



By: TA | AP Insight

Denmark's EU presidency in the mirror of the new US policy toward the bloc



Under the slogan "A strong Europe in a changing world," Denmark has taken over the six-month EU Council Presidency and will work to ensure that the bloc takes as much responsibility as possible for its own security.

The objectives of the Danish presidency are largely shaped by the attitude of the government in Washington toward the EU in the key areas of security and the economy.

Denmark launched its presidency of the European Union on Thursday with a call for Europe to unite to take on war in Ukraine and chaos caused by U.S.

President Donald Trump's global tariff **hike** which are likely to mark the Nordic country's six-month term at the helm of the world's biggest trading bloc.

"We have war on European soil. We face trade wars, and new tariffs, and we have our closest ally, in the United States, turning increasingly inward," said Danish European Affairs Minister Marie Bjerre. "Europe can no longer be in the shadow of the United States. We need now to stand on our own two feet."

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were in the western city of Aarhus for a day of celebratory events as Denmark started its eighth EU presidency since joining in 1973.

Presidencies rotate between the 27 EU member countries every six months. The nation in charge sets policy priorities and organizes the bloc's working agenda. It's supposed to act as an "honest broker," setting aside national interests to foster consensus.

Denmark is entering its term with the motto "A Strong Europe in a Changing World." Its aim is to help ensure the EU can take responsibility for its own security, boost economic competitiveness and tackle climate change.

The ceremony was held as large parts of Europe **sweltered** in high temperatures.

Russia's war on Ukraine, now in its fourth year, is seen as an existential challenge in Europe and will weigh heavily on most policy debate. Economic turmoil also lies ahead. Trump's 90-day tariff pause ends on July 9 with no EU-U.S. trade deal in place as yet.

Getting defense on track and gunning for 5%

NATO has warned that Russia could be ready to attack another European country in 3-5 years. To prepare, the military alliance — most of whose members are EU countries — has agreed that national military and defense-related investment should **rise** to 5% of GDP.

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Denmark's priority will be to set Europe on track to properly defend itself by 2030. That will require laying the groundwork for countries to buy the military equipment needed to execute NATO's defense plans with Trump's security priorities **lying** outside Europe.

That will mean wrapping up negotiations on proposals that will help countries purchase and make military equipment together.

Enlargement and another defense front

Helping Ukraine, but also Moldova, to join the EU soon is another security priority. Moldova has been shaken by Russian **meddling** in the form of energy coercion, election interference and disinformation campaigns.

Denmark says it aims to keep the two moving toward membership together, but Hungary is blocking Ukraine's path. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán **insists** that Ukraine should remain a buffer zone between Russia and NATO

countries.

All political and practical means will be used first to persuade Hungary to lift its veto

With fresh elections in Moldova in September, pressure is mounting for the EU to “decouple” their accession tracks. Bjerre said “all political and practical means” will be used first to persuade Hungary — a small EU country and the only one standing in Ukraine's way — to lift its veto.

She said it's important to send clear signals to Balkans countries. Most have waited many years to join.

Honing a competitive edge

As Trump wages tariff war, trade has changed drastically. The EU has sought new trade agreements with other countries, such as India, while other trade pacts are being revamped. Denmark says it's important to accelerate that process.

The government in Copenhagen says it's also seeking to cut more bureaucratic red tape in order to speed up innovation.

A major challenge looms in the form of the EU's next long-term budget

A major challenge looms in the form of the EU's next long-term budget. Von der Leyen plans to unveil the commission's blueprint for the seven-year spending package, which should enter force in 2028, on July 16.

With defense spending increases weighing heavily on national purses, member countries are unlikely to want to stump up more funds for European priorities. Denmark's aim is to get the debate — which could run for two years — off on the right track.

Managing climate change

Despite some backsliding, the EU still holds to its goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050, by cutting greenhouse gases and compensating for any remaining emissions. Denmark will lead work on setting a 2040 target to guide climate action and investment to keep the bloc on track.

Part of that will be the transition away from fossil fuels to green energy forms. Russia's war on Ukraine has highlighted the dangers of energy **dependence** on any one supplier.

Sanctions and political pressure have not stopped some EU countries of getting their oil and gas from Russia, although the level of dependency has dropped markedly since 2022. Denmark says the continued phase out remains a priority.

Copenhagen also says it should be easier for farmers to respect EU rules. It wants the bloc's agricultural policy to be simple and business friendly. One goal is to finalize negotiations on a rule simplification package.

Migration policy, outsourcing continues

In 2021, Frederiksen spoke of a **vision** of “zero asylum-seekers,” and her government will continue down the EU track of seeking “innovative solutions” to better manage migrants.



Denmark says it's important to persuade people not to set

out for Europe in the first place

Unable to agree how best to cope, EU countries have mostly focused on deporting people. They've tried to establish "return hubs" in countries outside the bloc where rejected asylum-seekers could be sent. That approach will continue.

Denmark says it's important to persuade people not to set out for Europe in the first place.

Work will also continue on preparing the vast asylum and migration policy **pact** to come into force next year. The pact was seen as the answer to Europe's migration woes, but countries still differ on how best to tackle the challenge.

Under international law, people have a right to asylum if they fear for their lives, safety or persecution.