
IO1/A4 NATIONAL REPORT (ICELAND)

Reference IO: Gap Analysis On Existing Support And Information On Labour Laws And Employment Policy In Partners' Countries

IO Leader: Einurð and Jafnréttisús

Project Title: Know Your Rights

Project Acronym: KYR

Project Number: 2019-1-IS01-KA204-051136



Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
1. Introduction.....	2
2. Key findings from Desk Review.....	2
Statistical data and overview of the migrant workforce.....	2
Immigrants on the labour market	3
Legislation	5
Issues/Problems.....	6
3. Good Practices.....	7
Good Practice 1: Multicultural Information Centre (Fjölmennningarsetur- MCC).....	7
Good Practice 2 - The labour union Efling.....	9
Good Practice 3 - Einn réttur ekkert svindl (e. One right no cheating)	10
4. Research Results II: Interviews with Stakeholders	11
Interview - The Directorate of Labour.....	11
Involvement in the labour market.....	11
Projects or Good Practices examples.....	12
Issues on the labour market and hindrances for foreign workers in Iceland	12
Most vulnerable groups and markets.....	13
Interview - Greta: from the perspective of an immigrant in Iceland.....	13
Involvement in the labour market.....	13
Projects or Good Practices examples.....	14
Issues on the labour market and hindrances for foreign workers in Iceland	14
Most vulnerable groups and markets.....	15
Interview - The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ).....	15
Involvement in the labour market.....	15
Projects or Good Practices examples.....	16
Issues on the labour market and hindrances for foreign workers in Iceland	16
Most vulnerable groups and markets.....	17
Summary of interviews	17
5. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	18
References	18



1. Introduction

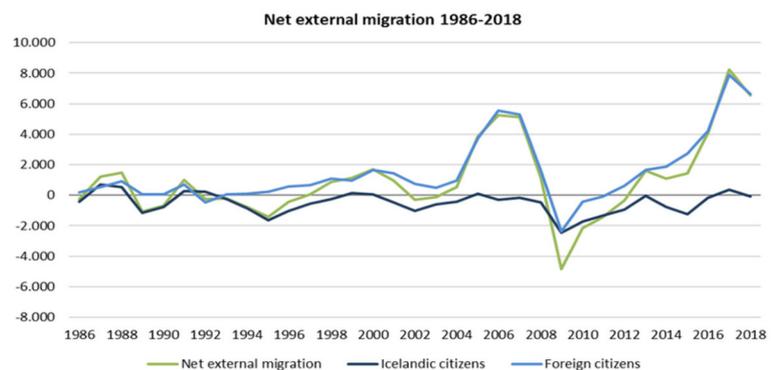
The aim of the report was collected data and analyse the present situation regarding labour rights and needs of migrant workers in the employment market in Iceland. In the first chapter of the report, we go over existing statistical data regarding immigrants in Iceland and get a close look at the legislation in general and labour laws in particular, at the end of the chapter we point out the biggest problems and issues that migrant employees face on the labour market. In chapter two of the report, we examine three examples of good practice and point out what can be learned from their experiences, in implementing the the KYR project. In the final chapter, we have three interviews with individuals with direct involvement and sufficient knowledge of migrant labour in Iceland. The report aims to get a good overview of the situation in the Icelandic labour market for migrant employees, and get an overview of the measures that need to be taken in the future.

2. Key findings from Desk Review

Statistical data and overview of the migrant workforce

Iceland doesn't have a long history of immigrants and it wasn't until 2005 that you can see a significant increase in migration to Iceland. Today immigrants in Iceland are about 14 % of the population or about 50 thousand people, if you include both first- and second-generation immigrants about 15 percent of the population (Statistic Iceland, 2019a).

As shown in the graph the significant increase started in 2005 with polish immigrants coming to Iceland for work. After the financial crisis in 2007, the numbers dropped significantly but since then have increased again, and now compared to the period before the crisis larger number of migrants as a labour force come to Iceland.



Source: Statistic Iceland



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein"

(Statistic Iceland, 2019a). This can partially be explained with the increased need for cheap labour in the construction and tourism industry (Hagdeild ASÍ, 2019).

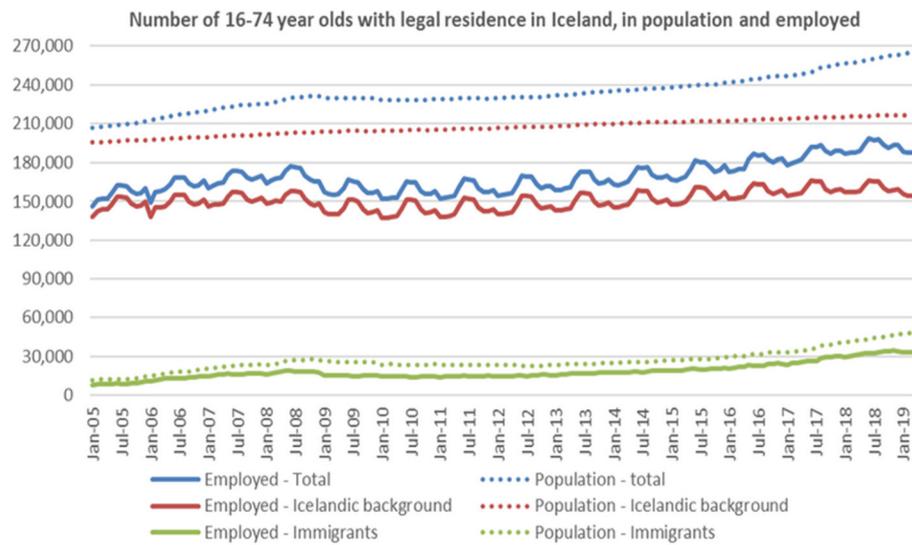
About 38 percent of employed immigrants in Iceland are Polish this for the time being the largest immigrant group in Iceland, followed by Lithuanians 6 percent. The largest age group of immigrants varies is between 25 and 49 years old, based on this fact we can conclude that most of the immigrants moving to Iceland come as a labour force (Statistic Iceland, 2018). Differences between the immigrant groups are evident, those coming before 2007 compared to the recent groups are, that the group now is more diverse than before, with many employees coming from new countries of the European Union, and many of them with the poor social network within the group or with other national groups already settled in Iceland. These groups would benefit most if reached by KYR project. In the graph below we can see the largest national groups in Iceland, such as Romanian, Lithuanian and Latvian being at the same time the newest groups on the list.

Number of citizens in Iceland after citizenship in 2019	
Country	Number of Citizens
Poland	19.266
Lithuania	4.093
Latvia	1.862
Germany	1.291
Romania	1.528
Portugal	1.230
United Kingdom	1.000
Spain	929
Denmark	922
Philippines	886
Source: Statistic Iceland (2019b)	

Immigrants on the labour market

By the end of 2019, around 39.000 immigrants were working in Iceland. About 19.000 men and 15.000 women, only 5.215 with Icelandic residency (Statistics Iceland, 2019c). Before the financial crisis in 2007, Iceland was experiencing a rapid upswing in the economy and that was followed with an increased number of immigrants settling in Iceland. When the financial crises hit Iceland in 2008, the most effected immigrant group was the Polish one, this shown with the Polish immigrant group being 9% of the ones receiving the unemployment benefits.(Wojtynsk & Zielinska, 2010; Skaptadottir & Rancew-Sikora, 2016). This is a very important and qualitative indicator that indicates how vulnerable the

employment market is for migrant workers in Iceland, as they become the first ones to be laid off in case of a crisis.



Source: Statistic Iceland (2019c)

As shown in the graph above, about 90 percent

of immigrants in Iceland are employed, more than the local population (Statistic Iceland, 2019c). Although these numbers look good, a new study from Statistics Iceland found that immigrants in Iceland have 8% lower earnings than the locals. Immigrants from other Nordic countries, however, have higher earnings than other immigrant groups, immigrants from western Europe have on average 4% lower-earning than those from the Nordic countries, immigrants from eastern Europe 6% lower earnings and immigrants from Asia 7% lower earnings (Statistic Iceland, 2019c). In 2017

Iceland Statistics reported that immigrants in Iceland received a medium of 2.000 euros less annually in wages than the native Icelandic employees. Immigrants also own a lot less than the average Icelandic person, all this based on comparing assets like real estate, cars or other assets. Despite that, based on this study it is stated that even though immigrants own less they also owe less. The industries with the highest percentage of immigrant employees are the construction industry with 30 percent of employees being immigrants in 2018 and the tourism industry with 40 percent of employees being immigrants (Hagdeild ASÍ, 2019). These industries are also the ones where the most violations of labour rights occur, this is based on all data given in the interviews done for the National Report.



Legislation

Individuals coming from EES can come to Iceland and work without registration unless they plan to stay more than 3 months then they have to register. If they plan to stay in Iceland, they should do so within 7 days of entering the country or no later than 6 months. When registering the individual will receive a temporary ID number, that gives him/her the right to work, but does not however guarantee all rights, so it is important that immigrants register domicile so they are entitled to their rights within the labour market, for instance, health insurance. Immigrant workers in Iceland should have the same wage as stated in the Icelandic collective agreement. Companies that are going to send workers to Iceland for more than 10 days need to provide the Directorate of labour a list of employees and employment contracts. Temporary work-agencies need to provide the Directorate of labour with registration and list of employees 10 days before the start of the employment. Employees should receive the same wages as would have an Icelandic employee for the same job, based on the collective agreement (ASÍ, n.d.a).

As an employed individual in Iceland, you have certain rights. Individuals that are citizens of countries that are part of the EU or EFTA have all the same rights as Icelandic citizens while posted workers from outside EU/EFTA have not the same legal rights though they should receive the same occupational benefits as if they had been hired straight to the company (ASÍ & SA, 2019).

Unions have a considerable impact on the legislation and the labour market. Most of the Icelandic employees are members of a Union. Each union has a prior made agreement with associations of employers within certain industries or with the individual public or private organizations. Although an employee can use his right to work without being part of a certain union, the employer, on the other hand, has to follow the prior made agreement made with the union for that specific job. The contract with the unions is it self certain agreement on rights and obligations, it elaborates and states important issues such as minimum wage for a specific job, working schedule, the right to annual and sick leave, etc. Each employee is free to choose his or her union at his/her will, though often certain companies agree with a union for their workplace, this though depends on the job (ASÍ, n.d.). As said before wages and



working schedule depend on labour markets agreements with the social partner and are estimated each year. Based on this we can notice differences in the minimum wage, within different labor unions in Iceland, , for example in VR the biggest union in Iceland, minimum wages for individuals over 18 is about 2.000 euros a month (VR, n.d.), in Efling the next biggest union it is 2.200 euros a month (Efling, n.d.). Although the agreements with the union cover most of employees rights, however, the employment law protects employees rights like the right: to paid leave, sick leave, maternity leave, maximum working days and accident insurance provided by the employer (ASÍ, n.d.).

Issues/Problems

The problems that immigrants or migrant employees face in Iceland are numerous and much has to be done in this direction. One of the most important and vulnerable issues is the lack of language skills being that Icelandic or English. Despite that, one of the main policies in immigration in Iceland is focused on language learning and has provided language courses, recent research shows that this has been an issue of criticism. This focus has had more results in isolating the individuals that don't speak the language from the society, rather than helping them be an active participant, also what is even more important to mention, countless research show that the government has failed in providing good quality language classes for immigrants (Innes & Skaptadottir, 2017).

Another issue in reaching the migrant population is the validation of education in Iceland that has been a struggle for immigrants for many years. Many highly educated individuals are not getting their degrees validated and working in low-income jobs. This is due to an overly complicated system, for example, to apply for a certain job/position within medical field -nurse, general practitioner, dentist you have to get a working licence from the relevant Icelandic authorities, in order to get that the job-seeking professionals have to sign a contract in advance with an employer who is willing to employ her/him only after they get their licence validated from the relevant local authorities. So, the job-seeking individual has to sign a contract in advance, before starting the whole license validation process which is not likely possible. This example is not directly linked with the worker's rights but it is



important to mention, because in the given example- the right to work- is compromised or made more difficult to achieve.

Another issue affecting directly the employees is the neglecting of the employers to pay their share of the union fee, leaving the employee in a very vulnerable state and without the protection of the guardian of their labour rights. In some cases, the individual doesn't know about this until she/he seeks help from the union for a certain matter. It has also recently and frequently come up that housing is a part of the prior mentioned agreement, it is often seen used as a threatening tool and therefor makes the situation of the employee much more vulnerable because, if fired she/he also loses the housing (Hermannsdóttir, 2019). Finally, the lack of information in immigrant groups is inherent and almost all of the institutions that should protect labour rights, mostly rely on individual self-reporting of the irregularities within the labour market directly from the help-seeking individuals. (Interviews, 2019).

3. Good Practices

In this chapter, three examples of good practices will be introduced. Those being, a. Multicultural Information Centre in West fjords of Iceland, b. Efling the union with the highest percentage of migrant employees, and c. “one right, no cheating” project led by The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ).

Good Practice 1: Multicultural Information Centre (Fjölmenningarsetur- MCC)

In 2012 it was decided to establish Fjölmenningarsetrið (MCC) (e. multicultural information centre) a special institution with a new bill on immigration laws, this was done because of the rising need to improve the service towards immigrants in Iceland, who at the time faced many problems and injustices, such as lower wages, unemployment, accidents and school dropout (Ruv, 2012). The centre is located in Ísafjörður (the biggest town in the western fjords of Iceland) and serves both private services and governmental companies, on information regarding immigrants, and also informs and helps immigrants to find their way in Iceland. Their role is also to be a



voice for the migrant community in Iceland regarding their issues and addressing the matter to the ministers and the government. (MMC, n.d.a).

Despite being located far from the capital area it has a clear information platform on its website that can be translated into the language of the largest migrant groups in Iceland. On their website, you have a

broad selection of information and you can choose what you need. Starting from things you need to know and do even before moving to Iceland. There is a special part for those just arrived in Iceland and that for people



Source: MMC (n.d) From the front page of the website

coming from the EU and for individuals coming from outside the EU.

On the site you can get information on labour rights, taxes, language courses etc. as well as an available information phone helpline in eight languages. On the website, you can find pdf documents with information you might need when moving to Iceland, for example how to register, laws and regulations, health insurance, work in Iceland and taxes. It is difficult to estimate the impact of these services, but the newest available reports are from 2017, the network traffic monitoring in the report stated that a rise has been detected within the internet activity during recent years and they have been able to offer the site in more language than in the beginnings (Haraldsson, 2017).

The best thing that the centre has done is offering a web site that can be used as a starting guide for individuals newly arrived in Iceland, as well as for those that need specific information. Having the information in such a wide variety of languages also reaches much more individuals and can especially be helpful to vulnerable groups that don't speak English or Icelandic. The problem is that the centre is located in Ísafjord which is not near the capital area where most of the immigrants and migrant employees are, so those in need for more

help and communication are not able to go to the office. Also, though the website is a good idea, the format is oftentimes not consistent with the translation while skipping from one to another link when accessing links on the page. Another thing missing is the additional information and measures taken regarding how they have been able to reach the migrant population in Iceland, and if the information portal is being used by individuals in Iceland or those coming to Iceland. Despite these problems the site would be a good portal to link to the material for KYR project in Iceland because it offers a wide variety of information.

Good Practice 2 - The labour union Efling

Efling is the second-biggest union in Iceland with over half of their members being immigrants or migrant employees. In the last years, there has been an increased focus on meetings, information spreading and other activities related to their concern in English and Polish language. All members can go to Efling without scheduling a meeting and are able to address the irregularities and violation of their labour rights in their workplace, Efling members also are entitled to legal assistance where lawyers assist them with their issues. In 2018 Efling was increasingly pursuing cases against violations of labour rights, for example towards employment agencies that had used threats of violence, partial wage withholds or and other kinds of labour rights violations.

Since 2018 Efling has been involved in inspections of workplaces and has gone to 837 workplaces, and registered 2500 employers and employees. In 2019 ASÍ started their involvement in the inspection with Efling and other unions in Iceland, focusing for example on bus and minibus migrant drivers in Iceland. This was done due to the problem of the increasing number of unregistered bus drivers and the inability of the authorities to prove if they are licenced accordingly. Another main focus is on the construction- and catering – industries and gastronomy sector, or said more specifically those industry sectors employing the most vulnerable migrant employees. Efling has increased cooperation with Mímir, that is an adult education centre that teaches Icelandic (Steinarsdottir, 2019).

One of the main issues is that members of Efling , especially those that are part of vulnerable groups do not as individuals seek assistance when they believe their rights are being broken.



On site inspections is an initiative used to reach out to these groups, to inform them on their rights and to encourage them to become members of a labour union.

In 2020 members of Efling were on strike for a better income, many of the employees on strike were immigrants in Iceland. Wages in kindergartens, house/building maintenance, gastronomy are one of the lowest in Iceland. The strike has been ongoing from the start of February 2020 and was still ongoing in some municipalities by end of March. As it can be seen on the photo, the strike is advertised in many different languages of the largest migrant groups in Iceland.



Retrieved from Efling.is

Good Practice 3 - Einn réttur ekkert svindl (e. One right no cheating)

Are you working?

Do you know your rights?

ASÍ's campaign against social dumping and undeclared work is aimed at companies that are abusing young people and migrant workers. It is not aimed at migrant workers that have come to Iceland to work trusting that everything is in order.

Free information brochures about the Icelandic labour market, workers rights and obligations in english and polish are available at www.asi.is and at your local union.

Everybody loses from social dumping!

Czy aktualnie pracujesz?

Czy znasz swoje prawa?

Kompania zwalczania izolacji społecznej prowadzona przez ASI wymierzona jest przeciwko tym przedsiębiorstwom, które wykorzystują pracowników młodych oraz obcego pochodzenia. Kampania nie jest wymierzona przeciwko obcokrajowcom, którzy przyjechali na Islandię w celu podjęcia legalnej i zorganizowanej pracy.

Bezpłatne broszury w języku angielskim i polskim na temat zatrudnienia na islandzkim rynku pracy, obowiązków, praw i płac, dostępne są na stronie internetowej www.asi.is lub w Twoich związkach zawodowych.

Wszyscy tracą na izolacji społecznej!



Picture showing the first thing you see when visiting the page. Retrieved from ekkersvindl.is

The project led by The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ). ASÍ consists of 47 unions, that being 2/3 of employees from the private and public sector. The project's aim is similar to the Know Your Rights project, promoting rights of the labour market. This is done with promoting videos mostly in Icelandic, but also with informational brochures that are handed out during inspections of workplaces. The main difference is that this promotion is dedicated to all employees and is not especially aimed at migrant employees. The web page



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein"

“ekkertsvindl.is” is the information portal and employees can have access to information in English, Polish and Russian. According to them, they are working on getting the material and brochures translated into languages of other large migrant groups in Iceland. The project has had difficulties reaching the employees, but they are working on new strategies, for example setting up advertisements on Keflavík airport with this reaching migrant employees when they arrive in Iceland. They have already agreed with company Isavia that is in control of the Keflavik airport. Although it is good to inform employees of their rights, the problem is that sometimes their hands are tied because of data protection laws (GDPR). One of the main objectives is to build awareness in the Icelandic society that violation of employees rights is a problem that should be taken seriously.

In the past, the leaders of the project and ASÍ have been trying to publish information regarding companies and employers that are breaking the law and violating the labour rights of individuals or are connected to human trafficking and exposing them to the media hoping that the cases will be taken more seriously and processed for further investigation. As the project contains information that is necessary for the development of the KYR educational material it would be a good reference point for Einurd to use. Another inherent issue from the project is the difficulty to reach those groups most in need, best and most helpful information we receive regarding this issue are from in site inspections on the workplaces and from talking to the employees.

4. Research Results II: Interviews with Stakeholders

Interview - The Directorate of Labour

Involvement in the labour market

Involvement of the Directorate of Labour in Iceland in the labour market is wide. Their role is to reassure that all employers follow the law towards employees and employment agencies and all job-seeking individuals. They are the institution that pays unemployment benefits in Iceland. In their work, they have a special responsibility towards the groups in Europe today that are considered the most vulnerable on the labour market., that are



posting- and employment agencies workers, that are mostly migrant workers. Posting- and employment agencies follow a specific law in Iceland that obligates the employer to notify the Directorate of Labour when they have contracted an employee outside of Iceland, the company has to show beforehand that employee has all the documents and the working permit and has the experience and has worked on the particular field.

Projects or Good Practices examples

Though Iceland could do better regarding the protection of migrant and foreign employees rights on the labour market, many good projects are going on. The labour unions have been focusing more on these issues, but they have a new project that focuses on posting for employees (<http://posting.is/>) with ASÍ (The Icelandic Confederation of Labour) that is an information portal specially for posting regarding employees in Iceland with information on their rights. ASÍ also has a web page with information on the rights of employees in Iceland (<https://www.asi.is/english/the-icelandic-labour-market/>), the problem is that though it is available in English and Icelandic, they don't have any information in other languages. Every Wednesday the Directorate of Labour organizes a meeting that is specifically targets individuals that have just arrived to Iceland, helping them with their first steps in the labour market, and what they have to do, in regards to get a working permit, social security number and more. Icelandic revenue and costumes have a project that is aimed for owners of the small and medium-sized business, that sets regular meetings and has set an information web portal (<https://litlaisland.is>). The mission is to inform the business owners of important employee rights and more. They mention that often employers don't necessarily know that they are violating rights but this is more a result of their own ignorance of the law.

Issues on the labour market and hindrances for foreign workers in Iceland

One of the biggest issues is that the system is too complicated and that the information flow and the ability of the institutions that have the role to promote the employee's rights aren't able to reach their target groups. Due to numerous institutions working together with the common goal to protect the employees, we are faced with a widespread of information among all of them and the problem is that there is not a single institution in Iceland that has



all the information on the status of the labour market. In the interview, they mention that though they have good cooperation with the other institutions, it would be better and easier if it could be less formal.

Most vulnerable groups and markets

As mentioned and defined earlier the most vulnerable group are posting and employment agency employees, but they have been defined in Europe to be the most likely to be in a position where their rights are violated. But because these groups are acknowledged vulnerable there have been set specific laws to protect them, and the agencies in Iceland have programs and inspectors that are focusing on these groups. So although they are the most vulnerable there are groups that don't seem to have the same focus, this would be individuals coming from less stable welfare- and surveillance countries, individuals that don't have social support from the national group in Iceland that many of the bigger migrant groups have, and then individuals that don't speak English or Icelandic. Also mentioned in the interview are individuals that come from countries that have just recently entered into the EU (European Union) and don't have as much experience of travelling for work as many of the other countries do and often don't have as much knowledge in English as other groups. The nationalities that are especially mentioned as vulnerable in Iceland are individuals from Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania. Interestingly in the interview, little was talk about the status of individuals coming to Iceland from outside the EU (European Union) and their vulnerability on the labour market, but it could be that those groups are not large enough in Iceland, apart from individuals from Asia Philippines and Thailand being on of the largest groups, but with a difference, they have a strong community in Iceland, and therefore in their opinion a good social network.

Interview - Greta: from the perspective of an immigrant in Iceland

Involvement in the labour market

She works in a municipality, where her job is to inform and serve especially sensitive groups of asylum seekers that come to Iceland, for example, inform them about their human rights.

Although she has not been working on issues relating to the labour market she is involved in



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

"The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein"

organizing and has been part of a support network for immigrants in Iceland. As she is herself an immigrant in Iceland and has been in Iceland for many years, coming from a country outside of the EU and navigating the labour market herself.

Projects or Good Practices examples

Judging from her perspective in Iceland, there are a lot of projects and services that focus on informing migrant employees of their rights with the aim to prevent them from exploitation in the labour market but says that these projects have fallen short of helping, the main reason is that they don't reach the target group. Although the projects and services are done out of goodwill, they are often too formal, the projects and classes are too formal and don't match the needs of the group. Another problem with the projects is that although many of them are good and could help, they rely on the migrant workers to come to them. She says that when institutions or projects have immigrants or someone that speaks the language, they are much more likely to reach the individuals in need. There is a comfort being able to talk to someone in your national language that has an understanding of your culture. This is similar to what The Directorate of Labour talked about, that when they have had some employees speaking Polish, Russian etc. and that they have been the most popular among their national group.

Issues on the labour market and hindrances for foreign workers in Iceland

In Greta's opinion, the main issue is that individuals that come here and are on non-permanent work visas and face challenges are afraid of going to the institutions in place because of the possible effect that might have that on their application for a permanent visa after 3 years. Often these individuals don't come here out of the blue but have some sort of a network here, they know that they should not expect to get the same salary as an Icelandic employee, and then it isn't a surprise to them that they don't get the same salary when they start working. Although this is a violation they are informed beforehand about this from their social network so they believe that thing should be this way. So maybe the biggest issue she sees in the system as it is, is that it is not approachable for migrants and as long as migration laws in Iceland are as they are, people will be discouraged to seek help because they don't want to risk their residency.



Most vulnerable groups and markets

In the interview, Greta wants to mention the group that comes from outside the EU and their issues in the first four years in Iceland. As the group doesn't have a permanent residence, but it's connected to their working visa, they are at more vulnerable to get exploited within the labour market. This group often endures abuse in the first years and works under terrible conditions. The goal of the individuals is to get a permanent residence in seven years and are also afraid that seeking help from the services or municipalities in Iceland will harm their application. According to Greta, they are not wrong, seeking financial or social help from the municipalities harms their application. Individuals that don't speak Icelandic or English are also really vulnerable on the labour market, in her words the less you know about the system, the less you understand how vulnerable you are. Though she agrees that having a strong community in Iceland can be a strength to new immigrants, it also poses a risk of wrong information and individuals being used inside these groups. This, for example, can be because the wrong information is being told about their rights in the labour market, and sometimes people pay others within the group for information because they don't know any other alternative. So, although the community can be a good place to find the information it can also be a problem when the group itself is not aware of the laws or rights of the employees. Other groups that she talked about are the Asian communities, the Filipinos and Thai, although they have a strong network and national group in Iceland, she mentioned that because of where they come from, there is no trust in the government, so they don't trust the authorities. This is a problem because they often are hidden and work like slaves in the first years in Iceland.

Interview - The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ)

Involvement in the labour market

ASÍ consist of 47 labour unions and their main focus is protecting the rights of their union's members. In the last years, they have been especially focusing on foreign employees. To do this they have been involved in inspection in workplaces and handing out brochures in English and Polish and are hoping to be able to translate them into more languages in the



coming months. The inspections have been important in reaching the employees whose rights have been violated and gave the unions and ASÍ a chance to reach the employees and hand them information and helpline numbers to reach them in case of violation. Though they are involved in all this, their role is not to investigate the workplace, but mainly to make sure that wages and union's contract are being followed. Because of this ASÍ also works with the government, providing information on violations to the relevant government organization.

Projects or Good Practices examples

The project “einn réttur ekkert svindl” (e. One right no violations) is their project in informing employees of their rights and is one of the examples in the -Good practices - chapter. In the interview, it is mentioned that not many other projects are going on, but there have been projects focusing on raising awareness about the problems in the unions and meeting were set with the confidants to spread more awareness.

Issues on the labour market and hindrances for foreign workers in Iceland

As mentioned in the interview with the Directorate of Labour, foreign employees face problems when coming to Iceland about getting the right information. The process of getting the right document and working legally in Iceland can be hard and overly complicated. To register and receive a working permit you have to go to many organizations and gather different documents. It seems that those organizations don't have communication between one another so often this ends in many visits to each one of them. What differs from the perspective of the directorate of labour is that in the interview it is discussed that employers are not unintentionally violating the workers, they often use the amount of the paperwork as an excuse but they knew what they were doing. In the interview it is mentioned that they are aware of examples of migrant employees arriving at the airport, the employer coming to get them there, they are driven straight to a house provided by the employer, driven to work and the store, all of that done so they don't have any communication outside the workplace. In her opinion, this is done so the workers are less likely to know their rights or have the opportunity to reach out. Language is a problem, especially with individuals that don't speak English. Many immigrants struggle with learning Icelandic and attending Icelandic courses,



due to it being held in the middle of the day and being expensive too. It is also mentioned that individuals that move to Iceland and have university degrees don't get jobs within their field and often end up working in construction or other low wage jobs.

Most vulnerable groups and markets

In the interview, there are mentioned a few groups as the most vulnerable. Individuals coming from outside the EU are often too afraid to seek help because they are afraid to be deported. She mentions that they are completely on the mercy of the employer, and because of that are in much higher danger of being exploited. Another group is migrant employees coming from post-soviet states, often not being able to speak English and unaware of their rights. These workers often get much more paid than they do in their home countries but sometimes the only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the legal wages they should receive, these employees most often work in construction, a market that is known to violate employees' rights, and often through employment agencies. Another group ASÍ has found that is at risk are women in the tourism industry, hotel, guesthouse employees, and those working in horse rentals. Often the work is outside of the Reykjavík city area, making it harder to reach them and comes with housing provided by the employer. This puts employees in a bad situation because if they complain or are fired, they are at risk to be thrown out of their homes. Human trafficking is becoming a problem in Iceland according to the interview, they have seen more cases, but the government has not been taking action. In those cases, ASÍ and the unions can't do anything, as they don't have the authority nor capacity or the tools needed.

Summary of interviews

Though the interview all had their perspective and different opinions on problems or the groups most in need, it was obvious from the interview that employees rights are being violated and migrant employees are not informed about their rights. All interviewed agreed that the employees coming from outside the EU and those who don't speak English are the most at risk in the Icelandic labour market. It is also clear that though it is important to inform migrant employees of their rights, it is equally as important to raise awareness in the society about these issues, as they have not been taken as seriously according to 2 of the



interviews, and there is a need for further regulations and fines for the unions and others to be able to work against these kinds of violations.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the research, it is clear that migrant and immigrant employees in Iceland face many issues in the labour market. Clearly, they lack information regarding their rights and the capacity to ask information and help from relevant institutions. Although the inspection and unions have been working on this for a few years, it seems that there is still need for more, and it would be helpful to use the information gathered by those organizations in the KYR project, as well as working closely with relevant stakeholders that have been working on those issues. This is especially for new migrant groups in Iceland, especially those who don't speak Icelandic or English, the focus of the project in Iceland should thus be the individuals coming from new countries to Iceland, rather than large migrant groups.

One of the problems seems to be that despite individuals seeking help from institutions and unions, their capacity to help isn't always there, and there is a need for changes in laws and regulations. Although the project can't change this, it is inherent that we also need to raise awareness with the project in society on the problems that migrant employees face in Iceland, and hopefully, put pressure on the government to fix those issues. In the interview, it was quite clear that there is a need for a project that reaches those groups that are in need, and that migrant employees, in general, are not aware of their rights. Also, an important factor is to build a good network inside the groups and contacting individuals from each language group they represent and present them with the information available in the project. This has been the biggest hurdle in other projects with similar goals in Iceland and seems to be the biggest factor in the success of projects.

References

ASÍ & AS. (2019) *Réttindi launafólks*. Retrieved from <https://www.asi.is/frettir-og-utgafa/utgafa/skyrslur-og-baeklingar/>



- ASÍ. (n.d.). Icelandic labour law. *ASÍ*. Retrieved from <https://www.asi.is/vinnurettarvefur/vinnurettur/icelandic-labour-law/>
- Efling. (n.d.). Minimum wages for full-time work for the private sector. Efling: Stéttarfélag. Retrieved from <https://efling.is/lagmarkstekjur-fyrir-fullt-starf/?lang=en>
- Einarsdóttir, G. (2019). Félagsvísar (Social indicators). Hagtíðindi (Statistical Series). Retrieved from <https://www.hagstofa.is/Utgafur/Hagtidindi>
- Government of Iceland. (n.d.) Foreign Nationals. Government of Iceland. Retrieved from <https://www.government.is/topics/foreign-nationals/>
- Hagdeild ASÍ. (2019). *Íslenskur vinnumarkaður 2019: Erlent launafólk og brotastarfsemi*. Reykjavík: Alþýðusamband Íslands
- Haraldsson, R. H. (2017). Tölfræðilegar upplýsingar um erlenda ríkisborgara og innflytjendur á Íslandi 2016. Ísafjörður: Fjölmenningssetur
- Hermannsdóttir, N. (2019). *Hvað mætir útlendingum á íslenskum vinnumarkaði*. Reykjavík: Alþýðusamband Íslands.
- Innes, P & Skaptadóttir, U. D. (2017). Icelandic for adults foreigners: effect of imposing an Icelandic language test. *Current Issue in Language Planning*, 18(1), 68-86. doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2016.1168689
- Lög um fæðingarorlof (e. Act on maternity and parental leave) no.95/2000
- Lög um orlof (e. Holiday Allowance Act) no.. 30/1987



- Multicultural information centre. (n.d.a). Fjölmeningarsetur hefur það hlutverk að greiða fyrir samskiptum fólks af ólíkum uppruna og efla þjónustu við innflytjendur sem búsettir eru á Íslandi. *Fjölmeningarsetur*. Retrieved from <https://www.mcc.is/um-fjolmenningarsetur/>
- Reykjavíkurborg. (2017). *Stefna Reykjavíkurborgar í málefnum innflytjenda, flóttafólks og umsækjanda um alþjóðlega vernd*. Reykjavík: Reykjavíkurborg.
- Skaptadóttir, U. D. & Rancew-Sikora, D. (2016). Introduction: Blurring boundaries in mobility studies. In U. D. Skaptadóttir and D. Rancew-Sikora (ed.), *Mobility to the edge of Europe: The case of Iceland and Poland* (pp. 7-16). Warsaw: SCHOLAR Publishing House.
- Statistic Iceland. (2018). Innflytjendum heldur áfram að fjölga. Hagstofa Íslands. Retrieved from <https://www.hagstofa.is/utgafur/frettasafn/mannfjoldi/mannfjoldi-eftr-bakgrunni-2018>
- Statistic Iceland. (2019a). Innflytjendum heldur áfram að fjölga. Hagstofa Íslands. Retrieved from <https://hagstofa.is/utgafur/frettasafn/mannfjoldi/innflytjendur/>
- Statistic Iceland. (2019b). Mannfjöldi eftir ríkisfangi, kyni og aldri. Retrieved from https://px.hagstofa.is/pxis/pxweb/is/Ibuar/Ibuar_mannfjoldi_3_bakgrunnur_Rikisfang/MAN04103.px
- Statistic Iceland. (2019c). Percentage of employment immigrants has increased in all region. Retrieved from <https://statice.is/publications/news-archive/labour-market/register-based-employment-1st-quarter-2019/>
- Steinarsdóttir, H. (2019). *Ársskýrsla Eflingar 2018-2019*. Reykjavík: Efling
- VR. (n.d.) Wages: Minimum income for full-time work. VR, your rights. Retrieved from <https://www.vr.is/en/your-rights/wages/>
- Wojtynska A. & Zielinska, M. (2010). Polish migrants in Iceland facing the final crisis. In G. Þ. Jóhannesson and H. Björnsdóttir (ed.), *Þjóðarspejillinn* (pp. 1-11). Reykjavík: University of Iceland.

