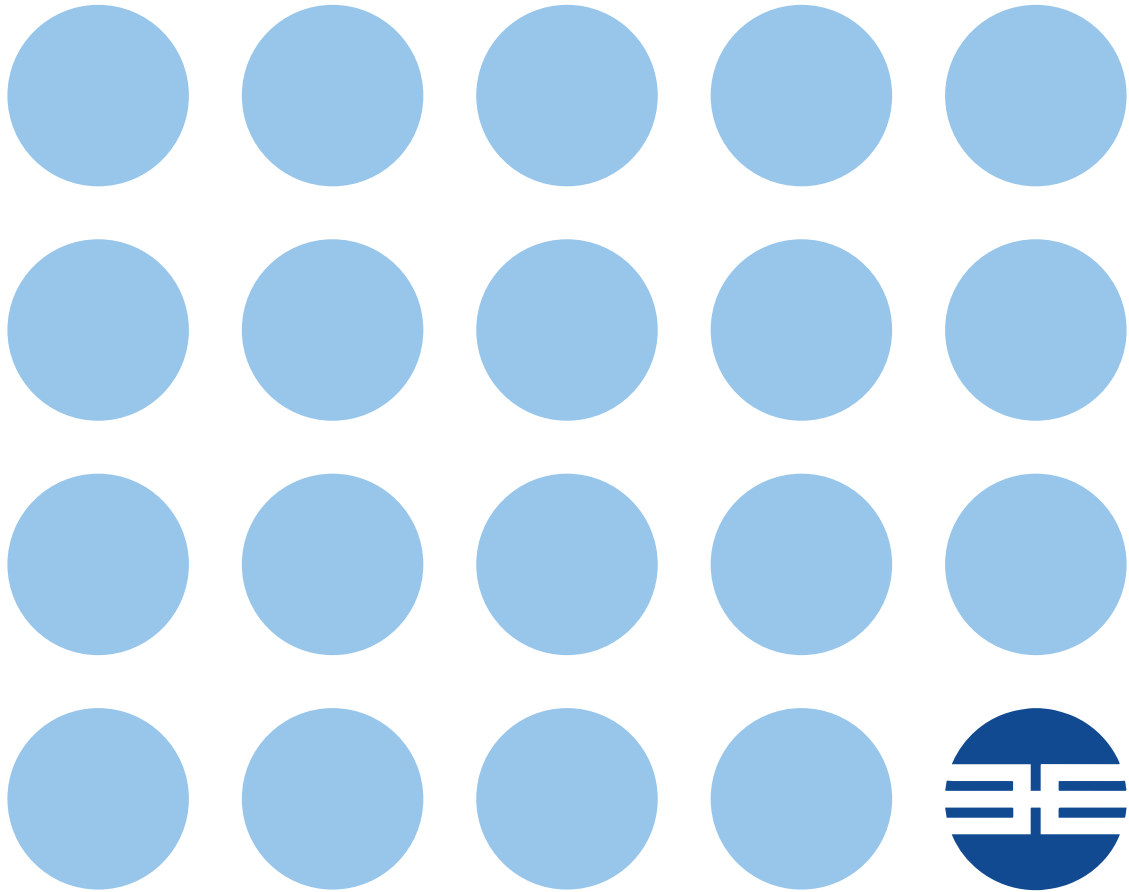
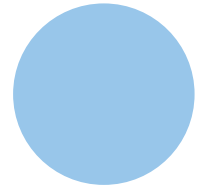


# BSRB POLICY

APPROVED AT THE BSRB FOLLOW-UP ASSEMBLY IN MARCH 2022



**BSRB**





# POLICIES

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# 1 SOCIAL SECURITY

## “Social security payments must follow wage developments in the country.”

Social security is part of the safety net in the welfare society to ensure satisfactory standard of living for those who have been unable to collect sufficient pension savings or have lost their work capacity due to sickness or injuries. BSRB demands that income indexing for social security and pension payments be reviewed. It is a fundamental factor that pensions ensure old-age and disability pensioners satisfactory standard of living.

It is important to ensure that social security payments follow wage developments in the country. Changes will have to be made to the disability pension scheme arrangement in accordance with the

old-age pension system, and more disability pensioners will have to be enabled to work by increasing the supply of flexible jobs and raising the maximum disability pension income level. It is important that people are enabled to return to the labour market after sickness, injuries or other setbacks. The experience from the banking crisis has shown that financial worries and a poor financial status have significant negative effects on people’s physical and mental health. The symptoms are slow to develop but are long-term and are one of the main causes for burnout and exhaustion. It is important to ensure that no one is forced into poverty due to reduced work capacity.



Ingibjörg Alexía is a service representative at Mosfellsbær, where she receives a range of enquiries and carries out numerous other tasks at the Mosfellsbær Town Hall.

## 2 PUBLIC SERVICES

Dynamic public services is one of the basic foundations of the welfare society. One of the government's main roles is to maintain a dynamic welfare system where Icelanders are ensured secure means of support, healthcare and social services, education and safety, irrespective of residency. The welfare system shall be financed out of the country's inhabitants' common funds and shall ensure that everyone receives excellent service, irrespective of payment ability. The experience has shown that a welfare society will not be built without upholding the values of co-operation and equality, values which the trade union movement has upheld from the outset.

The best way to ensure equality involves the government organising,

managing and financing public services. The legal framework of the public services must be sufficiently solid to provide protection against marketisation. Public services must never be run with profit; instead, public interests and societal goals are to be at the forefront.

Dynamic public services are based on professional and competent employees. It is important to ensure that staffing in a workplace is performed in such a way that the safety of users and employees is not at risk. The need for increased manpower has been defined, but capital is lacking to meet those requirements. It is also necessary to ensure that state and municipal employees have a good and organised working environment, improved

flow of information, dialogue and involvement in decision making, e.g. in regards to organisational changes and equal opportunities to seek work-related education and training.



Ingimundur Vigfús is a group home employee, working with the residents. The goal is to meet their needs, cultivate their interests and make them feel the best they can.

**“Dynamic public services is one of the basic foundations of the welfare society.”**

### 3 EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

A high employment level is one of the foundations of the welfare society, and thus it is the most vital task of authorities, at any given time, to ensure that most people are able to pursue work. The aim of the trade union movement is to improve the living conditions and quality of life of wage earners and uphold basic requirements with equality, justice and social responsibility as a counterbalance to the employer's profitability criteria.

Dynamic public services form the social infrastructure that ensures equality and access to healthcare services, social services and education as well as official investments ensuring physical

infrastructure such as structures, transport, telecommunications and other infrastructure that are necessary in every society. The public services and official investments thus return social dividends by forming the necessary foundation for dynamic business communities and innovation. BSRB demands that the public services be strengthened by developing an even stronger public labour market that is fully able to compete with the private sector when it comes to employees.

BSRB places emphasis on an employment policy being developed for Iceland in consultation with the members of the employment sector to strengthen the foundations of

the economic system. The labour market is undergoing major changes due to the technological changes of the fourth industrial revolution, necessary adaptation of industries due to climate change and proportionate aging of the nation over the next years and decades, all of which must be taken into account. The policy must also take account of just transition to carbon neutrality. What this means for the labour market is that an emphasis must be placed on green investments that create jobs which are fairly salaried, provide employment security and work-related rights and ensure that employees get the opportunity to influence their own working conditions. Green investments

**“The aim of the trade union movement is to improve the living conditions and quality of life of wage earners.”**



Garðar is a prison guard at Kviabryggja prison; his job involves i.a. security control and the monitoring of the prisoners' health.

should thus not only be assessed based on financial benefits, but also based on the impact on the quantity and quality of work positions. An important aspect in the transition is to enable people to strengthen their knowledge and skills with life-long learning and continuing education in order to take on new and altered jobs.

BSRB wants the position of the country's regions to be strengthened so that they are attraction for people for residency and work. The development of the business community and public services must be strengthened throughout Iceland. Energy price must be comparable throughout the country, as must access to Internet connection; the adoption of the fibre-optic cable is essential for jobs and education with no fixed location. New civil service jobs must be created in all regions of the country instead of transferring

jobs between regions. The experience has shown that the transferring of jobs between the country's regions has a negative effect on staff, the operations of the institution in question and the services that are to be provided.

The government, together with the trade union movement and the representatives of employers, must contribute to actively attend to those who, for some reason, no longer participate in the labour market. Particular attention must be paid to long-term unemployed people so that they will not become socially and economically isolated and so that they have the opportunity to study and train for new jobs. The government should lead by example by creating jobs with appropriate adaption and flexible working hours for people with reduced work capacity.

## 4 ECONOMICS AND TAX MATTERS

BSRB places importance on ensuring that social stability is the guiding principle in economic administration. Economic inequality is growing in Iceland, particularly when it comes to assets. Concentration of wealth and power is harmful to the society; it causes social class division and reduces social unity. This must be countered, i.a. with changes to the taxation system.

BSRB places emphasis on the importance that the taxation system be used as equalisation tool. The taxation system as well as the welfare system should be run with the mindset that people pay a deposit according to means but withdraw according to needs. Those who are more financially capable should deposit proportionally more than those who are less capable. Agreement must be reached on this way of thinking in government



Sædís Ósk is an airport security officer at Keflavík Airport, where she undertakes i.a. access management and screening.



operations; it is important to have solidarity and equality of people at the forefront.

The municipalities provide their residents with important services, and their projects are gradually increasing. The income bases of the municipalities do not reflect this development. This has meant that the wages of workers employed by the municipalities are generally the lowest in the Icelandic labour market. BSRB is therefore of the opinion that it is important that participation of the municipalities in the government's tax income be reviewed and increased.

It is important to increase the balancing role of the tax system and reduce the tax burden of low and average income groups and balance the loss of income with taxation on those who are in the highest income group and big property owners. BSRB

## “BSRB places emphasis on the importance that the taxation system be used as equalisation tool.”

wants to raise capital income tax so that operating profit income tax and capital income tax will be comparable to income tax on wage income and that the tax rates are higher for those who have the highest capital income. Rules on taxation of presumptive incomes must also be tightened so that certain minimum total income will be taxed as general income.

BSRB demands that increased asset inequality will be responded to with a large property tax on net assets of those who are the richest and that revenue and asset formation of holding companies that are not engaged in commercial operations be taxed for owners.

Iceland is rich in natural resources. BSRB demands that the nation is given a rightful share of the dividends generated from private parties' use of resources with a tax on economic rent. BSRB also attaches great importance on public ownership of natural resources, instead of being owned by private entities.

BSRB places emphasis on public ownership of society's basic infrastructure and wholly discourages the selling of energy companies owned by the government and other profitable companies.

BSRB demands that the current tax legislation will be completely

reviewed with the goal of correcting provisions which lead to tax avoidance, inequality and weakening of the government's income bases. Tax enforcement must also be substantially strengthened; budget allocations to that policy area translate many times over into public funds with increased taxation.

Technological changes and automation call for new ways of thinking about revenue generation. When technology replaces the human hand, it is important that the profit that is generated partly flows to the government.

The charging of carbon surcharge on fossil fuels is an important part of

reducing greenhouse gas emissions. BSRB demands, before decisions are made on taxation and tax concessions in order to reduce emissions, analysis on the effects of taxation on different income groups will be made. If the burdens prove to be a heavy load on the lower income groups, it is important to react with investments in more climate-friendly services which can replace the services currently being taxed or with direct payments to lower income groups that suffer the most from the taxation.

BSRB places great importance on tax reductions being fully financed and that they do not result in cuts in public operations, investments and income transfers. Collective

consumption is important to ensure equality of people, irrespective of income, and its weakening results in increased inequality in income, health and education.



Magdalena Kossak is an office worker at the Kópavogur Environmental Department.

**“Technological changes and automation call for new ways of thinking about revenue generation.”**

## 5 HEALTHCARE MATTERS

“BSRB wholly discourages deregulation of the healthcare services and fee collection based on profit viewpoints.”

The healthcare system is the mainstay in society. Good healthcare services improve people's living conditions and safety. In addition to this, good health of the people is beneficial for the national economy. The government is to run healthcare services with the taxpayers' money. The system must be efficient and ensure everyone equal access to first-class service at the appropriate service level, irrespective of economic status. A prerequisite for this is that the number of staff is in accordance with the need for healthcare services and the requirement for the services, as well as a good and safe working environment.

Shortage of funds to many important healthcare facilities has resulted in short-staffing, significant pressure on employees and increased risk of burnout. Important services have been cut, waiting lists are longer and private companies have taken over part of the services. Shortage of appropriate service resources for the elderly also creates problems for the healthcare system, as it is not possible to discharge patients from hospitals if there is shortage of nursing wards.

BSRB demands that budget allocations to the healthcare system be in accordance with the need for services and that public bodies are



Björk is a care assistant in Húsvík, where she works in general and specialised care of the sick.



Sigríður Helga is a care assistant at the retirement home in Borgarnes, where she works in general and specialised care of the sick.

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## “Health inequality can only be eliminated with broad government actions.”

ensured sufficient fundings to meet wage increases of staff agreed upon in the collective wage agreement.

BSRB wholly discourages deregulation of the healthcare services and fee collection based on profit viewpoints. Private enterprise reduces the efficiency of the system, overview and co-ordination, increases the risk of over-treatment and impedes monitoring of quality and scope. Privatisation also increases the pressure on wage increases, staff reductions and employment terminations of staff with extensive experience and higher wages to increase profit of the operations, which is then paid to the owners at the expense of wage earners and the quality of service.

A study conducted by the Directorate of Health on health inequality in

Iceland shows that although good health and well-being is generally improving in the country, health inequality is increasing in Iceland. Those who live in tight circumstances and are less educated are in worse health and living conditions than those with higher income and more education. This inequality has considerable impact on quality of life and life expectancy. BSRB demands that this development be addressed. Health inequality can only be eliminated with broad government actions. The most significant actions are the ones that ensure education and financial security. As for actions within the healthcare system, fee collection for various aspects of the healthcare services must be reviewed in order to further promote equal access. BSRB wants to prevent fee collection within the healthcare system more than what

has already been done with payment participation systems for healthcare services and medication, as well as dental services for children, old-age pensioners and disability pensioners, including for children’s orthodontics.

Equal access to healthcare services by location and easy access to healthcare centres and geriatric services must be ensured for all. The government must take greater part in travel costs of people who do not have the same access to healthcare services as others due to their residency. It is imperative to substantially strengthen the remote healthcare services, access to specialist services in local communities, ambulance transport and ambulance flights and thus ensure that such services are always available in the rural areas.

## 6 HOUSING MATTERS

Housing security, whether it is residency in rental housing or private property, is a human right. The government is to ensure housing security for all with a supply of housing at an affordable price, housing support and economic measures that reduce unnatural increase in housing prices.

The most reasonable way to increase housing security for Icelanders is to pay down housing debts for lower income groups and those with onerous support burdens. The experience has shown that the focus on increased loan grants has the effect of raising housing prices and makes the acquisition of housing even more difficult for those who have the lowest amount of resources. Such measures have direct effect on the economic system with increased inflation and instability.

The general apartment system has proved its worth and the number of apartments in the system has

increased every year. Bjarg, BSRB's and ASÍ's leasing company, is the backbone of this system, promoting housing security for wage earners in lower income brackets. BSRB strongly emphasises that annual capital contributions from the State and the municipalities be increased in order to accelerate the development of the system and to meet the urgent need of wage earners for housing at an affordable price.

BSRB places importance on the State and the municipalities paving the path for leasing company Blær, owned by BSRB and ASÍ. It is important to increase the options in the housing market for wage earners that are

above the income threshold in the general apartment system and thus promote housing security for all.

Direct housing support from the government has undergone a fundamental change with authority to use tax-free private pension savings to pay down mortgage loans. Analysis shows that the support is first and foremost useful for people in the highest income brackets. At the same time, the housing support for lessees has deteriorated in real terms and financial contribution to interest tax is negligible. BSRB demands that the housing support system be changed in a way that the support is directed toward lower income homes.

**“The most reasonable way to increase housing security for Icelanders is to pay down housing debts for lower income groups.”**

## 7 EQUALITY ISSUES

BSRB shall ensure that the government and employers work systematically towards equality by ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment of people in the labour market. It is especially important to secure equal status and equal opportunities irrespective of race, ethnic origin, religion, life stance, disability, impaired ability to work, age, sexual orientation, sexuality, gender or sexual expression, language, residency, social position or financial position. The federation shall also work specifically towards the empowerment of marginalised groups.

Equality shall be held as a guiding principle in all operations of BSRB. The federation shall offer dynamic equality education to member associations and members, promote all people working toward these important interests of wage earners and ensure that work is carried out in accordance with the rules applying



Sif is a customs officer in Reykjavík. Her job involves i.a. ensuring that laws and regulations are complied with in connection with the import and export of goods

to safety and equality in the labour market and in social activities.

### **The gender status in the labour market**

Significant gender division is the main cause of the gender wage gap in the Icelandic labour market, where one gender is by far the highest proportion in a number of industries. Employment participation of women in Iceland is very high; just over a third of women are in part-time employment because they carry the main responsibility of caring for the family and managing the household. Women are also out of the labour market for longer than men after childbirth due to the parental leave necessary to bridge the gap of caring for the child from when the parental leave finishes until a slot in day care is secured. This has a significantly negative impact on income, wage developments and opportunities for

career development for women as well as pension rights. There is also a considerable difference between women and men when it comes to positions of authority and influence where women are yet to receive equal pay. Actions must be taken in each field in order to eliminate differences in position and a wage gap in the labour market based on gender, foreign origin and work capacity.

### **Family friendly society**

In order to develop a family friendly society, BSRB is of the opinion that it is important that in all public policy formulation and financial planning, equality in salaried and unsalaried work is systematically

worked towards. Equality education at all levels of schooling and in the labour market must be ensured. It is important that government policies have the reconciliation of work and family life at the forefront.

Parallel with the work of eliminating the gender wage gap, parents' opportunities to care for their children must be equalised and their opportunities to spend quality time with their families must be increased.

BSRB considers it of high priority to improve the position of lower income families. It is important to ensure that all children live in a home with secure financial income,

**“Equality shall be held as a guiding principle in all operations of BSRB.”**



## “It is important to ensure that all children live in a home with secure financial income, have housing security and have the opportunity to take part in sports and leisure activities.”

have housing security and have the opportunity to take part in sports and leisure activities. Equal society will not be built unless all families can offer their children comparable opportunities irrespective of financial position and residency. It is important to strengthen public transport and make them more affordable.

Iceland stands out against the other Nordic countries as regards child benefit. The Nordic welfare system generally assumes that the entitlement to child benefit remains the same for all children irrespective of their parents' financial position, with the exception of the Danish welfare system where child benefit is

reduced for people earning average or above average income. In Iceland, only the parents with the very lowest income receive full child benefit. The child benefit system is unfocused and, in some cases, a random support to the people with the very lowest income; minimum wage recipients receive highly reduced benefits. BSRB is of the opinion that it is necessary to review the Icelandic system from the ground up and preferably look to the Danish system as a model. A new child benefit system needs to be built based on the best available data on the needs of different families and varied family structures. Thus, it must be ensured that children can have more than one home that receives

comparable support through the child benefit system. Child benefit must follow wage developments, and benefits must not be reduced if the income of parents is lower than the



Edgardo is employed to take on diverse jobs at the Akureyri Hospital Kitchen.

equivalent of the income criteria. Child benefit must also be the same for all children irrespective of age.

The extension of maternity/paternity leave to 12 months is a significant step forward. The law, however, does not ensure equal participation of parents on maternity/paternity leave, and the experience has shown that it is likely that women take longer parental leave than men, thus leaving women out of the labour market for even longer than before. It is therefore important that employers support men in taking paternity leave aligned to that of women. Equal participation of the genders in taking parental leave promotes that the aim of the law, to ensure a child's access to both parents and to enable parents to balance professional and private lives, is achieved. Maximum payments during parental leave must be raised, payments that correspond to minimum wage must be fully

allocated and maternity/paternity leave payments must not be lower than minimum wage. The child's right to secure day-care provided by the authorities immediately after the parental leave period must also be implemented.

It is highly important that wage earners are able to respond to the various circumstances that can occur in their personal life and that they are entitled to absences from work due to their children's serious long-term illness without wage reduction. The same applies to increased rights to absences due to illness of a child, taking into account the number of children, or illness of a parent, a spouse or other close relatives or due to family circumstances. Such integration results in increased job satisfaction, improved performance, increased capacity and lower employee turnover.

## Gender-based and sexual harassment and violence in the workplace

Gender-based harassment, sexual harassment and violence must be eliminated; the root of this scourge is inequality and gender power imbalance. The experience has shown that equal status and equal opportunities of all people



Ágústa is a driver at Strætó in Greater Reykjavík, and her job involves undertaking scheduled bus trips and providing services to customers.

## “Gender-based harassment, sexual harassment and violence must be eliminated; the root of this scourge is inequality and gender power imbalance.”

at workplaces does not happen by itself. Knowledge, will and actions are needed in order to achieve changes in this field. In accordance with legislation on equality and work protection, employers bear great responsibility for taking special measures to protect their employees or clients from sexual or gender-based harassment or any form of abuse in the workplace.

Harassment and violence take many forms including verbal, physical or emotional abuse. However, according to the rules that apply to harassment in the workplace, it is not important to determine the manifestation. All gender-based and sexual harassment and any form of abuse is prohibited.

People's experience can vary, and so can workplace culture. The law is clear however: the victim's perception determines whether harassment or violence has taken place. It is not up to others to assess how the victim experiences communications or certain behaviours; it is always up to victims themselves. Culture that categorises behaviour by using outdated ideas on where the distinction lies between harassment and discomfort must be eradicated. All forms of unwanted harassment are unacceptable and must be taken seriously.

Education on mutual respect must be carried out from an early age, and access to harmful material

containing violence, such as pornography, must be removed. The authorities must ensure access to constructive material that prevents sexual violence.

Employers and the authorities must ensure support for victims, perpetrators and colleagues following violence.

Good management and systematic integration of equal rights views, with special focus on eradicating power discrepancy in any form of decision making, is the key to ensuring that harassment and violence do not occur. We must all take part so that real changes in attitudes and culture can take place.

## 8 EMPLOYMENT TERMS

One of the main demands of BSRB is that people can live off their wages. It also applies to transfers, such as benefits and tax burden.

BSRB demands that the wage differences between the public and private sectors be balanced according to an agreement on pension issues from September 2016. Wage surveys have shown that wage differences between markets is around 17%. BSRB places great importance on reaching a conclusion on the basis of the agreement and that special pay adjustment guarantees be established with the main purpose of ensuring consistency in wage developments between the private and public sectors after equality has been achieved.

In the opinion of BSRB, it is the priority of the authorities, employers and the trade union movement to ensure wage equality irrespective of status with respect to disability, reduced work capacity, age, sexual orientation, sexual expression, sexuality, gender, race, religion, language, residency, political views, ethnic origin, social position or financial position.

### **Reassessment of work carried out by women**

60 years after wage equality was enacted by law, women still face wage inequality. National and foreign studies have shown that a gender-differentiated labour market is the main reason for gender-based wage

differences. Over the past years, much has been achieved in the work against gender-based wage differences. The focus has been on correcting wage differences within workplaces, e.g. by using the equal pay standard. Although beneficial, the equal pay standard is not a tool that tackles the fundamental gender inequality which remains present in our society. The standard does not correct the undervaluation of women's professions across industries and workplaces. The focus must thus be directed at correcting wages in women's professions based on their actual value and the value creation generated by those jobs.

**“BSRB demands that the wage differences between the public and private sectors be balanced.”**



Sigurður is a port guard at Hafnarfjarðarhöfn, whose role mainly involves guidance and safety monitoring.

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## 9 PENSION ISSUES

The Icelandic pension system is built on a solid foundation, based on three main pillars: tax-financed public pension, occupational pension funds with mandatory membership and voluntary pension savings with tax incentives. The strength of the Icelandic pension system is largely connected to the build-up of the pension funds. This means that new resources are set aside as pension rights are procured. BSRB strictly emphasises that this arrangement will not be changed.

BSRB wholly discourages that the specified private pension be implemented into law. This is based on manifold reasoning, with the largest being that this change entails weakening of co-insurance of the pension system, creates inconsistency in the system and

**“BSRB demands that income indexing for social security and pension payments be significantly reduced.”**

reduces the system’s sustainability and can have substantial negative impact on the pension rights of people of lower income, women and those who become disabled early on in their careers. The aim of pension rights equality between the public and private sectors was to co-ordinate pension rights and increase sustainability of the system. The enactment of the specified private pension goes against those aims.

BSRB demands that income indexing for social security and pension payments be significantly reduced. It is important that wage earners

who have paid into pension funds throughout their careers see the result of that in their income when they retire due to age or disability.

BSRB demands that the workers of certain professions who are forced into early retirement, e.g. due to pressure in a job, are granted early retirement funded specifically with higher contribution of employers to the pension fund. It is also important to ensure that people are able to continue work despite having reached the age of 70 and that this is reflected in their pension rights.

## 10 EDUCATION MATTERS

Equal opportunities for suitable education and training after the completion of compulsory education is the cornerstone of each society. Education promotes more active participation in Icelandic society and increases people's skills in the labour market. Education also results in increased value creation for the society as a whole and increased income for the government and the country's entire populace.

BSRB thus places great importance on equal rights to education irrespective of circumstances, age and residency. The federation discourages that tuition fees, of any kind whatsoever, be levied in public educational institutions.

**“BSRB places emphasis on equal rights to education irrespective of circumstances, age and residency.”**

### **Altered labour market, education and competence**

It is clear that in the coming years and decades, there will be significant changes to the labour market relating to technological changes of the fourth industrial revolution, the development of artificial intelligence, environmental changes, altered consumer behaviour, increased number of the elderly and other changes in society. Policy formulation and a clear view on the interaction between the labour market and education is therefore increasingly important. BSRB and its member associations place great importance on active participation in discussions, decision making and policy formulation in those areas relating to

education and training in the country, both in the formal and informal education system.

The Icelandic Parliament has passed a parliamentary resolution on educational policy to 2030 and is working towards an action plan on how the plan will be implemented. On adoption, BSRB wants to place increased emphasis on life-long



Haydee Adriana is an assistant manager at an after-school centre in Reykjavík.

learning and continuing education, not least in light of the foreseeable changes to people's working environment in the coming years.

The State and municipalities carry out important public services. BSRB calls on all public workplaces to establish a career development policy and follow up on such policy with an active career development plan to train its employees. Enhanced skills and increased knowledge of employees forms the basis of public services of higher quality for the benefit of all. Adoption of new technology is not realised without focused training of employees. Education that enhances skills must be part of the workplace [1]culture of the future, and the employer's responsibility for long-life learning of employees must be implemented into law and collective wage agreements.

BSRB demands that vocational university studies become a special

education level. The work on its structure must continue so that the program becomes a normal part of the public education system and is funded by the government. Care must also be taken to ensure that those who have completed on-the-job training or vocational studies at the third level have secure access to university study.

### **The fifth pillar**

Continuing education is the fifth pillar of the education system and is particularly important to people with little formal education to receive further learning opportunities. It is necessary that the fund system of the continuing education system is dynamic and accessible and that funding to the informal education system is sufficient to support the progressive work of education centres, centres for life-long learning and the Education and Training Service Centre.



Hörður works as a curator at the Akureyri Museum, where he manages the photographic gallery.



## “Enhanced skills and increased knowledge of employees forms the basis of public services of higher quality for the benefit of all.”

The assessment of financial needs and funding must take into account that the projects of the continuing education system are becoming more complicated and diverse, e.g. due to the increase in the number of foreign workers in the Icelandic labour market. It is thus, in this case, not enough to look only to the number of individuals. BSRB is of the opinion that it is important that the continuing education system is efficient and accessible to all those who need such a system and want to acquire long-life learning and continuing education within the system. BSRB is willing to take part in the work of reviewing it.

BSRB emphasises that revision of the Adult Education Act be completed in

close consultation with the members of the employment sector.

BSRB also strictly emphasises that both the State and municipalities are involved in the development and operations of education centres in the fields of continuing education and life-long learning, that have the role of analysing and designing educational approaches for the members of BSRB member associations, free of charge.

BSRB is of the opinion that it is necessary to strengthen the position of vocational study and on-the-job training alongside traditional academic studies. It is important to ensure that the education system, institutions and companies can

receive students who apply for such studies.

It is vital to strengthen the role of the occupational advisory boards that address the jobs carried out by the members of the BSRB member associations and to ensure that the associations have working conditions that allow them to exercise their functions with dedication. It is also important to strengthen the Vocational Training Fund and to simplify the use of the fund for employers so that it is optimised by the members of BSRB member associations.

### **Social wealth**

BSRB focuses on the importance of education and endeavours to ensure that Boards of the member associations, employees and those who have put themselves forward for social activities receive the necessary training and education.

BSRB supports the member associations in the important work of increasing and improving the knowledge of its members, in co-operation with employers. BSRB wants to place particular importance on increasing technical knowledge and computer literacy in accordance with the wishes of the members and the needs of the labour market.

BSRB emphasises that members of the member associations can develop their professional competence and educate themselves so that they become sought after in the labour market throughout their careers. It is important to ensure that members have the opportunity to seek vocational education and life-long learning alongside their jobs, without wage reduction. BSRB wants to endeavour to ensure that study leave becomes a natural right of the members of BSRB member associations. Such right

## “Vocational education and life-long learning is a priority issue for BSRB; the future labour market calls for new skills, new ideas and a growth mindset.”

must be ensured by collective wage agreements but co-ordinated between member associations.

BSRB emphasises that foreign workers are offered quality teaching and training in Icelandic, free of charge, that they are given the opportunity to study Icelandic during working hours {MQ} and that they receive training in Icelandic in the workplace, without wage reduction.

BSRB wants to ensure equal access to real skills assessment and education and career counselling with enhanced introduction and information supply for the members of the member associations. Particular attention must be paid

to those who have the least formal education.

Vocational education and life-long learning is a priority issue for BSRB; the future labour market calls for new skills, new ideas and a growth mindset. It is vital that the members of the employment sector and the members of labour market associations join together to ensure that success is achieved.

## 11 WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF STATE AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

The role of state and municipal employees is to provide important and statutory services where public interests are at the forefront. Co-ordinated services must be ensured and that workplaces and the jobs develop in the context of society and development of knowledge.

Studies show that employees in welfare services experience worse physical and mental health and reduced job satisfaction compared to those in other professions. Moreover, accident frequency has been measured the highest in the public service arena, particularly in the police department. It has repeatedly been pointed out that one of the best ways

to prevent this is to combat excessive overwork and improve staffing and the support for management and their training.

In order to ensure dynamic public services of high quality, it is important that employees are always provided with the best possible working environment where safety, knowledge, mutual respect, communication, professionalism and good health are kept at the forefront. Flexibility and opportunity must be provided for employees in order for them to develop their skills and knowledge with dynamic life-long learning, and it must be ensured that they have working conditions that enable them

to perform their work in a professional and high-quality manner. Employees in training shall receive wages.

BSRB places emphasis on the authorities establishing a clear policy on the organisation of work, communication, working hours and working environment with the goal of ensuring the mental and physical health of the employees. The main



Ingvar is a surveyor at Hafnarfjarðarbær, where he undertakes various land surveys, research and processing of data.

**“In order to ensure dynamic public services of high quality, it is important that employees are always provided with the best possible working environment.”**

## “Flexibility and reconciliation of work and private life must always be paramount in order to promote a more family friendly society and prevent pressure and stress.”

focus will be on how to prevent an unhealthy workload and unhealthy communication and behaviour. Moreover, how it will be ensured that managers have the knowledge and skills needed to work toward these set goals.

BSRB wants a regular comprehensive analysis with risk assessment of operating practices of workplaces and facilities of wage earners be carried out and that follow-up of the assessment be ensured. It is necessary to meet the staffing need that has been created after the implementation of better working hours, whereas the pressure in a few divisions has increased excessively.

Flexibility and reconciliation of work and private life must always

be paramount in order to promote a more family friendly society and prevent pressure and stress. Research shows that the more people are able to reconcile work and family life, the better their mental and physical health. The experience has shown, however, that there is a risk that increased flexibility results in the boundary between work and home becoming increasingly blurred. This must be addressed with a clear right to disconnect and that the rights and facilities of employees who work remotely will be negotiated in collective agreements.

### **Shortening of the working week**

The shortening of the working week is a basic requirement of BSRB and an important part of creating a more family friendly society that is based on

the reconciliation of work and family life. The shortening of the working week to 35 hours for daytime work, and that the working week of shift workers becomes 80% of the working hours of daytime workers without wage reduction, must be implemented in collective agreements.

A shorter working week results in increased job satisfaction and increased performance, less stress due to the reconciliation of work and family life and improved health and well-being. It also promotes increased equality in responsibility for household and care work, an increase in women's employment participation and decreased possibility of women pursuing only part-time work due to family responsibilities.

## 12 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE ISSUES

“BSRB demands that just transition be the guiding force in the measures to combat climate change.”

Climate issues are the biggest challenge that the nations of the world are facing. The time to avoid global warming of above 1.5°C is running out, and the reduction in



Hrannar is a port guard in Stykkishólmur; his role involves i.a. guiding ships through dangerous and narrow waters.

greenhouse gas emissions and the sequestration of carbon must thus be placed at the top of the government’s task list. Effects of warming are already becoming evident around the world; here in Iceland, they can mainly be noticed by melting glaciers, changes in weather, increased precipitation, landslides, rising sea levels, acidification of the oceans and far-reaching effects on the ecosystem. Emissions per resident in Iceland are among the highest in the world. BSRB supports the government’s climate goals but demands that increased emphasis be placed on the measures because global warming poses a risk to the safety and quality of life of humanity. Economic effects of warming are tremendous and much greater than

the costs of measures aimed at reducing emissions and increasing carbon sequestration.

BSRB demands that just transition be the guiding force in the measures to combat climate change and the adaptation to these inevitable changes. The aim of just transition is that investments generate green jobs and that lower income groups do not take on a proportionately heavier load and thus have the opportunity to take active part in the transition. Green jobs are the jobs that promote the achievement of the government’s climate goals, the jobs that protect or redeem the environment, reduce waste and develop infrastructure for energy transition. BSRB is of the opinion that it is necessary that the members of the employment sector launch a platform for co-operation on just transition so that rights and employment terms of wage earners are ensured, no less than for the economic sector. Members must

reach an agreement as to the ways to achieve set goals.

BSRB seeks to be a climate and environmentally friendly federation, both in word and deed, and encourages its member associations to follow the Green Steps in their operations and to encourage the employers in the public sector which the associations negotiate with to implement Green Steps, if they have not already done so. BSRB also focuses on climate and environmental education to the members in their member associations.

BSRB requires that employers ensure that employee working conditions are healthy and that the employers facilitate their employees to use environmentally friendly means of transport to and from work and during working hours, e.g. by offering public transport subsidies and access to ecological vehicles to employees.

BSRB supports the utilisation and protection of the land being in harmony and to the benefit of today's society and future generations.

BSRB demands that the country's natural resources be kept as public

ownership and that access to clean water for all be ensured. Food security must be ensured. The use of natural resources must be sustainable, and broad social accord must be attained on their use. BSRB emphasises that any kind of operation taking place in data centres must be reviewed, as energy performance must be in accordance with the government's policy on just transition.

BSRB will direct its focus points to the government, employers and, last but not least, the member associations by promoting co-operation and effective training.

**“BSRB makes the requirements that employers ensure that employee working conditions are healthy and that the employers facilitate their employees to use environmentally friendly means of transport to and from work and during working hours.”**



**BSRB policy**

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**BSRB IS THE LARGEST  
FEDERATION OF PUBLIC  
WORKER UNIONS IN ICELAND**

