



Results meeting with associations and companies

December meeting:

Three people attended the meeting. 2 representatives from Soup Company and Black Crust Pizza one representative from Red Cross and Lions Club.

First question would be should we attempt again to meet with them or include an action in the implementation phase regarding further collaboration and outreach to businesses and social associations and clubs for increased participation in stimulating inclusion projects and social cohesion.

The meeting/workshop included:

Short introduction regarding inclusion and development of society related to increased participation of immigrants in local community. Attendees were also informed of the project to create inclusion policy, current status of project and next steps.

Workshop included brainstorming session to identify challenges and solutions.

The meeting stood over from 15:00 until 17:00.

There was good discourse yet a lack of diverse perspectives in relation to small number of participants.

Challenges Identified:

1. Housing for companies

- a. Don't want employees to be reliant on employers
- b. Hiring can be dependent on housing rather than qualifications
- c. Staff need to be independent in decision making
- d. There is a lack of information regarding housing (the market is in control is it possible for municipality to step in)
- e. Companies usually pay for housing – at least the difference because housing is too high for individuals

2. Dissemination of information

- a. More access and introductions to materials about rights and responsibilities
- b. Information about website of municipality (needs to be updated and explained)
- c. Increase and simplify information
- d. Staff member designated to work with community (who do we look to for information)

3. Support Icelandic

- a. Icelandic speaking members of community negative and staying away from businesses
- b. Icelandic lessons provided through Fræðslunet limited in scope and access
- c. How do we support Icelandic learning

Solutions presented:

1. Increase access to information

- a. Responsible entity who works to increase the „flow“ of information to and from „through“ municipality
- b. Access for individuals as well as companies and associations
- c. Clearer information
- d. English-speaking council needs to be more present in providing information about what is being done work more with immigrant community to inform them and support inclusion

2. Housing

- a. There is a process and it is improving but maybe there should be more access to what is available, terms for renting, support for companies

3. Interculturalism in Vík

- a. More visibility (activities and opportunity for connections outside of work and between different sectors (nationalities)
- b. Maybe do something to meet the lack of uniformity (refugee reception municipality)

4. Icelandic projects

- a. Red Cross project „tölum saman“
- b. Implement and support more community based opportunities to practice Icelandic
- c. Projects with older citizens and retirees for communicating in Icelandic
- d. Ensure flexibility and support

5. Awareness campaign

- a. Municipality spearhead an awareness campaign for supporting inclusion and and Icelandic created tolerance and support

6. English-speaking Council working more with community

- a. There are different ideas and expectations for what the ESR should be doing and communicating with society .
 - i. More presences in sending out information to immigrants and people who have immigrants in employment
 - ii. Work more directly with associations to promote inclusion and support projects that create social cohesion
 - iii. Take a bigger role in clarifying misunderstandings within immigrant community related to governance, services, rights and responsibilities.

January meeting

The meeting was attended by four members of the business community, who were also active in different associations within the community.

The meeting was held at Kötlusetur and the same format was used with a short introduction to the process the council has been involved in, with a detailed explanation about inclusion and how it affects a community in development experiencing a population surge based on the influx of migrant based employment, and information regarding the approach for defining the municipalities role in supporting inclusion.

The meeting stood for two hours froms 10:30 – 12:30.

Challenges identified:

1. Icelandic courses

- a. Staff are often working shifts and have difficulties in attending courses
- b. Possibility of changing format for Icelandic courses few people apply for the “two” same courses offered by the local adult education center. (lack of interest)

2. Housing

- a. Similar discussion regarding cost to employers and having staff tied to housing
- b. Mentioned lack of transparency regarding responsibility for housing due to the fact that employers realize that in order for people to work they need a place to reside, but that it is not a requirement by law.

3. Integration and difficulties

- a. Residents (primarily Icelandic native speakers and long time residents in Mýrdalshreppur) who have little or no English skills are reserved about communicating with immigrants creating a feeling of isolation
- b. Permanent local residents are tired of the always having to welcome new people to the community because people don't stay long
- c. There is a segregated society which function in paralell to each other giving the impression that residents are socially active but not enough “mixing” an example was given that there was a event held at a local bar and only foreign residents knew about the event and vice versa.
- d. When local events are held you can often count the number of foreign born participants on one hand

4. Participation in clubs and local associations

- a. There is a need to make it obvious for immigrants that they are welcome to participate
- b. There is a need to find ways to increase immigrants confidence to participate in associations and volunteer work

5. Strain on employers and companies

- a. Employers ber a wealth of burden beyond housing and employing their immigrant employees – e.g.:
 - i. communication with gov (local and federal) regarding immigration, taxes, school and other services
 - ii. personal health issues – communicating with health authorities or the fact that employees go to their home countries for services
 - iii. lack of public transport meaning business becomes responsible for having some sort of transportation for employees
 - iv. Personal issues or counseling for personal issues that would not traditionally fall on the shoulders of an employer due to lack of knowledge regarding services to support people (divorce – enrolling children in school – social or welfare issues)

Solutions:

1. Increased access to information or a “someone” who can support immigrants in navigating society and life in Iceland.
 - a. Though there is information on the community website it isn't used and not everything is current or obvious

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- b. Vikipedia is a good source for informing about events and interpersonal communication but not everything can or should be discussed there and public service providers could use it more to encourage people to use other links to information
 - c. More collaboration with businesses and associations about information available to employees (live news on website directed at immigrants)
 - d. More events and opportunities for organizations and institutions to introduce themselves to people
2. There needs to be a change in how Icelandic courses are offered
 - a. Flexibility and access needs to increase (online, for shift workers, in Polish, different levels not just 1 & 2) There was concern about a lack of flexibility and collaboration with local adult education center
 - b. More community based opportunities to actually speak and practice Icelandic because the work environment in most places either provides services for foreigners or is made up almost completely of foreign born staff
 - c. A place for immigrants and businesses to access information about language learning
 - d. Requirements for speaking Icelandic – shared community accountability
 3. A mechanism for welcoming people which starts the inclusion/integration process
 4. Continued housing development

Vision statement:

Blomstrandi og eftirsóknarverður búsetukostur þar sem fólki líður vel og það tekur þátt í að þróa samfélagið. Mýrdalshreppur býður upp á metnaðarfulla skólaþjónustu þar sem öllum áskorunum er mætt hjá öllum nemendum óháð uppruna.

A flourishing and desirable place to live where people feel comfortable and participate in developing the community. Mýrdalshreppur offers ambitious school services where all challenges are met for all students regardless of origin.