



Stop work-related crime

Recently the news commentary programme Kveikur presented its investigation into work-related crimes with respect to foreign workers. It showed examples of a serious canker in Icelandic society, which is large scale wage theft, serious violations of the safety and working conditions of foreign workers, ill treatment and conduct by companies that can only, in the worst cases, be described as human trafficking within the labour market.

It is important to point out that foreign workers are important contributors to society and that the economic growth we have enjoyed in the past few years is largely driven by their economic contribution. These comrades of ours have a legal and contractual right to enjoy equal terms and other rights as others in the labour market. It is the duty of the trade union movement to make sure that their rights are respected just like those of any other.

The labour movement has in recent years pointed to the harmful development taking place in the Icelandic labour market, which the Kveikur programme revealed. The cases are not just in the tens or hundreds. The violations concern thousands of foreign workers. The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASI) and its member organisations have countered this development by redoubling their efforts to provide information and perform workplace inspections in order to support these comrades of ours and assist them in claiming their rights. Furthermore, the labour movement fought to have legislation put in place, the most recent being a new act on chain/subcontracting liability.

The success achieved is not nearly enough. We need to send out a clear message to companies and society as a whole that social dumping, work-related crimes and abuse of foreign employees must be rooted out by all available means. It is in the interest of those comrades of ours. It is the interest of all workers. It is the interest of healthy industries and society as a whole. The responsibility of the authorities and parliament is great.

- Stringent sanctions and fines must be put into law for stealing wages and any other violations of workers. We need legislation on chain/subcontractor liability for the labour market as a whole and an end must be put to Bankruptcy fraud. It must be insured that companies can never benefit from social dumping and work-related crimes and that they will suffer great financial damage from it.
- We call for a coordinated and tighter network of workplace inspections across the country. This calls for cooperation of all those concerned: the Directorate of Labour, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health, the Director of Internal Revenue, the municipalities and police as well as the labour movement. Where these take concrete

targeted action within specific industries and in specific areas using all measures available to each. Where each case is investigated to the end, violations identified and stopped. Employer associations also bear a responsibility in this respect.

- Individuals who have suffered violations and want to claim their right must be provided with support and shelter, not just from the labour movement but society as a whole. The examples we have been shown demonstrate that this is of utmost importance.

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASI) and its member organisations challenge the authorities and parliament immediately to take up arms with the labour movement.

Let us stop wage theft and violations in the labour market by any means!

If you have a tip, we refer to the following links:

<https://www.asi.is/stefna-asi/einn-rettur-ekkert-svindl/abending/>

<https://www.ekkertsvindl.is/#hafasamband>

<https://www.ekkertsvindl.is/english-polski>