

Factsheet Denmark



View from Froðba on Suðuroy towards (from the left) Skúvoy, Stóra Dímun and Líttla Dímun, with Sandoy in the background. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.

AUGUST 2009

THE FAROES

Geography

The Faroes comprise 18 islands, separated by narrow sounds and fiords, located in the northern Atlantic, almost midway between Norway, Iceland and Scotland. The 62° N parallel passes through the capital Tórshavn. The total area is 1,399 square kilometres. The distance between the northern-most and southern-most point is 118 kilometres and between the western-most and eastern-most point 79 kilometres. The Faroese landscape was shaped by volcanic activity 50-60 million years ago. It consists of alternating layers of hard lava (basalt) and thinner soft layers of ash (tuff). The characteristic landscape shapes with alternating escarpments and terraces have been created by erosion. The ice cover during the ice age has left its traces, espe-

cially in the east-facing valleys, where the areas around the fiords are characterised by soft shapes with rich vegetation. This is where most built-up areas are found. Due to the islands' location in the zone of prevailing westerlies, the erosion by the sea has been particularly strong on the western coasts, which are characterised by steep promontories, frequently colonised by vast flocks of birds.

Natural resources

Although influenced by changeable weather, the location in the Gulf Stream produces a relatively mild climate, which provides good conditions for grass growth. This has formed the basis of both sheep and cattle farming, which until the 20th century constituted the islands' main economic basis. The rich fish resources in the sea have also been crucial to life in the islands. In 1977, the exclusive fisheries zone of the Faroes was extended from 12 to 200 nauti-

cal miles as part of a universal development due to changes in the Law of the Sea. Before that, Faroese vessels used to fish all over the North Atlantic, while foreign fishing vessels fished extensively around the Faroes. The new system allowed increased Faroese fishing in home waters at the cost of the traditional fishing in more distant waters. In order to retain a flexible fishing pattern, agreements on the exchange of fish quotas have been made with other countries. Faroese fishermen also fish outside the 200 nautical miles zone. Here fishing is regulated by regional fisheries management organisations, to which the Faroese authorities also contribute as a part of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Energy

The rocky Faroe islands offer only limited mineral and energy resources. Peat and small seams of lignite on the island of Suðuroy used to contribute to the Faroese energy

Flag: The Faroese flag Merkið (The Sign) was created by Faroese students in Copenhagen in 1919 as a Nordic cross flag and brought to the Faroes, where it was run up for the first time in the village Fámjín, where the original flag is still on display in the local church. Merkið was for many years used unofficially by the Faroese population instead of the Danish flag, which at times caused conflict with the Danish authorities. When the Faroes came under British control during World

War II, the British authorities officially recognised the flag and with the Home Rule Act of 1948, it was recognised as the official flag of the islands by the Danish Realm. Photo: Ólavur Fredriksen.



Føroyar – The Faroes

Form of government: Home rule (self-governing part of the Kingdom of Denmark)

Area: 1,399 km² divided on 18 islands and a number of islets

Population: 48,797 (1 January 2009), 48% women, 52% men

Average life expectancy: Men 75.2 years, women 81.4 years

Fertility rate: 2.5 children (2008)

Capital: Tórshavn with 12,395 inhabitants (1 January 2009)

Language: Faroese

Currency: 1 Faroese króna = 1 Danish krone (DKK)

supply. The Faroes are very dependent upon imported oil, both for domestic heating and for the fishing fleet. In 1992, the responsibility for the management of sub-soil resources was transferred to Faroese Home Rule. A number of exploration licenses have been issued by Faroese authorities and the first boring on the continental shelf around the Faroes took place in 2001. By 2008, six borings had been completed, but no commercially viable finds were made. Expectations of financial gain from oil extraction have therefore been adjusted downwards, but the hopes of future income have not been entirely abandoned, as new borings are planned.

By contrast, increased focus on sustainable energy resources has been successful. Even though thermal energy based on oil still accounts for most of the electricity supply with more than 150,000 MWh, the water power capacity now amounts to over 100,000 MWh, an increase of 33% within the last 15 years or so. Wind turbines account for more than 15,000 MWh. The

potential is huge, but affected by wind force variations, especially the powerful gales, which can damage the equipment. However, better equipment has contributed to reducing this risk. High expectations are also held of the potential future development of technologies which can harness the energy in the waves and strong tidal currents.

History

The first settlers in the islands were probably Irish monks around 600, but very little information survives about them in the form of either physical remains or written records. The current settlement was founded by Norwegian Vikings, who a couple of centuries later took up residence in the islands, attracted by the farming opportunities. The settlers set up a legislative and judicial body of their own, the Alting, later called Løgting. In 1035 the Faroes became a fief under the king of Norway and adopted Norwegian law.

Trade links developed between the Faroes and Bergen on the west coast of Norway.



”Norröna” transports travellers and tourists between Denmark, the Faroes and Iceland. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.

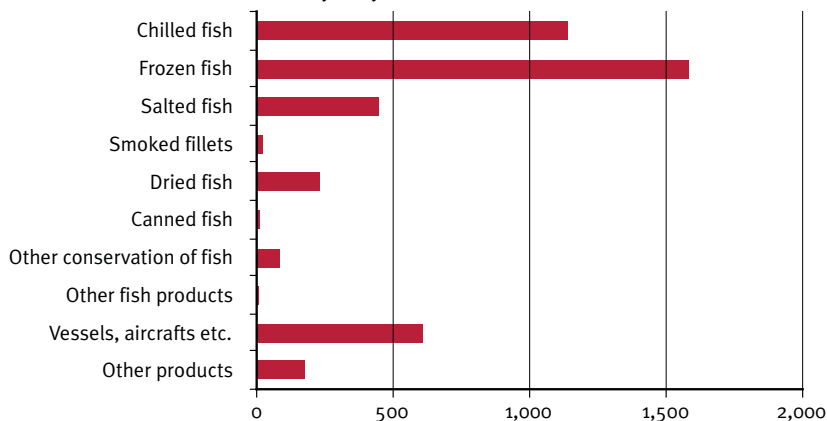




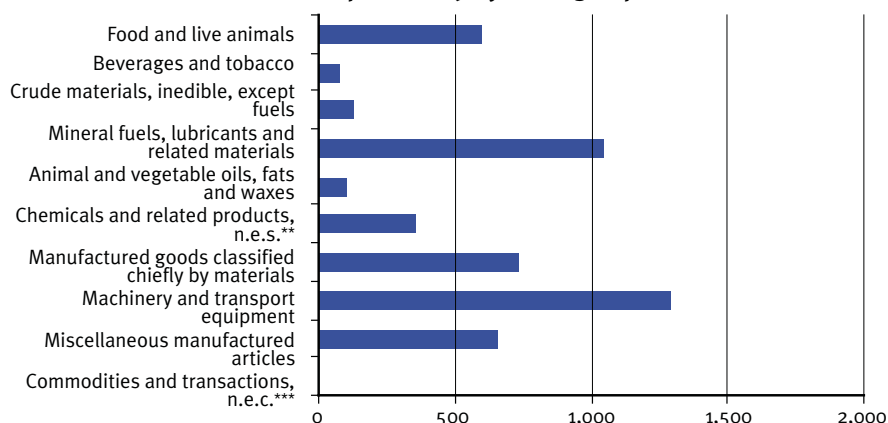
From sheep farming to fishing: Until the late 19th century, fishing in the Faroes was based on small boats and dinghies. However, an important change occurred when the Faroese started fishing in more remote oceans, which was made possible by the purchase of larger vessels. The first large vessel, a sloop (a cutter-like sailing ship), was bought in England in 1872 and heralded a change in the employment structure from sheep farming to fishing as the dominant occupation. In

the early 20th century, the first motorised vessels were acquired and the basis of the Faroese economy became export of fish, at first mainly salted and dried, but during the century increasingly frozen. The 1960s saw the introduction of the modern fishing fleet of steel vessels with powerful engines, operating modern, efficient fishing equipment. Photo: Samvit. fo.

Export of goods 2008 by main groups, DKK 1,000,000



Imports 2009 by SITC*-groups, DKK 1,000,000



* SITC = Standard International Trade Classification

** n.e.s = not elsewhere specified

*** n.e.c = not elsewhere classified

Faroese exports are mainly based on the country's main industry, fishing, which in 2008 constituted about 82% of the total export value of DKK 4.3 billion. The reason the percentage is not even higher is that in recent years non-profitable vessels have been sold abroad, while the export of equipment for fishing, fish farming and fishing industry has increased. Imports, which in 2008 amounted to DKK 4.9 billion, comprise a broad range of goods, with machinery, means of transport, including new vessels, and mineral fuels among the largest categories. The main markets for both export and import are the EU countries. In recent years, the balance of trade has been in deficit, for instance DKK 0.6 billion in 2008.

Source: Hagstova Føroya, www.hagstova.fo

Following the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark in 1380, control of the islands was transferred to Copenhagen. At the Reformation in 1536, the separate Faroese bishopric at Kirkjubøur was abandoned and the Faroes came under the diocese of Bergen and later Copenhagen. The church property was confiscated by the Crown, making the Danish king owner of

almost half the land in the Faroes. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the trade links also shifted to Copenhagen. The royal trade monopoly established in 1709 was not lifted until 1856. In 1814, the two kingdoms were separated, but the Faroes remained under the king of Denmark. The Danish Constitution of 1849 gave the Faroes representatives in the Danish parliament, Rigsdagen,

and in 1852 an elected council was introduced in the Faroes, adopting the old name Løgting.

After the lifting of the royal trade monopoly in 1856, economic activity increased. Larger areas were cultivated, among other things for potatoes, and from the late 19th century fishing became crucial to the further development. With the increased activity, cultural and linguistic self-awareness flourished. The fight for the Faroese culture and language increased political awareness and led to demands for more influence upon local affairs. Equal status was granted to Danish and Faroese in schools and churches from 1938, with Faroese dominant in all contexts apart from the judicial system.

Home Rule

During World War II, contact with Denmark was suspended. The Faroes had to manage on their own. After the war, negotiations were initiated regarding a new and more independent status for the Faroes. A referendum in 1946 turned down a Danish proposal for a new status as inadequate and showed a small majority in favour of secession from Denmark. The Løgting was dissolved, a general election was called and the result was a Løgting combination which decided to resume negotiations and finally entered into an agreement with the Danish government in the form of the current Home Rule Act of 1948. This divides the responsibility for the islands into common and special Faroese affairs. The common affairs are handled by Rigsdagen (since 1953 the Folketing) and the Danish government, while the special Faroese affairs are handled by the Faroese Home Rule authorities, consisting of the Løgting, the legislature, and the Landsstýri, the executive, which is appointed by and politically responsible to the Løgting.

Since then, the Faroese have gradually taken over more and more areas of responsibility. Common affairs are mainly foreign policy, defence, citizenship matters, administration of justice, banking and currency. In 2000, negotiations were initiated about

Monetary system: The Faroes are in monetary union with Denmark, which means that the Faroese króna is tied to the Danish krone, as in a currency board system. As the currency exchange rate for the Danish krone is tied to the European euro exchange rate mechanism, the Faroese currency is closely linked to the euro. This reflects the close economic ties with the European Union, which accounts for 65% of the exports from and 62% of the imports to the Faroes (2008). The

coins are identical to Danish coins, but since 1940 the Faroes have had their own banknotes, which in accordance with legislation from 1949 are legal tender in the islands. The banknotes are issued by the National Bank of Denmark. Danish banknotes can also be used in the Faroes and Faroese banknotes can be exchanged for Danish banknotes on a 1:1 basis, without commission, at any bank in the Faroes or Denmark. Photo: The National Bank of Denmark.



the establishment of a looser relationship between the Faroes and Denmark, but they did not lead to any result. In 2005, a law was passed which facilitated the transfer of powers to the Faroese authorities along with another law giving the Faroese government specific powers to enter into international agreements on matters relating to special Faroese affairs. In addition, the Fámjin Declaration was signed, allowing increased Faroese influence on the conduct by Danish authorities of foreign and security policy matters affecting the islands.

The Faroes elect two representatives to the Danish Folketing.

Denmark's membership of the EU does not extend to the Faroes, as the Faroese preferred to stay outside, mainly because of the Common Fisheries Policy. Instead, the Danish government and the Faroese Home Rule government have concluded

agreements with the EU regarding mutual trade and mutual access to fisheries. They have also entered into fishing agreements with other countries in the North Atlantic area and trade agreements with other European countries. The freedom of movement resulting from the Schengen Agreement has been extended to the Faroes. Faroese residing in the Faroes are exempt from Danish national service, but the Faroes are covered by Denmark's membership of NATO, and certain NATO installations have been in operation in the islands.

Political parties

The Faroese political parties were established at the beginning of the 20th century as part of the efforts to achieve greater autonomy. The first two parties were Sambandsflokkurin (The Union Party) and Sjálvstýrisflokkurin (The Autonomist Party), supporting the is-

lands' status as an integral part of Denmark and advocating greater autonomy respectively. During the 1920s and 1930s, a social polarisation began to be reflected in politics. This led to the establishment of the Social Democratic Javnaðarflokkurin and the conservative-nationalist Fólkaflokkurin (The People's Party). In 1946, Tjóðveldisflokkurin (The Republican Party) was formed with the main aim of establishing the Faroes as an independent republic. In recent years, new parties have come into being, including Miðflokkurin (The Centre Party), which emphasises Christian values.

Trade

Fish and fish products constitute most of the exports from the Faroes. A few major industrial companies, such as the shipyards and manufacturers of fishing equipment, as well as a larger number of small companies are increasingly important to the Faroese economy. The development of fish farming has provided an expanded resource basis and knowledge export within this field has created a new source of income. Hindrances to the development of new economic activities are the relatively small domestic market and the transport costs to the markets. In recent years, the focus has been on the opportunities provided by service companies, knowledge-based activities, fish farming and tourism.

Fishing

The Faroese fishing fleet is highly diversified. Small and large trawlers and long-line vessels fish in the productive waters around the Faroes. The catch is put on ice and transported to the shore, where it is sold at auction or delivered directly to factories for subsequent processing. A few large factory trawlers catch cod and haddock in the Barents Sea and redfish in the North Atlantic.

Tinganes in Tórshavn is the historic location of the Faroese Løgting (parliament). The name means "parliament headland" or "parliament point" in Faroese. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.





Fish farming: Since the 1980s, there has been focus on the development of fish farming. There has been a major increase in activities, especially in the past decade. The main species are salmon with an annual production of almost 32,000 tons and trout with a production of just under 7,000 tons (2008). The declining world market prices for these particular products have resulted in interest in other species, with trial farming of several flatfish and marine whitefish species. Apart

from the economic perspectives of fish production, the development and sale of fish farming technologies, such as the floating cages and feeding systems shown in the photo, also play a significant economic role. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri (Wikipedia).

Fishing and fish processing have been key occupations in the Faroese economy, both at sea, where the men did the fishing, and on land, where the fish processing in the fishing industry was mainly handled by women. Photo: Rasmus Ole Rasmussen.

The fleet of factory trawlers catching and processing shrimp in arctic and subarctic waters has been reduced due to restricted access to fishing and depressed prices. Large pelagic trawlers/purse seiners catch shoal fish such as mackerel, herring, capelin and blue whiting in Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian and British waters. Part of the catch is landed at the large fishmeal factory in Fuglafjørður.

Fish processing

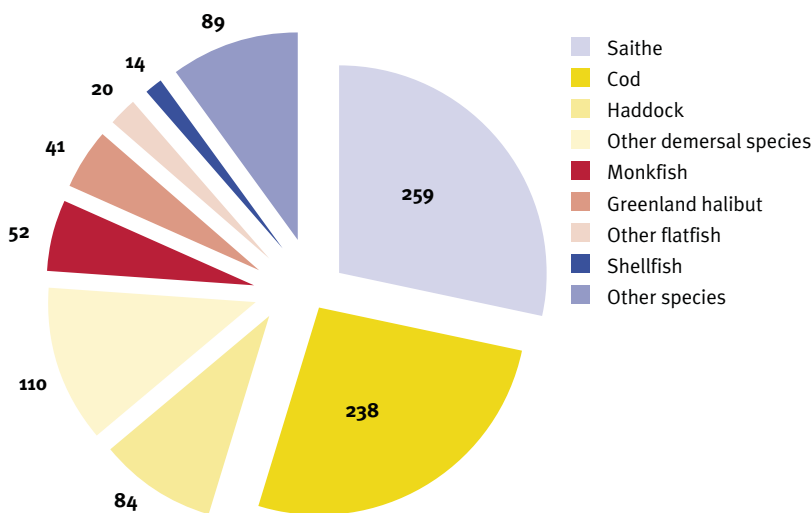
By far the most important industrial activity in the Faroes is fish processing, especially the production of salted fish and frozen fillets, partly sold as 'blocks' for further processing outside the Faroes. However, products with a higher degree of processing and therefore greater added value, such as fish portions or ready meals for the European market, are increasingly being manufactured. A number of small and large companies are able to supply a broad range of fish products. The largest company is United Seafood (Føroya Fiskavirkning), which processes just under 40% of the total catch and divides its activities between eight factories.

Other industries

Other industries play an important role in the Faroese economy, many of them fishing-related. In addition to shipyards building or maintaining vessels for both fishing and transport, smaller shipyards build fibreglass vessels and other companies produce fishing equipment such as nets, trawls, trawl doors, ropes, fish crates, transport crates, etc. Electronic equipment for use in fishing and the fishing industry is also produced. In addition, a number of companies supply the domestic market with for instance building elements, pre-fabricated houses, a broad range of food and milk products, woollen goods and other clothing as well as beer.



Faroese wet fish catches 2008, landed value, DKK 1,000,000



The above figure illustrates the first hand value of groundfish (such as saithe, cod, haddock, ocean perch, monkfish and flatfishes, including white and black halibut) landed by Faroese vessels in Faroese ports, mostly for processing with a small proportion for export as fresh fish. Other species of importance to Faroese fisheries are pelagic or semi-pelagic species such as blue whiting, herring, capelin and mackerel. While blue whiting (2007: 312,000 t) and capelin (2007: 19,000 t) are mostly landed for reduction to fishmeal and oil, partly at the Faroese fishmeal, fish oil and fish feed factory Havsbrún, the majority of the herring (2007: 63,000 t) and mackerel (2007: 14,000 t) are landed for human consumption, mostly in foreign ports.

Source: Hagstova Føroya, www.hagstova.fo

Population concentration: Over the past many decades, there has been a gradual concentration of the population and now 40% live in and around Tórshavn as against for instance under 20% in 1950. The development of the infrastructure into a network of roads and tunnels has made it possible to commute between various towns, and with Tórshavn as the centre almost 80% of the population can be reached within an hour's drive. The combination of emigration dur-

ing the crisis in the 1990s and reduced return has further contributed to the concentration process, as many of those originating from especially the southern islands of Sandoy and Suðuroy have chosen to settle in Tórshavn, insofar as they have returned. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.

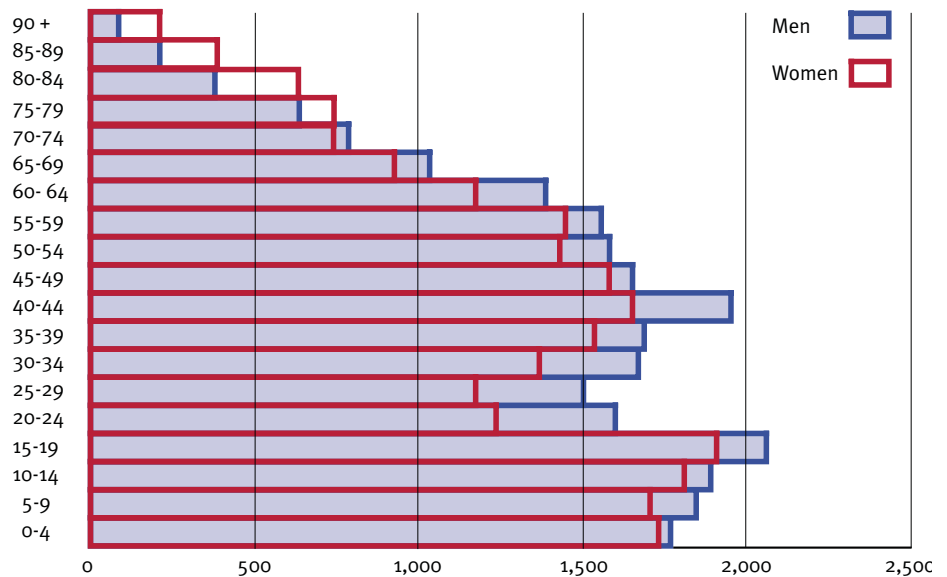


Infrastructure

The Faroes have an extensive, well-maintained road network linking virtually all settlements in the islands. A bridge connects the two largest islands, Streymoy and Eysturoy, while Borðoy is connected with Viðoy and Kunoy by dams. In several cases, tunnels have been constructed, for instance the subsea Vága tunnel, which since 2003 has connected the airport on Vágoy with the capital Tórshavn on Streymoy, the tunnel to Gásadalur on Vágar in 2004, the subsea tunnel from Eysturoy to Borðoy, which was opened in 2005, and most recently a tunnel from Øravík to Hov on Suðuroy in 2007. With the latest tunnels, almost 80% of the Faroese population are within an hour's drive from Tórshavn. Ferry routes with car ferries and a few passenger ferries between the larger islands are served by the public transport company Strandfaraskip Landsins. The smallest and most inaccessible settlements and islands are serviced by helicopter.

Passenger transport from the Faroes to the rest of the world is mainly by air. There are

Population distribution, age groups, number



Women live longer than men, also on the Faroes, resulting in a preponderance of women in the oldest age groups. However, the distribution is generally characterised by a large preponderance of men, especially in the age groups 20-50 years. Overall, 52% of the population are men and 48% women. This is because far more women than men move away for education and work, primarily to Denmark, as the traditional occupations in agriculture and fishing industry disappear due to mechanisation without being replaced by an equal number of jobs within the service sector and knowledge industries.

Source: Hagstova Føroya, www.hagstova.fo



Tunnels are an important element in the infrastructure of the Faroes. The tunnel from Eysturoy to Borðoy established a road connection from the capital Tórshavn to the second-largest town, Klaksvík. It passes beneath the Leirvíksfjørður strait, reaching a depth of 150 metres below sea level. The colours come from a light installation by the artist Tróndur Patursson. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.

flights to many destinations in the North Atlantic area, including Reykjavík, Stavanger and London, but the route to Copenhagen accounts for the majority of the traffic. All year round, the passenger and car ferry "Norröna" transports travellers and tourists between Denmark, the Faroes and Iceland.

Population

Over the past couple of centuries, the population of the Faroes has steadily increased. Although crises – most recently in the mid 1990s – have often resulted in net emigration from the islands, the population has slowly increased to its current level of just under 49,000 (48,797 as at 1 January 2009). As in the rest of Europe, the birth rate has been steadily declining over the last decades. In recent years, the birth rate has been between 1.3 and 1.5%, which is at the high end by European standards and should be sufficient to ensure repro-



Tourism: Tourism has become an increasingly important source of income for the Faroes. During the 1990s, both capacity and employment increased. The unique scenery, buildings and cultural offers are the main attraction. The region around Tórshavn receives most visitors, but increased activity has also affected more remote destinations. In recent years, the number of tourists has stagnated, but new initiatives and expanded North Atlantic collaboration between the

Faroes, Greenland and Iceland around the development of new tourism activities are expected to create greater interest. The initiatives include combination tourism with short or long stays at selected destinations combined with conference events, cruises and themed holidays. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.



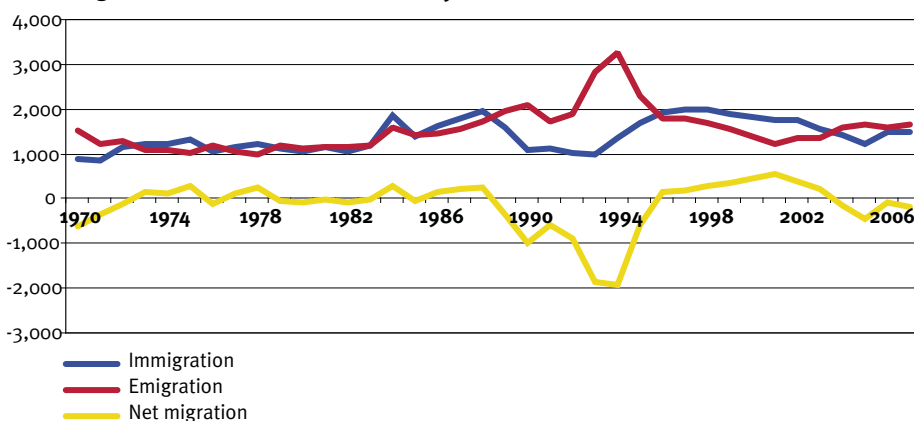
Happy students in traditional costume celebrate their graduation. Photo: Erik Christensen – Porkeri.

duction. However, in the long term, this might not be the case, as reproduction may be affected by the unequal number of men and women, which is particularly noticeable in the group of young and middle-aged people, where men outnumber women by 5-10%.

Education

The Faroese education system is similar to the Danish in many respects, with nine years' compulsory education. There are two upper secondary schools and several higher preparatory examination courses. Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (The University of the Faroes) in Tórshavn offers academic studies within Faroese language and literature, natural science, history and social science. The teacher and nursery teacher training college, and the nursing school have recently been integrated into the University and will in future lead to degrees at BA level. There are also a number of institutions offering other higher education and vocational training, such as business schools and polytechnics as well as a nautical school training master mariners and marine engineers. Approx. 500 young people are pursuing further education, but as the number of subjects and study places in the islands is limited, many choose to study elsewhere, including approx. 1,000 in Denmark.

Migration to and from the Faroes, years, number



A society dependent on fluctuating resources must be able to react to change. On the Faroes, one method has been emigration. Such a situation occurred in the 1990s, when a serious financial crisis affected trade and industry, including fishing. Many companies had to close and several vessels were sold by order of the court. The result was major emigration in the years 1992 to 1996, when almost 15% of the population chose to leave. Most settled in Denmark, partly because many Faroese have family there. As the crisis wore off and fishing flourished again, many decided to return, but nonetheless the net migration resulted in negative growth, especially among young people, and this has only been compensated for in recent years.

Source: Hagstova Føroya, www.hagstova.fo

Health service

In the large towns and settlements, general health is handled by 26 general practitioners and a number of private dentists. There are also three hospitals. The largest, with 225 beds, is the central hospital in Tórshavn, Landssjúkrahúsið, while the hospitals in Klaksvík and Tvøroyri have 26 and 16 beds respectively. During 2008, general practitioners and hospitals were linked by an electronic journal system, which is intended to provide the patients with the best possible care.

The Faroes

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Religion

Christianity is important to the Faroese and more than 80% of the population belong to the Established Evangelical Lutheran Church. The second-largest group of approx. 10% are the Baptists, or more accurately, the Plymouth Brethren, who, incidentally, were the first religious community to translate the Bible into Faroese in 1949. Danish was the official liturgical language from the Reformation in 1536 until 1939. Since then, the Bible, hymn book and church rituals have been translated into Faroese, which is now the official liturgical language. In 2007, the Faroese Home Rule authorities assumed responsibility for ecclesiastical affairs and the Established Faroese Church became independent of the Danish Established Church. The Church is headed by a bishop. The 60 parish churches are covered by 20 vicars. In addition to the National Church and the Brethren, there are a number of other religious communities.

Culture

The Faroese cultural life is extensive and enjoyed by many people both in and outside the islands. Over the past fifty years, authors such as William Heinesen (1900-1991) and Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen (1900-1938), who wrote mainly in Danish and thereby had access to a broad Scandinavian readership, have received great recognition for their stories' sensual union of nature and culture. Other writers write mainly in Faroese, but some of their works have been translated into Danish and other languages. Poets include Janus Djurhuus (1881-1948), Hans A. Djurhuus (1883-1951) and Christian Matras (1900-1988), while Heðin Brú (1901-1987) is one of the most important and read novelists.

Several painters are also known outside the Faroes, for instance Samuel Joensen-Mikines (1906-1979), whose Nordic Expressionism mainly focuses on human suffering. Hans í Mikladali (1920-1970) was inspired by Joensen-Mikines and is known for his paintings of houses and landscapes, while Ruth Smith Nielsen (1913-1958) is

regarded as one of the most important colourists in Nordic painting. Ingálvur av Reyni (1920-2005) depicts the dramatic Faroese nature with semi-abstract motifs in bright colours. In the following generation, Zacharias Heinesen (b.1936), Amariel Norðoy (b.1945), Tummas Arge (1942-1978) and Øssur Mohr (b.1961) have their own means of expression, but the powerful Faroese landscapes still inform their brushstrokes. In the works of Tróndur Patursson (b. 1944), the artist's experience of transcendental realities beyond those perceived by the senses influences paintings and glassware. Within sculpture, Janus Kamban (1913-2009) and Fridtjof Joensen (1920-1988) represent a realistic school, while a new generation, represented by for instance the sculptor Hans Pauli Olsen, explores new approaches.

Other cultural life on the Faroes is also rich. It includes theatre, dance, classical music and choral singing and in the past decades, jazz, folk and especially rock music have extended the field of cultural activity. Among the artists best known outside of the Faroes are the singer songwriters Teitur (Lassen) and Eivør (Pálsdóttir).

Sport is a very important feature of life in the Faroes. The national summer sport is rowing in boats based upon the traditional Faroese design, reminiscent of the Viking ships. Among the Faroese sportsmen taking part in international competitions, the best known are the Faroese national football team, who take part in European and World Championships.

Media

The printed press on the Faroes developed alongside the political movements. The largest newspaper, *Dimmalætting* (Dawn), was launched in 1877. It became the party newspaper of *Sambandsflokkurin* when the party was established in 1906, but has described itself as non-party since 1995. The second-largest newspaper, *Sosíalurin* (The Social), was launched in 1927 and has been associated with the Social Democratic Party (*Javnaðarflokkurin*). It has been owned by its staff and management since 2006. In ad-

dition, there are two small weekly newspapers: *Norðlýsið* (Northern Lights), a non-party paper for the northern islands established in 1915, and *Oyggjatiðindi* (Island Gazette), known for its critical and often controversial view of Faroese politics.

With the establishment of *Útvarp Føroya* (Faroese Radio) in 1957, radio broadcasts became a permanent part of the media picture, followed in 1984 by public television under the name *Sjónvarp Føroya* (Faroese Television). In 2005, the two activities were merged in one organisation, *Kringvarp Føroya* (Faroese Broadcasting Corporation). Both radio and television broadcasts are in Faroese, but a number of Danish and foreign programmes are also broadcast, especially on television. In addition to *Kringvarp Føroya*, the *RÁS 2*, *Lindin* and other local radio and television companies broadcast Faroese, Danish and foreign radio and television channels.

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