

Denmark's Prime Minister's New Year's Speech

January 1, 2025

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen (Social Democrats) delivered a New Year's Day speech to the Danish people.

Good Evening.

How does one begin a New Year's speech in such a turbulent world?

Does the big picture become too overwhelming, and the small things too insignificant?

Or is it precisely in the small things that we find the big?

When the world is on fire, we come together in Denmark and find our way—this time at the forefront. Because we know that much is at stake. That peace and freedom cannot be taken for granted.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of liberation.

Europe is more challenged than it has been since the five cursed years.

And when Europe is under pressure, so is Denmark.

It can be hard to see with the naked eye because, for the most part, things are going well here at home.

Unemployment is low. Employment is high. And in the spring, we gave municipalities and regions the biggest boost in 15 years, so there's more funding again for everyday welfare.

With the health reform, more doctors will serve the parts of Denmark where they are most needed.

And with the green agreement, we've promised ourselves and our children and grandchildren that we will no longer allow our fjords to be polluted to such an extent. And that agriculture will occupy less of the land that must continue to feed us in the future.

We're making progress—and perhaps even finding happiness, as TV2 sings.

And yet, not all problems have been solved.

Inflation is low again. And with the latest agreements, tax cuts, and wage increases, many Danes will have more money in their hands.

But have you noticed what has happened in the supermarket?

A pack of butter can cost more than 30 kroner when it's not on sale.

Packs of liver pate and cheese have gotten smaller—without the price dropping accordingly.

And half a kilo of ground beef? It now weighs 400 grams.

It can be hard to make ends meet, especially for some of our pensioners.

That's why I'm pleased that the state pension is increasing—up to 7,000 kroner this year for single pensioners. And if you also receive the elderly check, you could see a total increase of nearly 13,000 kroner.

Yes, we're moving forward in Denmark.

But it's in a much more turbulent—and dangerous—world.

A world where Europe risks falling behind.

They say the U.S. innovates, China copies, and the EU regulates.

That must change.

We must keep jobs in Europe, and that requires significantly more investments—both public and private—in energy, technology, defense, green transition, and climate.

The need is so great that we have to consider all the tools at our disposal.

State aid is necessary.

We must rethink the European economy.

That applies to Denmark as well.

We haven't implemented reforms, adhered to budgets, and decided that the retirement age should gradually increase—some might say too much—just to sit back silently while other continents seize the growth and prosperity of the future.

We will always pursue responsible economic policies. But responsibility isn't just about the bottom line.

Development must be socially just—even when the threat level is high. And we must ask ourselves:

Will we gain or lose jobs?

Will we develop our own industries and technologies or remain dependent on others?

And ultimately: Will we stand up for the freedom and world order that have provided the framework for our good and secure lives?

Moscow.

Pyongyang.

And Tehran.

Three capitals in three countries working closer and closer together—against us.

We see it in more and more places, but most clearly in Ukraine.

Ukrainians are defending themselves bravely—achieving more than many thought possible.

Against Russia, of course, but also against soldiers from North Korea and drones from Iran, here on European soil.

And in the background stands China. Without Chinese support, Russia couldn't attack Europe as they do.

It's clear: The war has never just been about Ukraine.

Putin hasn't sacrificed hundreds of thousands of Russian lives just to take the eastern part of Ukraine.

And North Korea and Iran haven't entered the war merely to see Russia claim a piece of its neighbor.

The world has changed.

I fear we cannot return to the way things were. And though I wish for peace more than anything, we must stand firm in the fight for our freedom.

Thankfully, we do so here in Denmark.

Imagine: We are one of the most steadfast populations in the world in our support for Ukraine's fight for freedom.

We can be proud of that.

Democracies cannot win by giving in—and certainly not by giving up.

We must not be naive. Even if Putin signs a peace agreement with Ukraine, we must not assume he will stop there—that he will be satisfied.

Because Putin does not want peace.

He wants a Europe on Russian terms.

Europe is the story of a continent that has left war behind and created the best countries in the world to live in.

But our history is also bloody.

The hardest thing for us as humans is likely understanding our own time.

Everything seems easier when we look back at the past—or even when we look toward the future.

We are at a pivotal moment.

If we give in, we lose. History has taught us that.

Europe and the U.S. have a fundamental shared interest in defending the world order that has ensured peace and prosperity.

I am pleased that we in the North Atlantic have strengthened our cooperation between the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Denmark in recent years.

And not least, that both the EU and NATO are stronger now than before.

But Europe must be able to do even more on its own.

On this, I agree with many recent American presidents, including Trump.

That's why we're building up—for the purpose of preventing war, to ensure peace.

We're expanding conscription, allocating billions to purchase air defense, combat vehicles, and drones, and strengthening our emergency preparedness.

It's expensive.

And it will get even more expensive.

We must prepare for scenarios we couldn't have imagined just a few years ago.

Damage to cables and critical infrastructure. Cyberattacks and sabotage.

The threats come in many forms. But no matter what confronts us, we must have the will to defend ourselves. The will to win.

The coming years will bring tough decisions and priorities.

It cannot be otherwise.

When I begin my New Year's speech by outlining all these challenges, it's not to paint a picture of doom.

Quite the opposite.

We must be realistic.

But never despondent.

We have faced great challenges before—and overcome them.

We can do so again.

When the world seems bleak, and worries line up, that's when we need everything that makes Denmark special—our Danish values.

We probably each have our own version, but many of us are shaped by the same things. So what's our common ground?

Of course, there's our trust.

Most of us trust each other—trust the authorities and the media. There are still front doors left unlocked, and a word is a word.

There's our association life—Denmark's strongest community.

It's not entirely untrue what they say: When two Danes meet, we have a beer. And when three Danes meet, we start an association.

We gather across generations and backgrounds. Play sports. Tinker with all kinds of projects. Break the chains of loneliness and form lifelong friendships.

Collaboration and flat hierarchies are also uniquely Danish.

We are good at working together. It makes everything easier and society richer.

Communities can also be tricky—for example, when parties across the aisle suddenly form a government together.

But in a turbulent world, maybe that's not such a bad idea?

Our dry and understated humor must also be a particularly Danish value.

Think of the times we laugh at ourselves instead of getting angry or offended—when we don't take ourselves too seriously but can shrug off everyday conflicts and the neighbor's annoying habits.

Last year, we lost two of those who made us all laugh:

Ulf Pilgaard, who brought social satire to dazzling heights. And Erik Clausen, who challenged us with the jester's wit.

Many probably remember him especially from *Midt om Natten*.

One of the songs from the film has been sung frequently at many confirmations over the years. I think you know it.

“If someone says everything is going to hell, don't believe them. It's always been like that, and it probably always will be. Don't you think?”

The song about Susan Himmelblå still resonates today.

I know we can tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

It will demand a lot from us.

But if we hold on to our values, our foundation is strong.

Trust. Binding communities. Humor and collaboration. And a few more: Initiative and, of course, our welfare state.

We're not the kind to sit back and wait.

We act.

The blacksmith in the production hall who spots a flaw in the machinery—and finds the solution no one else thought of.

The citizens in the small town who come together to save the local grocer's shop—buying shares and applying for grants so the shop can stay open.

Initiative makes us strong.

As Mads Pedersen said when he won the World Championship in road cycling a few years ago: “On a route like yesterday, I guess it paid off to train in bad weather.”

And he's right. The sun doesn't always shine—neither in the sky nor in our lives.

That's why we need a strong welfare state—with free and equal access.

Welfare has been challenged in recent years. First by the pandemic. Then by war and inflation.

We have much to fix. And we are making progress.

Nurses are returning, and waiting times are decreasing in several places.

Those of you dreaming of becoming parents now have the right to more help.

Our youngest children have more adults around them in nurseries and kindergartens.

We want to create an entirely new type of youth education.

And our elderly citizens can look forward to more time and care in eldercare.

In the new year, we'll continue to strengthen welfare and do more for those of you who are struggling the most.

All children deserve a good childhood. I'd like to once again encourage kids to spend less time in front of screens and more time playing and being with friends—or with us adults.

Psychiatric waiting times must come down.

More dignity for the most vulnerable in our society.

And if you're on sick leave from work, you should be treated with decency and respect. That's why we will reform the employment system and close job centers.

We'll crack down harder and more consistently on violent crime. Assaults. Unprovoked attacks. For the victims' sake—and for social cohesion.

And if you're convicted of serious crimes, such as gang, biker, or drug-related crime, you should not have the same rights as others. That's why we believe early retirement benefits should be revoked for you.

It's about rights and responsibilities.

We're in a new era.

Unfortunately, I believe the coming years will bring more threats to our country and way of life.

Building up defenses to avoid war is, in my view, unavoidable. But let's do it the Danish way—socially just and with our values intact.

That way, everything won't go to hell.

Happy New Year.