

EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN ICELAND



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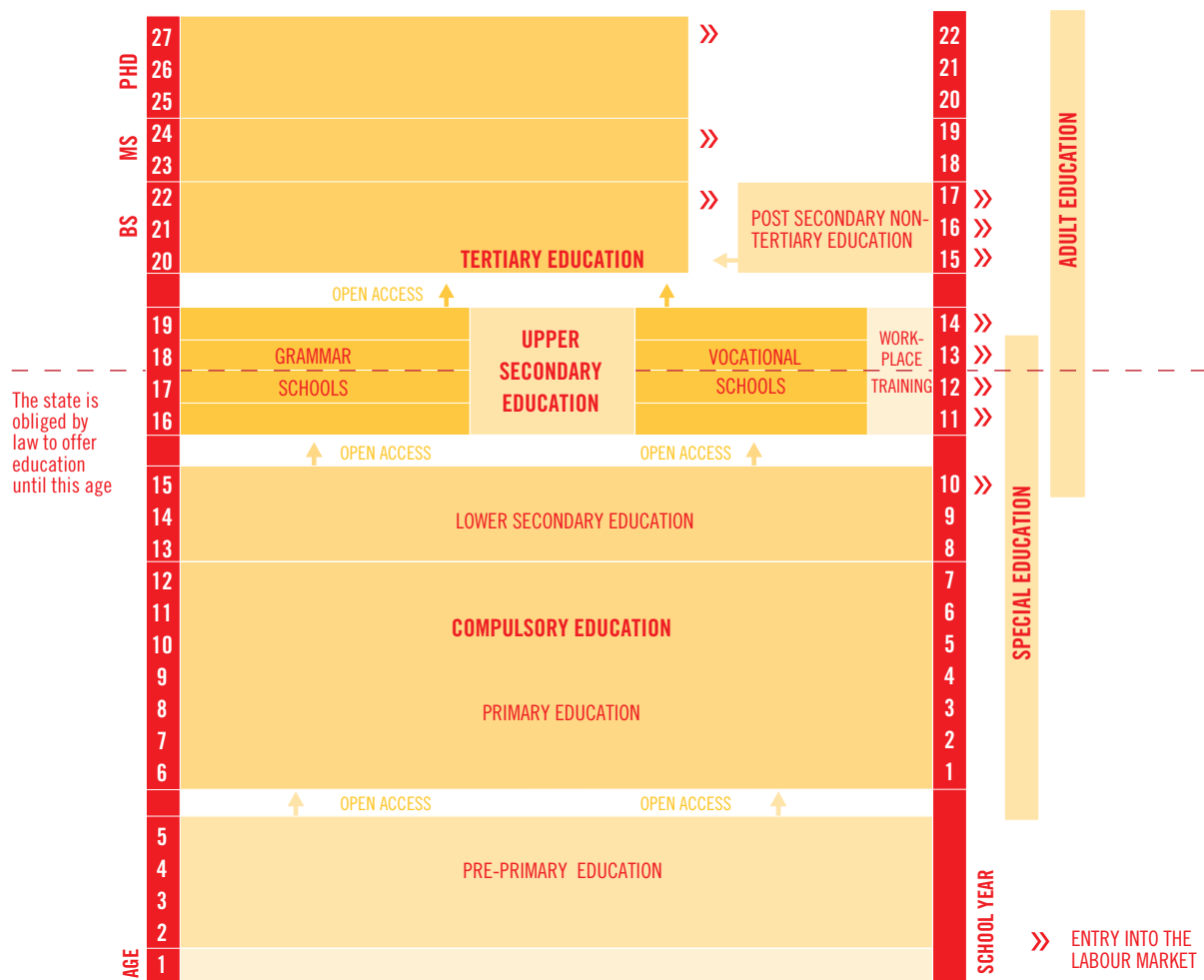
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The Icelandic education and training system





The Icelandic system of education and training

1. OVERVIEW

RESPONSIBILITIES

Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector, and there are very few private education institutions. Municipalities are responsible for compulsory and the state for post compulsory education and training. It also monitors that educational laws and regulations are followed at compulsory level.

- **The Ministry of Education**, Science and Culture is overall responsible for almost all public initial education and training. The municipalities bear the responsibility of compulsory education but overall guidelines are issued by the Ministry. The Ministry designs a policy and national curricula for upper secondary schools, which report directly to the Ministry. Standard frameworks for workplace training (contracts) are also designed by the Ministry and training workplaces are obliged to use them. The occupational counsels (manned by social partners and the Ministry) work with the Ministry in planning, development and analysis of changes in skills needs;

- **The Ministry of Education** also bears the overall responsibility for education and training for the labour market. Continuous vocational education and training of people at work is the responsibility of this Ministry and training is governed by it;
- **The Ministry of Social Services** subsidises education and training for the unemployed and two institutions operate under it: the Occupational Council (which is also manned by representatives of the social partners) which awards grants for vocational training and acts in an advisory capacity; and the Directorate of Labour which is in charge of unemployment registration and public employment offices;
- **The Ministry of Communication** is the responsible body for seafarers' qualifications, whereas the Ministry of Education and Science issues the curricula.

1.1. GENERAL VERSUS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

General education and training, with the ultimate aim of a university degree, has been much more popular in Iceland than vocational education and training. This may be changing slightly as more graduates from upper secondary schools (holding a matriculation exam) now commence vocational schools. The possibilities of vocational tertiary education are also increasing and a polytechnic institute opened in the autumn of 2008.



1.2. EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

Around 90% of all compulsory school leavers start upper secondary education but the drop out in both upper secondary and tertiary education is very high and Iceland is among the European nations with the highest percentage of early school leavers. It is estimated that between 30-40% of all adults had neither upper secondary vocational qualification nor university education in 2005 (GHK report).

One of the main reasons for the high drop out seems to be that there has been almost no unemployment in Iceland for many years and it used to be easy to get a job without having any particular skills. Many students (no reliable figures are available for the whole country but in some upper secondary schools it is more than the half) start working alongside their studies, which increases the likelihood of low success rates at the school, which again increases the likelihood of dropping out. In other words, most early school leavers can be defined as either 'positive leavers' (leaving in order to take up a job) or 'opportunistic leavers' (have not decided on what they want but take an available job and may later return to school)¹.

Unlike most other countries in Europe, unskilled people under 35 years of age are more likely to be employed than those who have higher educational skills². One reason for this may be that the latter group is still studying and therefore not employed. The population group 55 years or older shows a similar trend, which can probably be explained by lack of educational opportunities in their youth.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture appointed a special task force early in 2007 to put forth suggestions on how to decrease school drop-out. The group's main recommendations were to increase educational and vocational counselling, both in primary and secondary schools, to ensure that all guidance counsellors have the relevant university education (see chapter on vocational and educational guidance) and to appoint a special project manager in the Ministry of Education who would be in charge of implementing counselling policies. It is also recommended that a national forum on counselling be established.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Subsidised but not completely free pre-primary education is offered by all municipalities to children aged from 2-5. Some municipalities also offer nursery schools for children from 1-2 years of age. Over the past decades, the educational content of the programme on offer has been growing, especially during the children's last year of pre-primary school and cooperation between pre-primary and primary schools has been increasing.

¹ The classification of early school leavers by P. Dwyer is quoted in the GHK report p. 57

² Based on an OECD's education at a glance, quoted in the GHK report p. 96



3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory education extends to primary and lower secondary levels and covers children aged 6-16 and is regulated by law number 91/2008 [available in Icelandic at <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>]. School is divided into ten grades. It is possible for students to take courses at upper-secondary school level during their last two years in compulsory schools, if they are thought to be able to master the subjects in question.

Municipalities are responsible for the operation of compulsory education and pay for instruction, administration and specialist services as well as establishing and running the schools. There are also a few private compulsory schools which all receive financial assistance from the municipalities in tandem with pupil fees. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the nationally coordinated curricula of core subjects and carries out central (not compulsory) examinations for all school leavers in several subjects.

Over 90% of compulsory school leavers enter upper-secondary schools straight after graduation.

4. UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION


Upper secondary education is the responsibility of the state but there are a few private schools, which receive public subsidies.

The law on upper secondary education³ allows for varied admission requirements to different programmes according to course demands. Anyone who has completed compulsory or equivalent education or is 16 years old, can enter any upper secondary school, where the state is obliged by law to offer them at least two years of education, even though they are not obliged to take it.

Some schools offer what is called “a general programme”, which is specifically for students who did not have good grades from compulsory school. Some students need assistance in a single subject but are able to attend regular classes in others while others need counselling and assistance in several subjects. Many are fighting problems such as dyslexia, physical or psychological disorders (e.g. ADHD), history of substance abuse and lack of discipline. The main objective with these general programmes is that students become gradually capable of moving into other programmes. It is however obvious that many students are not able to do so and will need individual support throughout their lives.

The duration of upper secondary school programmes can be between one semester and four years.

³ Number 92/2008, available in Icelandic at <http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/log-og-reglugerdir/>



Upper secondary schools can be divided into two main types; those who offer some sort of vocational education and training and those who do not (grammar schools):

- grammar schools, offering only general education. Graduates can enter universities but do not have direct rights to certain jobs;
- schools offering vocational education and training. Most of these schools offer a combination of general and vocational education and training, where students can graduate with a general degree, a vocational degree or both. Graduates with general education (Matriculation exam) can enter universities but do not have direct rights to certain jobs. Those who graduate with vocational education and training can be divided into two groups: those with legally recognised certified qualification and those who have not. In the former case, graduation is a pre-requisite getting a job as a skilled journeyman. In the latter, anyone can take up the trade in question, although those who graduate from these studies have priorities over those who do not. In reality, it is rare for an unqualified person to get such a job. In order to enter universities, vocational students must add on to their general education. Where the schools do not offer the possibility of taking the Matriculation exam, students can add the necessary addition in other schools.


Some universities now offer specific tuition for those who want to enter universities but are without the matriculation exam.

5. POST SECONDARY, NON TERTIARY EDUCATION

Post-secondary IVET is still fairly limited, but growing. Different courses are offered at various institutions which provide certification for well-defined professions. The age of students varies because many have spent some years on the labour market.

Main pathways are:

- **certificates for a master of trade in certified trades.** Students must have completed the journeyman's exam and have worked as journeymen for at least a year. Studies are 2-4 terms at school. Masters of trade cannot enter university directly but there are possibilities of adding courses at 'preliminary studies' department in order to get access rights;
- **assistant nurses for the elderly.** Students must have completed an exam as general assistant nurses and have at least 4 years working experience as such. The programme is 2 semesters at school and some months in the workplace. Students graduate with a certificate that qualifies them to work in these institutions. The studies do not give additional rights to further studies;
- **marine engineering and captains 4th grade.** Students must have completed 3rd grade and additional sea time. Studies are several months at school and more sea time must be added. Certification gives unlimited rights to become a captain or a chief engineer. It also gives the right to enter university;

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- **tour guides.** Students must be aged at least 21 and have completed the matriculation exam and have an extensive knowledge of at least one foreign language. Studies take two semesters at a school, with visits to e.g. museums. A graduation certificate is necessary to become a certified tour guide. This does not give additional rights to commence tertiary education;
 - **industrial technicians.** Students must have completed at least half their upper secondary education in science. Studies are two semesters at a private university which offer this non-university degree. Industrial technicians can progress to university level;
 - **some degrees in agriculture** are also registered as post secondary education, even though the matriculation exam is not a prerequisite. Two agricultural schools offer these programmes, which most often are 4 semesters plus several months' hands-on training at e.g. a farm.

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Seven institutions offer tertiary education. Four of them are run by the state, the other three are private. To be allowed admission, students are required to have passed the matriculation examination, have finished other equivalent education or have, in the view of the university in question, acquired equivalent maturity and knowledge. Universities can impose further admission requirements, including admission tests.

Degrees on offer are bachelor, master and doctorate. Typical study time varies and it is common that people (re)enter university after several years of working.

In the autumn of 2007 a new training institution, not among the seven mentioned above, commenced in the old NATO base in Reykjanesbær, which will gradually offer various kinds of departments, among them a polytechnic institute which offers a flight academy. Students without matriculation exams will be offered a one year pre-university course in order to be able to enrol in the school.



7. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

Education and training for adults can be divided into two main categories; training on offer for all and training specifically aimed at the unemployed.

7.1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ALL

In recent years there has been a colossal increase in demand for adult education and training. The government has encouraged all actors on the labour market to realise lifelong learning targets and special funds have been created to ensure further education and training among employees.

The access to lifelong learning courses is supported in labour market agreements between employers and employees. The social partners have signed extensive contracts on the rights of all employees to education and training, partly funded by specific funds set up with this aim, from which employers can apply for subsidies towards training and work-places for offering training programmes for their staff. Both employers and employees contribute to these funds. With improvement in technology, distance education has flourished and many schools now offer a combination of distance and on-campus education and training.

Adult education and training for all can be divided into:

- **further education and training** for those already with some qualifications or those who want to finish upper secondary education. This education is conducted by schools and training centres and is sometimes subsidised by employers and can give rights to a salary increase.
- **At upper secondary level**, it is possible for adults (people over 18 years of age) to study at specific 'old age' departments at some upper secondary schools. Classes take place during the evenings and usually the ratio of lessons per unit is only half of what it is in the day-time schools. Graduation gives similar rights but the matriculation exam may in some cases give lesser right to university entrance than a 'normal' matriculation certificate. Adults can also enter day-time upper secondary schools if they want to add on to previous studies or commence new ones.
- **Nine Lifelong Learning Centres** are sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in the main regions. These centres are to facilitate adult learning in general and offer e.g. university education through distance education.
- **There are several possibilities** for those with vocational qualifications to up-grade their knowledge and skills, both in the vocational schools mentioned above and in special training centres operated by social partners.

- **basic training** for those with compulsory training or less. Employees can get grants for training which can give them increased salaries or better working conditions. Some upper secondary schools offer specific programmes for people who have not completed compulsory school. The emphasis is on meeting the needs of each individual and giving people all the time they need in order to catch up;
- **training at the workplace.** Although this is a growing field, only larger companies provide it regularly as yet. The vocational training funds mentioned above can subsidise such training. Some larger companies have established human recourse development departments which help employees plan their careers. Training at the workplace can be in many forms, e.g. tailor-made courses set up by the company on the work site, contracts with for-profit or non-profit educational providers and counsellors and/or home assignments using specific computerised educational packages. Most work places in Iceland are however too small to be able to offer such training on site and therefore tend to encourage their staff to seek training elsewhere and even subsidise such training.
- **hobby courses.** There is a variety of provision of training for individual requirements and it has been very fashionable to undergo some sort of such training. Participants pay all costs and private companies carry out the training.

7.2. SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

As unemployment levels have been very low for a long time, there are not many education and training opportunities for unemployed people that are not also open to everyone else. Unemployed people who undergo training do so mostly at private training centres and the state subsidises the training.

The main rules for training without losing unemployment benefits are:

- after 3 months of unemployment people can attend part time training but are then obliged to take any job they are offered for the remaining part of the day;
- after 6 months of unemployment people can participate in 3 months full time training;
- after 12 months of unemployment people can participate in full time training for one semester (around 3 months) on full benefits and another semester on half benefits.



8. TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVE

In the summer of 2008, the Icelandic parliament passed four new laws which will gradually affect all education and training. They are:

- the Pre-primary School Act 90/2008;
- the Compulsory School Act 91/2008;
- the Upper-Secondary School Act 92/2008;
- the Act on education and training (pre-primary, compulsory, upper secondary and the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers) 87/2008.

The main objective with these laws is to make individuals' journey through education and training smooth; they can choose different pathways, different speed and the barriers between each stage (compulsory – upper secondary – past secondary) stage will be lowered.

In compulsory schools, the main change is to increase the possibilities of selecting subjects, where students in 8th-10th grade will be able to elect around 1/3rd of their subjects. In the long term, it is also envisaged that compulsory education will be 12 years, the present primary/lower secondary school plus two years of the present upper secondary school. The Upper Secondary School Act takes one step on that road by obliging the state to provide everyone with adequate education and training until the age of 18, without obliging the students to take what is on offer.

The main ideas behind the law are:

- the division between general studies and vocational education and training be eliminated, instead there be one school with a wide variety of short and long study offers;
- schools have the freedom to plan individual studies so that they fit post-secondary admission requirements (universities and polytechnics), i.e. studies be output oriented;
- the only subjects all students have to take be Icelandic, English and mathematics ;
- the cooperation between schools and the labour market be strengthened;
- the curricula be revised every year in line with new development in each field;
- work-place training become an integrated part of the curricula under the auspices of the schools. A specific fund be established to pay the workplaces which take trainees;
- work-place training be improved and shortened;
- easier to add on former studies;
- a polytechnic be established.

Educational and vocational guidance

1. OVERVIEW


Educational and vocational guidance has developed rapidly over the last two decades. School counselling and guidance within the educational system has been the most dominant factor over the years but recently vocational guidance within the Public Employment Services, at the Lifelong Learning Centres and at the workplace has grown considerably. According to a survey made in the spring of 2007, Icelandic counsellors are predominantly females, aged between 36 and 55 and nearly half of them had a BA or B.Ed degree. More than two out of three work in either compulsory or upper secondary schools but one forth was employed on the labour market (Björnsdóttir et al). The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland offers two programmes for potential counsellors:

- **a 30 credits diploma programme**, taken in 1 or 2 school years plus training at primary, upper secondary and tertiary schools and at employment services. In order to be admitted to the course, students must have a bachelor degree in e.g. social sciences, education or other subjects. It has been possible to take at least a part of this course as distance education;

- **an additional 30 credits MA programme.**

Continuous education and training exists in various forms. At the University of Iceland some short courses have been offered and the Icelandic Educational and Vocational Guidance Association has arranged a variety of lectures and seminars on specific relevant issues. At primary school level an 80 hours course (plus 10 hours of home studies) on new trends in guidance was offered on site at four schools in and around Reykjavik in the school year 2006-2007.

In a broad sense, guidance has mostly been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, but the Ministry of Social Affairs has developed vocational guidance within the Public Employment Services. Other actors who have influenced the development of guidance are e.g. local authorities and experts in the field of guidance, trade unions, employers and various associations, including The Icelandic Educational and Vocational Guidance Association. The division of guidance affairs is based upon different clients, different subjects, different settings and different ways of funding. No formal channels exist in the co-operation of the actors responsible, but most innovations in the field of guidance have occurred when ministries, professionals and the social partners have combined resources.



In April 2003 the Icelandic Educational and Vocational Guidance Association agreed in its general meeting that the tasks of counsellors were to be the following⁴:

- **receiving new pupils/students.** Students will be introduced to the school and its study paths, teachers and older pupils/students (possibly a students' association). The working order of the school will be explained as well as rules, services and social activities;
- **cooperation between homes and schools.** In order to increase this cooperation, students' relatives will be introduced to the school. Such introduction will be carried out in cooperation with teachers and other staff, older pupils/students and parents' associations. If parents need further assistance, they will be offered interviews and guidance;
- **assistance with finding a job** (specifically for counsellors on workplaces and/or in employment services). Job seekers will be assisted by offering them help in getting an overview over their possibilities on the labour market and informed on how best to conduct themselves while looking for a job, writing job applications and how to prepare and behave during a job interview.

2. GUIDANCE IN COMPULSORY SCHOOLS

According to the Compulsory School Act (91/2008) all compulsory school students have the right to educational and vocational counselling, carried out by specialists in the field. In the same legislation, it is stipulated that in the National Curricula, set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, there shall be an emphasis on the education on the possibilities of further studies and work, with an introduction to the labour market. It is furthermore stipulated that the headmaster shall lead the work of counsellors and other specialists, such as health care professionals.

The supply of professional counselling varies. In the area in and around Reykjavík, access to counsellors tends to be much easier than in the countryside and there schools have also been able to employ at least some counsellors who have finished the university education mentioned above. In the countryside it is more common that e.g. teachers are appointed part time counsellors. Around 30% of all compulsory schools do not offer any form of counselling.

⁴ Neither the government nor the municipalities have officially accepted these as the (only) tasks of counsellors and they should therefore be viewed more as unilaterally accepted working guidelines.

3. GUIDANCE IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In the Upper Secondary School Act 92/2008 it is stipulated that 'Students have the right to educational and vocational counselling carried out by specialists in the field'.

The main tasks of the guidance counsellors are to:

- organise and implement career educational programmes;
- provide information and counselling on educational opportunities and career pathways;
- participate in various activities in order to enhance pupils' welfare and conditions;
- supervise the client's educational progress and suggest solutions when needed;
- support teachers when dealing with school-related problems and advise them in supervising classes;
- contact parents and legal guardians when needed;
- report every year on the activities undertaken.

A pilot project supported by Leonardo da Vinci was carried out in 2003 and 2004 with the main aim of deducing upper secondary and university dropout (<http://www.spiderweb-as.net>).

The aims of the project were to:

- **define dropout group(s)** in educational and vocational training systems, identifying their main characteristics, e.g. demographical, psychosocial and educational factors;
- **design a screening technique**, sensitive in detecting risk factors predicting dropout, finding young adults (students) at risk of dropping out, early in the drop out process;

- **design a response** analysis to evaluate what type of support this target group needs;
- **provide a support** system for potential dropouts that helps them develop positive self esteem and motivate them for preparation of further education and training;
- **provide school/guidance/vocational counsellors** (or main facilitators) with a course of materials, training and supervision to implement a support and prevention program at various placements;
- **provide a web page** of module based information for dropouts and counsellors;
- **evaluate the project/s reliability** and generalizability in countries with different educational systems and populations;
- **raise awareness** and participate in national and European discussion on support systems and prevention work with dropouts.

This project was deemed so successful that its continuation called PPS (Personal Profile & Support for Learners) was completed in 2008 and has received several European prizes (see <http://www.p-p-s.org>). The main targets and aims were:

- **identifying potential dropout groups** in educational/vocational settings at an early stage in the dropout process;
- **providing a holistic approach** to systematically evaluate the students learning environment and individual needs to provide suitable support;
- **providing comprehensive support**, assisting individuals in developing positive self-attitude and fulfilling their educational and career goals;
- **developing an accessible website** introducing the PPS tools and providing information regarding the dropout population.



4. GUIDANCE AT POST-SECONDARY NON TERTIARY LEVEL

As education and training varies at this level, guidance is also of various types. Usually the same system applies here as in upper secondary education.

5. GUIDANCE IN UNIVERSITIES

All universities offer guidance some services, even though all of them do not employ specific counsellors. The most usual services at university level are:

- personal counselling;
- group counselling;
- management of services for handicapped pupils;
- counselling on study-related problems and facilitating learning environment;
- evaluating and designing research in given fields, providing information on educational opportunities locally and internationally;
- (at the University of Iceland) teaching and training students e.g. at the guidance study programmes mentioned above.

Guidance counsellors working at university level refer their client to databanks on the Internet and to specialised information offices.

6. GUIDANCE FOR ADULTS

6.1. EMPLOYED ADULTS

PRIMARY AND UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION


Adults entering upper secondary schools have access to the same guidance service as younger students. The specific preparatory classes for people who have not completed compulsory education receive extra assistance.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

The Regional Centres for Lifelong Learning offer educational and vocational guidance to people living in their communities. Companies can also ask for assistance when planning their human resource development. Private educational services can also get assistance in the form of links on the centres' web-pages and advertisements in their paper publications. In some instances they can rent the centres' offices for their courses.

WORKPLACES

All trade unions encourage their members to attend to their careers planning by participating in lifelong learning courses and to update their skills according to personal needs and the need of the labour market. The unions publish information leaflets or newsletters and have access to confidential representatives who form an extensive network. Some unions offer their members professional guidance in individual interviews conducted by contracted counsellors.



A pilot project supported by Leonardo da Vinci was completed in 2006 offering guidance and counselling to low-paid workers⁵. Its ultimate aim was to assist lower-paid workers (un-/semi-skilled workers) in lifelong learning through the provision of vocational guidance at the workplace. The project developed a number of educational materials and a training course targeted at vocational guidance counsellors, trade union activists and employers in order to update their skills/competences in relation to the identified target group and to enhance access of low-paid workers to lifelong learning. 100 hours training was offered to vocational guidance counsellors, human resource workers and trade union activists. The project also delivered an on-line course on workplace guidance that included a wide range of materials on the website through which it was delivered. It contains the education materials in eight languages as well as the on-line course. After the project's completions, the Lifelong Learning Centres have offered shorter courses built on this model to labour union representatives at workplaces. Within the human resource departments of bigger companies the employee can design a career plan in cooperation with the training manager. The staff of the human resource departments has various educational background in the field of education, psychology and business. Several graduated schools counsellors have been hired as training managers, coaches, educational officers or department specialists.

6.2. UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

Guidance services for all those who seek assistance, unemployed or otherwise in transition, are offered mainly by Public Employment Services and are state funded. The Ministry of Social Affairs is the overall responsible and the Directorate of Labour supervises and co-ordinates a network of nine Employment Services located in the main regions. Their main task is according to legislature on Labour Market Measures, to assist job-applicants and the unemployed and to provide information or counselling on career development, career pathways and educational or vocational opportunities. Counsellors working in each one of those centres assist in the making of CV's, give advice concerning job interviews etc. The counsellors also provide information and advice on studies in secondary schools as well as on higher education level and on the possibilities of lifelong learning and continuing education. The district employment centres have systematically tried to enhance the level of skills of their clients e.g. with different courses, assisting the unemployed in entering further studies/training or supporting them financially to take courses that increase their accessibility to the labour-market. A prerequisite for such assistance is that the course is beneficial for the job search and that the person is an active job-searcher.

5 <http://workplaceguidance.eu>



7. OTHER GUIDANCE SERVICES

7.1. CULTURAL AND INFORMATION CENTRES

Local authorities have established cultural and information centres in some places which are meant to serve local communities or special groups e.g. youth and senior citizens. In some cultural centres access is granted to computer facilities and information on various opportunities is accessible. Professionals are contracted or work as volunteers within these institutions. The largest such example is Hitt Húsið – an information and cultural centre for youth in Reykjavik, where educational and vocational guidance is offered e.g. along with other types of guidance such as social work, birth control, financing etc.

7.2. PUBLICATIONS

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture publishes each year a pamphlet called “Nám að loknum grunnskóla” (Studies after Compulsory School), which gives a clear overview of all the possibilities on offer. The pamphlet is distributed in all compulsory schools and is available on-line. All universities publish study brochures annually.

7.3. WEB BASED SERVICES

It is very easy to find information on the web about what is on offer in each post compulsory school. Registration to the schools is also mostly on-line.

Information about studies abroad is available at Ploteus (<http://europa.eu.int/ploteus/portal>). The Icelandic Euroguidance also publishes a Q+A section where all the queries about specific studies which have been sent to the Euroguidance network and answers received are published (http://www.euroguidance.is/page/spurn_svor). Hitt húsið is in charge of web counselling called Total ráðgjöf (see <http://www.totalradgjof.is/>). This is a result of a Leonardo da Vinci project which was completed in 2005 but was deemed to be far too successful to stop at that point. The project is built on a holistic counselling for young people through email, letters, phone-calls and in person. Total Counselling main target group is people between 16 and 25 year old, even though kids between 13 and 16 also use the web. It covers all sectors and is aimed at young people who do not have the courage to ask someone face to face. It has been a great surprise to its staff how many boys fill that group. Both the boys and girls mostly ask for advice on sex and sexually transmitted diseases but other large groups of questions fall in the areas of friendship, family matters, depression and the difficult area of rape, morale etc. Only a few ask for advice on work and studies, which probably indicate that they get such advice in schools. Since 2003, when the web was formally opened, some 400 questions have been posted and answered and in average 20-25 questions were posted per week in 2008. Various actors on the labour market e.g. learning enterprises, trade unions and professional associations assist their members and clients with their career planning.

8. TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES

The demand for educational and vocational guidance has multiplied during the last decades as study supply becomes more and more varied. In all the recommendations given to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture on changes in education and training, it is recommended that guidance be further strengthened. The demand for counsellors to be well trained in their field has also increased. With the commencement of the Career Counselling and Guidance Education at the Department of Social Sciences of the University of Iceland in 1990 it became possible to study guidance and counselling as a separate subject. Since 2004 it has been possible to obtain a master's degree in the subject. Each year the number of students applying for these studies has far exceeded the places on offer. The department has offered the possibility of distance studies, which has been very popular for e.g. teachers in the country-side. The University now aims at aligning the department better to the Bologna process and also the change in legislation for teacher's training. Thus, in the near future, the department will offer guidance and counselling at master's and doctorate's levels. During the last few years, counsellors have been fighting for a legally protected status, meaning that only those with the necessary education and/or experience are allowed to call themselves educational and vocational counsellors. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has however not seen the reason for a change of this nature.

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- the Pre-primary School Act 90/2008;
- the Compulsory School Act 91/2008;
- the Upper-Secondary School Act 92/2008;
- the Act on education and training (pre-primary, compulsory, upper secondary and the protection of the professional titles and rights of compulsory school teachers, upper secondary school teachers and compulsory school head teachers) 87/2008.

- Overview of the Icelandic system of education and training
- Overview of the educational and vocational guidance system
- Trends and perspectives for education, training and guidance



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