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# A Society for Everyone

## Iceland's future and policy on matters of immigrants

White Paper on Matters of Immigrants

Draft policy to 2038

Government of Iceland  
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour



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A Society for Everyone – Iceland's future and policy on matters of immigrants

White Paper on Matters of Immigrants – Draft policy to 2038

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# Contents

<b>White Paper - Draft policy</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2. A Society for Everyone – Iceland's future and policy on matters of immigrants</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 Future vision .....	10
2.2 Objectives.....	12
2.2.1 Future vision, objectives and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.....	13
2.2.2 Objective 1 – Participation, equality and diversity .....	14
2.2.3 Objective 2 - Information, Access and Services .....	27
2.2.4 Objective 3 - Communication and Language.....	42
<b>3. Appendices</b> .....	<b>53</b>
3.1 Overall overview and impact of targets.....	53
3.2 Results of consultation.....	54
3.3 Glossary of terms .....	55

## List of Tables

Table 1 - Three objectives of the policy on matters of immigrants.....	12
Table 2 - Objective 1 targets .....	15
Table 3 - Indicators for Target 1.1 .....	16
Table 4 - Indicators for Target 1.2.....	19
Table 5 - Indicators for Target 1.3.....	22
Table 6 - Indicators for Target 1.4.....	23
Table 7 - Indicators for Target 1.5.....	24
Table 8 - Indicators for Target 1.6.....	25

Table 9 - Objective 2 targets.....	28
Table 10 - Indicators for Target 2.1.....	29
Table 11 - Indicators for Target 2.2.....	31
Table 12 - Indicators for Target 2.3.....	33
Table 13 - Indicators for Target 2.4.....	36
Table 14 - Indicators for Target 2.5.....	38
Table 15 - Indicators for Target 2.6.....	40
Table 16 - Objective 3 targets.....	43
Table 17 - Indicators for Target 3.1.....	44
Table 18 - Indicators for Target 3.2.....	46
Table 19 - Indicators for Target 3.3.....	48
Table 20 - Indicators for Target 3.4.....	49
Table 21 - Indicators for Target 3.5.....	51
Table 22 – Overview of targets in matters of immigrants.....	53

# White Paper - Draft policy

A White Paper (draft policy) comprises a discussion of and decision on the future vision, targets and results of activities over a specific period, the achievement in a specific area or the perspectives and values which serve as the basis. The policy covers a specific period of time and is intended to promote integrated planning; predictability in decision-making on actions, performance evaluation, and targeted monitoring. The White Paper on Matters of Immigrants is proposed for a period of 15 years, or until 2038.

Within the administration, the term policy mainly refers to the political priorities and improvements that the government intends to implement and which are explained in policies on individual issue areas and functions. Policies are implemented through action plans, decisions and actions of the government, regulations and laws.

A White Paper is a discussion document that is submitted for open consultation on the government's consultation portal and is intended to encourage discussion of the possible effects of the proposed policy on Icelandic society in the short or long term.

Preceding the White Paper a status assessment (Green Paper) is prepared, which includes an analysis of key topics and, as appropriate, possible options, in consultation with stakeholders. Stakeholders and the public were given the opportunity to participate in the status assessment and present their views on priorities, potential solutions and routes to success. On that basis, the government drafts a Parliamentary Resolution on a policy.

The policy sets out the government's future vision, objectives and targets, along with a preliminary assessment of their impact.

## The White Paper is part of the government's strategic planning process

A White Paper (draft policy) is published in an open consultation process on the government's consultation portal, after which the main points of view submitted are reviewed before the final policy is presented, through a Parliamentary Resolution for a fifteen-year policy, together with an action plan as provided for in the Immigrant Affairs Act, No. 116/2012.



Green Paper Status assessment and options - Open consultation - White Paper Draft policy -  
Open consultation - Policy

# 1. Introduction

The platform of the coalition government of the Independence Party, the Left-Green Movement and the Progressive Party includes the preparation of a clear and comprehensive policy on the matters of immigrants, aimed at ensuring that persons who settle in Iceland will have the opportunity to adapt to and actively participate in society in general and on the labour market. In addition, the Icelandic parliament Althingi approved, in Parliamentary Resolution No. 29/152, on a National Action Plan for Matters of Immigrants 2022-2025, the drafting of a policy on matters of immigrants and refugees, and multicultural issues, as stated in the first action of the plan.

A proposal for the establishment of a steering group to draft a policy on matters of immigrants and refugees was presented to the Ministerial Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs on 23 August 2022 and approved by the government three days later. Subsequently, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Labour Market requested nominations for the steering group.

A steering group for the drafting of the policy was finally appointed in mid-January 2023 and began work later that same month. The group included representatives of five ministries: in addition to representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, they came from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education and Children. In addition, there were representatives of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ), the unions BHM, BSRB and the Icelandic Teachers' Union (KÍ), the Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network in Iceland (WOMEN), the School of Humanities of the University of Iceland, the Immigrant Council<sup>1</sup>, the Icelandic Red Cross (RKÍ), the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA) and two representatives from the National Association of Local Authorities. A representative of the Directorate of Labour also attended the meetings of the steering group which concerned the drafting of the White Paper.

Work on a policy on matters of immigrants has emphasised in particular broad consultation with different stakeholders and ensuring that as many and as diverse voices as possible are heard. During the preparation of the Green Paper, discussions were held with immigrants<sup>2</sup> in two focus groups and with a number of experts in various fields. Preparation of the White Paper included discussions with hundreds of people interviewed at open meetings throughout Iceland. In the process as a whole, well over 550 people were spoken with.

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<sup>1</sup> The role of the Immigrant Council is laid down in Art. 5 of the Immigrant Affairs Act, No. [116/2012](#).

<sup>2</sup> An **immigrant** is defined as someone who was born abroad and has parents and grandparents who were all born abroad. An immigrant can be a foreign and/or an Icelandic citizen.

In the preparation of the Green Paper, the steering group met 8 times and held 32 meetings in thematic working groups. In the preparation of the White Paper, the steering group met 13 times and worked on the drafting of the policy. There has also been an extensive conversation with the public about the policy and practical issues. The aim of this conversation was to obtain the voices of immigrants themselves and to ensure that the key topics examined in the Green Paper and which form the basis of the draft policy reflected the real needs of the immigrants in the estimation of both the immigrants themselves and society as a whole. Twelve meetings were held around the country: 7 open meetings in Akureyri, Borgarnes, Egilsstaðir, Ísafjörður, Reykjanesbær, Reykjavík and Selfoss, and 5 closed focus group discussions with refugees in Akureyri, Bifröst, Reykjanesbær, Reykjanesbær, Reykjavík and Selfoss. A total of 489 people participated in the open meetings and focus group discussions. The conclusions of these conversation were analysed specifically to ensure that the emphases expressed would be reflected in this White Paper, i.e. in the draft policy.

In tandem with the preparation of the status assessment and drafting of a policy on matters of immigrants, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has worked on a detailed analysis of the situation of immigrants in Iceland. In co-operation with the organisation, a comparison was made between the preliminary results of the OECD analysis and the draft policy to ensure that there was harmony between the challenges that have been identified and the targets that the policy is intended to achieve.

The policy on matters of immigrants is linked to a large number of areas, as these issues affect all aspects of society. The policy is directly related to [the Education Policy for 2020-2030](#), [the Regional Development Programme 2022-2036](#), [the Parliamentary Resolution on a Strategic Plan for Local Government for 2024-2038 and the action plan for the years 2024-2028](#), the proposed [urban policy](#) and the proposed [Action Plan for the Icelandic Language 2023- 2026](#). The policy can be expected to influence future policy making, so that it envisages an inclusive social structure<sup>3</sup>, and, including infrastructure and services.

The draft policy on matters of immigrants sets out a future vision, three objectives and seventeen measurable targets, which are intended to reflect the key challenges presented in [the Green Paper](#).

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<sup>3</sup> An *inclusive society* refers to a specific type of society where the diversity of people is always assumed. The society is based on giving everyone the potential for active participation, and decisions are made consciously to ensure opportunities and possibilities for different groups to participate actively in society. An inclusive society is not only based on opportunities for participation, but also ensures that different groups of people have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making in the society.

## Basic concepts

When dealing with matters of immigrants and refugees, some basic concepts need to be defined to clarify the policy and what it is intended to achieve and to specify what is meant in each case. Because this area is undergoing continuous development, and also has a relatively brief history as a subject of investigation within the Icelandic academic community, the vocabulary and understanding of concepts is a work in progress. Section 3.3 provides definitions of the concepts underlying the discussion and indicators used in the White Paper, and definitions of concepts are also given in footnotes.

## Key topics

Bearing in mind the status assessment in the Green Paper, made available on the government's consultation portal from 10 November to 8 December 2023, the following key topics were selected in formulating policy on matters of immigrants for the coming years:

1. Ensure good and effective information services for immigrants and refugees about their rights and obligations in Iceland.
2. Improve teaching of Icelandic as a second language, ensure access to a variety of instruction for different age groups and equal access throughout the country.
3. Manpower needs on the Icelandic labour market is defined and predictable, to attract qualified workers from both within and outside the EEA.
4. Simplify and improve assessment of previous education and work experience of persons educated abroad, to enable them to obtain suitable jobs and the society to benefit from the education and experience of those who move here.
5. Aim for an inclusive society, where the participation of immigrants in all areas of society is always expected.
6. Ensure the involvement of immigrants in decision-making on matters of immigrants.
7. Reduce poverty among immigrants.
8. Promote democratic participation, protect human rights and equality for immigrants.
9. Strengthen research on matters of immigrants and refugees and improve registration and gathering of data to facilitate long-term improvements in the quality of services, founded on a knowledge base and measurable targets.



10. Ensure support for refugees so that they can establish themselves here and rebuild their lives. Emphasis is placed on support for the most vulnerable groups.

The Green Paper was made available on the government's consultation portal and was open for comment from November 10 to December 8, 2023, or for four weeks. It was published in three languages: Icelandic, English and Polish, to ensure that as many people as possible would be able to familiarise themselves with its contents. A total of 20 comments were received, 17 of them within the time limit for comments and 3 after the time limit had elapsed. In general, commentators welcomed the publication of the Green Paper and that work was being done to formulate a policy on matters of immigrants. The importance of having a policy to make actions in this area more effective was pointed out. The commentators' suggestions were useful and have been put to good use in preparing the draft policy presented here.

The picture portrayed in the Green Paper of the situation of matters of immigrants and refugees, although not exhaustive in all areas, thus gives a realistic evaluation of the state of affairs and sets benchmarks for assessing whether the targets of the policy are achieved.

Icelandic society is facing rapid demographic changes, as the percentage of immigrants in the total population is growing faster than in any other country in the OECD. It brings with it a number of challenges in various areas, and strategic planning is therefore key in co-ordinating actions in different areas, ensuring the best possible support both for the immigrants themselves as well as the infrastructure needed to promote an inclusive society. The policy on matters of immigrants is intended to ensure that the needs of immigrants are systematically taken into account on an equal basis with others, that people are offered equal opportunities, that human resources are utilised and that it is clear what demands are made on people and the society as a whole.

## 2. A Society for Everyone – Iceland's future and policy on matters of immigrants

The title of the policy presented here is A Society for Everyone – Iceland's future and policy on matters of immigrants. It is based on a future vision describing the results and benefits it is intended to achieve. The essence of this vision is the creation of a society where everyone, regardless of origin, enjoys equal opportunities. The purpose of the future vision is to reinforce the basis of decisions about the targets and their place in both short-term and longer-term activities. The policy is intended to cover the years 2024-2038 and, in parallel with the submission of a Parliamentary Resolution on policy, a Parliamentary Resolution is to be submitted on a National Action Plan for Matters of Immigrants intended to achieve the targets of the policy. The National Action Plan will be presented as provided for in the Immigrant Affairs Act, No. 116/2012. This is the first policy formulated by the Icelandic government on matters of immigrants and therefore marks a turning point in the field.

### 2.1 Future vision

The history of matters of immigrants in Iceland is not lengthy. Although immigrants have always lived in this country, for the longest time they formed a very small group. The number of immigrants began to grow around and after the turn of the last century, and has increased steadily, especially in recent years (as discussed in Section 1.2 of the [Green Paper](#)), until they now comprise almost one-fifth of the population. In a rapidly growing society where population increase can be attributed mainly to the rising number of immigrants, formulating a comprehensive policy is an urgent task for the government. As this is the government's first such policy, such a future vision is also presented here for the first time. However, the future vision has not been created out of thin air; it is based on clear values concerning democracy, equality and human rights, an assessment of the existing situation and a conversation with over 500 people who have been involved in shaping the policy at different levels. The vision is intended to be a beacon lighting the way to the

future and strengthening the foundation for decisions on the issues that affect the lives of immigrants in this country.

## Future vision

Iceland is a multicultural society that is inclusive and promotes equal opportunities for people to actively participate in society and on the labour market.

In Iceland, immigrants belong to a society which respects diversity and where the public infrastructure purposefully supports the inclusion and participation of everyone in society.

In Iceland, immigrants are given diverse opportunities and motivation to learn and adopt Icelandic as a language, with good and flexible access to practical study of the language.

Iceland's policy on matters of immigrants supports the basic values of Icelandic society, which are based on democracy, equality and respect for universal human rights.

The altered composition of the country's population calls for a clear future vision and targeted efforts to strengthen equality and promote equal opportunities for all residents. Without a clear vision of the future, there is a risk that decisions will be haphazard and arise as a reaction to challenges rather than being aimed at achieving a specific type of society and equal opportunities for all individuals. The future vision in matters of immigrants addresses one of the biggest demographic and social changes the nation has ever faced. It also presents a ground-breaking vision, in the spirit of what is customary in the other Nordic countries, to promote Icelandic as a language of communication that immigrants are enabled to learn and enjoy the support of society to do so. At the same time, the future vision implies the possibility of thriving in diversity, where no one is excluded, while at the same time diversity lays a common foundation for a single social whole.

Without a vision for the future with clear targets and actions, there is a risk of a widening gap in Iceland between native-born, on the one hand, and immigrants, on the other. The Green Paper and the key topics that were analysed there show that there is some inequality between native-born and immigrants that cannot be explained solely by the challenges involved in moving between countries. This is clearly seen in national data as well as in data from the OECD, where Iceland can be compared with various other countries regarding the situation of immigrants. Without a policy and actions, there is a risk that instead of one community, class division in Iceland will increase and two separate communities will form that will not enjoy the same opportunities to create a future for themselves and live an independent life based on respect for human rights.

## 2.2 Objectives

To connect the future vision to defined targets, specific objectives are presented here. They describe specific results that are to be achieved, are conceived with a view to the long term and are subjective, i.e. they are not based on quantitative indicators. Under each objective there are targets, which are measurable and are discussed following the respective objective.

Determination of the objectives was based on different topics or themes, which were intended to get to the core of the key topics which were analysed in the Green Paper and which have been described here in Section 1. The objectives are three in number and are shown in the table below. The themes of the objectives are **Participation and Diversity** (Objective 1), **Information, Access and Services** (Objective 2) and **Communication and Language** (Objective 3).

**Table 1 - Three objectives of the policy on matters of immigrants**

1	Immigrants belong to and are active participants in an inclusive society, based on diversity and equal opportunities.
2	Society ensures that the infrastructure meets the needs of different social groups, including different groups of immigrants, and communicates information in an accessible way.
3	For both children and adults, learning Icelandic follows varied routes, is motivating, professional, practical and accessible, so that it meets the communication needs of immigrants and society, both in everyday life, in education and on the labour market.

When defining these objectives, key topics of the Green Paper were looked at; specifying such objectives presents certain challenges, since the lives of immigrants, just like the rest of the population in this country, include all aspects of human life. Objective 1, Participation and Diversity, is intended to include key topics 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10. Objective 2, on Information, Access and Services, includes the challenges of key topics 1, 3, 4 and 9, while Objective 3 is focused on key topic 3. Objective 3 underwent some changes during its elaboration; it focuses on communication and language, to underline the importance of an inclusive society providing immigrants with encouragement and opportunities to learn the language. Learning and mastering Icelandic is no less about everyday communication than other traditional language learning and should provide a different foundation for people at different stages of their lives. All of the objectives were formulated in close co-operation with and reviewed by the steering committee during the drafting of the policy.

## 2.2.1 Future vision, objectives and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the representatives of all UN member states in September 2015. The goals cover both domestic affairs as well as international co-operation. The summary below links the policy on matters of immigrants with the SDGs. The hallmark of the SDGs is that they are universal, and Iceland's targets on matters of immigrants are therefore related to their implementation. The SDGs cover a large number of issues, as they are integrated and inseparable, and form a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. The policy on matters of immigrants addresses the following SDGs:



The policy has the targets of combating poverty among immigrants, ensuring equality in education, and greatly enhancing access and diversity in connection with learning Icelandic as a second language. Special attention is paid to vulnerable groups who are at risk of multiple discrimination. Women's labour force participation is measured specifically with the aim of equalising the status of native-born and immigrant women. The targets for evaluating education and emphasising that people are able to get suitable jobs fall under the SDG Decent Work and Economic Growth. The targets and indicators concerning housing affairs fall under the targets for SDG 11. The overall policy, with its future vision, objectives and targets, is all focused on increasing equality between immigrants and native-born.

## 2.2.2 Objective 1 – Participation, equality and diversity

### 1 Immigrants belong to and are active participants in an inclusive society, based on diversity and equal opportunities.

#### Explanation of the objective

- In Iceland, immigrants belong to a society based on inclusion<sup>4</sup> and multiculturalism.
- Equality, equal rights and general human rights are the cornerstones of an inclusive society, which recognises diversity and plans for it in ensuring the active participation of all groups in society.
- Respect is shown for diversity in the society, which is a driving force of progress in the development of modern societies.
- An inclusive society acts to combat inequality and poverty.
- Inclusion is a force that encourages participation, as immigrants are given equal opportunities with others and are encouraged to actively participate in the shaping of the society. The public sector leads the way in this regard, with its policies and legislation.

Objective 1 is based on participation and diversity, which forms a basic pillar of an inclusive society. Emphasis is placed on the principle that responsibility for an inclusive society lies not only with immigrants but with society as a whole. Its connection to the future vision is therefore obvious, as the main focus there is on an inclusive society and the participation of everyone in society, where the infrastructure and social structure promote equal opportunities regardless of origin.

Inclusion is about belonging and the creation of one society for all, where diverse groups form one whole. In order for this to happen, care must be taken when making decisions so as not to exclude individual groups in the society; rather, the opposite has to be the guiding principle and efforts made to create equal opportunities and systematically encourage the participation of those who are gaining a foothold in a new society.

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<sup>4</sup> **Inclusion** is a relatively new term in Icelandic and means that the diversity of people is assumed in all situations. Inclusion refers to the fact that the responsibility for anticipating diversity does not lie with one party, but with many. It lies with society as a whole as well as individuals within it. Inclusion therefore refers to relationships and systems based on shared responsibility. As such, it differs from terms such as integration, which refers to unidirectional responsibility, where the person who is in a minority is responsible for adapting to the circumstances of the majority. The word is most often used in context with other words, e.g. an inclusive society or inclusive health care, to mention some examples.

A glance at the key topics shows that, under the current situation, participation in society is not equal among native-born and immigrants, with the latter clearly in the weaker position. This is described in [the Green Paper's](#) discussion, for instance, regarding poverty among immigrants, in the division of income into deciles, in the percentage of immigrants who work in jobs not suitable for their education and in the electoral participation of immigrants. Whether a society is inclusive or not is partly a subjective assessment, based on people's own experience as to whether they feel they belong to a society and enjoy equal opportunities. However, there are many tangible things that have a direct impact on this, and it is clear that systematic efforts are needed to remove the obstacles immigrants face in Iceland so that they have opportunities equal to those of natives. Some of these challenges are similar to those of other countries, while others are more specific to the Icelandic context. The small size of the society offers an opportunity to achieve rapid change, but also underlines the importance of taking advantage of the experience of other nations, of learning from their mistakes and finding ways to adapt to local conditions those actions that have proven successful elsewhere, in order to strengthen an inclusive social structure.

### Objective 1 targets

Six measurable targets are designated for Objective 1, intended to measure the success aimed at in this objective. As participation, equality and diversity is a broad field, Objective 1 covers many issues. To some extent, therefore, the indicators are based on what data can realistically be gathered and how to ensure continuity in the indicators used over the entire period of the policy, i.e. from 2024-2038.

The following table provides an overview of the targets under **Objective 1**, which will be examined in more detail on the following pages.

**Table 2 - Objective 1 targets**

<b>1.1</b>	<b>Immigrants are active participants in democratic elections in Iceland and their participation is comparable to that of the society as a whole.</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Immigrants have opportunities equal to those of others for social participation.</b>
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Attitudes toward immigrants good, as is understanding among the general public of the terms multiculturalism and inclusion.</b>
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Poverty among immigrants is not greater than in the society in general.</b>

**1.5 Immigrants are employed by both the state and local authorities.**

**1.6 The diversity of the society is visible in public media.**

### Target 1.1

#### Immigrants are active participants in democratic elections in Iceland and their participation is comparable to that of the society as a whole

Four indicators have been selected for Target 1.1. The first indicator is comprised of three parts and concerns elections to local authorities, elections to the national parliament (*Althingi*) and presidential elections. The next two indicators are in two parts and concern elections to local authorities and to the Althingi. It should be borne in mind that the figures only include those who have the right to vote and are therefore eligible for election. The fourth indicator concerns the number of Immigrant Councils operating at state and local authority level. The state is obliged to have an active Immigrant Council, cf. Art. 4 of the Immigrant Affairs Act, No. 116/2012. No such statutory obligation rests on local authorities. The indicator is shown both in absolute terms and as a proportion, i.e. for the 11 municipalities with a population of 5000 or more and the state, making the denominator of the proportional indicator therefore 12.

**Table 3 - Indicators for Target 1.1**

		<b>Current situation 2024*</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A*	Election turnout of immigrants in (a) local government elections, (b) Althingi elections and (c) presidential elections	(a) 42% (b) 16.6% (c) no analysis available for presidential elections in 2020	Election turnout of immigrants will have increased by 25%	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants
B*	Immigrants as a percentage of democratically elected representatives in local government (a) and in the Althingi (b)	(a) 1.5% (b) 0%	(a) 10% (b) 8% (5 MPs)	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants



		Current situation 2024*	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
C*	Percentage of immigrants on candidate lists in elections to local authorities (a) and the Althingi (b)	(a) 4.4% (b) 3.7%	The percentage will be equal to the percentage of immigrants in the country's population	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants
D	Number and percentage of Immigrant Councils operating at local and state level	3/12**	All municipalities with 5,000 inhabitants or more will have Immigrant Councils	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

\* The percentage is based on the last election of each type.

\*\* In 2024, there were 11 municipalities with 5,000 inhabitants or more, as well as the Immigrant Council of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

### Purpose and social impact of the target

The right to vote, and thereby the opportunity to directly influence who controls the society, is a basic right in a democracy. Only those immigrants who have acquired Icelandic citizenship have the right to vote in parliamentary elections,<sup>5</sup> presidential elections and referendums. In elections to local authorities, Nordic citizens have the right to vote if domiciled in the municipality, and other foreign citizens if they have had a continuous domicile in Iceland for at least three years prior to election day. The same provisions apply to the eligibility to stand for election and therefore possible candidature for a seat in the Althingi or local government.<sup>6</sup> Turnout, however, is not only dependent on the right to vote but also on social variables such as immigrants' assessment of their own Icelandic skills and length of stay in the country, as increased language ability and longer residence increase the likelihood of voting, cf. a study by the University of Akureyri on immigrants' voting turnout in Iceland.

Both state and local government in Iceland are based on representative democracy, with emphasis placed on having elected representatives reflecting a cross-section

<sup>5</sup> The exception to this, however, is that Danish citizens, who were resident in Iceland on 6 March 1946 or at some time during the 10 years prior to that time, have the right to vote in parliamentary elections under Act No. 85/1946.

<sup>6</sup> See further the provisions on the right to vote and to stand for election in the Elections Act, No. [112/2021](#).

of the nation or municipality. To achieve such a target, immigrants need to have representatives both in local government, as well as in the Althingi, in the same or a similar proportion as their proportion in society. One way to achieve a more effective conversation with immigrants and ensure their involvement, on an equal footing with others, in decision-making is to consult special Immigrant Councils. Although this is not mandatory at the local government level, it is a good way to reach more residents.

It is clear that in order to change the current situation, targeted actions must be taken to educate people about their rights and mobilise interested immigrants to participate in politics. In this way, society as a whole can share a vision of democratic values and the social framework shaped by decisions at local government level and legislation in the Althingi. If the participation of immigrants remains as low as shown in the indicators in the table, there is a risk of increased marginalisation and a gap between native-born and immigrants.

## Target 1.2

### Immigrants have opportunities equal to those of others for social participation

Four indicators are shown for Target 1.2. It should be borne in mind that there are many ways to measure social participation, as it has different manifestations and covers a broad area. The indicators chosen here relate to children and social participation outside compulsory school. In the case of youth, consideration is given to the risk of being excluded from all activity once compulsory school concludes and the group that is not in work, study or vocational training (NEET, not in education, employment or training) is monitored specifically. For adults, the focus is on employment participation, especially among more vulnerable groups, and factors that may reveal obstacles to participation in society. Although the labour force participation of immigrant women in Iceland is good, the trend in the Nordic countries shows that many immigrant women do not enjoy the same opportunities to participate on the labour market as native-born women. Therefore, special attention is paid here to measuring the development in order to be able to prevent the same development in this country through early intervention. As to the labour force participation of refugees, this is measured five years after refugees were granted protection, as it is reasonable to assume that refugees need time to establish themselves after receiving protection, and that at first people need to work through the traumas that led to fleeing, which in turn can affect work capacity.

Table 4 - Indicators for Target 1.2

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	The percentage of immigrant children and native-born children involved sports and leisure activities is equal	See the Icelandic youth study for all children. Differences between groups have not been analysed	The participation will be the same proportionally among both groups	Ministry of Education and Children
B	Employment participation of immigrant women and native-born women is equal	First generation immigrant women 64.9%, second generation immigrant women 72.7%, refugee women 44% <sup>7</sup> Native-born women 73.9%	Equal employment participation of women from both groups; however, for refugee women, after 5 years of residence	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants
C	Labour force participation of refugees five years after being granted protection will be equal to the overall labour force participation	Labour force participation overall is 82% and 55% for refugees five years or more after being granted protection	Will have increased by 15% during the policy period	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

<sup>7</sup>This indicator covers all female refugees who received protection in the years 2010-2023; no gender-disaggregated data is available on employment after 5 years of residence, but the employment of all refugees five years or more after protection was granted was 48% as of 1 January 2024. For all genders, the employment participation rate of those who received protection in the years 2010-2023 was 49% as of 1 January 2024.

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
D	Immigrants' share in total unemployment and long-term unemployment	Immigrants make up 18.5% of the population and 55% <sup>8</sup> of persons registered as unemployed, and 57% of the long-term unemployed	The percentage of unemployed immigrants will be in line with that of society as a whole	Directorate of Labour
E	Immigrants as a percentage of the NEET group in Iceland	The percentage of immigrants aged 16-24 in the NEET group is 13%, compared to 18% of the general population	The percentage will not exceed the percentage of 16-24-year-old immigrants in the entire population	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants
F	Well-being and Social Participation of Immigrants - a study	The study has not yet been carried out. It is expected to be carried out twice during the policy period	The well-being and social participation of immigrants will be known	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

The opportunity to participate in society affects people's well-being and their experience of their position in society. Active involvement increases well-being, which makes people more resilient in the face of challenges and setbacks. Social participation has a multifaceted preventive value for both physical and mental health. For children and youth especially, participation in sports and leisure activities is important to strengthen their social skills and self-image. Organised sports and leisure activities have expanded in Iceland in recent years and are now part of the environment of most children in the country. There are many indications that, for immigrants, participation not only strengthens social skills and self-image, but is an important link in the children's language learning and enhances their Icelandic skills.

When young people find themselves outside of education and work, it can have a long-term impact on their opportunities and job prospects for the future. Being inactive can lead to social isolation, increasing the likelihood that young people will

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<sup>8</sup>Percentage of immigrants registered as unemployed in July 2023.

end up both socially and financially impoverished. Therefore, it is important to carefully monitor and mobilise especially young people who find themselves in this situation in order to prevent their marginalisation in the long term.

For adults, employment is one of the cornerstones of social participation. Participation of immigrants in employment is considerably higher in Iceland than in other Nordic countries. This must be considered one of the strengths of Icelandic society and the labour market with regard to social inclusion factors. It should be kept in mind that refugees occupy a certain special position due to their status, and in general their employment participation five years after granting of protection is lower than that of other immigrants. The reasons behind this include previous traumas, in addition to the Icelandic government's emphasis on welcoming particularly vulnerable groups. Despite the high employment rate of immigrants, there are many indications that they are more likely to lose their jobs than native-born and that their position on the labour market is more vulnerable (see further Section 3.6.4 in the Green Paper). Targeted measures to counter barriers on the labour market therefore will lead to a more equal situation.

Specific assessment of the well-being and social participation of immigrants is anticipated. Such a survey has not been carried out, with the exception of a survey on the well-being and social participation of immigrants among senior citizens, which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour commissioned in 2023 (see Section 3.4.5 in [the Green Paper](#) for details).

By working with key aspects of social participation and activity, possible marginalisation can be counteracted, and the quality of life and well-being of immigrants increased. People's activity in one area increases the probability of their activity in other areas, boosts well-being in general and therefore comprises social capital. The actions that fall under Target 1.2 are diverse, but the emphasis here is on the above-mentioned aspects, i.e. leisure and activity of children and young people and employment of adults.

### **Target 1.3**

#### **Attitudes toward immigrants is good, as is understanding among the general public of the terms multiculturalism and inclusion**

One indicator is used for Target 1.3, which is an opinion survey on the public's attitude to immigration, carried out regularly for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour since 2017.

Table 5 - Indicators for Target 1.3

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	The results of the opinion survey <i>Attitudes of the General Public to Immigration</i> , which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has had carried out every 2 years	Results of the survey conducted in December 2023	Survey indicators will show the same or better results than at the beginning of surveying	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

Whether people experience a society as inclusive or not depends largely on the attitudes that they encounter or experience. This applies to both immigrants and native-born, and it is therefore important that people who move to Iceland feel welcome and part of the society. Furthermore, it is important that those who live here feel that immigrants are and should be part of a society that takes advantage of the qualities of diversity. The attitudes of immigrants themselves are examined with a survey of their well-being and social participation (see Target 1.2) but here the focus is on attitudes towards immigrants.

By measuring attitudes regularly, any change can be detected in attitudes that could lead to the marginalisation of immigrants and present an obstacle to the future vision of the policy in this regard. The current survey measures people's attitudes towards the number of immigrants and their impact on society and the economy. It is important to develop the attitude survey further to include more variables and thus provide a deeper comparison. Regular assessment offers an opportunity to respond to the results in a targeted way through action plans, if the development of attitudes in society is negative. Here the frequency of assessment is of considerable importance, and measurements are expected every two years, the next one in 2025.

### Target 1.4

#### Poverty among immigrants is not greater than in the society in general

Two indicators are used for this target: on the one hand, the salary decile position and, on the other hand, the percentage of those defined as in poverty in Iceland in comparison to the corresponding percentage of the general population.

Table 6 - Indicators for Target 1.4

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility
A	Percentage of immigrants with low incomes	In 2020, 28.5% of immigrants had a disposable income below 60% of the median disposable income	A decrease of one-quarter or more from the current situation	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants
B	Poverty gap <sup>9</sup> within the group of immigrants living in poverty	Among immigrants classified as living in poverty in Iceland in 2020, 56.9% had a disposable income below the median disposable income of those living in poverty	The percentage of poor immigrants will have decreased and they will not live in greater poverty than others classified as living in poverty in Iceland	Statistics Iceland - Statistics on immigrants

### Purpose and social impact of the target

Poverty comes with social costs, both in the short and long term. Poverty reduces the quality of life and people's possibilities for an independent life. The government aims to reduce poverty in general and, due to the analysis of the vulnerable situation of immigrants in terms of poverty, developments among immigrants with regard to poverty must be monitored specifically. In the case of immigrants, there is a direct link between poverty and their position on the labour market, including the assessment of their education, their possibility of receiving instruction and improving their skills in Icelandic, knowledge of their rights and social participation. The indicators and the actions necessary to alter the current situation are therefore related to other indicators of the policy. Without targeted efforts to equalise the situation of immigrants and others when it comes to poverty, the risk of multiple

<sup>9</sup> The poverty gap measures how deep poverty is within a group that is already poor. The indicator is based on the median disposable income of those below the low-income threshold as a percentage of the low-income threshold.

discrimination<sup>10</sup> will increase, together with the marginalisation of immigrants and poorer opportunities for immigrant children who are living in poverty.

## Target 1.5

### Immigrants are employed by both the state and local authorities

Two indicators are used for this target: firstly, the percentage of immigrants among state employees and, secondly, the percentage among employees of local authorities. The data is analysed according to a specific job classification that is generally used in the analysis of public sector jobs.

**Table 7 - Indicators for Target 1.5**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	Immigrants as a percentage of those employed by the state by job category	An examination is in progress	Immigrants as a percentage of those employed in central government jobs will be comparable to their percentage of the population	State Personnel Policy Department
B	Immigrants as a percentage of those employed by local authorities by job category	Current situation unknown, needs to be assessed at the beginning of the policy period	Immigrants as a percentage of those employed by local authorities will be comparable to their percentage of the population	National Association of Local Authorities

<sup>10</sup> *Multiple discrimination* refers to a situation where people are discriminated against due to more than one discriminatory parameter, such as by gender and origin, or by gender, origin and disability. The discriminatory parameters have a negative synergistic effect and the person experiences multiple discrimination.



## Purpose and social impact of the target

Equal opportunities on the labour market are particularly important in creating an inclusive society. In public sector policy it is important that the state and local authorities lead by example and that their employees reflect the diversity of the society. In their human resource policies, public bodies will consider factors that can create obstacles for individual groups, such as immigrants, and how they can be countered. Such an approach also offers opportunities to utilise better the education and human resources among immigrants. Currently they are more likely than native-born to perform jobs where their education and work experience are not utilised, despite their education level being comparable to that of native-born. The diversity of the society needs to be reflected in government and local government jobs.

### Target 1.6

#### The diversity of the society is visible in public media

Three indicators are used here, which the National Broadcasting Service (RÚV) can compile in collaboration with Statistics Iceland. The indicators concern the proportion of immigrants interviewed, the themes discussed and immigrants' opportunities to create programming.

**Table 8 - Indicators for Target 1.6**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	Immigrants as a percentage of interviewees in RÚV radio and television broadcasting	The current situation is not known and must be examined at the beginning of the policy period	15%	RÚV in collaboration with Statistics Iceland
B	Percentage of immigrants involved in creating programming for RÚV	The current situation is not known and must be examined at the beginning of the policy period	10%	RÚV in collaboration with Statistics Iceland

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
C	Immigrants as interviewees on RÚV radio and television, by whether the interview concerns matters of immigrants or other issues	The current situation is not known and must be examined at the beginning of the policy period	Immigrants will speak equally about matters of immigrants and other issues	RÚV in collaboration with Statistics Iceland

### Purpose and social impact of the target

Visibility is part of creating role models and has major social significance. As a public service medium, RÚV has a greater role to play towards the public than other media, and also an opportunity to pave the way and to be a force for positive change, in addition to which RÚV's policy is to reflect the diversity of society. As a public service medium,<sup>11</sup> RÚV communicates news, information, culture and arts both on radio and television and on the Internet. RÚV is therefore an ideal platform for visibility and key to increasing immigrants' use of the content communicated to the country's population. RÚV does this, among other things, by ensuring that different groups in society are visible and have a voice. It is essential that a public service medium reflect the diversity of society and work in the interest of all groups that can place their trust in the organisation's work. By measuring the visibility and participation of immigrants as interviewees in RÚV's programming, an opportunity is created to work systematically to reflect diverse attitudes, including those of the rapidly growing group of immigrants in Iceland.

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<sup>11</sup> See further: Act on the National Broadcasting Service, a public-service medium, No. [23/2013](#).

## 2.2.3 Objective 2 - Information, Access and Services

### 2 Society ensures that the infrastructure meets the needs of different social groups, including different groups of immigrants, and communicates information in an accessible way

#### Explanation of the objective

- Access to information is a basic prerequisite for immigrants to enjoy opportunities on the labour market and in all areas of society.
- Information about Icelandic society, rights, obligations and public services is accessible to immigrants and presented in plain language and in several languages. The dissemination of information is of various types, efficient, builds [on] communication and takes into account the needs of different groups with varying degrees of, or even no, knowledge of Icelandic.
- Social infrastructure adapts to the changes and needs of society at any given time. Infrastructure in this context refers to public services of the state and local authorities in Iceland.
- Actions to shape the society are based on research and data about the situation of people who live there. Which makes it important that data on immigrants in Iceland is analysable and reliable.
- Education and job experience obtained abroad is valued appropriately on the Icelandic labour market and in other areas of society where it is of significance. Assessment of foreign education and job experience is available, efficient, transparent and clear.
- Forecasts on the manpower and skills needs of the Icelandic labour market support immigrants' access to the labour market.

Objective 2 concerns information, access and services, emphasising infrastructure that systematically supports inclusion, i.e. that promotes opportunities and removes barriers related to access to information and other basic services which are key to living in a society. This objective lays the foundation for people to gain a foothold in Icelandic society. Ready access to information increases people's independence, equalises opportunities and contributes to a more sustainable society. A large part of public services involves access to information, and here the emphasis is on ensuring that services reach everyone and support the needs of different groups. That people have opportunities to obtain information and gain an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the society.

By focusing on the recognition of immigrants' education, attention is paid to the well-being of immigrants as well as that of society as a whole. Education is an

investment, and it is therefore in society's interest to be able to make the best use of that investment for the benefit of the individual and the society. Furthermore, by creating predictability for those who intend to settle in Iceland, with a clear vision of the manpower and skills needs of the labour market and therefore of the future outlook in individual industries, a longer-term view is taken. Evaluation of education is a major issue for access to a society that immigrants want to take part in shaping, and that the society needs to use for the future.

By prioritising research and the gathering and dissemination of data, emphasis is placed on creating a knowledge base for progress and promoting well-grounded decision-making. There are many opportunities in this area, as well as simple ways to improve the expanding field of study.

### Objective 2 targets

Six measurable targets are designated for Objective 2, intended to measure the success aimed at in this objective. As the focus of Objective 2, information, access and services lay the foundation for the support system needed for immigrants to gain a foothold in a new society. The indicators are based on what data can realistically be gathered and how to ensure continuity in the metrics used over the entire period of the policy.

The following table provides an overview of the targets under **Objective 2**, which will be examined in more detail on the following pages.

**Table 9 - Objective 2 targets**

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Effective and diverse information services for new residents</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Strong and early support for refugees</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Study at institutions abroad is evaluated for professional qualifications in Iceland and validation of competence is used to assess the skills and experience of immigrants</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Active research in the field of immigration and dissemination of research results</b>

**2.5 The Icelandic education system meets the academic and social needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children and youth<sup>12</sup> at all school levels**

**2.6 The position of immigrants on the housing market is comparable to that of others**

### Target 2.1

#### Effective and diverse information services for new residents

Two indicators have been selected for this target: firstly, the number of people using information services and then how people use them. This indicates both whether the service is reaching the target group as well as the manner in which people elect to avail themselves of the service - information which can be used to develop it further. Since usage measurements are not personally identifiable and it is likely that certain people will use the service more than once, it is necessary to monitor whether immigrants generally know about the service and find it useful.

**Table 10 - Indicators for Target 2.1**

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	Number of people who use the information services of the Directorate of Labour, with a breakdown by type of communication (digital traffic, phone calls, inquiries, visits)	500 items per month for all media types combined (2022)	1,500-2,000 items per month for all media types combined	Directorate of Labour

<sup>12</sup> *Linguistically diverse* refers to the fact that people have different languages as their first language and can also be multilingual, i.e. have more than one language as their first language. Consideration must be given to linguistic diversity, especially in all studies, and the impact this has on students at different school levels.

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
B	A survey of whether immigrants know about, use and feel they need the information service	No survey has yet been conducted and such a survey is needed for each third of the policy period	75% of immigrants in Iceland will be familiar with information services for immigrants	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

When they take up residence in Iceland, it is important for immigrants to be able to obtain information about the society, their rights and their obligations simply and effectively. Various practical information about basic services are important initially in a new country and serve as guidance to the system. With longer residence, the need for information changes until the person no longer needs specific support in obtaining information.

Information is empowering and increases people's independence, enabling them to make informed decisions about both major and minor aspects of their lives. In the open dialogue of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour with immigrants throughout Iceland, the latter placed strong emphasis on efficient information provision in order to gain entrance to society as soon as possible. It was repeatedly mentioned how complicated and time-consuming it was to obtain the necessary information. A single information portal, giving access to state and local government institutions responsible for public services, can make it possible to ensure that immigrants have equal access to reliable information. Lack of access to information can lead to misunderstandings and increase the risk of information being passed on by word of mouth and from the experience of others. This increases the risk of information being misused and wrong instructions being given, which could affect the legal status of the person in Iceland, for instance, with regard to rights related to legal domicile, to mention an example.

## Target 2.2

### Strong and early support for refugees

Four indicators have been selected for Target 2.2, all related to the reception of refugees and support for their inclusion, which is carried out as provided for in the

Immigrant Affairs Act.<sup>13</sup> The government considers it necessary to offer refugees specific support in establishing themselves in Iceland and do so through agreements with local authorities for additional social support for up to three years after a residence permit is granted. It is important that this service is of practical use, and to ensure this such services must be monitored as closely as possible to make sure they are useful and continue to assist people fleeing the conditions in their home country in establishing themselves in Icelandic society.

**Table 11 - Indicators for Target 2.2**

		<b>Current situation 2023</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	Percentage of refugees granted protection each year referred to co-ordinated refugee reception	Due to delays in referrals to the co-ordinated reception in 2022, 2,142 persons were referred to co-ordinated reception in 2023, while the total number granted protection in the year was 1,986, which results in a statistical bias in the indicator for 2023 as it is 108%	Of those granted protection, 80% will accept the offer of co-ordinated refugee reception; all persons granted protection will be offered to participate	Directorate of Labour
B	Percentage of refugees who receive instruction in Icelandic or Icelandic sign language in the first year after being granted protection and the average number of lessons per person	75% receive instruction  The average number of lessons is 80 hours	90% will receive instruction  The average number of teaching hours will be 440 hours	Directorate of Labour

<sup>13</sup> See the provisions of Art. 3 a. of the Immigrant Affairs Act, No. [116/2012](#).

		Current situation 2023	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
C	Percentage of refugees who receive community education in the first year after protection	39%	90%	Directorate of Labour
D	Percentage of refugees who receive support in assessment of their previous education, study counselling and/or job search assistance in the first year after protection	Information not available	90%	Directorate of Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

All the Nordic countries have some type of system to support the inclusion of refugees and assist them in establishing themselves in a new country. The view is that because of their situation refugees, more than other immigrants, need specific support to take their first steps in a new society. In Iceland, such services are provided in collaboration with social services, the Directorate of Labour and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that form a continuum of support under the banner of co-ordinated reception of refugees. There the support, as is generally the case in social services, is tailored to the needs of each user. The goal of the service is to ensure that refugees receive the necessary assistance to overcome trauma and have the opportunity to actively participate in society, whether on the labour market, in education or in other areas. It is therefore important to measure the participation in such an extensive support project. Most refugees are assumed to require such support, although there will always be some portion of refugees who can establish themselves without specific support. It is also important that the support is strong at the start of residency, which explains the emphasis on referrals within certain time limits. Instruction in Icelandic, community education and support in finding employment supplement the work of social services, but are also available to all refugees, regardless of whether they receive assistance from social services or not, and it is therefore desirable that these actions be specifically monitored. Children, however, always receive support through the school system, regardless of whether their guardians receive support in the co-ordinated reception of refugees, and that support falls under Target 2.5.

The risk of not providing early support to refugees is that, without support, it is more likely to take longer for people to become established and active in society, and



their employment participation is likely to be lower. This can ultimately increase the likelihood that people will never become part of society and will need long-term welfare services with associated costs for the individuals and society. Indicator F of Target 1.2 is also related to the above-mentioned indicators, because the measurement of well-being and social participation measures, among other things, whether the goals of co-ordinated reception are met.

### Target 2.3

#### Study at institutions abroad is evaluated for professional qualifications in Iceland and validation of competence is used to assess the skills and experience of immigrants

Two new indicators are used here concerning evaluation of study at institutions abroad for professional qualifications in Iceland. Since the target is a response to a request to improve the efficacy of evaluation for professional qualifications and simplify the system for persons who apply to have their qualifications recognised in Iceland, there is no baseline status. One indicator from the OECD is also used, which provides an opportunity for Nordic and international comparison.

To meet the needs of those with limited formal schooling, two measures are presented concerning validation of competence. Such assessment is important for persons who are either considering further studies in Iceland, for example for professional qualifications, or who want to have their foreign work experience assessed when they enter the labour market in Iceland.

**Table 12 - Indicators for Target 2.3**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	Speed of procedure for the evaluation of studies by profession	A baseline and indicator needs to be prepared for the first years of the policy	A plan for improvement needs to be established with reference to the baseline analysis	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
B	Percentage of approvals and rejections of recognition of professional qualifications from foreign institutions by profession, as well as a review of the reasons for rejection	A baseline and indicator needs to be prepared for the first years of the policy.	A plan for improvement needs to be established with reference to the baseline analysis	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
C	Percentage of educated immigrants performing jobs that do not require specific education compared to native-born	In 2021, 42% of educated immigrants and 10% of educated native-born performed jobs that did not require specific education	The difference between the groups will have decreased and the percentage of immigrants in this situation has decreased from four times to no higher than double that of the percentage of native-born	A survey by the OECD that is carried out regularly
D	Immigrants as a percentage of those who complete validation of competence	In 2022, 14% of those who completed validation of competence had foreign citizenship	The percentage of immigrants completing validation of competence will be the same as that of native-born	Educational Fund

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
E	Percentage of immigrants with limited formal schooling on the unemployment register who undergo validation of competence	The indicator does not exist and the situation will be assessed at the beginning of the policy period	50% of immigrants with limited formal schooling on the unemployment register will undergo validation of competence and 100% will be offered such assessment	Directorate of Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

Studying is an investment, both on the part of the student and the state that pays for the education system enabling such study. It is important to make the best use of this investment, for the benefit of society as well as the individual. The fact is that many immigrants have difficulty getting their degrees, education and work experience properly evaluated in Iceland. A lengthy period may be required for evaluation and in some cases hampers the possibility of hiring immigrants for work suitable to their education and experience. The target is related to Target 2.1, as people must have clear information and instructions on where to look for evaluation of studies. It is also worth noting that the indicator does not cover the fifth pillar of the education system, i.e. continuing education and validation of competence or immigrants' access to it.

Recently, a single service portal was opened for evaluation of studies in Iceland, where application can be made for evaluation of studies in vocational subjects as well as university studies. To measure the benefits of that action and to continue to promote the evaluation of studies, indicators need to be established. Doing so also provides an opportunity to measure any deviations which may arise in evaluation of studies and thus strengthen the evaluation system and make it more efficient.

In Europe in general, there is some difference between immigrants and native-born in the percentage of educated people who perform jobs that do not require specific education. It is estimated that within the EU, about a third of immigrants are in this situation, which is about 12% higher than among native-born. However, this gap is greatest in the Nordic countries and is very high here in Iceland. It is therefore evident that a large number of people working on the Icelandic labour market do not take proper advantage of their education, and it is a great loss for society not to be able to utilise the education of people who are already active on the labour market. Here there are definitely opportunities for improvement.

The risk exists that, if the evaluation process is time-consuming and complicated, the foreign experts that the Icelandic economy needs will prefer to settle in other countries, as the competition for knowledge is high. If left unchanged, the system can therefore have a negative impact on Iceland's competitiveness and marginalise people, who work in jobs where their education is of less use, thereby limiting the opportunities they enjoy.

Similarly, it is important that persons with limited formal education have the opportunity to have their work experience assessed and to test their skills if they intend to start studying and acquire further qualifications in Iceland. A variety of options are used for validation of competence, where previous work experience, knowledge and participation in social activities are evaluated for further study or professional development. Validation of competence is an important part of supporting immigrants in establishing themselves in a new society and continuing to develop their opportunities in a world of rapid technological development and changes on the labour market. Such opportunities must be available to both immigrants and native-born to support the successful development of both society and the labour market.

## Target 2.4

### Active research in the field of immigration and dissemination of research results

For Target 2.4 three indicators of research activity are used. These are chosen to serve as the first step in boosting research in this field and knowledge dissemination. The first two indicators need to be developed better and the forum referred to in the third needs to be established, as it does not currently exist.

**Table 13 - Indicators for Target 2.4**

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	Funding for research on immigration is maintained in line with the number of immigrants in Iceland	The Development Fund for Immigration Issues allocates ISK 694,000 per 1,000 immigrants	The contribution per 1,000 immigrants in real terms will remain constant or increase from the present level	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
B	The number of studies published in the field of immigration each year	The current situation is unknown, a baseline must be established in the first years of the policy period	Studies will increase by 10% during the policy period	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
C	A special forum, which keeps track of research on matters of immigrants and refugees is active and disseminates knowledge of the research in Icelandic society	Such a forum does not exist today	There will be an active forum for the dissemination and exploitation of research results	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

Rapid societal changes, such as a large increase in immigration, are accompanied by various challenges for the group in question as well as for society as a whole. As pointed out in the status assessment of the [Green Paper](#), it is necessary to strengthen research in matters of immigrants and refugees and improve recording and gathering of data to facilitate long-term improvements in the quality of services, founded on a knowledge base and measurable targets. Support for research, data gathering and targeted measurement of results can improve projects and decisions for the future. Dissemination of research has been insufficient, limiting the ability of those who work on matters of immigrants on a daily basis to be able to take advantage of domestic research results. Therefore, it is clear that a bridge needs to be built between researchers and workers in the field, and the third indicator of this target is significant in this regard. It is also clear that the indicators of the funding for research need to be developed better, since the funds currently dedicated to matters of immigrants support both projects and research.

If there is no change in both the number of studies and the dissemination of results, there is a risk that progress in the field will be slower and that decision-making will not be based on as solid a foundation as if research were available.

## Target 2.5

### The Icelandic education system meets the academic and social needs of children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds at all school levels

As this goal is very extensive it is difficult to measure. Of the five indicators used for the target, the first refers to more complex indicators that are recognised and have been used for measurement in the education system for years. Three indicators are regular measurements published by Statistics Iceland and show the number of students who complete or drop out of their studies. Since education is of major importance and has predictive value for the participation of young immigrants in society and their general well-being for the future, these indicators are considered suitable for measuring development under this target. Lastly there is one indicator which concerns the mother tongue of immigrant children.

**Table 14 - Indicators for Target 2.5**

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	The results of PISA, the Icelandic Youth Survey and other assessment tools used in the education system	See the latest results of each study individually <sup>14</sup>	Regarding improvement from the current situation, different indicators apply for different studies	Ministry of Education and Children
B	Students graduating at upper secondary school and supplementary level by background, age group and gender	In the 18-24 age group, 163 first-generation immigrants and 74 second-generation immigrants graduated in 2022	One-third more people aged 18-24 will graduate compared to the current situation	Statistics Iceland

<sup>14</sup> For further details, see the main [PISA](#) results for Iceland and the results of [the Icelandic Youth Survey](#)

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
C	Students graduating with university degrees and doctoral degrees by background, age group and gender	<p>In 2022, 462 first-generation immigrants and 16 second-generation immigrants graduated at level ISCED 5</p> <p>In 2022, 33 first-generation immigrants and no second-generation immigrants graduated at level ISCED 6<sup>15</sup></p>	A target will be set at the beginning of the policy period, as the size of the future generations must be examined in order to set a realistic target. This is also related to success in A and B. The minimum benchmark, however, is to have no reduction from the current situation	Statistics Iceland
E	Number of schools that accept children's mother language study as an optional subject or as a substitute for compulsory study under the National Curriculum Guide for compulsory and upper secondary schools	Status not known but will be examined at the start of the policy period	Target set following assessment of situation	Ministry of Education and Children

**Purpose and social impact of the target**

The Icelandic school system needs to meet the academic and social needs of students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds better. This is clearly stated in the Education Policy 2030. Children with a diverse linguistic and cultural background fare worse in the Icelandic school system than their native-born peers,

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15. Consideration should be given here to the fact that the second generation of immigrants in Iceland is relatively young, making it natural that it does not appear in the indicator.

and the difference tends to increase with the increasing age of the students. Young people in this group are more likely to drop out of upper secondary school than their native-born peers. The Icelandic government has already set itself the goal of expanding the publication of study materials, equalising the situation of children and young people with different backgrounds regardless of where they live, and emphasising their well-being and Icelandic skills at compulsory, upper secondary and university levels. This is done to equalise the situation of children and young people regardless of origin and give them equal opportunities to study at all school levels. Access to education is also the key to their welfare and opportunities for the future.

Failure to act to equalise opportunities in this respect increases the risk of growing class divisions between people of different origins and the marginalisation of young immigrants, directly counteracting the aims of this policy.

## Target 2.6

### The position of immigrants on the housing market is comparable to that of others

Four indicators are used for Target 2.6. These are all indicators that are generally used to monitor the situation on the housing market, but have not been used specifically to analyse the situation of immigrants on the housing market. The indicators are regarded as generally giving a good picture of the housing market situation, and adding the background variable of immigrants will provide an opportunity for more in-depth analyses than has previously been possible.

**Table 15 - Indicators for Target 2.6**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	Percentage of immigrants in the rental market compared to that of native-born	Figures exist but are not broken down by background	Targets set following assessment of situation	Statistics Iceland and the Housing and Construction Authority (HMS)
B	Percentage of immigrants who are owner-occupants compared to that of native-born	Figures exist but are not broken down by background	Targets set following assessment of situation	Statistics Iceland and the Housing and Construction Authority (HMS)



		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
C	Percentage of immigrants on the rental market who receive housing benefits in comparison to native-born	Figures exist but are not broken down by background	Equal status of immigrants and native-born	Statistics Iceland and the Housing and Construction Authority (HMS)
D	Percentage of immigrant households in arrears on their housing mortgages or rent compared to the percentage of native-born households	Figures exist but are not broken down by background	Equal status of immigrants and native-born	Statistics Iceland

### Purpose and social impact of the target

The need for housing increases with the increase in population; however, in recent years the increase in residential housing has not kept up with the increase in population. Secure housing is a basic human need and is of major significance if people are to establish themselves in a new society and deal with the challenges that migration between countries entails. A higher proportion of immigrants are in the rental market than native-born, which can be normal enough at the beginning of their residence. Comparisons with other Nordic countries and OECD countries can also be used. Immigrants are also more likely to be unaware of their right to housing benefits and more likely to live in housing which is not designed for residential use, and therefore does not confer entitlement to housing benefits. The situation of immigrants on the housing market is therefore a measure of their potential to gain a foothold in the country, in addition to which conditions on the housing market affect people's welfare. The indicators can be used to monitor whether the situation of immigrants on the housing market improves from its current situation, as is discussed in Section 3.3.2 of [the Green Paper](#). Monitoring arrears in connection with housing can reveal whether housing costs are more burdensome for immigrants than for native-born. Housing matters and the availability of both rental housing and residential housing for purchase are important to all residents, but here there is a risk that, given the difficult situation on the housing market, immigrants will be in a weaker position than other residents. One step towards a solution is to ensure better that immigrants are aware of their rights regarding benefits that need to be applied for, such as housing benefits.

Housing security is key to an inclusive society, and inequality on the housing market therefore has a negative impact on both people's financial and social welfare.

## 2.2.4 Objective 3 - Communication and Language

**3 For both children and adults, learning Icelandic follows varied routes, is motivating, professional, practical and accessible so that it meets the communication needs of immigrants in the society, in education and on the labour market**

### Explanation of the objective

- There are two national languages in Iceland, Icelandic and Icelandic sign language.
- The Icelandic language is a cultural heritage that needs to be protected so that everyone enjoys equal opportunities in society.
- Communication between people, and the language, are the keys to participation in society.
- Immigrants are guaranteed access to diverse and flexible instruction in Icelandic, as well as incentives for active use of the language.
- Access to language learning is guaranteed regardless of residence, and standard criteria for language skills are systematically applied to create predictability and understanding of the requirements for language ability in society.
- Special emphasis is placed on the quality of instruction in Icelandic as a second language at all school levels.
- The success and utilisation of Icelandic instruction at different levels is closely monitored.

Society is about communication and language is one of the keys to communication. Participation in society is based on the possibility of communicating, and therefore the third objective of the policy is based on the future vision that immigrants have diverse opportunities and motivation to learn Icelandic and Icelandic sign language. In conversation with the immigrants themselves during the circuit of Iceland that was made in preparation of the targets that appear here, Icelandic was one of the main topics of discussion. Immigrants want to learn Icelandic, but feel that they lack the opportunity and motivation to learn the language, and that immigrants in rural areas have far too few opportunities to learn Icelandic. To create such opportunities and motivation, clear targets are set for the supply of instruction and access, with an emphasis on flexibility. Immigrants in Iceland are a very diverse group and therefore no single study option suits everyone. Variety also makes learning more enjoyable, which creates motivation to continue learning. In tandem with this, it is important that the society as a whole show understanding and provide encouragement to use the language. As Icelandic skills are only of use in Iceland, it is important that people see an advantage in learning the language. Icelandic is

important to the nation and a symbol of unity and cultural heritage. For most Icelanders, their native language is part of the nation's identity, and therefore it is important, in an inclusive society, to bear in mind that Icelandic is various things. It is a route to communication and participation in society, and skills in the Icelandic language and Icelandic sign language are therefore important to everyone who lives here, both immigrants and native-born.

Iceland, unlike the other Nordic countries, has not built a strong support network for teaching Icelandic as a second language. This also means that teaching Icelandic as a second language as a specific teaching subject has yet to grow, and offers many opportunities. Iceland is at a certain turning point and major steps forward have already been announced in this area. Therefore, the emphasis here is on setting clear targets for the quality of instruction and the evaluation system. Such targets treat both students and teachers with respect and create opportunities for development and research, while emphasising language skills and use. Learning Icelandic takes place not only in classrooms, but also through active use of the language and opportunities to learn both through play and work.

### Objective 3 targets

Five measurable targets are designated for Objective 3, intended to measure the success aimed at under the objective of Icelandic language instruction for adults. The targets are intended to bring together the complex interplay of supply, accessibility, flexibility and incentives needed to achieve the progress made in Nordic countries in teaching the country's national language. The National Curriculum Guides for Preschool, Compulsory School and Upper-secondary School apply to Icelandic instruction for immigrant children.

The following table provides an overview of the targets under **Objective 3**, which will be examined in more detail on the following pages.

**Table 16 - Objective 3 targets**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>The supply of practical instruction in Icelandic is good and reaches the whole country</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>The quality of Icelandic instruction is guaranteed</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>There is understanding and an incentive to use Icelandic in communication between immigrants and native-born</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Instruction in Icelandic is accessible and flexible</b>

### 3.5 The evaluation system for Icelandic language skills is harmonised

#### Target 3.1

#### The supply of practical instruction in Icelandic is good and reaches the whole country

There are three indicators for the supply target. They are intended to respond to the needs mentioned by the immigrants themselves, i.e. that more, and more diverse, ways of learning need to be offered. It is important here that people all over the country have the opportunity to study. A special target is set for teaching Icelandic sign language to underline the importance of paying attention to both official languages of the country when setting goals for teaching Icelandic to immigrants. Teaching Icelandic sign language is particularly important since the language community is small and immigrants make up about 20% of sign language users in the country. The indicator for workplace-related instruction of Icelandic reflects a trend that is increasing and is related to the importance of being able to use the language skills, among other things, for communication in the workplace.

Table 17 - Indicators for Target 3.1

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	The number of courses, study places and study options, including distance learning, offered at different skill levels in each region of the country based on the number of immigrants residing in the region	No analysis has been carried out, but the number of courses that receive public support is known	The supply and diversity of study options will have increased and access will be guaranteed throughout the country	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
B	Courses in Icelandic sign language are available for deaf <sup>16</sup> immigrants	Analysis of the current situation is ongoing	Courses in Icelandic sign language will be available to all deaf immigrants	Communication Centre of the Deaf and Hearing-impaired
C	The number of workplaces that offer work-related Icelandic instruction and the percentage of immigrants of those active on the labour market who have access to such instruction, by region	The indicator does not exist and a baseline must be established at the beginning of the policy period	The target is to increase the number of workplaces that offer work-related Icelandic instruction. A numbered target will be set following the establishment of a baseline	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

Immigrants themselves say that access to Icelandic instruction is one of their main challenges. The general consensus is that a much more powerful and diverse learning environment needs to be created, extending throughout the country, and the targets for supply and utilisation are intended to achieve this. It is in everyone's interest to provide opportunities to learn Icelandic and Icelandic sign language, as the language is a key to communication in Icelandic society. It is clear that in order to achieve this target, the supply and diversity must be increased, otherwise it is likely that immigrants will have only limited opportunities to learn and use the language. This would have a wide-reaching effect on communication and the equalisation of opportunities in the society, and it is likely to lead to the yet more use of English as the language of communication. With regard to Icelandic instruction in the workplace, the employers' views are of major significance and follow-up on the target will require their co-operation.

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<sup>16</sup> The word "deaf" refers to those people who are hearing-impaired, speak sign language and have sign language as their first language. In the same way that other immigrants do not have Icelandic as their first language, deaf immigrants do not have Icelandic sign language as their first language.

## Target 3.2

### The quality of Icelandic instruction is guaranteed

Three indicators are used for the quality of Icelandic instruction, intended firstly to measure the qualifications of the new, growing class of teachers who specialise in teaching Icelandic as a second language and how much of the instruction is in the hands of specially trained teachers. The second indicator is to measure the harmonised assessment of studies, using criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and the third is users' assessment of the quality of instruction. These indicators can provide a good overview of the development in teaching, which will grow rapidly and reach a certain maturity during the policy period.

**Table 18 - Indicators for Target 3.2**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	Percentage of teachers who have teaching qualifications and specific training in teaching Icelandic as a second language	The number of trained teachers does not meet the need. A baseline must be determined at the beginning of the policy period	The proportion of qualified teachers will be sufficient to satisfy the need for instruction in Icelandic as a second language	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and the Ministry of Education and Children
B	Percentage of courses that assess learning outcomes based on the proficiency levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	The current situation is not known and must be examined at the beginning of the policy period	All courses that receive public funding assess learning outcomes based on the proficiency levels of the European Framework of Reference for Languages	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
C	A user evaluation of the quality of instruction will be conducted twice during the implementation period of the policy	See the results of an assessment of the quality issues of Icelandic instruction for adults whose mother tongue is not Icelandic <sup>17</sup>	85% of students consider the quality of instruction to be good or very good	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

### Purpose and social impact of the target

With the aim of ensuring the quality of Icelandic instruction, criteria are set for the development of this rapidly growing teaching field. This does not imply that instruction today does not meet such criteria, but a framework for comparison is lacking and it is therefore difficult to get an overall view of quality issues regarding the situation in teaching of Icelandic as a second language. To achieve this, it is necessary to continue and possibly speed up the implementation of the instruction and proficiency criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and to strengthen opportunities for special training for teachers of Icelandic as a second language. However, the quality of the instruction will never be greater than the experience of those who take advantage of it, which makes it important to hear the users' voices regularly in order to create opportunities for further development of Icelandic teaching for immigrants. Using such criteria can also ensure responsible use of public money that is spent to support this instruction. Without criteria, it is not possible to guarantee this, nor to ensure equality between students who attend courses from different instruction providers.

### Target 3.3

#### There is understanding and an incentive to use Icelandic in communication between immigrants and native-born

One indicator is used here, in the form of a comparative study of attitudes concerning the use of Icelandic. This is an unexplored field which, however, has a

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<sup>17</sup>The results of the assessment, which was prepared by the Social Science Research Institute for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, are available [here](#).

major impact on whether people see it to their advantage to learn and use the language of their country of residence.

**Table 19 - Indicators for Target 3.3**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	A comparative study will be carried out every four years on the attitudes of native-born and immigrants towards opportunities to use Icelandic and attitudes towards Icelandic interlanguage <sup>18</sup>	It has not been formally investigated, but the results of a conversation with immigrants around the country indicate that there is a need to increase tolerance and opportunities for Icelandic interlanguage	The attitudes of both groups will develop in a positive direction in the interval between the studies	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

This target is set to meet the voices of immigrants who believe that there is a general lack of understanding among Icelandic-speakers when concerning opportunities for people to express themselves in Icelandic while learning the language. Similarly, there are voices maintaining that immigrants do not use Icelandic, and assume there are various reasons for this. To understand the challenge which communication involves, it is necessary to know the attitudes of both native speakers and immigrants who use Icelandic as an interlanguage regarding opportunities to use Icelandic and the experiences this involves. The indicator is therefore intended to lay the foundation for a new perspective on the use of all kinds of Icelandic and people's experiences in this regard. Failure to encourage understanding and the motivation between native speakers and people who use an Icelandic interlanguage creates a risk that communication between immigrants and native-born will take

<sup>18</sup> Icelandic interlanguage is the language of non-native speakers. It refers to the language use of non-native speakers, including pronunciation, word choice, grammar and sentence structure.



place for the most part in English, which can be expected to be a third language in communication in many instances.

### Target 3.4

#### Instruction in Icelandic is accessible and flexible

To meet the target of accessibility and flexibility, three indicators are used which are intended to give a picture of whether Icelandic instruction is accessible and flexible. The indicators are chosen based on benchmarks used by the OECD in comparisons between countries of how accessible and flexible instruction is. The main factors of the OECD's assessment are the time, location and methods available.

**Table 20 - Indicators for Target 3.4**

		<b>Current situation 2024</b>	<b>Goal for 2038</b>	<b>Responsibility for indicator</b>
A	The number of distance learning places available relative to the number of immigrants	The situation is not known and a baseline must be determined at the beginning of the policy period	Target set when baseline analysis is complete	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
B	Supply of Icelandic lessons at different times of the day, based on the region of the country and the number of immigrants in each region	The situation is not known and a baseline must be determined at the beginning of the policy period	Target set when baseline analysis is complete	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
C	Number of open smart solutions that support the learning of Icelandic and the use of the language	The situation is not known and a baseline must be determined at the beginning of the policy period	Target set when baseline analysis is complete	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

### Purpose and social impact of the target

This target is intended to meet more specifically the need for the supply of instruction and ensure that the educational opportunities are both available and accessible. Target 3.4 is linked to Target 3.1 which concerns supply as measured by the number of courses. In this case, the emphasis is on time, such as the time of day, so that people in different jobs with different working hours, e.g. due to shift work or the nature of their work, have the opportunity to attend a course in Icelandic. And to make sure that location alone does not prevent learning Icelandic; as Iceland is a sparsely populated and large country, distance learning is in some cases the only possible solution and, in addition, suitable for many people, e.g. those with children and shift workers. Smart solutions are used as an important support tool for language learning and development of smart solutions in Iceland is rapid. Access to such solutions is key to enabling many people to take advantage of them, and therefore the focus here is on those smart solutions that are accessible to the general public. This target creates an important link between supply and quality, on the one hand, and accessibility, on the other. If accessibility is not improved, there is a risk that Icelandic instruction will reach far fewer immigrants and that the difference in accessibility between rural areas and the SW corner of the country will remain unchanged from its current level.

### Target 3.5

#### The evaluation system for Icelandic language skills is harmonised

To increase predictability, transparency in evaluation and general use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, three targets are set, all of which are related to the Common European Framework. The indicator provides clear criteria and is also comparable between languages.

Table 21 - Indicators for Target 3.5

		Current situation 2024	Goal for 2038	Responsibility for indicator
A	A standardised, official placement test, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, is offered at test centres throughout Iceland	Such a test is not available	The test will be offered regularly in all regions of the country	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
B	Continuing education providers will assess and confirm the proficiency of each student upon the conclusion of a course, based on the skills levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	Current situation unknown	All accredited continuing education providers will assess skills based on the skill levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
C	Immigrants have access to free, on-line, sample tests, where they can check their level of proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	Not available	Will be accessible, visible, effective and regularly updated	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

### Purpose and social impact of the target

The target of widespread use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as a benchmark for the assessment of proficiency is set to create transparency and standardised criteria. The advantage of this indicator is that it

enables a comparison of skills in different languages and facilitates both the setting of criteria for language skills and clarity as to which level of proficiency is desired when language ability is required. Use of the Common European Framework makes it easier for persons who are learning Icelandic to know what requirements are made of their proficiency, for example, when applying for studies or jobs. The use of such a measuring device is therefore encouraging and increases predictability as to the requirements when it comes to study and proficiency in Icelandic as a second language on the labour market.

## 3. Appendices

### 3.1 Overall overview and impact of targets

The table below provides an overview of the targets set in the policy on matters of immigrants. While they are very broad in scope, all are concerned with equalising the position. They are intended to create equal opportunities for immigrants. To create a clearer picture of what is expected of immigrants and what support is available. As mentioned in the introduction, the affairs of immigrants affect the entire society, as their lives, like those of other residents, comprise part of the society. The targets are intended to create the positive characteristics of an inclusive society, while at the same time fostering the society's basic values and strengthening the infrastructure and basic pillars that enable immigrants to establish themselves in Iceland. To build their own lives and participate in the society equally with native-born. A clear view of matters of immigrants contributes to more targeted decision-making, where the diversity of society is always taken into account.

**Table 22 – Overview of targets in matters of immigrants**

No.	Objective
1.1	Immigrants are active participants in democratic elections in Iceland and their participation is comparable to that of the society as a whole
1.2	Immigrants have opportunities equal to those of others for social participation
1.3	Attitudes toward immigrants are good, as is understanding among the general public of the terms multiculturalism and inclusion
1.4	Poverty among immigrants is not greater than in the society in general
1.5	Immigrants are employed by both the state and local authorities
1.6	The diversity of the society is visible in public media.
2.1	Effective and diverse information services for new residents
2.2	Strong and early support for refugees
2.3	Studies from foreign institutions are assessed for job qualifications in Iceland, and validation of competence is used to assess the skills and experience of immigrants
2.4	Active research in the field of immigration and dissemination of research results
2.5	The Icelandic education system meets the academic and social needs of children and youth with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds at all school levels
2.6	The position of immigrants on the housing market is comparable to that of others
3.1	The supply of practical instruction in Icelandic is good and reaches all areas of the country
3.2	The quality of Icelandic instruction is guaranteed

No.	Objective
3.3	There is understanding and an incentive to use Icelandic in communication between immigrants and native-born
3.4	Instruction in Icelandic is accessible and flexible
3.5	The evaluation system for Icelandic language skills is harmonised

## 3.2 Results of consultation

Consultation on the Status Assessment and Options, i.e. the Green Paper on the Matters of Immigrants and Refugees, through the government's consultation portal lasted from 10 November to 8 December 2023. A total of 20 opinions were received, 17 of them within the time limit for comments and 3 after the time limit had elapsed. The commentators are listed in their alphabetical order in Icelandic: The Icelandic Confederation of Labour; the Icelandic Social Workers' Association; the Icelandic Industrial Educational Centre; the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Iceland; the Icelandic Department of Amnesty International; Jóhanna Björk Sveinbjörnsdóttir; Leikn, the association of adult education providers in Iceland; the Icelandic Human Rights Centre; Mirra, Center for research and education on international migration and ethnic relations; the Icelandic Red Cross; the State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre; the City of Reykjavík, the Multicultural Council of the City of Reykjavík; the City of Reykjavik - ambassadors of residents of foreign origin; the National Association of Local Authorities; the Confederation of Icelandic Employers; the Federation of Icelandic Industries and Confederation of Industry and Icelandic Ed-tech Industry; Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network in Iceland; Símennt, the Association of Education and Lifelong Learning Centres; and the Icelandic Disability Alliance.

In general, commentators welcomed the publication of the Green Paper and the work being done to formulate a policy on matters of immigrants. The importance of having a policy to make actions in this area more effective was pointed out. Suggestions from commentators mainly expressed a desire for more detailed discussion of the issues of individual groups, rather than suggestions concerning the key topics and future vision. A report on the consultation is available [here](#).

In preparing the future vision, objectives and targets of the policy, consultation with the steering group continued, as discussed in the introduction. The conclusions of extensive consultation with the public at open meetings and focus group discussions were also used. The emphases that were expressed at those meetings were well reflected in the key topics examined in the Green Paper. At the meetings, ways to achieve the goals set were also presented and were referred to the Immigrant Council, which will make a proposal for actions to the Minister, as provided for in the Immigrant Affairs Act, No. 116/2012.

### 3.3 Glossary of terms

Explanations are provided below of the main terms and concepts used in the draft policy on matters of immigrants.

**A second-language speaker** refers to someone who speaks Icelandic as a second language. Second language refers to the languages that people learn after learning their mother tongue or first language. Children can acquire more than one language simultaneously and become bilingual or multilingual. Native-born are therefore generally native speakers of Icelandic while immigrants are generally second-language speakers. Immigrants who move to Iceland as children can, however, become bilingual, i.e. native speakers of both Icelandic and their mother tongue, and are not second-language speakers of Icelandic.

The word **deaf** refers to those people who are hearing-impaired, speak sign language and have sign language as their first language. In the same way that other immigrants do not have Icelandic as their first language, deaf immigrants do not have Icelandic sign language as their first language.

**Linguistically diverse** refers to the fact that immigrants have different languages as their first language and can also be multilingual, i.e. be native speakers of more than one language. Consideration must be given to linguistic diversity, especially in all studies, and the impact this has on students at different school levels.

**Multiculturalism** refers to the characteristics of a society which includes different cultures that thrive in their interactions with each other. Multiculturalism is most often used in combinations such as multicultural society or multicultural schooling. Multiculturalism reflects a view that everyone has the right to maintain their own culture and also that it is possible to belong to more than one culture. The term refers to the social cohesion of different cultural groups.

**A refugee** is a person who is outside their home country or a stateless person who is outside the country where they had a regular residence, because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, and because of such fear cannot or does not wish to avail themselves of the protection of that country. In this policy refugees are those individuals whose status as refugees has been recognised by the Icelandic state.

**An immigrant** is defined as someone who was born abroad and has parents and grandparents who were all born abroad. An immigrant can be a foreign and/or an Icelandic citizen.

**Inclusion** is a relatively new term in Icelandic and means that the diversity of people is assumed in all situations. Inclusion refers to the fact that the responsibility for anticipating diversity does not lie with one party, but with many. It lies with society as a whole as well as individuals within it. Inclusion therefore refers to relationships and systems based on shared responsibility. As such, it differs from terms such as

integration, which refers to unidirectional responsibility, where the person who is in a minority is responsible for adapting to the circumstances of the majority. The word is most often used in context with other words, e.g. an inclusive society or inclusive health care, to mention some examples.

An **inclusive society** refers to a specific type of society where the diversity of people is always assumed. The society is based on giving everyone the potential for active participation, and decisions are made consciously to ensure opportunities and possibilities for different groups to participate actively in society. An inclusive society is not only based on opportunities for participation, but also ensures that different groups of people have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making in the society.

A **native-born** is one who does not fall under the definition of an immigrant. Native-born therefore includes persons with no foreign background, persons with no foreign background who were born abroad, persons who were born in Iceland and have one foreign parent and persons who were born abroad, or have parents who were born abroad but at least one grandparent who was born in Iceland.

**Icelandic interlanguage** is a language of second-language speakers. It refers to the language use of second-language speakers, including pronunciation, word choice, grammar and sentence structure.

**Multiple discrimination** refers to a situation where people are discriminated against due to more than one discriminatory parameter, such as by gender and origin, or by gender, origin and disability. The discriminatory parameters have a negative synergistic effect and the person experiences multiple discrimination.

**The NEET group** refers to young people who are not in education, employment or vocational training. This is an acronym for the English *Not in Education, Employment or Training*.

A **foreigner** is someone who does not have Icelandic citizenship. Thus, the word refers to persons other than immigrants and includes, for example, all those who visit the country temporarily, for example, to work or as tourists.

**Second-generation immigrants** are people who were born in Iceland but whose parents are both immigrants.



