

Ávarp rektors Háskóla Íslands, Jóns Atla Benediktssonar, á alþjóðlegu ráðstefnunni “Small States and the European Migration Crisis: Challenges and Responses”, haldið í Norræna húsinu, 12. des. kl. 13.

Minister of Justice, German Ambassador, ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all here to the Nordic House for this conference. I want to thank you all for coming, especially our guests that have travelled from abroad and managed to be with us despite the weather conditions we have been having this week. For the next two days the Centre for Small State Studies at the University of Iceland will be hosting this event here at the Nordic House.

This conference, *Small States and the European Migration Crisis*, is part of an Erasmus+ co-funded research project, called *Navigating the Storm: The Challenges of Small States in Europe*, that has been ongoing since 2017 and is just about to enter its final year. This project has created a network of 10 European universities that have been working together in delivering research within the field of small states studies – exploring the challenges that small states in Europe are faced with in the political turmoil that we have been experiencing in recent years.

You will hear more about the network and its deliverables in a few minutes, but I want to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of international research collaboration like this for the academic community. Networks like this one create an opportunity for researchers from different parts of the world to work together, share their research and address issues on an international level that have an international reach.

The focus of this conference is on small states and their responses to the sharp increase of asylum seekers that we have seen in recent years – especially in

2015-2017. This provoked heated debates within and between European states on for example burden-sharing, political and cultural coherence and border control, and although the impact of the crisis differed between states, it touched the whole continent.

This crisis has tested the resilience and institutions of small states. At this conference, today and tomorrow, academics from the network present their research for the forthcoming book "*Small States and the European Migration Crisis: Challenges and Responses*". This book will attempt to provide a comprehensive comparative account of European Small State's choices and strategies in dealing with this international crisis. Answering questions such as: How have small states coped with the crisis in terms of policy, resources and focus? And how can small states become better equipped, domestically and externally, to deal with crises in the future?

I am sure there will be lively discussions about these issues for the next two days.

That being said, it is my pleasure to introduce to you the Government's of Iceland Minister of Justice, Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir, who will now give the opening address.