

## **Adult Education and Integration in Iceland**

Iceland introduced the first joint integration strategy in 2007. The strategy states that the Icelandic language is the key to the Icelandic society. That language competence might be decisive for successful integration.

The strategy is based on the assumption that all immigrants are employed and the strategy consequently contains no measures targeted at unemployed immigrants. There are courses in work-oriented language education on the workplace directed towards foreign workers; courses specifically targeted at immigrants and courses for both immigrants and Icelanders.

In 1994 1.7 per cent of the population in Iceland was immigrants. In 2008 the number had risen to 8.1 per cent. The immigration consists almost exclusively of labour immigration, and the large rise from 1994 to 2008 is attributed to the high demand for labour during these years. After the boom ended the trend reversed and during the first half of 2009 there was net emigration from Iceland.

Until the beginning of 2009, around 90 per cent of the immigrants were employed. Therefore there exists no economic support to cover living expenses during education periods. On the contrary it is expected that studies are carried out in parallel with work and that the participants themselves seek opportunities to learn Icelandic and ways to finance the studies.

In line with the perception of language as the key, the educational focal point in the strategy is language education. Validation of prior learning and professional expertise is also mentioned in the strategy. And it is stated that work-oriented Icelandic as a second language must be prioritised.

The purpose of the education in Icelandic as a second language is to prepare the participants to democratic participation in the Icelandic society. The focus is on personal, social and work-related competences.

Work-related courses in Icelandic as a second language exist both within the public and the private sector. Since 2000 it has been still more common for larger enterprises to arrange language education at the work place for their foreign employees. The education typically focuses on the vocabulary needed by unskilled workers.

Integration through adult education in Iceland consists primarily of language education and is often organised by the employer and labour federations.

## **Research Environments and Contact Persons**

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## **Resources**

Directorate of Immigration: <http://utl.is/index.php?lang=en>

Education and Training Service Centre: <http://frae.is/english/education-and-training-service-centre/>

Ministry of Welfare: <http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/>