



Community,
Collaboration,
Commitment

STRONGER TOGETHER

— STORBYENS HJERTE & SMERTE
REYKJAVÍK 2024 —



Reykjavík



STORBYENS
HJERTE OG SMERTE

Dear all,

We would like to thank you for participating in the Stronger Together conference at Harpa Music Hall in Reykjavík from September 25–27, 2024. It was a pleasure to organize the event and host you in Reykjavík. We hope you left inspired, with new ideas and valuable connections with other Nordic professionals.

The Nordic countries should remain the best place for children and young people. The Storbyens hjerte og smerte conference focuses on improving their living conditions. Joining professionals from all Nordic countries every other year is crucial. We aim to ensure that children and young people feel good, know their rights, and participate in decisions affecting them.

Young people played a significant role in organizing the Reykjavík Stronger Together conference. In March, a youth conference, U-LYNC, was held in Reykjavík, prepared by a large group of young people. We are grateful to everyone involved in both conferences. Special thanks to the young participants, keynote speakers, and workshop leaders. Thank you all for your excellent participation and presentations.

We look forward to seeing you again!

Ingibjörg Sigurþórsdóttir and Haraldur Sigurðsson,
Icelandic steering group members

***Storbyens hjerte og smerte* is a cooperative project involving major cities in the Nordic countries, initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1996.**

This year's conference theme, *Stronger Together*, focused on community, collaboration, and commitment. Six keynote speakers highlighted current youth issues and shared their visions for enhancing the Nordic countries for young people.

Participants engaged in various workshops organized by the participating cities, receptions, and networking events, hopefully ensuring a dynamic and productive experience for all involved.

Investing in Children

The Key to Prosperity

Ásmundur Einar Daðason, Minister of Education and Children presented the Prosperity law and talked about the importance on investing in children. He emphasized why children's rights matter, the significance of the Prosperity Act, and the ongoing reforms aimed at enhancing children's wellbeing in Iceland.

Why Children's Rights Matter

Children's rights are fundamental to ensuring their safety, well-being, and development into healthy, prosperous adults. Politicians have a responsibility to prioritize and advocate for these rights through policy creation, resource allocation, and raising awareness. Aligning national laws with international standards, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is essential for upholding children's rights globally. Policies supporting children's rights can break the cycle of poverty and improve future economic conditions.

The Prosperity Act

Enacted in 2022, the Prosperity Act aims to improve children's prosperity in Iceland by integrating and strengthening services. The legislation provides a framework for early support, reducing the need for severe interventions. The Act emphasizes cooperation among service providers, ensuring that children receive the necessary support promptly.

Evaluating Wellbeing in Monetary Terms

An economic analysis conducted during the drafting of the Prosperity Act revealed that investing in children's wellbeing is a profitable long-term investment. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) significantly impact individuals' wellbeing and can lead to high societal costs. By reducing the incidence and impact of ACEs, the Prosperity Act is expected to bring substantial economic gains to Iceland.

Implementation and Ongoing Reform

The implementation of the Prosperity Act is led by the Ministry of Education and Children, in collaboration with municipalities and other stakeholders. Significant milestones include the establishment of the Ministry in 2022 and the ongoing review of legislation related to children's rights and services. A new bill on inclusive education and school support services is set to be presented in 2024, aiming to ensure equal opportunities for quality education.

The Dashboard on Children's Prosperity

To monitor and support the Prosperity Act, a comprehensive dashboard on children's prosperity has been developed. This interactive tool provides data on various indicators of children's wellbeing, allowing for evidence-based policy development and targeted interventions. The dashboard covers dimensions such as education, quality of life, health and wellbeing, security and protection, and participation and social connection.


Conclusion

Investing in children is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic economic decision. The Prosperity Act and related reforms are designed to create a holistic system that supports children's needs, ensuring their prosperity and contributing to a brighter future for Iceland. By prioritizing children's rights and wellbeing, we can build a society where every child has the opportunity to thrive.







 Can't find any pictures of yourself?
[Click here to view more photos.](#)



Do you have a green thumb?

Strengthening communities through inter-professional collaboration

One of the intriguing aspects of Oddný Sturludóttir's keynote speech was the question: "Do you have green fingers?" This metaphor is inspired by the work of researcher Anne Edwards and refers to the "gardening tools" necessary for successful inter-professional cooperation. In essence, nurturing the "soil" of relationships among professionals from various fields is crucial for the flourishing and thriving of children and young people in our society.

What kind of a society do we want to live in?

Worldwide there is a growing recognition of the significance of inter-professional collaboration in promoting the welfare of children and young people. Oddný spoke about how essential it is for various institutions to collaborate effectively to address challenges, such as increasing violence.

She encouraged participants to reflect on how they can strengthen relationships within communities and among different professional groups and institutions. In fostering such connections, we must ask ourselves key questions such as: „What kind of society do we want to live in, work in, and create together?“

The theme is closely related to Sturludóttir's PhD project. Her research focuses on the implementation of the Prosperity Act in three municipalities in Iceland, examining what supports and hinders inter-professional collaboration. She finds it fascinating to explore this topic in depth.

Strengthening Communities

In her talk, Sturludóttir talked about the importance of systems thinking, identifying first and foremost as a system thinker herself, and sustainable development goals, particularly Goal 17 which focuses on partnerships

to achieve lasting change. She also spoke about Peter Senge's three core values for communities that learn: building connections, fostering sustainability, and knowing their identity. Building connections involves understanding the values, dreams, and motives of others, and recognizing who is missing from the conversation and why. She emphasized that understanding the identity of our communities is essential.

Calling for system leaders who see the larger picture

Finally Oddný called for system leaders who can see the larger picture, shift focus from reactive problem-solving to co-creating the future, and foster reflection and generative conversations. This involves opening the mind, will, and heart to challenge assumptions, let go of preset goals, and truly hear one another.



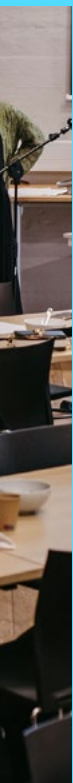
Get keynote

Workshops and presentations



Wednesday

- Children's prosperity in Reykjavík. A new Act on integrated services in the interest of children's prosperity in Iceland.
- Youth Conference. Introducing results and working on an action plan.



Thursday

- Collaboration in local community development as the most important enabler to promote good and equal conditions for children and youths. Malmö.
- Can connections create change. Understanding the role of relationships in outreach work with marginalized youth. Oslo.
- Kindergarten as a hub for cross-sector collaboration, fostering unity and community strength. Trondheim.
- SSP in practice in Copenhagen, Odense and Aalborg.
- SSP Copenhagen, a cross-sectoral and crime preventive initiative.
- SSP Copenhagen, emergency preparedness.
- Community Police in Iceland.
- Collaboration in preventative work – police, schools and social services. Oslo and Copenhagen.
- Sex education. Reykjavík.
- Sexual violence. Reykjavík.
- Queer Community Centre. Reykjavík
- Childs rights school/youth centre/after school program. UNICEF. Reykjavík.
- Adolescent's sleep and the start of the school day. Reykjavík.
- The difference of being asked and being heard. Trondheim.
- Lökkytrökk – Youth club and work for youth on wheels. Oslo.
- Co-creating trust: A workshop for developing better strategies for enhancing trust. Oslo.
- Interdisciplinary outreach work: Enhancing community engagement and support. Trondheim.
- Presentation of FACT, a model for people with complex and serious problems and opportunities to participate in local community. Bergen.
- Flotinn, a mobile youth centre targeted at teenagers across various neighbourhoods. Reykjavík.

Patrolling the Internet



How to Drive a Uniformed Police Car Online?

In today's digital age, the role of law enforcement is evolving, and Lone Strand, a police superintendent from Norway, is at the forefront of this transformation. As a keynote speaker at Storbyens Hjerte og Smerte, she emphasized the importance of engaging with the online community as part of a professional responsibility. Her goal is to inspire individuals to embrace their online presence, whether as professionals or responsible adults, aligning with the conference theme of "Stronger Together."

The Evolution of Online Patrols

The concept of online policing began in 2014 with the establishment of the first online patrol via a Facebook page. By 2018, it became mandatory for all police districts in Norway to have their own online patrols. This initiative recognizes that people live differently across regions, necessitating tailored approaches to online presence. The Norwegian police, or Nettpatroljen, aim to be present where the public is—primarily on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube.

Community Policing in the Digital Realm

Strand advocates for a model of community policing that extends into the digital space. The online patrols serve as virtual police stations where individuals can seek help and advice. This approach not only humanizes the police force but also fosters trust and dialogue with the community. By showcasing everyday police work—often with a friendly dog as companion—officers can connect with the public on a personal level.

Interestingly, Strand supports the idea of police officers engaging in informal activities online, such as dancing. This strategy not only increases followers but also creates a platform for reaching out with important messages later on. Being playful helps to break down barriers and makes the police more approachable.

Engaging with Youth and Parents

Recognizing the prevalence of social media among youth, the police utilize these platforms to reach out to younger audiences. They participate in discussions on popular games like Fortnite and FIFA, demonstrating that the internet is not a lawless space. This proactive approach aims

to build trust and provide safety and security in environments where young people gather.

Moreover, the police have initiated digital parent meetings to engage with parents who may not attend traditional gatherings. This outreach allows them to connect with thousands, addressing concerns about online safety and the digital landscape.

Challenges Ahead

Despite the successes, Strand acknowledges some challenges in online policing. Issues of privacy versus security, legal considerations, and the need for cultural understanding of various platforms are paramount.

In conclusion, Lone Strand's vision for online policing emphasizes the necessity of adapting traditional policing methods to the digital world. By fostering community engagement, building trust, and addressing the unique challenges of online interactions, the Norwegian police are paving the way for a safer, more connected society.



Watch interview



Get keynote



Inspiring key note speakers

This has been very inspiring. I think it is great that cities of nordic countries are coming together and collaborating. The key note speakers were also very inspiring. It has been a great conference!

Jan from Denmark



An event that expands the world view

This was an incredibly exciting conference. We listened to many informative speakers with talks that were really moving and had a lot to do with our line of work. This expanded our world view and our view on what can be done. It was an inspiring event.

Yrsa and Sigurhjörtur from Iceland



Interesting to meet Icelandic police colleagues

The main thing for me, attending this conference, was to meet the Icelandic police colleagues up here. That was the most interesting thing for me.

Jonas from Denmark





Optimistic after the conference

I think we should have more events like this. They bring togetherness, bring people closer together. I'm just glad to be part of it and this has been very educative. I am very optimistic because people here have shown that it is possible to be together and get things going on.

Musa from Norway



Sharing knowledge across borders

I think this conference is of great importance, both to learn from each other and to create an environment where we can share our knowledge across borders. It is also important to have the opportunity to get information that we can incorporate in our own local communities.

Julianne from Norway



Lessons on diversity very important

There are many similarities between our countries. I take a lot of things about diversity from the conference, that we in Iceland have to take into account. Here we are a bit behind, when it comes to things that people have already experienced in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Árni from Iceland





The Icelandic Prevention Model

Improving Lives Through Evidence-Based Strategies

In the 1990s, a collaborative effort was initiated by policymakers and practitioners and a group of Icelandic social scientists. They aimed to comprehensively understand the societal factors influencing substance use and risk behavior among adolescents and devise potential prevention approaches. This led to the development of an evidence-based, community-based, socially embedded, and highly participatory model for adolescent substance use prevention – the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM).

The IPM design

Margrét Lilja Guðmundsdóttir, Chief Knowledge Officer at Planet Youth discussed, in her presentation, how the IPM is designed to strengthen protective factors, mitigate risk factors, and build healthy community environments for positive youth development by focusing on key domains in the local school community: family, peer group, leisure (out-of-school) time, and school.

The IPM's impact has grown far beyond Iceland. Through the Planet Youth Guidance Program, this model is now implemented worldwide. By 2024, the program is used in hundreds of municipalities across 19 countries, with partnerships spanning towns, cities, regions, and entire nations. The approach emphasizes holistic community building and long-term progress over quick fixes.

Challenges in Iceland

Despite the success of the IPM, new challenges have emerged. Iceland's remarkable achievement in decreasing youth substance use is now one of its biggest challenges – new trends, such as the rise of synthetic drugs, demand updated prevention strategies. While traditional substance use has declined, new threats, including nicotine products and highly caffeinated energy drinks, are on the rise.

Loneliness, anxiety and depression on the rise

Mental health also remains a critical concern. Rates of loneliness, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges are increasing among children, adolescents, and adults. Additionally, toxic communication and violent behaviour are becoming more common, influenced in part by excessive screen time and social media use, which negatively impact mental well-being and interactive communication.

Alcohol sales and access are also undergoing significant shifts. Politicians, businesses, and individuals are advocating for more liberalized alcohol policies, driven by a desire to replicate practices from other countries. Increased accessibility, including the rise of online alcohol sales, has led to higher consumption among adults, although this trend hasn't yet appeared among children and young people. Nonetheless, these changes could have long-term effects that require careful monitoring.

Moving Forward

Addressing the root causes of these challenges is crucial. The most effective strategy is a primary or universal prevention approach that aims to prevent problems before they arise. While Iceland's success in reducing drug use is commendable, there is always room for improvement. By staying ahead of emerging drug trends, prioritizing mental health, and ensuring inclusivity in prevention efforts, we can continue building healthier, safer communities for future generations.

Influencing Online Behavior



Through Offline Efforts

At Storbyens Hjerter og Smerte, María Rún Bjarnadóttir, Director for Innovation and Policy at the National Commissioner for the Icelandic Police, delivered a keynote on enhancing online safety for children in Iceland. With a background in law, Bjarnadóttir has focused her efforts on addressing the alarming rise in online sexual violations, particularly among youth.

The Need for Action

In 2021, data revealed a troubling increase in sexual offenses against minors, with a significant percentage of victims being under 18. Teenage girls reported feeling pressured to share nude images, while boys consumed pornography at alarming rates. This situation highlighted a pervasive sense of insecurity in the online environment for children, prompting urgent action.

Legislative and Policy Reforms

To combat these issues, a series of legal reforms was made, aimed at enhancing online safety for children and young people. This involved not only changing legislation but also ensuring systematic follow-up to address the nuances of online behavior. The initiative received strong backing from politicians, including the Minister of Justice and the Ministry of Child and Social Affairs, which facilitated the hiring of dedicated personnel to oversee these efforts.

The reforms were complemented by collaborations with NGOs and tech companies to support victims and limit the spread of harmful content. Public awareness campaigns were launched, utilizing various platforms to disseminate information about online safety.

A Multi-Faceted Approach

In her talk, Bjarnadóttir emphasized the importance of a multi-approach strategy that combines academic research with public discourse. This agile methodology allows for continuous reassessment and adaptation of strategies based on real-time feedback and data. Key policy measures focus on prevention and education, updating the criminal justice system to effectively handle cases of sexual violence and digital abuse, and providing comprehensive support for victims.

Engaging the Community

The Icelandic police have actively engaged with the community through social media, particularly Instagram and Facebook, to reach diverse age groups. They launched age-responsive prevention campaigns targeting children, parents, and potential perpetrators. Educational materials were distributed in schools, and digital parent meetings were made available online to raise awareness about the risks children face.

One notable initiative is the “Taktu skrefið” campaign, which aims to support perpetrators in changing their behavior. This program acknowledges that many offenders are adults who exploit children, emphasizing the need for community awareness and intervention.


Positive Outcomes and Future Directions

There are signs indicating that these efforts are yielding results. Data indicates that children are feeling less pressure to share intimate images, and the overall incidence of such behavior is declining. Looking ahead, the Icelandic police are focusing on promoting safe internet use, implementing age verification for online pornography, and utilizing AI to investigate child sexual abuse material.

In conclusion, Dr. Bjarnadóttir’s insights underscore the critical need for a comprehensive approach to online safety. By combining legislative action, community engagement, and ongoing education, Iceland is setting a precedent for effectively addressing the challenges of digital safety for children.





 Can't find any pictures of yourself?
Click here to view more photos.

Community resilience

Within a context of deadly shooting

How do communities cope with and respond to the challenges posed by high levels of violence, particularly in areas marked by socio-economic disadvantages? This question was the main subject of criminologist Leandro Sclarek Mulinari presentation at the Storbyens hjerte og smerte conference in Reykjavík. Mulinari is also an assistant professor in social work focused on policing at Södertörn university.

The importance of social injustice

The issue of deadly violence in urban areas is a growing concern globally. In Sweden, the Järva area of Stockholm has experienced significant challenges related to local conflicts and deadly shootings. Worth paying attention to regarding this is the social injustice rooted in the areas worst affected.

Mulinari based his presentation on a comprehensive study exploring community research in Husby, Järva and its responses to deadly violence. Järva, an area with approximately 89,500 inhabitants, has seen a troubling rise in deadly violence. Between 2019 and September 2022, there were 71 shootings, 17 of which were fatal. This violence is concentrated in specific local conflicts, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty among residents. Despite these challenges, the community has shown remarkable resilience.

Many with personal connections to victims of violence

Mulinari highlights the unequal distribution of security within Järva. Many residents have personal connections to victims of violence, which profoundly affects their mental health and daily lives. A significant portion of the community feels under-protected by the police, who are often perceived as over-policing certain groups.

Despite the challenges, local civil society organizations, such as Folkets Husby, play a crucial role in providing support. These organizations offer a space for community members to gather, share their experiences, and receive emotional support. The study underscores the importance of these local actors in fostering resilience and promoting a sense of solidarity.

Essential to empower local organizations

The resilience of the Järva community in the face of deadly violence is a testament to the strength and solidarity of its residents. While there are significant challenges related to under-protection and over-policing, the community's ability to come together and support one another is a powerful example of resilience. Moving forward, it is essential to continue empowering local organizations and addressing the root causes of violence to create a safer and more supportive environment for all residents.



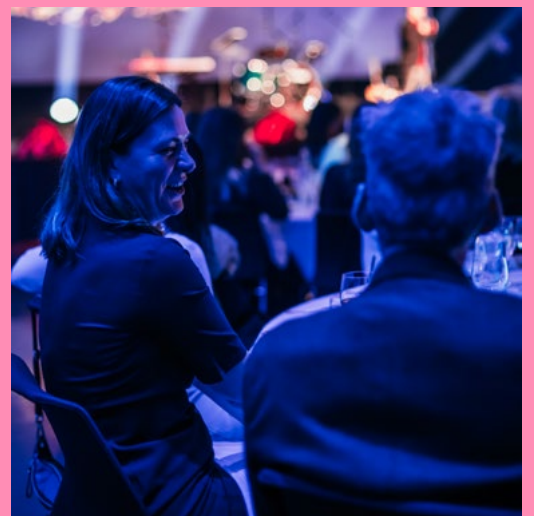
Watch interview




Get keynote







 [Can't find any pictures of yourself?
Click here to view more photos.](#)



The conference, *Stronger Together*, became a pivotal moment for the voices of the youth in the Nordic countries. These voices had been carefully considered and discussed at the U-LYNC youth conference held in Reykjavík in March. Intended for professionals, staff, officials, politicians, and researchers who deal with issues affecting young people in Nordic cities, the conference showcased the outcomes of the U-LYNC project—Urban Life of Young People in the Nordic Countries: Challenges and Opportunities.

The U-LYNC conference brought together around 80 young people from 10 cities to discuss pressing issues such as Youth Participation, Mental Health, Education, Sustainability, and Diversity. The insights and ideas generated by these young voices were presented to the leaders of the 10 Nordic cities, highlighting the importance of youth perspectives in shaping future policies and initiatives. The U-LYNC project not only provided a platform for these discussions but also emphasized the collective strength and potential of Nordic youth in addressing contemporary challenges.



Mental Health



Diversity



Conference



Sustainability



Youth Participation Education



**Thank you for the time
together in Reykjavík!
See you in Oslo 2026.**

Follow us at ungnord.com



**STORBYENS
HJERTE OG SMERTE**