

# 'Norway and Denmark in the run-up to the referendums' from 30 jours d'Europe

**Caption:** In July 1972, the monthly publication 30 jours d'Europe paints a detailed picture of Denmark and Norway which both wish to accede to the European Economic Community (EEC).

**Source:** 30 jours d'Europe. dir. de publ. FONTAINE, François ; Réd. Chef CHASTENET, Antoine. Juillet-Août 1972, n° 168-169. Paris: Bureau d'information des Communautés européennes. "La Norvège et le Danemark dans l'attente des référendums", auteur:Lorieux, Claude , p. 17-18.

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## Norway and Denmark in the run-up to the referendums

Four of the twelve diplomats who represent Denmark in the European Community are devoting all of their time to receiving compatriots who come to Brussels to familiarise themselves with what the Common Market is about. Two more act as ‘reinforcements’ when necessary, which is rather often ...

In the space of two weeks, ten charter flights have brought to Brussels a thousand Danes on fact-finding missions funded by the Folketing (Danish Parliament), followed by 400 delegates of the Trade Union of Non-Specialised Workers, which opposes Denmark’s application. These ‘migrations’, which are also taking place between Norway and Brussels, have their purpose, since the electors of Denmark and Norway will be voting on accession to the Community this autumn.

### Our Nordic cousins

During the enlargement negotiations, Denmark, with its population of 4.9 million, and Norway, with 3.9 million, were known, together with Ireland, by the condescending yet affectionate title of the ‘little candidates’. The ‘big candidate’, of course, was the United Kingdom, whose two unsuccessful applications — in 1963 and 1967 — had also kept the two ‘little’ countries from Europe’s doors.

Danes and Norwegians are ‘related’ (Norway was a Danish province from 1450 to 1814), yet they have their differences. One need only think of the atmosphere of their capitals: Copenhagen is known as the Paris of the North, an anti-establishment hotspot ... and home to many a ‘sex fair’. Oslo, strung out in a wonderful setting along a fjord, is a large provincial city with plenty of charm, but the party spirit is less than ubiquitous.

The Danes and Norwegians had at least two concerns when they entered into negotiations with the Six. Their first demand — granted — was that their accession to the Common Market would not require a return to customs barriers among the EFTA countries, whether they were members of the Community (e.g. Denmark, Norway and the UK) or not (e.g. Sweden and Finland). They were also insistent that they wished to continue the ‘European integration’ that had been under way since the war in the form of the *Norden*. This, a sort of Nordic Commonwealth, consists of five countries: the three Scandinavian States (Denmark, Norway and Sweden), Finland and Iceland. Although three major Nordic integration programmes (on defence, a customs union and ‘Nordek’) have failed, the *Norden* is a reality, often a more profound one than our Common Market. It sent (apart from Iceland) a single negotiator to the Kennedy Round. Between the two annual sessions of the Nordic Council, there is consultation among politicians and civil servants. It has resulted notably in the creation of the SAS airline and a common labour market and the unification of social security systems, civil codes, patent and copyright law, etc. Oslo and Copenhagen were unwilling to give this up, and the Six had no difficulty with that.

### The model candidate and the ‘cactus’

That being said, Denmark was the ‘model candidate’ and Norway the ‘cactus’ at the Brussels negotiations. Danish industry made no particular demands. As to the farmers, languishing in EFTA ‘purgatory’, they were all too anxious to embrace Europe’s green expanses. The hardened bargainers had to base their case on Greenland and the Faeroes, Danish territories with a total population of no more than 80 000, mainly fishermen. The Faeroes, moreover, were granted an additional three years to choose between Europe ... and the big blue sea.

In Norway, on the other hand, everyone and his friend seemed to be a ‘special case’, apart from the manufacturers (34 % of gross national product), who were eager for new markets. Only 2.5 % of the land is cultivable and the growing period, in some regions, is as little as three months. Despite very high prices, farmers provided for only 40 % of their fellow citizens’ needs. If the common agricultural policy had been applied without adjustment, their income would, according to Oslo, have fallen by 58 %. The Six therefore did ‘the necessary’ to avoid accelerating a rural exodus that would have seen entire provinces depopulated.

The 40 000 fishermen caused the Ministers a number of sleepless nights. Norway has no deep-sea fishing fleet; for the most part, they fish from small boats. They are terrified that stocks would be exhausted. If they could no longer practise fishing, most of them would have to emigrate southwards. There was no chance of any industry coming to their villages. And what was the point of pillaging the fish stocks? Norway already produces as much fish as all the Six put together. Accepting the Community rules on coastal fishing areas for them meant giving the green light to an invasion of factory ships from Britain, Germany or the Netherlands. Norway obtained better treatment from the Six than the other 'sea-girt peoples' (the British, Danes and Irish): it will retain exclusive rights over its coasts within the 12-mile zone until 1983. This scheme could be proposed wholly or in part.

### **Game not yet won in Oslo**

The referendums on accession to the Common Market will take place on 25 September in Norway and on 6 October on the other side of the Skagerrak, where the popular verdict will have executive force. In Norway, the vote is merely a consultation exercise. But nobody imagines that Parliament... would vote against its electors.

The prospect of entry is as worrying for Oslo's political circles as for the British Labour Party. Norway, which started the Brussels negotiations under a somewhat Euro-sceptic Prime Minister, is now led by a Social Democrat Government in a minority but with strong convictions. It will need a three-quarters majority in Parliament and a good result in the referendum, including a high turnout and acceptable results among the farmers and fishermen of the Far North. Yet those two groups remain mistrustful, even hostile to Common Market accession, and many citizens admit that the complexity of the Common Market case is beyond them. They prefer to leave it to the specialists in the form of their Members of Parliament.

Still, the European idea is taking root in public opinion: polls show that the 'Europeans' (40 %) are gaining ground at the expense of the 'don't knows' (20 %). Optimism is the order of the day in Oslo, yet the game is far from being won.

Denmark's Prime Minister, Jens Otto Krag, a Social Democrat like his Norwegian counterpart, Trygve Brettni, would have very little to worry about if responsibility for the decision lay with the Folketing. The four main parties support Common Market entry. The public is more hesitant, though: 41 % for, 30 % against and 29 % 'don't know' at the most recent poll. There is little in the way of discontent at the outcome of the negotiations; the concern is rather what the Eurocrats in Brussels have up their sleeves. This concern is shared by large sections of Danish and Norwegian public opinion.

### **Younger generation anxious to preserve the Nordic model**

In both countries, youth movements are almost unanimously opposed to accession to the Community. They fear that the successes of Scandinavian social democracy and the Nordic way of life will be abandoned in the name of economic growth and productivity ... Despite Sicco Mansholt's words on 'gross national happiness', they also fear, in the same context, that Brussels will eat away at their national sovereignty ..., to which their governments reply that it is better to have a 'small say' in matters rather than suffer (like Sweden, for example) the repercussions of decisions taken by a formidable Community of ten nations.

Indeed, Copenhagen and Oslo both want the Ten to pay more attention than the Six to issues such as the Third World and improving the quality of life. This is a subject that they have placed among the priority objectives of the next European summit. A test of sorts.

Claude Lorieux