

## **The Åland political process needs the involvement of more immigrants.**

According to the law, the Åland Legislature must provide, whenever possible, appropriate notice to all persons who are entitled to stand for public office or have the right to vote in municipal elections.

The Social Democratic International Group believes that it is extremely important that immigrants are made aware of their social and democratic right to participate and vote in the autumn elections. Legislation was amended in 2007 to allow those who had resided a shorter period of time on Åland the right to vote. Still, voter turnout among new arrivals has remained low the last three local elections. While this may be due to numerous factors, a primary reason may be because the authorities have failed to provide readily understandable information about the voting process. In turn, the political parties have failed, for the most part, to involve immigrant candidates. Experience has shown us that even if an eligible immigrant voter is interested in the electoral system and voting rights, it is still very difficult to obtain information.

We propose that the Åland Government provide readily understandable information to immigrants who may be eligible to vote. We propose that this be translated into numerous languages. We ask that the government does this, both in brochure form and on their website, prior to the municipal elections in October.

Currently there is an information office for i.e. Nordic immigrants in Mariehamn, entitled *Hallå Norden*. We think this is a good start, but we would like to see to concept extended to immigrants from other parts of the world.

Because immigrants impact Ålands future, they have an obligation to participate in and be held accountable to the democratic process. Therefore, the goal should be to provide to every single person on Åland who has the right to vote, regardless of ethnic and linguistic background, the means to make informed choices. Only through the widest possible participation in the election process can we insure a truly democratic and multicultural Åland.

Åland Social Democrats International Group.

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