



# Municipality of Klaksvík

## Intercultural Profile

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This report is based upon the visit of the CoE expert team on 1 & 2 June 2017, comprising Irena Guidikova and Phil Wood. It should be read in parallel with the Council of Europe's response to Rijeka's ICC Index questionnaire, which contains many recommendations and pointers to examples of good practice.

### 1. Introduction

Klaksvík is the second largest town of the Faroe Islands. It is located on Borðoy, which is one of the northernmost islands (the Norðoyar) and is the administrative centre of Klaksvík municipality.

The first settlement at Klaksvík dates back to Viking times, but it was not until 1938 that the four villages of Vágur, Myrkjanoyri, Gerðar and Uppsalar were finally merged to form the town of Klaksvík. The establishment of a centralized store for all the northern islands then triggered its further growth to become the centre for this region.

Klaksvík is located between two inlets lying back to back. It has an important harbour with fishing industry and a modern fishing fleet, and is visited regularly by tourist cruise ships.

Today, 5,000 people live in Klaksvík Municipality and of this figure approximately 121 are foreign residents from 35 different countries (2014). It could quite well be the case that the Northern Isles will soon become a single municipality once again. If this proves to be the case, the municipality will have a population of 6,000.

With the opening of the Leirvík sub-sea tunnel, the Norðoyatunnilin in April 2006, Klaksvík gained a physical link with the mainland of the Faroe Islands and can now be considered one of its key ports. Several developments are under way to exploit this symbiosis, including a new industrial park located by the tunnel entrance. Klaksvík is also home to Summarfestivalurin, the largest music festival in the Faroe Islands.

The Mayor of Klaksvík is Jógvan Skorheim. He has also in the past been a business man and a member of the national parliament, and he is the national leader of the Self-Government Party (Sjálvstýri).

### 2. Background to the Faroe Islands

The Faroe Islands are a self-governing nation within the Kingdom of Denmark. The islands govern independently in a wide range of areas, including taxation and customs, social security, culture, education and research. Currently, Denmark administers monetary, judiciary, police, and defence affairs, family and inheritance law, as well as immigration and border control in the Faroes. An important distinction to note is that the Faroes and Denmark are two different legal territories in

terms of immigration regulation. Furthermore, the Faroe Islands is not part of the European Union, despite Denmark's membership of the EU.

Travel and immigration regulations differ between the Faroe Islands and Denmark. A residence permit in the Faroe Islands is not valid for Denmark and a Danish residence permit is not valid for the Faroe Islands. The Faroese political system is a variation of the Scandinavian type of parliamentary democracy, with its own democratically elected legislative assembly, Løgtingið, and an executive government, Føroya Landsstýri, headed by the Prime Minister, løgmaður. The core values of Faroese society are, by and large, inspired by European heritage and values. This is reflected by the fact that the European Convention of Human Rights is directly incorporated into Faroese Law. The Faroes are also subject to the core UN Human Rights Treaties, e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Denmark has devolved substantial autonomy to the Faroese parliament in Tórshavn, but support for an independent Faroese state has nevertheless become widespread; with polls consistently showing about 50% Faroese are in favour of independence from Denmark. Some Faroese politicians are discussing whether to transfer their newly won autonomy further on to the EU and other international organizations, while others argue for a pro-globalist but EU-sceptic separatism. In 1973, when Denmark joined the European Community (EC), the Faroe Islands remained outside the EC to protect its political autonomy and the Faroese fishing waters from other EC members. Over time, Norway and Iceland, states sharing a common imperial past with the Faroe Islands as part of the Danish multinational conglomerate state, strengthened their relationships with the EU by joining the EFTA and EEA. In contrast, the Faroe Islands – as one of only a few territories in Western Europe – still figures as a 'third country' in relation to the EU. Nonetheless, the EU plays an important role for the Faroe Islands both as an export market and as a reference for a political future outside the Danish realm. In 1998, the Faroese government established its own diplomatic representation in Brussels in cooperation with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 2000, the Faroese parliament set up the Faroese Treaty Commission, which drafted a constitution for a sovereign Faroe Island state in a 'free association' with Denmark. It also established an economic council, which argued that using the EU's common currency, the euro, rather than the Danish kroner could be advantageous for the Faroese economy. The Faroese government has also negotiated an association with the EU's research programme (FP7 Framework Programme, now 2020 Horizon) and is aiming to be part of the European Common Aviation Area.

The Self Government Party (which holds office in Klaksvík) supports the achievement of independence through gradually increasing Faroese autonomy until the Faroe Islands becomes a de facto independent state.

This isolated existence in a place, which is reliant upon an unpredictable and uncontrollable factor – the weather – is said to contribute to the Faroese character. It is said that people are extremely self-reliant but they also have a rather laid-back and fatalistic attitude to life. It is described as a culture of 'Kanska' (maybe)<sup>1</sup> – which is akin to the Spanish sense of *mañana*.

The economy of the Faroe Islands was the 166th largest in the world in 2014, having a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of \$2.613 billion per annum. High dependence on fishing means the economy remains extremely vulnerable. After the severe economic troubles in the early 1990s, brought on by a drop in the vital fish catch and a banking crisis, the Faroe Islands have revived in the

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<sup>1</sup> Marnersdóttir, M (2007) *Construction and Deconstruction of the Faroese nation*. *Scandinavian Studies*, 79(2), 151-166.

last few years, with unemployment holding below 3% since 2006, one of the lowest rates in Europe. Since 2000, new information technology and business projects have been fostered in the Faroe Islands to attract investment. The result from these projects is not yet known but is hoped to bring a better-balanced market economy to the Faroe Islands.

The Faroese also hope to broaden their economic base by building new fish-processing plants, and petroleum found close to the Faroese area gives hope for deposits in the immediate area, which may lay the basis to sustained economic prosperity. Also important is the annual subsidy from Denmark, which amounts to about 3% of the GDP.

The Faroes have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe, but this is not necessarily a sign of a recovering economy, as many young students move to Denmark and other countries once they are finished with high school. This leaves a largely middle-aged and elderly population that may lack the skills and knowledge to take up the IT positions that are emerging. The Faroes are developing some of the most advanced IT and communications infrastructure in the world.

The Faroe Islands experiences a relatively high birth rate (in 2013, 260 more children were born compared to the number of deceased), which means that there is a natural population growth. At the same time, however, the islands experience a small net out-migration, which means that the total population growth in 2013 was 136 people<sup>2</sup>. In terms of immigration to the Faroe Islands, individuals from the other Nordic countries continue to exceed the number of individuals from non-Nordic countries, although by now there is a small group of non-Nordic immigrants in the Faroe Islands.<sup>3</sup>

As in the rest of the West Nordic Region, there are more men than women in the Faroe Islands. This is partly due to the fact that more women than men migrate. The Faroese peripheral municipalities, especially small isolated islands, are losing their young people. First the girls move, and then the boys follow. Young men who refuse to move, for example those who are waiting to take over a well-functioning farm, have a hard time finding a spouse.<sup>4</sup>

The young people are moving to larger and more central villages or to the capital Torshavn. Many young people, especially those who are planning to take a higher education, move abroad. Not surprisingly, Denmark is the most popular destination on the European continent. And girls are currently the most ambitious and daring in relation to realizing their dreams of a high education, a stimulating career and an exciting lifestyle.<sup>5</sup>

According to Prime Minister Aksel Johannesen, the Faroes have a "gender deficit" with approximately 2,000 fewer women than men. This, in turn, has lead Faroese men to look beyond the islands for romance and marriage. There are now more than 300 women from Thailand and Philippines living in the Faroes and they now make up the largest ethnic minority. Many, though not

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<sup>2</sup> Haagensen, Klaus (2014) *Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2014*. København: Statistics Denmark – Nordic Council of Ministers

<sup>3</sup> Høgnesen, Runa Preeti (2015) *Cross-Border Marriage, Community and Construction of Womanhood – An Analysis of Married Philippine and Thai Women in the Faroe Islands and their Experiences with Inclusion and Exclusion*. Endnu ikke på- begyndt Ph.d., Fróðskaparsetur Føroyar.

<sup>4</sup> Faber, S. T., Nielsen, H. P., & Bennike, K. B. (2015). *Place,(In) Equality and Gender. A Mapping of Challenges and Best Practices in Relation to Gender, Education and Population Flows in Nordic Peripheral Areas*. Nordic Council of Ministers.

<sup>5</sup> Gaini, Firouz. (2011b). "The adversity of Heroes of the past – Masculinity and Identity among young men in the Faroe Islands." In *Among the Islanders of the North – An anthropology of the Faroe Islands*, redigeret af Firouz Gaini, 163–99. Torshavn: Faroe University Press.

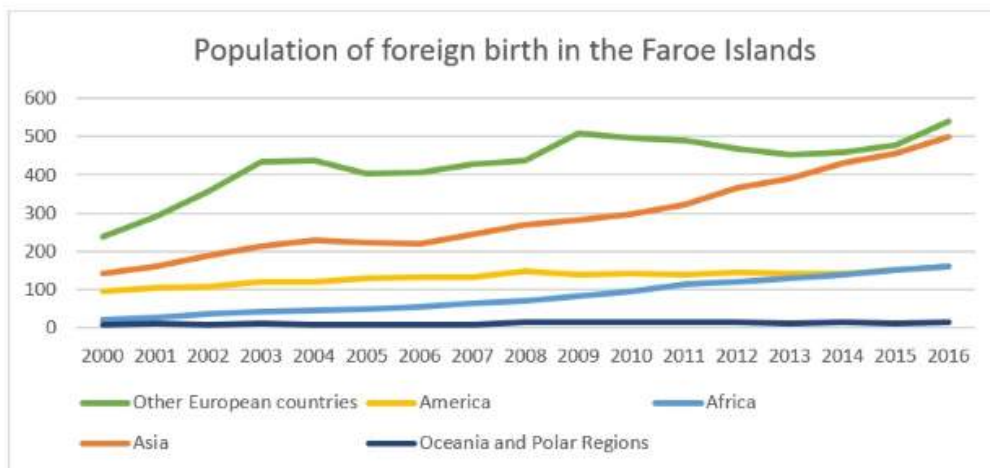
all, of the Asian women met their husbands online, through commercial dating websites. Others have made connections through social media networks or existing Asian-Faroese couples.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst in 1985 the number of immigrants living in the Faroes represented 0.3% of the population, in 2017 the figure is 2.24% and this does not include those who have achieved naturalisation. Also for past 5 years 12% of new births have had at least one foreign parent.

### 3. National Policy Context

The case of the Faroe Islands in relation to integration efforts is an example of how the whole policy field of immigration and integration can be initiated in a region where little policy attention to this theme has been given in the past.<sup>7</sup>

Immigration to the Faroe Islands is not a new phenomenon because, as a fishery nation, mobility has historically been a part of society but, in recent years, the proportion of the population born abroad has increased; not least among the people born in either other European countries than the Nordic, and Asian and African born. While a share of these may be children born to Faroese parents while previously living abroad, those born in non-Nordic countries is rising, while the Faroese population born in other Nordic countries (except DK) is stable – pointing to an increasing diversity of the resident population.



While the vast majority of the total population in the Faroe Islands holds Danish citizenship (more than 97%) it is quite impressive to see that in a small population of 50,000 people, no less than 89 countries of citizenship are represented in 2016<sup>8</sup>. Of the almost 1400 foreign citizens, Icelanders account for the majority but are closely followed by Filipino, Thai and Norwegian. However, as can be seen from the diagram below, taken as a group, EU countries other than the Nordic countries also account for a significant share.

Since the Faroe Islands are not a member of the EU, the increase in EU residents can be found in the relaxation of work permit rules in the Faroe Islands - a change that is closely connected to the current very low unemployment rate in the Faroe Islands.

<sup>6</sup> Ecott, Tim (2017) *Wives wanted in the Faroe Islands*. BBC News Magazine, 27 April 2017.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-39703486>

<sup>7</sup> Nordic Welfare Centre (2017) *Working with integration across the Faroe Islands*.

<http://www.nordicwelfare.org/integrationnorden/About-us/Exemple/A-holistic-approach-to-working-with-integration-across-the-Faroe-Islands/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.hagstova.fo>



While the foreign population is thus not significant either in proportion of the population or in absolute numbers, the increase in the diversity of the Faroese population has prompted the policy field of integration to emerge in the Faroese political discourse during the past decade. This can be seen both as a recognition of the increased diversity in the Faroese society and to some extent also the growing motivation for foreigners to settle in the Faroe Islands: from being perceived mainly as a question of family reunification of foreign partners and family to Faroese residents, to also include labour migrants with no previous ties to the Faroe Islands and (though still in the very few numbers) relocation of people in humanitarian need.

Due to being a part of the Danish Realm the granting of permits to reside in the Faroe Islands is currently handled by the Danish Authorities. As there is some discussion of repatriating the field of immigration fully to the Faroe Islands, the current activities of establishing structures for the immigration and integration policy field at the Faroe Islands can also be seen as an effort to be prepared in case this happens. In addition to general preparatory measures, the Faroese government also justifies its actions as an effort to be pro-active to avoid some of the problems it perceives regarding immigration and integration in the other Nordic countries.

The initial formal efforts to address the topic of integration and immigration on the Faroe Islands are the 2008 establishment of the Immigration Office in the Faroe Islands (Útlendingastovan)<sup>9</sup>, an agency that in addition to acting as an intermediary between the Danish authorities and the Faroese ministries, now also serves as the Faroese entry point for immigration and integration issues, and the 2010 appointment of a working group by the Faroese Ministry of the Interior and their report (Integrásjónsálit) published in 2011.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Local Diversity and Policy Context

Whilst the national report from the 2010 working group had several recommendations for an actual Faroese integration policy, Klaksvik municipality became the first Faroese authority to formulate such a policy. It was the outcome of a process running during 2014/2015, supported by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and foreseen as a first step also for a national Integration Policy.<sup>11</sup>

Based on research of the circumstances, needs, and requests of the immigrants to Klaksvik Municipality, the policy makes recommendations for concrete programs to be implemented, and it addresses particularly the topics of language learning, information and communication, community involvement and networking, and empowerment of the immigrants. To assist the implementation of

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.immigration.fo/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://tilfar.lms.fo/logir/alit/2011.03%20Integrati%C3%B3ns%C3%A1lit.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.klaksvik.fo/index.asp?PID={510AC712-2773-4CC9-90D0-E5EDD5E58F59}>

the integration policy, an Integration Committee, consisting of representatives from the immigrant communities, has been set up, and the mayor meets with it on a quarterly basis to gain feedback and hear of any challenges and concerns. The aim of the committee is to provide the immigrants with a formal forum for communicating on a regular basis on integration-related issues.

A next step in the Faroese integration work was the employment (in late 2015) of a Faroese-wide integration officer at the Immigration Office; a permanent position that is tasked with continuing the work on formalising and improving the integration efforts across the Faroe Islands. The post-holder, David Im, also doubles as the Integration Officer for Útlendingastovan.

The practical outcome of this was the publishing of a collected volume on the relevant information for immigrants in English, and the next major task was addressing the accessibility to language training in Faroese for immigrants.

Klaksvik's action can be seen as an interesting example of how the local level can lead the way – whether as a result of municipal necessity and ambition, or an outcome of a strategic decision to establish a smaller-scale 'test bed' - the experiences of which can then be transferred to national level for further implementation.

Klaksvik's Integration Policy is subtitled 'A City For Everyone'. It is introduced by the Mayor who states that:

*Diversity brings with it new and specialized knowledge, skills, as well as rich experiences, which will enrich and develop the Faroese society. Simultaneously, the diversity brings with it a particular challenge. If we are to succeed as a society in utilizing these resources and take care of the challenges that come with it, it is of importance that we have a written plan where we outline how, as a society, we will welcome and accommodate all new citizens.*

The Faroese Minister of Trade and Industry Johan Dahl also introduces the Policy with words which echo concepts of Interculturalism and Diversity Advantage:

*Integrating foreigners should speed up the process where immigrants become a part of society. We should not force our own ideas and values on people, who move here but instead give them space and opportunities to function in our society. Immigrants come to the Faroes with abilities, values and cultures we should hold in respect and from which we can greatly benefit. Simultaneously immigrants can adopt our values and share them with others.*

One of Klaksvik's first steps was the formation of the integration Committee, which includes in its membership 2 politicians, plus foreign representatives including Filipino, Bangladeshi, Indonesian and Polish. It is said that it took the Committee some time in order to find a clear role for itself, and is and still considered 'a work in progress'. Whilst it does serve a valuable role as a place to talk through tricky issues, it aims also to keep people active through things like volunteering and events. Its most high profile activity has been an International Day, held for last the 3 years, where everyone can display their culture.

It was stated that the Committee's discussion had led to some quite surprising revelations, for example that on average it takes a foreigner 7 years to integrate into Faroese society.

## 5. Governance and Democratic Participation

There are three types of elections held in the Faroe Islands:

- LØGTINGSVAL  
General elections for the Faroese parliament, Løgtingið, which consists of 33 elected members serving for a period of four years by popular vote as a single constituency.
- FÓLKATINGSVAL  
Additionally, two Faroese representatives are elected for the Danish parliament, Fólkatingsið.
- KOMMUNUVAL  
Local elections for the councils/municipalities. Elections are normally held every four years

In terms of the local municipal elections, all Faroese/Danish nationals aged over 18 registered in the Faroe Islands have the right to vote. Citizens of other countries also have the right to vote in municipal elections if have been residing in the Faroe Islands for three years prior to the election. This includes the right to stand for election in the municipal elections.

It is not known how many foreign citizens avail themselves of this opportunity.

## 6. Education and training

All children in the Faroe Islands must attend school for 9 years, usually from the age of 7 until the age of 15, at an elementary school and then a lower secondary school. The schools offer 9 years of compulsory basic education and an elective 10th year. Some public elementary schools also offer pre-school classes for six-year-old children. Pupils who do not have Faroese as a first language may be entitled to additional lessons in Faroese. This is assessed at the local school by the teacher and the school administration office.

In the public school system, from 1st to 9th/10th grade, parents are expected to cooperate with school to further their child's learning and thus dialogue between parents and school is considered vital.

Secondary schools can be divided into three groups: technical, business, and general education. Secondary education is available at five locations in the islands. Secondary school, Miðnám, is usually intended for young students between the ages of 16 and 19. But preparatory education for adults is also a part of Miðnám. The diplomas awarded by the Faroese secondary schools are equivalent to those awarded in the Danish education system. Diplomas from the general upper secondary school and diplomas after three-years' study at technical and business schools give access to higher education.

It was suggested during our visit that because of its reliance upon a fishing economy, the Faroese have traditionally accorded a low priority to education. It was now becoming more widely recognised that human capital – rather than fish – is the key to country's future prosperity but, ironically, the acquisition of higher education by the younger generation is often the first step to their emigration. As such it was said that the education of youngsters of foreign or mixed heritage must be given a high profile as they will increasingly fill the looming demographic and skills gap.

A careers guidance counsellor noted that most foreign people she encountered were already over qualified for the jobs they were doing, and there were hardly any courses or pathways for such people to enable them to transition to more suitable employment.

## 7. Employment and business

In the Faroe Islands almost every adult is in work. Most are employed in the public service sector (health and social work) or in private businesses that are related to the fishing industry, that is by far the most important source of income for the national economy – usually fish products account for over 95 per cent of Faroese exports. Many Faroese are also self-employed, with their own shop, restaurant or other small businesses, such as smaller fishing vessels.

A considerable proportion of the Faroese workforce has been employed abroad. In 2014 their remitted wages accounted for about 7% of GNP, a record in a European context. This group has typically been employed as skilled workforce, e.g. carpenters or electricians in Norway, as sailors in the Danish merchant fleet or on foreign fishing vessels. The workforce is organised in unions and employers are organised in federations. These parties negotiate agreements that set out the conditions for employment and wages – on behalf of workers and employers. Additionally, national legislation governing minimum wages for the fishermen (minstaløn), the duration of the working week, holiday entitlements, parental leave, unemployment benefits etc. These collective bargaining agreements between unions and the employers' federations apply to the whole Faroese labour market, but, at the same time, any employee can negotiate additional individual benefits with their employer.

Foreigners are now a common, and in some cases essential, component of the Faroese labour market. During our visit we took evidence from various employers in the private and public sectors. For example the manager of Fjallafipan day care centre reported that it has staff originating from Philippines, South America and Europe. Most of the time it works very well, and is best when an immigrant has been there for several years and feels comfortable in the surroundings. Language is not a major obstacle but can produce occasional misunderstandings.

The JFK/Kosin fisheries company is one of the largest employers in the area and employs large numbers of foreigners, both in its medium size trawler fleet of 19 vessels (which employs many people from Greenland and eastern Europe) and a large processing factory (with many staff of Filipino and Thai origin).

It has 756 workers and 20% of the Faroese fish export market, with its main markets being the UK for frozen fillets and Norway and China for fresh fish. The Kosin factory opened in 60s and then reinvested in 2014 to guarantee year-round 24/7 production. It employs 30-40 immigrants and none are employed without permits. Some also come on a sport-related resident and work permits and can only work half-time. Most immigrants stay for long periods and everyone earns the same salary as native Faroese. Immigrants tend to ask for the longest hours and overtime, whilst the native workforce is aging and prefers fewer hours.

English is the main language of the workplace for foreigners, though a few try very hard to learn Faroese – but it is not mandatory to learn either. At JFK/Kosin there are very few opportunities for promotion which can be rather frustrating for some immigrants. The director stated that immigrant workers were highly valued by the company because they bring many other qualities aside from hard work. For example, one worker shows up an hour before everyone else to prepare the workplace. Another one helps many colleagues to speak English and is the social bridge builder. A third is always very happy and positive and spreads a good work culture.

The preference of the company is to employ people from as many different ethnic backgrounds as possible rather than simply rely upon the largest groups, as this seems to lead to higher productivity and workplace harmony.



The company expects their proportion of foreigners to continue growing. They get a lot of young foreign girls who come with the intention of staying for 2 or 3 years but carry on for decades because they find the lifestyle and earnings conducive. They have noticed there are many more younger immigrant women coming in the last two years because younger Faroese men are seeking wives - not just older men as in the past.

The Faroese national Unemployment Programme<sup>12</sup> gave evidence. Every worker pays for the service through taxes which offers a welfare safety net. The service also helps people to find employment. Only 20 foreigners, out of 380, are registered in their system but there is a suspicion that this is because the service has not been proactive enough in reaching out to foreigners. Their webpage and application form is only in Faroese and the service desk staff have trouble dealing in foreign languages and technical terminology. It was admitted that when they call people in for a job talk they tend to overlook the people with strange names as they make assumptions that they won't be able to communicate with them.

Since the appointment of Klaksvik's integration officer he has worked closely with them and they have tried to call in every foreigner for a consultation. This is particularly valuable for those foreigners who live in very isolated places where there are no local job opportunities.

They are becoming increasingly concerned with how to manage people's expectations between working forever in the fish factory and expecting wider job opportunities to open up. They need to have more candid conversations about expectations with foreign clients. They can offer 3 months paid training to people in a reimbursement scheme with the employer, but only for people who opt into the system. They can also offer 3 months payment for setting up in self employment but not much demand from foreigners

We also took evidence from the Distance Learning and Careers Guidance Centre – which is based in the Innovation House (Íverksetarahúsið).<sup>13</sup> They deal with a lot of young school leavers, mid career changers, and people seeking higher education applications. The Service is aware that it cannot offer much help to the higher educated migrants and is seeking to address this.

The Innovation House employs 3 staff who offer advice and guidance to entrepreneurs. They offer workshops to help new start-ups. They find mixed teams work well and are interested in doing more to encourage this. We would recommend them to explore the Innoversity (Innovation + Diversity) model which has been pioneered successfully in Copenhagen.<sup>14</sup>

One experienced business owner stated that there was an attitudinal problem with entrepreneurship in the Faroes, namely that people are enthusiastic starters of joint ventures, but after a few years of trading most partners are keen to 'cash in' and sell their stake. This is seen as a result of the historic precarity of life in the Faroes with people preferring to live for the present rather than invest in the longer term. He hoped that the entry of more foreigners into the labour market and eventually the business community would lead to new attitudes. However there are still very few foreigners starting businesses or investing in the Faroes.

## 8. Culture

The Library is the cultural institution which has taken the greatest initiative toward integration. This includes diversifying the language of the book stock and other media.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.als.fo/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.iverksetan.fo/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.innoversity.org/>

The Coming Together initiative is a collaboration between the library and Red Cross and builds upon what is a national pastime. Two local women proposed it and were allowed to use the library on a monthly basis and it is now very popular. There is an average of 12 including some locals but unfortunately the number of immigrants has remained static. So the organisers are experimenting with doing it differently. They have approached the police and other agencies for ideas and connections, and now organise it around an event, but it remains troublesome. It is apparent that the most long-standing and well integrated immigrants are the regular attenders, but newer arrivals are much more difficult to attract and keep. The library also runs a book club but there are no foreigners attending.

Rowing is a popular national sport over the summer as well as handball and the women football team is the best in Faroes.

The big question for many people who run both municipal and civil society leisure services is that whilst they are really trying to involve foreigners in all their activities but the take-up remains stubbornly low.

It seems that providers need to approach things differently. Firstly they need to move beyond seeing all foreigners as an undifferentiated mass and start seeing them as individuals and segmenting them according to lifestyle – as they would with the native population.

It is suggested the authorities consider adopting some ideas which have worked well elsewhere. For example the Human Library model and also the idea of Time Banking whereby people can barter their time, skills and belongings in ways which builds social capital.

## 9. Language and multilingualism

Faroese is the mother tongue and official language in the Faroes. It is a Germanic language, which descends from Old Norse and is closely related to Nordic languages such as Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish. For centuries Danish was the primary language for state affairs, but is now a second language taught in schools. Faroese is used at all levels of society, but in addition to this, Danish may be used in official matters by institutions under the Danish government, e.g. the High Commissioner's Office, Ríkisumboðið, and the court.

Almost everyone in the Faroes understands Danish but English is gradually becoming more significant in both the education system and society. Faroese schools allocate almost the same teaching time to English as to Danish and the use of English in higher education is growing.

Foreigners have the right to Faroese language courses offered by evening schools (kvøldskúli) managed by municipalities and financed by the Ministry of Culture and Education. Currently, Faroese language learning is not mandatory by law, but the government strongly recommends people to enrol on courses. The bigger municipalities like Klaksvik offer tuition or language learning courses in the Faroese language, which are held at the evening schools. The courses are dependent on a minimum number of participants and courses may therefore be cancelled or be unavailable if not enough participants sign in.

The language courses are designed as a beginner's course with two or three learning levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) dependent on the evening school. Some schools have separate courses intended for Nordic speaking learners and English speaking learners, if needed. The

level and the design of the classes are usually based on the need and capacity of the students with a hands-on perspective. The content of the introductory courses is primarily language and partly culture and society including aspects of the local community, such as visits to public agencies and large workplaces. However, each of the evening schools teach uniquely and may differ from each other. It is possible to apply for a special travel allowance to cover travel costs to attend classes.

There is no official list of private tutors for Faroese language learning but it is not too difficult to find a tutor in most communities or through social media. The Faroese University offers bachelor level courses in Faroese language for foreigners each semester. In addition, every second year, the university offers a three-week summer course, International Summer Institute, intended but not limited to Nordic speakers.

During the Expert Visit we participated in a lively debate about the current state of language training in Klaksvik. In 2011 the town only had one language teacher and now the number has grown to three. The staff are qualified school teachers whose main job is working with schoolchildren but they offer language tuition for adults as a supplementary service in the evening.

With funding from the Education Ministry school books are now being produced for foreigners and the plan is for standardised tests to be introduced to give incentives for learners. There is currently a lack of language standardisation across Faroes with a variety of dialects and teaching methods. Most classes are held in the evenings but teachers are also flexible enough to cope with shift workers. Lessons also include an introduction to Faroese culture and society. There is currently a serious lack of online teaching resources in Faroese language.

All 3 teachers work together and often do one-to-one tuition because pupils are at so many different levels of ability. They teach on Mondays and Wednesday from 6 to 8. They have had to prepare teaching materials from scratch to cope with pupils of very different learning abilities and they report huge differences in learning pace. They now have a Welcoming Manual although it is mainly focused upon Torshavn. They have worked jointly with the Ministry on developing a new curriculum which will lead to a new examination, but it is not yet approved.

Without an examination and universally recognised qualification it means that many capable people are unable to access high skill jobs. Many people work in fishing and because the workload is extremely variable, if there is a lot of work on many will not attend classes on a regular basis.

Faroese language is not included in the Google Translate facility making it hard for foreigners to cope. So a Faroese language website has been set up to enable multi translations<sup>15</sup>.

Outside of formal schooling the national pastime of knitting is an important way for many foreign brides to learn via their mother-in-law's knitting groups. But a major problem within mixed households is that local partners don't speak Faroese to their wives, but stick to English. Many women work, take care of kids and try to learn language in what little spare time they have, but the teachers think the system ought to be able to make it easier for them.

Kinga Eysturland is a linguistics specialist and a member of the Klaksvik International Committee and she thinks there is need for a radical step change in the way Faroese is taught to foreigners. Currently there is no 'Faroese as a foreign language' programme and existing teachers are not trained from this perspective. Their training and fundamental approach is the same as if they were teaching native children, and this is not the ideal way for teaching non-native adults. Teachers' competences are at odds with their linguistic role as they are primarily primary teachers.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://snar.fo/>

She gave examples that in the same classes there can be a mixture of brand new arrivals and people who have been in the Faroes for many years. Courses are often too informal and casual and it is too easy to skip classes so people feel no pressure to learn thoroughly. This opinion was reiterated to us by another group of foreign women at a later meeting.

It was said that a language school is not a knitting club, and nor should it be part of an adult school, but should have its own status. Too many materials and methods are for teaching children but not appropriate for adults, who need vocabulary which is more appropriate to the world of work. Apparently there is very little feedback and little correction of mistakes, and no progress monitoring or compulsory testing.

Courses start with total immersion but the problem is that newcomers struggle to find the context for what they are being taught. Listening should be made the top priority, rather than speaking which teachers currently emphasise.

Motivation and continuity is a big problem because there is no need to speak Faroese at all time. Generally if a native encounters a foreigner in public, and hears that their Faroese is not perfect, they will immediately slip into speaking English.

Beyond this there is a need to support the development of multilingualism, but many teachers' own language skills are not good enough and they don't have enough confidence in English

For a future Language Strategy there is a need to set realistic goals, ie establishing what people should be able to do after xx hours of training.

In mitigation the teachers argue that most of the people who need to improve their language work in fish factories working long hours and difficult shifts. Their first priority is to earn money to remit back to their countries of origin, and they are reluctant to sacrifice their earning capacity for Faroese language when they can get by in English. This is particularly the case with Thai women.

Perhaps a solution to this would be for the government to give them a loan to pay for their language training to enable them to work less and learn more and faster. This has been tried to good effect in Norway.

The teachers would like the chance to enrol on a course for teaching as a foreign language but it has never been offered anywhere. They feel like pioneers in everything they do and are doing their best in difficult circumstances.

In the background the Government is reducing the number of teaching hours it will fund. Given that Faroese is such a minority language and was, until quite recently, under serious threat of extinction, it seems rather perverse that the Government should not be doing everything it possibly can to ensure everyone of its residents is given the chance to learn the language.

We asked whether the key agencies have held joint discussions to sort out the gaps here but it appears little progress has been made so far. The Klaksvik integration office is pushing the Ministry to do more and make it easier for people to progress.

It seems that a key reason for the lack of progress is the complex relationship with Denmark. Formal education diplomas are difficult to provide because everyone has to go through (what was described

to us as) the roundabout (or dead end) which is Denmark and most people have to learn both languages. A foreign professional must learn Danish to get a Faroese license to practice

We wonder whether Klaksvik can offer some kind of temporary registration certificate to allow people to work, particularly if they come from conflict zones. Bergen in Norway has been able to fast track people in this way. Can Klaksvik be a policy laboratory for untried or unorthodox policies and actions?

## 10. Public space, neighbourhoods and ethnic mixing

Professor Erika Hayfield reported on a research study of 39 interviews with non-Nordic foreigners from 24 countries to try to understand the social connections which were being made (or not being made) between foreigners and locals. She observed that people in small island communities like the Faroes have multiplex relations, ie people live in close-knit networks with many connections and understand that if they offend someone it may be remembered for a long time, and may come back to haunt them many years later. This is the opposite of city life, where one can leave behind failed relationships and submerge into the anonymity of the crowd. As such there is a high level of social control and self-censorship in traditional Faroes society. This produces very strong social capital - which has many positives - but it can be very costly to make mistakes. It can be particularly costly for outsiders and newcomers who do not know the unwritten codes and lack extensive social networks.

Immigrants comment that the Faroese tend to hold back on speaking their opinion because of this. Young people who cannot tolerate this tend to leave in search of the anonymity of the city. It is said the Faroese are forgiving of people who come from social networks they can identify with, but for people outside of these networks they have much less incentive to help out. So it takes a very long time for outsiders to understand the social subtleties, particularly if they come from societies where very loose ties are the norm.

There is also a suggestion that nepotism can be a factor in gaining access to key parts of the Faroese labour market and into the hierarchy of key institutions. Conversely, anyone who does not come from a recognisable network will experience a glass ceiling of subliminal and institutionalised discrimination.

At present, immigration is still too young for this to be presenting as a serious problem. Most foreigners are not at the stage in their lives where they want to push for high office, where they might experience such discrimination. However, the clock is ticking on Faroese society in this regard. It needs to confront itself with some very difficult questions about how it can maintain its social cohesion and pride in its traditions whilst also opening up its social and economic structures for talented and ambitious newcomers to advance and prosper.

It is said that if you are not part of a recognised network in the Faroes you are effectively invisible. The Faroese elite will need to self-consciously build in checks into their system to ensure that they do not remain blind to the legitimate aspirations of newer citizens. Legislation against discrimination will help but cannot change behaviour single-handedly. Change will need to be more subtle than this.

## 11. Interfaith Dialogue

According to the 2011 Census, there were 33,018 Christians (95.44% of adults), 23 Muslims (0.07%), 7 Hindus (0.02%), 66 Buddhist (0.19%), 12 Jews (0.03%), 13 Baha'i (0.04%), 3 Sikh (0.01%), 149

Others (0.43%), 85 with more than one belief (0.25%) and 1,397 with no religion (4.04%).<sup>16</sup> Whilst most people identifying as Christian are Lutheran, there are several other important Christian communities in the Faroe Islands, the largest of which is the Plymouth Brethren, with approximately 13 percent of the total population belonging to them. Other religious communities are the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, the Pentecostal Movement, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Philadelphia congregation (a branch of the Pentecostal Movement).

We heard evidence from the Pastor of the main Lutheran Evangelical Church. She is of oriental origin but was adopted and brought up locally - but then lived outside the Faroes for 22 years. On returning she noticed there had been a big change in the population but she felt the church community had not taken account of this. She met lots of foreigners who felt left out of the church community and were particularly lonely at festival times when they could not go home to be with their own families. She initiated a Christmas service in English for foreigners and, as a consequence, the Bishop was inspired to set up an integration committee to develop new ideas.

There are now English-speaking Easter services too, and future plans to raise visibility and work in more locations to reach more people. The religious calendar is now getting more complex with the addition of so many new cultures so needs better coordination between the different groups. She said her next big challenge was to persuade the Faroese to understand that they are welcome (and to feel a sense of obligation) to attend the events and festivities of foreign communities.

Klaksvik's integration officer and Bethesda Baptist brethren church dialogued on how to reach out to immigrants. Out of the conversation, international café started for both local residents and immigrants. It continues after two years on a weekly basis, including the introduction of games and sports to show how different cultures behave.

Whilst founded upon a mission of seeking the inner being and values of individuals, the Brethren also recognise a responsibility to reach out to work in practical ways with the wider community. For example, they plan to arrange more activities and retreats where locals and foreigners can go away together for extended periods of building empathy and relationships.

## 12. Health and Welfare

The Health Service for Children, Gigni<sup>17</sup>, is often the first point of contact, and has a great opportunity to access families that other agencies cannot reach. The families they encounter usually consist of a foreign wife and a local husband with children. They do home visits after childbirth and will do up to six to foreign families who lack social or extended family support.

They always make an effort to question what their own parental ethics and methods are and how these might compare to or differ from those of the families they encounter. Mothers with no Faroese language find it very hard to attend the mainstream mother and baby support groups. They try to integrate them through English discussions, but unfortunately all written materials are only available in Danish

It is particularly difficult for the foreign wives of sailors who are away a lot and are isolated with kids. There is a need to encourage as many as possible to learn how to drive to help them get to events

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<sup>16</sup> "CS 10.1.2 Population by religious faith, educational attainment, occupation, country of birth, year of arrival in the country and place of usual residence.". Statistics Faroe Islands. Retrieved 1 October 2015.

<sup>17</sup> <http://gigni.fo>

for mothers and overcome their isolation. There may be a need to start a group just for foreign mothers.

### 13. Welcoming and hospitality

The Faroese government has produced a handbook for immigrants which covers the issues of accessing Rights and Responsibilities, Voting, Work Permits, Housing, employment, Education, Transport and Leisure<sup>18</sup>. However some people consider it too formal and administrative and believe there is a need for a more user-friendly and welcoming approach.

The Faroe Islands are slowly coming to terms with the impact of greater mobility and the expectations of people who arrive for the first time. Greater tourism is one aspect of this and has increased by 100,000 in the last two years. Having observed the negative impact of tourist saturation in parts of Iceland the Faroese are keen to take a different track. In the past they worked hard to attract people to come. Now there is a different strategy of leaving it up to tourists to find them, and then ensuring those who come are steered towards high quality and sustainable experiences.

### 14. Media and Communication

In July the municipality is appointing a journalist to the new position of Public Relations and Promotions Officer. This is part of the strategy to raise the profile of the area and the progressive way in which Klaksvik welcomes foreigners will be an important component of this. The aim is to tell more stories about the town. It would be worthwhile for Klaksvik to follow the progress of ICC's new initiative Story Cities.<sup>19</sup>

The municipality is also interested in organising more international events. They already stage an annual festival of dance and get 600 people for a week from mainly Nordic countries. The Mayor is now thinking about organising something which combines elements of the established International Day with creative arts and the activities of the Innovation House.

### 15. Conclusions and Recommendations

The members of the Council of Europe Expert Visit Team would like to thank the authorities of Klaksvik Municipality for organising a very thorough, informative and enjoyable itinerary. We were appreciative of the candid willingness to discuss difficult topics as well as to show off more successful achievements.

We have also noted the widespread availability of clear and explanatory documents about different aspects of policy and practice at the government and municipal level, which has made it easier than usual to grasp the important local issues.

In the light of this, it is very surprising that when Klaksvik completed the Intercultural Cities Index, it registered a very low score. As the visit proceeded it became increasingly apparent to the Team that Klaksvik has seriously downplayed itself owing to a less than thorough completion of the

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.immigration.fo/info/news/new-handbook-for-immigrants/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/art-of-mixing>

Questionnaire and that it is advised to revisit the Form as quickly as possible. We are unable to explain why this has been the case, but it may well be due to an excess of modesty.

It is obvious that Klaksvik already has a strong political will to 'do the right thing' in regards to immigration. Clearly it has also ventured out into the world and has sought out many examples of exemplary practice in the formulation of policy in order to inform its own policy statements. If Klaksvik has a shortcoming it is one it has identified itself. As someone commented during our visit: "We are little and still learning. We have put things in place but still don't know how to make them work together".

This will need to be a combination of 'learning by copying' (from other ICC members) and, more importantly, 'learning by doing' - in other words, figuring out what works in the local context - and having the patience and courage to absorb a few failures, because the best knowledge is always hard won.

We commend the establishment of the Integration Committee, but would like to see its status now upgraded, to become an Advisory Committee to the Municipality on Integration.

It needs to be established as an independent non-commercial foundation, with the power and opportunity to take its own initiative and raise its own money. There are several good examples to study in the ICC network. Perhaps local business can play a role here, because it has so much to gain from successful integration.

The municipality is extremely fortunate to have a specialist integration officer of high calibre. But it should not place too much reliance on one individual or even one department. Interculturalism needs to pervade the municipal administration so there is a need to invest in staff with high skills or potentially to be trained to a high level in diversity skills.

There also needs to be a process of visioning that explore what the full potential of 'the diversity advantage' and 'the intercultural lens' could be for Klaksvik. This needs to be part of a wider visioning and positioning of Klaksvik in the national and international context. Can Klaksvik offer something different and distinct from Torshavn?

Would local businesses help to start some high profile new initiatives that don't - or even can't - exist in Torshavn? For example a hybrid restaurant that combines Faroes cuisine with multi-ethnic influences. A music festival based on the same principles.

The proposed new foundation could be the vehicle for making diversity the means to the end and not just an end in itself.

Perhaps an achievable next step would be the staging of an Integration Conference. This could be a practical 'policy lab' whereby a group of experts and practitioners from the ICC network gather in Klaksvik to work on solving some real-life conundrums and demonstrate them under the scrutiny of local conditions and people.



# ICC MEETING PROGRAMME IN KLAKSVIK

## DAY 1

<b>09.00-09.45</b>	Venue: Býráðshøllin, Klaksvíkar Kommuna. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and Opening Speech by the Mayor</li> <li>• Speech by Member of City Council or from administration</li> <li>• Integration Committee representative's introduction and presentation</li> <li>• Concluding and Transition presentation by Integration Coordinator</li> </ul>
<b>10.00-11.00</b>	<b>ICC and index results presentation</b>
<b>11.15-12.00</b>	<b>Open Discussion</b>
<b>12.00-13.00</b>	<b>Lunch and Interaction</b>
	<b>Thematic Discussions</b> <i>(Each theme will use last 10-15 minutes for questions, comments, or feedback)</i>
<b>13.05-14.15</b>	<b>Language</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erik Biskopsto – manager of Klaksvik evening school</li> <li>• Rannva Joensen – Faroese teacher</li> <li>• Jorun Hognesen – Faroese teacher</li> <li>• Kinga Eysturland – international resident</li> </ul>
<b>14.15-15.25</b>	<b>Labor Market Integration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Niels Juel Arge – manager at Fjallafipan</li> <li>• Jogvan Hansen – Sales and Operation Director at Kosin</li> <li>• Deirdre Hansen – guidance counselor at Fjarnam</li> <li>• Erika Hayfield – professor at Faroese University</li> </ul>
<b>15.30-16.30</b>	<b>Services and organizations in the city</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marjun Lomaklett – priest at Christianskirkjan</li> <li>• Katrin Lassen and Maria Matras – visiting nurses</li> <li>• Rogvi Joensen – organiser at Betesda church</li> <li>• Annika Egholm – library manager</li> </ul>
<b>End</b>	
<b>19.00</b>	Meeting with a selection of foreign residents of Klaksvik

## DAY 2

<b>09.00-09.45</b>	<b>Visit to the Library</b>
<b>10.00-11.00</b>	<b>Visit to Á Skúlatrøð School</b>
<b>11.15-12.00</b>	<b>Meeting with the Mayor and senior officials of the administration</b>
<b>12.00-13.00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>13.00-14.00</b>	<b>Visit to Kosin Fish Processing Plant and meeting with Sales and Operations Director Jogvan Hansen</b>
<b>14.00-15.00</b>	<b>Summing up and Close</b>