

The International Strategy of Herning Municipal January 25th 2012

With this international strategy, Herning Municipal wishes to play an active role in the internationalisation of our field. The citizens, companies and municipal employees must be ready and geared for the challenges presented by a growing global world.

Vision

We are known for opinions and actions with an international outlook

Challenge

The vision of Herning Municipal entails that employees, citizens, students and companies in Herning Municipal act internationally¹ and are known to have an international outlook by its affiliates, customers, users, guests and contacts, in Denmark as well as globally.

Globalisation means changes for citizens and companies in Herning Municipal:

- Increased international competitiveness provides a new division of labour, where industry trades, in particular, move to countries with lower wages. Therefore, companies must be able to cooperate internationally. For many it will be difficult to gain foothold on the labour market due to weak resources.
- Distance in time and space has been reduced. The Internet and cheaper as well as quicker flights, means that it has become easier to communicate and transport people and goods.
- The population becomes more diverse in composition.

Facts

- The international division of labour means a change in business structure²
- Contracting and Business to Business relations become more international (cooperation/trade between companies)³
- Knowledge is generated and collected internationally⁴
- An increasing amount of companies in Denmark use English as their corporate language⁵
- More educational institutions in Denmark offer programs in English⁶
- Problem solving, for example environmental issues, more often requires international cooperation⁷
- More companies recruit qualified personnel internationally⁸
- 8% of the citizens of Herning Municipal originate from a different country than Denmark⁹

The four International Strategy categories and their focus areas

The International Strategy is divided into four categories that make sense for Herning Municipal from a strategic point of view. The four categories are: reputation, citizen, business and employee. Listed under each category are statements explaining how the categories can unfold.

Reputation

- We are valuable to international citizens, students, guests and workers.
- We are available in principal languages.

Citizen

- We have intercultural and linguistic skills
- We offer school and study opportunities to international citizens

Business

- We are export-oriented
- We attract and execute international events
- We are internationally innovative
- We cooperate internationally
- We employ international citizens

Employee

- We offer good service to international citizens
- We gather new and relevant information internationally
- We participate in international projects and fundraisings
- We offer broad recruiting
- We offer international competence and management training

Reputation

Why: Herning wishes to encourage growth in the mid and western part of Central Denmark Region. We will achieve this by strengthening our powerhouse through means of new approaches and by being recognized nationally as well as internationally, for having a certain identity.

Status: In many ways, Herning is the powerhouse that drives the progress in the mid and western part of Central Denmark Region. Herning is known for bringing sport and cultural events to the area and for being a dynamic business town. Businesses have formed and grown based on good ideas that have been "produced" and later sold, nationally as well as internationally.

Focus areas: - **We are valuable to international citizens, students, guests and workers.**

How: Herning Municipal can continue to optimise the reception of foreign citizens, including the distribution of welcoming packages containing welcoming letters in English and German. Organizations can be encouraged to be more visible and open to new foreign citizens. Furthermore, to improve the conditions of foreign students, Herning Municipal can incorporate an ongoing dialogue with businesses and higher education institutions. Finally, it is suggested that tourist organisations continue to improve the marketing efforts aimed at potential guests.

- **We are available in principal languages**

How: Herning Municipal selects a well-defined amount of information that will be relevant to companies that do business with companies based in Herning, to future international employees and citizens as well as potential guests. This information can be translated into English and German and kept up to date.

Furthermore, a general welcoming text about Herning can be drafted. This text can be translated into Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Spanish and French by the click of a translate-button.

Citizen

Why: Increasingly, the citizens of Herning Municipal will be employed on a labour market that requires international competencies¹⁰. More companies are acquired by international groups or expand internationally. Often, this business transformation causes the corporate language to change into English. More educational institutions introduce English as the spoken and written language on certain study programs to accommodate the international demand and to be able to recruit the best teachers. The demand to be able to succeed internationally in foreign countries and in meeting international trade partners, guests, etc., requires intercultural competencies as well as awareness of the characteristics of Danish culture. The linguistic and intercultural skills of the labour force of tomorrow are becoming increasingly more important.

8% of the citizens of Herning Municipal originate from a different country than Denmark. It is a mix of international (specialised) labour, students, spouses, family reunified and refugees. Many of these wish to stay in Denmark and become integrated in Danish society. An increasing amount of specialised international mobile labour, however, intends to stay in Herning for a limited time period only. It is important for these that their children can receive education that can be transferred to other countries.

The citizens want a qualitative service, but at the same time very few want to pay more taxes. This sets demands for the innovation capacity where international knowledge can be a significant parameter.

Status: All students in the primary and secondary schools in Herning Municipal take classes in English and are offered classes in German as well as French. Students with a different native language than Danish can, upon arrival, start in a special class and later receive additional lessons in Danish. Herning Municipal also supports the International School and the International Business Baccalaureate in Ikast.

In addition to this, schools work towards providing the children with intercultural skills with respect to the mission statement of the primary and secondary school. A number of schools participate in exchange projects where students and teachers get the opportunity to practice both linguistic and intercultural skills.

A language assessment is performed around 3 years of age, if suspected that a child may need language stimulation due to conditions of linguistic, behavioural or other nature. If a bilingual child is considered to need assistance based on the language assessment, it will receive language stimulation in its secondary language, Danish, while attending day care.

Furthermore, the libraries provide the citizens with the possibility to acquire knowledge and insight about international relations, develop linguistic competencies and gain access to relevant information. The library in downtown Herning puts focus on the broader perspective, the propagation of news and topicality in a globalized world.

Focus areas: **- We have intercultural and linguistic skills**

How: The primary and secondary schools will continue to develop the intercultural and linguistic skills under the Education Act. Offering new languages, such as Chinese and Russian could be considered¹¹. Furthermore, it could be relevant to improve the intercultural competencies.

Youth schools also offer language programs and this offer could be expanded.

- We offer school and study opportunities to international citizens

How: We will continue to improve and cooperate on school and study offers for international citizens in conjunction with the development and needs that an altered demographic composition brings.

Business

Why: The global competition makes greater demands for competitiveness, innovation and productivity, as the salary levels in Denmark are relatively high. The global age in which sending information and travelling has become easier, means that more companies are internationalised in regard to branching out as well as having partners and customers in many countries. As a result hereof, the number of international employees is increasing. As a result of the EU policy about the free movement of labour, more and more look towards countries with higher salaries and presumably better jobs.

The global market brings new opportunities by way of new markets, new capital, new business partners, etc.

Businesses in Herning need to develop and adapt their competencies, continuously, to keep up with the global challenges.

Status: Herning Municipal does great strategic work to attract and develop relevant and sustainable international culture and sport events. Emphasis is put on ensuring that the events have significant experience economy impact on growth and employment. From an international point-of-view, the events should also brand the identity of Herning.

In general, Herning Municipal can offer business development and services to companies as per the law of business promotion. This is done by offering entrepreneurial and business guidance and by offering support for development projects, knowledge centres, etc. Herning Municipal also participates in a few international projects focusing on business development.

Focus areas: **- We are export-oriented**

How: Herning Municipal can, to a greater extent, create coherence between business services and export focus. Making a demand hereof in a performance contract between Herning Municipal and the executing operator can ensure this coherence.

- We attract and execute international events

How: In regards to hosting international events, Herning Municipal wishes to be trendsetters. We want to have the courage to challenge our business partners to join us in creating unique events. Herning specifically supports and organizes international culture and sport events. European Championships and World Championships are a few examples of what Herning Municipal work actively on attracting.

Additionally, Herning Municipal also focuses on business tourism and supports the framework of business tourism.

- We are internationally innovative

How: Herning Municipal can, to a greater extent, create coherence between business services, business development projects, business support and innovation. Making a demand hereof in a performance contract between Herning Municipal and the executing operator can ensure this coherence. Herning Municipal can also inspire innovation in the companies, by participating in networking opportunities.

- We cooperate internationally

How: Danish, as well as Herning based companies will be able to gather inspiration and knowledge about products and markets by cooperating with foreign knowledge institutes, companies and potential product buyers. Herning Municipal can encourage companies to act proactively on the international stage. This can be done accordingly by making demands in performance contracts with businesses that receive funding for development projects from the municipal.

- We employ international citizens

How: International citizens possess knowledge about the culture and market potential of their home countries. Because of their native language and cultural knowledge, they have a unique opportunity to pave the way to new business markets. International citizens can be in possession of an expertise that does not exist or is difficult to recruit in Denmark. This could be a certain type of welding, a medical education, ice hockey skills or a specific degree in wind power engineering.

The international citizens often bring a spouse who may have an interest in entering the local labour market.

Jobcenter Herning will counsel international citizens about job opportunities in Herning, as well as opportunities within the municipal. The web portal Jobnet, provides the possibility for both the employee as well as the employer to advertise for jobs/employees. Jobcenter Herning continuously develops the service to ensure that it meets the current needs.

Employee

Why: The Herning Municipal employees service a diverse population group from approximately 120 different countries as well as different social and educational backgrounds and different needs. An increasing share of these citizens is only residing in Herning temporarily, to work or study. Businesses with a need for specialised foreign labour for shorter or longer periods expect the municipal to be able to communicate with the employees in English and German. The linguistic, communicational and intercultural skills of the municipal employee are important factors in providing the foreign citizens with a positive experience of the service meeting.

Can the population reflect themselves in the municipal employees? With a population of which 8% originate from a different country than Denmark, a more diverse composition of the municipal labour force would be natural. The job qualifications however, would have to be met. An increasingly international labour force could facilitate better communication and understanding, particularly in positions that service the citizens.

It is important that the given tasks are solved in the best manner possible, within the provided resource limits and while taking citizens and legal requirements into account. This, for instance, requires continuous supply of knowledge. It may be relevant to gather this information outside national borders.

Finally, globalization opens up to new problem solving opportunities. It is possible to participate in international projects, it is possible to exchange knowledge over the Internet and it is possible to fundraise, especially within the EU.

Status: Herning Municipal participates in the regional social fund project "Recruiting and retaining foreign labour". In this context, the employees at Citizens' Service and Jobcenter Herning have received courses in German and English as well as courses in intercultural understanding. The reception process of foreign citizens has been improved.

The municipal labour force has become more diverse within the different employment categories. Special language skills are furthermore of great priority when recruiting for citizen-oriented job positions.

Several specialised institutions within the Børn og Unge sector (Children and Youth) as well as the Social, Sundhed og Beskæftigelse sector (Social, Health and Employment), participate in international knowledge exchange. The Teknik og Miljø (Engineering and Environmental) as well as By, Erhverv og Kultur (City, Business and Culture) have done fundraising for international projects. Participation in international projects is, however, relatively limited.

Focus areas: **- We offer good service to international citizens**

How: In order to provide good service to international citizens it is vital that the municipal ensures that the employees possess the right skills, including linguistic and intercultural skills. The municipal should, on a regular basis, offer relevant courses/in-service training to the service employees, among others, in both intercultural understanding and languages.

To provide good service to international citizens it is required that the meeting with the municipal is manageable and that it is easy to find the necessary information. For instance, this could be information about how to enrol a child in primary and secondary school. To provide good service, the employees in Citizens' Service have to have the bigger perspective on things. Furthermore, it should be easy to access information online in Danish, English and German.

- We gather new and relevant information internationally

How: We wish to gather new and relevant knowledge internationally in order to obtain better qualifications. These qualifications can then be used to solve new challenges such as climate, new disabilities and new social problems.

We will draw on the expertise of knowledge centres in fields where it is possible and makes sense to do so. We will use our EU-office, Central Denmark EU-office, networks and the Internet to gather new knowledge and inspiration to use in problem solving. We will always conduct a cost-benefit evaluation when gathering new knowledge. How does time spent relate to expected output? At the same time we want to live up to the vision of the municipal, which is daring to explore new avenues.

We want to maintain the high quality of our current cultural offers and cultural life by joining international networks as per the Cultural Agreement by the Ministry of Culture between the municipalities of Central and Western Jutland.

- We participate in international projects and fundraisings

How: We wish to participate in international projects for which we have fundraised, if it makes sense to do so and provides a sensible economical output. Therefore, we wish to identify development or problem areas early on that could benefit from being solved internationally. We will then screen the possibilities of co-financing and partner searching, possibly with help from our EU-Office, Central Denmark EU-Office, in Bruxelles.

- We offer broad recruiting

How: Herning Municipal can recruit international citizens to ensure that the municipal labour force reflects the population and to ensure special expertises. With every job application, the applicant with the most relevant professional and interpersonal skills will be chosen. Here, linguistic and intercultural competencies can be of importance.

- We offer international competence and management training

How: The increasing internationalisation of society brings many demands and possibilities. This means that leaders and employees need to possess international competencies, as well as the ability to see the strategic opportunities for Herning. By offering international competence and management training to leaders and non-leaders, these competencies can be secured.

¹ 'International' is an active word, while 'global' is a passive word. A global influence, for example, means that lower salaries weaken the competitiveness.

² Bernard Salt: Global Skills Convergence, KPMG 2008,

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

⁵ jobfisk.dk - <http://www.jobfisk.dk/rekruttering/488-denmark-recruitment-news.html>

⁶ http://studies.ku.dk/studies/courses_offered_in_English/ and <http://bachelor.au.dk/en/alphabet/>

⁷ WTO Report: The need for environmental cooperation http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/envir_e/stud99_e.htm

⁸ Vækst i jobkørdning, Tal fra Udlændingetjeneste: "Tal på Udlændingområdet 30.04.09"

⁹ Source: Danmarks Statistisk 2010

¹⁰ Bernard Salt: Global Skills Convergence, KPMG 2008,

¹¹ (China is expected to be the 3rd largest recipient of export from Denmark in 2030. Germany and Sweden will continue to be the largest. Mandag Morgen, February 15th, 2012)