

## FACTSHEET DENMARK

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## THE FAEROE ISLANDS

In the last decade, the Faeroe Islands have mainly been mentioned in the international press in connection with three circumstances: the severe economic crisis in the early 1990s, the subsequent political development towards increased home rule or full sovereignty and, finally, the incipient oil exploration.

## THE RELATIONSHIP WITH DENMARK

In the 1998 election, *Sambandsflokkurin* (The Union Party), which supports a close connection with Denmark, lost seats, while the secession party *Tjóðveldisflokkurin* (The Republicans) was very successful. This resulted in the creation of a coalition, which initiated a political process with the declared aim of achieving full sovereignty. In spring 2000, the *Landsstýri* (home government) and the Danish government entered into negotiations concerning the Faeroese proposal of a treaty which would involve sovereignty within a loose commonwealth of the Faeroe Islands and Denmark, including joint monarchy, monetary union and collaboration in various other areas. In October 2000, the negotiations reached a deadlock and in spring 2001, it remains uncertain how the relationship between the

Faeroe Islands and Denmark will develop in the future.

## GEOGRAPHY

The Faeroe Islands are located in the North Atlantic, almost midway between Norway, Iceland and Scotland. The 62°N parallel passes through the capital Tórshavn.

The 18 islands are separated by narrow sounds and fjords. The total area is 1,399 square kilometres, extending 118 kilometres North-South and 79 kilometres East-West. The Faeroese landscape is shaped by volcanic rocks and erosion processes which have taken place since the volcanoes ceased being active 50-60 million years ago. Erosion by the waves of the sea has mainly worn away the westerly coasts, which today are characterised by high promontories, in some places colonised by vast flocks of birds. Along the protected parts of the fjords the mountains, mainly formed by soft moraine stemming from the ice age, slope gently towards the coast and this is where most of the old settlements are located.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The islands are not rich in natural resources. The green grass on the mountains is the basis for traditional sheep farming. In some parts of the island of Suðuroy, there are small seams of lignite, which have contributed to the islands' fuel supply, particularly in wartime. It is the riches of the sea which lie at the heart of the development of today's Faeroese society. Until 1977, when a fishing limit of 200 nautical miles was introduced, the fishing nations, including the Faeroe Islands, were largely free to fish anywhere in the entire North Atlantic area. Since then, the Faeroe Islands have had to exchange quotas to be able to exploit the fishing areas of other countries.



Føroyar – Færøerne

Government type: Home Rule in national union with Denmark

Area: 1,399 sq. km consisting of 18 islands and some islets

Population: 46,000

Capital: Tórshavn, 16,700 inhabitants

Language: Faeroese

Currency: Danish krone (DKK)

The main fish stocks in the sea around the Faeroe Islands are cod, haddock and coalfish, but greater silver smelt, Norway pout, halibut, monkfish and redfish, which are all demersal fish, are also caught in smaller quantities. Other valuable species are blue whiting, salmon and herring. The majority of the hauls in Faeroese waters are caught by local fishermen and landed on the islands for further processing.

Oil strikes on the British side of the median line between the Shetlands and the Faeroe Islands have stimulated interest in oil exploration in the Faeroese seabed. The responsibility for sub-soil minerals was handed over to Faeroese home rule in 1992. Concession legislation was passed and seismic tests of the continental shelf were carried out in 1994-1999. After an agreement about the course of the continental shelf boundary between the Faeroe Islands and the United Kingdom was reached in 1999 between Denmark/the Faeroe Islands and the United Kingdom, the first invitations to tender were issued in spring 2000 and in August 2000, licences



for hydrocarbon exploration on the Faeroese shelf were awarded to a number of oil companies. The first borings will take place in 2001.

### HISTORY AND HOME RULE

The first inhabitants on the islands were probably Irishmen who arrived around 600 AD. A couple of centuries later, Norwegian Vikings took possession of the country. From around 1135, the Faeroe Islands were brought under the Norwegian crown as a tributary country and in 1271, they became subject to the Norwegian *Gulating* (Parliament) Act. The *Alting* was replaced by a legislative assembly, the *Lagting* (now *Løgting*) with 36 members, and subsequently the *Løgting* mainly functioned as a court of law. In 1380, Denmark and Norway (including the Faeroe Islands) were joined in monarchical union. Initially, Faeroese trade links were with Bergen, but during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, they gradually shifted to Copenhagen. Trade on the islands was regulated by the king and in 1709, became a royal monopoly, which was lifted in 1856.

At the time of the Reformation of 1536, church property was confiscated by the king, who subsequently owned almost half of all land in the Faeroe Islands. In time, the *Løgting* lost its importance and in 1816, it was abolished. The Danish Constitution of 1849 also applied to the Faeroe Islands, which were allowed to send two representatives to the Danish parliament, and in 1852, an elected county council was introduced, adopting the traditional name *Løgting*.

When contact with Denmark was suspended during World War II, the political situation changed. A referendum in 1946 showed a small majority in favour of secession, but the *Løgting* was dissolved, a general election was called and the result was a *Løgting* which reached an agreement with the Danish government on the current *Home Rule Act of 1948*. This divides fields of responsibility into matters of common interest handled by the Danish national authorities, the Danish parliament (since 1953 the *Folкетин*) and the Danish government, and matters of local interest handled by the

Faeroese home rule authorities, the *Løgting* and the *Landsstýri*. Gradually, more fields of responsibility have been taken over by Faeroese authorities. Today, the principal matters of common interest are foreign policy and defence, administration of justice, banking, currency and church.

Denmark's membership of the EU does not extend to the Faeroe Islands, which are covered by special trade and fishing agreements with the EU. The Danish government and the *Landsstýri* have likewise entered into fishing and trade agreements with a number of other countries. Faeroese nationals living on the Faeroe Islands are exempt from Danish national service. NATO has installations on the Faeroe Islands. Two Faeroese delegates are elected to the Nordic Council.

### THE POLITICAL PARTIES

The Faeroese political parties came into being in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the desire for more or less extensive autonomy. The first were *Sambandsflokkurin* (The Union Party) and *Sjálvstýrisflokkurin* (The Autonomist Party). In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a further division on the basis of social class with the Social Democratic *Javnaðarflokkurin* and the conservative-nationalist *Fólkaflokkurin* (The People's Party), which mainly represented commercial interests. 1946 saw the foundation of *Tjóðveldisflokkurin* (The Republicans), who demanded a Faeroese republic.

The Faeroe Islands elect two members to the *Folкетин*. In the 1998 general election, the two seats went to *Fólkaflokkurin* and

*Javnaðarflokkurin*, which in Denmark collaborate with the Conservatives and the Social Democrats respectively.

### TRADE

Fishing and the fishing industry are the principal trades and virtually all other trade derives from these. Shipyards and the fishing tackle industry are important, but many small-scale industries have also been established. They are, however, limited by a small domestic market and the transport distance to export markets. Agriculture is only of marginal economic significance.

### FISHING

Trawlers and long-line vessels are used to fish in the waters around the Faeroe Islands. The catch is cooled with ice on board and sold at auction or directly to the filleting factories. Purse-seine or power block vessels catch shoal fish such as mackerel, capelin, herring or blue whiting in Faeroese, Icelandic, Norwegian and British waters. Most are landed at the large fishmeal factory in Fuglafjørður. A smaller number of large factory trawlers catch cod in the Barents Sea. The catches are processed and frozen on board. The trips normally last 2-4 months. Prawn trawlers, which also freeze the catch on board, fish the waters of Greenland, Newfoundland, Spitsbergen and the Barents Sea.

### AQUACULTURE

After expansion in the 1980s, followed by extensive structural rationalisation in the 1990s, sea farming of salmon and trout has increased dramatically. In 2000, ex-

### EXPORTS (2000)

	DKKm	% of total export
Filleted fish, chilled/frozen	1,232.6	32.4
Salmon and trout	666.8	17.6
Salted fish	545.4	14.3
Whole fish, chilled/frozen	506.7	13.3
Waste fish	240.1	6.3
Prawn, etc.	236.2	6.2
Processed fish	74.6	2.0
Ships	261.5	6.9
Other products	39.8	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,803.7</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Statistics Faeroe Islands.

port exceeded 30,000 tons, i.e. more than the entire cod haul in Faeroese waters.

### FISHING INDUSTRY

The principal land-based industry on the Faeroe Islands is the fishing industry and most large settlements have filleting factories. The filleting factories were hard hit by the economic crisis in the early 1990s. Most were merged with the parent company Føroya Fiskavirking, which today runs processing plants on 6-8 production sites. Since around 1990, a series of new and specialised fishing industries have come into being, based on for instance farmed salmon.

### OTHER INDUSTRY

The fishing trade is supplemented by various related trades and industries, for instance producing trawl, nets, lines and rope. Since 1962, the shipyards in Tórshavn and on Skála have built steel ships, mainly fishing vessels, but also cargo carriers and various other types. Other small industries catering to the domestic market include breweries, factories producing double glazing, windows and other building elements, pre-fabricated houses, fibreglass boats, computer software, food and milk products, tinned fish as well as spun and woollen goods.

### EXPORT AND IMPORT

Fish and fish products account for some 95-97% of exports, ships for 2-3%, while fishing tackle make up the remainder. Imports include food and other consumer goods, artisans' machinery and industrial capital equipment, means of transport and fuel. The main export market is the EU, which takes more than 80% of exports and supplies most of the imports.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

The Faeroe Islands have a good and well-maintained road network and all settlements are connected with the outside world by road, the only exception being Gásadalur on Vágar. A bridge connects the two largest islands, Streymoy and Eysturoy, while Borðoy is connected with Viðoy and Kunoy by dams over the narrow sounds. Tunnels enable traf-

fic to traverse the high ridges. The ferry routes between the islands are served by the government-owned company Strandfaraskip Landsins and car ferries service the routes between the major islands.

Helicopters fly to the small islands and settlements which are not connected to the road network. Passenger road transport is handled by private companies, but coordinated by the public Bygdaleiðir, which together with the public ferry company has established a coherent and well-functioning public transport system.

Passenger traffic to and from the islands is mainly by air. The main destination is Copenhagen, but there are also flights to Reykjavík, Stavanger, Aberdeen and London. During the summer months, the passenger ship routes connecting the Faeroes with Denmark also cover Norway, Scotland and Iceland.

### DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT

During the last 200 years, the population of the Faeroe Islands has steadily increased. So far, the population figure peaked at the end of 1989 with 47,800 inhabitants. The crisis period 1989-1994 saw a net emigration of 10% of the population. As it is mainly the young and fit who leave, this emigration has had serious consequences for the age profile of the population. The crisis has now turned and since 1996, net immigration has been increasing. In 2000, there were 46,000 inhabitants.

The birth rate has traditionally been considerably higher on the Faeroe Islands than in Denmark, but the figure has steadily declined and in 2000, it was 1.39%, which is largely the same as in Denmark. The rate of mortality was 0.89%. This is slightly lower than in Den-



The village of Mikladal on the island of Kalsoy. Photo: Polfoto/DIGO.

mark, due mainly to a younger population.

There has been a gradual but considerable relocation and concentration of the population. This process has been going on with varying momentum for more than a century. Thus, the proportion of the population living in the capital Tórshavn increased from 19% in 1950 to almost 36% in 2000. Emigration during the crisis in the early 1990s affected all parts of the Faeroe Islands, but subsequent stabilisation and growth have not benefited all areas, especially not the southern islands of Sandoy and Suðuroy.

### EDUCATION

The Faeroese education system is broadly similar to Denmark's. It is based on a compulsory primary school with 7 grades and the option of an 8th, 9th and 10th grade. There are two upper secondary schools and several higher preparatory examination courses (*HF*). Further education establishments include the university in Tórshavn, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, with institutes for Faeroese language and literature, natural science, history and social science. There are also various vocational training establishments such as a college of education and a nursing school in Tórshavn, several business schools and polytechnics, a school of marine engineering in Tórshavn, nautical schools in Klaksvík and Tórshavn and a fishing college in Vestmanna. However, most further education takes place in Denmark. Other educational institutions include the Faeroese Folk

### POPULATION (2000)

Average life expectancy in years:

– Men: 75.2

– Women: 81.4

Fertility rate:

– 2.6 children

Source: Statistics Faeroe Islands.





Boat race in Tórshavn harbour on Ólavsøkuaftan (St Olav's Eve) on 28 July. Photo: Biofoto/Lars Gejl.

High School in Tórshavn and a home economics school in Klaksvík. In addition, it is possible to take music lessons on a municipal basis and there are also random opportunities for leisure-time education.

#### LANGUAGE

Faeroese is a West Nordic language related to Norwegian and Icelandic, but in phonetic development it is closest to West Norwegian dialects. The Faeroese written language was established by V.U. Hammershaimb (1819-1909) in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, but Faeroese was not recognised or used in liturgy, education and administration until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Home Rule Act of 1948 recognises Faeroese as the principal language, but Danish must be well and thoroughly learned. Public affairs may be conducted in Danish as well as in Faeroese.

#### HEALTH SERVICE

There are three hospitals on the Faeroe Islands. The largest is the central hospital in Tórshavn, Landssjúkrahúsið, with 225 beds. The hospitals in Klaksvík and Tvøroyri have 36 and 16 beds respectively. The larger towns and settlements have general practitioners, called borough medical officers, and private dentists. There are health visitor and domes-

tic help schemes. The schools are covered by both medical and dental services.

#### RELIGION

Most of the population belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark. In 1998, 85% of the total population belonged to the established church. The Faeroe Islands are a diocese under the Danish national church. There is currently a political movement to make the national church a Faeroese field of responsibility. The liturgical language is now Faeroese with a Faeroese bible, hymn book and liturgy. There are various smaller religious communities outside the established church. The largest is the Plymouth Brethren, who were the first to produce a Faeroese bible translation in 1949.

#### CULTURE

Faeroese cultural life includes theatre, dance, classical music and choral singing, and most notably painting. Samuel Joensen-Mikines (1906-1979) was the first artist to become known outside the islands with his expressive paintings of for instance pilot whale hunting. The most prominent figure of the last fifty years is probably Ingálvur av Reyni (b.1920), who works with semi-abstract motifs and often on a large

scale. Zacharias Heinesen (b.1936), Amariel Norðoy (b.1945) and Tumas Arge (1942-1978) belong to the next generation, which keeps returning to the Faeroese landscape with its mountains and settlements.

Sculpture is represented by among others Janus Kamban (b.1913) and Fridtjof Joensen (1920-1988) with their realistic works, while a younger generation of painters and sculptors are exponents of a less traditional approach. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the quantity of Faeroese literature grew, both within prose and poetry. The most famous author was William Heinesen (1900-1991), who wrote in Danish, with his internationally acclaimed novels and several collections of poetry. He received the Nordic Council Literature Prize in 1965. This prize was also awarded to the poet Rói Patursson (b.1947) in 1986. In 1997, the Danish director Nils Malmros made a film version of the Faeroese novel *Barbara* by Jørgen-Franz Jacobsen (1900-1938).

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