



What do immigrants in Reykjavík say?

Conclusions of an intercultural convention



Table of contents

Introduction	Villa! Bókamerki ekki skilgreint.
Immigrants in Reykjavík	4
Arrangement of the convention	7
Election of intercultural council	8
Main conclusions	Villa! Bókamerki ekki skilgreint.
Pre-schools and compulsory schools	9
Cultural matters	11
Reykjavík Art Museum	11
Gerðuberg	12
Reykjavík City Library	12
Department of Sports and Leisure in Reykjavík	12
Leisure card	13
Swimming pools	14
Social centres	14
Social Service	14
The city's website	15
Discussions at the intercultural convention about things other than the city's service	16
Media and participation in the community	16
Information - general	16
Communication between immigrants and Icelanders	16
Government institutions	17
Next steps	18
Enclosure	18

Introduction

The idea of an intercultural convention was born in the winter of 2009 to 2010 at the Reykjavik Human Rights Office. It had been clear for a long time that the voices of immigrants needed to be heard in order to improve the services for them in the city, in order to know how they feel and to facilitate a mutual integration for them and the Icelandic community. The intercultural convention which was held on November 6th 2010 was an effort to make an improvement in this regard.

The purpose of the intercultural convention was twofold:

- To create a field where immigrants in Reykjavík could share their experience of the city's service and express their own ideas and suggestions for improved services.
- To elect seven Reykjavikian representatives of a foreign origin for an intercultural council, which would operate as an advisory agent to the Reykjavik City Human Rights Council and to the institutions of the city on immigration affairs.

The conclusions of the groups should be useful for the improvement of the city's service. The success of this will however depend upon the city's staff and elected representatives.

Many things can be learned from the execution of this first intercultural convention but in general it is safe to say that it was an all around success. The Reykjavík city's human rights office gives it's heartfelt thanks to the individuals, institutions and others who in some way participated in the intercultural convention and made it possible.

Preparation of the convention

The preparation of the convention took place at The Human Rights Office and Anna Þorsteinsdóttir was hired to manage the project. Two workgroups worked on the project. On the one hand it was a group appointed by The Human Rights Council and on the other it was a workgroup appointed by the relevant divisions of the municipality. They are all thanked for their good work.

The group appointed by The human rights council:

Barbara Jean Kristvinsson, representative of The Social Democratic Alliance,

Claudia Overesch, representative of The Left-Green Movement

Grazyna M Okuniewska, representative of The Independence Party

Euardo Perez Baca, representative of The Best Party

Work group:

Dagbjört Ásbjörnsdóttir, sports- and leisure division

Kristín R. Vilhjálmisdóttir, culture and travel division

Fríða B. Jónsdóttir, preschool division

Nanna Cristiansen, education division

Edda Ólafsdóttir, welfare division

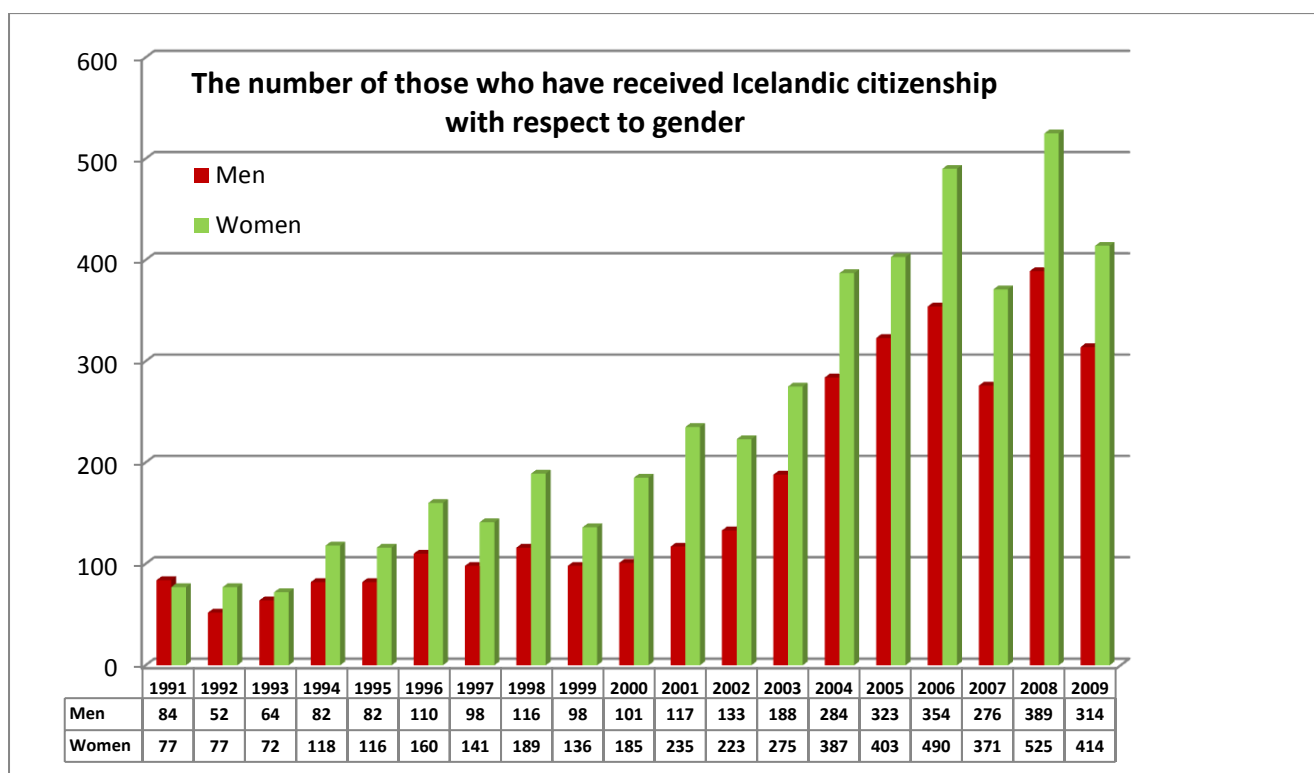
Immigrants in Reykjavík

All information in the charts and in the pictures below are based on information from Statistics Iceland.

Immigrants in Iceland on January 1st 2010 were 26.171 in total. Out of those 11.792 reside in Reykjavík. Included in these numbers are those who have been granted Icelandic citizenship. Foreign citizens in Reykjavík are on the other hand 9.555 or 8.1% of the city's population.

A big increase has been in the granting of Icelandic citizenship in the last decade and it can be assumed that those immigrants who have received Icelandic citizenship have during their stay in the country acquired some knowledge of the Icelandic language. The highest number of granted citizenship was in the year 2008, counting 914. Slightly fewer were granted Icelandic citizenship in the year 2009, i.e. 724.

Picture no. 1 shows the number of those who have been granted Icelandic citizenship from the year 1991 up to and including 2009. During this time more women than men are receiving Icelandic citizenship all these years except the year 1991. During this time 4.594 women receive Icelandic citizenship and 3.265 men.



Picture 1. Granting of Icelandic citizenship 1991-2009 with respect to gender.

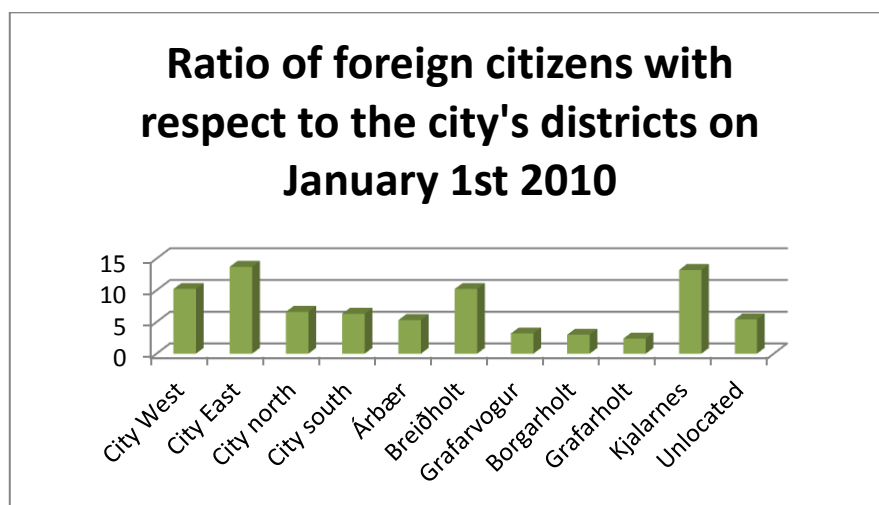
Chart 1 shows the population of the city's districts on January 1st 2010 and how many foreign citizens are in them and their ratio to the population of the district.

Chart 1.

Population with respect to districts¹ in Reykjavík, foreign citizens with respect to districts and their ratio to the population of each district on January 1st 2010.

	Population of district	Foreign citizens	% of foreign citizens
City west	16.327	1.663	10,2
City east	19.390	2.664	13,7
City north	13.279	883	6,6
City south	13.811	872	6,3
Árbær	10.267	543	5,3
Breiðholt	20.704	2.120	10,2
Grafarvogur	7.552	238	3,2
Borgarholt	10.425	314	3
Grafarholt	5.433	133	2,4
Kjalarnes	821	108	13,2
Unlocated	317	17	5,4
Total	118.326	9.555	8,1

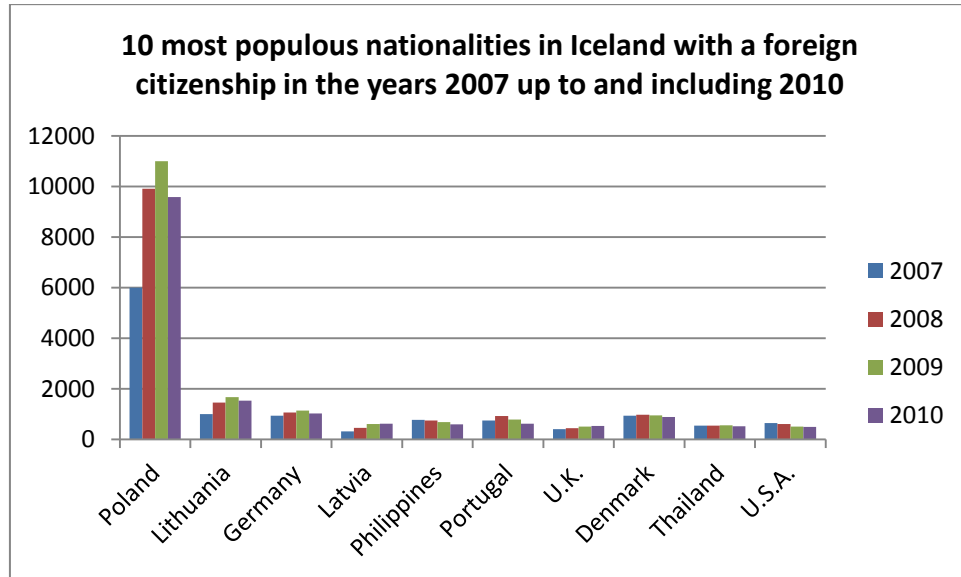
Picture 2 shows figuratively the same information as found in chart 1, i.e. what the ratio of foreign citizens is in the city's districts.



Picture 2. Ratio of foreign citizens with respect to the districts of Reykjavík city.

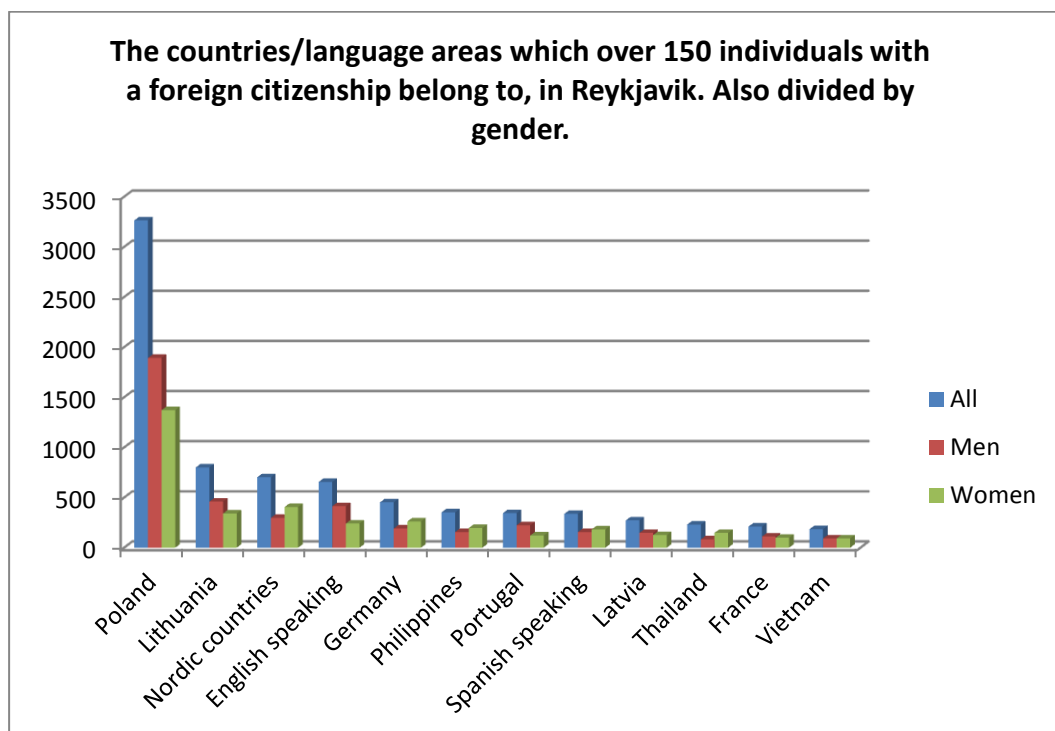
¹ City west is the old city west and south-west. City east is city east, Norðurmýri and Hlíðar. City north is Laugarnes, Laugarás, Heimar and Vogar. City south is Háaleiti, Bústaðahverfi and Fossvogur.

Picture 3 shows the 10 most populous nationalities in Iceland, relative to the most populated groups on January 1st 2010. The population of these groups is then portrayed from the year 2007. Poles have by far the largest population with 9.583 on January 1st 2010.



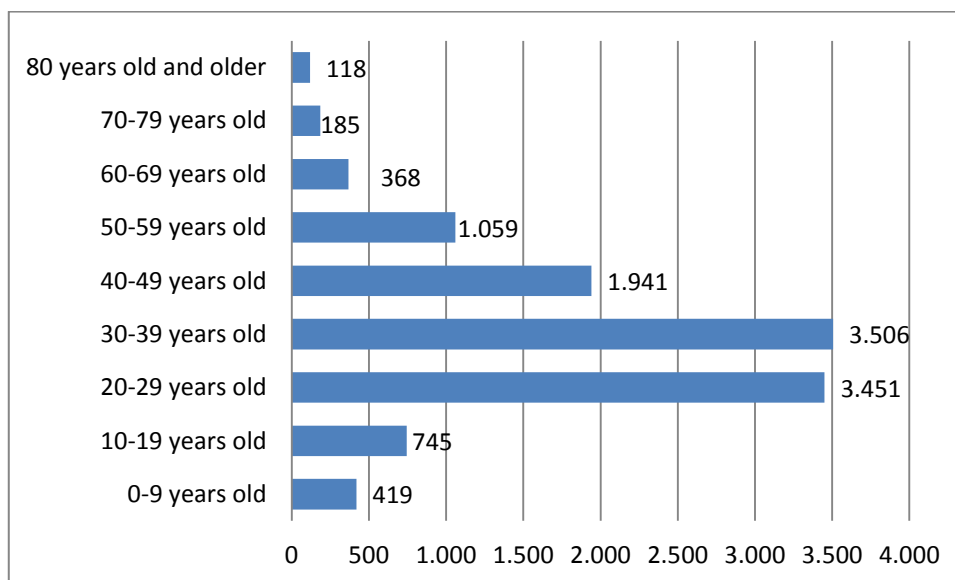
Picture 3. The most populous nationalities in Iceland with foreign citizenship.

Picture 4 shows the countries of origin and/or language areas of origin which over 150 individuals of a foreign citizenship belong to. People from Nordic countries and English and Spanish speaking people are grouped together. Poles are by far the most populous group or 3.264 on January 1st 2010. Lithuanians are the second largest group counting 800 at the same time.



Picture 4. Immigrants in Reykjavík with respect to nationality/language areas and gender.

Picture 5 shows the spread in age in the group of immigrants in Reykjavík. It is evident that the age from 20 to 39 is by far the largest group or 6.957. These numbers also reflect the immigrants who have Icelandic citizenship.



Picture 5. Immigrants, including those who have received Icelandic citizenship, with respect to age.

Arrangement of the convention

Over 200 participants registered by e-mail for the convention and the participants were grouped with respect to languages. The convention was advertised in newspapers and introduced by distribution through mailing lists of immigrants. Introduction leaflets in a few languages were distributed around the city, i.a. at the Kólport flea market and immigrants' shops.

The discussions took place at round tables with the participation of 4 to 11 participants along with a table manager and secretary. The choice of language was with respect of the participants' registration and the languages used in the discussions were: Icelandic, English, Spanish, Polish, Thai, Cebuano and Russian.

Table 2 shows the number of Reykjavík immigrants with respect of the language areas of the languages used at the intercultural convention.

Table 2. The number of immigrants with foreign citizenship in Reykjavík who speak the languages used at the intercultural convention.

Language	Population
English	726
Cebuano	782
Polish	3.362
Russian	256
Spanish	396
Vietnamese	388

Thai	230
Total	6.140

Questions about the city's service were delivered from the city's divisions and service office² prior to the convention. All questions were translated to the languages used at the convention. Table managers at the convention saw to it that all participants would participate in the discussions and that as many questions were discussed as possible. The secretary took notes of the discussions. In addition to the questions discussed there were open discussions at all tables about the matters of immigrants. The discussions took place between the hours of 10:00 and 14:00. A half hour lunch break was taken where light refreshments were offered and a fifteen minute coffee break in the afternoon.

The questionnaire was conducted in the way that all the city's divisions, that so wished, presented questions. They were then hung on a wall and guests had an opportunity to answer them in writing on specific answer papers which were collected. All the questions used in the questionnaire were closed and the answering options were either yes or no. Very few participants answered this part of the questions. This part of the convention resulted in little or no conclusions.

At the introductory tables a few of Reykjavík city's institutions along with various fellowships introduced their activities and service for immigrants. There were amongst others: Harmony of Cultural Worlds, which is a part of the Humanist Movement and has the aim of putting an end to discrimination and hatred of foreigners and connect all Icelanders regardless of nationality or origin; Intercultural Youth Centre, which is an intercultural field where young people can find fellowship and support as well as participating in intercultural social activities; Multicultural and Information Centre, which is run by the state and has the role of assisting with the communication between people of different origin and strengthen the service for immigrants residing in Iceland; the Service Center for the District of the City Center and Hlíðar, which is run by Reykjavík city and is a knowledge center in the matters of immigrants and Reykjavík City Library which offers various service for immigrants.

It is worth mentioning that during the Intercultural convention students from The Icelandic Filmschool worked on documentary material about the convention.

Elections to an intercultural council

One of the two aims of the intercultural convention was to elect Reykjavikian representatives of a foreign origin to an intercultural council, which is meant to be an advisory agent for The Human Rights Council of Reykjavík and the institutions of the city in immigration affairs.

Elections to The Intercultural Council were carried out between the hours of 10:00 and 14:00. Eligible voters were all residents of Reykjavík, 18 years and older, of a foreign origin. Participants in round table discussions went aside for a moment to vote during the discussions.

² Education- and preschool division, culture- and travel division, sports- and leisure division and the office of web affairs under the service office.

On the electoral roll as well as eligible voters were all Reykjavík residents of a foreign origin who had reached the age of 18. Seven representatives were elected to the council, five representatives and two alternatives. Sixteen individuals from thirteen countries ran for election. Elections were open during the convention and the procedure was a success in every way. More voters should however have exercised their right to vote as voters were 109.

Those who sit on the newly elected Intercultural Council of Reykjavík are:

Representatives:

Raúl Sáenz from Mexico who is the president of the council,
Katelin Marit Parsons from Canada,
Juan Camilo Román Estrada from Columbia,
Shuhui Wang from China and
Toshiki Toma from Japan

Alternatives:

Angelique Kelley from The United States of America and
Flóra Vuong Nu Dong from Vietnam

One of those elected, Akeem-Cujo Oppong from Ghana decided not to take a seat on the council. Furthermore it was decided to offer observers from Poland and Lithuania to sit in on the council's meetings as they represent the largest nationalities and do not have a representative on the council.

The Intercultural Council held three meetings in the second half of the year 2010. The interest and enthusiasm that shone through holds great promise for the continuation.

Main conclusions

In this chapter the main conclusions of the convention are summed up and it is always a matter of evaluation as to what is put forth. In attachment 2 conclusions can be seen as they came from the group and in attachment 3 they are put forth in the way that the answers to specific questions are categorized and marked by which language was spoken in each group. This is done to simplify the process for those who are working with a specific part of the material. Those who want to study the conclusions of the convention in whole are advised to study the attachments. Advice on ways in this chapter are worked out from the conclusions of the convention itself.

Nationalities were mixed in a few of the groups which used English and delivered conclusions in that language.

Pre- and compulsory schools

How can the information from pre- and compulsory schools be improved?

Some of the questions that were discussed at the convention referred both to pre- and compulsory schools and in those instances the answers are put forth together.

Immigrants request information in English and/or Polish about how to register a child in preschool, about the arrangements of the preschool, in which preschool it is possible to register a child and in which preschool it is not, how long the wait is for a placement in the preschool and how much it costs to have a child in preschool.

Requests were also made about keeping parents better informed about the child's connections and wellbeing in the school. That it was important to offer interpretation when it was needed and much emphasis was placed on

respect for other cultures and immigrants and not to exclude children of other religions and life views.

It was pointed out that translations didn't always have to be perfect.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ To create a webcenter where all schools can place common questions and answers or announcements. This would then be utilized by all who need it.
- ✓ Put together a list in a few languages of essential items needed for school and of key events in the most common languages.
- ✓ Hold monthly meetings about the position of children of a foreign origin and send weekly messages to parents about how the child is doing in school.

What can the elementary school do to increase the involvement of parents of a foreign origin in their children's homework?

It was expressed that it causes stress for the parents to not be able to monitor how the children are doing in school and assist them with their homework.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Train parents of a foreign origin in how it is best and most effective to work with children who are beginning to learn the language. Show parents the advantages of participating in this way which makes it easier for them to help their child which in turn reduces stress.
- ✓ Give parents access to the books that the children are working on.
- ✓ Acknowledge mother language teaching as a part of the children's studies and support it in action.
- ✓ Host country introductory evenings. Introduce the culture of the foreign children.
- ✓ Host international days at the schools and not set people up as we and the others, i.e. Icelanders and immigrants.
- ✓ Put together a list of the most common concepts in mathematics with translation.

What can the pre- and elementary school do to increase the participation of foreign parents in school work in general?

Requests were expressed about the need to show immigrants more tolerance, e.g. when they were speaking Icelandic, there was a need to listen to them better and respect their opinions. Requests for more communication between immigrants and Icelanders could also be read into the work of the groups. It was expressed that not all schools are offering information translated to the children's mother language. The preschools had done well in this and the elementary schools should also be able to do so. Simple information was lacking such as the custom of children attending the „parent's meetings“. Staff needed to realize that the cultural worlds are different, i.e. in some places it is not customary to look into people's eyes when they are spoken to. The service needed to be more personal.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Information about meetings in other languages than Icelandic and use e-mail in other languages.
- ✓ Run events or projects which connect Icelanders and foreigners.
- ✓ Ask Icelandic parents to show tolerance and respect for the opinions of immigrants.
- ✓ Use an interpreter when rules and such are being introduced.
- ✓ Show understanding of the importance of mother language teaching.
- ✓ Assign an intermediary who the parents can turn to and who works with the children who learn Icelandic as a second language (preschools).
- ✓ Use communication books.
- ✓ Teach children about a world without borders.
- ✓

How do you think that the city's preschools should work with a diverse group of children, both with respect to children of a foreign origin and children whose parents are both Icelandic?

Emphasis was placed on looking at diversity as an opportunity but not a problem. It was expressed that the teachers needed training in dealing with intercultural issues. That it is important for them to have opportunities for refresher courses so that they are better equipped to teach children of a foreign origin. Teachers need to understand different culture, i.e. recognize traditions and religions and respect them.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Have knowledge of the background of children and thus acquire an understanding of their circumstances.
- ✓ Work more with each child. Not let the child be isolated and say that it has homesickness.
- ✓ Be on guard against bullying and exclusion.
- ✓ Assist with homework.
- ✓ Emphasize mother language/mother language teaching within the school system.

Cultural affairs

Reykjavik Art Museum

It is important to become better acquainted with the operations of the art museum by using the existing websites in foreign languages such as the Polish site and publications in foreign languages, such as Grapevine. There is a shortage of information about where foreign artists can exhibit their work. Emphasis and aims of the museum need to be better emphasized.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Put forth information in other languages than Icelandic, use mailing lists, e.g. of the Polish school, also translate posters into other languages. Brief information suffices.
- ✓ Advertise events better.

- ✓ Exhibit art by children of a foreign origin.
- ✓ Host exhibitions by artists of a foreign origin and connect the exhibitions with the culture of different countries.
- ✓ Set up workshops with children.
- ✓ Host events for parents and children.

Gerðuberg

It is expressed that many good things are being done in Gerðuberg but that it is difficult to get there for those who do not live in Breiðholt.

Reykjavik City Library

It would be an advantage if it was possible for foreigners to gather in the libraries and hold for example meetings or cultural evenings there.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Create websites which have electronic books in various languages.
- ✓ Have books in foreign languages which fellowships or individuals might donate.

ÍTR

It was pointed out that improvements could be made on the giving out of information about recreation. Emphasis would be needed to be placed on reaching the parents. It was also expressed that sports teams and others who stand for recreation with children should introduce their work better to parents of children of a foreign origin and that the city should not be the only one in charge of doing so.

The staff of the recreational centres needs to show the children respect regardless of their origin and possess knowledge of the culture and background of relevant individuals. It is important to offer courses in intercultural skills to staff. It also matters to keep staff of foreign origins. A connection with parents also mattered.

It is necessary to set up a communication network in the various communities of immigrants in order to introduce the leisure centres. Information needs to be passed on to people in their language. One way would be to use visual material. The participation of children and adolescents of a foreign origin in the leisure centres activities is less than that of children of an Icelandic origin. The introduction of the leisure centres activities to people of a foreign origin need to take place outside of traditional working hours. Many of the parents do not know what the activities are about and it would for example be possible to invite them to introductory visits at the leisure centres. Due to a lack of information the parents fear that the leisure centres are expensive and they lack information about the option to use the leisure card to pay for the leisure centres.

The need to ask the Icelandic children to befriend the foreign children was expressed in many groups.

Foreign children are often more disciplined than the Icelandic children and they are not allowed to stay out as late as Icelandic children. Icelandic children 16 to 18 years old go out and drink alcohol which is not allowed in many other communities. Children are often kept too long at the leisure centres and it is not alright that 12 year

old children come home after midnight.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Make an effort to increase the participation of children of a foreign origin in the activities.
- ✓ Introduce the leisure centres to parents of children of a foreign origin outside of traditional working hours and invite them for a visit.
- ✓ Give out information about leisure activities in other languages than Icelandic. It is important to connect with the parents. Send an information brochure to parents about the leisure activities in the neighbourhood.
- ✓ The sports teams should pass on information in other languages than Icelandic. They should use their possible information channels, such as mailing lists of the Polish school and the Polish information site and Grapevine.
- ✓ Distribute brochures about the leisure centres at schools, on the bus and send brochures to the Polish school.
- ✓ Introduce the advantages of physical exercise for children.
- ✓ Send information to parents about social centres. Many do not know what takes place there or where they are.
- ✓ Strengthen the collaboration with foreign parents by keeping foreign employees.
- ✓ Establish a buddy system.
- ✓ Have specific reception hours to welcome everyone.

Leisure card

During the discussions it was expressed that it was necessary to introduce the leisure card better through the schools, the Polish school and to have information on bulletin boards, for example at the Polish shop. It also was expressed that people fear they will not be granted an extension to their residence permit if they received any type of financial aid and the question whether some would view the leisure card as such aid. Information about the leisure card would have to be in a few languages. The use of a leisure card takes place through *Electronic Reykjavik* and many would need assistance to use that system.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Send people a „gift card“ for sports and leisure centres.
- ✓ Offer people assistance with registration on *Electronic Reykjavik*, i.e. have people who help parents with applying for a leisurecard.

Swimming pools

The necessity for closed cabins and showers was expressed as some have not been accustomed to undress or bathe in front of others. An emphasis was also placed on the importance of approaching people with consideration when rules of swimming sites were explained. It is valuable for immigrants to go to the swimming pools as people are open to communication there.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Have the announcements at the swimming pools in many languages.
- ✓ Offer women's and men's swimming as some people of a foreign origin find it uncomfortable to be exposed amongst strangers of the opposite sex.
- ✓ Offer swimming lessons free of charge for adults. Many do not know how to swim but want to.

Social centres

It was pointed out that social centres had acquired a negative reputation. It was therefore urgent to get information about them to parents so that they can trust what takes place there.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Circulate information about what takes place at the social centres.
- ✓ Increase the collaboration between schools and social centres.

Social service

The necessity for information brochures for people who are arriving in the country was discussed. It is possible to utilize better the brochure **First steps** which exists. The brochures need to be at the airport, at the Directorate of Labour, at banks, at health centres and at the office where ID numbers are applied for, at schools and preschools.

A need is for an information brochure about the service centres in Reykjavik and it could be handed to people as they acquire an ID number so they know where things are to be found in Reykjavik and what service is being offered. It would also be possible to send the brochure to legal addresses after people apply for an ID number. Immigrants do not know what a service centre is and many foreigners are not aware of their existence. Immigrants need to know what takes place there and what service they offer.

Above all there is a shortage of information about what the social service offers. In Poland for example the social service functions entirely differently, it helps only the poor. Therefore the Polish do not use this service, they are afraid of using the social service and think that it can effect their permit to stay in the country. Immigrants hesitate to seek assistance and do not realize what a diverse assistance is available at the service centres. Senior citizens of a foreign origin know little about the service which the city offers and ways need to be found to make improvements in this regard. It was expressed that sometimes it is difficult to approach the social workers and

that they do not call back.

The need for service in one place was discussed (one stop shop – Intercultural Centre).

It was also expressed that immigrants themselves need to speak as one voice and need to have their own association.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Make the service more personal, have a picture of the service centre and the counsellors who work there. Each family is to have a counselor. It would be possible to initiate contact and call new residents in the neighbourhood and invite them for an interview. Call immigrants in the neighbourhood, send them brochures etc. with a personal message „Welcome to Reykjavik“.
- ✓ Make the service centers more visible in the neighbourhood, invite for visits, e.g. for soup.
- ✓ Increase the number of people in the frontline of the service centres. Information is needed about what a service center is.
- ✓ Establish a reception station to receive immigrants (one stop shop).
- ✓ Invite immigrants to meetings at the service centres where people are welcomed and given information about rights and duties.
- ✓ Employ foreigners to the service centres. This creates connections with the community of immigrants.
- ✓ Offer language teaching free of charge for parents and their children as the language is the most important way to participate in the community.
- ✓ Offer meetings or evenings for new immigrants at the service centres where their services are introduced.
- ✓ Have a specific worker who gives immigrants information.
- ✓ Establish a new Intercultural Centre.

The city's website

The city's website is much too complicated and difficult for finding information. Information needs to be updated better, links are not active or wrong and information is often not in other languages than Icelandic. Information needs to be in a human language. Sites need to be selected in other languages immediately from the front page.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Present more information about cultural activities, sports conditions and opening hours of swimming pools.
- ✓ Use simple Icelandic and rather use the money for personal service than to offer information in many languages.
- ✓ Make the available information in other languages more accessible.

Discussions at the intercultural convention about matters other than the city's services

As is evident from the description of how the convention was carried out, open discussions also took place at the convention where specific questions were not being answered. In this chapter it will be discussed what was expressed in them. The discussion was about the media and how immigrants are portrayed in it or rather to say how minutely visible or audible they are at that level. The discussion was also about general introductory information and how it is to be an immigrant in Iceland. Last but not least the discussion about state institutions was prominent, i.a. the Directorate of Immigration and the law environment in which immigrants live in.

Media and participation in the community

Immigrants at the convention discussed how little intercultural was discussed at the level of media. Few immigrants are participants in politics and therefore they were not prominent at that level and they were not applying themselves on behalf of immigrants. The intercultural community needed role models, Icelandic children of a foreign origin are for example very rarely in the media.

Suggestions were made about broadcasting at specific times on radio and television. Information can be circulated this way about what is on offer in Reykjavík.

Information – general

The importance of having information available in prominent languages was expressed. The deliberation would not have to be long or detailed and translations do not necessarily have to be perfect. The most important thing is that the information gets delivered and that it is fine to use „google translate“. It doesn't matter whether the information arrives by e-mail or letter, the main thing is the language.

It was emphasized that care needed to be taken regarding consistency of information. Institutions do not seem to be in touch with each other and information is not always correct or coordinated.

Compulsory courses for those who intend to settle down in Iceland are needed as well as language courses free of charge.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Offer the possibility of sending in questions and receiving answers.
- ✓ Offer individualized information service, some want to receive e-mail, others written messages and still others phonecalls.

Communication between immigrants and Icelanders

Immigrants point out that they are here to stay. Information in other languages are too much focused on tourists and foreigners who reside here must not be forgotten. Information needs to be available upon arrival in Iceland, where to be registered, where it is possible to look for work, housing, etc. and what the rights and obligations are.

We must learn to approach each other, i.e. Icelanders and immigrants. Icelanders are homogeneous and have never experienced discrimination on their own skin in the country. Icelandic parents need instruction as there are those who indoctrinate their children with racism and children, especially of an asian origin are bullied. The social

element is missing, a place to meet and discuss matters and receive support is needed. It is needed to build up such a culture in this country that gives immigrants a sense of belonging to the society.

Immigrants need assistance in choosing a job and finding jobs. If the individual in question is from Iceland then he has a good network. For older kids who come to Iceland it could be good to have an introduction to job opportunities and the work market to help them find work and decide what they want to study in high school. Not least is there a need to pay attention to this as the drop out of this group is great.

Icelanders need to realize that it is a cultural shock for children who come from a warm climate to have to go out in all weathers and this applies especially to younger children.

The lack of connection between immigrants and Icelanders was expressed. It is needed to strengthen the social aspect and help immigrants to better integrate into the Icelandic community. It is needed to establish a social facility for the group where it would be possible to meet and have discussions, receive support, feel like a part of the community. Icelanders could be among the participants.

Pointing out ways

- ✓ Bring out positive things in connection with an intercultural community.
- ✓ Establish a „mentor“ or buddy family to assist people of a foreign origin in integrating into Icelandic society.
- ✓ Use an interpreter when it is needed.
- ✓ Offer assistance with studies- and job selections.
- ✓ Establish a „one stop shop“ or service centre for foreigners in one place. It would be good to have a centre and then branches in the suburbs.
- ✓ Offer immigrants and different groups to introduce themselves and their culture to city staff.

State institutions

The importance of discussing the service to immigrants by state institutions was expressed during the general discussions. The importance of establishing a department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which would take care of those newly arrived in becoming aware of service offered, for example language courses, health care, etc. was discussed.

It was expressed that foreigners in Iceland would want to see a change in the laws and in the service of the Directorate of Immigration. Immigrants fear the Directorate of Immigration, it should be friendlier and more accessible. The purpose of immigration authorities should be to help people to stay legally in the country. It is a general experience of all immigrants that the Directorate of Immigration is unfriendly and hostile and tries as it can to find ways to get those in question out of the country.

It is necessary to hold meetings where immigrants meet to discuss the system in whole, lack of information and unclear laws and regulations.

The next steps

Conclusions will be introduced to the Human Rights Council and the Intercultural Council. In continuation conclusions will be introduced to the City Council and to the divisions of the city. It will be requested that those divisions that carried out the work would turn in a plan of action which meets the requests and points that came up at the convention. Furthermore that the Human Rights Council/Human Rights Office set forth an action plan requiring execution.

The conclusions will then be introduced at an open meeting. Those who participated in the Intercultural Convention will be asked to attend. All conclusions and information about the convention, i.a. a documentary video produced about the convention, will be set up on a specific website.

Attachment

Questions set before participants at the convention and answers as they were delivered from the groups. The answers are marked by the groups which they were delivered from:

P = Polish groups (2 tables)

R = Russian groups (2 tables)

L = Lithuanian group (1 table)

V = Vietnamese group (1 table)

E = English speaking groups – with English as a mother language and other languages as mother languages, i.a. Cebuano (6 tables)

Í = Icelandic speaking group, mixed nationalities (1 table)

S = Spanish speaking groups (2 tables)