



The German Minority in Denmark

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.

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 - 1850, which Denmark won, the second in 1864, which Denmark lost to Prussia and Austria - did not solve the national conflicts but resulted in Schleswig becoming a Prussian province and the creation of a small Danish nation state.

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, plebiscites were held in Schleswig in 1920.

The result in the northern zone was 75 % for Denmark, 25 % for Germany, and south of the border, the result was 80 % for Germany and 20 % 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 result was the creation of the German minority in Denmark and the Danish minority in Germany.

However, the border was not yet a peaceful one: the Germans felt that the en-bloc voting procedure had been unfair and demanded a redrawing of the border. When Hitler came into power, the German minority hoped for a revision of the border. The occupation of Denmark by German troops from 1940 - 1945 further poisoned relations between Germans and Danes.

1945 marked a turning point and 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 acknowledged 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 and were important steps toward complete equality.

Organization(s)

Minority members regard themselves as Danish citizens with a German identity and strong ties to the region of North Schleswig. At the same time, the minority considers itself as a bridge between Danes and Germans.



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

The Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger is the German minority's umbrella organization. Its aim is to represent the interests of the minority and promote German language and culture in Nordschleswig. The head office of the BDN is the general secretariat in Aabenraa/Apenrade.

The minority is in close contact with the Danish parliament and government through its secretariat in Copenhagen.

Activities

Kindergartens and schools are central institutions of the German minority. 20 preschools, 15 schools and 1 grammar school play an important role in teaching German language and culture. Danish is part of the curriculum and the students can use the final exams to study in both Germany and Denmark.

The central library at Aabenraa/Apenrade and branches in Haderslev/Hadersleben, Sønderborg/Sonderburg, Tønder/Tondern and Tinglev/Tingleff and two mobile libraries provide 230.000 media units, including books, magazines, games, recordings, and DVDs for 8.000 users.

Der Nordschleswiger is the daily of and for the German minority.

Volunteer work is essential for the German minority and a wide range of organization offer Sports and leisure activities.

The *Knivsberg* is not only the highest point in Nordschleswig but also the location of the Jugendhof, the conference center of the German minority, which especially provides youth activities, such as dance, sports and music. The area is the setting for the yearly *Knivsbergfest*, the traditional summer gathering of the German minority.

Rowing is a popular sport among the German minority, and the six local rowing clubhouses function as their local meeting places.

Members of the German minority can attend church services in German. Five German ministries in the rural parishes and four in the cities are responsible for the German Lutherans.

The ministers share the church buildings with the Danish population.



Political representation

The German minority's political party is the *Schleswigsche Partei* (the round, blue and yellow S is the logo of the party), which also functions as an independent, regional party.

At the local elections in 2017, ten representatives of the Schleswigsche Partei were voted in: five in *Sønderborg/Sonderburg*, two in *Aabenraa/Apenrade* and *Tønder/Tondern*, plus one in *Haderslev/Hadersleben*.

History & museums

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



Royal visit in July of 2008 His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary Elizabeth with the chairmen of the German minority, Hinrich Jürgensen.

history through excursions, lectures and publications. In *Sønderborg/Sonderburg* you may visit the German museum with its collection on German history.

Contacts in Denmark and Germany

Germany, the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark lend financial support to the German minority.

All parties represented in the national and regional parliaments are members of a committee responsible for the border region and the German minority. The Danish parliament has a similar committee chaired by the minister of the interior, where matters concerning the German minority are discussed. Cross border cooperation between Denmark and Germany has always been very important for the Ger-

man minority and has therefore been promoted.

International cooperation

In recent years, the cooperation with the other minorities of the region has become an important task. The German minority supports the process of European integration and believes in a Europe united in diversity.

Minority issues have regained prominence particularly since the democratic revolutions in Europe following 1989. The German minority feels an obligation to help solve or prevent conflicts wherever possible and does this through the *Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)* and *YEN (Youth of European Nationalities)*.



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www.nordschleswig.dk