



Europeans as Migrants, Human Rights and Penal Policy

Helgi Gunnlaugsson
Professor of Sociology

European Migration and Asylum Policies for the Future – Nordic perspectives

Oslo, October 21, 2016



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES



Europeans as Migrants

- Millions of Europeans, including Scandinavians, flocked to N-America in the late 19th century searching for a better life.
- As a case in point up to 20 percent of the whole Icelandic population, members of my family included, migrated from Iceland to Canada and N-America in the late 19th century.





Why Did They Leave Iceland?

- Over-population in Iceland, economic hardship, lack of work opportunities, no space to build a home
- Difficult natural conditions because many parts of Iceland did not even experience any summer many years in a row in the late 19th century so they had to migrate, against their own will for the most part, with or leaving family behind in many cases.





External Change of Iceland: Influx of New Immigrants During 2000's:

- In 1999 only 2,4% were foreign born but in 2009 this figure stood at 9,0%
- Number of Immigrants in 1999: 6.521
- 2009: 28.644
- January 2013: 25.926 (7,0%)
- January 2016: 26.485 – (total population of Iceland: 332.459)
 - About half from Poland





Public Attitude Survey

(Globescan/Maskina, Amnesty International, 2016)

- 86% of Icelandic respondents welcome refugees to Iceland (80% worldwide)
- 74% wanted the government to do more to help refugees (66% worldwide)
- 65% accept refugees in their neighborhood (32% worldwide)
- 13% personally accept people fleeing war in their home (10% worldwide)

