

2018 Annual Report



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Vigdís International Centre
under the auspices of UNESCO

Introduction

The Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding is an independent professional research and instructional centre under the auspices of UNESCO and a part of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages. The Vigdís International Centre is operated by the University of Iceland as part of its Centre for Research in the Humanities and was formally opened on 20 April 2017.

That same day, Veröld – House of Vigdís was inaugurated. The building houses teaching facilities for the University of Iceland's School of Humanities, study areas for students and research offices for the members of the Faculty of Languages and Cultures. The Centre occupies a part of Veröld: Vigdísarstofa, exhibition space, auditorium, offices for staff members, two offices for guest researchers, and the "home area" of languages.

The building has proved to be a great lever for both the Vigdís International Centre and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute. The Vigdís International Centre is young, but the board and staff are dedicated in their work to assure solid foundations, both financial and professional, for the Centre for the years to come.

It was decided in 2014, before the opening of the Vigdís International Centre, that during the first years, its activities would focus on languages and cultures in the West-Nordic Region, namely The Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and the west coast of Norway, both in the field of research and

dissemination of information. The decision reflects the emphasis that the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute has placed on research on the ecology of languages and language contact in these regions, in collaboration with researchers in universities in Norway, Denmark, Faroe Islands and Greenland.

The Vigdís International Centre has cooperated with many institutions and organizations, both in Iceland and internationally. Most of the Centre's activities in 2018 were prepared in cooperation with the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages. On behalf of the board of the Vigdís International Centre I would like to thank the staff, all partners and patrons for their invaluable support.

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir
Chair of the Board

Objectives and functions of the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding

The Centre operates according to the Agreement Between the Government of Iceland and UNESCO, signed on 27 June 2013. According to the Agreement, the objectives and the functions of the Centre are as follows (see art. 7.1 and 7.2 from the Agreement):

The objectives of the Vigdís International Centre are to:

- a) promote multilingualism in order to further understanding, communication and respect between nations and cultures;
- b) raise awareness of the key role of languages as a basic aspect of the human cultural heritage; 12
- c) contribute to the preservation of languages;
- d) function as a clearing house in the fields of multilingualism and linguistic diversity for decision makers, experts and the general public;
- e) promote translation and translation studies in order to enhance the respect for and enjoyment of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding;
- f) contribute to worldwide monitoring of the implementation of language policies and language planning in the field of mother-tongue-based multilingualism;
- g) promote research and education in foreign language and culture studies;

- h) support and promote research into the role of the mother tongue as a human right;
- i) promote the investigation and analysis of and compilation of statistics on translation flows.

The function of the Centre shall be to:

- a) work towards and encourage the preservation of languages by maintaining and supporting digital archives for languages of the world;
- b) support language vitalisation and create a “planetarium of languages” – a combination of a real and virtual reality museum on the languages of the world with exhibitions to be experienced both on location and on the internet;
- c) promote and disseminate research on languages and cultures as an element of the human cultural heritage by supporting research chairs for outstanding scholars, including scholars from developing countries;
- d) provide a forum and facilities for international doctoral students and academics, especially from the developing countries;
- e) devise and make available worldwide strategies and methods in support of endangered and indigenous languages through research projects, conferences and publications;
- f) support outstanding research in the field of language policy and politics;

- g) provide facilities and expertise for research projects and disseminate results with a special view to the objectives of the centre;
- h) demonstrate how native language visions and focused language policy can enhance literacy and education through the means of research projects and dissemination of knowledge;
- i) develop an international discussion platform;
- j) collaborate with all relevant UNESCO programmes, in particular in the field of translation flows observations, like the Index Translationum (International Translation Bibliography).



Furthermore, the Centre operates according to the Rules and the Procedures of the Vigdís International Centre that were formally agreed upon by The Centre for Research in the Humanities at the University of Iceland on 27 November 2012.

Governing Board and staff

According to the UNESCO Agreement and the Rules and Procedures for the Vigdís International Centre, the Governing Board makes all strategic decisions on behalf of the Centre and is responsible for its finances towards the Board of the Centre for Research in the Humanities and the Dean of the School of Humanities. The board shall also ensure that the Centre fulfills its role, decide on its research policy, grant funding for individual research projects and approve its annual operating budget and annual report.

Changes were made to the board of the Vigdís International Centre in May 2018 when Auður Hauksdóttir requested a sabbatical from her duties as chair in the second half of the year. Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir took over her position and Geir Þórarinn Þórarinsson became a new board member. Besides this change the members of the board remained the same. Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Geir Þórarinn Þórarinsson and Þórhallur Eypórsson are all nominated by the University of Iceland. Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson is the representative of the Icelandic UNESCO-Committee. Guðrún Kvaran was nominated by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. Irmgarda Kasinskaite Buddeberg is the representative of UNESCO on the board.

The Governing Board of the Vigdís International Centre met in Veröld in September 2018. Irmgarda Kasinskaite Buddeberg participated in the meeting via Skype from Paris.

In accordance with the agreement between UNESCO and the Icelandic government, as well as the Centre's rules of procedure, the Governing Board decided in October 2017 to appoint an Executive Committee to handle the Centre's affairs on its behalf. This was done in order to ensure the effective running of the Centre between sessions of the board. The executive committee met frequently in 2018.

Sebastian Drude continued as managing director of the Vigdís International Centre in 2018, Valgerður Jónasdóttir as events manager and Þórunn Elísabet Bogadóttir as public relations manager until May, when she went on maternity leave. She was replaced temporarily by Halldóra Jóhanna Þorlákssdóttir.



Financial Support and Management of the Centre

In 2017 the Government of Iceland approved funding to the Vigdís International Centre of an annual 20,000,000 ISK for three years. The City of Reykjavík agreed annual funding of 3,000,000 ISK for three years, as well as special support for the Vigdís Square outside Veröld – House of Vigdís. Other municipalities have supported the Centre and building in previous years. In 2018, the Vigdís International Centre also received a contribution from Garðabær municipality.

The rector of the University of Iceland grants the Centre with 15,000,000 ISK every year from 2017-2019, for wage payments of the managing director.

The Centre benefits greatly from all the goodwill and support which the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute has received from several organizations and individuals throughout the years. Presently, all efforts are being made to provide funding to support its future operation.

Cooperation

The Vigdís International Centre has cooperated with many different organisations both in Iceland and internationally. They include Linguapax, European Language Resources Association (ELRA), Common Language Resource and Technology Infrastructure (CLARIN), City of Reykjavík, City Library of Reykjavík, International Standardization Organization (ISO), Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL), InfoTerm, Modeling the Linguistic Consequences of Digital Language Contact (MoLiCoDiLaCo), the Nordic House, the Association for Bilingualism (Móðurmál) and the Icelandic Association of Translators and Interpreters (THOT).



Highlights of the Activities of the Centre

West Nordic network

It was decided before the establishment of the Vigdís International Centre that during the first years the Centre would focus its activities on languages and cultures in the West Nordic Region, namely the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and the west coast of Norway.

Two research networks related to this emphasis are now operated. Auður Hauksdóttir is at the forefront of the West Nordic collaborative network Sprog- og kulturkontakt i Vestnorden, where the main research focus is the relationship between languages and culture in the area. The network held a two-day workshop in Veröld in March of 2018, where research projects were presented and plans for future projects were made.

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir leads the Vestnordisk Sprogbarometer, with researchers from the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute at the University of Iceland, University of the Faroe Islands, University of Greenland and the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use at the University of Copenhagen. The sprogbarometer project focuses on researching the use of English and Danish in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland, particularly in the school systems and media. The project received a Nordplus grant in 2018.



Sagatid-Nutid

The exhibition Sagatid-Nutid was opened in Veröld – House of Vigdís by Queen Margarete of Denmark on the 100th anniversary of Iceland’s sovereignty on 1 December. 2014 saw the new Danish translation of the complete edition of the *Icelandic Sagas*, featuring 40 illustrations for 40 of the sagas by the artist, Karin Birgitte Lund. The drawings were exhibited in Veröld – House of Vigdís as part of the exhibition series that commemorates the 100th anniversary of Iceland’s independence. The drawings illustrate the sagas, using motifs from Viking and medieval Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The artist’s interpretation provides an impression of the fascinating aesthetic of those periods. The pictures are inspired by medieval Icelandic manuscripts, frescoes from

Danish churches, Norwegian stave churches and Gotland's picture stones. The exhibition also included a series of large-scale drawings inspired by the era of the sagas.

Roots and Wings Conference

The Vigdís International Centre took part in organising the Nordic conference Roots and Wings in May in Veröld. The conference topic was creative collaboration across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages, and Eliza Reid, First Lady of Iceland were among the speakers.

The conference was a collaboration between the Reykjavik City Library, The Nordic Council of Ministers, The Norwegian Cultural Council, The Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Vigdís International Centre and the Icelandic UNESCO Committee, and it was part of the joint Nordic project "Culture and Inclusion in the Nordic countries".

International Mother Language Day

The Vigdís International Centre held the symposium *Dictionaries: Multilingualism, Translations and Terminology in Veröld – House of Vigdís* to celebrate the International Mother Language Day on 21 February. The symposium was also held to announce the arrival of a unique collection of dictionaries and journals to Iceland, donated to the Vigdís International

Centre by InfoTerm, The International Information Centre for Terminology, which the Vigdís International Centre is a member of.

The program covered a range of topics from the past and present of lexicography, terminology, and translation studies in Iceland and in general. One of its objectives was to stress the importance of dictionaries for linguistic diversity, multilingualism and the bridging of borders. Representatives of many of the most important institutions working in these fields in Iceland and Europe were present.

FEL Conference held in Veröld

Some of the world's leading experts and scholars on endangered languages, language documentation and language revitalization came together at the FEL Conference XXII – Endangered Languages and the Land, held 23–25 August in Veröld – House of Vigdís at the University of Iceland in Reykjavík. The 3-day event was dedicated to endangered languages and their relation to the territory, with a special focus on novel cartographic and visual means for representing the complex and multilingual language landscapes.

Organised by The Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding, the conference was held in collaboration with the Foundation for Endangered Languages.

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Languages and former President of Iceland, gave an opening

speech at the conference and was followed up by Eliza Reid, first lady of Iceland. Keynote speakers were Claire Bower from Yale University, Jost Gippert from the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Jeff Good from the University at Buffalo and Kristine A. Hildebrandt from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville.



ISO working group meeting

In the first week of November, working groups of the International Standardization Organization (ISO) dedicated to the coding of languages met in Iceland for the first time. Language codes are probably by far the most often used ISO standard. For all digital content or device interfaces where languages can be selected, these are identified by a two or three-letter ISO code, like “*is*” or “*isl*” for *Icelandic*. The rules for these codes are established and refined by the working

groups of ISO’s Technical Committee 37 that met in Veröld – House of Vigdís, hosted by the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding. Sebastian Drude participated in the meeting on behalf of the Centre.

Café Lingua

The Vigdís International Centre is a co-organizer of Café Lingua in Reykjavík. Café Lingua is a platform for those who want to enhance their language skills, Icelandic or other languages, a place to communicate in and about various languages as well as a gateway into different cultures. The goal is to “unveil” the linguistic treasures that have found their way to Iceland, enriching life and culture, as well as giving world citizens the option to express themselves in Icelandic and to introduce their mother tongues to others. Café Lingua is run by the Reykjavik City Library and The Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding. The Vigdís International Centre hosted several Language Rendez-vous in Veröld – House of Vigdís.

Languages open worlds in Danish

The book *Tungumál ljúka upp heimum. Orð handa Vigdísí* (*Languages open worlds. Words for Vigdís*) was first published in 2010, in celebration of the 80th birthday of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. The book contains texts by twenty-seven Icelandic authors written for Vigdís with their thoughts on language.

The book has now been translated into Danish by Erik Skyum-Nielsen, literary theorist and translator. *Sprog åbner verdener. Ord tilegnet Vigdís Finnbogadóttir* was published in 2018.



New website

A new website for The Vigdís International Centre and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute was published in December 2018. The website was built by the advertising and web agency Hype. It has separate sections for the Institute, the Centre and the building Veröld – House of Vigdís.

Events held by the Vigdís International Centre and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute in 2018

January

- *Language Development across the Life Span*. Introduction of a new book, edited by Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir and Hafdís Ingvarsdóttir.
- Café Lingua Language Rendez-vous in Veröld.
- Annual Japan festival in cooperation between the Department of Japanese and the Embassy of Japan in Iceland.

February

- Annual “Culture Night” in Veröld, in collaboration with the City of Reykjavík.
- Language Rendez-vous in Veröld.
- The International Mother Language Day celebrated with the symposium: Dictionaries: Multilingualism, Translations and Terminology.
- University Simulator. Dozens of students from senior high school spend the day in Veröld.
- Chinese New Year celebrated by the Northern Lights Confucius Institute at the University of Iceland.

March

- Renaissance in Harlem and the scolding of Zara Neale Hurston’s voice. Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, professor at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about literature and culture.



- From Iconic Ingstad to a Motherless Child: Norwegian Immigrant Narratives from Canada. Ingrid Urberg, associate professor at the University of Alberta. Lecture series about literature and culture.
- It Seemed to Him the Typical Action of a Criminal: The Representation of Crime in the Fiction of Graham Greene. Gregory Alan Phipps, associate professor at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about literature and culture.
- Of Literature and Landslides: Making Sense of Catastrophes in Contemporary Andean Writing. Rebecca Jarman, associate professor at the University of Leeds. Lecture series about literature and culture.
- Margaret Atwood’s Irish Murderess in *Alias Grace*. Guðrún Björk Guðsteinsdóttir, professor at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about literature and culture.

April

- Alexander Pushkin and his family mansion. Lecture and workshop from experts at the Mikhaylovskoye Museum Reserve in Russia.
- Language and culture in Spain. Lectures by Emma Martinell from the University of Barcelona and Ignacios Vázquez from the Beira Interior University in Portugal.
- “There are Indians buried here”– the occurrence of native Americans in the text of Ole E. Rølvaag: Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie. Gro-Tove Sandmark, doctoral student at the University of Stavanger. Lecture series about literature and culture.
- Danish and Icelandic literature, a beeline for a century. A symposium and a part of an event series to mark the 100 year anniversary of Icelandic sovereignty.
- Beauty and the Beast and other fairytales written by French women. Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir, professor at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about literature and culture.
- (Drama)queens and popular culture: Of great British queens in television and movies in the 21st century. Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir, senior lecturer at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about literature and culture.

May

- Learn how to draw Donald Duck and friends. Animation workshop for children with Flemming Andersen. Event series to mark the 100 year anniversary of Icelandic sovereignty.

- Donald Duck in Iceland – Denmark as Iceland’s window to the world. A symposium to mark the 100 year anniversary of Icelandic sovereignty.
- ISO standard interpretation appliances set up in Veröld, so that conference interpretation can be offered in six languages at the same time.
- Shaming Women’s Laughter. Dianna Niebylski, professor at the University of Illinois, Chicaco. Lecture series about literature and culture.
- Roots and Wings Conference in collaboration with the between the Reykjavik City Library, The Nordic Council of Ministers, The Norwegian Cultural Council, The Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Vigdís International Centre and the Icelandic UNESCO Committee.



June

- Sponde, confini, trincee: L’Italia nell’Europa post 1918. International conference held by the Department of Italian at the University of Iceland and the University of Warsaw.

- Conversation about rap and hip hop, and Rap and poetry festival. A part of an event series to mark the 100 year anniversary of Icelandic sovereignty.
- Early Language Learning: Multiple perspectives. Conference in collaboration with the School of Education at the University of Iceland.

August

- Magnificent Manga. Conference about the Japanese comics tradition. Organised by the department of Japanese at the University of Iceland.
- FEL Conference held in Veröld.
- Translating culture. Artist, writer and film maker Xiaolu Guo. Lecture series about languages in collaboration with Angústúra Publishing.
- Breton: a Celtic Language on the Continent. Lecture by Malo Adeux, doctoral student at Université de Bretagne Occidentale.

September

- Design Patterns for Teachers – sharing knowledge is good. Ola Knutsson, senior lecturer at the University of Stockholm.
- Digital language projects – difference between genders? Þórhildur Oddsdóttir, adjunct lecturer at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- La traducción de textos sobre culturas desconocidas. Mirosław Trybisz, adjunct lecturer at the University of Gdansk.



- La tertulia política: Un discurso mediático-ideológico. Marina González Sanz, lecturer at Sevilla University.
- Prisa IV conference.
- Russian Movie Night in cooperation with Cinema Paradis and the Embassy of Russia.
- The joy of creation in a new costume. Gunnella Þorgeirsdóttir, adjunct lecturer at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- New Trends in Italian Cultural Tourism. Luca Zarrilli, senior lecturer at Chieti-Pescara University.
- Sidenotes in translations. The Icelandic novel *Boy and girl* in German. Marion Lerner, senior lecturer at University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.

- The European Language day celebrated. Program for children and a symposium about the use of technology in language teaching.
- Café Lingua Language Rendez-vous.
- The second European Language Resource Coordination (ELRC) workshop.
- Movie night in cooperation with the Reykjavík International Film festival.

October

- Preservation of Icelandic in Northern America. Ideas of those who emigrated. Úlfar Bragason, professor at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- Café Lingua Language Rendez-vous.
- Climate discourse in Putin's Russia. Jón Ólafsson, professor at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- Bear Tales: Ways of Seeing Polar Bears in Traditional Folktales and Modern-Day Children's Literature. Lizanne Henderson, senior lecturer at the University of Glasgow.
- Gene Therapy, Invisible Cars, and Frost: James Bond's Icelandic Mission in Die Another Day. Monica Germanà, senior lecturer at the University of Westminster.
- Mesopotamia. From corn to poetry. Kolbrún Lilja Kolbeinsdóttir, MA in literature. Lecture series about languages.
- Poetry is vital. Symposium about the poet Sigurður Pálsson in collaboration with Forlagið Publishing.

- Five Italian Movie Nights in collaboration with the Department of Italian at the University of Iceland.

November

- Positive views towards language learning. Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir and Oddný Sverrisdóttir, professors at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- Café Lingua Language Rendez-vous.
- Teaching writing in secondary school. Workshop for teachers. Patricia Prinz, associate professor at Mercy College.
- China's climate problem. Hafliði Sævarsson, project manager at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- The meaning of privileged moments in Kausgard's My Struggle. Gísli Magnússon, senior lecturer at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- Translations from foreign countries. Rúnar Helgi Vignisson, senior lecturer at the University of Iceland. Lecture series about languages.
- Danish-Icelandic design. Symposium and exhibition to mark the 100 year anniversary of Icelandic sovereignty. In collaboration with furniture store Epal and the Embassy of Denmark.

December

- Queen of Denmark, Margaret, visits the University of Iceland and Veröld – House of Vigdís, along with the President of Iceland and his wife.
- The exhibition Sagatid – Nutid opened by the Queen Margaret.
- Using the European language levels (CEFR) in teaching. Gísli Hvanndal, project manager at the University of Iceland. Language series about languages.
- The relationship of Iceland and Canada in past and present. Symposium in cooperation with the Embassy of Canada.
- Cafe Lingua Holiday event.



Thanks

The board and staff of the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding wish to thank all those who contributed to the Centre's work and activities in 2018. The Vigdís International Centre would not have become reality had it not been for the financial support it has received, as well as the help and encouragement from the University of Iceland, the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages, the International Advisory Board and not least Vigdís Finnbogadóttir herself.

The board and staff would like to extend their gratitude to Auður Hauksdóttir, who served as the chair of the board of the Vigdís International Centre until June 2018. She was instrumental in establishing the Centre and the building of Veröld – House of Vigdís.