

Icelandic Youth Effort Post-2008

The international financial crisis of 2008 hit Iceland hard and unemployment rose dramatically. Iceland had formerly had virtually no unemployment and was now experiencing youth unemployment for the first time in many years. Previously there was no system to help unemployed young people, but now several initiatives have been implemented.

The proportion of young Icelanders who have dropped out of secondary education is relatively high, so the initiatives are to a large extent focused on helping unemployed youths back to studying. Ungt fólk til athafna ("Youth in Activity") is an initiative under the Icelandic Social and Welfare Ministry, directed by Vinnumálastófnun (the employment agency) in cooperation with the education sector, civil society and the labour market.

Young people registering themselves as job seekers at the Employment Agency will be enrolled into the program, and within three months must be offered work, studies or other meaningful activity. The program is indirectly a measure to get more young people to complete secondary education. One objective is to develop new methods to prevent dropout. Young people without high school education are a prioritized target group.

Participation is mandatory

Young job seekers will be assigned a special youth counsellor to help them find an activity that suits them. The program covers a wide range of measures within employment, education, job training and self-reinforcing methods. Participation is mandatory for maintaining unemployment benefits.