



VIGDÍS INSTITUTE



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of UNESCO

# Annual Report 2021

The Vigdís International Centre



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# FOREWORD

In 2021, The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and The Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding carried out events and projects in close collaboration, as well in cooperation with domestic and foreign institutions.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many conferences and events were cancelled and a number of events was carried out online. Nonetheless, the board and members of the centre made a considerable effort to strengthen and promote its programme, not least concerning the centre's role in helping organise the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022–2032), which the United Nations announced at the end of 2020; indeed the former chairperson of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages' governing board is a member of IDIL's steering committee.

Work on other projects also continued. The exhibition on Vigdís Finnbogadóttir's life and career was opened in the Vigdís Room, and in collaboration with Gagarín, the design and interactive multimedia company, and the first phase of the *Living Language Lab* exhibition in Veröld's exhibition room was completed. A study website, containing a number of school projects related to the *Living Language Lab* was created, and school visits to both exhibitions started in September for students aged 12-19. To celebrate the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute's 20th anniversary, new series of publications was launched in 2021, the *VFI Minis*. Finally, mention should be made of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute's publication of the thirteenth edition of its journal *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*.

I would like to thank the board members, staff of the institute and centre, participants, collaborative partners and all well-wishers for their invaluable support throughout the year.

*Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Chairperson of the boards of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding*



# THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

The Vigdís International Centre is the umbrella title of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages, which is a research institute within the University of Iceland's School of Humanities, and the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Cultural Understanding, which operates within the VFIFL under the auspices of UNESCO.

The Vigdís International Centre places great emphasis on a multicultural knowledge and approach to other nations and languages and that multilingualism can facilitate personal, cultural and economic achievements. Globalisation calls for increasingly versatile skills in cross-cultural exchanges and various forms of interaction in all aspects of human life. The new challenges now facing communities, institutes, companies and private individuals on the international scene can only be handled with a comprehensive ability to communicate between differing linguistic and cultural worlds.

The United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development for the world is the guiding light in the forming of the Vigdís International Centre's policies and research. The centre works towards declaration number 16, concerning peace and justice, and also number 4, regarding education for all, by supporting and encouraging multilingualism, translation studies, multicultural exchanges and imbuing respect between differing cultural groups through championing research in foreign languages by providing more knowledge to the general public, providing further education for teachers, and welcoming visits of schoolchildren to the centre. Equal rights and environmental concerns are also seen as a guiding light for the work of the Vigdís International Centre.

## THE VIGDÍS FINNBOGADÓTTIR INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages is one of the main members of the Research Centre of the Humanities which carries out teaching and research in the languages currently taught in the Faculty of Language and Cultures in the School of Humanities at the University of Iceland: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, English, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian,

Spanish and Swedish. The institute's research is based on various aspects of language and cultures and the main topics include:

- Linguistics, including comparative linguistics, interaction between languages, language acquisition, second language learning, and lexicology.
- Literature, including that of individual nations and language areas and also the literature of immigrants.
- The languages and cultures of specific geographical and linguistic regions, linguistic relations and comparisons of languages and cultures, both contemporary and historical.
- Communications in foreign languages and their value in education, culture and international trade and industry.
- Development of language teaching techniques and materials and the application of new technology in language courses and instruction.
- Translations for practical as well as literary purposes.

The aim of the Vigdís Institute is to support and strengthen research and teaching in languages and culture. The main guiding light in this research is to increase the understanding of multilingualism and the value of a knowledge on foreign languages and cultures in all their various aspects. The Institute disseminates its knowledge of the nature of language courses and innovations in language teaching at all the levels of education.

The institute also supports an informed discussion in society about multilingualism, literature and culture, language courses and teaching, and cultural literacy. The institutes carries out this role by holding lectures, symposia and conferences in connection with the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding, the publication of scholarly works, and the development of course materials and other useful resources in order to simplify communication in a multilingual world. Much emphasis is placed on language technology for the benefit of language courses and research, including the development of internet-related courses, language materials and online dictionaries. The institute maintains a strong scholarly discussion through a programme of lectures and the publication of an online journal: *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*. Scholars within the institute participate in many development and research projects within their various fields of interest and in collaboration with Icelandic and foreign scholars and university institutions.

## THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR MULTILINGUALISM AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding was formally inaugurated on 20 April 2017, the very same day as the official opening of the building Veröld – House of Vigdís. The centre supports conferences, seminars, lectures, research, film screenings, courses, meetings, and exhibitions to provide information and knowledge about foreign languages in as wide a spectrum as possible, in order to fulfill its obligations according to the agreement between the government of Iceland and UNESCO signed in June 2013. The main objectives of the centre are:

- To promote multilingualism in order to further understanding, exchange and respect between cultures and nations;
- To raise awareness of the importance of language as a core element of the cultural heritage of mankind;
- To promote translation and translation studies and the observation, analysis and statistics of translation flow;
- To work at the preservation of languages and to create awareness of language policies and control of languages, with multilingualism as a guiding light;
- To promote research and education in foreign languages and cultures;
- To support and promote research into mother tongues, regarding them as a basic element of human rights.

The main emphases of the Vigdís International Centre during its first decade of operations are to be as follows:

- Ecology of Languages in the West Nordic Region, i.e. the interconnection of languages and cultures on the western coast of Norway and in the Faroe Isles, Iceland and Greenland.
- Indigenous languages and languages in limited geographic areas with small numbers of native speakers, in connection with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032 (IDIL 2022-2032) in collaboration with UNESCO.
- The literature, language and culture of the Romani/Gypsy peoples around the world in connection with the research network Roma in the Centre.
- The organizing and setting up of The Living Language Lab exhibition, to be opened in 2021, where visitors will have the opportunity to become acquainted with, and be informed about, the history and development of various languages from all over the world.

# GOVERNING BOARDS, SCHOLARS AND STAFF

The governing board of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages from January until May 2021 consisted of Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, chair, Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Geir Þórarinn Þórarinnsson, Oddný G. Sverrisdóttir and Guðmundur S. Brynjólfsson, who represented doctoral students. Members in reserve were Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir and Gísli Magnússon. On the annual meeting of the Institute in May 2021 a new board was elected. Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir became the chair of the board. Other members are Oddný G. Sverrisdóttir, Kristín Ingvarsdóttir, Assistant Geir Þórarinn Þórarinnsson and Jóna Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir, representing doctoral students. Members in reserve are Gísli Magnússon and Erla Erlendsdóttir. Six board meetings were held during the year.

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, and Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir made up the institute's editorial board, while Geir Þórarinn Þórarinnsson and Þórhildur Oddsdóttir were the editors of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute's online journal, Milli Mála.

The governing board of the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding consisted of Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, the board's chairperson, Ann-Sofie Nielsen Grimaud, Geir Sigurðsson, Guðrún Kvaran, the government's representative appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Irmgarda Kasinskaite, the representative of the executive office of UNESCO, and Sæunn Stefánsdóttir, representative of the Icelandic UNESCO committee. According to the agreement made with UNESCO, the executive committee is to oversee the projects and policies of the Centre, and this executive committee is composed of all the board members except the UNESCO and Icelandic UNESCO representatives. The governing board of the Centre held its annual meeting on 16 June 2021, and the executive committee also held a meeting once during the year.

In 2021 there were forty scholars who were members of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages. The staff of the Vigdís Institute consisted of Halldóra Jóhanna Þorláksdóttir, public relations manager, Sofiya Zahova, research specialist, and Valgerður Jónasdóttir, events manager.





Governing Board of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages



Executive committee of the International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding

# COLLABORATION

The Vigdís International Centre collaborates with a large number of institutes, organisations, associations and companies, both in Iceland and internationally. Examples include: Linguapax, European Language Resources Association (ELRA), Common Language Resource and Technology Infrastructure (CLARIN), the Icelandic Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, the City of Reykjavík, the Reykjavik City Library, the Centre for Icelandic Literature, the Reykjavík International Literary Festival, various publishers, STÍL, the Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland, Women Political Leaders (WPL), the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL), InfoTerm, Modelling the Consequences of Digital Language Contact (MoLiCoDiLaCo), the Nordic House, the Language Centre of the University of Iceland, the Northern Lights Confucius Institute in Iceland, the Icelandic Mother Tongue Association, the Icelandic Association of Translators and Interpreters, the Gypsy Lore Society, andrúm architects, Gagarín, the embassies of the United States of America, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Poland, Russia and Sweden, many universities throughout the world, and the cultural associations Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute.

# RESEARCH SUBJECTS, RESEARCH NETWORKS AND DEVELOPING PROJECTS

## RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH NETWORKS

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Professor of Second Language Learning, is one of the leaders of **WILA – Workshop on Heritage Languages in the Americas**, which holds a conference every year, alternatively in Europe and the Americas, and publishes an annual journal. She is also one of the leaders of **PRISEAL**, a research network concerned with the use of English in the writing of academic articles. In 2021, Birna took a seat in the steering committee of the **International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022–2032)** declared by the United Nations in 2020.

Jón Ólafsson, Professor of Cultural Studies and Russian was given an excellence award for his project **Democratic Constitutional Design: Negotiating Civic Engagement, Institutional Control and the Common Good** which examines what lessons about democratic constitutional design can be drawn from the ongoing attempts to revise the Icelandic constitution that began in 2010.

Pórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics, is the project leader of research entitled **Insular Scandinavian Morphology and Morphosyntax** ongoing from 2019–2021.

Three research networks of multinational teams of scholars concentrating on the West Nordic area are now within the International Centre's auspices:

Auður Hauksdóttir, Professor emerita of Danish, is leading the research network **Language and Cultural Interaction in the West Nordic Region**, which is investigating the linguistic and cultural interconnections between Greenland, Iceland, the western coast of Norway, and the Faroe Isles. The SVF members of the network include Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Birna Bjarnadóttir, Gísl Magnússon, Guðrún Kvaran, Kristján Árnason, Pernille Folkmann, Pórhallur Eypórsson, and Pórhildur Oddsdóttir;

in addition there are representatives from universities and institutes in Greenland, Norway, Denmark and the Faroe Isles.

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir and Auður Hauksdóttir are in charge of **The Language Barometer**, a synchronic contact study of the Faroese, Greenlandic and Icelandic languages with English and Danish.

Pórhildur Oddsdóttir, Adjunct in Danish, leads the research project **The Representation of Language and Culture in Learning Materials for Foreign and Second Language Learning** in which representatives from four universities in Scandinavia take part. The main aim of this project, financially supported by Nordplus Sprog, is to examine the course materials and books used in the teaching of Danish in Iceland, the Faroe Isles, Greenland, and Denmark, as well as the teaching of Swedish in Finland.

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, Professor of French, is leading two research projects, one on **Representations of Sin**, dealing with the origins of the concept and its representations in literature, and the other on **The Translation and Reception of French Narrative Literature in Iceland**, from medieval times until the present day.

Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir, Associate Professor of English, represents the research project **Scotland in the North: Arctic Encounters in Scottish Literature**, with the goal to provide new insights and knowledge as to how the longstanding ties between Scotland and the Arctic have informed Scottish literary culture from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir and Irma Erlingsdóttir, Professors of French lead **The French Wave in Icelandic Theatre: 1960-2000**, a project focusing on translations and productions of French theater literature in the period 1960-2000 and its influence on Icelandic theater.

Sofiya Zahova, a research specialist, leads an international research network **Roma in the Centre**, a multidisciplinary project involving the study of the literature, language, culture and social issues of the Romani/Gypsy peoples around the whole world. Sofiya also participates in the European project **Educated Roma women, empowered Roma communities!** which deals with the education and empowerment of Roma women.

Pórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics, is a participant in the research network Emotive Performativity in Northern Europe and in the research network The Oxford History of North Germanic Morphology for the period 2018–23.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

Auður Hauksdóttir is leading the development of four projects related to the teaching of Danish in the Faroe Isles, Greenland and Iceland. The pedagogic material **Taleboblen** is designed to help teach spoken Danish, especially pronunciation, and the interactive computer game **Talerum** for the teaching of Danish. **Frasar** is an online collection of Danish-Icelandic idioms designed especially to help Icelanders express themselves in Danish, and can also be used to help Danes express themselves in Icelandic. Finally the project **EGO – Personal Digital Workplace with Language Resource** aims to develop a digital workplace for students in Danish studies.

The Icelandic-French online bilingual dictionary **LEXIA** is a collaborative project of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. Other collaborative partners include the Sorbonne University in France and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. The project leader of the French part is Rósa Elín Davíðsdóttir, and both she and Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir are the representatives of VFIFL on the committee of experts. The project began in 2015 and the online dictionary was opened for users in June 2021.

**Icelandic Online** is a collaborative project of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. The project director is Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir. Seven Icelandic Online free and open access web courses began during the period 2004–2013, intended for self-education on computers, tablets and smartphone. Around 260,000 people all around the world have registered for these courses, of which 85,000 users are active participants. Since 2019, work has progressed on producing Icelandic Online – Börn, a new course especially for children between the ages of five and seven. The project's editorial board consists of Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Halldóra Þorlákssdóttir, Þorgerður Anna Björnsdóttir, Kolbrún Friðriksdóttir, Úlfar Bragason and Branislav Bedi.



Vigdís Finnbogadóttir at the opening ceremony of LEXIA – Icelandic-French Online Bilingual Dictionary

# OPENING CEREMONY OF LEXIA

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir opened LEXIA – Icelandic-French Online Bilingual Dictionary in Veröld – House of Vigdís, at an opening ceremony in Veröld – House of Vigdís on 16 June 2021.

LEXIA is a collaborative project of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute for Foreign Languages and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. The project leader of the French part is Rósa Elín Davíðsdóttir, researcher at the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute. Þórdís Úlfarsdóttir is the editor in chief and Halldóra Jónsdóttir a project manager and editor of the Icelandic part, both from the Árni Magnússon Institute.

The origin of the project dates to 1983, when the Icelandic and French governments signed an agreement to strengthen the countries' co-operation in the field of culture and science, e.g., with the support of a French-Icelandic dictionary as well as an Icelandic-French dictionary. The French-Icelandic dictionary was published in 1995, and work on the Icelandic-French web dictionary began in the autumn of 2015 after a decision was made to publish it in digital form and build on the ISLEX database, a multilingual dictionary between Icelandic and Nordic languages already produced by the Árni Magnússon Institute.

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, who has from the beginning been a great promoter of the dictionary, opened LEXIA at the opening ceremony in Veröld. Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin, French Minister of Culture, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland, Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, Graham Paul, French Ambassador to Iceland, Olivier Cadic, Senior Member of the French Parliament, Guðrún Nordal, Director of the Árni Magnússon Institute and Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir, Director of the Vigdís Institute, all gave speeches during the ceremony.

The opening of LEXIA marks a turning point as more than 70 years have passed since an Icelandic-French dictionary was last published. LEXIA contains 50,000 lemmas and 31,500 usage examples, as well as 10,000 fixed expressions and collocations, all of which are translated into French.

LEXIA is an important part of strengthening communication and strengthening friendships between France and Iceland. An urgent need was for a new dictionary for Icelanders learning French, French-speaking Icelandic students, translators, enthusiasts of the French language and culture, and all those who interact with French-speakers who are around 75 million people around the world.



François Heenen, Rósa Elín Davíðsdóttir, Halldóra Jónsdóttir og Þórdís Úlfarsdóttir, members of LEXIA's editorial



Speakers at the opening ceremony of LEXIA – Icelandic-French Online Bilingual Dictionary in Veröld





Á fjarlægum ströndum

TENGL SPÁNAR OG ÍSLANDS Í TÍMANS RÁS

INNUDAGSMATUR

og fleiri sögur Rómafólks

Hernaðarlist Meistarara Sun

við kvikuna

örsögur frá Rómönsku-Ameríku

Raddir frá Spáni

Sögur eftir spænskar konur

WORDS OPEN UP WORLDS

| Words for Vigdís

SÖNGUMÁL LJÚKA UPP HEIMUM

| Orð handa Vigdís

FRÖG ÁBNER VERDENER

| Orð tilegnet Vigdís Finnbogadóttir

Neruda

Hafid starfar í þögn minni

Luis Borges

Yfir saltan mar

Clot

Morð í dómkirkju

Rangan og réttan - Brúðkaup - Sumar

Albert Camus

Franz Kafka

UMSKIPTIN

# PUBLICATIONS

The Vigdís International Centre pays special attention to the publication of scholarly research and translations of foreign literary works into Icelandic and publishes an annual journal *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*. The centre’s series of dual-language books now has more than a dozen titles available. This work is beneficial for students in the fields of languages, literature and the humanities in general and is also intended for lovers of literature who have the opportunity to compare the translation with the classic’s original text. The centre’s single-language translations aim at introducing foreign authors and works that are not so well known here in Iceland while also filling a gap in the history of Icelandic translations. All attempts are made to translate these works from their original languages, and most of them have detailed introductions. Launched in 2021 to celebrate the institute’s 20th anniversary *The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages Minis* is a new series intended to disseminate a variety of essays and short texts, both original and translated, on different cultures and intellectual traditions.

## **MILLI MÁLA – JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

The thirteenth volume of *Milli Mála – Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures* was published in 2021 with open access on the website [millimala.is](http://millimala.is). The editors of this edition are Geir Þórarinn Þórarinnsson and Þórhildur Oddsdóttir. The journal publishes peer-reviewed articles in the fields of foreign languages, translations, linguistics and education. A tradition has also evolved of publishing literary translations, especially of short stories and texts. There are eight peer-reviewed articles in the thirteenth volume of *Milli Mála* featuring topics of literature, linguistics, the teaching of foreign languages, translations and composition. It also contains works which have been translated from four languages.

## **ON DISTANT SHORES – RELATIONS BETWEEN SPAIN AND ICELAND**

The book contains a collection of articles by fourteen authors that deal extensively in the history of communication between Spain and Iceland. Topics include Icelanders’ journeys on the Camino de

Santiago, Spanish whaling off the coast of Iceland in the 17th century, Icelanders' participation in the Spanish Civil War, translations of literary works between the languages, and Spanish manuscripts in the Árni Magnússon Manuscript Collection. The book is published by the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and the University of Iceland Press and sponsored by the Icelandic Literature Center. The editors are Erla Erlendsdóttir and Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir.

### **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. FRENCH SHORT STORIES AND TALES**

*Beauty and the Beast* contains a selection of short French literary texts from the 12th to the 18th century: poems, short stories, parables, philosophical stories, fairy tales and short stories. The works show diversity and growth in the writing of short texts during this long period and provide insight into the cultural world from which they spring. The book is published by the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and the University of Iceland Press and sponsored by the Icelandic Literature Center and the The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute Fund. Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir, collected and translated the stories and wrote a preface. She was nominated to the Icelandic Translators' Prize for the translation. The book was edited by Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir.

### **THE BELKIN TALES**

*The Belkin Tales* is a collection of five short stories by the Russian national poet Aleksandr Pushkin. The stories are full of joy and playfulness, in which the author plays with well-known literary themes, such as the romantic hero and the ghost story. Some of them had unforeseen influences on Russian literature.

*The Belkin Tales* is published by the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and the University of Iceland Press and sponsored by the Icelandic Literature Center and the The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute Fund. Rebekka Þráinsdóttir translated *The Belkin Tales* and wrote an epilogue on the life and works of Aleksandr Pushkin and the literary context of the work. The book was edited by Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir.

## VFI MINIS

The first three books in the new series of *The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages Minis*, contain translated essays by three authors: *From The hall of uselessness – Essays on China* by the Belgian-Australian sinologist Simon Leys, translated by Geir Sigurðsson, *Why do we fear imagination? On the Reformation and the aesthetics*, by Dorthe Jørgensen, philosopher and theologian, translated by Gísli Magnússon, and *Sex, coercion and lies in Morocco*, by the French-Moroccan writer Leïla Slimani, translated by Irma Erlingsdóttir. The books are edited by Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir and Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir and published by the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages and the University of Iceland Press with support from the Icelandic Literature Center, the The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute Fund and the Danish Arts Foundation.



Snapshots from the events of 2021

# EVENTS

## LECTURE SERIES

Thirteen lectures in Veröld – House of Vigdís were organised for the Vigdís International Centre’s Tuesday Lecture Series, in which scholars discuss the world’s languages from various linguistic, literary and translation viewpoints. Five of those were held when gathering restrictions allowed, and six were delivered online.

## CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

Three international conferences were planned for the Vigdís International Centre during the summer of 2021, but all had to be postponed to 2022 because of Covid-19 restrictions.

Five symposia were held in 2021:

### **The West Nordic Day 2021**

The West Nordic Day was celebrated 23 September with a diverse programme in collaboration with the Nordic House. Ann-Sofie Nielsen Gremaud, Associate Professor of Danish, directed the seminar *West Nordic futures. Greenlandic and Faroese perspectives*. Among speakers were the representatives of the Faroe Islands and Greenland to Iceland. Following the seminar there was a screening of the Faroese film *Skál* and a Q & A with its main actors.

### **The poet, the Tao and the Mysticism**

To mark the 100 anniversary of the first Icelandic translation of Laozi’s *Tao De Jing*, a seminar was held in October on the relations of the literary works of Halldórs Laxness to Daoist philosophy and mysticism. Eight scholars gave presentations at the Seminar which was held in collaboration with Reykjavík UNESCO City of Literature and Gljúfrasteinn-Laxness museum.

### **Culture of the North: Russia, Faroe Islands, Iceland: Geography, History, Literature, Culture.**

Seminar on the geography, history, literature and culture of Russia, Faroe Islands and Iceland was held on 27 October. Mikhail V. Noskov, Ambassador of Russia to Iceland, Árni Þór Sigurðsson,

Ambassador of Iceland to Russia, Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland and Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Dean of the School of Humanities gave speeches at the seminar, followed by presentations of specialists and screening of two documentaries. The Program was held through the collaboration of Vigdís Centre, ODRI – Friendship Society of Russia and Iceland, The Embassy of Russia in Iceland and The Embassy of Iceland in Russia.

### **On Distant Shores. Relations Between Spain and Iceland**

A seminar and a book launch for *On Distant Shores. Relations Between Spain and Iceland* was held 28 October where fourteen authors presented their articles from the book. At the same occasion, Erlendur Sveinsson, filmmaker, presented the Vigdís International Centre with a generous gift, his five part documentary series *Dream of the Way*, in Icelandic and English versions, as well as a version of the first part with subtitles in Galician.

### **Educated Roma Women – Empowered Roma Communities**

The Vigdís International Centre partners in the newly launched project “Educated Roma women, empowered Roma communities!” lead by the Croatian Romani Union “Kali Sara”. A workshop for Roma girls and young women was held in Slavonski Brod, Croatia, 27 – 28 November, as a part of the project which is funded by EEA and Norway Grants.

## **TRANSLATORS’ SYMPOSIUM**

In 2019 the Vigdís International Centre embarked upon a series of symposia for translators which were held both within the institute itself and abroad. The aim was to encourage and increase translations of Icelandic literary publications and to support and encourage those involved in such work. One symposium was held in 2021: *French Literature in Iceland – Symposium on translations and translator*, in collaboration with The Embassy of France to Iceland, The Icelandic Association of Translators and Interpreters and Bóksala Stúdenta.

## **TEACHERS’ WORKSHOPS**

The Vigdís International Centre began a series of workshops for teachers in 2019 in collaboration with STÍL, the Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland and the Language Centre of the

University of Iceland. The workshops, which were well received right from the beginning, are half-day courses introducing the latest methodologies in language teaching. They are especially intended for teachers of foreign languages, but are open to the public. In 2021, three workshop were held.

## **INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY AND EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES**

UNESCO's International Mother Language Day on 21 February and the European Day of Languages on 26 September are celebrated every year by the Vigdís International Centre in collaboration with STÍL, the Association of Foreign Language Teachers in Iceland.

On the Mother Language Day, digital material on the Japanese language and Japanese crafts tutorials was made and distributed to primary schools for use in class, since gathering restrictions did not allow for school children to be invited to Veröld. On the European Day of Languages, language teachers were invited for a reception and introduction to the Centre's new language exhibition, The Living Language Lab.

## **CAFÉ LINGUA**

Café Lingua—Living Languages is a collaborative enterprise of the Vigdís International Centre and the City of Reykjavík Library. One of its aims is to utilise those languages that have found their way to Iceland with people from all around the world and which have enriched its society and culture. Café Lingua provides a doorway into the world's many languages and cultures and a perfect place for those who wish to try out or gain a greater knowledge and ability in foreign languages. One Café Lingua event was held in 2021.

## **FILM SCREENINGS**

Film screenings are regularly organised by the teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures at the University of Iceland as part of their courses in foreign languages. Open to the public, these events are aimed to help train learners in listening and understanding the spoken foreign languages taught within the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures and in connection with the multicultural policies of the Vigdís International Centre. In November 2021, a film festival in honor of the Polish science-fiction writer Stanisław Lem (1921-2006) was co-organized with the Language



Centre of the University of Iceland and the Embassy of Poland in Iceland, where five films based on Lem's work were screened.

## **THE JAPAN FESTIVAL**

The Japan festival, in collaboration with the Japanese Embassy to Iceland and the teachers and students of Japanese studies of the University of Iceland, has been held annually in Veröld – House of Vigdís from its opening and always been extremely popular. Due to gathering restrictions in 2021, the festival was held online in February. The programme contained interviews with well-known writers, a Japanese cooking class, introduction to the Japanese language and a live-broadcast from a guided tour of a Shinto temple in Japan. From the very beginning of Japanese studies, there has always been a good social life and camaraderie among the students and all of the work organising the festival was carried out by the teachers and students of the department.

## **VISITING LECTURERS**

A number of lectures are delivered by scholars from universities abroad every year in Veröld – House of Vigdís. In 2021, guest scholars from universities in Spain, the United States and the Czech Republic presented a total of four lectures.

## **HALLDÓR LAXNESS LITERARY PRIZE**

The Halldór Laxness International Literature Prize was awarded for the second time on 11 September. Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland, presented the award to Turkish-British writer and human rights activist Elif Shafak at Veröld - House of Vigdís, at the Reykjavík Literary Festival of which the Vigdís International Centre is one of the partners.



Language teachers attended an introduction to the Living Language Lab on the European Day of Languages



# EXHIBITIONS

## THE LIVING LANGUAGE LAB

The first phase of *The Living Language Lab*, a multimedia experience located in the exhibition room of Veröld – House of Vigdís was completed in 2021. This is intended to be a continuous project aiming at increasing knowledge and appreciation of the world’s languages in as many contexts as possible. The project manager of the exhibition is Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir who is also the editor in chief along with Halldór Þorláksson. The exhibition is being constructed in collaboration with andrúm architects and the multimedia company Gagarín, while the Icelandic Youth Fund, The Fund for Student Creativity and Nordplux helped support the project financially.

In 2021 support was received from the Directorate of Labour for hiring university students to create a study website, containing a number of school projects related to the Living Language Lab for its main target group, young people between the ages of twelve and nineteen. School visits to the exhibition started in September.

## EXHIBITION ON VIGDÍS FINNBOGADÓTTIR

In the Vigdís Room at Veröld – House of Vigdís, an exhibition on Vigdís Finnbogadóttir’s life and career was opened in collaboration with the design and interactive multimedia company Gagarín and andrúm architects. School visits to the *Living Language Lab* include a visit to the exhibition Vigdís Finnbogadóttir.

## EXHIBITION OF THE WORKS OF ÞORVALDUR SKÚLASON

An exhibition of the abstract paintings of Þorvaldur Skúlason was opened in Veröld – House of Vigdís in March 2020 and remained open until the end of 2021. The display was part of the fortieth anniversary exhibition of The University of Iceland Art Collection. The works illustrate the whole range of the artist’s career, from 1923 to 1984. The exhibition curators were Kristján Steingrímur Jónsson and Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir.



Katti Frederiksen was awarded the Vigdís International Prize

# THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

The Greenlandic linguist, poet and activist Katti Frederiksen, Greenland's current Minister of Education, Culture and Church, was awarded the 2021 international prize for culture, named after Vigdís Finnbogadóttir.

The Icelandic government, the University of Iceland and the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages established the prize to honour the occasion of Vigdís Finnbogadóttir's 90th birthday in 2020 and the 40th anniversary of her historic election as President of Iceland. The prize is awarded annually on 15 April, Vigdís' birthday.

Katti's achievement in drawing attention to Greenlandic language issues, both domestically and internationally, is remarkable. Through her poetry, scholarly writings, children's literature and participation in public debate, she has been tireless in spotlighting the importance of the Greenlandic language for Greenlandic society and how important it is to promote the growth and development of the language for use in all areas of human life and society.

Katti Frederiksen completed her Master's degree in Greenlandic, literature and media studies from the University of Greenland in Nuuk, Ilisimatusarfik, in 2011, pursuing part of her study programme at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. She has been a member of the Greenland Language Council and worked for many years at Oqaasileriffik, the Language Secretariat of Greenland. In 2020 she became Minister of Education, Culture and Church in Greenland. Together with her colleagues at the Language Secretariat, she has made a major contribution to projects aimed at strengthening and developing the Greenlandic language, to equip it to meet the key challenges of using and participating in digital solutions.

Finally, Katti Frederiksen has underlined how crucial it is for children and adolescents to become adept at speaking and writing in Greenlandic - to strengthen their self-image, their awareness of their own culture and belief in their future.

Porbjörn Jónsson, Iceland's Consul to Greenland, presented Katti with the prize, which totals ISK 6 million.

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Similarly, many thanks are due to the former chairperson of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, for her vital support and contribution to the Institute and Centre.

We are also especially grateful to the governing board, teachers, staff and the Rector of the University of Iceland, Jón Atli Benediktsson for their very willing and harmonious co-operation. The same is also due to the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, and the faculty's staff, and to Guðmundur Ragnar Jónsson, overall manager of the university's governance.

Finally, both the governing boards and members of the Vigdís International Centre wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude to all those who have collaborated with or, in many and various other ways, have supported the centre's work and projects.

# THE VIGDÍS INTERNATIONAL CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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## Annual Report

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir

Halldóra Jóhanna Þorlákssdóttir

## Photographs

Front cover: Halldóra Jóhanna Þorlákssdóttir

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