

Welcome to session

The past, present and future: Riding the wave of nationalism in internationalisation

Introductions



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Raise your hand

What is your role?

1. International Officer
2. Policy Advisor
3. Manager
4. Researcher
5. Educator
6. Student
7. Other

Raise your hand

Do you think internationalisation of education is under threat in your institution?

- Yes
- No

What is happening?

January 2025

- **Concerned** about developments in our countries
- **Updated each other** on the situation in each country
- **Discussed actions** we can take as researchers & educators in field of internationalisation



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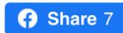
EUROPE

It's an altered world. But

DENMARK-NETHERLANDS-IRELAND

Riding the nationalism wave requires a collective approach

Simone Hackett, Denise McAllister Wylie and Steffen Saxil 22 January 2025



A wave of nationalism is washing through Europe, leaving a profound and detrimental impact on higher education and society. Over the past few years, many countries have veered to the political right, sparking questions about the origins and consequences of this shift, particularly in relation to higher education and internationalisation.

In this article, three higher education professionals from Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland share their unique perspectives on this wave, examining its effects on (inter)national higher education policies and practices within their contexts.

We aim to ignite a conversation and invite readers to reflect on what role we, as institutional leaders, academics, practitioners, students and citizens, can play in responding to this wave, and how we can safeguard and promote internationalisation and intercultural learning.

Ireland



- **Strong government support** for internationalisation - strategies since 2010
- **Higher education is underfunded** - internationalisation boosts funding as well as national economy
- **Public pressure may grow** - housing shortages, migration concerns; 2024 strategy targets 'modest' growth
- **Rising nationalism now poses risks** - undermining internationalisation; fueling anti-migrant narratives
- **Government response** - GCE, European languages in primary school

The Netherlands (was)

- Populism & Media Influence
- Restrictions on internationalisation and major funding cuts
- Internationalisation in Balance Bill (WIB)
- Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs (TAO): Are courses taught in English necessary and add value?
- Shrinking demographics & cutbacks
- Universities took action
- Protests and restrictions on English-taught courses
- **Reverse turn:** TAO test scrapped

Future

- Government collapses
- New government elections in October 2025
- Far right Party for Freedom of **Geert Wilders** is still **leading** in the latest opinion polls.



The Netherlands (Now)

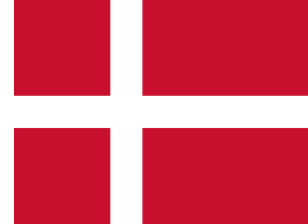
- Jetten cabinet to reverse €1.5 billion in cuts to education and science
- Movement towards the Lisbon target of 3% of GDP in science and research
- New talent strategy for targeted selection and retention
- Binding agreements on international student intake
- “Universities and colleges need international talent to retain business and knowledge clusters in the region”
- To better regulate the influx of international students, the government is making "binding administrative
- agreements with educational institutions regarding the capacity of non-Dutch-language programs and
- regional capacity."



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Denmark



- **First reduction** of int. Students in 2017 by 25%
- **In 2021 no English language programs** in undergraduate studies at UAS (Research institutions also required to reduce places)
- **May 2025 tighter rules for study visas** for unofficial programs (not allowed to work, no spouses)
- **Currently (fall '25) also debate over reducing non-EU students** in graduate programs at research universities
- **Is this a problem?... you bet!**

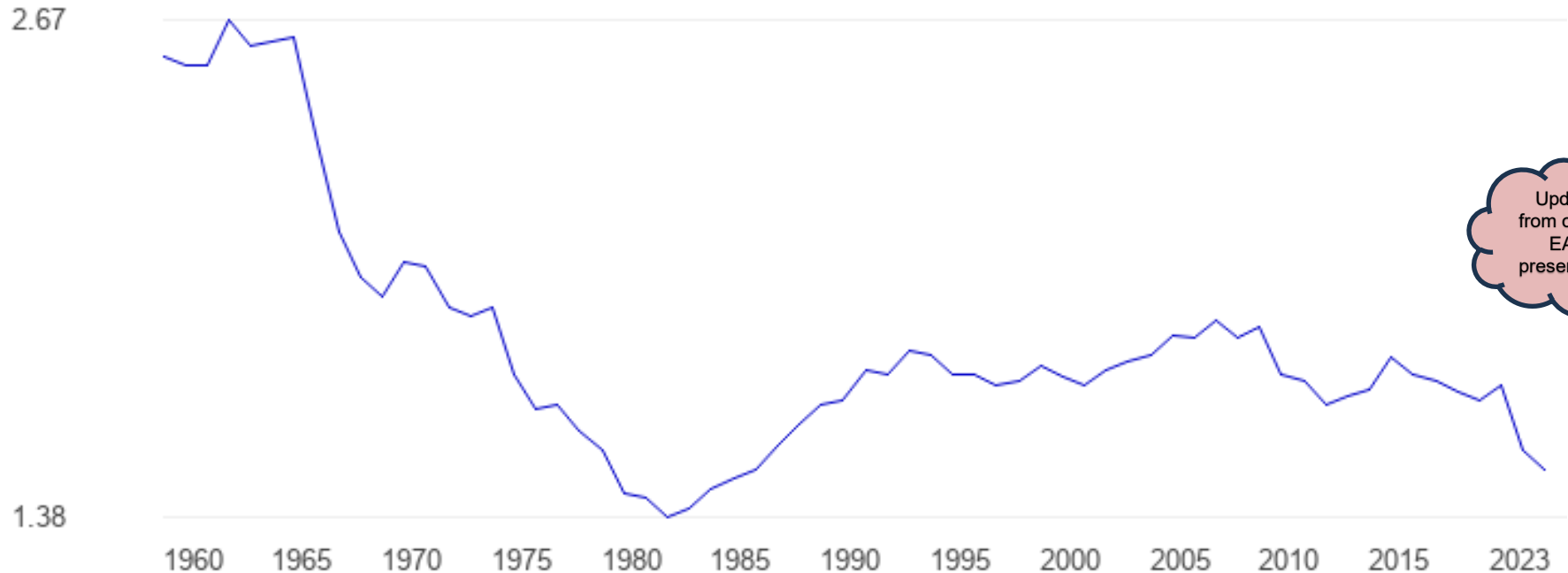


What's the problem with Denmark?

- In 2024, there were approximately **15,300 Danish-controlled subsidiaries abroad**. These companies are owned by approximately 3,800 parent companies in Denmark.
- Danish **subsidiaries abroad** employ approximately **1.6 million employees**.
- Export companies: The number of Danish companies with exports of goods has remained stable at approximately **15,000** over the past ten years.
- **25** of the largest Danish companies account for a very large share of global employment, with over **one million employees** abroad together.
- In 2023, there were **13,800 foreign-owned** companies in Denmark, which constituted 3 percent of the total number of companies.
- Approximately **45 percent** of employment in Danish companies is created by direct export demand
- **6 in 10 companies** operating internationally has English as corporate language (DI 2016)

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Do I Need to Point out the Obvious..



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https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Denmark/Fertility_rate/

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Effect of International Students

- Avdeev (2026) found that exposure to international students causes native students to:
 - Form Social ties to non- natives
 - Hold more positive attitudes towards migration and learning about other cultures
 - Seek opportunities abroad
- The arrival of international students makes Dutch students more open and tolerant, giving them a positive attitude about European integration

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Pedagogical approach needed

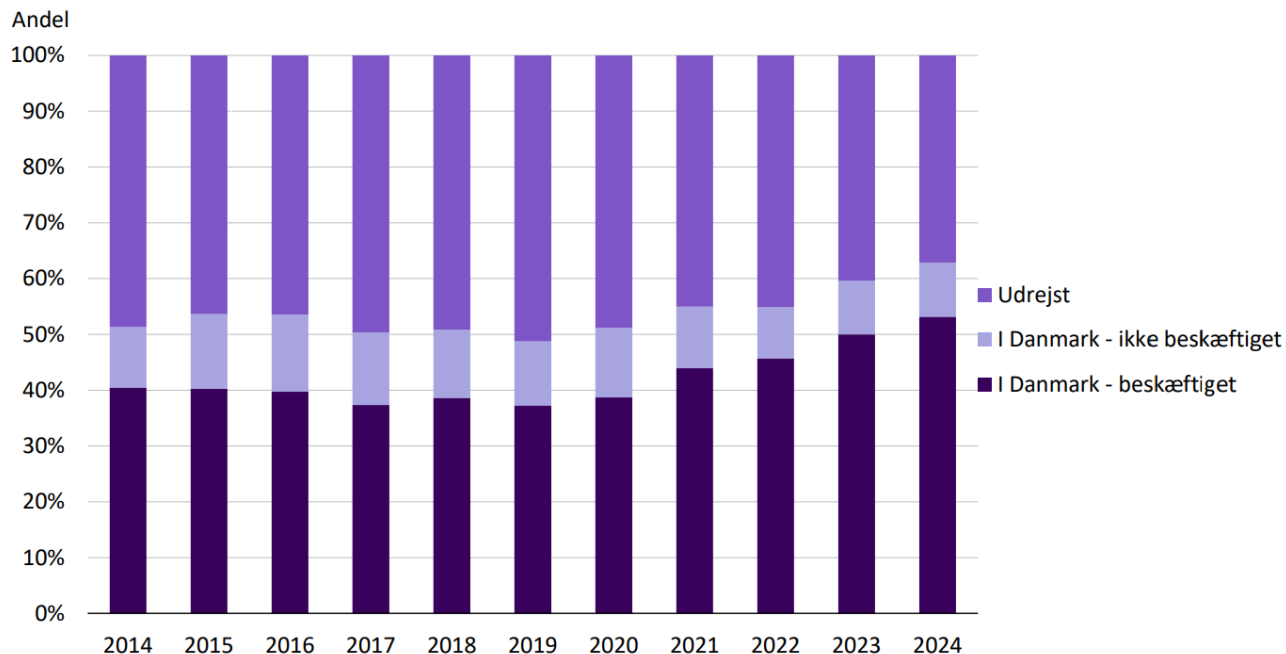
- Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige (2009) compared students who went abroad with those who did not. Without structured pedagogical intervention, the difference in intercultural development was limited.
- What made a difference was not mobility itself, but the presence of guided reflection, mentoring and feedback throughout the experience
- Deardorff (2006) emphasises that intercultural competence is not the result of exposure, but of learning processes that make sense of that exposure.

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More Graduates Stay

Stor stigning i internationale kandidater, der er i job i Danmark to år efter endt uddannelse

Status for internationale dimittender fra kandidatuddannelser to år efter endt uddannelse



Kilde; Dansk Industri

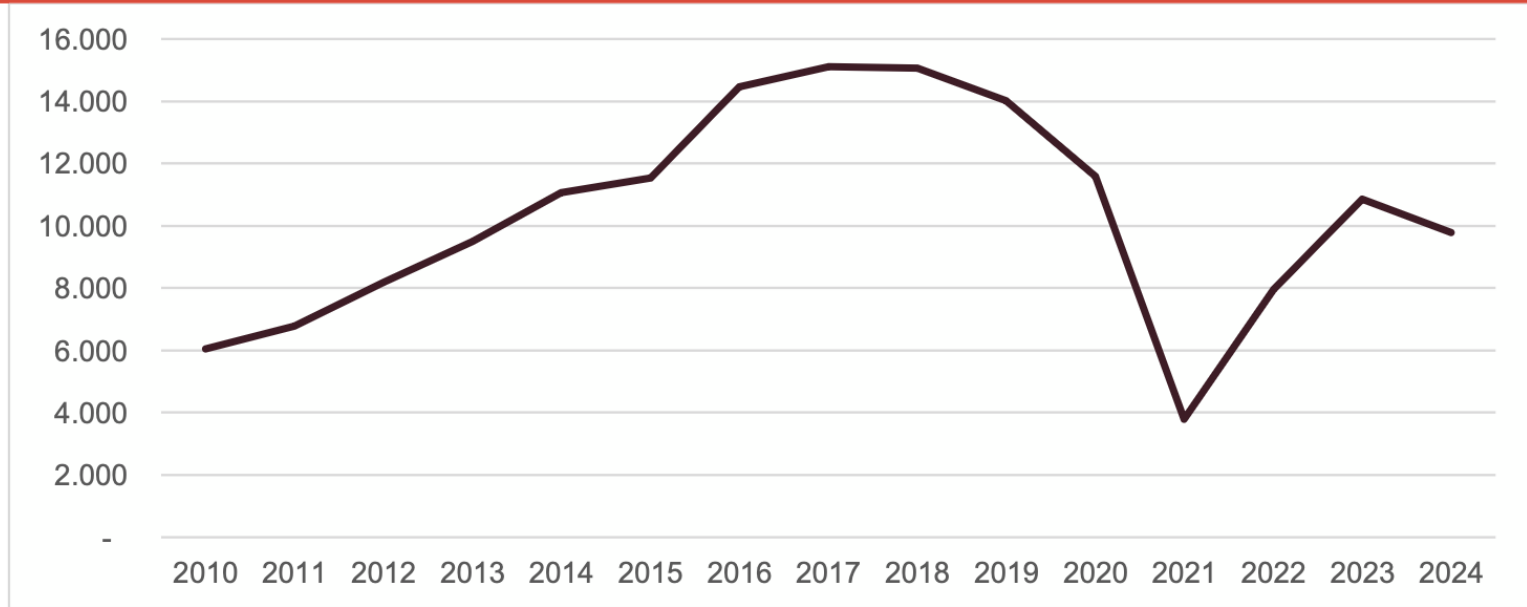
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But Fewer Goes on Exchange

Figur 1 // Udvikling i antal udvekslingsstuderende



Kilde: egne beregninger pba. tal fra Statistikbanken.dk

Note: Studerende fra danske institutioner på studie- eller praktikophold i udlandet.

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Kilde; DEA, Udveksling i tilbagegang 2025

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How do we
surf the
nationalism
wave?

Let's
discuss...





Activity: Riding the Wave

Group Reflection (10 min)

- Discuss together: do you see patterns across your institutions? If so, what are they?

Group Synthesis (30 min)

- What are the **top 2–3 strategies** we can realistically put in place to:
 - Ensure internationalisation is sustained?
 - Build intercultural competence? Encourage respect for different approaches?
 - Support successful international collaboration?



Group Feedback

One person from each group reports back on the following:

- What did you agree on?
- Was there similarity or difference among group members re. where they were on the wave?
- Did they identify patterns?
- Name one key strategy that they propose



Bridging Gaps & Building Skills (from EAIE)

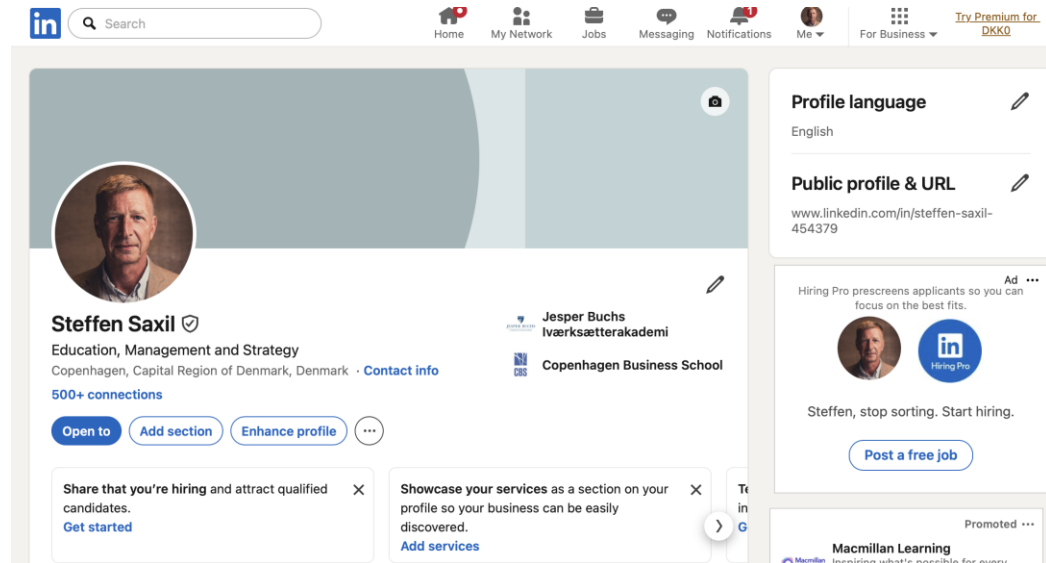
- Break down “ivory tower” perception by engaging local communities.
- Show how research & internationalisation benefit society.
- Share insights in inclusive, relatable ways to empower citizens.
- Involve businesses and professional work fields
- Factual Media

Critical Thinking & Intercultural Competence

- Invest in methods fostering **critical thinking, media literacy & fact-checking**.
- Essential in era of AI, social media, disinformation & populist politics.
- Expand initiatives like **COIL** to build intercultural skills & collaboration.
- Create safe spaces where staff & students learn from diverse perspectives.
- Ensure international staff & students feel welcome and valued.

Let's continue the conversation

Connect on LinkedIn



List of references

- [Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige \(2009\)](#)
- [Stanislaw Adeev \(2026\)](#)
- [Deardorff \(2006\)](#)
- [Dansk Industri \(2025\)](#)
- [Danmarks statistik \(2023\)](#)
- DEA (2025) Udveksling i tilbagegang
- And some cool research:
- [Simone Hackett \(2023\)](#)
- [Denise McAlister Wylie](#)

