

## **A bridge to the future:**

# **European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10**

## **National policy report - Iceland**

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## **PREFACE**

The "Copenhagen process" was launched as the contribution of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to the challenges identified in the Lisbon-Agenda. In the Copenhagen Declaration, approved on 30 November 2002, the ministers responsible for VET in 31 European countries (EU Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries), the European social partners and the European Commission agreed on enhanced European cooperation in VET.

This **Policy Report** formed a part of the Cedefop ReferNet 2010 work programme. It provides information on Iceland's progress in VET towards EU policy goals within the framework of the Copenhagen process and according to the policy priorities defined in the Maastricht Communiqué (2004) and the Helsinki Communiqué (2006). It considers measures taken in the context of the Education and Training 2010 programme since the Copenhagen Declaration.

The main section of the report is subdivided into the following seven policy areas identified by education ministers as priorities for national policy design in the VET sector:

- socioeconomic changes for the future VET policy development;
- the Economic crisis – VET policies as recovery measures;
- impact and implications of the joining work on European principles and tools;
- strengthening the links between VET and the labour market;
- quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET;
- enhancing creativity and innovation;
- financing VET.

The national ReferNet policy reports are one of the main sources Cedefop used to produce its Policy Report.

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# 1. SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE VET POLICY DEVELOPMENT

## 1.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

Globalisation has meant that tourism has multiplied in the past two to three decades, making the “tourism industry” one of the main fundamentals of the economy.

The impact of tourism can be seen vividly by just looking at the numbers of people working in the sector.

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of jobs	7 385	7 622	7 337	7 365	7 552	7 923	8 211

Source: Statistics Iceland

Even though many of all these people have not had any training, the tourism sector has felt the need to design, implement and offer education for an increasing number of these people.

### **Example of initiative: New opportunities for education and training in the tourism sector, since 2005.**

#### **Outline**

In 2005 an investigation was carried out among all relevant parties in the tourism sector and they were asked to identify the training needs for people working in the sector as they saw it. They found that basic training was poor and uncoordinated. Thus, 28-38% of people working in the sector had no formally recognised training after compulsory school, with the restaurant sector showing the extremely high percentage of 44 untrained people (source Gudmundsdóttir and Thoroddsen, 2009).

It was felt that there was a need for both more basic training and also more specialised courses for different groups within the sector. There was also a call for increased re-training and international connections so that the sector could develop further.

In 2006 a thorough debate within the sector was undertaken and educational providers were summoned in order to see what they could possibly offer and initiate. Training elements were prioritised and what followed were the first pilot courses in “skills in tourism”. Special courses were designed for low skilled people working in tourism. The pilot project received a Leonardo da Vinci mobility grant and in 2008 it received an award as a LdV good example of practice.

In the spring of 2007 the first courses were offered, three times 20 hours. Since then, two curricula have been designed and are offered by several of the Lifelong Learning Centres. Students can use study points earned at these courses as a deduction at upper secondary schools, should they want to study further. In 2009 some 200 students had already completed at least one of the courses (source: *ibid*).

#### **Objectives**

The main objectives were to offer training for those who had no or very little formal training. Tourism skills I is composed of 60 hours with the main emphasis of increasing students’ personal, professional and general knowledge and to strengthen their positive attitude to both themselves and to the sector as a whole so that they can offer a quality service to their potential customers. Tourism skills II is 100 hours and offers specialised training to different groups within the sector.

These two courses are seen as the first two steps towards a professional training in tourism which is to be offered at upper secondary level and also as a part of a continuous education and training within the sector. Leading people within the tourism sector also see it as an important

objective that study points earned at these courses become better recognised in upper secondary education in general so that it does not become a blind alley for people who might want to use it as a first step in education and training.

### **Target groups**

The main target groups are people with little or no formally recognised education and training who either already work or aspire to work in tourism.

### **Status of implementation**

In 2009 Tourism skills I and II were offered at the Lifelong Learning Centres around Iceland and at Mímir Lifelong Learning Centre in Reykjavík. Around 200 people had completed at least one of the courses.

### **Operation and delivery**

This is a national measure and Tourism skills I and II already give some points towards upper secondary education but it has to be admitted that given the time it takes to complete these courses, the study points for further studies they give are few and not all upper secondary schools acknowledge them. Therefore, the leaders of the sector want to increase the coordination of these studies with e.g. studies in trade and office work.

### **Key actors involved**

- Samtök ferðaþjónustunnar (The Icelandic Travel Industry Association);
- Starfsgreinasamband Íslands (the Federation of General and Special Workers in Iceland);
- Símenntunarmiðstöðvar (Lifelong Learning Centres);
- Mímir Lifelong Learning Centre;
- Fræðslumiðstöð avinnulífsins (the Education and Training Service Centre).

### **Evaluation**

In 2008 the Leonardo da Vinci programme in Iceland made an assessment of several projects in transfer of knowledge. The Tourism skills project was found to be one of the best examples of practice. The evaluation committee e.g. found that:

“This project is directly linked to a national project addressing the need for providing formal training to people working in the tourism sector... The broad variety of partners from different organizations both in the tourism industry and education in Iceland meant that the results could be directly disseminated to the relevant parties and successfully fed into the training market. It is safe to say that the project’s results have had a strong impact on progress in this field as new curricula was developed and implemented in continuous education and it is now planned to start a new study path within the vocational schools... The project receives recognition for innovation, management, results and benefits. There was an identified need for training for the target group and the objectives of the mobility project were clear and directly linked to results of needs analysis carried out within the target group. Participants were actively involved in the project team. They represented different players or interests in the subject and the visits were targeted with that variety in mind. The project had a strong impact on the renewal of education within the whole tourism sector in Iceland. New curricula have been developed and the organization of training has been structured”(source:

<http://www.leonardo.is/Apps/WebObjects/LME.woa/swdocument/19/Fyrimyndarverkefni+-+Leonardo+mannaskipti+%28%C3%A1+ensku%29.pdf>).

### **Indicators of success**

Interest in participate in the training.

### **Integration of outcomes into larger policies**

The tourism sector has been one of the fastest growing sectors in Iceland in the past decade. As often is the case, the supply for education and training has not managed to keep up with the demand. The fact that the sector itself leads the work on further training of its staff shows the need for further development. With the current economic crisis, it is also likely that the sector will be able to attract more people who already have upper secondary and even tertiary education but would nevertheless need specific training in issues relating to the sector itself.

### **Conclusions**

#### **Obstacles encountered**

The main obstacle has been that the tourism sector is very seasonal in the biggest part of Iceland. In and around the capital, people manage to get employment all the year round but for the rest of the country, the sector can only offer employment for 3-6 months of the year. Therefore, people have been reluctant to undertake work in tourism as a professional career and the sector had mostly been manned with young people who are still at school (summer employment) and by uneducated foreigners who want to experience the adventure of working in Iceland for a few months. Leaders in the sector have tried their very best to expand the tourism period by offering e.g. conferences, Christmas stays etc. and have had some success. With the current economic crisis, the sector is seen as one of them main hopes for a rapid growth of the economy and this may encourage people to see it as their future working field.

#### **Issues which remain to be addressed**

Further training within the sector is already on the drawing board and the sector shows great ambition and determination. Its leaders realise that they face growing competition from the rest of the world and that if the economic crisis continues, people might travel less. The low value of the Icelandic currency enables new groups to visit Iceland but the sector will have to continue increasing the quality of its service and to offer new “products”.

#### **Source, legend**

Gudmundsdóttir, María and Thoroddsen, Skúli: Færni í ferðapjónustu. Nýtt grunnám í ferðapjónustu. Gátt, Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins, December 2009 (available in Icelandic at [http://www.frae.is/files/Gátt%202009\\_MG%20og%20ST\\_054-056\\_503972354.pdf](http://www.frae.is/files/Gátt%202009_MG%20og%20ST_054-056_503972354.pdf)).

### **1.2 Impact of technological progress on VET**

Recent technological progress has had two major impacts:

- the constant update of curricula, technology and processes in VET schools and workplaces. Due to the small size of the population and of most companies, the costs this implies are considerable. Therefore new technology tends to be implemented in leaps rather than a steady flow and schools have in some case made cooperation agreements with schools in other countries that are further advanced on Icelandic students can taking part of their training there;
- the needs of professionals to update their skills. This demand has been met by a big increase in the offer of course and many sectors have joined forces in order to better be able to meet this demand. Iðan – fræðslusetur (Vocational Education and Training Centre ) offers courses for five different sectors and the supply is entirely determined by the needs expressed by each sector (source: <http://idan.is/>). Rafiðnaðarskólinn (the Re-training and technical training center for electrician and electronic technicians ) offers training for people in the electricity and electronic sector (source Rafiðnaðarskólinn <http://rafidnarskolinn.is/>).

### 1.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

Immigration from all over the world to Iceland multiplied between 2000 and 2008. The most revealing statistics on immigration is the number of immigrants to Iceland annually.

<b>Table 2: Net foreign immigration:</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants</b>
1970	-184
1980	102
1990	70
1995	219
2000	1 652
2001	1 440
2002	745
2003	480
2004	968
2005	3 742
2006	5 535
2007	2 989
2008	1 621
January-September 2009	-745
Source: Statistics Iceland	

Before 2000, immigration hardly existed and then it multiplied with a sharp peak in 2006 and in 2009, fell again below 0. Even though the great majority of the immigrants came first and foremost to work, not to study, many of them had grown children who needed schooling at various levels.

In the beginning of 2009, the biggest groups of immigrants were born in the following countries:

<b>Table 3: Immigrants by country of birth, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 644</b>
Poland	11 575
Lithuania	1 572
Germany	1 325
Philippines	1 313
Thailand	887
Source: Statistics Iceland	

As can be seen from this table, Polish immigrants are the biggest group by far. Men dominate the group (were 7 158) and most of them are of working age. However, the total number of immigrants of aged between 16 and 25 (which is the “normal” age of Icelandic VET students) is 47 387 and people between 16 and 20 (which would be the age of upper secondary school students if they passed through it at maximum speed) are around 20 thousand (source: Statistics Iceland).

The need for educational programmes for this group is obvious. A small group of these students is studying at VET schools, where the lack of a common language between them and their teachers has been the main hurdle. Even though most teachers can communicate in English, it does not help because the students cannot!

**Example of initiative: Fjölmenningskólinn (the Multicultural School)**, department for non-Icelandic speaker at Tækniskólinn – skóli atvinnulífsins (Reykjavík Technical Collage), in operation since 2008.

### Outline

There has been a growing need for education and training for non-Icelandic speakers. The former Iðnskólinn í Reykjavík, which was in 2008 joined with the Fjöltækniskóli Íslands to form the Tækniskóli Íslands, was one of the first schools to offer an extensive programme for them. The main emphasis has been to teach Icelandic as a second language at various levels; from the group of complete beginners who neither know a word of the language nor the Latin alphabet to the group of people who have mastered some knowledge but could not e.g. study a trade of their choice in Icelandic. An increased emphasis has been placed on additional support, especially to people aged 16-18 years (the Icelandic state is obliged to offer anyone of that age education and training), to study further.

### Objectives/measurable targets

The main objectives of the school have been two:

1. to teach the group enough Icelandic and enough about the Icelandic society in order to be able to live and work in Iceland without major problems. A brochure in English for the courses is available at [http://kennarar.2t.is/fa/ANN\\_enska.pdf](http://kennarar.2t.is/fa/ANN_enska.pdf);
2. to assist in any possible way those who want to study further and, preferably, complete an upper secondary degree in VET.

### Target groups

The target group varies in terms of nationalities, age, gender and previous education and training, the only thing it has in common is its migrant background and lack of knowledge in the Icelandic language.

### Status of implementation

The school has tried its best to keep some sort of statistics for this group but it is difficult because some students of foreign decent have obtained an Icelandic citizenship and some even an Icelandic name. Unless their teachers know them personally (which is difficult in a school which had around 2 600 students in the autumn of 2009), this is impossible.

The most recent statistics is from the autumn of 2009. In total there were 185 students for foreign background registered at the school.

**Table 1: Number of students with non-Icelandic background by field of study at the Reykjavík Technical Collage**

Number of students	Name of study-field
1	General department
153	General department for new citizens
1	Textile technician
3	Basic education in constructions and building
2	Basic education in electricity
1	Gold and silver making
3	Basic education for information and media
4	Hairdressing
3	House-builders
2	General design
1	Painting
1	Multi media

1	Master of trade as a painter
1	Natural science and flight technology
6	Computers
2	Technical drawing
Source: Tækniskólinn	

### **Policy/measure operation and delivery:**

#### **Level of operation:**

National. The school forms part of the official national policy of offering the same education and training to all those who live in Iceland, regardless of where they were born or how much Icelandic they know. Due to the great variety of languages spoken in Iceland (in 2009 there were over 190 nationalities registered as living in Iceland. Source: Statistics Iceland), it has proved impossible to offer education to everyone in his/her mother tongue and Icelandic is the only possible option.

#### **Key actors involved**

- Teachers, counsellors and administrative staff of Tækniskólinn
- Officials at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

#### **Evaluation:**

No assessment has been carried out on the operation of the Fjölmenningskólinn.

#### **Indicators of success**

The best indication of success is the steadily growing number of students attending the school.

#### **Integration of outcomes into larger policy**

As stated above, this is a part of a national policy but has served as an example of how much is possible to achieve. Each student graduating from the school serves as an example to his/her peers that it is indeed possible to complete an education.

#### **Conclusions**

##### **Obstacles encountered**

The main obstacle has been the lack of common language for teachers and students. This has been (at least partly) overcome by the utilisation of body language, interpretation (when possible) and good will from both parties.

##### **Issues that remain to be addressed**

The education of foreign young people is far behind the education students who are born in Iceland receive. In 2009 the state cut severely the amount allocated to teaching Icelandic to foreigners. This was one of the many measures undertaken to cut the state budget in the economic crisis Iceland is going through. As many foreigners have left the country, this is possibly a justifiable action but the question is whether it will not have a negative effect in the long run if immigrants become an isolated group within the society as has been the case in many other countries.

#### **Source, legend**

##### **Interview:**

Ásbjörnsson, Fjölnir, headmaster of the Multicultural school, interview 18/12/2009.

Tækniskólinn, skóli atvinnulífsins: <http://www.tskoli.is/> in English version at <http://en.tskoli.is/>

**Statistics Iceland:** <http://hagstofa.is/>

#### **1.4 Impact of greening of economy on VET**

The main impact of the greening of the economy in Iceland has been the development of finding, reaching and utilising renewable energy. All energy which is produced in Iceland is either from hydroelectric plants or from geothermal heat. Although conservationists argue that at the rate this energy is being tapped, it will not be able to renew itself, others maintain that even if this was the case, this energy does not pollute the nature nearly to the same extent as does oil and coal and it must therefore be used as much as possible.

Utilisation of domestic energy grows year by year and e.g. grew from just over 60% of total energy consumption in 1987 to 82% in 2008 (Source: Statistic Iceland).

Two main groups are affected by this growth in the utilisation of renewable energy:

- vocational professionals who work in the building and maintenance of the power plants. They are first and foremost people educated in the various professions connected to electricity (electronics technicians, electric distribution technicians, electro-mechanical technicians and electricians) and also professional builders, plumbers, etc. These people are more or less all trained in Iceland and need to keep constantly abreast with new technology and the utilisation of green energy is an integrated part of their studies;
- professionals with university degrees who find the energy and make the plans for utilising it. They could be geologists, engineers etc. Some of them are trained in Iceland but most of them have received their specialisation somewhere abroad. As they hold university degrees, they are not counted as “vocational specialists” in the statistics.

No new examples of initiatives could be found within this sector.

#### **1.5 Other challenges for VET**

As will be discussed in chapter two, a major shift has already started between professions due to the financial crisis that Iceland is going through. Thus, there has been almost a complete collapse in the building sector but sectors such as tourism and innovation are enjoying a boom. Some vocational specialists have been able to move between sectors, others have moved abroad (the biggest group to Norway) and yet others remain unemployed.

## 2. ECONOMIC CRISIS – VET POLICIES AS RECOVERY MEASURES

### 2.1 Initiatives for recovery

Iceland was one of the first countries to be hit by the economic crisis and was at the time of writing this entry (early 2010) still one of the countries worst hit. The consequences have been numerous but here the focus will only be on VET and related issues.

There is a big educational gap among the population. Thus, there is in a European perspective an unusually high percentage of the population which has no recognised education after compulsory school but at the same time; the percentage of people with university degrees is also unusually high.

When Lárus Blöndal from Statistics Iceland looked at the educational attainment of the Icelandic working population in 2007 he found the following

<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>%</b>
Compulsory education	161 000	100
Upper secondary education, including VET	45 11	28
Tertiary education	69 450	43

Source: Statistics Iceland

Unemployment rose rapidly after the crisis and Iceland has seen figures of unemployment which have not been known for years. As is common in such cases, young people are badly hit in general and young people with no recognised upper secondary education in particular. A survey of this was made in October 2009 and it was discovered that:

- 14 369 people were unemployed, thereof 4 903 between 16-29 year old
- the rate of unemployment was highest among 20-29 year olds 12%, but was lower than 8% among the population as a whole;
- 30-40% of the entire population have no education after compulsory school but among the unemployed this percentage is 52 and among the group younger than 29 years it is 67% (Source: Guðmundsson, Gestur 2009).

Professor Guðmundsson also found out that the biggest majority of the group of young people who had been unemployed for more then three mounts had dropped out from upper secondary school already in the first year (1 453 out of a group of 1 887). The situation is even worse among those unemployed for more than 6 months (1 096 out of a group of 1 416). (Source: *ibid*). Thus, getting them through upper secondary education would not be easy. His conclusion was that other options needed to be created; shorter courses, on-the-job training and assistance with strengthening the self-image.

#### **Example of initiative:**

**Title of policy/ measure:** New opportunities for young, uneducated, unemployed people.

#### **Outline**

The high unemployment rate among young people who had no recognised education after compulsory school was the main reason for initiating special measures for this group.

#### **Objectives/measurable targets**

The main objective is that no one of this group will remain unemployed for a period of three months without betting offered at least one of possibilities of either a job or a training place in a company or a school. Should they refuse to participate in any such offers; their unemployment benefit will be cut.

**Target groups**

Young people who had no recognised education after compulsory school.

**Status of implementation**

The measure started at the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2010 and therefore no statistics is available at the time of writing this input.

**Operation and delivery:****Level of operation**

National. This is part of a larger educational and employment policy.

**Key actors involved**

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
- Ministry of Social Services and Social Affairs

**Evaluation:**

No assessment is available yet.

**Indicators of success**

The main indicator of success will be whether the rate of young, uneducated people will drop considerably among the unemployed. The first measurable target will be whether they will get an offer of training and/or work within three months of becoming unemployed and the second how such an offer will be sufficient to keep them occupied.

**Integration of outcomes** into a larger policy

This measure, if successful, will become part of the official policy of fighting unemployment.

**Conclusions:****Obstacles**

Not known

**Issues remaining to be addressed**

Not known

**Source, legend**

Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security

<http://www.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/frettir/frettatilkynningar/nr/4720>).

### **3. IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE JOINT WORK ON EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS**

#### **3.1 Impact of joint work on European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments**

It is safe to say that the participation in the European process of making education and training transparent throughout the continent has contributed considerably to changing the Icelandic system of education and training. In 2008, new laws governing pre-primary, primary and upper secondary education were passed in Parliament, as well as a law concerning the training and professional rights of teachers. To a certain extent, these laws were inspired by developments in education and training at European level. Thus, the new law on upper secondary education has a provision on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which is in line with extensive work on principles and practices within this field in Iceland in the last eight years, which are to a great extent inspired by European cooperation. This work has led to an increase in participation in lifelong learning by certain sectors of the population.

Furthermore, there has been a certain paradigm shift in the national debate on education and training. Instead of focusing on the time it takes students to complete a degree (which is still the tradition in upper secondary schools); there will be a focus on the learning outcomes, defined through a national qualifications framework. A national qualifications framework for university education has already been passed for higher education, and a separate one is under preparation for upper secondary education.

Iceland is at present participating in a few ECVET pilot projects and will look towards implementing regulatory provisions that will enable it full participation in this credit system when it is up and running. Furthermore, Iceland is ready to follow the development of the EQARF cooperation with a view to considering ways to participate there, as well.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses of implementation of European tools and principles**

The main strength this implementation of European tools and principles is that they enable policy makers in Iceland to review their policies and practices in education in light of European cooperation and experiences. They also make it easier for Icelanders to take a part of their education and training in other European countries and for other Europeans to take parts of their education in Iceland.

The main weakness is that due to shortage of human capital, Iceland can only participate in a limited scope in the European initiatives. Iceland also needs on a regular basis to confirm its will and intention to participate in European initiatives, to fight its way back, so to say, to an approval.

#### **Example of initiative: National qualifications framework, under implementation, expected to be adopted in 2010.**

##### **Outline**

Despite not being a member of the European Union, Iceland has participated actively in the EU's efforts of making education and training transparent so that students can easily transfer educational credits from one country to another. In the case of the national qualifications framework for higher education, Iceland was ahead of the EU in passing its final version, which means that it is not 100% compatible to the European qualifications framework. Therefore, the NQF is at present (beginning of 2010) under revision to adapt it better to the EQF. At the same time, an NQF for upper secondary education and training is under construction.

The possibility of implementing an NQF, in line with the EQF, was foreseen already in 2006 when a report called New Upper Secondary School (Nýr framhaldsskóli) was published (source: Stefánsson, Jón B. et al 2006). At the time, not many people within the system of education and training knew the meaning of this and how it could possibly affect the school system. Gradually, the idea won ground and a certain paradigm shift occurred where learning outcomes became more important than the time spent at either schools or a training workplace.

### **Objectives**

The objectives for VET all fall within the objectives set for upper secondary education and training in general. The main ones are:

1. Each school is to define each pathway in two different ways:
  - according to EQF levels 1, 2, 3 or 4
  - whether it leads to the general matriculation exam, vocational qualifications or other certificates.

Each level defines the skills students must have acquired upon completion. The framework for this competence is defined irrespective of the content of the studies. It is to be expected that students use different length of time to complete their studies (Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: *Viðmiðunarrámmi um lokapróf*, available in Icelandic at <http://www.nymenntastefna.is/Namskrargerð/lokaprof/>).

2. New national curricula for all VET pathways are expected to be ready in 2010, based in the NQF. Many VET pathways have already been defined according to learning outcomes so that real competence assessments (raunfærnimat) became possible already in 2006 when the Educational and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) was asked by the Ministry to develop the first such assessments. The Vocational Education and Training Centre (*Iðan fræðslusetur*) and the Electricians Training Centre (Fræðsluskrifstofa rafiðnaðarins) have since 2007 been offering real competence assessment for an increasing number of professions (for further information please see Progress in the policy priority areas for vocational education and training - ReferNet Country Report Iceland 2008 <http://www.rthj.hi.is/Apps/WebObjects/HI.woa/1/swdocument/1014355/Policy.pdf?wosid=false>).

### **Target groups**

Students and graduates

### **Status of implementation**

Expected implementation autumn 2010.

### **Policy/measure operation and delivery**

**Level of operation** (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

National. This is part of a national policy on lifelong learning, increasing participation in lifelong education, making access easier and increasing the life quality of the citizens.

### **Key actors involved**

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture;
- upper secondary schools;
- training workplaces
- social partners.

### **Evaluation:**

No assessment has been carried out.

**Indicators of success** (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

It will be extremely difficult to find indicators of success for this isolated measure within the whole set of major changes which have been taking place and will take place in Iceland. First of all, it will take a long time for things to fall completely into place and secondly; the economic situation is likely to change considerably in the coming years. A more transparent system of education and training is the desired outcome but how that will be measured remains to be seen.

**Integration of outcomes** a larger policy.

The measure is a part of a larger national policy on education and training.

**Conclusions**

**Obstacles encountered**

Challenges related to novelty of approach.

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

As the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture wishes to involve all relevant partners in the NQF process, it will still take some time to reach a consensus on its final form.

**Source, legend**

**Advertisement on the adaptation of the NQF** (in Icelandic and English)

<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>

**Ministry of Education, Science and Culture:** Viðmiðunarrámmi um lokapróf, available in Icelandic at <http://www.nymenntastefna.is/Namskrargerð/lokaprof/>.

**Progress in the policy priority areas for vocational education and training** - ReferNet Country Report Iceland 2008

<http://www.rthj.hi.is/Apps/WebObjects/HI.woa/1/swdocument/1014355/Policy.pdf?wosid=false>

**Stefánsson, Jón B. et al:** Nýr framhaldsskóli: skýrsla starfsnámsnefndar. Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2007.

### **3.2 Promoting geographical mobility of learners/apprentices and teachers/trainers in VET**

Iceland has for a long time cooperated with the other Nordic countries operated educational programmes in the fields of mobility and other educational activities. In year 2007 this activity was expanded in a new programme, The Nordplus Framework Programme 2008-2011. Since the beginning of 2008 the Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became participating members in the programme on equal basis with the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

#### **Example of initiative: Nordplus Framework Programme 2008-2011.**

**Outline**

**Rationale**

The main rationale was to contribute to the development of quality and innovation in the educational systems for life-long learning in the participating countries by means of educational co-operation, developmental projects, exchanges and networking.

**Objectives**

To increase co-operation in education and student mobility.

**Target groups**

Students and education providers in Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.

**Status of implementation**, including statistical data, if available (in the planning stage, pilot project, a measure implemented all over the country/mainstreamed, etc.).

The project is in full operation but no overall statistics exist.

**Operation and delivery:****Level of operation**

Transnational. It is a part of a larger national policy.

**Key actors**

Educational authorities.

**Evaluation:**

Not relevant yet.

**Indicators of success** (e.g. high take-up, employment success, low deadweight, etc.).

Not relevant yet.

**Integration of outcomes** into a larger policy

The measure is a part of a larger national policy on education and training.

The measure is a part of the Nordic cooperation in which Iceland participates in e.g. the field of education and training.

## 4. STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN VET AND THE LABOUR MARKET

### 4.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

The Occupational Councils are the main bodies responsible for anticipating skills needs. A new regulation was passed in 2009 governing their roles (see below).

#### Strengths and weaknesses

The strengths are not nearly as obvious as the weaknesses. Iceland not until now been a part of the countries taking part in either Cedefop's skills needs analysis or DG-Employment sectoral analysis and has therefore missed out on an opportunity to use other countries' experience in this field. In 2010, there is a hope that Iceland might participate in Cedefop's next round of analysis, which could greatly assist all relevant partners in making such analysis for Iceland.

#### Example of initiative:

**Title of policy:** New regulation on Occupational Councils (number 711/2009), with an amendment number 711/2009.

#### Outline

##### Rationale

Upon the Upper Secondary School Act of 2008 (available in English at [http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir//Upper\\_secondary\\_school\\_Act.pdf](http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir//Upper_secondary_school_Act.pdf)) it was necessary to amend all regulations which follow the Act. For a while, the need to streamline the Occupational Councils and make them better in line with the needs of the labour market for education and training had been discussed between officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and social partners. The opportunity was used to reform the Occupational Councils, change their roles and make it clearer who should initiate change and in what way.

##### Objectives

The main objectives were to define:

- the role of the Councils i.e. to advise the Minister on VET at upper secondary level ;
- occupational groups into:
  - building and constructions;
  - healthcare, social service and pedagogy;
  - design and handicraft;
  - food, catering and tourism;
  - metal, engine and production;
  - electricity and electronics;
  - transport, vehicles and logistics;
  - office and trade;
  - cosmetics;
  - environment and agriculture and;
  - information and media
  - fisheries and merchant transport.
- representatives and who nominates them. Representatives must have good knowledge in the relevant sector, have some experience on passing on education in the field and know the policy which has been made on the development of education in the named field. Representatives are nominated by different actors for each sector. They are e.g. social partners, schools and the teachers' union, ministries and municipalities;

- tasks:
  - a. to define the needs for education and competences for relevant trades;
  - b. to suggest the final objectives of each vocational pathways;
  - c. to suggest the creation of new pathways;
  - d. to set goal-posts for the division between schools and workplaces when it comes to training;
  - e. to suggest the content and structure of final exams;
  - f. to advise the Ministry on new suggestions for pathways made by VET schools;
  - g. to advise on the evaluation of private VET schools and their pathways;
  - h. to keep a record on schools and workplaces which meet official demands to be allowed to teach students;
  - i. other specially allocated tasks.
- methods used. Each Council is supposed to work in a close cooperation with all relevant partners in the sector and seek the advice of relevant experts;
- costs and who should bear them. The Ministry pays a certain amount to each Occupational Council each year, according to specific contracts.

In the Upper Secondary School Act, it is stipulated that an Occupational Committee will be formed by the chairs of each Occupational Council as well as a chair and a vice-chair appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. This Committee has the main roles to;

- advise the Minister regarding policy making and implementation of vocational education,
- serve as a platform for collaboration and coordination between the Councils; and
- provide opinion of categorisation and division of occupations for the Councils (article 27).

### **Target groups**

The target groups were the Occupational Councils directly and all those working in VET indirectly. The latter group consists of students, teachers, administrators, workplace trainers etc.

### **Status of implementation**

The regulation came into force on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2009.

### **Policy operation and delivery**

#### **Level of operation**

National. It is a part of a larger educational policy.

#### **Key actors involved**

- Officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture;
- Members of the former Occupational Councils;
- Head-masters and other administrative staff from VET schools.

#### **Evaluation:**

No assessment has taken place yet.

#### **Indicators of success**

The main indicator of success will be whether the new Occupational Councils will be able to increase the participation in VET.

#### **Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

The regulation is a part of a larger national policy.

## **Conclusions**

### **Obstacles encountered**

No obstacles were encountered.

### **Issues remaining to be addressed**

Once the regulation has been in place for some years, it will need an evaluation and, possibly, some alterations.

## **5. Source, legend**

**Regulation on Occupational Councils number 711/2009** (available in Icelandic at

<http://www.reglugerd.is/interpro/dkm/WebGuard.nsf/b7fd33650490f8cf00256a07003476bb/c9681e6551fb23200025761d006b0a3f?OpenDocument>).

**Amendment to the regulation number 711/2009.** Available in Icelandic at

<http://www.stjornartidindi.is/Advert.aspx?ID=93d1544e-053c-4fc5-9fa7-060f2f0f1a9>.

**Upper Secondary School Act number 92/2009.**

## **4.2 Integrating skill needs of the labour market into VET provision**

See above

## **4.3 Involving labour market actors in VET**

See above

## **4.4 Promoting workplace learning**

For many decades young people lack of interest for vocational education and training has been debated. Compared to the rest of Europe, a much lower percentage of Icelandic students choose vocational education when they start upper secondary schools. Some of those who start in general education later either change paths or start vocational studies or they add on to their general degree with a vocational one. Several reasons have been named for this low interest in VET:

- parents push general education;
- vocational degrees do not give them same automatic rights to start university as does the general Matriculation exam;
- some of the study paths traditionally chosen by women (e.g. nursing) are classified as general tertiary education rather than VET as they used to be;
- the schools which enjoy the reputation of being “the best” in the country do not offer VET.

Whatever the reason may be, officials have tried their very best to change it. With the new Upper Secondary School Act from 2008, VET is supposed to give the same right to tertiary education as general education. However, some of the universities have stated publically that they are not willing to accept less general knowledge from their students than has so far been the case.

Several regulations have been passed since 2008 to strengthen VET, one of which is discussed below.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

The possibilities offered by the VET system are both numerous, varied and the likelihood of getting a job in most professions immediately upon graduation (and even before!) have been very good. In fact, until the collapse of the banking system in 2008, which took with it sectors like building and construction and decreased the number of people working in several service professions, there was a considerable lack of education people in many professions. Therefore it was possible (and may still be in some professions) to get a job without the correct

qualifications. Even though the unqualified person could not use the title the job entailed, (s)he often received the same salaries as those who could.

As could be expected, these people were the first to lose their jobs when the crisis hit the economy. This revealed one of the fundamental weaknesses of the entire education system in Iceland, the high number of people who had no formally recognised education and training.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has called upon VET schools to allow those who have completed part of their training to resume it and preferably complete it. Several problems must however be overcome:

- there are not enough workplace training places for everyone;
- most drop-out students have only completed less than the first year of their studies;
- drop-out students are of all ages and some have not been at school for a long time;
- for some, the reason they gave up studying (dyslexia, low level of intelligence, bullying at former schools) may still be valid.

As thoroughly debated in the last policy report from Iceland

(<http://www.rthj.hi.is/Apps/WebObjects/HI.woa/1/swdocument/1014355/Policy.pdf?wosid=false> p. 18-19)

Real Competence Assessments are used to assist students in getting their knowledge, skills and competence validated.

### **Example of initiative: Regulation on journeyman's exam, 2009.**

#### **Outline**

##### **Rationale**

With the new Upper Secondary School Act of 2008, it was necessary to amend all regulation governing education and training at that level. The changes to the journeyman's exam were not extensive, took more to the form than the content and organisation.

##### **Objectives**

The main objective was to set the framework with the journeyman's exam; who should organise them, carry them out and supervise that they are up to quality standards. The regulation also defines that the exams shall "guarantee as far as possible that the exams mirrors the study-demands, scope and organisation of each study path according to its general curricula and that students have equal rights everywhere in the country" (article 2. Source: Regulation on journeyman's exams, number 698/2009. Available in Icelandic at <http://www.reglugerd.is/interpro/dkm/WebGuard.nsf/b7fd33650490f8cf00256a07003476bb/cc7d1c803203bbe50025761d0066ae5e?OpenDocument>. Translation by text's author).

##### **Target groups**

Journeyman and students aiming for the journeyman's degree.

##### **Status of implementation**

The regulation was adopted 20. July 2009.

##### **Policy operation and delivery**

###### **Level of operation**

National. The regulation is a part of the overall VET policy.

**Key actors involved**

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
- Occupational Councils
- VET schools
- Workplaces offering on-the-job training.

**Evaluation:**

No assessment has been carried out.

**Indicators of success**

Better coordination and increased quality of journeyman's exams.

**Integration of outcomes** into a larger policy

The regulation is a part of the overall VET policy.

**Conclusions:****Obstacles encountered**

No obstacles were encountered.

**Issues remaining to be addressed**

None.

**Source, legend**

**REGULATION ON JOURNEYMAN'S EXAMS, NUMBER 698/2009. AVAILABLE IN ICELANDIC AT**  
<http://www.reglugerd.is/interpro/dkm/WebGuard.nsf/b7fd33650490f8cf00256a07003476bb/cc7d1c803203bbe50025761d0066ae5e?OpenDocument>.

## 5. ADDRESSING EQUITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

### 5.1 Addressing equity in VET

Equal access to all education and training (including VET) is one of the fundamental policies of the Icelandic system of education and training. Thus, people can (and do) access VET at any age over 16, with any background (e.g. they do not need to have passed the final exam of compulsory school) and they can get knowledge they have acquired in their lives assessed or tested and possibly gain study points.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

The strength of the VET system is how much is on offer and in how many places. With the establishment of the comprehensive schools in the 1970s and 1980s students could choose from a wider variety of study paths and transferring from one path to another became easier. Even though workplace training is still a strong element in most VET, more and more of “new professions” (e.g. media and computers) have been moved completely into the schools.

The main weakness is still the lack of interest in VET discussed in chapter 3.

Until at the end of 2008, there was ample room on the labour market for anyone who wanted to work and, from 2005-2008, thousands of foreign workers streamed into the labour market. Employers even made special calls to those already receiving old age or disability pensions to re-enter the labour market.

With the collapse of the financial system in October 2008, the weaknesses with the system first came vividly apparent. The first group to lose their jobs en masse were the immigrants, followed by others who had no formally recognised education and training. The number of disability pensioners grew again and young people were badly hit.

#### Example of initiative: Draft law on continuous education and training, 2010.

##### Outline

##### Rationale

The main reason for the necessity of the law was the need to “close the circle” of laws on education and training. In 2008, 4 new laws had been passed on

- pre-primary education
- compulsory education
- upper secondary education and
- the training and professional rights of teachers and other school staff.

The only component missing was specific measure for the (re) training of adults who had, for one reason or another, a low level of formally recognised education and training.

Another reason was the educational gap mentioned above, especially the large number of people with little or no formally recognised education and training.

##### Objectives

The main objective of the law was to provide education and training for people who had little or no recognised training. Here, continuous education is defined as “any type of education, measure or guidance which is designed in order to meet the needs of the individuals with short formal education and which is not already offered by upper secondary schools” (source: Draft law on continuous education, available in Icelandic at

<http://www.althingi.is/altext/138/s/0262.html>. Translation by text’s author).

Further objectives are to:

- a. give people with short education an opportunity for increased active citizenship;
- b. give them the adequate educational opportunities and ease the re-commencement of studies;
- c. to give people the opportunity to increase their employability and responsibility;

- d. create the sphere and measures to better meet the needs of the labour market for increased education and training;
- e. give people with study and/or work difficulties an education which suits their needs;
- f. increase the acknowledgement of the value of education which takes place outside the school system;
- g. enable people who have learned skills outside the official school system to have them validated;
- h. heighten the level of education and training in the country. (Source: *ibid*).

The law will change several components of education, e.g.:

- an increased offer of education which is carried out alongside work;
- increased emphasis on short courses which will give points students can use to study further;
- curricula which will be validated by the Ministry or special bodies nominated by it;
- quality control of those offering education and training;
- increased real-competence evaluations;
- a state supported fund which will grant funds to officially recognised centres offering education and training which can apply for it on a yearly basis;
- increased quality of education and training

### **Target groups**

The main target group is people with little or no recognised education and training. In the Icelandic context this means that most of these people have only completed compulsory education and that some of them may not even have passed their final exam.

### **Status of implementation**

The law had not been passed at the time of writing this input but was expected to be passed before the closure of Parliament in the spring of 2010.

### **Operation and delivery:**

**Level of operation** (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

National. The law is one of the four fundamental pillars of laws on education and training.

### **Key actors involved**

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture;
- social partners;
- Parliament.

### **Evaluation:**

No assessment has been carried out,

### **Indicators of success**

The main indication of success will be the number of people utilising the new measures to increase their education and training.

**Integration of outcomes** into a larger policy.

The law is a part of a larger national policy.

### **Conclusions**

#### **Obstacles encountered**

The law has taken a long time passing through the Parliament, which had nothing to do with its content but more with the fact that it was tabled just before the financial collapse and was

therefore repeatedly postponed so that parliamentarians could debate something felt to be more important.

### **Issues that remain to be addressed**

With the passage of the law, relevant regulations will have to be made and accepted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

### **Source, legend**

Draft law on continuous education, available in Icelandic at <http://www.althingi.is/altext/138/s/0262.html>

## **5.2 Support services for groups at risk**

One of the components of the support policy for young, unskilled people discussed in chapter 2 is guidance and counselling. Each Lifelong Learning Centre now receives specific funds for this initiative and all of them have employed professional counsellors to carry out the task. The Education and Training Service Centre (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) supervises the institutive and monitors its success and keeps a close eye on potential problems. See chapter 2 for further details.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

The strength of the initiative is that it is available everywhere in the country. The main weakness is how late it came. Many young people had already been unemployed for almost a year, without any offer on counselling (let alone a job or adequate training). For these people it is likely to become very difficult to turn back to a world of discipline and initiative, where they have to wake up in the morning and be active.

## **5.3 Active citizenship**

Active citizenship is one of the fundamental characters of the Icelandic society as can be seen in the high rate of participation in political debates and social and cultural life. New methods and tools (e.g. Facebook) have gained immense popularity and in 2008, the participation in the “kitchen revolution<sup>1</sup>” was so great that the government collapsed. Therefore, so far, there has not been any need to address active citizenship in VET specifically. In compulsory school, it is however one of the pillars of the education.

### **Example of initiative: Labour Market Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups - in light of the current global crisis 2009-2012**

#### **Outline**

##### **Rationale**

“Recent years we have seen an increase in the numbers of people who are incapacitated for work, causing increasing strain on the Nordic countries’ welfare systems. Thus there is much to be gained from reversing this trend by opening up new opportunities for vocational rehabilitation and a review of the social welfare system aimed at enabling people to take part in the generation of economic value for society. In order to enable people to become more active in society, it is necessary to consider all possible opportunities and remove obstacles” (source: <http://formennskadansk2009.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/Formennska2009/arbejde/utanforskap/Capacity-invitation-english.pdf> ). These lines from the invitation to a conference which initiated a five year Nordic (Icelandic, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish) project on employment for all, describe

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<sup>1</sup> named so because people used pots and pans and various other kitchen utensils to make noise outside the house of Parliament

the main objective of the project Labour Market Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups - in light of the current global crisis 2009-2012.

### **(Objectives/measurable targets**

The main objective with the project is that the Nordic countries coordinate better their activities for groups facing the risk of expulsion from the labour market.

These following questions will be asked:

- How do the Nordic Countries meet **these challenges**?
- With what kind of combined **strategies and measures**?
- How are they **implemented** – and with what kind of strength etc?
- What seem to be **good practices** – or not so good practices?
- What are the **results**?
- What can the Nordic Countries **learn from each other**?
- What might **other countries learn** from the Nordic Countries?

The project aims at producing a verity of written and audio-vision material which is aimed at both informing the officials of each of their countries of what is possible and, more to the point, the target groups of their possibilities.

### **Target groups**

The main target groups are:

- Youth at risk on the transmission from school to work (school dropouts, disabled youngsters, youngsters from immigrant families);
- Seniors at risk on unintended early retirement;
- Persons with mental health problems and/or diseases.

### **Status of implementation**

This is a Nordic pilot project.

### **Policy/measure operation and delivery**

#### **Level of operation**

Nordic – at national level in all countries. If the project is deemed successful, it will form one of the bases for the social policies of all the Nordic countries.

### **Key actors involved**

- Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues (coordinator)
- Ministries of welfare and social services in the Nordic countries
- Social partners.

### **Evaluation**

No assessment is available.

### **Indicators of success**

- Increased inclusion of people at the margin of the labour market;
- increased access to work for outsiders;
- rehabilitation and creation of good and adequate job opportunities to vulnerable persons;
- reduction of long term sickness leave and early labour market exits through disability benefits;
- reduction of the high and growing number of persons on permanent disability pensions.

### **Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

If the project is deemed successful, it will form one of the bases for the social policies of all the Nordic countries.

**Conclusions****Obstacles encountered**

Undoubtedly, the obstacles will be numerous with the current economic crisis where people who have no physical or psychological problems have difficulties getting and keeping work, let alone others!

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

Unknown.

**Source, legend**

**Halvorsen, Bjørn:** Labour Market Inclusion Policies in the Nordic Countries during the crisis.

Presentation at a conference, 10.11.2009. Slides available at

<http://formennskadansk2009.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/Formennska2009/arbejde/utanforskap/u-1.pptx>).

**Invitation to the above mention conference**

<http://formennskadansk2009.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/Formennska2009/arbejde/utanforskap/Capacity-invitation-english.pdf>)

## 6. QUALITY, EXCELLENCE AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

### 6.1 Improving the quality of VET

Constant work is in progress to improve the quality of VET provisions. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (menntamálaráðuneyti) leads the work with the active participation of the social partners and the schools. According to Upper Secondary School Act passed in 2008 several demands are made on all schools for increased quality control and stronger provisions are made for external evaluation. Following the act, several regulations have been passed, two of which will be discussed below.

Intern and extern evaluation in and of upper secondary schools are important tools for improving quality in VET as well as general education at this level.

#### Strengths and weaknesses

With the Upper Secondary School Act of 2008, schools will for the first time be responsible for the entire VET process. In the older law, workplaces were responsible for the on-the-job training, without having a coordinates system of quality control. The new Act makes provisions for official recognition of both schools and work places and the responsibility for the quality of each degree is much clearer.

As the Act is so recent, it is too early to tell what this means in real practice and whether the quality of VET will improve.

#### Example of initiative: Regulation on on-the-job training, 2009

##### Outline

##### Rationale

With the new Upper Secondary School Act of 2008, it was necessary to amend all regulation governing education and training at that level. With on-the-job training it was also necessary because the structure was amended, making the schools responsible for this part of VET as well as the part taking place at schools.

##### Objectives

The main objective was to make a regulatory framework for on-the-job training. This involves two contracts:

- a contract between students and the work-place stating salaries, working conditions, etc.
- a contract between the school and the work-place stating the content and frame of the training.

Each VET school is made responsible for making the latter contract for each of its students. In it the commencement of the workplace training is stated, planned finalisation and the rights and obligations of students, workplaces and schools respectively. The workplace is obliged to give the student a comprehensive training in his/her field and to teach him/her the treatment, care and utilisation of relevant material and equipment utilised in the trade.

A company must get a formal recognition to be allowed to train students. To get such recognition it must comply with a set of rules, e.g. to be able to offer a comprehensive tuition in the field. If it cannot do so, it can cooperate with another company which can supply the missing tuition.

##### Target groups

The main target group is students studying for the journeyman's exam in certified trades, where workplace training is an integrate part of the overall training.

**Status of implementation**

The regulation was adopted on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2009.

**Policy/measure operation and delivery****Level of operation**

National. The regulation is a part of the overall VET policy.

**Key actors involved**

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
- Occupational Councils
- VET schools
- Workplaces offering on-the-job training.

**Evaluation**

No assessment has been carried out.

**Indicators of success**

The main indicator of success will be a better coordination of the training taking part at workplaces and the studies which happen at schools. Better workplace training is another indicator.

**Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

The regulation is a part of the overall VET policy.

**Conclusions****Obstacles encountered**

No obstacles were encountered.

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

None.

**Source, legend**

**Regulation on on-the-job training number 697/2009.** Available in Icelandic at

<http://www.reglugerd.is/interpro/dkm/WebGuard.nsf/b7fd33650490f8cf00256a07003476bb/540f0e1cab592850025761d0065e4f0?OpenDocument>.

**Examples of initiatives to implement the European quality assurance reference framework (EQARF).**

Iceland had decided to participate in the EQARF but work on the framework is still on the initial phase and cannot be reported here.

**6.2 Promoting excellence in VET**

No such official policy exists. However, the Federation of Icelandic Industries has initiated a programme in which workplaces can seek financial support to train people. A special attention is given to sectors where it has been difficult for students to get training places. Source Samtök iðnaðarins: <http://www.si.is/malaflokkar/menntamal-og-fraedsla/vinnustadakennslustyrkur-si/>. This will be further discussed in chapter 8.

### **6.3 Higher level qualifications in VET**

Post-secondary education and training is still fairly limited, but growing. It is hoped that the Upper Secondary School Act of 2008 will encourage schools to initiate new such programmes but so far, no progress can be described in that field.

**Examples** of higher level qualifications introduced in your country.

Different courses are offered at various institutions, all of which are public and vocational and provide certification for well-defined professions:

- masters of trade;
- assistance nurses for the elderly;
- marine engineering and captains 4th grade
- tour guides;
- industrial technicians;
- some specialized professions in agriculture.

Recently the Reykjavík Technical Collage (Tækniskóli Íslands) has added two pathways: sound technology and light technology but as they are so new, it is too early to tell whether they will continue.

### **6.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems**

Since the establishment of the comprehensive upper secondary schools (*fjölbrautarskólar*) in the 1970s and 1980s, moving from one study field to another has been relatively easy. The schools are based on a three tier division: core subjects for all students, different paths and electives. Study points for the first and third tier can be used even when changing study paths. The study paths themselves also make it easy for students to change their minds within each path. To take an example: all students in the building sector start with the same curriculum in the first year and only after that go to different departments. If e.g. a student who originally planned to be a painter decides to become a house builder (s)he will only have “wasted” the minimum of hours.

With the Upper Secondary School Act of 2008, it is also supposed to become easier for students to move horizontally between schools. Thus, the final exams from vocational schools are supposed to give the same rights to study at university as does the general Matriculation Exam.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

The small size of the system is at the same time its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. It is transparent and e.g. all headmasters know what papers from other schools mean so that when a student chooses to change schools (s)he does not need a long time to explain what skills (s)he already has.

At the same time the system has mainly been criticised for not offering enough possibilities. VET in general takes 4 years and contains a lot of general subjects students have to master, which makes life difficult for those who e.g. deal with dyslexia or other study problems. Supporters of the current structure point out that short study paths might not serve the students in the long run, they might graduate with a speciality for which there might be no need and not be able to get out of a blind alley.

#### **Examples of the initiatives**

No recent initiatives exist.

### **6.5 Teachers and trainers**

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

The main strengths of the teaching profession is how well educated teachers are and how much research has been carried out in the field.

The main weakness is that teachers do not enjoy a very high status in the society and teaching is often seen as an option only for those who cannot find anything else to do or are getting up in the years.

Another weakness is that the teaching profession has gradually become a field dominated by women. In compulsory schools almost all teachers are women and in upper secondary and tertiary schools they are a majority. VET teachers are still of both genders. While it is not maintained here that women are worse teachers than men, it has become apparent that lack of male role-models in schools makes many boys think of school as “girly”, a place where they do not feel at home and want to stay in.

### **Example of initiative: Act on the Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Pre-School, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School number 87/2008**

#### **Outline**

##### **Rationale**

The Act was one of the four passed in 2008 and formed an (almost complete) framework for all education and training in Iceland.

##### **Objectives/measurable targets**

The Act covers all teachers, VET teachers among them. The main difference with this Act and the one which was valid before it, is that teachers’ training from 2011 it will take 6 years (Master studies) instead of 3 (Bachelors’ studies).

General VET teachers must have this degree from a university and vocational subject teachers must have a master of trade certificate and 60 credits of pedagogical studies at a university (source [http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Log\\_um\\_kennaramenntun\\_ENSKA.pdf](http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Log_um_kennaramenntun_ENSKA.pdf))

Research in pedagogical issues will be given increased weight when all teachers will have to deliver a Masters’ thesis. The former Educational University of Iceland and now the University of Iceland – School of Education have for many years conducted extensive research on teaching in all its details. Thus, the University of Iceland now operates 14 research units and four research groups in the field with the aim to:

- a) have the initiative and do research in the field;
- b) be the cooperative sphere for researchers in the field and with researchers from other fields;
- c) cooperate and liaise with those who form the policy and coordinate actions in the field;
- d) cooperate with foreign researchers;
- e) give masters’ and doctorate’s students theoretical training and experience in scientific methods by giving them the opportunity of conducting research and carrying out study projects coordinated by the research unit;
- f) try to get a complete overview over research in the field, disseminated knowledge with e.g. publishing results and theoretical papers and giving lectures;
- g) give advice and other service in the field as far as possible.

Source: <http://www.hi.is/is/menntavisindasvid/rannsoknir/rannsoknarstofur>.

For decades, teachers’ salaries were raised according to study points they would earn through continuous education. Thus, studying was not only a reward in itself; it also contributed towards the income. This was abolished in the contracts signed between teachers and the state/municipalities in the 1990s. However, there is still a strong tradition among teachers to add to their knowledge and the University of Iceland offers a wide range of courses. For VET teachers, they must keep up with development in their trades of fear losing their jobs to someone who does!

**Target groups**

All teachers

**Status of implementation**

Even though the Act was passed in 2008, teachers and schools are governed by the older Act until 2011 and thus, the Act is not in place yet.

**Policy/measure operation and delivery:****Level of operation**

National. It is part of an overall policy.

Key actors involved (main institutions involved in adopting and carrying out the measure).

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture;
- Parliament;
- teachers' Unions.

**Evaluation:**

No assessment is available.

**Indicators of success**

Once the new Act is in place in 2011, the professional standards of teachers in general will increase considerably.

**Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

The Act is part of an overall policy.

**Conclusions:****Obstacles encountered**

No obstacles were encountered.

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

None.

**Source, legend**

**Act on the Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Pre-School, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School number 87/2008.** Available in English at [http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Log\\_um\\_kennaramenntun\\_ENSKA.pdf](http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Log_um_kennaramenntun_ENSKA.pdf)

## 7. ENHANCING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

### 7.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

One of the few positive consequences of the present financial crisis has been that innovation and creativity have bloomed like never before. Most of it comes directly from the grassroots, people have felt the need to make something new instead of just hanging around waiting for a solution from the authorities. Both the state and several municipalities have given these imitative some support. Here are a few examples:

- companies which have been validated as “innovative” by the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannsóknamiðstöð Íslands) are able to employ people who have registered for unemployment benefits. The state still pays them the unemployment benefit and the company pay the difference between this and the salaries they would normally get;
- the municipality of Reykjavík and Orkuveita Reykjavíkur have given entrepreneurs (architects, VET professionals, etc.) access to a huge building where they neither have to pay rent nor for any utilities (electricity, water, etc.). In this building they will design prototypes for new goods which will be sold to the public;
- several university centres have been opened around Iceland where innovation centres are placed. They pay subsidised rent and get support with carrying out their projects;
- women in innovation have been given additional support. Courses to encourage them to start, and teach them how, a company are held twice a year at the Innovation Centre of Iceland (see further in example below). The Enterprise Europe Network is located at the Innovation Centre and it also participates in the program EU Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors;
- the University of Iceland and the University of Reykjavík have both opened innovative centres where their students can get assistance in making something new and/or starting their own companies.

#### **Innovations in the pedagogical content/curricula generally**

No direct mention is on innovation in the national curricula for upper secondary schools published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for each profession.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

The strength of the push for innovation can be seen in how many now participate in some project or another and the support of various kinds which can be obtained.

The main weakness has been difficulties getting the necessary capital to turn all the bright ideas into real production. The main emphasis of the economic policy in recent years has been in attracting big foreign investment and opening e.g. aluminium smelters which employ a lot of people. Small-scale investment with public funds has received little attention and the banks have been reluctant to lend money into such high risk ventures. Inventor and entrepreneurs have therefore either had to start their businesses on funds they have been able to gather among family and friends or go abroad. This may be changing slightly after the collapse of the banking system and the realisation that big solutions may not necessarily be good solutions.

#### **Example of initiative: Imprá, Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands (Imprá, the Innovation Centre Iceland)**

##### **Outline**

##### **Rationale**

Imprá was established in 1998 as the main governmental support to innovation and start up companies. At that time, it was located at the Technological Institute of Iceland, which was merged with the Building Research Institute in 2007 to form the Innovation Centre Iceland.

It is now a leading research and development and business support institute.

Its mission is to increase innovation, productivity and competitiveness of Icelandic business by carrying out innovative technology research, diffusing knowledge and giving support to entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

Impra:

- assists entrepreneurs in the start-up, growth and management of SMEs;
- operates an Incubator Centre which offers support and facilities to start-up companies working on innovative business ideas;
- offers extensive internet information services, workshops and courses for SMEs and the general public and publishes books and manuals on management, marketing, and more;
- runs an Enterprise Europe Network office (EEN) to encourage cooperation between Icelandic and European companies (source <http://www.nmi.is/english/>).

### **Objectives**

Impra has the following objectives:

- to assist inventors and entrepreneurs in evaluating business ideas and provide counselling on start-up, growth and management of SMEs. The department offers workshops and courses for SMEs and the general public and popular support programmes for women entrepreneurs. Extensive internet information services and publications on management, marketing, etc.;
- to operate an Incubator Centre which offers support and facilities to start-up companies working on innovative business ideas, and hosts the Enterprise Europe Network coordinating office in Iceland to encourage cooperation between Icelandic and European SMEs. Entrepreneurs can work on their prototypes and get the theoretical and practical support they need, e.g. subsidised rent, utilisation of meeting rooms, telephone service and the access to Impra's support net of companies and staff. Entrepreneurs get support in getting the patent for their ideas and registering their companies;
- to be a centre of information and guidance for entrepreneurs and small businesses, regardless of the sector to which they belong. Impra operates centres in Reykjavík, Akureyri, Ísafirði, Höfn, Egilsstöðum, Húsavík, Sauðárkrókur and the Vestmannaeyjar islands. Impra has also published a variety of leaflets on how to start a company and sell products;
- to carry out special support projects for small companies, including foreign cooperation (e.g. the Enterprise Europe Network);
- to give advice to the public administration on innovation and improved conditions for operating small and medium-sized companies;
- to be the coordinator of the association of businesswomen, which main objective is to serve the interest of women who run companies, enhance their cooperation and solidarity;
- to give information (both in the form of courses and answering enquires) to all those who might be interested in establishing their own company.

### **Target groups**

- Entrepreneurs,
- people with good ideas for new products,
- anyone interested in new technology and the possibilities "out there".

### **Status of implementation**

Impra has been operated since 1998 and several new companies have been established due to its support. Statistics on how many they are in total and how many are still in operation is not available.

Requests to Impra about all kinds of matters dealing with the business environment in Iceland are around 6 000 per year. Around 600 women have taken courses for start ups at Impra and started their own companies. Other courses dealing with innovation support are held and some participant starts their own companies following that.

### **Policy/measure operation and delivery**

#### **Level of operation**

National. Law on public support with technical research, innovation and the development of employment (*Lög um opinberan stuðning við tæknirannsóknir, nýsköpun og atvinnuþróun*) number 75/2007 defines the framework for the Innovation Centre Iceland. This forms a part of the overall employment policy and is seen as a vital part of the policy of increasing Iceland's competitiveness and to increase the quality of life in the country.

#### **Key actors involved**

- Impra's staff
- Innovation Centre Iceland's staff
- Ministry of Industry.

#### **Evaluation**

The Institute of Social Sciences carried out an assessment on Impra's Incubation Centre in Akureyri (north Iceland) 2006. The main results were:

- 90% of participants had already been able to produce a new good or service;
- 88.7% had gained increased knowledge on the creation and operation of companies;
- 76.7% had made a business plan;
- 37.6 had been able to get the necessary funding to start a company;
- 10.3% had registered a patent.

Source: Institute of Social Sciences, University of Iceland: Úttekt á árangri af verkefnum Impru nýsköpunarmiðstöðvar á Akureyri. Available in Icelandic at [http://www.nmi.is/files/IMPRA%20SKÝRSLA%20LOKADRÖG\\_375591319.pdf](http://www.nmi.is/files/IMPRA%20SKÝRSLA%20LOKADRÖG_375591319.pdf).

#### **Indicators of success**

The main indicators of success are:

- number of companies getting support of any kind;
- number of people attending courses;
- number of registered patents;
- number of registered new companies;
- survival rate of these companies in 1, 5 and 10 years.

#### **Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

Innovation has been receiving increased attention in the last few years and Impra's success is undoubtedly one of the reasons for this.

#### **Conclusions**

##### **Obstacles encountered**

Laws and regulations keep changing in the field of innovation. Although this is not directly an obstacle, it has made it necessary for the Innovation Centre Iceland's staff to be constantly aware of the legal background on which they are advising their clients.

### **Issues that remain to be addressed**

The main issue needing be addressed in increased financing of innovative measures and companies.

### **Source, legend**

Law on public support with technical research, innovation and the development of employment (Lög um opinberan stuðning við tæknirannsóknir, nýsköpun og atvinnuþróun) number 75/2007 (available in Icelandic at <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/137/2007075.html>).

Innovation Centre Iceland: <http://nmi.is/>

Impra: <http://nmi.is/impra/>

## **7.2 Improving quality of teaching**

No mention is made on innovative pedagogies and learning strategies and practice, use of new technologies, creation of networks of practitioners for exchange ideas, testing new resources and teaching methods neither in the Act on the Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Pre-School, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School nor in the regulation on the content of the studies to become a teacher at pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

See above.

## **7.3 Innovation-friendly institutions**

A regulation on a specific fund for innovation in pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary school was passed in February 2009 (see example below).

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

The regulation is too new to be able to use as an indicator for strength and/or weaknesses.

### **Example of initiative: Regulation on the Innovation Fund for Pre-primary, Compulsory and Upper Secondary Education, 2009.**

#### **Outline**

##### **Rationale**

The older Development Fund for Education had been established as a part of an older policy in education and training and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture felt the need for a new regulation in line with a new set of laws.

##### **Objectives**

The Fund's main objective is to support development and innovation in pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools. The schools can apply for a grant to support certain projects, either as individual schools or in a cooperation of several schools. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture advertised these grants on an annual basis and in the advertisement it is explained what the main theme of the current year is and how much money has been allocated.

##### **Target groups**

Pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary schools.

##### **Status of implementation**

The regulation was passed in February 2009.

**Policy/measure operation and delivery****Level of operation**

National. It is part of the overall national policy on education and training.

**Key actors involved**

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

**Evaluation**

No assessment has been carried out.

**Indicators of success**

Interest in the fund and many applications and grants.

**Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

Innovation has been receiving increased attention in the last few years and Impra's success is undoubtedly one of the reasons for this.

The fund is part of the overall national policy on education and training.

**Conclusions:****Obstacles encountered.**

None.

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

With the government trying to cut the budget in every possible way, it can be expected that finding money for the fund may turn out to be difficult in coming years.

**Source, legend**

**Regulation on the Innovation Fund for Pre-primary, Compulsory and Upper Secondary Education**, number 242/2009. Available in Icelandic at

<http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>

**7.4 Encouraging partnership**

No such policy exists.

## **8. FINANCING VET**

### **8.1 Improving efficiency, equity, levels of VET funding**

There has been no recent major change in the funding of VET. The regulation on on-the-job training number 697/2009 states that a fund for on the job training will be established but this had not taken place yet. In the meantime, the Federation of Icelandic Industries has established a specific fund for workplace training (see example below).

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

Employers who train apprentices as part of a journeyman's education have for some time criticised the costs this involves. They point out that even though the apprentices carry out some valuable work towards the end of their contract, most of the time they cost the employers more than they produce. The state will meet these costs with the new fund but, because of the financial crisis, it is uncertain when it will commence and how much it can contribute. The new fund created by the Federation of Icelandic Industries shows an initiative by employers themselves which can serve as an example on the funding of workplace training.

#### **Example of initiative: Federation of Icelandic Industries' Workplace Training Fund, 2009.**

##### **Outline**

##### **Rationale**

The demand for workplace training is greater than the supply in many sectors. Due to the small size of the majority of Icelandic companies, many employers are not able to bear alone the costs it involves to hire an apprentice. Apprentices receive a part of the salaries of fully trained people (the percentage grows as the training progresses) but do in the beginning not produce a lot plus they demand the attention of their masters of trade to teach them how things are done. The example of goldsmiths has e.g. been widely discussed. Most companies employ one or two people (the owner and maybe one additional person) and each year the number of young people applying to study the trade is several hundred percentage higher than the number of training places. By paying companies to employ apprentices the Federation of Icelandic Industries hopes that more companies will be able to employ them.

##### **Objectives**

The main objective is to support companies in sectors where it is been difficult to get a training place in hiring apprentices who need workplace training as part of their vocational education towards a certified trade. Each year 10 million IKR will be allocated to the Fund from which companies can apply for grants twice a year. The leaders of the Federation call on the state to allocate at least the same amount to the fund. Each time a particular sector will be specially targeted and the amount granted to each company may vary. Each company will receive the maximum of 50% of the additional costs it involves to hire an apprentice.

##### **Target groups**

Workplaces that need additional funding to be able to train apprentices.

##### **Status of implementation**

The fund was initiated in November 2009 and allocated its first grants at the end of year.

**Policy/measure operation and delivery:****Level of operation**

The Federation of Icelandic Industries calls for the state to participate in the fund but so far, this has not happened.

**Key actors involved).**

Federation of Icelandic Industries.

**Evaluation**

No assessment has been carried out.

**Indicators of success**

The main indicator of success will be time; i.e. how long the Federation will be able to offer this support to employers. As everywhere else, it will be difficult to find the money!

**Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

Innovation has been receiving increased attention in the last few years and Impira's success is undoubtedly one of the reasons for this.

**Conclusions****Obstacles encountered**

Unknown.

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

The State will have to decide whether to support this Fund or establish its own.

**Source, legend**

Federation of Icelandic Industries

<http://www.si.is/malaflokkar/menntamal-og-fraedsla/vinnustadakennslustyrkur-si/>

**8.2 Use of Lifelong Learning Programme funds**

Iceland has participated in the Lifelong Learning Programme since its commencement and, before that was initiated, in both the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes. VET schools have been able to draw great benefits from the latter programme (see example below).

**Strengths and weaknesses**

It is difficult to see any weaknesses connected to the participation in these European programmes. Due to the interest and the active participation of everyone involved, Iceland has been able to draw much higher support per capita from these schemes than many other European countries, even though they are members of the European Union! The participation has however given a lot of benefits apart from partly funding mobility programmes and pilot projects e.g. getting new ideas on educational pathways, curricula and recognition of informal and non formal learning.

**Example of initiative: Participation in the Leonardo da Vinci programme (since 1995).****Outline****Rationale**

The reasons for taking part in the Leonardo da Vinci programmes are many:

- gaining better knowledge how other European nations conduct their VET in order to learn from them;
- to open possibilities for students, teachers and others to go on study visits abroad;
- to participate in the design, implementation and operation of all sorts of cooperative projects in VET.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives are:

- to support people's participation in continuous education and re-training which has the objective of increasing their knowledge and skills and enhance their personal development;
- to increase the quality of VET and enhance innovation at educational and training institutions and at training workplaces;
- to increase the attractiveness of VET among employers and people in general and to support VET students' mobility.

### **Target groups**

The main target groups are:

- VET schools;
- public institutions;
- private businesses;
- NGOs connected to VET.

### **Status of implementation**

Since its beginning, the Leonardo da Vinci has allocated over 16 million Euro to different institutions. The biggest receivers have been VET schools, educational centres providing (re)training for different groups of employees, companies (for re-training their staff) and NGOs. Details on the allocation of funds for the years 2007-2009 can be found in Icelandic at

<http://leonardo.is/id/343>.

### **Policy/measure operation and delivery**

**Level of operation** (national, regional, local, or sectoral level).

National. Participation in the Lifelong Learning Programme is part of the national policy on education and training.

### **Key actors involved**

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture;
- Research Liaison Office of the University of Iceland (in charge of Leonardo da Vinci);
- all those receiving funds from the programme.

### **Evaluation**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture published a report on the implementation of the Socrates and Leonardo programmes in 2007.

There the main findings on the LdV were:

- the implantation of Leonardo II in Iceland has been a success;
- the programme has given varied opportunities to motivated individuals and groups of individuals to pursue, promote and disseminate new ideas and practises into the system, while at the same time not transforming it in any fundamental aspects;
- LdV has met a distinct a need within the vocational system as the participation of Iceland has been very active and on par with most if not all other participating nations
- identified target groups have been penetrated successfully during the period;

- the number of applications indicates that there is strong interest in the programme and that activities correspond to national needs.

Source: **Ministry of Education, Science and Culture:** Icelandic National Report on the Implementation of the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes, 15/09/2009. Available in English at <http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/ldv-socrates-2007-2-iceland.pdf>.

#### **Indicators of success**

- High participation rates in mobility projects;
- High number of quality applications for pilot projects/transfer of innovation projects;
- Good knowledge on the LdV programme throughout the relevant groups in society.

#### **Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

It is beyond doubt that all the different input Iceland has received through participating in the Leonardo da Vinci programme has affected the national educational policy both directly and indirectly. The window to what is happening in the rest of Europe has been opened and headmasters, administrators and policy makers have seen what others do, how they do it and whether it could possibly fit into the Icelandic system and improve it. As can be seen elsewhere in this report, the Research Liaison Office of the University of Iceland which is in charge of LdV, participated in the recent policy analysis carried out by the Ministry of Education, Training and Culture and was thus able to utilise many of the aspects learned by the LdV.

#### **Conclusions**

##### **Obstacles encountered**

The low interest in VET mentioned elsewhere in this report is the greatest obstacle for the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

##### **Issues that remain to be addressed**

Unknown

##### **Source, legend**

**Leonardo da Vinci:** <http://leonardo.is/>

**Ministry of Education, Science and Culture:** Icelandic national report on the implementation of the Socrates and Leonardo programmes, 15/09/2009. Available in English at <http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/ldv-socrates-2007-2-iceland.pdf>.

### **8.3 Use of other EU funds**

Iceland is not a member of the European Union and has therefore not received any EU funding from the funds mentioned above.

### **8.4 Improving VET governance**

With the Upper Secondary School Act number 92 2008 (available in English at [http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Upper\\_secondary\\_school\\_Act.pdf](http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Upper_secondary_school_Act.pdf)), a fundamental change was made to the governance of VET. Schools were given much more scope to initiate new study programmes, VET students have the same rights to enter university as general students and schools are responsible for the work-place training which forms part of VET.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

See chapter 1

## **Example of initiative: Upper Secondary School Act, 2008.**

### **Outline**

#### **Rationale**

The main rationale behind the legislation was to open up the system of education and training and make the transition between levels (primary – upper secondary and upper –secondary – tertiary) and between subjects (e.g. between VET and general education) smoother and easier. Thus it is stated that: “Pupils transferring between institutions that operate according to National Curriculum Guide for upper secondary schools have the right to have their former studies validated for course units in the receiving institution as long as those correspond to the school curriculum guide and the study programme description in question. Study units that do not correspond to the core subjects for the relevant study programme, shall be validated as elective courses” (article 31).

#### **Objectives**

The main objective was to increase the number of people graduating with upper secondary qualifications of some sort.

#### **Target groups**

The target group was all young people.

#### **Status of implementation**

The Act was passed in June 2008.

#### **Policy/measure operation and delivery**

##### **Level of operation**

The legislation is on a national level and will govern all other policy measures in upper secondary education and training from pre-primary through post-secondary to tertiary education and training. The Act is a big part of a general change in the policy for education and training at all levels.

#### **Key actors involved**

The key actors involved are many: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*menntamálaráðuneyti*) led the work but called in all relevant bodies for consultations. Of these, the Occupational Councils (*Starfsgreinaráð*) (mostly manned by social partners) and representatives from schools, teachers, parents and counsellors were the leading actors. The Act is based partly on work carried out by a specific committee set up by the Minister of Education with the purpose of proposing a restructuring of vocational education and training. Rather than focus on just that aspect, the committee chose to suggest that all education and training be changed in order to decrease any difficulties in moving between general education and VET (source *Nýr framhaldsskóli, skýrsla starfsnámsnefndar*. Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Available in Icelandic at <http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/starfsnamsnefnd.pdf>

#### **Evaluation**

No assessment has been carried out.

**Indicators of success**

The main indication of success will be an increased number of students graduating from upper secondary schools with either a general Matriculation exam or a VET degree.

Specific indicators of success for VET will be a higher percentage of students completing VET and a smoother and easier progress through their educational and training period.

**Integration of outcomes into a larger policy**

The Act is the framework for all regulations etc. on upper secondary education and training.

**Conclusions****Obstacles encountered**

No obstacles were encountered.

**Issues that remain to be addressed**

Following the Act, several regulations have since been passed and National curricula set for various pathways. There are still some regulations in the pipelines and the on-the-job training fund stipulated in the Act remains to be formed.

**Source, legend**

**UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL ACT NUMBER 02/2008. AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AT**  
[http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Upper\\_secondary\\_school\\_Act.pdf](http://www.nymenntastefna.is/media/frettir/Upper_secondary_school_Act.pdf).

## **9. PROGRESS IN MODERNISING EUROPEAN VET SYSTEMS IN THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE COOPERATION**

### **9.1 Impact of European cooperation in VET on development of national VET policies**

European cooperation in education and training in general has been one of the fundamental reasons for a complete revival of all laws and regulation governing the field in Iceland. Iceland participates in both the Bologna process and the Copenhagen process and has adopted all the relevant European tools for cooperation. Several such examples are discussed elsewhere in this report.

### **9.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level**

Iceland has participated in all the European cooperation connected to the framework of “Education and Training 2010” work programme. In 2009 a detailed report was compiled by the Research Liaison Office of the University of Iceland for the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, on what had already been accomplished and what remained to be done (available in English at [http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/ET\\_2010\\_Iceland\\_english\\_translation.pdf](http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/ET_2010_Iceland_english_translation.pdf)).

The work was set out with the notion that “most Icelanders are familiar with the European Union’s cooperation programmes for education and training, as thousands of Icelanders have enjoyed the benefits of participation in teacher or student exchange or in some other European cooperation project under the Socrates or Leonardo da Vinci programmes. Fewer know of the efforts of the European Union in which Iceland takes part that are geared towards improvements of Europe’s education systems” (source: *ibid* p. 8). Therefore, the debating process behind the report itself was the fundamental pillar of the work. A method called “open method of coordination” as used to call **all** relevant people to the table in several rounds of debate on various sub-issues and the main issue (a big conference). People were literally challenged to state even their most controversial opinions and how they felt the system of education and training could or should be improved.

The groups’ findings were presented at a conference to officials at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, who later used it for further work on educational and training policy. In his speech at the conference Mr. Arnór Guðmundsson, the Director of Education at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture stated: “The educational policy marked by the new legislation in many ways echoes the emphases of the EU in education and training. Here one could mention emphases on lifelong learning, key competence, learning outcomes, qualification framework, reducing dropout from learning, increasing the quality of teacher education and enhancing the relationship between education and the employment sector, including with real skills evaluation... If one considers the indicators that have been set for progress towards the objectives set by the EU for the year 2010 it comes to light that much could have been done better in this country. Though opinions differ as to whether these are the true indicators of results in the education system, it is unavoidable that we take seriously the indications, such as of declining reading skills and of significant dropout from education. New policy and legislation in the Icelandic education system is intended to create the prerequisites for strengthening the Icelandic education system in these and other areas. The implementation of the new education policy and legislation that is ahead will have to be subject to evaluation against such indicators of results, while each step taken in the coming months will be monitored to see where they lead. Thus the process of implementation, execution and quality assurance will have to be followed continuously” (source Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: Policy-making for LIFELONG LEARNING - The Development of Education Policy in Iceland in the context of Europe

[http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/ET\\_2010\\_Iceland\\_english\\_translation.pdf](http://bella.mrn.stjr.is/utgafur/ET_2010_Iceland_english_translation.pdf) p. 8).

### **9.3 External dimension of European cooperation in VET**

No such cooperation has taken place.

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### **10.3 List of acronyms**

List the acronyms mentioned in this report in alphabetical order. Provide an explanation in the native language with an English translation.