

D E N M A R K

SECTION A

Capital

Copenhagen, city 487,969 (1998 est.), metropolitan area 1,362,264 (1996 est.)

Area

43,094 sq km (16.639 sq mi)

Form of government

Parliamentary state and constitutional monarchy with one legislative house

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$23,800 (1999 est.)

Population

5,356,845 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Danish	95.8%
Asians	1.6%
Yugoslavians	0.5%
Scandinavians	0.4%
African	0.3%
Other	1.4%

Official language

Danish

According to the Greenland Home Rule Act, Article 9, Greenlandish is the principal language of Greenland. As regards the Faroe Islands, the Faeroes Home Rule Act, Article 11, provides that Faroese be the main language.

Minority languages

German (Faroese and Greenlandish are not considered to be and do not regard themselves as national minorities, they are independent people in the Danish State)

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The bilateral declarations "*Bonner und Kopenhagener Erklärungen*" of 1955 protect the use of minority languages.

Background notes

The region of Schleswig, which had been disputed by Prussia and Denmark, was divided in two parts in 1920. South-Schleswig remained German, while North-Schleswig went to Denmark. Although Danes had been living in this region since the 9th century, groups of Germans settled down there starting in the Middle Ages, Germanizing the region increasingly over the centuries under the reign of the Holsteins.

SECTION B

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

GERMAN

Approximately 20,000 people in Nord-Schleswig (which has a total population of about 250,000) speak German as a mother tongue and the language of cultural identification. A large proportion of the majority population masters German due to the proximity of the border.

There is not a great public presence for the language. The language is not used on official notices, in official documents or in the courts. Knowledge of German is not required for employment in the public service.

German is taught as a foreign language in all Danish schools in the region. In Nordschleswig some pupils attend private German schools where German is used as the language of instruction and Danish is taught as a subject. Within the act for private schools funding comes from several different sources. The schools are partially funded by the Danish government and local authorities as well as through subsidies from the German Federal government. Teachers may, on a voluntary basis, attend professional training courses in Denmark or Germany.

There are no television or radio stations broadcasting exclusively in German. There are, however, several bilingual cross-border programs in which German and Danish are used according to the subject matter. It is

also possible to receive programs broadcast by German radio and TV channels. There is one German-language daily newspaper covering both regional and international news.

The Schleswigsche Partei has been the political representation of the German minority since 1920.

SCHOOLS

Mother tongue instruction is provided in approximately 35 languages. The most common are: Turkish, Arabic, Urdu, Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, Albanian, Persian, Somali, Tamil, Vietnamese, Finnish, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Polish, Russian and Chinese. A municipality must establish mother tongue instruction if a minimum of 12 pupils, who reside in the municipality, request it. In case of insufficient demand, pupils must be referred to another municipality in the same county.

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities signed on February 1, 1995, ratified on September 22, 1997, enacted on February 1, 1998.

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was signed by Denmark on November 5, 1992.

SECTION C

Background notes

Updated (April 2001)

GREENLAND

Greenland, or Kalaallit Nunaat together with the Faeroe Islands, is a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. It has the same Constitution, foreign policy, defense and judicial system.

But since 1979, when the Home Rule Act was introduced, Greenlanders have been working hard to achieve their own identity. Their language is an important part of this goal.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

Updated (April 2001)

GREENLAND

Under the law in Greenland the principal language is Greenlandic (kalaallisut). It belongs to the East-Inuit language family and is closely related to the Inuit language in Canada and Alaska. Both Greenlandic and Danish can be used in public administration while English is the third language.

The Home Rule Act provides that Danish is taught comprehensively in primary schools. However, growing interest has caused that although ten years ago 60% of pupils were registered as Danish-speaking and only 40% as Greenlandic-speaking today, the situation is opposite.

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Updated (January 2001)

On January 1, 2001 the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages came into force in Denmark.

This European treaty, which aims at the protection of the European linguistic diversity was open to signature in 1992 and came into force in 1998. Up to the present moment 24 Council of Europe member-states have signed it though only 11 countries have ratified it. Denmark signed it in September 2000.

The interest will be aimed at the German in Southern Jylland, which is considered a minority language. Regarding the Faroese and Greenlandic languages these already have a high degree of protection so the European Charter should not apply to them.

What else can be found about languages and minorities?

Updated (February 2002)

FAROESE

The Faroese language is not a minority language. The constitution of the autonomous Faroe Islands of 1948 gives Faroese the status of being the main language, while Danish was to be learned thoroughly and could also be used as an official language. Today Faroese is the only language of the islands, while Danish has the position of first foreign language.

Petur Petersen, Permanent Secretary at the Faroese Ministry of Education, tells the story of how the Faroese Islands with a population of about 46,000 people have managed to preserve and develop their language.

“If you go fifty years back, the relation between Danes and Faroese people was not that good, but today there are no problems. There are some Danes living on the islands and they learn to speak Faroese. The Danes had a big influence before, but not today. We have developed our own culture. However, many of us have studied in Denmark, so we know the Danish language, but if you want to talk about a language influence on the Faroe language, it is English, just like for many other languages.”

Around 2,000 Faroese students go abroad every year, but according to Petersen, most of them come back. “A typical Faroese knows a lot about his island and also knows about the national circumstances in Denmark. An islander is also normally very tolerant, very religious, and close to his family,” he explains.

“The Faroese language has its roots in the Old Norse language from the Viking Age. The Vikings who mainly came from Norway sailed westwards to find new land. Faroese thus belongs to the so called West-Nordish language group to which also Icelandic, West Norwegian belong. In the northern parts of the Shetland Islands there has also existed a language belonging to this group of languages. Considering the grammar, Faroese is closest to Icelandic, while the pronunciation and sounds have similarities with certain west Norwegian dialects. During the Middle Ages Faroese was an independent language with clear distinctions from the neighboring languages Icelandic and Norwegian, according to old documents.” This information was part of Petersen's presentation at the recent Partnership for Diversity Forum that was held in Palma de Mallorca. Petersen also got there the chance to compare the Faroese situation to other islanders' situation. Another island with many parallels to the Faroese Islands, is Greenland.

Greenland has the same conditions and links to Denmark as the Faroe Islands, but the Faroe Islands got their self-government in 1948, and Greenland in 1979.

“I visited Greenland in 1998. Their central administration had about 450 employees, and half of them were Danes. They asked me how many Danes we have in our central administration – we had none. They could not understand this. The Greenlandic laws are written in both Greenlandic and Danish, while since 1994, the Faroese laws are entirely in Faroese,” explains Petersen.

“The language of the official administration and the parliament is Faroese. We are monolingual - we only speak one language. In 80 years, the Danish language has been exterminated in favor of Faroese,” says Petersen. However, according to Petur Petersen the Faroese situation cannot be

entirely compared to the situation of the monolingual Swedish-speaking Åland Islands, which are part of the Republic of Finland.

“Well, for instance it is easier for them to get books from Sweden, whereas it is entirely up to us to develop ourselves. We have our own school publishing house which guarantee that we have books in Faroese. Our language is our culture, whereas the Åland Islands are part of a language area where the Swedish language is spoken,” compares Petersen.

However, Petur Petersen says that it is still very inspiring to meet other islanders, and that they can learn from each other. For the Faroe Islands, the next big step is a step towards independence. “Everybody on the Faroe Islands wants bigger independence. The only thing they cannot agree on is how fast this process should take – some want it to happen really quickly, others want to take it slower.”

“The previous Danish Government was negative as far as Faroese independence was concerned. But Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who represents the newly elected Danish Government, visited the Faroe Islands in Mid-January. He gave clear signals that if the Faroe Islands want independence, Denmark will not stand in the way. So now we will have to see what happens,” concludes Petersen.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF DENMARK



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