



## Scandinavian immigration policy as negative nation-branding

Previously hailed as a liberal frontrunner, in recent years Denmark has faced increasing international criticism for its restrictive stance in regard to asylum and immigration. A closer look at this policy reveals how Denmark has sought to reduce asylum arrivals through a combination of indirect deterrence and negative nation-branding. The Danish case thus helps explain why Scandinavian countries are increasingly branding themselves as hardliners towards asylum-seekers.

### What we knew before

Shifting Danish governments have pursued strict immigration policies as a means to reduce asylum arrivals. Commentators, however, argue that the vast majority of restrictive measures have no direct impact on access to asylum but rather concern rights and conditions of stay after arrival, social benefits, family reunification and return.

### What we know now

Since 2015, Scandinavian countries have pursued a “beggar-thy-neighbor” approach to immigration, making conditions for asylum-seekers as unattractive as possible in order to push new arrivals to other countries. But research shows that this kind of indirect

deterrence only works if restrictive measures are actively disseminated. International attention and Denmark’s own measures to brand itself as a hardliner country is thus part and parcel of this policy strategy.

### Implications of new knowledge

Since 2015, Scandinavian countries have overturned their historical brand as liberal frontrunners on asylum and immigration. The Danish case gives us a better understanding of how small countries that can rarely affect harder forms of migration control develop alternative strategies. Negative nation branding in regard to asylum and immigration is one way for states to manage obligations under EU and international human rights law.

### Research source

“Do-Gooders Dilemma: Scandinavian asylum and migration policies in the aftermath of 2015”

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