

MINORITIES IN DENMARK

GENERAL INFORMATION: DENMARK



Total population	5,397,640 (2004)
Official languages	Danish
Minorities	Greenlander (1 %), Faroese (0.9%), German (0.4%), Roma
Immigrants	Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian, Somali, Former-Yugoslavian, other (6.3%)

Primarily a maritime country, Denmark shares a 68 km landborder with Germany. This area – the southern part of the Region South Denmark – an area of 3,938 square km between the German-Danish border and the Kongeaaen is inhabited by members of a German minority of 15.000 concentrated in and around Tønder (Tondern), Sønderborg (Sonderburg), Aabenraa (Apenrade) and Haderslev (Hadersleben). The German-speaking minority is a historically recognized minority in Denmark. It has existed since 1920 as the consequence of establishing the German-Danish border on the basis of two plebiscites held in Schleswig.

GERMANS IN DENMARK - LOCATION AND INHABITANTS

North of the Danish-German Border in North Schleswig live 15.000 people who belong to the German minority. The German minority in North Schleswig maintains its own schools and a wide spectrum of social and cultural institutions and serves as a vital bridge between the German and Danish cultures. Minority members regard themselves as Danish citizens with a German identity and strong ties to the region of North Schleswig.

HISTORY

Both Germans and Danes lived in harmony until the rise of nationalism in the middle of the 19th century. Two wars - the first from 1848 to 1850, which Denmark won, and the second of 1864, when Denmark lost to Prussia and Austria - did not solve the national conflicts but resulted in Schleswig becoming a Prussian province.

The outcome of the World War I opened up the prospect of a solution to of the Schleswig question: Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and applying the right of national self-determination, two plebiscites were held in Schleswig in 1920.

In the southern part the vote in each community was counted separately, while in the northern part, all votes were counted together – en-bloc. The result in the northern zone was 75 % for Denmark, 25 % for Germany, and south of the border, the result was 75 % for Germany and 25 % for Denmark, but with no Danish majority in any community. As a result the border between the two zones became the national border between Denmark and Germany.

Another consequence was the creation of the German minority in Denmark and the Danish minority in Germany. But the border was not yet a peaceful one: the Germans felt that the en-bloc voting procedure had been unfair and demanded a re-drawing of the border.

When Hitler came into power the German minority hoped for a revision of the border, but in the end got disappointed. The occupation of Denmark by German troops on April 9th, 1940 further poisoned relations between Germans and Danes in the border region. World War II was a disaster for the German minority: 752 volunteers died in the war, all buildings - schools and kindergartens etc. – were confiscated and some 3.000 German minority men were jailed for cooperating with the German occupation.

But 1945 also marked a new, democratic beginning for the German minority with the Declaration of Loyalty. In it the German minority officially declared their loyalty toward the Danish constitution and acknowledged the border of 1920. By the Declaration of Loyalty the German minority became an accepted part of Danish society.

The Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of 1955 were a further step towards normality. The declarations assured the rights of the minorities north and south of the border and stated the freedom to choose their nationality. Highlights of recent history have been the visits of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II in 1986 and of German president Richard von Weizsäcker in 1989, as well as the joint visits to the German minority in North Schleswig of Danish queen Margrethe II and German president Roman Herzog in 1998. All of these visits were important steps toward complete equality and demonstrated the good relations in the Danish- German border region.

GERMANS IN DENMARK – ORGANIZATION

The Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger is the German minority's umbrella organisation. Its aim is to represent the interests of the minority and promote German language and culture in Nordschleswig. At the same time, the minority sees itself as a bridge between Danes and Germans. The head office of the BDN is the general secretariat in Aabenraa/Apenrade.

The German minority's political party is the Schleswigsche Partei, which also functions as an independent, regional party. At the local elections in 2005 five representatives of the Schleswigsche Partei were voted in: two in Aabenraa/Apenrade, and one each in Sønderborg/Sonderburg and Tønder/ Tondern, and a mandate without the right to vote in Haderslev/Hadersleben. The latter resulted from a special rule that gives the party a voice but

not a vote in the local council, if the Schleswigsche Partei achieves at least 25 % of the votes of a normal mandate. Junge SPitzen is the political youth organization of the German minority.

EDUCATION

The minority is in close contact with the Danish parliament and government through its secretariat in Copenhagen. Kindergartens and schools are central institutions of the German minority. 24 pre-schools/kindergartens, 16 schools and 1 grammar school play an important role in teaching German language and culture, but also Danish is part of the curriculum so that the children may feel at home on both sides of the border. The final exams may be used to study in both Germany and Denmark. Volunteer work is essential for the German minority.

CULTURE, YOUTH & SPORTS

The Central Library at Aabenraa/Apenrade, one branch each at Haderslev/Hadersleben, Sønderborg/Sonderburg, Tønder/ Tøndern and Tinglev/Tingleff, two mobile libraries, and 15 school libraries - 23 German libraries - provide 230.000 media units, including books, magazines, games, recordings, and DVDs for 8.000 users.

Sports and leisure activities are offered by a wide range groups that are part of the youth association Jugendverband. The Jugendverband is responsible for the yearly Knivsbergfest, the traditional summer gathering of the German minority. The Knivsberg, highest point in Nordschleswig, also the location of the Jugendhof, the conference centre of the German minority, which especially provides youth activities, such dance, sports and music. Rowing is a popular sport among the German minority, and the six local rowing club houses also function as their local meeting places.

History looms large wherever you are in Nordschleswig, in the German minority as well. The Archive/Institute for Historical Research manages the archives of the German minority and performs related historical research. The Heimatkundliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft is an association committed to the study of local and regional history through excursions, lectures and publications. In Sønderborg/Sonderburg you may visit the German museum with its collection on German history in Nordschleswig and in Aabenraa/Apenrade, the German school museum.

MEDIA

Der Nordschleswiger is the daily newspaper of and for the German minority. It plays an important role in the minority group's intracommunication, and acts as its voice, contributing actively towards shaping positive German-Danish relations.

Established in 1946 as a weekly, it became a daily paper in 1951. *Der Nordschleswiger* was the first German newspaper published in Western Europe after 1945. The newspaper has a daily circulation of 3,000 copies (distributed mainly by post). It is strongly funded by the German State (65%), while other financial income comes from sales (18%) and advertising (17%). The newspaper has its publishing house and main editorial office at Aabenraa/Apenrade, with branch offices at Haderslev/Hadersleben, Sønderborg/Sonderburg, Tinglev/Tingleff and Tønder/Tøndern.

Since 2004 *Der Nordschleswiger* has broadcast first two and now three newscasts daily on a private, regional radio station.

LINKS ABOUT GERMANS IN DENMARK ON THE INTERNET:

www.nordschleswig.dk, www.bdn.dk, www.nordschleswiger.dk



The German minority's symbol shows the two Schleswig lions in the traditional blue and yellow colours and a bridge as a sign of the minority's function as a bridge between the German and Danish cultures and languages.