

# SHARING INFORMATION ON PROGRESS REPORT 2022

Aarhus BSS  
Aarhus University



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
AARHUS UNIVERSITY



### Message from the Dean

Through high-quality research-based degree programmes, informed by impactful research and close collaboration with external stakeholders, Aarhus BSS is constantly evolving to meet society's needs and to ensure that our graduates have the right skills and knowledge for future job markets.



We have a long-standing interest and experience in implementing the sustainability agenda as evidenced by our teaching, research, engagement with external stakeholders and institutional practices. Our commitment extends to the management of the university's campuses and facilities and sustainable investments. As well as reducing our impact on the environment, we also aim to empower our graduates to leave the university with the skills and knowledge needed to create value for society.

This report represents our achievements since our last reporting in 2020 and is a demonstration of how we contribute to the conditions for society's welfare and development. The last two years have been very productive at Aarhus BSS. Despite the major challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we maintained the momentum in our efforts towards a consistent and continuing implementation of our strategic direction, ensuring that our students – our most valuable assets – experienced as little disruption to their education as possible. It has taken commitment and effort from all of the school's faculty members and from the many administrative staff members, who have delivered support expediently and efficiently. Because of this professional and committed effort from both faculty and staff, Aarhus BSS has been able to respond sturdily to the challenges and promptly adapt to new conditions.

With our new school strategy developed for the period 2022-2026, we have high ambitions and are looking forward to further progressing as a provider of skilled graduates and scientific breakthroughs that add value to society. The strategy is a direct reflection of our ambitions to offer high-quality education and produce highly skilled graduates who will form the future workforce and create value for society and stakeholders. We, therefore, also look forward to continuing our engagement concerning responsible management education and the PRME.

Best regards,

Thomas Pallesen  
Dean of Aarhus BSS

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Department of Law

Department of  
Management

Department of Political Science

Department of Economics and  
Business Economics

Department of Business Development  
and Technology

Department of Psychology and  
Behavioural Sciences



# Introduction

Being a business school in a society subject to the rule of law and based on deeply ingrained notions of equality and democracy, the values of ethical behaviour are rooted in the culture of Aarhus BSS' faculty and students. The Scandinavian and Danish "welfarist" values and legal systems are built on a high degree of transparency, equality as well as religious and political freedom.

The acknowledgement of sustainability has reached a level where sustainability is no longer treated as a new or specialist issue. Instead, it has become recognised as an immanent and inseparable part of the general business environment. Within this context, Aarhus BSS also abides by Aarhus University's policies on responsible behaviour for faculty, staff, students, and researchers' activities.

## Strategy 2022-2026

During 2021, the school developed a new strategy for the period 2022-2026. The new strategy confirms and strengthens the school's commitment to the course that it has already set. It defines a clear profile that both sets ambitious goals and exploits existing strengths, and that will continue to enable the school to fulfil its role as a leading institution in its quest to deliver graduates and research that make a positive impact on societal innovation, growth, welfare and sustainability. Over the course of the strategy period, Aarhus BSS will strengthen and clarify its profile as a comprehensive, research-based school of business and social sciences that strongly prioritises its responsibilities to society and contributes to finding solutions to societal challenges.

Research and research-based degree programmes within the core disciplines of business and social sciences continue to form the backbone of the Aarhus BSS strategy. The distinctiveness of the school is founded on strong research bases in both business and social sciences and on the potential synergies arising from the integration of the two.

To further enhance its distinctive character, Aarhus BSS will continue to develop its well-established educational brands and explore relevant collaboration within and between our disciplines, bringing social sciences into business and vice versa. Interdisciplinary initiatives created in the mix of our core disciplines allow us to advance knowledge across academic fields. This approach keeps us competitive and at the forefront as a provider of skilled

graduates and scientific breakthroughs. In accordance with the mission and vision of the school, Aarhus BSS has identified the following strategic goals related to Education, Research and Collaboration.



### Education

Our goal is to strengthen our degree programmes through high-quality research-based teaching, focusing on job market relevance and on creating great job prospects for our graduates.

### Research

Our goal is to further strengthen the quality of our research and optimise its impact on academia, business, and society.

### Collaboration

Our goal is to improve the scope and quality of our collaboration with national and international stakeholders to ensure that our degree programmes, research projects and services rendered to society remain impactful, relevant, and adaptable to change.

## MISSION

To offer high-quality research and research-based education within and across the fields of business and social sciences, and to produce highly skilled graduates who will form the future workforce and create value for society and stakeholders.

## VISION

We contribute to the conditions for society's welfare and development by aspiring to the highest international quality in education, research, and collaboration.

# Principle 1 - Purpose

We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

Aarhus University seeks to be a leading globally-oriented university that, through its outstanding research and the education of graduates with relevant and sought-after competencies, promotes the development of society, both nationally and internationally. As the largest of the five faculties in terms of student population, responsible for 1/3 of all students enrolled at Aarhus University, Aarhus BSS is committed to provide learning and research that has a positive impact on society, and views students and graduates as the most important ambassadors of the university's knowledge.

In the strategy period 2022-2026, Aarhus BSS is intensifying efforts to enroll students with strong qualifications, who are motivated and engage actively in their studies and in developing their academic and professional skills.

The strengthening of the quality and relevance of the research-based education is a continuous process to ensure excellent employment opportunities for graduates in Denmark and abroad which are aligned with the changes and needs in the job markets. The graduates must meet the requirements for future leaders in business, public organisations and civic society. Maintaining an international outlook is equally relevant as a means of educating highly skilled, entrepreneurial and internationally competitive graduates, who will form the future workforce, exercise leadership, propagate innovation and create value for society and stakeholders.

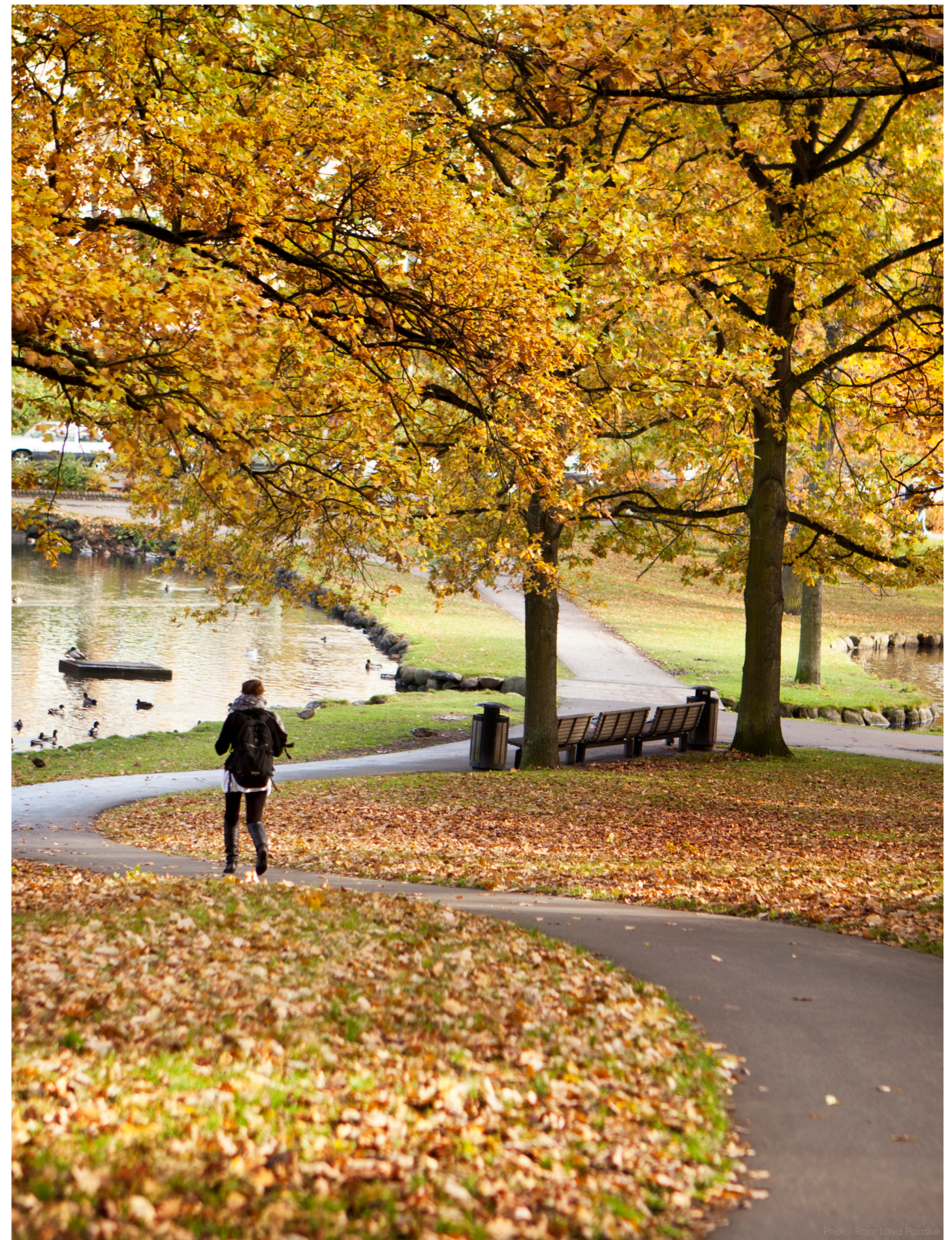
## Circle U. alliance

In 2021, Aarhus BSS accelerated its engagement in the Circle U. alliance, which aims to introduce new standards for mobility and internationalisation of the student experience. Circle U. is an inclusive, research-intensive and interdisciplinary European University Alliance, consisting of nine equally committed European universities with a shared dedication to the alliance's long-term transformational processes and future. The nine universities are: Aarhus University (Denmark), Hum-

boldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany), King's College London (United Kingdom), Université Paris Cité (France), University of Belgrade (Serbia), University of Louvain (Belgium), University of Oslo (Norway), Università di Pisa (Italy) and Universität Wien (Austria).

The aim of the alliance is that by 2025, students, faculty, staff and partners from civil society, businesses and the public sector collaborate to jointly develop competencies and solutions for keeping Europe and our planet healthy, peaceful, democratic and prosperous. Through physical and virtual knowledge hubs, students and faculty will be able to co-create knowledge and solutions across disciplines with external stakeholders and find new ways of working together.

Through the alliance, Aarhus BSS has signed a formal agreement on a double MSc degree in business administration with UCLouvain. The agreement facilitates auspicious opportunities for highly qualified students from both institutions to further enhance their competence, language, cultural and social skills. The double degree programme serves as a cornerstone in the study programme portfolios of the two institutions, positioned as a unique opportunity for students to study business administration and management from a truly European perspective.



# Principle 2 - Values

We will incorporate into our academic activities, curricula, and organisational practices the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

Aarhus University is a signatory to the European Universities' Magna Carta. Research freedom, independence, in-depth study, curiosity and critical interaction with the surrounding world are thus essential values for the university and its faculties.

The ambition for Aarhus BSS and its coherent value proposition is to increase the quality of all its academic endeavours, to gradually adapt the educational portfolio to societal demands and to continuously recruit and train the requisite faculty and students.

The school is committed to delivering both basic and applied research contributions to the development and welfare of society. The school strives to maintain a positive and competitive research environment that will support international and interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance its impact on society and its international reputation. Furthermore, the academic interchange between business and social science will be reinforced through relevant research collaboration, e.g. within social data science, inequality, and sustainability.

Strong academic core disciplines must be combined in new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration that will contribute to finding solutions to the societal challenges. These challenges are complex and cut across boundaries, sectors and academic subject areas. Therefore, solutions must be sought through partnerships that themselves cut across the boundaries of the traditional academic disciplines. Breakthroughs that transcend disciplines must be created, and the students must be trained to think and act across the boundaries defining traditional fields of research and study.

## Strong research base

High-quality research-based education can only exist with researchers who excel within their fields and incorporate that expertise into their teaching. Therefore, Aarhus BSS strives to

## AARHUS UNIVERSITY VALUES

Our fundamental values are described in the Magna Charta of the European Universities.

We safeguard freedom of research and expression, in addition to individuals' opportunities to realise their potential. Open dialogue, tolerance and diversity are the very foundation of the university's vocation. Because we regard the universities as one of the pillars of society, we assume co-responsibility for the development of a democratic, sustainable society.

develop talent and strengthen its research base and the quality of scientific output. The school aims to achieve this by recruiting and developing talented PhD students and faculty, and by providing transparent recruitment processes promoting gender equality and diversity, attractive working conditions and ample career opportunities.

## Green transition

Aarhus University is a co-signatory of the Global Universities and Colleges Climate Letter together with a wide range of other networks and institutions all over the world. As a co-signatory, the university pledges to work to address climate challenges by supporting the following three-point plan, in accordance with the criteria in the UN's Race to Zero:

- Mobilising more resources for action-oriented climate change research and skills creation.

- Pledge to reach net-zero by 2030 or 2050 at the very latest.
- Increasing the delivery of environmental and sustainability education across curriculum, campus and community outreach programmes.

In addition, the university has updated its travel policy with more climate-friendly guidelines, and it will offer a training course to staff and students so that they can learn more about climate issues and how they as individuals can contribute to the university's green transition.

## Organisational climate efforts

In recent years, the university has successfully launched a number of initiatives to reduce the university's greenhouse gas emissions and encourage green development.

2021 was the first full year of Aarhus University's climate strategy 2020-2025. Across the university, 68 activities were launched as

part of the 2021 climate action plan. Of these, 54 have reached their targets or are close to reaching their targets. Completed activities include energy optimisation of buildings, preparation of a draft travel policy including climate considerations, procurement of electric cars and shared car fleets, and a nudging campaign to promote cycling to and from the workplace.

The university is also part of Climate Alliance Aarhus, which focuses on circular procurement and climate-friendly workplaces.

In 2022, the university's green transition is supported through 34 CO<sub>2</sub>-reducing activities that have been or are in the process of being implemented across the university's campuses. These include a number of energy-saving initiatives in university buildings, such as an energy optimisation of the ventilation system as well as a Living Lab project that focuses on sustainable renovation in the new campus 'University City'.



# Principle 3 - Method

We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

Aarhus BSS strives to strengthen and develop its successful educational brands to elevate the student experience, provide the students with skills and qualifications needed in the future job markets and prepare them for lifelong learning. This includes offering an inspiring and supportive learning environment, enhanced use of digital competences and opportunities, competency development combining practical experience with extensive theoretical knowledge, and a focus on future career prospects, including entrepreneurship and venture creation.

A selected number of courses offered at Aarhus BSS are featured below as examples where responsible leadership is promoted and which equip students with valuable skills for future careers.

## Global Management and Manufacturing

The Bachelor of engineering programme in Global Management and Manufacturing qualifies students to work with management, design, development and improvement of global production networks and business processes, primarily within operations management, supply chain management, quality management, purchasing and the interaction between development and manufacturing of products.

During the programme, the students focus on five main areas: management and design of operations, supply chain management and sustainability, supply chain management and digitalisation, business development and optimisation in a global perspective, and project management. The subjects covered equip the students with a global view of management and business development and give them the tools to understand the company's value-creating activities and financial conditions, how to work innovatively, how to design and develop sustainable supply chains and products, and how to use digitisation to optimise or develop a company's

business foundation.

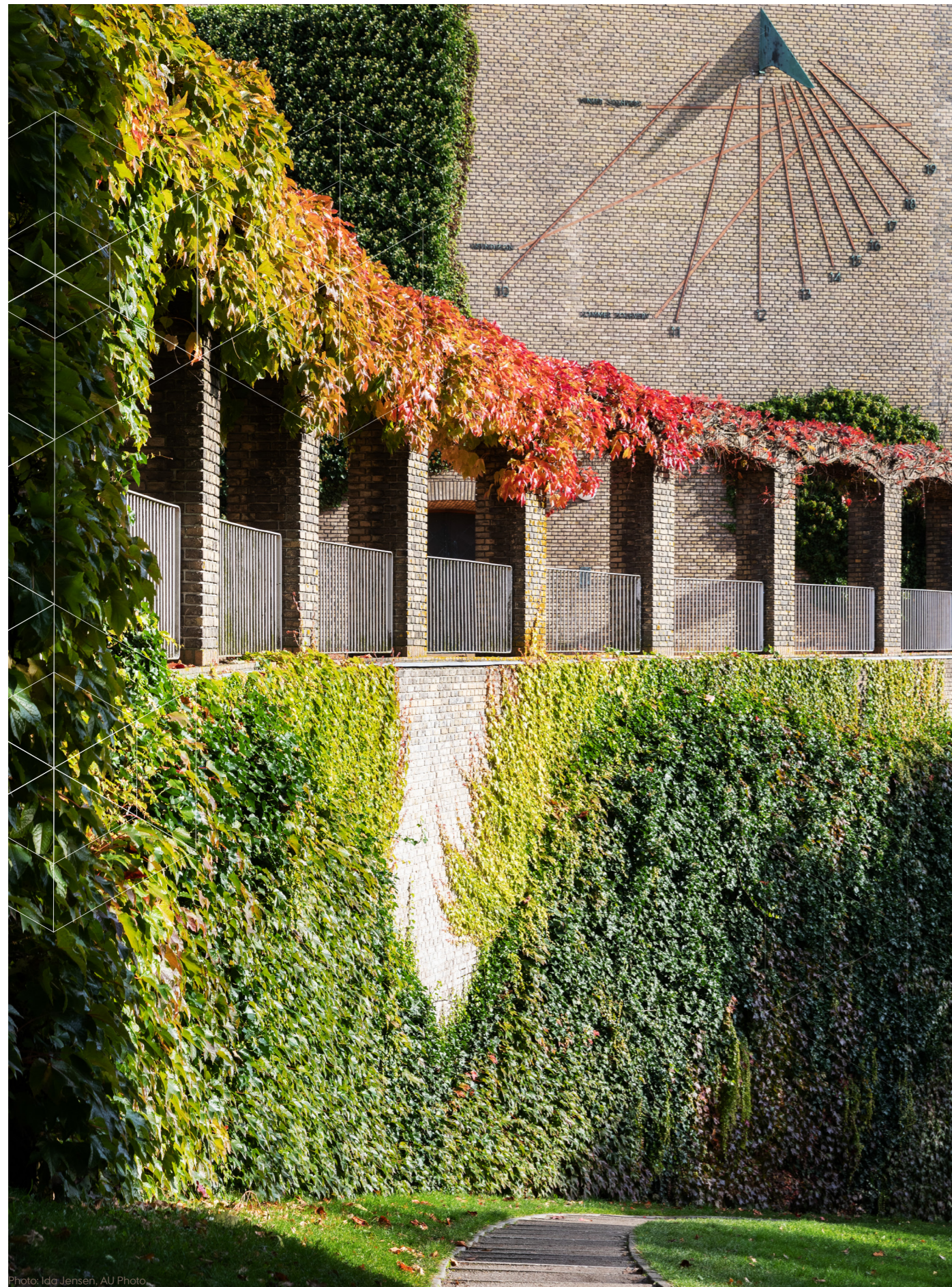
## Leadership and Motivation in Public Organisations

The master's level course in Leadership and Motivation in Public Organisations gives the students insights into the role that management and motivation play in the public sector. The course combines theoretical discussions with evidence-based management training, which increases active management among both public and private managers.

During the course, the students gain deep insight into management and motivation in a public context. All students are paired with a public manager with whom they will work. Public managers must also understand their employees' professional norms and values, and they must be able to set the direction for the employees' work efforts and activate the motivation to create value for citizens and for society. The course connects insights about motivation and leadership with the public context and gives the students a better understanding of the conditions under which public leaders exercise their leadership. They will also have the opportunity to develop their own leadership skills through systematic and practical management training. Matching students with public managers provides the opportunity for students to experience the management of an actual public organisation, where the course theories can be put into perspective. In addition, the student receives feedback from the manager, just as the student is taught to give feedback to the manager's own development plan.

## Moral Psychology and Business Ethics

The course "Moral Psychology and Business Ethics" covers underlying foundations of what moral psychology is, and why business ethics is important as ever to understand from a moral



psychology and business management perspective. The course reviews the theoretical concepts of moral psychology and ethics before examining different contexts where morality and ethics are under pressure. The students also gain insight into practical implementations that might increase or decrease ethical conduct in modern organisations.

During the course, the students acquire following skills and competencies:

- Argue on the importance of ethics on business decision-making.
- Ability to critically evaluate and analyse what factors might be affecting moral behaviour in specific contexts (such as organisations, firms, etc.).
- Ability to account for and apply the key methodologies and theoretical approaches of moral psychology and business ethics.
- Understand and be able to communicate how moral standards can shift in the individual, business, and social domains and why this might be.
- Ability to design effective choice architecture to hinder the possible development of immoral behaviour in an organisational setting.
- Ability to identify and relate the learning material to real world contexts, enabling the student to identify areas in which threats to ethical decision making may arise.

### CSR and Sustainable Business

In recent years, a general shift has taken place in many countries away from the continental, implicit CSR and sustainable business approach towards a more explicit approach. Corporate stakeholders demand more and better documentation of CSR and sustainable business initiatives, and companies are increasingly feeling the consequences of the lack of or misleading management and communication of their CSR and sustainable business activities, both with respect to revenue, recruitment, retention of employees, corporate reputation and legitimacy.

The purpose of the course in CSR and Sustainable Business is to enable students to handle the strategic management of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainable business in theory and practice.

The students gain knowledge about, among others:

- The institutional and stakeholder context of CSR and sustainable business, including the social implications of the tendency to move from implicit CSR towards explicit CSR and the related importance of local and global culture.
- Core concepts and definitions of CSR and sustainable business.
- Central theories and models within CSR and sustainable business management (for example institutional theory, stakeholder management theory and ethical theory).
- Various types of stakeholder-oriented CSR and sustainable business processes and practices related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations in their Agenda 2030, e.g. cross-sector social partnerships.
- CSR and sustainable business strategy making and implementation, including communication and reporting.

All of the above examples are also contributing to develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large (principle 1).

Photo: Jesper Røis, AU





# Principle 4 - Research

We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.

The foundation of all the activities of Aarhus BSS is research of the highest quality. It is therefore crucial for the future development of the school to create the best possible framework and working conditions for researchers. Freedom and time for in-depth exploration are the foundations for research breakthroughs, which take place in the context of both strong core disciplines and interdisciplinary collaboration. The objective is to give the researchers optimal conditions for contributing to finding solutions that will meet the grand challenges facing society.

Access to attractive and modern research infrastructure is a very important prerequisite for pushing the knowledge frontier forward. Aarhus BSS desires to ensure its researchers the best opportunities for strengthening their core fields and for increasing interdisciplinary collaboration. With quality being the key driver of the school's research agenda, the ongoing focus in the strategy 2022-2026 is on combining scientific rigour with societal returns, contributing to creating decisive value for the individual and for society as a whole.

In the following, select examples of research projects that promote the PRME-agenda are described.

## Platform for Inequality Research at Aarhus University (PIREAU)

Inequality is on the rise many places across the world with detrimental consequences for the well-being of individuals and the cohesion of societies. Reducing inequality is a core developmental goal for the United Nations, and solutions are urgently needed.

PIREAU is Aarhus University's answer to this call for action. Spearheaded by Aarhus BSS, PIREAU brings together more than 30 scholars from a variety of disciplines to conduct cutting-edge

cross-disciplinary research on inequality. These include experts from the school's departments of economics and Business Economics, Management, Law, Psychology and Political Science as well as experts from the Faculty of Health and from renowned international institutions.

Inequality is multidimensional, yet most of the extensive research on the causes and consequences of inequality has been mono-disciplinary. The ambition of PIREAU is to facilitate true interdisciplinary research at the highest international level and thereby make a significant contribution to our understanding of inequality. Selected research projects of PIREAU:

- Causes of Inequality in Children's Health and Economics
- Debt and Inequality
- Digitalisation and Inequality
- Employment and Health Effect of Labour-Market Policies
- Behavioural Sources and Mediators of Health Inequality
- Social Prognosis of Stroke in Denmark
- Health Access to Vulnerable Families with Diabetes during Pregnancy

## Sustainable development in the food sector

In spring 2021, a new interdisciplinary research project coordinated by a professor at the Department of Management received DKK 8,4 million from Innovation Fund Denmark.

The 'PlantPro Project' involves 15 different players in the food

industry as well as 3 Danish universities: Aarhus BSS, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School, Plantebranchen, The Vegetarian Society of Denmark, Thinktank OneThird, Simple Feast, Beyond Coffee, Circular Food Technology, Møllerup Brands, Food Innovation House, Orkla, Naturli, Planteslagterne, Upfield, Eachthing, Rema1000 and Fair Trees.

In addition to exploring how Denmark can strengthen and expand the transition to more plant-based food, less food waste, and green food production, the project looks at how to prepare the export market for launching Denmark to the forefront of these areas.

The project is unique as it brings together entrepreneurs, large companies and special interest organisations, combining consumer insights with technical innovations. It also explores both the plant-based trend and food waste avoidance - areas which are rarely considered together or integrated, despite the presence of substantial synergy effects.

## Horizon Europe grant for research project on Global Supply Chains

Three researchers from the Department of Economics and Business Economics are part of an international research group that has received a grant of DKK 22.3 million from the Horizon Europe Work Programme for their project entitled "Rethinking Global Supply Chains: measurement, impact and policy".

The research group consists of researchers from ten other research institutes and universities from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Poland. The overall goal of the project is to enhance the understanding of the impact of global supply chains (GSCs) using new measures that can quantify the role of knowledge flows, and more generally services inputs, and thus acknowledge the increasing importance of intangibles

in global production. The project provides new and innovative methodologies for assessing the development of GSCs, which generates new knowledge on ongoing and expected changes in GSCs due to shocks.

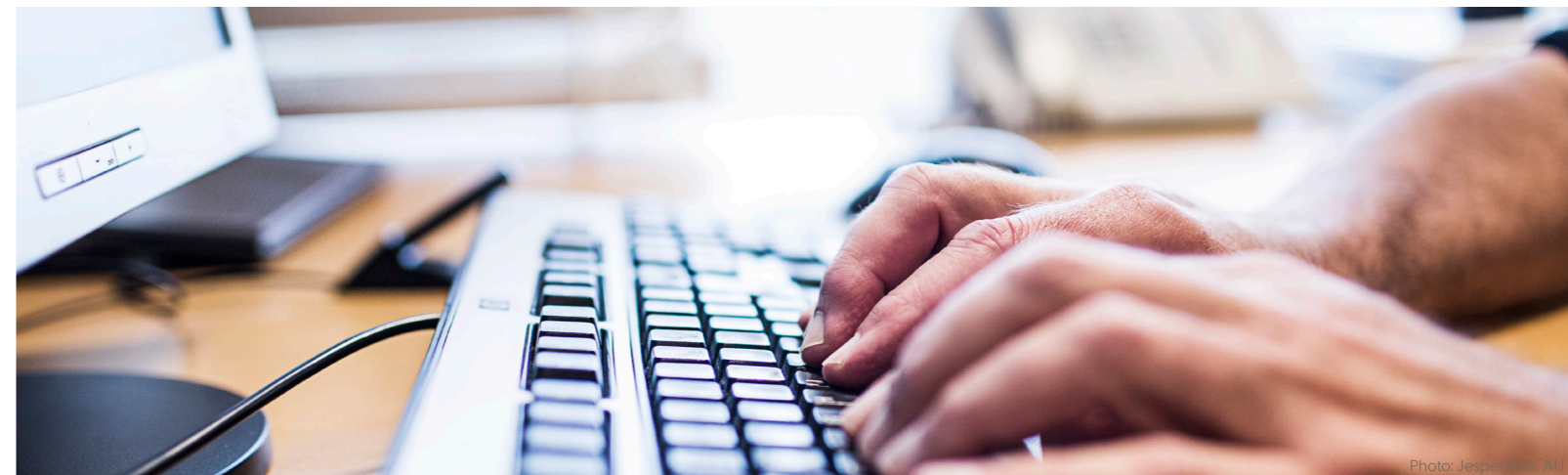
The research, both theoretical and empirical, will be conducted mainly at the level of the firm – the unit that ultimately decides on the organisation of international production.

Using the RETHINK-GSC innovative measures allows the project's researchers and future scholars (i) to investigate the interaction between tangible and intangible GSCs to evaluate the changing nature of global supply chains, (ii) to provide novel ways of analysing the impact of GSCs on social, economic and environmental outcomes in European countries, and (iii) to evaluate the resilience of GSCs to exogenous shocks. Furthermore, the project elaborates policy scenarios for expected future GSC developments. This new evidence contributes to enhancing policy developments related to ensuring level playing fields in trade relations and ensuring security of strategic supplies.

## Green expert group

In June 2022, The Ministry of Higher Education and Science appointed a professor of economics from Aarhus BSS as the chair of a new green expert group for the next two years. The experts will assess the effect of research and innovation on technologies which can reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. This is an important step towards achieving Denmark's climate goals.

The expert group is to evaluate and develop instruments of governance for the public research initiatives to promote Denmark's climate goals, which consist of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases with 70 per cent before 2030 (compared to 1990 levels) and achieving climate neutrality before 2050.



# Principle 5 - Partnership

We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

Aarhus BSS has a long tradition of collaboration with businesses and organisations both regarding degree programme development and research. Collaboration is a crucial element of the school's endeavours and is hence elevated as one of the three core activities that define the school's strategy for 2022-2026.

Collaboration at Aarhus BSS manifests itself in many ways. The faculty members collaborate with peers across disciplines and borders, and employers from the private and public sector are an integral part of many endeavours, including the development of the school's educational portfolio. Furthermore, a wide range of public, corporate, institutional, governmental and professional contacts spanning a variety of industries and organisational levels are involved in activities at Aarhus BSS, from student fairs and mentoring to case competitions and lectures, in research and innovation activities, and in funding and advisory roles.

The school continuously strives to strengthen its dialogue with decision-makers in private and public companies as well as relevant alumni in order to bring its students and research into play and maximise its contribution to society.

## Entrepreneurship and Innovation

In 2021, Aarhus University adopted a new sub-strategy for business collaboration and innovation. The sub-strategy is based on the university's overarching strategy 2025. The aim is to apply the sub-strategy to develop the university within three main areas. Firstly, to increase entrepreneurship and innovation at the university to create more knowledge-based spinouts and startups and to generate more entrepreneurial experience that can contribute to the growth and development of society. Secondly, to establish specific and value-generating project partnerships that create value for researchers, students and businesses. Thirdly, to ensure proper framework conditions for business collaboration and in-

novation and promote a strong business and innovation culture.

Aarhus BSS plays a central role in this strategic initiative in relation to entrepreneurship and innovation activities among students and faculty alike and across the university. A central AU Business Committee has been appointed with the Aarhus BSS Vice-Dean for Research and Talent as a member. The committee handles academic issues and framework conditions that are common to all of Aarhus University's faculties in business and innovation-related issues. In addition to liaising with private and public firms, the committee has the overall strategic responsibility with regards to infrastructure development and facilitation of entrepreneurship and innovation activities in the university's start-up hub for students and faculty - *The Kitchen*.



## New labs to deliver solutions for modern business problems

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the Department of Business Development and Technology began upgrading its laboratories. In spring 2022, nine new labs have been inaugurated at a major opening event at the school's campus in the city of Herning. The improvement of department lab facilities was to offer researchers and students better conditions for taking an innovative approach in their daily efforts to apply knowledge and technology to tackle the challenges of modern companies.



Researchers and students can treat specific problems faced by modern companies. The aim is to analyse and support current processes of change, digitalisation and green transition in business and industry, and as such in society as a whole. The new facilities will make it easier for all the interesting thoughts and ideas that exist in the intersection between technology and business to gain an impact on the world.

Several of the labs follow the typical journey from idea to market for a product. For instance, in the Concept Lab, students and researchers can develop their idea and outline a proposal for a product. In the Proto Lab and VR Lab, they can add specific technologies and electronic components to their solution, and production and material labs, where they can give further shape to their product and make it ready for sale on the market. The entire setup is best imagined as an iterative process in which the user is able to return to the drawing board on a continuous basis and further develop his/her main concept before revisiting the other labs and adjusting the specific product. The hope is that the refurbished labs – in addition to supporting daily research and teaching activities – will provide more graduates with the tools to venture out and change the world in practice.

## Scholarships for Commercial and Retail Management students

A major successful example of a fruitful collaboration within education - besides the already well established employer panels on all degree programmes, is the MSc in Commercial and Retail Management, established in collaboration with key actors in the Danish retail and brand sector.

One of the founding partners, Salling Group, have donated a total of DKK 5 million for promoting the degree programme. Furthermore, as a new initiative, in 2022, the Salling Foundations decided to award three scholarships of DKK 25,000 for the top three internship assignments among the students enrolled in the programme. The three recipients of the scholarship were selected by the top management at Salling Group following a thorough selection process which culminated with six candidates giving a presentation in front of the Salling Group management team. Salling foundations is also one of the largest sponsor of the school's Crown Prince Frederik Centre for Public Leadership.

## Collaboration on green transition with Indian universities

The Department of Business Development and Technology has in many instances engaged in collaborative project work with Indian universities and considers India to be a crucial partner to Danish manufacturing companies in the green transition. The objective of the relation between the department and the Indian universities is to prepare the ground for the development of innovative business models in an interdisciplinary Indian-Danish research collaboration as well as engage in exchange projects that bring Indians to Denmark and provide the students and staff in Denmark with the opportunity to go to India.

During summer 2022, 25 Indian Master's students with backgrounds in, among others, design, engineering and digital technology visited the Department of Business Development and Technology to cooperate with five local companies for six weeks on the development of green business models. Their visit was part of the Greenbizz project, which is funded by DKK 50 million by the EU.

# Principle 6 - Dialogue

We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

Aarhus BSS strives continuously to put its knowledge to work through closer and innovative relationships with the business community, public authorities, organisations and society in general.

Knowledge exchange builds on the foundation of Aarhus BSS' strong research activities and results, not least its interdisciplinary research collaborations, and thus contributes to finding solutions to the societal challenges on local, regional and global levels.

The most important contribution to knowledge transfer takes place through education of a large number of knowledge disseminators in the form of graduates, but faculty members at Aarhus BSS are also very active participants in the public debate by undertaking duties in boards, commissions and councils, and by contributing to the drawing up of reports, recommendations and expert opinions for public and private companies.

## Covid-19 pandemic

Over the past two years, Aarhus BSS has demonstrated a high degree of resilience and agility dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially the transition to online teaching has been very engaging and important, as one of the school's core activities is to deliver high-quality degree programmes. Faculty members have experimented and come up with new ways of teaching and applying digital solutions that have allowed them to teach and supervise from a distance.

The pandemic has curtailed most academic, industry, and government basic science and clinical research, or redirected research to COVID-19 especially during 2020 and early 2021. In spite of these challenges, many researchers were also swift to engage in relevant research or consulting activities regarding COVID-19.

During spring 2020, more than DKK 33 million was granted to Aarhus BSS researchers for projects connected to the consequences of coronavirus on society and EU's crisis management in the wake of the pandemic as well as to projects related to the SMEs. Furthermore, many were able to contribute importantly to the research-based advice given to policy-makers since March 2020. In particular, Aarhus BSS researchers have advised the Danish government on matters of population sentiment and opinion, behaviour during the pandemic, economics, public governance, and the law.

A number of researchers are currently engaged in expert groups composed by the government to examine the emergency preparedness of the healthcare sector and the decisions that led to the lockdown of Denmark, the financial bailout packages, and the financial consequences of the various scenarios for opening or closing of certain industries.

## Tools for SMEs to rethink business

When the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2020, small and medium-sized companies suddenly had to adapt their businesses to new market conditions, where unfamiliar behaviour patterns and new technologies made their entrance. It has since become clear that the pandemic has made long-lasting effects on global society and the business environments of SMEs. For the companies, it is therefore not about getting back to what was before COVID-19, but about getting to a new and changed reality effectively.

This formed the basis for a new research project at the Centre for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises at Aarhus BSS. The project aims to map the challenges and behaviour of SMEs and provides companies with useful tools to maintain their competitiveness and growth opportunities. The project, which is called Rethink

NOW, collects knowledge and experience from 150 companies via a series of virtual competence courses, where the SMEs are also offered help from relevant experts to test new initiatives and business processes. The core purpose of the project is to increase the competitiveness and growth of SMEs. If companies are to achieve this, they must both streamline and optimise their existing business while rethinking their business model.

The new knowledge generated through the research project will subsequently be made available to all Danish SMEs. Likewise, the research results can be used in political and business-promoting efforts, and the new knowledge will have the potential to advance initiatives that can strengthen the general competitiveness of Danish companies.


## UNESCO Chair

In Autumn 2022, a joint UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Leadership and Futures Capabilities between Aarhus BSS/Aarhus University and The Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) has been established in partnership with UNESCO. The Chair holder is a researcher from the Department of Management at Aarhus BSS.

The purpose of the Chair in Anticipatory Leadership and Futures Capabilities will be to contribute to Danish national and regional development, inserting futures orientation and its associated competencies across the public, private, academic, and civic sector debate, empowering learners and leaders to become capable leaders of inclusive, secure and sustainable communities of tomorrow.

The chair will address the societal and global challenges of tomorrow and foster a culture of future-thinking in support of responsible leadership and development, in Denmark and beyond. The plan is to engage in research, teaching, training, policy- and public-engagement activities to spread methodological understanding of how people and institutions can use anticipatory processes to better guide actions in the present.

The Chair is awarded in reflection of UNESCO's commitment to building a futures literate global society and is supported by the Danish National Commission for UNESCO.



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