her preferred city.

“Copenhagen is literally my favourite city. With four children, it felt like a better environment to raise a family.”

The move required detailed planning. The family continued to own and operate their restaurant in Houston, which meant establishing systems that could function without their physical presence.

MANAGING WORK ACROSS BORDERS

Stepping away from daily oversight of a US-based business was one of the more challenging adjustments. Distance changes how decisions are made and how control is exercised.

Operating across time zones required trust in staff and confidence in systems. It also reinforced the importance of clear processes. While the restaurant continued to operate successfully, the physical separation highlighted the limits of involvement from abroad.

At the same time, the move created space to consider new professional projects closer to home.

STARTING SOMETHING SMALLER IN COPENHAGEN

After settling into life in Copenhagen, both she and Chris wanted a local workplace. They were not interested in replicating the scale or intensity of their restaurant business in the US.

She had wanted to open a cookie shop for years. Denmark felt like the right place to do it, provided the concept remained simple.

The result was *Frydenlund Cookies*, named after the family's last name. The menu is intentionally narrow: a classic chocolate chip cookie, hot chocolate, and, later, ice cream. The focus is consistency rather than expansion.

The name choice was deliberate. Where *Mico's Hot Chicken* carried her own name, this business was intended to represent the family as a whole.

DAILY LIFE BEHIND THE COUNTER

Running a small shop has reshaped her daily routine. She works every day and prefers the predictability of the scale. The shop provides structure without the constant urgency of a larger operation.

Operating locally has also increased her interaction with the surrounding community. Customers return regularly. Other small business owners offer informal advice. A recent catering order came through from a parent at her child's school, who shared the business with her workplace.

These connections developed through everyday interaction rather than formal networking.

BALANCING AMERICAN AND DANISH APPROACHES

Living in Denmark has not prompted her to replace American habits with Danish ones. Instead, she is selective about what she adopts and what she maintains.

She does not attempt to alter Danish norms but is deliberate about preserving American-style customer service, including friendliness and attentiveness.

Parenting highlights some of the clearest contrasts. Danish children are often

given independence earlier, while American parenting tends to involve closer supervision. Observing these differences has influenced how she thinks about responsibility and trust.

At home, certain American habits remain consistent: open communication, encouragement, ambition, and politeness.

RAISING CHILDREN ACROSS TWO COUNTRIES

For the children, moving between Denmark and the US has been relatively straightforward. Travel between the two countries remains frequent, driven by the family's business ties.

Family routines provide continuity. Friday movie night, complete with candy and snacks, remains fixed regardless of location.

For her children, Denmark is not something to compare or evaluate. It is simply where daily life happens.

LANGUAGE AND EVERYDAY INTEGRATION

Learning Danish has been slower than expected. Because English is widely spoken, daily life does not require fluency. She can read and understand some Danish, but speaking confidently remains a goal.

She plans to prioritise language learning more actively as her children grow older.

Living abroad has reshaped how she defines home. It is no longer tied to a city or country, but to the people she lives with. Home, for her, is portable.

LOOKING AHEAD

Managing family life and businesses across borders has clarified her sense of capability. The experience of moving countries, raising four children, and building new routines has altered how she assesses challenges and opportunities.

When asked what living in Denmark has revealed to her, her answer is straightforward: that she is capable of more than she once assumed.

Looking ahead, her focus is on maintaining stability rather than accelerating growth. Building a family life that works alongside businesses designed to last - without rushing either - remains the priority.

For now, that balance is found in Copenhagen, one small shop, and a daily routine shaped as much by family life as by work.

Frydenlund Cookies is based in Copenhagen, serving classic chocolate chip cookies and hot chocolate. Find them at frydenlundcookies.dk and on Instagram @ [frydenlundcookies.](https://www.instagram.com/frydenlundcookies/)



DENMARK'S INVISIBLE BARRIERS FOR EMESE

In this issue, **Aamna Tauheed** investigates the growing gap between Denmark's reliance on international labour and the realities faced by international job seekers.



EMESE HELMECZI

THE 2025 IMMIGRATION REPORT, published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, states that in 2024, Denmark received 54,000 international migrants on a long-term or permanent basis. This is a significant number compared with previous years for Denmark. The report also notes that, despite living in better conditions than before, international workers' wages remain lower than those of native Danes, but their unemployment rate is higher.

Several news reports indicate that 2025 was a challenging year for internationals in Denmark due to the Immigration Ministry's tight-fisted approach. According to new data from Statistics Denmark, the unemployment rate for internationals in Denmark is much higher than that for natives. By combining and analysing data on the unemployed and working populations (18-64 years old), the results revealed

that the ratio of unemployed internationals is three times higher than that of unemployed native Danes.

DENMARK THROUGH THE LENS OF #THEFORGOTTENGOLD

As a voice for internationals, The International Denmark highlights and addresses the challenges faced by the international community living in Denmark through its #TheForgottenGold Movement, which has now become much more than a hashtag. As the purpose of this movement is to make qualified international professionals visible in the Danish job market, this month we feature Emese Helmecki. Emese arrived in Denmark from Budapest, Hungary, in 2024 with her husband and two sons, with long-term plans and a sense of hope and belonging.

"It wasn't an abrupt move or a hasty decision to shift to Denmark from Hungary. I like the Dan-

ish culture and values. I always get inspired by the "hygge" (cosiness) culture whenever I visit my sister-in-law in Denmark. I am a Human Resources (HR) expert with 8 years of experience, and my husband is a senior IT Project Manager. Sharing about me, I thought I would immediately get a job, but I got so many surprises during my one-year job-seeking journey in Denmark", says Emese with a wide smile.

Her story is the story of a system that unintentionally keeps international talent standing on their toes in the Danish job market, despite its reputation as a promoter of inclusivity and cultural diversity.

A PLANNED MOVE AND A DELIBERATE CHOICE

"Denmark always stands for the right values, and these are the ones we wanted to live by," explains Emese, when I inquired more deeply about her rea-

sons for relocation. She also shared insights and observations on the Danish welfare system, security, work-life balance, and, above all, trust between people and social cohesion. Denmark is not a stranger to her and her family because they have relatives living here. All these factors have led to Emese's move from Budapest to Denmark.

A CONSTANT STRUGGLE WITH PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Emese has a master's degree in business English and 8 years of professional experience in Human Resource management and operations. She is also a skilled digital marketer and has extensive experience as a team leader and line manager. She came to Denmark with the clarity of her skills and the belief that the new country would open doors to professional growth and integration. What she did not anticipate was the constant battle with invisibility in the challenging job market, especially for foreigners.

"It's been more than a year since I have been putting my energy into getting a job, but I still feel distant and excluded from the Danish job market. Most people said it is not due to a lack of competence. However, because the system is still struggling to translate international experience into local opportunities, Emese said, she shared her efforts to find a job in the tricky Danish job market.

THE DANISH JOB MARKET: AN ENIGMA FOR INTERNATIONALS

Emese knew from the outset that understanding employment laws, labour regulations, and workplace culture would be essential, which is why she decided to localise her knowledge. She learned the Danish language and enrolled in Danish HR-related courses with a strong focus on corporate laws. That course helped her secure an internship in Denmark, which she thinks is a first step toward understanding the local workplaces and company environments. In parallel, she applied for HR roles in several companies aligned with her background.

"For me, the internship was the key and a doorway to enter into a Danish company," she said. "I believed that if companies could meet me face to face and see how I work, that would have an influence. In addition, I sent almost 100 job applications to various companies. I had a couple of interviews, but they were screening interviews, and nothing progressed beyond that stage." Sharing her experience getting feedback on applications, she immediately responded: "Initially, I never received feedback even after asking for it several times, but whenever it came, I ended up with more questions. The job market is so unpredictable, especially for internationals like us. Sometimes I receive an answer that I am too senior for this role, and in other cases, recruiters tell me the role has shifted focus during the hiring process. I don't know if it is a bias or an uncertainty in the job market", said Emese with a confused smile.

Many international professionals share Emese's view, calling the Danish job a tricky one and a difficult path. In their stories, the previous #ForgottenGold participants also described similar experiences of ghosting, a lack of feedback, and automated rejections from companies in the Danish labour market. Despite a 12-13% international workforce, many internationals are struggling in the Danish job market,



EMESE HELMEZI

"DESPITE KNOWING YOUR VALUE, THIS LACK OF CLOSURE CAN CREATE FEELINGS OF SELF-DOUBT OR INCOMPETENCE."

calling it an enigma or a jigsaw puzzle.

IS NETWORKING THE KEY-A MYTH OR REALITY?

"Networking is a chance, but without a guarantee of translating into an opportunity", said Emese when I asked about attending the networking events in Denmark, which most people considered a key to access in the Danish job market.

Emese shared that she was initially told networking events and job fairs could help her connect with companies. She attended many professional events with clear expectations for meeting with companies interested in hiring. What she found after having that experience was different. In her words:

"I expected companies to offer work or at least to screen the candidates at the job fairs and later invite them for interviews. I observe that in these events, companies focus more on visibility, personal branding, and social media engagement than on recruitment. Most of them required paid participation, and investing continuously doesn't make any sense, especially if someone doesn't see a real pathway to employment. I am not against the events, but in my opinion, they are only helpful in the initial days in Denmark."

THE EMOTIONAL COST OF THE JOB-SEEKING JOURNEY

"Finding a job in the challenging Danish Job market as an international is a lonely activity. There are numerous job centres in the country, but they have limitations in helping job seekers. Focusing specifically on recruiters, in my personal experience, they are very engaging and polite during initial conversa-

tions and encourage people to apply, rarely offering any meaningful feedback during follow-up calls or after the application. Frequent ghosting or silent treatment from companies does affect job seekers like me emotionally. Despite knowing your value, this lack of closure can create feelings of self-doubt or incompetence".

HOLDING ON TO TRUST AND MOTIVATION

Despite challenges and constant setbacks, Emese remains resilient and motivated, and doesn't want to give up as a job seeker in Denmark. She is clear that she wants to add value in the Danish job market via her professional competencies. She still holds to that trust which brought her to Denmark with her family. Her journey represents that of many skilled internationals who choose to live and contribute to Denmark rather than other countries. Emese's story is the essence of #TheForgottenGold- the movement about people who do not lack value but whose worth and skills are yet to be recognised.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Aamna Tauheed is a Denmark-based copywriter and communications specialist with a strong background in business communications. Passionate about storytelling, she writes compelling content that amplifies brands and drives positive change.



OUTSMART THE MID-WINTER SLUMP

Leslea Petersen explores why the mid-winter slump hits hard - and how you can stay focused, energised, and ready for new opportunities.



PEPEL'S-RON-LACH

DOES ANYONE ELSE feel like the sun sets before you've even finished your morning coffee? I know the lighter days are coming, but waking up in the dark never gets easier. Honestly, I'd love to hibernate through this season and wake up when spring arrives.

In Denmark, the long, dark winter months can make even the most determined job seeker feel a bit flat. The days blur together, energy dips, and suddenly, the job search that once felt full of possibility at the start of the year starts to feel heavy.

Everyone's talking about February being the start of the busy job search season (It is), but after a long January, you might not feel ready to jump back in. If you've found yourself staring at your laptop, struggling to write a cover letter or send another application, you're not alone. The mid-winter slump is real, and it affects thousands of people every year. The good news? It's not permanent, and there are ways to outsmart it.

WHAT IS THE MID-WINTER SLUMP?

The mid-winter slump is the period, often in January and February, when motivation and mood dip. It's partly biological. With fewer hours of daylight, our bodies produce more melatonin, the hormone that makes us sleepy, and less serotonin, which helps us feel happy and focused. Add in the cold weather, January that lasts half the year (Feels like it), and the emotional tiredness of job hunting, and it's no

wonder your energy has dropped.

In Nordic countries like Denmark, this seasonal slowdown is especially common. But remember, it's not you failing to stay motivated; it's simply a natural response to the season. Once you understand what's happening, you can take a few simple steps to get yourself out of it.

HOW TO OUTSMART THE SLUMP AND BE READY FOR ALL THAT FEBRUARY BRINGS!

Here are a few fresh ways to keep your motivation going.

1. CREATE A "WINTER PROJECT"

Instead of focusing only on job applications, start a small project that excites you. It could be building a personal website, mentoring someone else with your experience, or sharing your expertise in a LinkedIn post. It keeps your momentum going, helps build your credibility and offers networking opportunities - all positive things for the job search.

2. PRACTICE DAILY ROUTINES TO RESET NEGATIVE THINKING

When motivation dips, your mindset becomes your biggest support. Try a short daily ritual, like writing down three things you're proud of or setting a simple goal for the day. These small moments of reflection can shift your energy and help you stay grounded. I do this in every season.

3. CHANGE YOUR JOB-SEARCH SPACE

A change of scenery can do wonders. Add a plant or rearrange your workspace; even a few small tweaks can make your space feel more inspiring and lift your mood. Or find a different seat. Our English Job Networking Club meets weekly at various locations and collaborates to find jobs!

4. FOCUS ON MICRO-GOALS

Big goals can feel overwhelming when your energy is low. Instead, set tiny, achievable actions like 'reach out to one new contact this week' or 'spend 15 minutes commenting on a few posts on LinkedIn'. Small steps!

5. GIVE BACK OR PAY IT FORWARD

Volunteering or mentoring can give you a sense of purpose. Helping others reminds you of your own strengths and keeps you connected. It feels good to help others, and this will shift the focus away from yourself.

6. VISUALISE SPRING

No, this isn't something that's 'way out there', but as a visual learner, I like to motivate myself with visuals or imagery. The shoots are emerging in the garden, and spring will be here very soon. Think of your job search like planting seeds. The applications you send, the connections you make, and the skills you build now are all seeds that will grow into opportunities later. Keep nurturing them, and you'll see results when the right time comes.

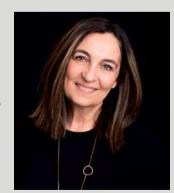
7. BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Winter might test your patience, but it also builds your persistence, and that's exactly what will help you land the right opportunity. Be kind to yourself, keep showing up, and remember that every small step you take now moves you closer to your goal. You have this!

ABOUT THE WRITER

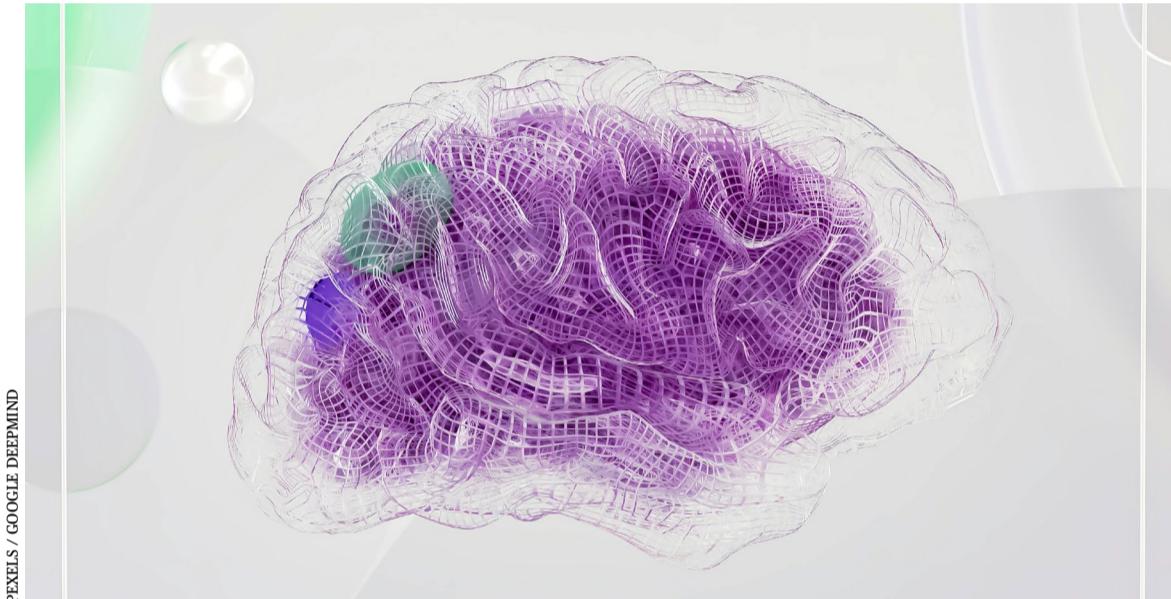
Leslea Petersen is the CEO of English Job Denmark, helping professionals and businesses retain international talent.

With 20+ years in communications, she is passionate about diversity, recruitment, and supporting inclusive workplaces.



SEEING BEYOND THE SEIZURES

Misconceptions still surround epilepsy, despite how common it is. **Lyndsay Jensen** looks at why awareness and understanding remain essential.



PEXELS / GOOGLE DEEPMIND

EVERY YEAR, ON the second Monday of February, the world marks International Epilepsy Day - a moment to recognise a condition that affects millions of lives but remains misunderstood. For people living with epilepsy and their families in Denmark, this day is both a reminder of ongoing challenges and an opportunity to deepen public awareness, challenge misconceptions, and advocate for meaningful support.

EPILEPSY IS COMMON AND MISUNDERSTOOD

Epilepsy is not a single disease but a spectrum of neurological conditions characterised by recurrent unprovoked seizures - sudden bursts of electrical activity in the brain that can affect awareness, behaviour, sensations, and movement. It is [one of the most common neurological disorders](#), second only to headaches in frequency globally.

In Denmark, epilepsy affects [between 0.7% and 1% of the population](#), which translates to roughly [50,000–55,000 people](#) living with the condition.

That means in many communities, workplaces, classrooms, and families, epilepsy is not rare - it is normal, a part of everyday life for thousands.

LIVES SHAPED BY A SPECTRUM OF EXPERIENCES

Epilepsy affects individuals differently. For some, seizures are frequent and severe; for others, they may be rare and subtle. Some people may live decades with epilepsy without major disruptions to daily life; for others, the condition shapes their choices around work, education, social life and even family planning.

Research using nationwide registry data in Den-

mark found that [people with epilepsy are significantly less likely to have children](#), with men showing a 41% lower likelihood and women a 28% lower likelihood of becoming parents compared to those without epilepsy. The reasons behind this are complex, encompassing biological factors, social barriers and the lingering effects of stigma that can influence relationships, economic security, and life decisions.

THE NUMBERS TELL A STORY

A large population-based study in Denmark estimated that [around 697 individuals per 100,000 population lived with epilepsy](#) on 31 December 2018, amounting to more than 40,000 people in a population of nearly 5.8 million. These figures provide an important snapshot, but they also highlight how data definitions matter: when broader criteria are included, prevalence estimates can be even higher.

Beyond the numbers, it is crucial to understand the human impact behind them: each data point in these studies represents a person with aspirations, challenges, and a unique story.

TREATMENT: HOPE AND CHALLENGES

The primary treatment for epilepsy is antiepileptic medication, which aims to reduce or prevent seizures. In Denmark, as in many countries, [about two-thirds of people with epilepsy can achieve good seizure control with medication](#).

For those whose seizures do not respond to medication - often termed drug-resistant or refractory epilepsy - other options may be considered. These include surgical intervention, nerve-stimulation therapies, or specialised dietary approaches.

Despite medical advances, treatment is not just about controlling seizures - it is also about man-

aging side effects, balancing quality of life, and addressing the psychological and social components of living with a chronic neurological condition.

EPILEPSY AND MENTAL HEALTH

People with epilepsy often face higher rates of co-occurring psychiatric conditions, including anxiety and depression, compared with the general population. These challenges may arise from a mix of neurological, social and psychological factors - and they remind us that epilepsy care must be holistic, addressing both physical and emotional health.

STIGMA: THE INVISIBLE BARRIER

Perhaps the most persistent challenge for people with epilepsy is stigma. Misconceptions - such as the belief that epilepsy is a sign of cognitive impairment, "possession", or unpredictably dangerous behaviour - can isolate individuals socially and professionally. Even subtle forms of stigma can have real consequences: from reluctance to disclose a diagnosis, to obstacles in finding employment, to strained relationships.

International Epilepsy Day exists to challenge these misconceptions - to put faces, voices, and experiences behind a diagnosis, and to remind society that people with epilepsy are not defined by their condition.

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

If you live with epilepsy, know this: your life is not defined by your seizures. You are a person with dreams, relationships, challenges - not a statistic or stereotype. If you know someone affected, take a moment today to listen, learn, and offer support rooted in compassion.

To learn more, you can visit the Epilepsi Foreningen [website](#). Please be aware that the website is in Danish.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Lyndsay Jensen is the Project Lead at **Changing Places Danmark**, an NGO advocating for disability inclusion in public bathrooms. Inspired by her son's disability, she is passionate about creating accessible environments that enable dignity, independence, and full participation.



A LEAKY DANISH LABOUR MARKET

As Denmark's demographic crisis deepens, **Kelly Draper Rasmussen** looks at how immigration policy may be contributing to the loss of international talent.

DENMARK IS IN the midst of a significant demographic crisis, in which an ageing population and younger people moving to large cities are causing communities to lose workers. Meanwhile, Danish universities cannot educate enough people in the shortage industries fast enough. Denmark is recruiting international workers in record numbers, but they are not staying longer than a few years.

RETENTION RATES ARE FALLING FAST

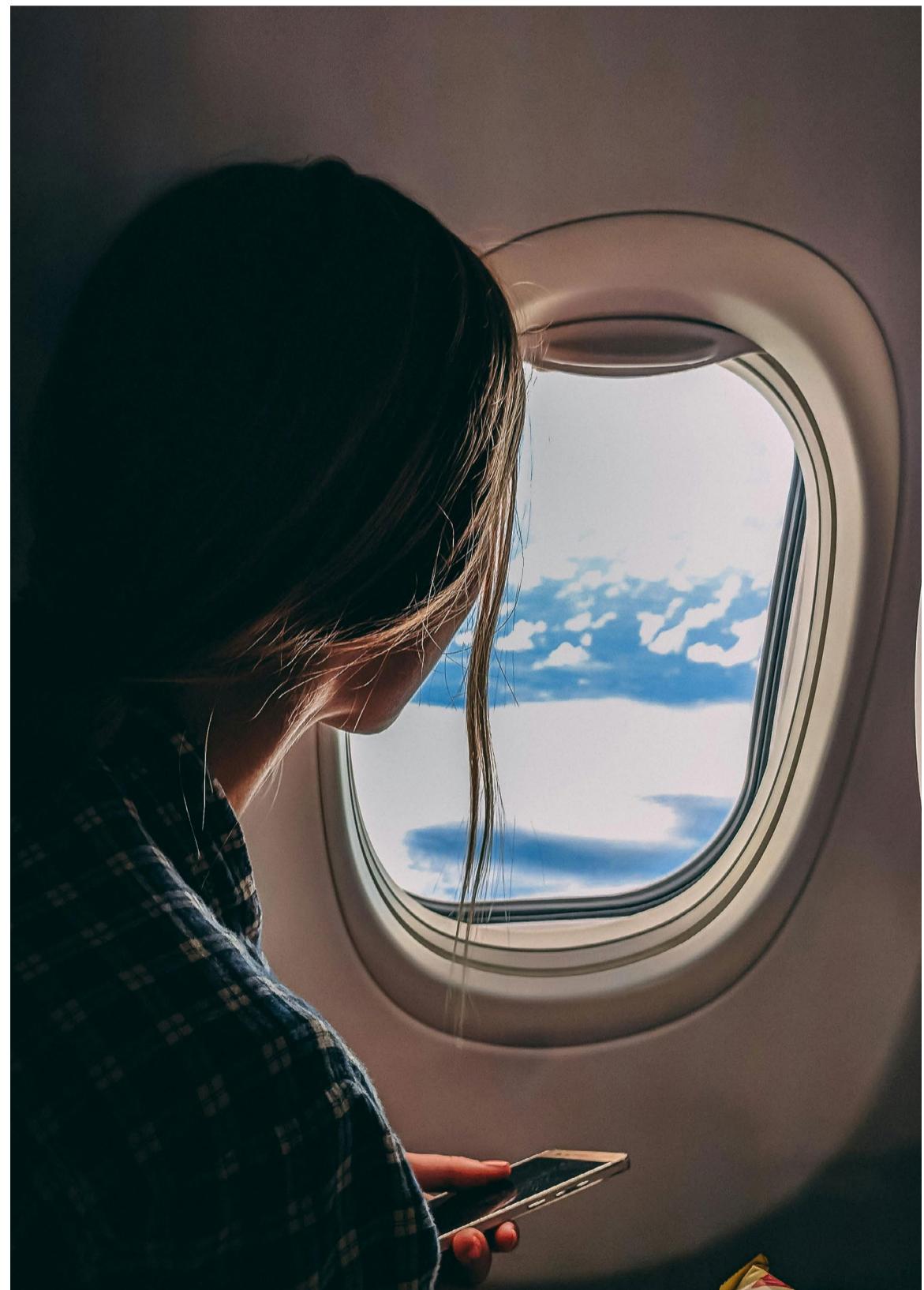
Dansk Industri recently examined international workers' retention rates and noted that 50% of EU internationals remain for more than six years, 40% of non-EU internationals here for work do so, and 25% of students educated here remain for six years. In 2007, Denmark had relatively high retention (75% over 7 years), and there was also a phenomenon of academics returning to Denmark after time abroad. By 2025, that pattern had reversed. Dansk Industri also noted that 'unskilled' labour retention is converging on 'highly qualified' rates. As in, 'getting as bad'.

RECRUITING WELL, BUT LEAKING TALENT

Denmark is very good at recruiting international workers. Thousands arrive every year, but there is a leak in the bucket. Analyses, if they touch on root causes at all, will point out that international workers are highly mobile, so therefore, just like a force of nature, a roll of the gods' dice, there is no way of persuading them to stay. Is fatalism appropriate in these circumstances? I would like to kick the tyres on one of my hypotheses to see if there are any interventions open to Denmark to keep more people here.

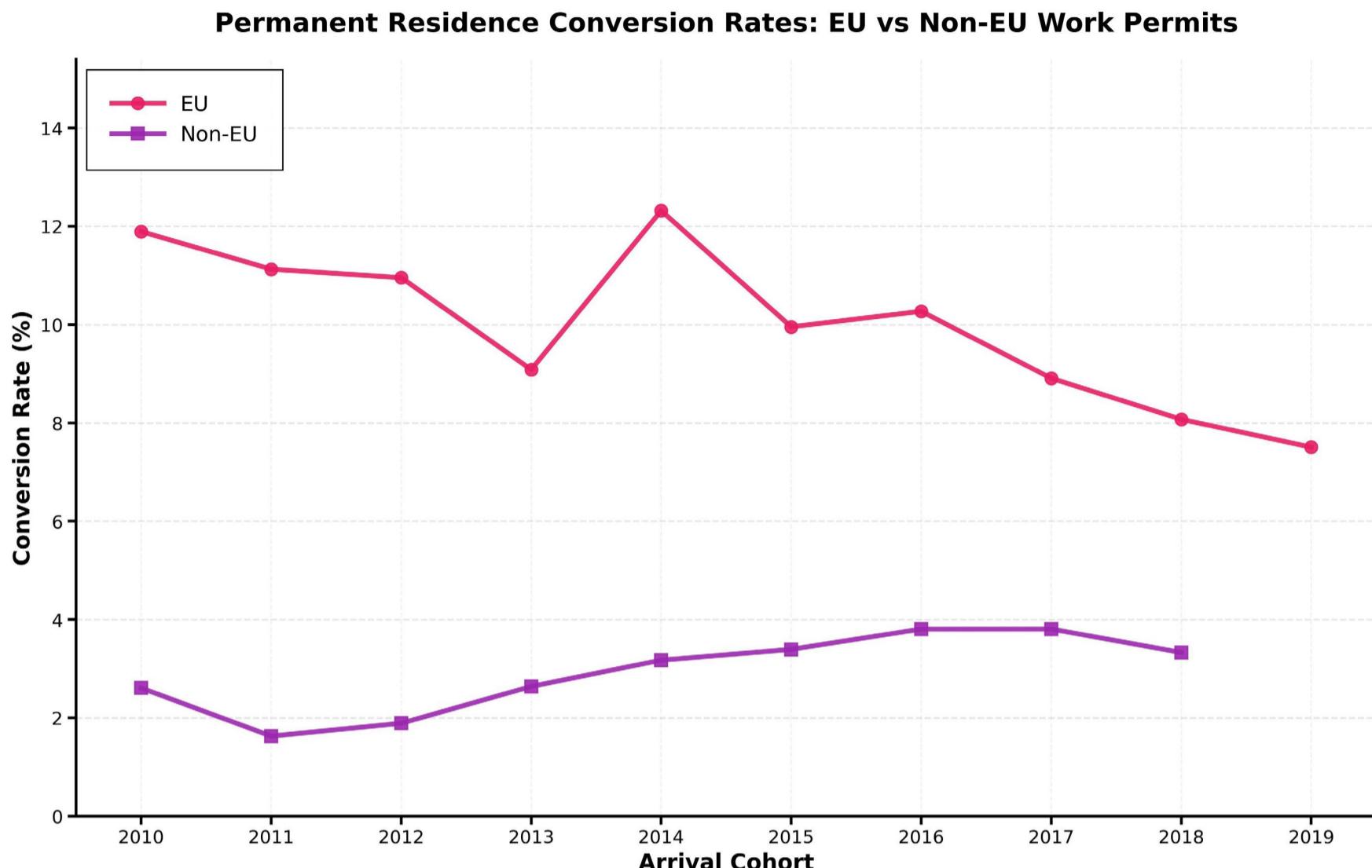
PERMANENT RESIDENCY AS A RETENTION BOTTLENECK

I hypothesise that the difficulty of obtaining permanent residency for non-EU workers is part of what drives them away. To examine this possibility, I used migration data from the past 15 years. EU immigrants can get permanent residency automatically after five years (almost), no questions asked. Non-EU must meet a rigorous set of requirements after eight years (four years if they are unicorns with excellent Danish, etc.). Denmark has been systematically tightening these requirements over the past decade, while EU workers have maintained a stable five-year pathway. Looking at cohorts who arrived in a particular year and seeing how many of them 'convert,' that is, receive permanent resident status,



PEXELS / JASON TOEVS

“DENMARK IS VERY GOOD AT RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS. THOUSANDS ARRIVE EVERY YEAR, BUT THERE IS A LEAK IN THE BUCKET.”



in the two years after they become eligible, shows the disparity in sharp relief.

A WIDENING CONVERSION GAP

For EU residents, the conversion rate is 10%. For non-EU, it is 3%. The EU conversion rate has deteriorated in recent years, but this is only because many more EU workers have been arriving, not because the pathway is becoming more difficult. Permanent residency grants increased from 4,000 to 6,500 per year, but arrivals more than doubled. Non-EU immigration has also increased, but the number of permanent residency grants has not changed.

SAME CONTRIBUTION, DIFFERENT SECURITY

The work is the same. The contribution is the same. The only difference is their passport. For me, it seems plausible that people coming to work in Denmark might want the stability of permanent residency before they put down roots. Danish citizens and permanent residents receive two years of unemployment benefits (*dagpenge*) to find their next role. International workers on temporary permits? Six months to find a job or leave the country. Danish companies are happy to lay off large fractions of their workforce periodically, and if you can rely on (*dagpenge*), then that is no big deal. But if you have only six months to find a job or end your lease, move your children to a new school, pack all your belongings, and ship them without the assistance

of a relocation package, your position is much more precarious and vulnerable. When studies investigate the reasons for leaving Denmark, this is often cited as one of the key issues driving people away.

POLITICS, INCENTIVES, AND THE COST OF INACTION

Why is it so hard for people to get permanent residency, even though Denmark desperately wants international workers, and Danish businesses do not want to spend any more than they absolutely have to on recruitment? Politically, tightening immigration rules has played well with voters and perhaps has been seen as consequence-free. We are entering an election year, and we have already seen, in the local elections, the rhetoric surrounding foreign nationals hardening. The question is: will the business community and the *kommuner*, reliant on international workers, push back against national political point-scoring, or will they simply continue to monitor the problem and publish an annual report on how much worse things have become?

**“THE WORK IS THE SAME.
THE CONTRIBUTION IS THE
SAME. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE
IS THEIR PASSPORT.”**



ABOUT THE WRITER

Kelly Draper Rasmussen is a Denmark-based data analyst who makes complex immigration and labour data accessible through her Data in Denmark newsletter. Her research has informed national policies and supports international communities.



HELPING STUDENTS THRIVE IN TRANSITION

As cultures intersect more frequently, **Makoda Gascon** shares how children growing up between worlds develop a unique sense of identity as Third Culture Kids.



PEXELS / YAN KRUKAU

AS GLOBALISATION BECOMES more prevalent, the number of individuals travelling, living abroad, and settling in a new country is increasing. This rise in travel has led many individuals to integrate their home culture with the culture of their host country. In particular, this can lead to the creation of new terms to better explain the unique cultural experience of these individuals, particularly children, who are described as Third Culture Kids.

WHAT IS A THIRD CULTURE KID?

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) are children who create a new, 'mixed' culture that incorporates aspects of their parents' cultures and the culture of the country where they live. The reason for this newfound cultural development can be for a list of reasons, but encompasses a child being raised and growing up in a culture that is unlike the one that is primarily shown by their parents.

For example, I was born and raised in Canada, and both of my parents are Canadian. However, starting in middle school, I took trips down to the United States multiple times a year with my mother, learning from the somewhat similar culture every time I went. Eventually, I ended up moving to the United States, and have been living in the country for around ten years. When I think about my own culture, it feels like a mismatch between Canada and the United States, where many of the things that I consider as 'mine' are a mixture of both of my cultural experiences within both countries.

Due to the vast nature of this title, there is no clear

estimate on the total number of children that would fall under this label, or those who would have fallen under this label before its creation. This title was created to give this new culturally significant group of individuals something that would help differentiate them, and is a popular title amongst educators to aid in differentiating students based on their cultural upbringings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIRD CULTURE KIDS

While this new type of student is becoming more and more prevalent in our global age, their importance within the classroom isn't always known. Perhaps unlike their monoculture counterparts, Third Culture Kids are able to bring in a plethora of strengths that they have gained from their multicultural upbringing. These strengths can include things such as a global mindset, diverse linguistic abilities, and adaptability.

Inside a classroom, TCKs aid in making the classroom environment more global, as there is now a greater need to consider other points of view on topics. For some schools, it may be easier to stick with a homogeneous point of view, but TCKs challenge educators, as well as other students, to think about different perspectives and broaden their understanding.

HOW TO SUPPORT THIRD CULTURE KIDS

Many children who could be considered TCK, they may be unaware of this transition of cultural understanding as they grow up. In light of this, the big-

gest way to support a TCK is to embrace all aspects of who they are and what they can become. Due to their ability to enhance their life with not only their parents' culture, but also the culture of the country they live in, they are able to bring forth such a unique outlook on situations that are presented to them.

Since many Third Culture Kids may feel isolated due to the fact that they may not be able to fully integrate into a singular culture, it is important to provide these children with the support they need. This may include educating oneself on the history, culture, and traditions that are of importance to a TCK. Once there is knowledge about a child's different culture, it can be helpful to include information from that culture in order to showcase that the student is able to not feel embarrassed by half of themselves. Including information on a specific culture could include topics such as music, food, tradition, weather, clothing, holidays, and language.

In order to incorporate all children in a cultural learning experience, hosting events that celebrate culture in different ways can normalise any uncomfortable feelings between children. Having a day that allows students to highlight their culture through wearing clothing, cooking food, showcasing their language, and talking about traditions can better educate and interest others in that specific culture. This can also help to bridge the gap in a TCK's understanding of their new home culture in a more personalised way.

ENDLESS UNDERSTANDING

In conclusion, TCKs may seem vastly different, but in reality, all they need is the same opportunities to grow up knowing that they are cared for and supported. While having Third Culture Kids may prove to be a challenge for some individuals, realising that they can offer such an amazing learning experience for others aids in making sure that they do not feel isolated while getting used to their newfound cultural experiences.

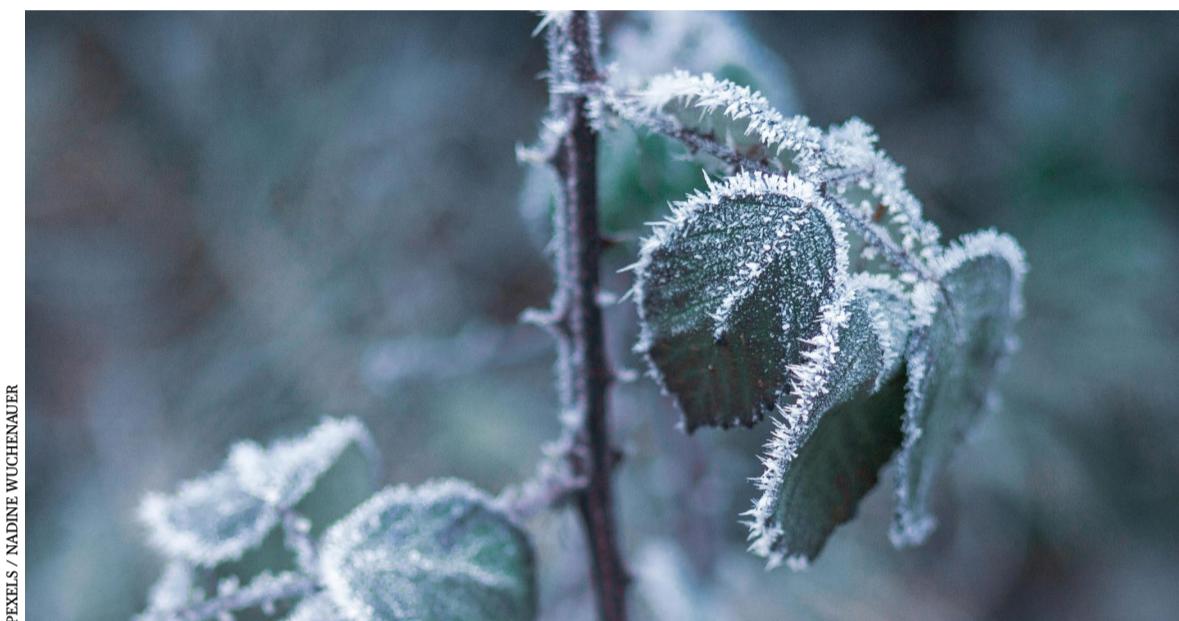
ABOUT THE WRITER

Makoda Gascon is a Canadian-American educator who will be relocating to Denmark. She has a strong background in writing and education, and loves to share her passion for knowledge to better connect people from all over the world.



WHEN WINTER STAYS TOO LONG

Fiona L Smith discusses the quiet heaviness of late winter and how listening to the nervous system can support a slow, embodied return to life.



PEXELS / NADINE WUCHNER

AFTER IMBOLC ON 1 February, we're officially closer to Spring than to midwinter. The days are getting longer, and the seasonal shift has begun. But for many, particularly those of us living in the 'dark north', that change can still be hard to feel.

Instead, we often experience a sense of heaviness or a lack of motivation at this time of year. Energy is inconsistent, and rather than wanting to socialise, there may be a strong pull to just stay on the sofa, wrapped in warm blankets. Sometimes this is exactly what the body needs; sometimes it comes with a restless, gnawing anxiety under the surface, or numbness, listlessness or disconnection.

You might feel guilty; some might call it laziness. But it all makes sense when we look at how the Nervous System responds to winter.

In somatic and trauma-informed work, we recognise several survival responses in the Autonomic Nervous System. Most people are familiar with fight-or-flight; less understood but equally common is freeze.

Freeze isn't simply 'doing nothing'. It's a highly organised physiological state in which the body conserves energy, limits movement, reduces sensation and emotion and pulls inward. Heart rate and circulation slow, digestion gets sluggish, and our emotional range narrows. It's a protective response that often follows prolonged stress, burnout, or overwork.

WINTER CAN SIGNIFICANTLY EXACERBATE THIS STATE

Cold temperatures, reduced daylight and less spontaneous social contact all signal to the body that resources are scarce. Movement naturally decreases, spontaneous connections occur less frequently, and sensory input declines. The Nervous System adapts

accordingly, shifting us towards a freeze-like state; often without us realising.

When contact and sensory input are reduced, the world can begin to feel distant, and freeze often feels profoundly isolating. From this state, reaching out to new friends or recent acquaintances, or trying something unfamiliar, can feel difficult, reinforcing a sense of not quite belonging. This is a particularly sensitive area for many internationals living in Denmark.

THE DANGER OF BEING HIGHLY COMPETENT

What complicates this is that many people don't experience an obvious collapse. Instead, they're living in what's known as a functional freeze.

Functional freeze is a highly capable and often socially rewarded state, especially at work. From here, we can get a great deal done; we meet deadlines, care for everyone else, tick boxes, and keep life moving.

Underneath, though, there's often a lot of activation being held in check – pain, anxiety, insomnia or irritability – alongside a conscious or unconscious holding back of impulse, desire and emotional expression. You're 'keeping it all together'.

Over time, numbness and emotional flatness can set in, and we lose access to passion, creativity and joy. You're going through the motions rather than fully living. This is a survival state and, whilst efficient, there's rarely much energy left once the essentials are done.

Functional freeze can persist well beyond the point at which we feel we 'should' be doing better. Mentally, we want to move on; Spring is coming! But the Nervous System doesn't understand 'should'; it understands lived experience. If the body contin-

ues to experience cold, pressure, isolation and lack of contact, it stays organised around survival rather than aliveness.

GENTLY THAWING FREEZE

By February, many bodies are quietly asking for something different. Not more effort or force, but more contact, sensory input and movement.

When we're in freeze, the ego can respond by pushing harder, with an all-or-nothing approach. Unsurprisingly, this leads to procrastination or shutdown, because the system perceives it as too much.

Freeze doesn't soften through willpower; it shifts through consistent, small kindnesses. Through cues that say it's safe to engage, little by little.

Gentle movement is a powerful way to support this – brisk walking, shaking, yoga flow or spontaneous dance. Unforced movement allows the Nervous System to experience mobilisation in safety.

We can also resource ourselves by gently orienting to our surroundings when outside: looking up at rooftops, noticing light, colour, and movement, or letting our gaze take in other people. The more we connect with what's here, the more present we become, and the safer the body feels.

Contact matters enormously. This might involve contact with trusted people, massage or bodywork, or sensory warmth, such as baths, saunas, blankets, or a hot water bottle. These aren't luxuries; they're regulatory signals.

Social connection doesn't need to be intense. Low-pressure contact is often sufficient – a short walk, a voice note, making eye contact, and exchanging a few words with the barista (SO un-Danish!). Being seen and heard in ordinary ways brings the body back to life.

February is a threshold month. Winter isn't over yet, even if the calendar says otherwise. When we respect the Nervous System's timing and tend to its need for warmth, contact and gentle connection, the transition towards new life and beginnings becomes more sustainable and embodied.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Fiona L Smith is a Somatic Therapist, Coach & Nervous System expert who supports women to heal from burnout & anxiety and reclaim ease and confidence. UK born, she lives in Rødovre with her family and loves walking, winter dips, and sunshine.



THE ILLUSION ENDS HERE

With illusion giving way to confrontation and identity under pressure, **Ophelia Wu** explores why clarity, intention, and self-honesty may be the most radical acts of the years ahead.



AS WE MOVE into February, the world and the sky have some big news. On January 26th, Neptune entered Aries, where it will stay until 2039. Neptune, the planet of illusion, dreams, spiritual vision, and the unconscious, dissolves boundaries and exposes where we've been drifting in borrowed scripts, fantasies, or self-deception. Aries, in contrast, is about direct action, individuation, courage, and primal identity - raw, bold, and focused on the "self" rather than the collective. The meeting of these energies creates a subtle but profound tension: the illusions and borrowed patterns that previously floated in the background now demand attention. In other words, the question arises: whose life are you actually living?

Neptune moves slowly, and each sign it visits spans over a decade. The last Neptune-in-Aries cycle, between 1861 and 1875, coincided with major upheaval and reinvention in history, including the U.S. Civil War and shifts in social structures and ideals. For most of us today, the answer to this question isn't immediately clear. We carry layers that aren't ours: expectations, beliefs, roles, even ambitions borrowed from ancestors, parents, partners, or society. These borrowed identities shape our decisions, our desires, and, often, our sense of self.

BORROWED TIME, BORROWED IDENTITY

Time, too, is borrowed. The moment we are born into this world, we are living on

borrowed time, counting down day by day until we run the course of our lives. We spend years chasing goals that aren't truly ours, performing roles to satisfy others, and living according to scripts that feel safer than being fully ourselves. The danger isn't always obvious; it often masquerades as duty, virtue, or practicality. Yet every moment spent on borrowed paths is a moment we cannot reclaim.

This is where clarity enters, not as a checklist or productivity hack, but as the visible expression of intention. Intention is the seed; clarity is the lens through which that seed finds its direction. Without clarity, our intentions float vaguely, filtered through expectations and illusions. Clarity allows us to recognise the borrowed parts of ourselves and, importantly, to begin the hardcore, courageous work of reclaiming what is truly ours. It works the other way; without intention, there's no clarity because you lack direction and focus. How are you going to navigate life without knowing what you want or who you are? These are fundamental questions we all need to confront, yet they are among the most profoundly confusing philosophical ones - ones that evolve as we grow and experience life.

And that work is never easy. Being true to yourself is easier said than done, because few of us are ever taught how to do it. We are shaped by nature and nurture, by culture, experience, and circumstance. We are already born into a set of beliefs and customs that feel natural and familiar. With each chapter of life comes



UNSPASH / ARONVISUALS

a new layer, sometimes insight, sometimes another borrowed mindset, adding both wisdom and complexity. That's why the hard, often lonely work of self-understanding matters. Whether through therapy, spiritual practice, or honest introspection, we confront our obstacles, our blind spots, and the why behind our patterns. We unravel the borrowed identities to uncover the person beneath.

That reminds me of my time at university, when I was fascinated by postmodern ideas of the self. Where does one begin, and where does one end? According to Foucault, our identity is shaped by the social and cultural structures around us - there's no pure, autonomous self waiting to be found. Derrida



PEXELS / GABBYK

adds that the very concept of self is never fixed; it is always deferred, fluid, and unstable. In this sense, the self is not a singular, static entity but a constantly evolving construct, layered with influences, expectations, and experiences.

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT? SORRY, THAT DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE

Neptune in Aries amplifies this cosmic call. Where Neptune in Pisces blurred boundaries and invited reflection, Neptune in Aries compels action. It ignites the inner compass, urging us to act on the clarity we've cultivated, to step into our own lives rather than perform someone else's. It's a reminder that understanding alone is not enough; insight must lead to living with integrity, moment by moment. It's embodiment, not performance.

Over the past 13 years, with Neptune in Pisces, many of us were invited into deep spiritual work and shadow exploration. Ancestral healing, confronting generational trauma, and facing our own patterns offered opportunities for transformation if we were willing to do the hard, painful work. Those who truly engage with this process will emerge from this period with clarity and direction; Neptune in Aries will give them the motivation to act, take steps forward, and bring their insights into tangible reality.

But for those who didn't do the work, or only engaged superficially - scrolling endlessly through social media "guru" accounts, taking bite-sized, misinterpreted, out-of-context healing advice, or using spiritual practices as a bypass - the illusions will now begin to fall away. The foundation for clarity and grounded action is fragile or nonexistent. If you haven't embodied it, it isn't your reality. What was once a comfortable "my truth" or "her truth" will collide with the truth, and when that happens, the illu-

sion collapses. There's no more delusional la-la land for you to hide in anymore. It's hard. It's painful. But it's the necessary reckoning that allows genuine clarity and forward movement to take root.

LIVING WITH INTENTION

So where do we begin, and where do we end? Perhaps the truth is that we never truly finish. Life layers new experiences over old ones, offering opportunities to notice what's borrowed, to release what no longer serves, and to reclaim what is ours. Clarity isn't a destination but a practice - an ongoing dialogue between intention, understanding, and action. A light that keeps you grounded for the version of you, guiding you from where you are to where you want to be. As life goes on, your identity can evolve accordingly, your goals can change, your priorities can be rearranged, and your perspective can shift - as long as you are living a life you want, for yourself. The only person you need to be responsible for is yourself, instead of living other people's realities, building someone else's dreams, and putting your own dreams and needs on hold. Each act of self-awareness, each moment reclaimed from expectation, each decision rooted in clarity and integrity, is a quiet rebellion against borrowed time. Intention is the map; clarity is the compass; and the work, as hard and nuanced as it is, is the journey of finally being truly yourself, bridging the gap created by years of misalignment.

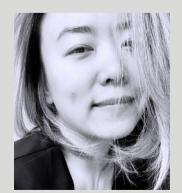
So here is the question to carry with you: what do you really, truly want? If nothing is a constraint, how do you want to live your life?



PEXELS / BENGISU

ABOUT THE WRITER

Ophelia Wu is a Copenhagen-based fashion consultant, journalist, with a career spanning Hong Kong, London, and beyond. She brings her passion for fashion, beauty, and interiors to brands worldwide while embracing the Scandinavian lifestyle.



WINTER RUT STUCK? HERE'S YOUR RESET

This issue, **Alexandra Beck** reframes February training as an act of continuity, not motivation.



PEXELS / BURST

BY FEBRUARY, WINTER has usually lost its charm.

The festive lights are gone, the social buzz has quietened, and spring still feels like a rumour someone started to keep us hopeful. The days are short, the air is cold, and motivation feels... negotiable.

This is what I call the mid-winter slump. Not dramatic, not alarming – just a slow drain of energy, enthusiasm and momentum that sneaks up on a lot of people.

And no, it doesn't mean you've failed at your January intentions.

It means you're human.

After years of coaching people through Copenhagen winters – and living through them myself – I've learned that February isn't the month to push harder. It's the month to get smarter.

Here's how I outsmart the slump, without turning life into a self-improvement project.

FIRST: STOP TAKING THE SLUMP PERSONALLY

Low energy in mid-winter is not a character flaw. It's a predictable response to darkness, cold, disrupted routines and accumulated stress.

By February, most people have been “holding it together” for months. Work has been busy, social calendars were full, December was indulgent, January was demanding, and suddenly there's very little novelty left to lean on.

This is not the moment to ask yourself why you're not more motivated.

It's the moment to reduce friction.

KEEP MOVEMENT SIMPLE AND FAMILIAR

When energy is low, complexity becomes the enemy.

February is not the month for reinventing your training, chasing new goals, or testing your willpower. It's the month for returning to what you already know works.

For me, that means familiar movement, predictable sessions and training that leaves me feeling better when I walk out than when I walked in.

Strength training is particularly powerful here. It's grounding. It's structured. It gives you a clear beginning, middle and end. There's something deeply reassuring about moving weight with control when the rest of life feels a bit grey.

You don't need longer sessions. You don't need harder sessions. You need repeatable ones.

USE ROUTINE AS AN ANCHOR, NOT A PRISON

One of the biggest mistakes I see in winter is people abandoning routine en-

tirely because life feels heavy – or clinging to it so rigidly that it becomes another stressor.

The sweet spot sits in between.

I keep my regular training appointments because they take decision-making out of the equation. I don't have to ask myself if I'll train today, only how much I have to give.

Some days that's a strong session. On other days, it's simply showing up and moving.

Both count.

Routine in winter isn't about discipline. It's about conserving mental energy.

FOCUS ON HOW MOVEMENT AFFECTS YOUR HEAD, NOT YOUR BODY

In February, I rarely train for aesthetics or performance.

I train for clarity.

Movement is one of the fastest ways I know to reset my nervous system. It lifts brain fog, improves sleep, and gives me a sense of agency when the world outside feels dark and still.

The physical results will come – they always do – but the immediate return on investment is mental.

If you reframe training as something that helps you think, cope and breathe a little deeper, it becomes far easier to protect.

LOWER THE BAR FOR “SUCCESS”

Winter has a way of turning all-or-nothing thinking up a notch.

If I can't do a full session, what's the point?

If I've missed a week, I've blown it.

If I'm tired, I should wait until I feel better.

February is not impressed by that logic.

This is the month to celebrate consistency that bends. Shorter sessions. Lighter loads. Fewer expectations. More kindness.

Training that adapts keeps going. Training that demands perfection usually doesn't.

REMEMBER: THIS SEASON PASSES

One of the most useful things I remind myself – and my clients – every February is that this is a season, not a verdict.

Energy returns. Light comes back - motivation shifts. The work you do now is not about transformation. It's about continuity.

Staying in the game.

Outsmarting the mid-winter slump doesn't require grit or hype. It requires calm structure, realistic expectations and the confidence to do less, better.

And when spring arrives – as it always does – you'll be glad you kept moving, even quietly.

That, in my experience, is how strength for life is built.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Alexandra Beck is a Swiss/Brit personal trainer and nutrition coach in Copenhagen, helping people of all ages find fun and consistency in fitness. A former communications professional, she now brings energy, and community magic to every workout.



DENMARK'S VIKING KINGS

Jess Hearne traces Denmark's evolution from Viking networks to a stable kingdom, showing how power moved from brute force to enduring institutions.



PEXELS / ANDRIU CHEPELOVSKYI

BEFORE BORDERS AND institutions shaped Denmark, it was shaped by movement. Long coastlines, shallow seas and sheltered fjords carried the people, stories and ambitions of the Viking Age from one shore to another. Ships linked Scandinavia to distant regions through trade, warfare and allegiance. Loyalty was personal, owed to leaders rather than a state. Authority rose and fell with reputation and success.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, a line of Viking kings began to give lasting form to this restless region. Far from merely raiding and ruling, they learned how to turn movement into permanence. By claiming territory, shaping belief and concentrating power, they transformed networks of coasts and routes into a kingdom with history, borders and purpose. What had once been fluid slowly acquired weight, until Denmark could be recognised as a nation with the strength to endure.

GORM THE OLD AND THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST

The story begins in Jutland with Gorm the Old, a king whose reputation rests as much on stone as on the sword. His legacy looms large at Jelling, where two burial mounds and a runestone still capture the Danish imagination. Gorm ruled in a world where chieftains held sway through kinship and gift-giv-

ing; a patchwork of regions bound loosely by custom rather than a united realm.

What Gorm offered was continuity. By raising a runestone, he linked his power to lineage and land. The stone honours his wife Thyra as "Denmark's adornment", a phrase that treats Denmark itself as a single entity worthy of praise and protection. Still pagan and rooted in ancestral tradition, Gorm's realm had begun to imagine itself as a single kingdom rather than a scattering of regions.

HARALD BLUETOOTH AND THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

Gorm's son, Harald Bluetooth, was a king caught between worlds. He inherited the old gods but recognised the power of the new faith spreading from the south. His decision to convert to Christianity around 965 AD was both spiritual and strategic, bringing the Viking realm into the orbit of European kingship, literacy and law.

Also at Jelling stands Harald's runestone, boldly proclaiming that he conquered Denmark and Norway and brought Christianity to the Danes. By naming the land as a whole and placing himself at its centre, Harald turned fragmented loyalties into a single royal authority, recasting conquest and conversion as acts of kingship over a unified realm. In

timidating ring fortresses rose across the country as symbols of a king who could command labour and loyalty on a national scale.

Yet Harald's reign was a tumultuous one. The new order disrupted longstanding allegiances, and rebellion ensued, led by his own son, Sweyn. Harald died wounded and in exile, but his vision endured. Denmark was now a Christian kingdom with borders, a king and a spot on Europe's political stage.

SWEYN FORKBEARD, CNUST AND THE SEA CROWN

Sweyn Forkbeard and his son Cnut the Great carried Danish ambition beyond the homeland. Where Harald had consolidated, Sweyn expanded. His campaigns against England were ruthless but calculated, drawing wealth and prestige back to Denmark. The Danegeld payments filled royal coffers and strengthened the monarchy at home.

By 1028, he was the ruler of England, Denmark and Norway, having created a North Sea realm bound by ships and silver. Unlike the raiders of earlier generations, Cnut governed. He issued laws, supported the Church and presented himself as a Christian king among equals. A later story tells of Cnut setting his throne by the shore and ordering the sea to halt, using the inevitable failure of the command to remind his courtiers that even a great king's power had limits.

Under Cnut's rule, the country had become a kingdom with a centre, a court and a sense of destiny. When the North Sea empire fractured after Cnut's death, Denmark remained. The idea of the nation had taken root.

By the time the Viking Age drew to a close, Denmark had borders, a kingship and roots. Power was no longer measured only by what could be taken, but by what could be held and remembered. From Jelling's monuments to Cnut's far-reaching authority, Denmark had become a kingdom that could endure beyond the age that gave rise to it.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Jess Hearne is an Irish Content & Communications Specialist based in Copenhagen. With a background in history and socio-political studies, she works with clients across many areas, while pursuing passion projects in feminist history and film psychology.



THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD LIGHTING

With light as both a necessity and a design element, **Maja de Silva** explores how thoughtful lighting shapes atmosphere, emotion, and everyday life in the home.

LIGHT IS ONE of the most essential elements in our lives. It surrounds us constantly, yet we rarely truly notice it. Most of the time, it simply exists in the background—quiet, reliable, taken for granted. But the moment it disappears, we become aware of how deeply we depend on it. When darkness falls, we immediately notice the lack of light. We crave it. We seek it. Light shapes not only what we see but also how we feel, function, and experience the world.

Sunlight, in particular, is everything. It is the source of life itself, the reason we can exist on this planet. It influences our natural rhythms, our energy levels, and our overall well-being. We celebrate it instinctively: sunbathing in summer, admiring golden sunsets, waking up early to catch a soft sunrise. Sunlight brings out colours, warmth, and a sense of optimism. And when the sun is gone, we find ways to replace it—we light candles, make fire, and create artificial light to bring comfort back into our spaces. Today, we are incredibly fortunate to have access to a wide range of lighting solutions: beautiful lamps in endless shapes, materials, and colours, each with the potential to transform how a space feels.

Light truly fills our lives. For context, pause for a moment and look around you. How do you experience the light where you are right now? Is it soft and calming, or harsh and cold? Is it energising or overwhelming? Notice how it affects your mood and your body. Now think about different environments—your home, your workplace, a café, a restaurant, or a museum. The lighting in each space creates a distinct atmosphere. Some spaces feel welcoming and inspiring, while others feel flat or uncomfortable. This difference often comes down to how thoughtfully the light has been considered. I invite you to experience light more consciously and to start shaping your own spaces with intention.

A FEW TIPS FOR YOUR INTERIORS

We all need good lighting, but what does that actually mean? From an interior designer's perspective, good lighting serves multiple functions. Let's start with the living room. This space typically requires a combination of practical and atmospheric lighting. Ceiling lamps are important—they allow you to clean, stay active, and feel awake, especially during the darker months (particularly here in Denmark). These can be spotlights or a statement ceiling lamp, ideally with dimmers to easily adjust the mood.

From there, build layers. Light up corners with floor lamps and don't be afraid to mix and match styles. There are so many beautiful designs available, and combining them creates character. Shades are especially powerful—whether plain, colourful, textured, or patterned, they add warmth and personality. Table lamps are another great option, and you can often find unique second-hand pieces that bring soul into your home. One key detail to keep in mind is proportion. The size of a lamp relative to the surrounding furniture can make or break the look. A well-proportioned lamp can become a strong statement piece, shaping the room and creating a calm, inviting atmosphere.

Most importantly, choose lamps you truly love. Trends come and go, but personal style lasts. If you stay connected to what feels right for you, your lighting choices will continue to bring joy for years to come.

In the bedroom, lighting plays a huge role in comfort. A good ceiling light is still important, but it should feel gentle and beautiful. If space allows, a floor lamp can help create a cosy reading corner. Bedside lighting deserves special attention—larger lamps with shades on night tables often look stunning and balanced. You can match shade colours with accents in the room's accents or keep things neutral for a calm, timeless look. Smaller lamps can work as well, provided they are part of a thoughtful composition. Ever wondered why hotel rooms feel so effortlessly elegant? The secret is almost always layered, well-balanced lighting.

LIGHTING AS A DESIGN ELEMENT

Multiple light sources are the key to shaping a space. Play with forms, materials, and colours, and use dimmers or smart bulbs to easily shift the mood throughout the day. Don't treat lamps as boring, purely functional objects. Think of them as essential design elements—sometimes even pieces of art. After all, they illuminate your home and accompany you through every moment. We spend so much time choosing sofas, tables, and décor, yet lighting deserves just as much care and attention.

Light up your home thoughtfully, and you'll notice how it gently transforms not only your space, but also how you feel within it.



DESIGNER/PHOTOGRAPHER: MAJA DE SILVA / LOCATION: PRIVATE HOME, CPH, DK

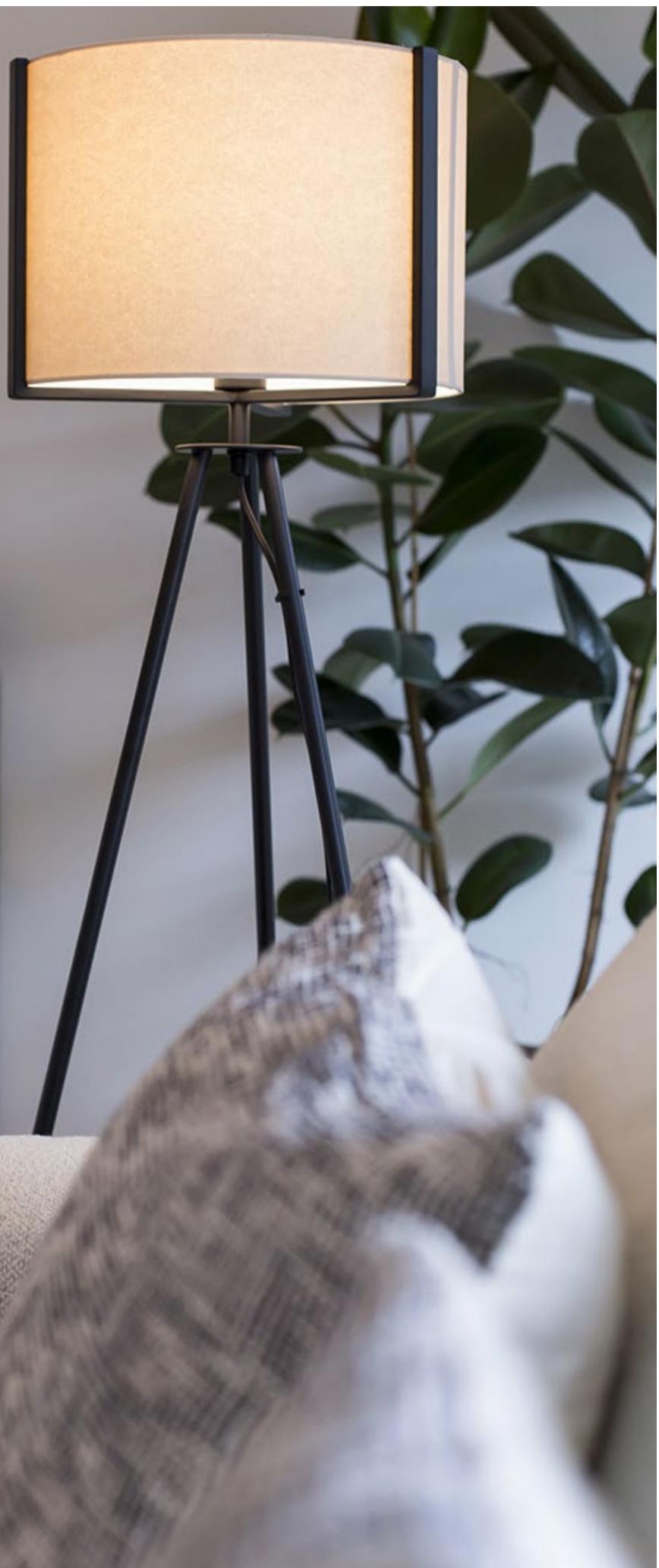


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“Light surrounds us constantly - quiet, reliable, and often taken for granted. Yet the moment it disappears, we feel its absence deeply. Light shapes not only what we see, but how we feel, how we function, and how we experience the world.”



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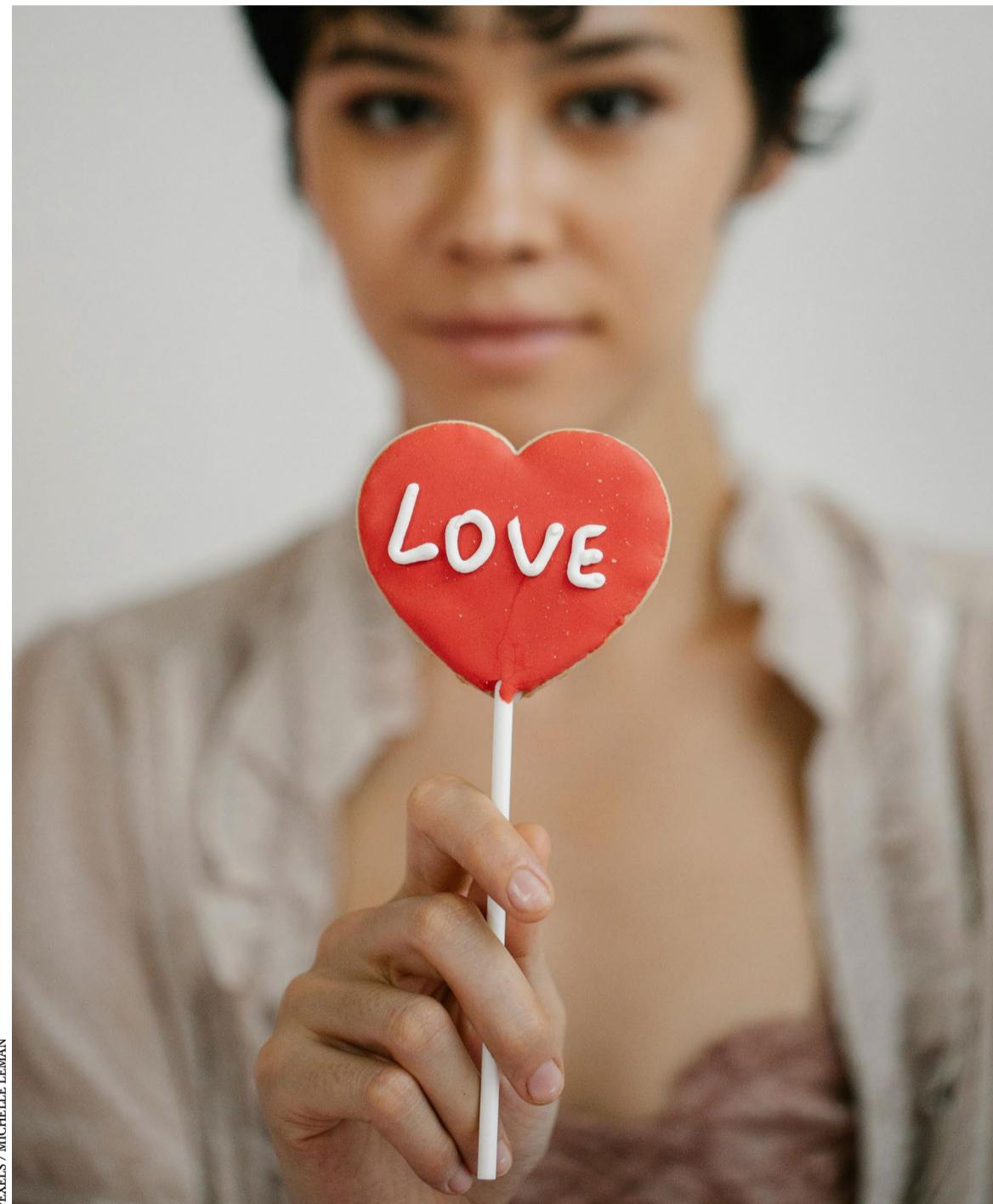
ABOUT THE WRITER

[Maja de Silva](#) is a Copenhagen-based interior architect and photographer with an international background spanning Switzerland, the US, and Poland. She blends design expertise and visual storytelling to create intimate, thoughtful interiors while embracing a modern Scandinavian lifestyle.



DANISH WAYS OF SAYING “JEG ELSKER DIG”

Brooke Taylor Fossey’s look at love beyond *jeg elsker dig*.



PEXELS / MICHELLE LEMAN

IT'S FEBRUARY, WHICH means many of us are thinking about love – well, Valentine's Day at least. *Valentinsdag* has gained some traction in Denmark since the 1990s and 2000s, but it's still not widely celebrated. So how do Danes prefer to profess their love?

WHY DANES RARELY SAY JEG ELSKER DIG
Danes are famously reserved when it comes to saying 'I love you.' While it might seem surprising to outsiders, the phrase *jeg elsker dig* isn't dropped lightly in Denmark. So if Danes rarely use these words, how

do they express love? In plenty of ways! But cultural preferences show that everyday gestures and language nuance take centre stage.

ACTIONS OVER DECLARATIONS

Instead of grandiose declarations, Danes often express love through consistent actions, shared routines, and practical support. Saying *jeg elsker dig* can feel too formal or intense for many Danes – and so it is often reserved for a deep love that has been tried and tested – for family and long-term relationships. But that doesn't mean feelings aren't deep or genu-

ine. For Danes, presence, attentiveness, and reliability often matter far more than verbal affirmations, and the same is true of friendships. Although it can take a while to develop deep ties with a Dane, once you do, many say that you're in for life.

SOFTER WAYS OF SAYING “I LOVE YOU”

That said, Danes do have ways of expressing affection in words, even if they're less intense than *jeg elsker dig*. Phrases like *jeg holder af dig* ('I care about you'), *du betyder meget for mig* ('you mean a lot to me'), or *jeg er vild med dig* ('I'm crazy about you') are commonly used among partners. Danes will also often use "I love you" in English before using the Danish equivalent.

THE MEANING BEHIND KÆRESTE

One small word that carries a lot of emotional weight in Danish is *kæreste*. It's used for both men and women, for relatively new relationships or partnerships that have lasted years. At its simplest, it translates to 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend,' but the literal meaning comes from *kær*, which means 'dear' or 'beloved.' Calling someone your *kæreste* signals closeness, commitment, and affection without needing to say *jeg elsker dig* until you're ready.

WHEN LOVE WORDS CARRY WEIGHT

It's an interesting cultural observation for me, coming from a culture that loves many things – I love coffee! I love biking! I love chocolate! It's lovely (oops) for me to see the weight of the Danish *jeg elsker dig*, and how Danes reserve *jeg elsker* for a few things, so that it continues to hold its meaning.

QUIET, STEADY LOVE

Ultimately, understanding Danish love is about appreciating quiet, steady expressions and consistency. Even if *jeg elsker dig* is said less often, the feelings behind it are real and deeply felt. Danes just like to take it slow and steady in love.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Brooke Taylor Fossey is a Danish language coach and content creator based in Copenhagen. With a background spanning city planning, craft beer, and bagel-making, she now helps learners explore Danish language and culture on [@nearlydanishdame](https://www.instagram.com/nearlydanishdame)



SKILLS WORTH LEARNING IN 2026

In this article, **Diana-Medrea Mogensen** rethinks the skills conversation for 2026. The focus shifts from trends to capabilities that support sustainable performance.

I SUSPECT MANY of you opened this article expecting to read about the latest skills, likely related to new technologies, emerging trends, or new regulations such as the AI Act. Every year, someone publishes a list of “skills in demand for the future,” and every year, we are told that we need to catch up.

This article makes a different case.

Instead of choosing what to learn based on what the world claims to need next, it may be more useful to choose skills based on what you need in order to work better, decide more clearly, and sustain yourself over time. Most skills are transferable in one way or another. The real leverage comes from investing in capacities that strengthen how you act when things are uncertain, busy, or uncomfortable.

Ultimately, business performance is inseparable from human performance.

If you strip skills down to what they actually do for you in daily life, a pattern appears. Some skills consistently pay off across industries, tools, and contexts because they improve how you lead yourself and others, manage resources, and follow through.

COMMUNICATION

Communication skills support almost everything you do as a business owner. They help you lead, sell, and influence without pushing. They allow you to explain your value clearly, align expectations with clients, and address tension before it escalates into conflict.

Clear communication also supports boundaries. When you can articulate what you offer, what you do not offer, and under which conditions you work best, you reduce misunderstandings and unnecessary stress. Over time, this saves energy and preserves relationships.

When communication improves, friction decreases everywhere.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Financial skills rarely feel exciting, but they are among the most stabilising skills you can develop. They help you manage and deploy money intelligently instead of impulsively. They give you perspective when income fluctuates and help you distinguish between short-term discomfort and long-term sustainability.

With basic financial literacy, decision-making becomes more calm. You stop reacting emotionally to numbers and start using them as information. Money shifts from being a constant source of anxiety to becoming a tool you can work with consciously.

A business does not need perfect finances to function, but it does need clarity.



PEXELS / GEORGE MILTON

DISCIPLINE AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Discipline is often misunderstood as rigidity. In practice, it is the skill that enables you to get the job done even when motivation is low. It is the capacity to follow through on decisions, maintain routines, and finish what you start, regardless of mood.

Without discipline, insight remains theory, and plans remain unfinished. With it, even small actions compound over time. Discipline reduces mental load because you spend less energy negotiating with yourself.

This is not about working harder. It is about reducing friction between intention and action.

SELECTIVE DIGITAL COMPETENCE

Digital skills matter most when they solve concrete problems. Knowing how to automate recurring tasks, document processes, or streamline communication can save time and reduce dependency on others.

You do not need to master every new tool, though. You only need enough digital competence to remove bottlenecks that repeatedly slow you down. Used selectively, digital skills increase autonomy and free up attention for work that actually requires your presence.

Technology becomes useful when it simplifies, not when it distracts.

CHOOSING WHERE TO INVEST NEXT

If you want to be intentional about your learning in 2026, start with a simple reflection. Where do you lose the most energy right now? Where do you hesitate, avoid, or overcomplicate? Where do you rely on

others more than you would like? What kind of human do you need to become for your business to feel more stable?

Choose learning that supports that.

A meditation practice might help you regulate under pressure. A communication course might help you close sales or prevent misunderstandings. Financial skills might help you make calmer decisions. Discipline might help you finally finish what you start. Even something seemingly unrelated, such as a craft or physical practice, can strengthen patience, focus, and follow-through in ways that directly translate to business.

The skills that pay off are rarely the newest ones. They are the ones that help you stay regulated, manage resources wisely, act consistently, and adapt when conditions change. When learning supports who you are becoming, results tend to follow naturally.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Diana Medrea-Mogensen is a Denmark-based entrepreneur, funding strategist, and educator working at the intersection of self-employment, learning, and inclusion. She founded We Are Entrepreneurs to support expats and underrepresented groups in building sustainable businesses.



BAKED CHOCOLATE TART

Natasha Liviero brings irresistible indulgence to this chocolate-lover's dessert, combining crisp pastry with silky baked dark chocolate custard and a delicate milk chocolate glaze. Perfect for ending a meal on a sweet note, it's effortlessly elegant and guaranteed to please.



BAKED CHOCOLATE TART (Makes 1 x 23cm Tart)

Ingredients Pastry Case:

10g Cocoa butter, melted (or 1 egg,
10g cream, 5g cocoa powder)
340g flour
50g cocoa powder
180g butter, cold and cubed
100g icing/confectioners sugar
Pinch of salt
45g almond/hazelnut flour
70g whole egg, whisked



Ingredients Chocolate Custard:

220g 70% dark chocolate, roughly chopped
Pinch of salt
200g cream
90g low-fat milk
50g light brown sugar
55g whole egg, whisked



Ingredients Chocolate Glaze:

54g cream
8g honey
90g milk chocolate, roughly chopped
4g hot water



Method:

1. Begin the day before with the pastry.
2. Butter/grease a 23cm-wide x 2cm-deep tart ring with butter/baking spray, then set aside on a baking tray lined with a Silpat or baking paper.
3. If you don't have cocoa butter, prepare an egg wash by whisking together the egg, cream and cocoa powder. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.
4. Sift the flour and cocoa into a bowl. Add the butter, sugar, salt, and almond/hazelnut flour, and beat at medium speed with a paddle attachment until the mixture resembles sea sand.
5. Add the egg and continue mixing until a smooth dough develops. This will only take a few minutes.
6. Divide the dough in half and freeze one half for later use. Roll out to 3mm thick between two sheets of baking paper, then refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
7. Remove from the fridge and rest at room temperature until pliable but firm enough to line your tart ring.
8. Line the base and sides of the tart ring and freeze overnight.
9. Set the oven to 165°C. Bake the tart for 20 minutes (no baking beans required).
10. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 5 minutes before gently brushing the tart all over (inside and out) with melted cocoa butter or the egg wash. The tart must be cool and firm enough to handle, or it will break. Return to the oven and bake for a further 10 minutes.
11. Remove from the oven and cool to room temperature.
12. Drop the oven temperature to 150°C.
13. To prepare the chocolate filling, place the chocolate and salt in a large heat proof bowl. Heat the cream, milk and sugar until simmering.
14. Pour the heated cream mixture over the chocolate and let it rest for 2 minutes, then whisk to combine. Add the egg and continue whisking until thick and glossy, while minimising air bubbles.
15. Pour into the cooled tart case (remove any air bubbles with a toothpick or a kitchen blowtorch) and return to the oven for 15 minutes. The filling will be jiggly in the middle and set around the sides. Cool completely at room temperature - around 2 hours.
16. Prepare the glaze by placing the cream and honey in a medium-sized jug. Heat in the microwave until simmering.
17. Add the chocolate to the jug and let it rest for 2 minutes before whisking to combine.
18. Whisk in the boiling water until smooth, then pour over the surface of the tart.
19. Gently tilt the tart to coat the entire surface, including the sides. Shimmy the tart and remove air bubbles with a toothpick or a kitchen blowtorch.
20. Leave to set for at least 3-4 hours at room temperature (the glaze will firm but not fully set).
21. Decorate with gold leaf or a grating of chocolate around the edges and serve as is or with a dollop of whipped cream.

NOTES:

- *For best results, use high-quality chocolate such as Lindt.
- *Best eaten the day it's made - to make ahead, complete the tart in the morning and serve as dessert in the evening.
- *Store leftovers in the fridge - the pastry will soften, and the chocolate filling will firm up, but the flavour will still be good!

ABOUT THE WRITER

Natasha Liviero is a South African pastry chef with Croatian heritage and a passion for European patisserie. She spends her days crafting recipes, sparing time with her cats, and sharing her pastry journey on Instagram [@natashaliviero](https://www.instagram.com/natashaliviero).





STUDENT ASSISTANT – ROMANIAN TRANSLATOR

Are you looking for a student job where you can use your strong Romanian language skills? And are you excited to work with a variety of translation tasks from English into Romanian?

Location: Within 1-2 hours of Skanderborg

Deadline: When filled

Contact: Tanja Rosted Rafn Gjesager, Head of Master Data & Quality targje@normal.dk

FUNCTIONAL SYSTEM INTEGRATION ENGINEER FOR OT-DEVELOPMENT

You will play a central role in the planning, design, development and implementation of future IT and OT systems, with a particular focus on integrations between new railway traffic management and traffic planning systems.

Location: Copenhagen

Deadline: 24 February 2026

Contact: Cléo Deroo, Teamleader +45 21 79 71 27

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

Your role will be to bridge finance and technology, drive continuous improvement in reporting capabilities and system functionality to support strategic decision-making across the organisation.

Location: Ishøj

Deadline: When filled

Contact: N/A

To advertise your vacancy here, contact:

info@englishjobdenmark.dk

or call 60 70 22 98.

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<https://englishjobdenmark.dk/>

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

AUTOMATIONS SPECIALIST

Do you want to take ownership of automation projects that really matter – and help drive the development of a production site in transformation?

Location: Esbjerg

Deadline: When filled

Contact: Thomas Jessen, Automation Team Leader +45 21 20 99 31

ENGLISH SPEAKING BUS DRIVER

In this exciting role, you'll be responsible for safely navigating our guests through the city's vibrant streets, while providing insightful commentary in clear and engaging English.

Location: Copenhagen

Deadline: 29 March 2026

Contact: info@helloworldtours.com

PRIMARY TEACHER (KEY STAGE 1)

In the International line we use Cambridge International Examinations primary curriculum. We are looking for a qualified primary teacher with English as a mother tongue.

Location: Aalborg

Deadline: 27 March 2026

Contact: Jenny Rohd-Thomsen, Head of International Department jrt@skipper-clement-skolen.dk

ORDER MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST – EMEA (2 POSITIONS AVAILABLE)

This is a hands-on role focused on daily order processing and partner support in a global B2B tech environment.

Location: Copenhagen

Deadline: 22 February 2026

Contact: Karina Ravnskjær Thomsen, Manager, Order Management EMEA +45 88 30 03 00

TALENT ACQUISITION SPECIALIST AT ALL GRAVY

You'll play a central role in shaping how we attract, assess, and hire the best talent across the board. You'll partner directly with Jonatan & Kristian - our two founders, hiring managers, and Operations to design an outstanding candidate experience that reflects our culture and values.

Location: Copenhagen

Deadline: When filled

Contact: N/A

JUNIOR BACKEND DEVELOPER

You will join our development team in Copenhagen, working closely with frontend and backend developers, as well as designers.

Location: Copenhagen

Deadline: When filled

Contact: ml@foodoptimize.com or +45 31 43 31 84

SENIOR FULL STACK ENGINEER – BUILD, SCALE, AND SHAPE THE FUTURE OF PREDICTIVE AI –

This isn't a role about ticking boxes; it's about building systems that scale, shipping products that deliver impact, and raising the engineering bar as we grow. Come join our Product and Engineering team and be a part of a vibrant growing team that prides itself on delivering high quality products that are heavily valued by our customers.

Location: Taastrup

Deadline: When filled

Contact: N/A

HEAD OF CREATIVE PRODUCTION

As Head of Creative Production, you will ensure that our global ideas translate into high-performing, locally relevant advertising at scale, across markets, languages and platforms.

Location: Copenhagen

Deadline: When filled

Contact: N/A

MECHANICAL ENGINEER – MOTOR DESIGN

In this role, you will be responsible for the mechanical design, development, and optimization of electric motor components used in axial fan applications.

Location: Randers

Deadline: When filled

Contact: N/A

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Students, Graduates, Spouses, Professional Job Seekers & Career Changers through an online community, workshops, events and 1:1 coaching.

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