

148 - Logan Lee Sigurðsson

Thank you for the proposal.

On behalf of W.O.M.E.N. samtök af erlendum uppruna, we would like to draw attention to the 2024 OECD report, “Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Iceland.”

The report highlights how the ultimate predictor of the long-term success of integration measures is the outcomes of the descendants of immigrants. It notes with concern that the outcomes of native-born children with migrant parents remain troubling, as over half of them are low performers in the PISA exam. What has been found to be of particular benefit for children of migrant parents is attending pre-primary education; however, alarmingly, attendance levels are disproportionately lower than those of children with native-born parents—and have been declining further in recent years. The gap between migrant and native parent attendance is also reported to be the second largest within OECD countries, based on available data.

The report points out that municipalities have attempted to overcome placement waiting times by increasing school fees or incentivizing children to stay at home through cash-for-care benefits - both of which have had significant negative effects on immigrant families. Mothers of foreign origin, in particular, are often the first to reduce labour market participation due to childcare needs, and these measures are believed to explain decreasing pre-primary attendance among children from immigrant backgrounds.

W.O.M.E.N. shares these concerns. Any effort to raise costs or incentivize keeping children at home, to any extent, could be immensely negative for such children and their families. The same can likely be said for any parents with limited support, financial strains, or inflexible working conditions. As for example, immigrant families often lack comparable extended family and support networks to share the burden of early pickups and days off. Immigrants also have a tendency to occupy lower paid sectors where missing a few hours on a paycheck carries disproportionate weight to those of higher paid occupations. Such higher paid occupations also tend to have a much higher leniency and tolerance for adapting work hours to suit family needs. The proposal put forth to incentivize parents with higher fees will therefore unfairly push the burden of higher fees onto those who don't have any other options, and who face the most detrimental impacts.

W.O.M.E.N. recognizes that the intention of these proposed changes is to improve conditions for staff, for which we share a strong interest. A significant number of workers in pre-primary education are women of foreign origin, and we remain concerned about their wellbeing and opportunities in the current circumstances. We believe it is essential to address how such jobs are often marketed as employment and language-learning

Samráðsgátt Reykjavíkurborgar, 29.10.2025
Umbætur í náms- og starfsumhverfi leikskóla

solutions to migrant women in the absence of adequate integration alternatives - particularly when the support required to make these positions equitable, sustainable, and desirable for the broader population is lacking.

W.O.M.E.N. therefore enthusiastically welcomes the initiative to make improvements and offers our continued support to consult on these matters as helpful. Pre-primary education is vital and deserves robust investment. However, W.O.M.E.N. strongly urges that this investment must not come at the expense of the children and families facing some of the most acute needs. We reiterate that any measures that increase costs or incentivize home-care over pre-primary education risk widening existing inequalities and undermining long-term integration outcomes.

W.O.M.E.N. implores for revisions that do not risk deepening such disparities, and instead prioritize protections for those with the greatest needs.