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GREENLAND

With a modern and well-functioning welfare system, where education, pension, health service and unemployment benefit are taken for granted, the development of Greenland's home rule is in many ways a model for other indigenous population groups around the world. Home rule makes Greenland's population self-governing in almost all domestic areas.

On the other hand, the country is dependent on a single resource, fishing. Its economy is closely tied to fluctuations in the fishing industry and price developments on the global market. It also still has close cultural, political, social and economic ties with Denmark in the form of annual subsidies of over DKK 2,500m and the free provision of education, hospital and other services to Greenlandic citizens.

GEOGRAPHY

Greenland is the world's largest island with an area of around 2.2 million sq. km, but only some 410,000 sq. km are not covered by ice. Cape Morris Jesup at the northernmost extremity of Greenland is the northernmost land area in the world, situated less than 730 km from the North Pole. Greenland's southernmost point, Cape Farewell, is situated 2,670 km to the south of Cape Morris Jesup.

The Greenland ice sheet is the second largest in the world. With the exception of a few sheltered valleys in South Greenland, the climate is arctic and the average temperature during the warmest month of the year does not exceed 10°C.

The East Greenland current flows along Greenland's east coast covering it with a sheet of ice up to a metre thick during the six winter months. Along the southern part of the west coast, a relatively warm current keeps the coast clear of ice all

year round. Only at the southernmost point is navigation impeded during the spring and summer by ice masses drifting down along the east coast and south of Cape Farewell. From Disko Bay northwards, the sea is covered by ice during the winter months but navigable during some of the six summer months.

HISTORY

The first people migrated to Greenland across the Davis Strait from the American continent more than 4,000 years ago. The first links with Europe were established with the Norse settlements in 985 AD and lasted until the mid 15th century. The flourishing European whaling industry in the 16th century restored regular visits to Greenland, but a permanent link was not established until the settlement of the Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede in 1721. This formed the basis of Danish sovereignty for the next 258



Kalaallit Nunaat – Grønland

Government type: Home rule in national union with Denmark

Area: 2.17 million sq. km of which 410,000 sq. km is not covered by ice

Population: 56,245 inhabitants

Capital: Nuuk, 13,650 inhabitants

Language: Greenlandic and Danish

Currency: Danish krone (DKK)

years, where the establishment of the trade monopoly the Royal Greenland Trade Department, the KGH (*Kongelige Grønlandske Handel*), was particularly significant.

Until the Second World War, Greenland was a closed country with a very low standard of living. In 1906, sheep farming was introduced in the southern part of the country and commercial fishing started in 1908. During the Second World War, the German occupation of Denmark meant that all contact with Denmark was suspended and officials in Greenland and Washington made contact with the USA, which agreed to defend Greenland; in 1951-1952 an American military base was established at Thule. After the war, a popular movement arose in favour of modernisation of the country and the basis of the welfare system which today characterises Greenland was laid in the 1950s.

POLITICAL LIFE

As early as 1857, Greenlanders were involved in the decision-making process and the 1908 Statute intro-

duced municipal and provincial councils with democratically elected representatives. In 1953, Greenland became a county, in principle on equal terms with the other Danish counties. Greenlandic opposition to Danish administration contributed to the introduction of home rule in 1979.

In accordance with home rule, Greenland retains extensive powers of self-government while remaining under the Danish Crown. The *Folketing* (the Danish parliament) has transferred almost all legislation to the *Landsting* (the Greenlandic parliament) but the *Folketing* and the Danish administration retain control over some areas of government. Greenland's voters elect two representatives to the *Folketing*.

At least every four years, there is a general election to the *Landsting*. The *Landsting* nominates the president of the *Landsstyre* (the Greenland executive) and approves the nomination of its members, who act as the country's government. Each member of the *Landsstyre* serves as minister of a particular government department.

Greenland is divided into 18 municipalities, each led by a local council and a mayor. Among other things, the municipalities are responsible for childcare, primary schools, cultural and leisure activities and a range of social services.

Political life is very active and dominated by three parties. *Siumut* is the largest party with a policy seeking extensive independence within the framework of Danish sovereignty. Second largest is *Atassut*, which advocates close co-operation with Denmark. The party *Inuit Ataqatigiit* pursues independence for Greenland.

LINKS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Greenland and Denmark jointly control the exploitation of mineral resources whereas foreign policy, the police service and the judicial system as well as the surveillance of Greenland's waters are handled by Denmark. The Danish state is represented by the High Commissioner.

Greenland is a member of the Nordic Council and has close links with the other Nordic countries. Greenland's economy, settlement

structure, education service and welfare system have much in common with the Scandinavian welfare state model, but there are also links with the North American continent. The international organisation ICC, Inuit Circumpolar Conference, has been particularly influential in developing Arctic co-operation, which has for instance manifested itself in the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996.

POPULATION

Just over 56,000 people live in Greenland. More than 49,000 of these were born on the island. With a rate of natural increase of around 12 per thousand, the population is steadily increasing.

The central parts of West Greenland are the most densely populated. Most of the population – around 45,000 – live in the towns, of which Nuuk is the largest. 60% of West Greenland's population live in the six largest towns, the rest in more than 120 settlements, trading posts and sheep stations.

The settlements have only one shop with relatively few goods and few opportunities for paid employment. Conversely, many of the larger towns offer a rich choice in terms of both shopping goods, schools and education, which in turn gives access to a larger number and variety of jobs.

Although the economic significance of the traditional way of life is steadily decreasing, hunting is still a crucial part of Greenlandic identity.

LANGUAGE

The official languages are Greenlandic and Danish. Greenlandic is closely related to the languages spoken by the Inuit in Canada, USA and Siberia. Greenlandic comprises East Greenlandic, West Greenlandic and Polar Eskimo. Greenlandic is the language used in schools and dominates in most towns and settlements.

RESOURCES

Greenland has considerable mineral deposits. Formerly cryolite was mined in Ivittuut, coal near Qullissat, marble and later, zinc, lead and silver near Maarmorilik and zinc, molybdenum and lead near Mesters

POPULATION (1999)

Average life expectancy in years for people born in Greenland:

– Men: 61.1

– Women: 67.4

Fertility rate for women born in Greenland:

– In towns: 2.2 children

– In settlements: 3.3 children

Average age of first-time mothers born in Greenland:

– 25.8 years

Source: Statistics Greenland.

Vig. There are also a number of minerals which may prove to be of economic interest, including offshore oil finds close to Nuuk and Jameson Land in East Greenland as well as deposits of gold, niobium, tantalite, uranium, iron and diamonds. Greenland's first major hydraulic power plant is situated near the Buksefjord south of Nuuk.

HUNTING

In the traditional sealing community the marine mammals are essential for survival and every year around 160,000 seals, some walrus and a limited number of whales are killed. The meat of the animals is traded locally where it fetches considerable sums, but the only commercial exploitation of the seals is through the sale of sealskins to the tannery Great Greenland in Qaqortoq. Due to the difficulties of selling the skins on the global market, the Home Rule Government generously subsidises the sealskin trades. However, in recent years, this market has improved considerably. Every year, some 150 polar bears are killed. Only local residents whose main occupation is hunting may hunt polar bears.

In addition, the island's rich bird life is exploited and the reindeer in West Greenland and the musk oxen in North East Greenland and around Kangerlussuaq are also hunted. Hunting continues to play an important role for the population in North and East Greenland, though it is no longer the dominant occupation. On the other hand, hunting has gained a strong foothold as a subsidiary occupation or leisure activity in towns as well as settlements.

SHEEP FARMING

The more fertile areas of South Greenland are suitable for sheep farming and fields have been cultivated for harvesting the necessary winter fodder during the summer. As there is no private right of ownership for land in Greenland, the sheep farmers are jointly responsible for agreeing the terms of the right to use the land. Some 20,000 lambs are slaughtered annually in Narsaq and in addition, large numbers are slaughtered on the farms.

FISHING

The nutrient salts from the melting snow and ice during the summer months together with the long, light summers encourage abundant plankton growth, which feeds more than 200 different species of fish, crustaceans and mussels. In addition to 5,000 dinghies, the fishing fleet consists of around 300 cutters and some 25 trawlers.

The cold-water prawn is by far the most important fishing product. Formerly, cod played a central role, but today Greenland halibut is particularly important. Fishing of Norway haddock, catfish, Atlantic halibut, salmon and char is of local importance.

FISHING INDUSTRY

The majority of Greenland's fishing industry is managed by Royal Greenland A/S, which is owned by the Home Rule Government. The main product is peeled prawns, which are sold on the northern European market. The company's trawlers mainly produce unpeeled, cooked or raw, frozen prawns. The company is the world's largest retailer of cold-water prawns. A total of almost 6,500 people are employed in fishing and the fishing industry.

SERVICES, TRADE AND SALES

Much of Greenland's wholesale and retail business is managed by the publicly owned company KNI (Kalaallit Niuerfiat, Greenland Trade). The company is divided into two separate units, Pisiffik A/S, which operates in the ten largest towns, and Pilersuisoq A/S, which supplies settlements and smaller towns. KNI handles approximately half the total

sales; the rest is distributed between the co-op FDB's retail chain Brugsesen and private businesses. Trade and sales together employ around 3,500 people. An essential component of Greenland's trade is *brædtet* (the board), where hunters and fishermen sell seasonal produce directly to the public. Larger towns have purpose-built facilities with electricity and water for *brædtet*, while smaller towns and settlements manage with simple open-air stands.

More than 8,000 civil servants are employed in the service and administration sector, mostly by the Home Rule Government and the Landsstyre. Many of the jobs are in Nuuk. The 18 municipalities employ around 2,600 people in local administration, the education system and social institutions such as old people's homes, creches, nurseries and youth recreation centres. The central authorities employ around 300 people.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Most of the everyday necessities are imported. International trade is dominated by the trade with Denmark. In 1999, total imports amounted to DKK 2,900m, while the export revenue was approximately DKK 1,900m. The trade deficit is covered by a block grant from Denmark of over DKK 2,500m a year.

Prawns account for 64% of Greenland's exports and halibut, crab and cod make up the rest. In 2000, Greenland renegotiated its fishing agreement with the EU. This agreement, in force from 2001 to 2006, provides Greenland with an annual grant of DKK 320m in exchange for a series of EU fishing rights. The agreement also allows Greenland to sell its fish products as

non-dutiable goods to the EU, and this export adds up to a yearly income of around DKK 200m. The main export countries are Germany, Great Britain, Japan, China and Denmark.

INFRASTRUCTURE

There are roads in the towns, but the towns are not connected by a network of roads. Shipping is still the main element in Greenland's infrastructure. A well-developed freight system handles transport between Greenland and Denmark and increasingly also between Greenland and countries such as Iceland and Canada. Part of the local passenger transport within Greenland is by ship, but most people travel by air. Local traffic is by helicopter, while transport between the districts and the major towns is by plane. In recent years, air traffic has been developed and runways have been established near to most major towns. The main air traffic junction remains Kangerlussuaq.

SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION

Greenland has a well-developed but also costly social safety net. In 1997, the state contributed around DKK 1,400m towards the social system. The main social benefits include old-age and early retirement pension, educational grants, social security payments in connection with unemployment and family allowances.

The Home Rule Government strives to ensure that Greenlanders do not have to leave the island for their education and a number of regional training centres offer a broad range of vocational training. In addition, there are secondary schools

EXPORTS (1999)

Selected export articles

	1,000 tonnes	DKKm	% of total export
Prawn	45.7	1,238	64.0
Greenland halibut	13.5	386	20.0
Crab	2.0	68	3.5
Cod	1.5	43	2.2
Sealskin products	–	11	0.6

In 1999, Greenland's total export revenue was DKK 1,932m.

Source: Statistics Greenland.



The town of Narsaq in South West Greenland. Photo: Narsaq Foto.

in Nuuk, Qaqortoq, Aasiaat and Sisimiut. Higher education establishments include a college of education, a socio-educational college, business colleges and a small university (Ilisimatusarfik).

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

Greenland's church is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark. Greenland's National Museum and Archive in Nuuk serves as the central museum for the island.

Despite the huge distances and the nature of the landscape, communications in Greenland are extremely well-developed. A digital radio link along the coast constitutes the backbone of the telecommunications network.

KNR (Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa, Greenland Broadcasting Corporation) has overall responsibility for radio and television services and produces radio as well as a relatively large number of television programmes.

The building of the Greenland Culture Centre in Nuuk (1997) established an important focus on Greenland's rich cultural life, presenting both cultural experiences from abroad and contemporary and traditional Greenlandic culture.

Greenlandic art has always been closely associated with nature and natural materials. Soapstone and bone are important materials for carving figures and sculptures, notably by artists such as Christian Rosing (b.1944) and Aka Høegh (b.1947). Aka Høegh is also known as one of Greenland's great graphic artists, whose work like that of artists such as Jens Rosing (b.1925), Kristian Olsen (Aaju) (b.1942), Kistat Lund (b.1942) and Naja Abelsen (b.1964), is inspired by man's meeting with Greenland's magnificent nature.

Story-telling was formerly a key feature of Greenlandic culture, but with the introduction of writing in the 18th century and the establishment of the South Greenland Printing Press in 1857, the written word became an important element of cultural life. The Danish-Greenlandic explorer Knud Rasmussen (1879-1933) wrote fiction inspired by the Greenlandic tradition and was at the same time probably the most important documenter of Greenlandic legends and stories and the way of life of the Polar Eskimos. Many poets, such as Mathias Storch (1883-1957) and Otto Sandgreen (1914-1999), have dealt with the great changes which the Greenlandic

society underwent in the 20th century. This is also a central theme in the work of poets such as Aqqaluk Lyngø (b.1947).

Traditional drum song is still practiced, but vocal art is dominated by the polyphonic singing introduced by the Moravian Brethren and performed by for instance the Greenlandic choir Mik. The music scene is dominated by rhythmic music with rock bands such as Sume, G-60 and Zikaza as well as Ole Kristiansen (b.1965) and Rasmus Lyberth (b.1951).

Traditional drum dance has largely been superseded by the more contemporary approach of amateur theatre groups which incorporate traditional modes of expression using masks and face painting, while focusing on contemporary problems. The theatre group Silamiut plays a key role.

Rasmus Ole Rasmussen
Senior Lecturer, lic.scient.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Home Rule Government of Greenland
Postboks 1015
DK-3900 Nuuk
(+299) 345 000
www.gh.gl
info@gh.gl

Greenland Tourism
Pilestræde 52
Postboks 1139
DK-1010 Copenhagen K
(+45) 3369 3200
www.greenland-guide.gl
info@visitgreenland.com

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Factsheet Denmark. Published by the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with Danmarks Nationalleksikon A/S. Address: Asiatisk Plads 2, DK-1448 Copenhagen K, Denmark. Telephone: (+45) 3392 0000. Telefax: (+45) 3254 0533.

E-mail: um@um.dk. Website: www.um.dk.

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