

TOWARDS A CLOSING OF THE GENDER PAY GAP



Centre for Women's and
Gender Studies, Iceland



Towards a Closing of the Gender Pay Gap Country Report Iceland

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Country report
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Towards a closing of the Gender Pay Gap
Country report on pay differentials between Men and Women
Iceland

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1. Introduction

This report discusses the situation and development of the gender pay-gap issue in Iceland. A brief outline is given of legislation, research and measures that have been taken for the purpose of reducing and eliminating the unexplained wage difference between women and men.

2. Institutional Framework: Attitudes, Legislation and Wage Formation.

The following chapters explain the legislation on which the effort to bring about equal rights in Iceland is based, and also public policy regarding this issue. There is brief discussion of the structure of the labour market, covering the most important steps that have been taken to reduce gender-related wage differences, both by the authorities and labour unions and other interested parties. Finally, the most important topics with regard to gender equality in the job market are explained.

2.1. Public Policy and the Role of Social Partners.

a) Legislation banning gender discrimination (and/or supporting equality for men and women) in education and labour market, and especially gender pay discrimination and equal pay.

Even before the middle of the 20th century, in 1945, a law was enacted concerning rights to equal wages within specified occupations (e.g. among teachers) and in 1958 the Icelandic authorities ratified the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention of 1951 concerning equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. In 1961, following this ratification, a law was enacted on equal remuneration for women and men, under which the intention was to increase the wages of women within specified professions to match those of men. The Act on the Equal Status Council which included a provision stating that all men and women should receive equal pay for equal-value and comparable work, was enacted in 1973, and the first Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men took effect in 1976. According to this Act, women were entitled to equal pay for equal-value and comparable work, and employers were prohibited from discriminating against employees on the basis of gender.¹ From 1995, equal rights, including equal rights for men and women, have been a constitutional right in Iceland.²

The current Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men dates from the year 2000; its aim is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of society. Article 13 of the Act contains the following provision, with respect to employers: „Employers and labour unions shall make systematic efforts to equalize the status of the sexes in the labour market. Employers shall make specific efforts to equalize the status of the sexes within their companies or institutions and make efforts to promote that occupations are not categorized as specific women’s jobs or men’s jobs. Companies and institutions employing more than 25 people shall prepare a programme on matters of equality or include specific provisions on gender equality in their personnel policy. It shall specifically state aims and measures to be taken to ensure for their employees the rights provided for Arts. 14-17 of this Act.” Article 14 states *inter alia*: „Women and men who are employed by the same employer shall receive equal pay and enjoy equal terms for equal-value and comparable work.” It is stated that the term pay shall mean any kind of fee, benefit payments etc.

Article 19 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights covers education and schools and emphasis is placed on providing education on matters of equality and the equal preparation of

¹ Lög um jafnrétti kvenna og karla nr. 78/1976. [Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 78/1976]

² Stjórnarskrá íslenska lýðveldisins 17. júní 1944, lög nr. 33/1944. Stjórnskipunarlög nr. 97/1995.

[The Constitution of the Republic of Iceland from 17 June 1944, Act No. 33/1944. Amendment to the Constitution No. 97/1995]

both sexes for active participation in society, family life and the labour market. Article 15 states that women and men shall have equal opportunities to continuing education and vocational training.³

Since 1986, a specific Governmental Action Plan has been in force with respect to measures for obtaining equal rights for men and women. The first one covered the years 1986-1990, the next one 1993-97 and the third 1998-2001. The current plan covers the period from 2002-2004. The plan states that according to government policy: "women and men shall enjoy equal opportunities and have equal possibilities for influence in the community".

The Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men of 2000 and the Governmental Action Plan of 1998-2001 are strongly influenced by what has been happening in the field of equal rights at the international level in recent years. The Supreme Court has also returned decisions confirming the right of women to the same wages as men for equal-value work.⁴

b) Institutions in charge of implementing measures mentioned under a) and b).

The Centre for Gender Equality is a national bureau in charge of administering the *Act on Equal Status and Equal rights of Women and Men*. The Centre also provides counselling and education in the field of gender equality, for the governmental and municipal authorities, institutions, companies, individuals and non-governmental organisations. The Centre for Gender Equality plays a monitoring role in the implementation of Act Nr. 96/2000 on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, which provides for total equality for men and women with respect to education and the job market.

The Equal Wage Council was founded in 1973 and it was changed into *The Equal Status Council* in 1975. The Council consists of nine members appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs according to nominations by different parties. The role of the Equal Status Council is to make systematic effort to equalize the status and the right if woman and man in the labour market. The Council shall submit proposals to the Minister of Social Affairs on measures to be taken on that field. The Council shall serve the authorities in a consultative capacity on matters of equality both regarding the labour market and in matters of equality within other spheres of the society.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for equal rights issues, as well as the supervision of the Directory of Labour. That institution monitors employment issues in this country, including wage trends.

A conference on the gender pay gap was organised by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Equal Status Council, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Directory of Labour on 28 February this year. The conference addressed the status of men and women on the job market, touching on various issues, including means of implementing job evaluation in the open job market and within individual companies.

c) Public programmes, campaigns and measures, and agreements to support gender equality in education and labour market.

Even though legislation concerning equality of pay for men and women has been in force for decades, there is still an unexplained difference in the wages women and men receive. The results of a survey on wages performed by the Equal Status Council, published in 1995, attracted much attention, as they revealed that the unexplained difference in the wages paid to women and men was substantial and that men enjoyed various benefits and additional payments in excess of women.⁵ The Minister for Social Affairs reacted by creating a work

³ Lög um jafna stöðu og jafnan rétt kvenna og karla nr. 96/2000. [The Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 96/2000. Please find the English version of the Act at the website of the Centre of Gender Equality, <http://www.jafnretti.is>, under English summary]

⁴ T.d. Hæstaréttardómur nr. 11/2000. [i.a. Judgement of the Supreme Court No. 11/2000]

⁵ Guðbjörg Andrea Jónsdóttir, 1996, *Samanburður á launum karla og kvenna sem starfa hjá Reykjavíkurborg*. Reykjavík, Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands.

group in 1995, which was intended to work for improvements in women's wage issues. Special consideration was given to gender-neutral job evaluation as a means of combating the gender-related wage difference.⁶ The work group included representatives from the Icelandic Confederation of Labour [Alþýðusamband Íslands, ASÍ], the Equal Status Council [Jafnréttisráð], the Ministry of Finance, the City of Reykjavík, the Confederation of State and Municipal Employees [Bandalag starfsmanna ríkis og bæja, BSRB], the Confederation of University Graduates [Bandalag háskólamanna, BHM] and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers [Samtök atvinnulífsins, SA]. The work group supervised the execution of a pilot project concerning job evaluation within various governmental agencies and companies, designed to investigate whether job-evaluation could provide an effective means of reducing the gender pay gap. The work group was not unanimous in its conclusions, and the report prepared towards the end of the project is therefore primarily a description of the ideology underlying gender-neutral job evaluation.⁷

The City of Reykjavík has now embarked on the implementation of gender-neutral job evaluation. The evaluation forms a part of the City of Reykjavík's collective wage bargaining contracts concluded with the principal employees' unions, covering about half of the City's employees. This constitutes a fundamental change in basic wage-formation. Job evaluation is scheduled for completion on 1 December 2002, at which time the work on adjusting wages based on the results of the evaluation will begin. The adjustments will take effect in stages during the term of the contract (1 December 2001 – 30 November 2005). The emphasis will be on effecting changes where the difference is greatest. The City of Reykjavík is the second largest employer in the country so that other major employers, who have declared their will to combat the gender pay gap, will no doubt be monitoring the results of the job evaluation.

In recent years the City has made a systematic effort to reduce the gender pay gap, and a new survey of the wages of the City's employees indicates that the gap between men and women has narrowed slightly; in 1996 the unexplained wage difference was 14%.⁸ The new survey indicates that the gender pay gap has decreased to 7%, given the same conditions as in the former survey.⁹

Most employees' interest groups have set themselves targets in equal rights issues, stating that men and women should receive equal pay for comparable jobs, and also emphasising that men and women should enjoy equal rights to continuing education, vocational training etc. The Store and Office Workers' Union in Reykjavík [Verzlunarmannafélag Reykjavíkur, VR], which has positioned itself at the forefront in this field, is worth particular mention. VR received recognition for its efforts in the interest for equal rights from the Equal Status Council in 2001. VR conducts regular wage surveys among its members, with particular emphasis on the position of women, as the Union's policy with respect to equal rights contains special provisions on equal pay for men and women. In the years 2001-2002 the wage difference ranged from 16-18%.¹⁰ VR wants to eliminate this difference, e.g. by increasing the number of women in positions of responsibility and management and

⁶ CEDAW/C/ICE/3-4, 28. ágúst 1998. Skýrsla Íslands um afnám mismununar gagnvart konum. (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), lögð fram hjá Sameinuðu þjóðunum 1998, bls. 26-27. [CEDAW/C/ICE/3-4, 28 August 1998. Iceland's report on the elimination of discrimination against women (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) submitted to the United Nations in 1998, pages 26-27]

⁷ *Starfsmat gegn kynbundnum launamun. Tilraunaverkefni um starfsmat. Skýrsla um framkvæmd þess, niðurstöður og ályktanir* (Reykjavík, Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 1999). [*Job-evaluation to fight the gender pay gap. A pilot project for job evaluation. A report on its execution, findings and conclusions* (Reykjavík, the Ministry of Social Affairs, 1999).]

⁸ Guðbjörg Andrea Jónsdóttir, 1996, *Samanburður á launum karla og kvenna sem starfa hjá Reykjavíkurborg*. Reykjavík, Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands.

⁹ Kristjana Stella Blöndal og Ævar Þórólfsson, 2002, *Samanburður á launum karla og kvenna hjá Reykjavíkurborg 2001*. Reykjavík, Félagsvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands.

¹⁰ Verzlunarmannafélag Reykjavíkur 2000, and 2001.

enhancing the education of women (continuing education and life-long education, vocational training, vocational development and paid leave for studies).

Employers have increasingly involved themselves in equal rights issues and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers [SA] has placed equal rights on their agenda. Their agenda emphasises increasing the number of women in positions of management and responsibility and securing for women the same terms and rights as men.

An initiative designed to promote equality started by the University of Iceland and the Centre for Gender Equality, "Leadership to women and gender equality in choice of education", was begun in the year 2000. The aim of the project is, on the one hand, to prepare girls finishing their studies at the University of Iceland for leadership in their future field of employment and, on the other hand, to increase the number of women in science, engineering and computer technology. With this Initiative the University of Iceland, with the support of the parties co-operating in the project, wants to contribute to levelling the share of men and women in the knowledge and information society of the new century. Many universities abroad have embarked on similar efforts to secure the participation of women in the dawning age of information technology and to increase the diversity of the sciences with increased gender equality in the choice of education.

Every effort is made to equalise the percentage of men and women in engineering and computer sciences, where girls are very much a minority, and in the Faculty of Nursing where only 1.4% of the students are men. Courses have been held for women students at the University and, as part of the Initiative, a brochure titled *The Key to Success on the Job Market* was published in 2002 containing instructions for women with regard to job applications, job interviews etc. VR participated in the publication together with members of the Initiative. The Initiative will be evaluated following its conclusion in the fall of 2002, but it is already clear that it has brought results¹¹

Measures taken by the State concerning equal rights have mostly involved co-ordination, as in the case of the Governmental Action Plan to achieve gender equality referred to above. On the part of the minister responsible for equal rights affairs, the main emphasis has been on new legislation concerning maternity/paternity leave and parental leave, whereby fathers are granted an independent three-month entitlement to paternity leave (when the Act is fully implemented in 2003). This is further discussed in section **d** and in **2.3**.

In the year 2001 The *Centre for Gender Equality* organised and implemented a project which included three seminars and one conference on parental leave and the participation of fathers in the care of small children. The project was a part of the introduction of the new act on Parental leave from May 2000.

In September 2002 Equal Status Council and a committee on women and financial resources, released the findings of study on the gender pay gap. The study covers the private labour market in Iceland, except for those employed in banks, and those employed by the municipalities, except for those employed by the City of Reykjavík. The conclusions of the are that average contracted wages of women are 70% of men's.

d) Labour market regulations that may affect gender segregation and gender pay gap.

The labour market participation in Iceland is very high, and the rate of female employment is among the highest in the world. In 1999 88,2% of the men and 80,2% of the women were active on the labour market (OECD Employment Outlook 1999).

In a comprehensive study, Jónsdóttir (1995) has found that the main difference between the private sector and the public sector is that the gender pay gap is wider in the public sector for university educated employees. Jónsdóttir (1995) also estimated that 11-16% of the gender pay gap in the private and the public sector could only be explained by the sex of the person. The survey showed that when controlled for occupation, education, experience (i.e. seniority), age, working hours, whether in private or public employment, the earnings of women is 16% lower than the wage of men (Jónsdóttir 1995:93).

¹¹ <http://www.hi.is/stjorn/jafnrettisn/Ataksverkefni/index.html>

The gender gap in the average gross income decreased slightly during the 1990s. In 1992, women's average earnings were 55% of men's and this ratio increased to 58% in 2000. This is to a large extent explained by different hours of paid work. From 1992 to 2000, a small improvement occurred as concerns this indicator of gender equality. Information on the gender pay gap in the private sector reveals that women's pay was closest to men's in elementary occupations in 1999 and among specialised workers in 2000. The widest gender pay gap in both 1999 and 2000 was among service and sales workers. The gender gap in this occupational group widened from the 1st quarter 1999 to the 1st quarter 2000 (Mósesdóttir 2001). The VR wage survey conducted in 2000 found that among service and sales workers men in full-time work earned 26% more than women in full-time work. When working hours, occupation, age and experience (seniority) has been accounted for, men earned 16% more than women (Verzlunarmannafélag Reykjavíkur 2001). An analysis of the gender pay gap of unskilled workers in the private sector from 1992 to 1997 showed widening of the gap among unskilled workers (Mósesdóttir 1999). The greatest reduction in the gender pay gap occurred among plant and machine operators, followed by clerks (Mósesdóttir 2001).

The number of women holding executive posts on the job market has increased between 1992 and 2000, but even so, studies show that Icelandic men are three times more likely than women to hold higher positions. Jónsdóttir (1995) showed that in 1994, 93% of men with university degrees were senior officials and managers, as compared to only 70% of women. Women with university educations were much more likely to work as professionals and associated professionals. In a new report on evaluation of gender equality in the Icelandic labour market, Lilja Mósesdóttir gives the following description of education and vocational training in the labour market:

Formal educational level of each cohort of women entering the Icelandic labour market has been increasing faster than that of men in Iceland but education is often the prerequisite for an employment in higher positions. In 1998/99, 59% of the 20 years old women passed matriculation examination (stúdentsspróf) while the share for men was only 39,3% (Hagstofan 2000). Employment-related vocational training has, on the other hand, been beneficial for unskilled women who have received pay rises on the completion of the relevant training. Employment-related training in Iceland has first and foremost been financed by individuals themselves and to a lesser extent by the trade unions and employers. Various measures have been undertaken by the labour market partners to enhance the vocational skill of those in the labour force. These measures have primarily taken the form of short-term vocational training courses. A survey conducted in 1992 found that men and women were as likely to participate in vocational training courses. Men, on the other hand, attended more often vocational training courses during their working hours and their courses lasted longer. After completing vocational training, men were more likely than women to be promoted by their employers to a higher position. Active labour market policy has increasingly been used to finance vocational training of unemployed women in order to enhance their employability. Hence, vocational training has not been an instrument to reduce gender segregation in the Icelandic labour market.¹²

Birth-benefits to mothers can be traced back to 1946 in Iceland. These benefits were very limited and they covered only certain groups of women. In 1954, state employees were entitled 3 months paid maternity leave, and successively, a few unions gained similar rights. In 1975, all salaried mothers became entitled to 3 months paid leave after giving birth. The following decades the rights to parental leave were slowly extended. In 1987, the length was extended to 6 months.¹³ In 1998, fathers got the rights to two weeks paid paternity leave. In 2000, the Act on parental leave was radically changed.

¹² Lilja Mósesdóttir, *Evaluating Gender Equality in the Icelandic Labour Market*. Working paper. Reykjavik University, 2001.

¹³ Guðný Eydal, 2001.

New legislation on maternity/paternity leave and parental leave¹⁴ took effect on 1 January 2001, under which women are entitled to a maternity leave of three months, men have an independent right to three months, and this is supplemented by a joint right to three additional months which parents can divide between themselves. The legislation will take effect in stages and therefore fathers currently only have an individual right to two months, but in 2003 the act will be fully implemented. It is hoped that the Act will reduce the gender pay gap, as it will have the result that men will be as likely as women to take childbirth leave. The Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund's monthly payment to an employee during maternity/paternity leave shall amount to 80% of her/his wage during a twelve month consecutive period ending two months prior to the first day of the maternity/paternity leave. Included in such wage shall be all forms of wages and other remuneration.¹⁵

Work permissions. The Directory of Labour, acting for the Minister of Social Affairs, is responsible for the issue of work-permits to foreigners. Decisions on the issue of work-permits are based on the employment situation in the occupations or sectors and regions in question. The current Foreigners' Right to Work Act dates from 1994, but new legislation will take effect on 1 January 2003.¹⁶ In recent years, increased emphasis has been placed on preserving the rights of foreigners working in this country (e.g. wages, working hours etc.) and the labour unions and employees' interest groups have made an effort to inform foreign workers and immigrants of their rights and obligations.

The red card is a work permit that is granted to the employer for a specific period of time, e.g. it is temporary. Such permits are granted for one year to begin with. In order to receive this permit, there must be a signed employment contract (signed by both employer and employee). The forms for this contract are available at the office of the Directorate of Labour. This is a binding contract and it guarantees the applicant certain rights. The holder of a red card is not allowed to terminate the work contract before the specified contract period ends, and the same applies to the employer, who may not end the contract before the specified time without a valid reason. The employee may end the work contract if his/her rights have been infringed upon. If the red card holder decides to leave Iceland at the end of the contract period, the employer must pay his/her fare back to the home country. Also, if an unforeseeable event, which is beyond the control of the employee, makes it necessary for him/her to end the contract and leave the country, the employer must pay for the fare back to the home country. This is stated as an optional feature in all temporary contracts. The Directorate of Labour has, however, made this a condition for granting all first time temporary work permits.

Temporary work permits are usually renewed for one year at a time. Generally, the Directorate of Labour grants renewals of existing temporary work permits, although it should be kept in mind that this is provided that the unemployment rate does not increase drastically.

The green card is a permanent work permit which, unlike the temporary work permit, is granted to the individual and not to the employer. You can apply for a green card when you have had a legal residence in Iceland for 3 years and have at some time been granted a temporary work permit. The bargaining status of the employee (where work contracts are concerned) is more flexible for the green cardholder and the green card holder is not bound to the employer as is the case for red cardholders. The length of the contract and the terms regarding contract termination may be negotiated and agreed on in a specific contract between

¹⁴ Lög um fæðingarorlof nr. 95/2000. [The Act on Maternal/Paternal Leave and Parental Leave No. 95/2000. Please find the English version at <http://www.jafnretti.is>, under English summary.]

¹⁵ Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave, Nr 95/2000

¹⁶ 133/1994. Lög um atvinnuréttindi útlendinga. Ný lög um atvinnuréttindi útlendinga, sem taka gildi 1. janúar 2003: The Foreigners' Right to Work Act. A New Act on the Labour Market Rights of Foreigners: <http://www.althingi.is/alttext/127/s/1442.html>].

the employer and employee. Otherwise, all working conditions could be based on the collective bargaining agreement between your union and employer.¹⁷

2.2. Wage formation systems

There are numerous labour unions in Iceland, most of which are organised into larger interest groups which in some cases assume responsibility for wage negotiations on behalf of their member unions.

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) is the largest interest group of Icelandic employees. ASÍ struggles for improved rights and conditions and defends the interests of employees' vis-à-vis employers and the government, in addition to providing various services to its member unions and members. According to its statutes, the objectives of ASÍ are "to lead the class struggle of working people in Iceland, e.g. by developing and co-ordinating an integrated policy for the confederation in matters concerning wages and employment terms." ASÍ has over 70,000 members, accounting for about 2/3 of all Icelandic employees in organised unions, in 120 member unions all over the country.

The Confederation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB) is the biggest union of employees in public service in Iceland. The members work in the fields of telecommunication, postal services, customs, police, fire resistance, health care, education of pre-school children to name but a few. BSRB-members are employed by local governments as well as the state. BSRB is a confederation of 35 unions with approximately 18,000 members, whereof two thirds are women. The unions in BSRB have the collective bargaining right. Sometimes the unions bargain individually but often under the auspices of BSRB.

The Association of Academics (BHM) - is the organisation of Trade Unions of Academics the smallest of the three main organisations of employees. At present there are 24 member-unions in BHM, consisting of a total of approximately 6,500 employees with an academic degree of 3 years or more. Most of them are employed by the state, municipalities and other public entities, but increasingly the fast growing private sector of e.g. health care industry is employing academics within BHM. The member-unions themselves preserve the right to negotiate collective agreements for their members but BHM assists the member-unions in many fields and speaks for academics in common causes.

The primary goal of BHM is to support the professional unions of university graduates, preserve their wage-bargaining rights and promote respect for higher education in Iceland. The activities of BHM thus rest on two main principles: respect for university education as a prerequisite for development and progress in the Icelandic economy and recognition of education as a basis for better wages.

The Store and Office Workers' Union in Reykjavík, VR, serves the municipalities of Reykjavík, Kópavogur, Seltjarnarnes, Mosfellsbær and Kjósarhreppur. The purpose of the union is to work for better terms and employment rights for its members. Fully qualified members are slightly over 19,000 in more than one hundred occupations. The union negotiates collective bargaining contracts for its members and represents them in their relations with the authorities and others, with respect to their interests.

The Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA) was established 1999 as a unified organization to represent and promote the views of employers and provide Icelandic businesses with a variety of services. SA projects include negotiations of contracts with unions on wages and working conditions, and the interpretation as well as communication of decisions by governmental authorities that directly affect the financial performance of businesses at both the domestic and international level. SA includes about 2,800 businesses. The organization accounts for almost 60% of all salaried employees on the Icelandic labour market.¹⁸

¹⁷ Information from the website of the Intercultural Centre of Iceland (http://www.ahus.is/index_en.htm)

¹⁸ The information is for the most part gathered from the websites of the Confederations, most of them containing information in English: <http://www.vr.is>, <http://www.bsrb.is>, <http://www.asi.is>, <http://www.bhm.is>, <http://www.sa.is>.

If an individual believes that the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights has been violated, e.g. the provisions on equality of pay, a complaint can be submitted to the Complaints Committee on Equal Status which is appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs (the minister responsible for equal rights), under the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights. With respect to the functions of the Complaints Committee, the Act contains the following provision:

The role of the Complaints Committee shall be to consider and issue in writing a substantiated opinion on whether the provisions of the law have been violated. The Committee's opinion shall not be subject to appeals to a higher authority. In cases which may be expected to have a policy-establishing effect on the labour market in general, the Committee shall seek comments from the overall organizations of employees and their contracting parties before issuing its opinion. In cases where the Complaints Committee on Equal Status is of the opinion that the provisions of this law have been violated, it shall submit substantiated requests for improvements to the parties concerned.¹⁹

In the event of disputes, management and labour have the option of obtaining a decision from the following institutions:

The Labour Court is an independent court responsible for the settlement of disputes between labour and management, including complaints involving employment contracts or conflicting interpretations of employment contracts. *An arbitration tribunal* set up *ad hoc* for specific disputes pursuant to legislation on contractual arbitration dating from 1989. An arbitration tribunal does not issue legal opinions and only specific disputes can be referred to the tribunal. The conclusion of an arbitration tribunal is final and can be appealed to the public courts only in exceptional cases.

There is no minimum wage act in Iceland, but minimum wage are set by the collective agreements. There is no regulation protecting the right of part-time workers.

In 1997 the member unions of BHM, with the exception of the Icelandic Teachers' Union, entered into a contract with the Icelandic State, the City of Reykjavík and other employers on the introduction of a decentralised wage system. This means that individual organisations decide what factors are used to determine salary frameworks and wages, taking into account the individual needs of the organisations themselves and their employees. These contracts are known as institutional contracts (workplace contracts) and they form a part of the collective wage bargaining contract. The official purpose of the new system, according to public documents, is to make it easier to use success and performance as a basis for wages, reduce overtime and incorporate bonus payments into wage scales, increase the weight of daytime wages in total income, and promote efficiency and productivity. As many fear that the gender wage gap will widen in a decentralised wage system, employers announced that they would take special precautions to avoid this danger and use the new wage system to take measures against the gender pay gap already in place. In addition, a booklet was published to inform union representatives and managers of government institutions about the gender pay gap and point out ways of dealing with it.²⁰ After these changes the Icelandic bargaining system for the public sector is not as centralised and transparent as it was. Information on the gender pay gap has always been difficult to obtain in Iceland, but the new bargaining system has made it even more difficult than before, because less information is available, for example on job titles for the public employees.

¹⁹ Lög um jafna stöðu og jafnan rétt kvenna og karla nr. 96/2000. [The Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 96/2000.]

²⁰ *Launajafnrétti í framkvæmd í dreifstýrðu launakerfi. Fræðsla fyrir fostöðumenn og trúnaðarmenn stéttarféлага* (Reykjavík, 1998). [Pay-equality in effect in a decentralised wage system. Information for managers and union representatives].

2.3. What's on?

A conference on the gender pay gap, held by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Equal Status Council, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Directory of Labour on 28 February this year, as mentioned in 2.1.c hereof, attracted considerable attention and there are regular discussions of the gender pay gap in the media. However, wage surveys published regularly, confirming the continuing pay gap, are the factor having the greatest impact on public opinion, the politicians and the employers. A brief survey of the database of the largest newspaper in Iceland, *Morgunblaðið*, revealed a substantial number of articles on wage issues with respect to men and women. Included are both articles received from outside the paper, news commentaries and editorials.

The new Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave mentioned earlier has elicited considerable reaction. The majority seems to approve of part of the leave (3 months) being reserved for men, but some have expressed the opinion that the Act could prove expensive for the labour market and that the companies cannot manage without their employees (male) for three months. There was, for example, a considerable debate about a year ago when the City fire department nearly exceeded its budget owing to the fact that so many fire fighters had taken parental leave. The discussion has sometimes been ambiguous; at the same time that the idea of fathers spending more time with their newborn children is welcomed, employers flinch from the cost.

Last winter, the government considered, as a measure to reduce costs, postponing implementation of the second stage of the Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave (i.e. extending the independent right of fathers from one to two months). This evoked a strong reaction from the public, labour unions and parties involved equality matters. These proposals were withdrawn, as the Act has been regarded not only as an important step towards adapting the labour market to increased flexibility within the workplace and co-ordinating family and professional life, but also towards narrowing the gender pay gap.

2.4 Some Key Labour Market Statistics

Statistics Iceland (Hagstofa Íslands) is the national statistical institute of Iceland which is, among other things, responsible for the collection and processing of data and the production of statistics on the economy, the labour market and social affairs. The Public Sector Labour Market Research Institute (*Kjararannsóknarnefnd opinbera starfsmanna – KOS*) is a committee responsible for wage-research in the public sector and the gathering of information on collective agreements. The Institute of Labour Market Research (*Kjararannsóknarnefnd*) is a similar committee engaged in research on wages and wage-trends in the private sector. The information requested for this gender pay-gap research is not available in its entirety in any one of the institutions mentioned above, and therefore the statistics are not always compatible. In many cases, a special effort (i.e. statistical running) has been made to obtain the information requested but in some cases the statistics have simply not been available.²¹

²¹ All statistics in Tables A and B are from Statistics Iceland (Hagstofa Íslands).

Table A1. Labour force and employment. National level indicators, 1991

	All	Women	Men
Total population, persons aged 16-64	157,700	77,900	79,800
Labour force, persons aged 16-64	132,900	61,400	71,500
Labour force, persons aged 25-64	109,000	49,900	59,100
Education, labour force *			
- Level / field of education ISCED1,2	56,400	31,700	24,700
ISCED3	53,100	19,400	33,700
ISCED5	8,600	4,700	3,900
ISCED6,7	14,600	5,500	9,100
Employment rate (employment /population ratio), aged 16-64	82.0%	76.5%	87.5%
Unemployment rate (unemployment/ labour force ratio), aged 16-64	2.7%	3.0%	2.4%
Employment, persons aged 16-64	129,400	59,600	69,800
Employment status (persons)	25,700	7,200	18,600
- employers and self-employed			
- employees	103,800	52,400	51,300
- family workers	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
- unknown			

* Not comparable to 2000, this is ISCED-76

Table A2. Labour force and employment. National level indicators, 2000

	All	Women	Men
Total population, persons aged 16-64	173,500	85,500	88,000
Labour force, persons aged 16-64	153,700	72,800	80,900
Labour force, persons aged 25-64	124,300	58,200	66,100
Education, labour force 25-64*			
- Level / field of education ISCED1,2	54,400	28,900	25,500
ISCED3	27,100	14,200	12,900
ISCED4	12,400	1,400	11,000
ISCED5	29,000	14,700	14,300
ISCED6	1,200	200**	1,000
Employment rate (employment /population ratio), aged 16-64	86.6%	82.8%	90.2%
Unemployment rate (unemployment/ labour force ratio), aged 16-64	2.3%	2.8%	1.8%
Employment, persons aged 16-64	150,200	70,800	79,400
Employment status (persons)	26,100	7,800	18,300
- employers and self-employed			
- employees	124,200	63,100	61,000
- family workers	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
- unknown			

* ISCED-97, not comparable to 1990

** Proportional standard error is 20% or higher, because how few women are in the sample.

The tables on Labour force and Employment 1991 and 2000 (A) show that there are somewhat more men than women in the Icelandic labour, and this gender difference has remained almost unchanged between the two years.

The employment rate in Iceland increased slightly between the years 1991 and 2000. Men's employment rate is approximately 11% higher than that of women in the year 1991, and 7.4% higher in the year 2000. The gender ratio of employees on the labour market is almost equal, both in 1991 and 2000. On the other hand, men are more than double the number of women as employers and self-employed individuals.

The educational level of Icelandic people has increased between the years 1991 and 2000. The data from 1990 is based on the unemployment rate in Iceland is very low, both for women and men.

Statistical information on the division of all employees in Iceland between the public and the private sector is not available, and this goes for the number of migrants/immigrants as well. Statistics on the average gross wage rate per hour for employees, divided by gender, are also unavailable.

Table B1. Employees and wages. National level indicators, 1991

	All	
	Women	Men
Employees, persons aged 16-64	52,400	51,300
Employees, persons aged 25-64	41,900	40,700
Education, labour force *		
- Level / field of education		
ISCED1,2	26,500	18,400
ISCED3	16,600	23,200
ISCED5	4,200	2,800
ISCED6,7	5,000	6,800
Migrants / immigrants among EE1564		
Working time (employees)		
- Usual/ contracted working hours per week	32.6	49.8
- Actual working hours per week	34.3	50.8
- - less than 30 hours per week	17,900	4,300
- - less than 20 hours per week	6,800	2,000
-- 45 hours per week or more	10,800	33,300
Employees, EE1564	n.a.	n.a.
- temporary contracts		
- members of unions	n.a.	n.a.
- covered by collective agreements		
Wages EE1564 – all		
- average gross wage rate per hour		
- gender pay gap		x
Wages EE1564 - only full time workers		
- average gross wage rate per hour		
- gender pay gap		x

* Not comparable to 2000.

Table B. Employees and wages. National level indicators, **2000**

	All	
	Women	Men
Employees, persons aged 16-64	63,100	61,000
Employees, persons aged 25-64	49,100	47,700
Education, labour force		
- Level / field of education*		
ISCED97 1&2	28,900	25,500
ISCED97 3	12,900	14,200
ISCED97 4	1,400	11,000
ISCED97 5	14,700	14,300
ISCED97 6	200**	1,000
Migrants / immigrants among EE1564		
Working time		
- Usual/ contracted working hours per week	33,5	48,3
- Actual working hours per week	35,2	49,8
- - less than 30 hours per week	18,900	6,100
- - less than 20 hours per week	8,300	3,400
-- 45 hours per week or more	13,900	38,400
Employees,		
- temporary contracts	3,800	3,000
- members of unions	57,000	48,500
- covered by collective agreements		
Wages EE1564 – all		
- average gross wage rate per hour		
- gender pay gap		X
Wages EE1564 - only full time workers		
- average gross wage rate per hour		
- gender pay gap		X

* Not comparable to 1999.

**Proportional standard errors is 20% or higher, because how women are in the sample.

The tables on Employees and wages 1991 and 2000 (B), show that men work more hours per week than women on the average. Men work about 50 hours per week, while women work about 35 hours. The ratio has remained unchanged between the years 1991 and 2000. Women work more often as part-time employees than men and the ratio remains almost unchanged between the years. This applies to women who work less than 30 hours per week and women who work less than 20 hours per week.

The public sector in Iceland is rather small. 19% of all women at the labour market are publicly employed and 13% of the men. Based on information from the Public Sector Labour Market Research Institute, the gender pay gap is 39%, while it is 19% for the private sector.²² As can be seen from this, the gender pay gap is very large in the public sector in Iceland. They reason for this needs to be investigated further. Several things might explain the large gender pay gap: 1) Administrators and managers are included in the data for the public sector but not in the data for the private sector. 2) Another suggested reason is that the gender job segregation is very large in the public sector. It is worth noting that the only municipal employees included are those in the city of Reykjavik, employees of other municipalities are not included.

²² The data on the private market is based on Lilja Mósessdóttir (2001), which has made use of data from The Institute of Labour Market Research.

3.0 Introduction

The object of this study is to examine gender-related wage differences in the labour market. The case-study approach is used, and the study is limited to three sectors, i.e. secondary school teachers, fish processing workers and engineers.

Secondary School Teachers

Historically, the secondary school teacher sector in Iceland has been male-dominated. The number of women has been increasing in recent decades, and the current gender ratio among secondary school teachers is relatively equal. Secondary school teachers used to have relatively high salaries, but over the past 20-30 years their wages have been decreasing in comparison with other professions in Iceland. It has been maintained that this trend can partly be traced to the increase in the number of women in the profession. There is no accurate historical data on the teachers wages, but according to representatives for the Teachers' Association, secondary school teachers used to compare their wages to the wages of Icelandic MP's (members of the parliament) about forty years ago. It is often maintained that this negative wage development is related to the increasing proportion women in the profession. According to the Teachers' Association men were 60% of the profession about 4-5 years ago, but today the proportion men and women is equal. However, the educational system has undergone extensive changes during this period and the number of students has increased heavily (see below). No serious investigation has been carried out on the issue.

Compulsory schooling in Iceland extends from the age of 6 to 15. Secondary school in Iceland takes 4 years, unlike the other Nordic countries where it takes 3 years. On the other hand, the school year in Iceland is shorter than in the other Nordic countries, as the summer holiday is 3 months.

Fish Processing Workers

The fisheries industry has been Iceland's basic industry for a long time, involving the participation of a large part of the population in one way or another. The number of positions in the industry has fallen in recent decades as a result of technical advances in various stages of the industry. Progress in other sectors has also had the effect that the significance of the fishing industry is proportionately less than before.

The fish-processing sector in Iceland is a low-wage sector. The sector employs a relatively larger number of men than women, and the number of foreign workers has increased in recent years.

Engineers

Engineers in Iceland are mainly employed in the private sector, but also in the public sector. A career in engineering requires a minimum of 4 years' university studies, but in fact most engineers also have an M.Sc. The engineering sector is highly paid and engineers often occupy positions of authority.

The engineering sector is male-dominated, but the number of women has been increasing, and currently more women are registered in engineering studies at the University of Iceland than ever before.

3.1 Teaching associate professionals

Presentation of the teaching associate professionals

Now, in the year 2002, the number of secondary school teachers is 1331, according to data from Statistics Iceland. There are 660 women and 671 men. The student population has been increasing during the last decades. The number of students in upper secondary and tertiary

education has increased with 42% in the period 1980-2000, from 14,261 in 1980 to 20,256 in 2000. During the same period, the population has increased with 23%.²³

All secondary schools in Iceland are run by the State. One school, however, is partly private and this is one of the two schools that were looked especially in the course of this study. The average education of teaching associate professionals is 4 to 7 years in university. This education must involve a BA/BS- or MA/MS degree plus teaching qualifications which is an extra 1 to 2 years at the University, leading to the Teacher's Certificate. A few of the teaching associate professionals also have a Doctor's degree. There is hardly any unemployment among secondary school teachers and in fact it has been difficult to fill posts in some subjects, e.g. the sciences. In some rural areas there is a shortage of secondary school teachers owing to migrations to the Reykjavik metropolitan area.

There has been a concern among Icelandic teachers about the low renewal in the group, and that young educated people are not attracted by the job. This is clearly reflected in the ageing of the group. According to data from the Association of Secondary School Teachers, mean age for men is 50 year, and for women 46 year. The age distribution is very different from men and women; 55,6% of the men are 50 years or older, compared to 35,9% of the women.

Present discussion on gender issues within teaching associate professionals

Gender issues are not much of an issue among teaching associate professionals, as centralised collective bargaining contracts stipulate identical wages for both sexes. There are some horizontal wage differences between men and women due to segregation in teaching subjects. Women more often teach theoretical subjects (arts, literature, languages, social sciences etc.) while men more frequently teach practical or technical subjects within vocational training. However, no data exists on this segregation.

Vertical wage differences between men and women are also not an issue, neither in public debate nor in the two schools that received closer scrutiny. However, a vertical wage difference does appear to exist. An interview with the representative of the Association of Secondary School Teachers revealed that men are more often in management positions within the schools. Regarding the two schools that received closer scrutiny, one had a predominantly male management, while the ratio was more equal in the other.

Men work more overtime and seem to be more likely to take on various projects than women, for example with production of teaching material, curricula for the school etc. (see table C.1.2000). Men work on average longer hours per month than women, and the difference between the actual working hours of men and women has increased in the years from 1990 to 2000. Women are also more likely than men to be working part-time (see table C.1.1990 and C.1.2000). The main reasons for this gender difference have not been investigated. Two distinct explanations are the most common among the teachers themselves are. On the one hand that the ideology of the breadwinner model is still dominant among teachers, and on the other hand, that the gender segregation according to subjects allows men to work more in terms of teaching hours, since they more often teach practical and vocational subjects which require less homework.

Programmes regarding gender equality

As has revealed earlier, gender equality is generally speaking not much of an issue in secondary schools. However, according to the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men from the year 2000, all work-places are under obligation to have in place an equal rights programme or provide specifically for the equal rights of men and women in their human resources policy. The schools that received special scrutiny do not have equal rights programmes, but they claim that they provide for equal rights of men and women in their personnel policies. Policy documents like that are mostly very general statements, and they were not investigated in the present study.

²³ (Statistics Iceland)

The most recent collective wage bargaining contract for secondary school teachers, dating from the year 2001, does not make any reference to the equality of men and women.

Performance evaluation

Performance evaluations were introduced in the last collective wage bargaining contract. A part of the Government budget for the schools is earmarked as supplementary pay for secondary school teachers. The bargaining contract indicates what kinds of characteristics the evaluations should be based on. The point of the new system is to enable school managers to reward teachers for good performance, and thus, the arrangement of the performance evaluation is left to each school. It must be pointed out the wage supplement is only a small percentage of the wages, within 1% of the monthly salary. We will see one kind of implementation later on, in the case study.

Interviews with secondary school teachers and school staff reported that performance evaluations might have the result of reducing wage transparency. What is happening is that a form of confidential personal contract is being made with secondary school teachers.

Researchers are concerned about wage contracts based on personal agreements and wage confidentiality which they believe may lead to lower wages for women than men. This could be the effect of performance evaluations. One of the persons interviewed revealed concern in this regard. Thus far, no data exist on whether individual wage contracts have resulted in widening of the gender pay gap among secondary school teachers.

Wage formation system

All secondary school teachers in Iceland are state employees and subject to the Ministry of Education. One large union is operated for all the teachers in Iceland, the Teachers' Association of Iceland. The Association was established in 2000, when the associations of compulsory teachers and secondary teachers merged into one. Successively other associations have joined the Association, and now there are six member associations. Almost all secondary school teachers are members of the Association of Secondary School Teachers. The secondary teachers are the second biggest group in the Association, after compulsory teacher and their division makes up 17% of the whole profession. Women are in majority within the Association as a whole (74% of all members), while they are half of the secondary teachers. The Negotiating Committee of the Association of Secondary School Teachers negotiates wage contracts with the Government Salaries Negotiation Committee. As revealed earlier, collective wage bargaining contracts are centralised and have terms of 2 – 4 years. According to the collective bargaining wage contract, secondary school teachers are divided into wage brackets based on education, age, work experience and position. In the latest agreement seniority was skipped in favour for life age. The performance evaluation will also have an effect on salaries, although the evaluation is not as yet in full use, as stated earlier.

Considerable changes were made in the most recent collective contract. Previously, various seminars and courses had had a direct impact on wage increases, but this is no longer the case. Now, account is only taken of credentials, i.e. BA/BSc, MA/MSc degrees and Doctoral degrees. The monthly base salary of secondary school teachers was, however, raised to meet the wage cut resulting from the decision to stop evaluating seminars and courses for pay hikes. Also, the performance evaluation was incorporated into the wage contract on the initiative of the State, but there is not a consensus among teachers. According to a survey conducted by the Association of Secondary School Teachers in 2000, 36% of the teachers were in favour of a decentralised wage system and 38% were against it. One fourth of the respondents did not hold any opinion.²⁴ There are many who believe that the performance evaluation is being used to encourage competition and discrimination within the teachers union, which has hitherto been characterised by unity of purpose and transparency of

²⁴ (<http://www.ki.is/FF/konnunff.htm>)

the teachers' wage system. This collective contract was negotiated following a two-month strike and was approved by 90% of the votes.

It should be noted that strikes among teachers in Iceland have been common in recent decades. The history of these strikes can be traced back to the year 1985 when the secondary school teachers performed a spontaneous 'illegal' strike (stopped working). The following year, 1986, civil servants got the right to strike in Iceland. Since then, Icelandic teachers have went on strike four times with accelerating confrontations; in 1987 for three weeks, 1989 for five weeks, 1996 for seven and a half week, and finally in 2000-2001, the longest strike hitherto, for eight weeks.

The average gender pay gap, according to net wages (excluding overtime pay) for all school teachers (all member of the Teachers' Association) is about 98% in the year 2000, but the gender pay gap in gross wages is approximately 82%. This is approximately the same as the gender pay gap for secondary school teachers separately (see table C.1).²⁵ The gender pay gap in net wages is probably due to the fact that the men are older than the women, as mentioned earlier. The main reason for men's higher gross wages is probably because of men's longer working hours, and further, that the number of men in management positions tends to be greater than that of women. (Table C.1 > Wages – average gross wage rate per month).

3.2 Fish processing workers

Presentation of the fish processing workers

The fishing industry has been Iceland's basic industry for a long time. In 1991, the export of fish products accounted for approximately 60% of the value of Iceland's exported goods and services. In the year 2000 this proportion was 40%. Fish and fish processing accounted for approximately 10% of GDP in Iceland in the year 2000, of which fish processing makes up for less than a half. The importance of this sector has been decreasing since 1980, when it accounted for approximately 17% of GDP.²⁶

Employers of fish processing workers are mainly of two kinds, on the one hand fish processing companies (which do not operate vessels), and on the other hand fishery enterprises that both operate vessels and fish processing. Approximately 230 fishing vessel operators are members of the Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners (Landssamband íslenskra útvegsmanna, LÍÚ) and the estimated number of man-years within the federation is approximately 4500. Approximately 100 companies are members of the Federation of Icelandic Fish-Processing Industries [Samtök fiskvinnslustöðva] and the estimated number of man years within that federation is approximately 5200. All fisheries and fish processing companies in Iceland are private enterprises.²⁷

In 1980 the number of people working in the fish processing industry was 9.500 (9.1% of the employment). In 1991 there were 8000 persons employed in fish processing, 3300 women and 4700 (6.1% of the employment) (see table C.2). In the year 2000 there were 6700 persons employed in fish processing, 3000 women and 3700 men (4.3% of the employment). Thus, there has been a reduction in the sector since 1991, and the number of men has decreased proportionately more than the number of women. The largest group of workers within the fishing process industry are those working with freezing, salting and drying of fish. The mechanisation in the sector has been rapidly increasing. Fish processing is to a greater extent carried out aboard the fishing vessels, instead of on land. This has led to changes in the gendering of work in the fishing industry, implicating that the seamen to a large extent carry out the processing instead of women in the fish fabrics.

²⁵ Fréttarit KOS. Nr 24, 2000. Observe that this data includes *all* teachers in the Teachers' Association as data is usually not produced for the groups separately in official statistics. Secondary school teachers are only 17% of the whole group.

²⁶ Information from the website of the Ministry of Fisheries.

²⁷ Information from the website of the Confederation of Icelandic Employers.

The proportion of non-Icelandic employees in the fish processing sector in Iceland has increased in recent years. There is a common view in Iceland, and that is confirmed by interviews in the present study, that Icelanders regard fish processing as menial work, and the jobs are increasingly being filled by foreign workers. Some Icelandic fish processing companies advertise their jobs overseas, primarily in Poland. Although the fishing industry is to an increasing degree dependent on migrant workers, no information is available about the accurate numbers of these workers, nor their origin. There has been a big discussion in recent years in Iceland, both in media and in the parliament, on the rights of foreign workers. The legislation is only slowly progressing. As previously stated, the current Foreigners' Right to Work Act dates from 1994, and new legislation will not take effect until 2003.

Fish processing workers in Iceland are divided into general fish processing workers and specialised fish processing workers. General fish processing workers have no formal training in the field of fish processing. Specialised fish processing workers have either studied at the Fish Processing School [Fiskvinnsluskólinn] or have attended courses organised by the companies in co-operation with school. There is no data available on the ratio between specialised fisheries workers and unspecialised, unemployed fisheries workers, nor on the proportion men and women in the group mentioned. The contracted working hours of fish processing workers are 40 hours per week.

Present discussion on gender issues among fish processing workers

Gender issues are not much of an issue among fish processing workers. Fish processing workers, both general and specialised and of both sexes, are paid according to the same wage contract.

There is a strong gender differentiation in the fish processing sector. A clear distinction is made between so called "men's work" and "women's work". Women are more often engaged in boning and trimming (the finer jobs) while men work more usually employed on fork-lifts and the packing machinery (the coarser jobs). This segregation is usually not questioned by the employees (Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir 1995).

The wage difference which is clearly revealed in table C.2, appears to be primarily the result of vertical gender difference. Some specialised fish processing workers hold special positions within the companies, i.e. foremen or assistants, and they are qualified to drive fork-lifts or are employed in quality control. All these positions are related to an increase in pay, although the amount of such increase differs. In general, workers will negotiate individually remuneration with the fish processing company for these positions; this increase is then added to the base wage determined by the wage contract. In one of the fish processing companies which were studied especially, these promotions usually entail a 10-20% increase. The vertical wage difference appears to stem from the fact that men are more often in the above positions, i.e. with the exception of quality control, where the majority are women. It is possible that the individual contracts between employers and employees also reflect horizontal wage differences between men and women, in the sense that men and women in the same job have different wages. However, we have no information about that, since the contracts are confidential.

In one of the fish processing companies that was specially examined it was revealed that no formal discussion is taking place on the vertical difference. On the rare occasions that such matters are discussed it is more often on a humorous note. The workers interviewed were of the opinion that the deciding factors regarding promotion were ambition and competence, irrespective of gender.

Programmes regarding gender equality

As revealed earlier, gender issues are, generally speaking, not much of an issue among fish processing workers. However, according to the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men from the year 2000, all work-places are under obligation to have in place an equal rights programme or provide specifically for the equal rights of men and women in their human resources policy.

Neither one of the two fish processing companies, which both have more than 25 employees, have prepared an equal rights programme. The Confederation of Icelandic Employers currently has courses for companies on the preparation of equal rights programmes. A representative of one of the companies mentioned above said that she would shortly be attending such a course on behalf of her employer.

Wage formation system

General and specialised fish processing workers are members of the Efling-trade union. The majority of all fish processing workers are members of this union. Efling-trade union is therefore responsible for wage bargaining on behalf fish processing workers. The party responsible for bargaining on behalf of the fisheries and fish processing companies is the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. These are comprehensive contracts which are renegotiated every few years. As stated earlier, the separate contracts made between the employees and employers regarding promotions are confidential.

3.3 Engineers

Presentation of engineering professionals

In general, there are no exact employment figures available regarding engineers. No data exists on the total number of engineers, the proportion men and women, nor the distinction between employment sectors, in terms of public sector, private sector and self-employment. The Engineer's Union regularly conducts surveys among its members, which provides the only data available on the labour market situation of engineers. However, the data is rather unreliable because of poor response rates.

Engineering involves at least 4 years of studies, after which candidates are supposed to apply to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for a licence which permits the applicant to use the professional title of engineer. Most engineers apply for a licence. According to the representative for the Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers, USCE [Stéttarfélag verkfræðinga, SV], about 20% of Icelandic engineers have completed 4 years of university studies, about 75% have an MSc. degree, and about 5% have completed a doctoral degree. This is an estimation since no reliable data exists on this.

The representative for the engineer's union estimates the number of engineers in Iceland to be approximately 1400-1700. According to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, there were about 1400 licensed engineers in Iceland in 2000. Of these, 90 or 7%, were women.²⁸

Based on a survey conducted by the Association of Engineers in 2001, it may be assumed that most engineers work for private enterprises, a substantial number works for the public sector, and that few are self-employed.²⁹ Unemployment is virtually non-existent among engineers in Iceland, well within 1%.

Wage formation system and bargaining institutions

There is only one professional association of engineers in Iceland, the Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers, USCE [Stéttarfélag verkfræðinga, SV]. The association is an independent entity, and payment of membership dues is not mandatory. According to

²⁸ There is no accurate data on the number of ingenieers, nor the proportion men and women. These figures are obtained at the website of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce [<http://www.idnadarraduneyti.is/>].

²⁹ The survey of the Engineer's Union covered approximately 1400 engineers but only about 270 responded. For that reason the survey only gives some rough implications about the work settings of engineers.

union's own definition, its role is to serve as a forum for engineers in wage bargaining, to represent engineers in employment affairs and to serve as a source of data regarding salaries and terms of employment of engineers. Members are provided with legal assistance, free of charge, in disputes with employers.

Participation in the union is relatively limited, compared to other occupations in Iceland. The Union has 880-890 members, and that is about half the profession, which is estimated to be approximately 1400-1700 individuals. Approximately 98 of the members are women, or 11%, but as stated previously licensed women are 90 (7% of licensed engineers). This could indicate that union membership is much higher for female than male engineers.³⁰ Comparable figures for the year 1990 are not available. General information on the engineering profession is quite difficult to obtain as stated earlier, and engineers do not appear to be a particularly closely knit profession. Interviews with engineers revealed that young engineers are less likely to be union members than older engineers.

The USCE negotiates a centralised contract with the state and local government. The contract provides for salary brackets which are used for comparison in the determination of salary levels; the contract also provides for engineers' rights. Each public agency also concludes a separate institutional agreement with the engineers in its employ. In 1997, a centralised contract was negotiated for the first time with the state and local authorities, which provided for such an institutional agreement.

The USCE also negotiates a centralised contract on behalf of the Icelandic Association of Consulting Engineers, ACE [Félag ráðgjafaverkfræðinga, FRV]. To be admitted to ACE people have to fulfil certain qualifications and experience according to the statutes of the Association.³¹ The contract involves the assurance of various rights and obligations of consulting engineers and provides for working hours, vacations, employment contracts, etc. On the other hand it does not incorporate wage scales, since collusion on remuneration to consulting engineers is illegal under Icelandic competition law. This is a result of the fact that the cost of consulting services is dependent on the salaries of engineers, and engineering firms are prohibited from collusion regarding fees.

There is also in existence an Association of Chartered Engineers in Iceland [Verkfræðingafélag Íslands, VFÍ]. This association has approximately 1060 members, both employees and employers. The association organises conventions and various other activities. It is not involved in the wages and employment terms of engineers.

The USCE has no equal rights strategy in place and no specific work is in progress regarding equal rights issues. The centralised contracts in place do not specifically address equal rights issues. In the non-public sector, individual contracts are negotiated with engineers. In most private companies, salaries are confidential. Engineers have virtually no criteria when bargaining with their employers for salaries; the only comparison they have is the annual survey conducted by the USCE on engineers' salaries, but participation in these surveys has been rather limited, as already mentioned.

Present discussion on gender issues among engineering professionals

Because of the severe lack of information on engineers, very little is known about gender issues within the engineering profession. It is not known whether men and women engineers hold the same positions, given equal qualifications. Furthermore, it is difficult to say whether there is any horizontal wage difference between men and women in the private sector, as salaries in that sector are confidential. In light of the fact that women tend to get worse deals from individual contracts than men, it seems reasonable to assume that there is a horizontal wage difference.

³⁰ These figures are from the Engineers Unions' website, however they are not reliable.

³¹ <http://www.frv.is/Upplysingar/>

There is no doubt that there is a vertical wage difference between men and women among engineers, both in the private sector and the public sector. It is much more common for men to occupy managerial positions than women. This was revealed in interviews with engineers and representatives of employers. To some extent this can be traced to the fact that women engineers are relative newcomers in the market, and therefore have less seniority than male engineers. However, this does not fully explain the horizontal wage differences in other occupations, and therefore, there is a reason to doubt that it does so in the engineering profession.

Programmes regarding gender equality

The USCE has not set up an equal rights policy. On the other hand, the Association of Chartered Engineers in Iceland, does have a Women's Issues Committee. The committee has organised seminars for women featuring consultants and other parties. A typical agenda of such seminars will include: Contracting, women and the managerial role. The Women's Issues Committee has also set up an "equal affairs" plan. In our interviews, female representatives for engineers were eager to emphasise that the Committee was not a 'women's rights issue'. They believe that a specific focus on women's rights or feminism would lead to the women's and the committee's marginalisation. And since the Association of Chartered Engineers in Iceland is not a professional union, the Committee has not addressed the wage gap of men and women.

The University of Iceland and the Committee on Equal Rights at the University of Iceland have, in co-operation with other government agencies and private entities organised an initiative titled "Leadership to women and gender equality in choice of education". Among other things, the initiative is intended to promote greater enrolment by women in engineering and computer studies; according to the Equal Rights Representative of the University, the initiative has been successful, and the proportion of women among new students of engineering has increased by 3%.³²

3.4 Some key labour market statistics

Teaching associate professionals

The following information is obtained from the Public Sector Labour Market Research Institute and from Statistics Iceland. The data is not comprehensive. Teachers in Iceland are employed only in the public sector.

³² <http://www.hi.is/stjorn/jafnrettisn/Ataksverkefni>

Table C.1 Teaching associate professionals, 1990.

	All – 1990		All – 2000	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Employment, persons aged 15-64			624	768
Employees, persons aged 15-64 (EE1564)			624	768
Employees, persons aged 25-64 (EE2564)			594	713
Education EE2564 - Level / field of education – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }				
Migrants / immigrants among EE1564				
Working time EE1564 - Usual/ contracted working hours per week				
- Actual working hours per month	*			
- - less than 30 hours per week				
- - less than 20 hours per week				
- - 45 hours per week or more				
Employees, EE1564 - temporary contracts	**	**	**	**
- members of unions	All	All	All	All
- covered by collective agreements	All	All	All	All
Occupation EE1564 - horizontal segregation – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }				
Wages EE1564 – all - average gross wage rate per month – ISK	112.456 ***	135.465 ***	197,828 ***	242,752 ***
- gender pay gap	83%	x	81.5%	X
Wages EE1564 – only full time workers - average gross wage rate per month – ISK	118.169 ***	139.435 ***	209,080 ***	248,732 ***
- gender pay gap	84.8%	x	84.1%	X

*The number that were available on actual working hours where not reliable.

**All teachers who begin teaching get a 1-year contract. Following the year, they receive an open contract, i.e. permanent employment. Figures on the number of teachers with temporary contracts are not available. Part-time teachers are also on temporary contracts, but information on their number is available only from the schools in question.

*** The figures involve total wages (on the one hand for all and on the other hand for those in full employment) per month, including daytime wages, overtime wages and other wages. These total wages are calculated on the basis of the average of all the months of the year, i.e. average monthly wages by gender for each position-equivalent. Overtime wages are 1.0385% of the monthly wage per hour, which makes it possible to approach the average number of paid overtime hours per position.

Data on the number of employees engaged in teaching at secondary schools (employment) and their number on the payroll (employees) are obtained from Statistics Iceland. It should be noted that this group includes individuals who are not licensed teachers. The figures show that men outnumber women slightly in the ranks of secondary school teachers in 2000, but figures for 1990 are not available at this time.

As regards number of working hours per week, it is assumed that secondary school teachers work approximately 40 hours per week on the average over the year. Owing to the nature of the work, however, secondary school teachers work only in the winter, and not in the summer. Men worked more hours per month than women in

both years, 1990 and 2000. The number of working hours per month has increased during the period for both men and women, but proportionately more for men. The ratio of women's work to men's work has fallen from 85% (women 163.11 hours per month, as opposed to 192.83 for men) in 1990 to 74% (women 179.23, men 240,15) in 2000. One reason for this is that men take on much more overtime than women. The number of secondary school teachers in full time position has grown between the years 1990 and 2000, with the number of women growing proportionally more than the number of men. As revealed earlier, all secondary school teachers are members of a union which negotiates centralised wage contracts with the government.

Looking at the figures shows that the gender pay gap among secondary school teachers is substantial, i.e. 15-20%. This gap has not changed much between the years 1990 and 2000. As shown earlier, men are more often full-time employees, they work more overtime and they appear to be more frequently employed in management positions than women.

Fish processing workers

Fish processing workers in Iceland are divided into general fish processing workers and specialised fish processing workers, in table C.2 both groups are included.

According to the Icelandic Labour Force Survey ILFS [Vinnumarkaður 1990] for 1991, the number of employed persons in the fish processing sector was 8000, women 3300, men 4700. (No further statistics available from 1991). All employees in the fish processing occupation are employed in the private sector.

Table C.2. Fish processing workers, 2000.

	All	
	Women	Men
Employment, persons aged 15-64	3000*	3700*
Employees, persons aged 15-64 (EE1564)		
Employees, persons aged 25-64 (EE2564)		
Education EE2564 - Level / field of education – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }		
Migrants / immigrants among EE1564		
Working time EE1564	40	40
- Usual/ contracted working hours per week		
- Actual working hours per week	27,7	30,4
- - less than 30 hours per week	1446	1154
- - less than 20 hours per week	808	859
- - 45 hours per week or more	281	521
Employees, EE1564 - temporary contracts	???	???
- members of unions	+95%	+95%
- covered by collective agreements	+95%	+95%
Occupation EE1564 - horizontal segregation – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }		
Wages EE1564 – all	675	808
- average gross wage rate per hour – ISK		
- gender pay gap	83,60 %	X
Wages EE1564 - only full time workers	682	760
- average gross wage rate per hour – ISK		
- gender pay gap	89,80 %	X

* Statistics from the ILFS for the year 2000. Concerns employed persons in the sector, irrespective of age.

(Note: statistics for: *Employees, persons aged 15-64 (EE1564)* and *Employees, persons aged 25-64 (EE2564)* are not currently available).

According to 1991 statistics, the proportion of men in fish processing was much higher than the proportion of women. Comparison of the 1991 statistics with the 2000 statistics reveals that the number of fish processing workers has fallen substantially, from 8000 to 6700, with the number of men falling proportionately more than the number of women. This decrease may be traced, among other things, to the fact that the number of jobs has gone down as a result of technical advances.

The contracted working hours per week are 40 hours. As can be seen from the table, the working hours for 2000 are much lower. According to The Institute of Labour Market Research [Kjararannsóknarnefnd] the reason for this is twofold: First, a large number of women work part-time. Secondly, during high season in the fish process industry, a large number of seasonal workers get job. They are included in the data and therefore the figure for working hours is not representative for the average fish worker. Even if the figures have to be interpreted with caution, they reveal the gender difference in working hours. Thus, there is a much larger number of men than women that work 45 hours a week, or more.

Almost all (+95%) fish processing workers are union members, and the union negotiates comprehensive contracts for its members. Statistics are not available for workers with temporary contracts.

Examination of the average gross wage rate per hour for men and women in fish processing reveals a substantial wage gap; the hourly wage for women amounts to only 83.6% of the hourly wage for men. As revealed earlier, there is a gender-related, vertical wage difference in fish processing, i.e. men are probably more often employed in positions of higher authority than women and are therefore paid a higher wage. It is not known whether there is a horizontal gender wage gap, because of the special contracts for certain groups of fish processing workers, i.e. those holding the position of foreman or assistant.

Looking at the average gross wage rate per hour for full time workers – ISK narrows the wage gap, with the hourly wage for women reaching 89.8% of men's wages.

Engineering professionals

The numbers for all engineerings are from Statistics Iceland they include engineers and technical experts, it was not possible to separate these two groups. But as noted earlier the representative for the engineer's union estimates the number of engineers in Iceland to be approximately 1400-1700. According to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, there were about 1400 licensed engineers in Iceland in 2000. Of these, 90 or 7%, were women.³³ Please note that this only applies to the column "All" in table C.3. The figures on the private market are from The Institute of Labour Market Research and the figures on the public market are from the Public Sector Labour Market Research Institute, which both include engineers only.

³³ There is no accurate data on the number of ingenieers, nor the proportion men and women. These figures are obtained at the website of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce [<http://www.idnarraduneyti.is/>].

Table C.3 Engineering professionals, 1991.

	All		Private sector		Public sector	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Employment, persons aged 15-64	200*	1.900				
Employees, persons aged 15-64 (EE1564)	200*	1.300				
Employees, persons aged 25-64 (EE2564)	200*	1.200				
Education EE2564 - Level / field of education – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }						
Migrants / immigrants among EE1564						
Working time EE1564						
- Usual/ contracted working hours per week	45,9*	47,2				
- Actual working hours per month	43,8*	47,1			171,63*	224,79*
- - less than 30 hours per week	–	100*			3***	10***
- - less than 20 hours per week	–	100*			3***	6***
- - 45 hours per week or more	100*	1.200			9***	168***
Employees, EE1564						
- temporary contracts	0*	0*				
- members of unions	–	–				
- covered by collective agreements						
Occupation EE1564 - horizontal segregation – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }						
Wages EE1564 – all					139.824	173.750
- average gross wage rate per month - ISK					****	****
- gender pay gap		x		x	80,5%	X
Wages EE1564 - only full time workers					140.930	178.359
- average gross wage rate per month - ISK					****	****
- gender pay gap		x		x	79%	x

* These numbers are from Statistics Iceland they include engineers *and technical experts*, it was not possible to separate these to groups. Proportional standard error is 20% or higher, because how few women are in the sample.

**Calculation based on October 1990, paid number of working hours (not actual working hours) for each group. Includes daytime working hours + overtime.

***Calculated how many workers were within each group in quantity of work.
30 hours a week correspond to approximately $30 \times 4.33 = 130$ hours per month.
20 hours a week correspond to approximately $20 \times 4.33 = 87$ hours per month.
More than 45 hours a week correspond to approximately $45 \times 4.33 = 194.85$ hours per month.

**** The figures involve total wages (on the one hand for all and on the other hand for those in full employment) per month, including daytime wages, overtime wages and other wages. These total wages are calculated on the basis of the average of all the months of the year, i.e. average monthly wages by gender for each position-equivalent. Overtime wages are 1,0385% of the monthly wage per hour, which makes it possible to approach the average number of paid overtime hours per position.

Table C.4 Engineering professionals, 2000.

	All		Private sector		Public sector	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Employment, persons aged 15-64	200*	1.900				
Employees, persons aged 15-64 (EE1564)	200*	1.300				
Employees, persons aged 25-64 (EE2564)	200*	1.300				
Education EE2564 - Level / field of education – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }						
Migrants / immigrants among EE1564						
Working time EE1564					40	40
- Usual/ contracted working hours per week	41,7*	47,2				
- Actual working hours per month	44,8*	51,3	³⁴		165.22*	200.04*
- - less than 30 hours per week	–	–			7***	7***
- - less than 20 hours per week	–	100*			3***	3***
- - 45 hours per week or more	100*	1.400			9***	126***
Employees, EE1564			³⁵			
- temporary contracts	0*	0*				
- members of unions	100*	700*				
- covered by collective agreements						
Occupation EE1564 - horizontal segregation – if relevant { ... to be defined and specified ... }						
Wages EE1564 – all			1.768	1.958	281.877	334.345
- average gross wage rate per hour/month– ISK ³⁶					****	****
- gender pay gap		x	90,3%	x	84,3%	x
Wages EE1564 - only full time workers			³⁷		284.718	335.523
- average gross wage rate per month - ISK					****	****
- gender pay gap		x		x	84,9%	x

* These numbers are from Statistics Iceland and they include engineers *and technical experts*, it was not possible to separate these two groups. Proportional standard error is 20% or higher, because how few women are in the sample.

**Calculation based on October 2000, paid number of working hours (not actual working hours) for each group. Includes daytime working hours + overtime.

***Calculated how many workers were within each group in quantity of work.

30 hours a week correspond to approximately $30 \times 4.33 = 130$ hours per month.

20 hours a week correspond to approximately $20 \times 4.33 = 87$ hours per month.

More than 45 hours a week correspond to approximately $45 \times 4.33 = 194.85$ hours per month.

**** The figures involve total wages (on the one hand for all and on the other hand for those in full employment) per month, including daytime wages, overtime wages and other wages. These total wages are calculated on the basis of the average of all the months of the year, i.e. average monthly wages by gender for each position-equivalent. Overtime wages are 1,0385% of the monthly wage per hour, which makes it possible to approach the average number of paid overtime hours per position.

³⁴ Data on the actual hours of engineers in the private sector are unavailable owing to the small number.

³⁵ Data on the number of engineers on temporary contracts are unavailable.

³⁶ Unfortunately, comparable figures could not be obtained for the private and public sectors; one the one hand hourly wages are used, and on the other hand monthly salaries.

³⁷ Data not available as there are not enough women engineers in the sample from which the figures are derived.

*****Unfortunately, comparable figures could not be obtained for the private and public sectors; on the one hand hourly wages are used, and on the other hand monthly salaries.

In the year 2000, it appears that the gender pay gap is less in the private sector than in the public sector; thus, women's wages correspond to 90% of men's wages in the private sector, and 84,3% in the public sector. This comes as a surprise, as the public sector negotiates a centralised agreement with all engineers. However, this is in line with Jónsdóttir (1995) findings, that the main difference between the private sector and the public sector is that the gender pay gap is wider in the public sector for workers with university education. This result is contrary to the other Nordic countries where the gender pay gap has traditionally been smaller in the public sector (see e.g. Sjörup 2001).

According to the representatives of the engineers, the general wage difference between the gender among engineers can, at least partly, be traced to the fact that women are relative newcomers to the profession. Since they have less seniority than men, they consequently have lower wages, it is maintained, as engineers' salaries are to some extent based on seniority. The wage difference is also explained to some extent by the vertical wage difference between men and women. However, no research has been made on the issue.

Engineers' salaries in the public sector have gone up substantially between the years 1990 and 2000; this applies to both men and women. The gender pay gap has narrowed slightly over this period. Looking at engineers in full-time employment, women's wages were approximately 79% of men's wages in 1990, as compared to 84.9% in 2000. Thus, the gender pay gap has narrowed by 6% in the course of 10 years.

4. The workplace study

Here are the results of the 18 interviews conducted with teachers, fish processing workers and engineers. Two companies were chosen in each field, of which one was supposed to be state-operated, and the other privately operated. In Iceland, however, the state does not operate any fish processing plants, so both fish processing companies are privately operated.

Interviews were conducted with three employees in each company; the employer's representative, the representative of the trade-union in question or any other party familiar with labour affairs in the workplace and finally an interview was carried out with a party of the opposite gender of that of the trade union representative.

The interviews from each place of work have been joined together into a single narrative, based on the following criteria:

- The hierarchy of the internal labour market, to give an idea of the vertical wage difference between men and women.
- Wage contracts and working hours
- Training and educational activity
- Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover
- Wage agreements and wage negotiations
- In School A there is a separate chapter on the new wage bonus system being developed in secondary schools in Iceland. This will provide an indication of the changes taking place in teachers' employment terms.
- In the two fish processing plants there is a separate chapter on men's jobs and women's jobs, where the gender differentiation of work in fish processing is conspicuous.
- The discussion of each place of work is followed by a summary.

Table 15. Key statistics for the workplaces

	School A		School B		Firm A Fish Processing		Firm B Fish Processing		Firm C engineering workplace		Firm D engineering workplace	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Number of employees	95		112		250		73		352		75	
Share of men and women	.51	.49	.42	.58	.72	.28	.38	.62	.88	.12	.73	.27
Share of men and women in management	.64	.36	.67	.33	.91	.09	.33	.67	.95	.05	.76	.24
The selected occupation, share among M and W	.57	.43	.44	.56	.43	.57	.35	.65	.86	.14	.87	.13
Share of occupation with part time	.11	.13	.12	.19	.00	.04	.00	.00	.0	.03	.00	.00
Share of occupation hired last year	.29	.13	.05	.11	.48	.40	.14	.23	.17	.0	.34	.03
Share of occupation employed five years or more	.21	.03	.23	.36	.17	.03	.05	.12	.66	.14	.33	.03

Notes: M = men, W = women.

4.1 Two Secondary Schools

The interviews with the secondary school teachers were conducted in two medium-sized secondary schools in the greater Reykjavík area. School A is a comprehensive school and among the newest secondary schools in Iceland. School A offers both vocational education and general academic education. School B is unusual in the fact that it is a semi-private, non-profit institution. There are relatively few schools in Iceland operated in this form. School B's operation is largely funded by state grants and the teachers' wages are paid by the state. The wages and rights of teachers in schools in Iceland, whether publicly or privately operated, are largely the same. The main difference is that the students pay fees and the school is to a certain extent sponsored by companies in Iceland.

School A

The employer's representative in School A is male and holds the position of Principal. Interviews were conducted with male and female teachers at the school. The male teacher is also the teachers' trade-union representative at the school.

School A has 95 employees, of which 70 are teachers. The gender ratio within TO/ among the teachers is 43% women and 57% men. The ratio of male teachers at the school is

relatively high when compared to other secondary schools in Iceland. This may to some extent be traced to the vocational training carried out at the school.

The hierarchy of the internal labour market

The organisation of School A is as follows: Central administration > education supervisors > vocational supervisors > general teachers. The central administration is comprised of four administrators: the Principal, the Vice-Principal and two Directors of Studies. The Principal is a man and the Vice-Principal is a woman, the two Directors of Studies are of opposite sex. There are five education supervisors, all male. Vocational supervisors have overall supervision of each vocation; their gender ratio is equal.

There is not much discussion concerning vertical wage differences between men and women in School A. The management receives higher wages; this is especially true of the administration and education supervisors.

Wage contracts and working hours

In School A, teachers are generally hired for one year to begin with, and are subsequently given the option of permanent employment. All teachers have standard contracts. The average working week of a teacher in School A is 50 hours. The majority of teachers regularly work overtime and are paid for such overtime. One of the objectives of the last collective bargaining contracts was to reduce the amount of overtime, and School A is working on this objective. In general, men work more overtime than women.

The female teacher said that the varying amount of work behind the differing disciplines was not taken into account in the determination of wages. In Denmark and various other countries, language teachers and first language teachers have fewer mandatory teaching hours, as the grading of papers and examinations is more time-consuming than in the sciences.

I suspect that there is a majority of women in first-language teaching and that men hold the majority in teaching the sciences.

There are no bonuses paid in School A and there are no significant benefits in place for teachers.

Training and educational activity

School A offers specific training courses and the teachers themselves can also send in applications to attend training courses. The school also brings in lecturers to discuss certain subjects concerning the school's activities as a whole. Teachers are not obliged to attend any particular training courses although they must be mindful of continuing their education. Training courses are held outside normal working hours owing to the nature of the teaching work.

Teachers no longer receive direct pay raises following completion of training courses. Prior to the latest contracts, teachers could collect points by attending training courses. Having collected a certain number of points the teachers would move up a wage bracket. Teachers who make an effort to attend training courses may instead apply for a raise in wages through the performance evaluation system which is discussed further below. The new contracts stipulate that training courses attended by the teachers must be related to the subject that they teach. According to the interviews, women seem to have slightly more interest than men in attending training courses.

Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover

Frequent changes in staff are not a problem in School A. The school is still in the course of being developed and new study programmes and staff are being added.

In general, there is no gender differentiation with regard to staff changes although it is difficult to get people to teach certain subjects, particularly scientific subjects and computer subjects. In the scientific subjects the majority of teachers are male, while the arts and

humanities, (including languages), are dominated by women. There are six teachers from outside Iceland in School A.

Wage agreements and wage negotiations

School A concludes centralised collective bargaining contracts with teachers, as do other secondary schools in Iceland. The Salaries Negotiation Committee and seven representatives from the Teachers' Association of Iceland [Kennarasamband Íslands, KÍ] negotiate the contract. The collective bargaining contract is submitted to a general vote of the members of KÍ. All the teachers in the school are members of the Teachers' Union, KÍ. Wage differences between men and women are not part of the principal contract.

The employer's representative says that teachers are fully informed about the wage system and wage criteria but the female teacher disagrees. She says that teachers in the school need to make an effort to obtain information about wage matters. Representatives from KÍ have come to the school and held presentations on the collective bargaining contract, but she says that little else has been done to inform teachers about these matters within the school. There is no confidentiality regarding wages in School A, as all teachers have standard contracts. However, information is not released on the wages of individual teachers. School A does not have an equal rights plan, although equal rights issues are addressed in the school's human resource policy. The School has flexible working hours, except for the mandatory teaching hours.

Performance evaluation

The most recent collective bargaining contract with teachers called for a performance evaluation. The performance evaluation is intended enable teachers to apply for bonuses by having their performance at work evaluated. Each school is granted a certain amount and, for the most part, develops its own policy on the allocation of these funds to teachers. The policy shall be drawn up in consultation with the teachers.

School A is developing this new evaluation system. In all probability, a committee consisting of two teachers and two administrators will be appointed. This committee will have the role of reviewing applications from individual teachers and assessing whether the teacher should receive a bonus. The employer's representative says that teachers are not all equally happy at subjecting themselves to such evaluation. He also points out that the bonus is a very small part of the wage, approximately 1% of the total wages. The interviewees were in agreement that through the performance evaluation, the state was taking its first step toward decentralised contracts, i.e. transferring increased powers to the schools themselves.

Both teachers' representatives are rather negative concerning the performance evaluation. The female teacher says that it is difficult to assess teachers in this manner, as their work is for the most part carried out inside the classrooms. She also says that there was no mention made of protecting women's' rights in this system, saying that women are often more modest while men are more sure of themselves and more apt to praise themselves.

To summarise:

All the teachers in School A have the same contract, so principally there should not be any horizontal wage gap. However, it remains to be seen whether the performance evaluation will generate a trend towards horizontal wage gaps. Both the teachers interviewed are rather negative about it. The gender pay gap is not considered, and interviewees maintain that women are a vulnerable group in this respect. Men generally work more overtime than women, which is one of the main reasons for the gender pay gap among teachers. In the latest centralised agreement there was an attempt to reduce the overtime work. School A is working on the issue.

There is, on the other hand, a vertical gender pay gap in School A. Men are in majority of the managerial staff in School A, or 64%, while women are 36%. Thus, all the educational supervisors are men. The overall proportion men are 57% in School A and women are 43%. That means that men are over-represented in School A according to the

profession as a whole. Gender equality is not much discussed in the school, although the school's human resource policy does address equality issues.

School B

The employer's representative in School B is the Vice-Principal, who is male. Also interviewed was the trade-union representative at the school who is female. Finally, a male teacher who is familiar with staff issues at the school was interviewed. Both teachers are department heads and members of KÍ, the Icelandic Teachers Union. There are 76 teachers employed in School B, 56% women and 44% men.

The hierarchy of the internal labour market

The employer's representative says: "the number of male teachers is steadily decreasing, although this is not as yet a matter of concern in secondary schools", indicating that he regards it as positive to have more men. The male teacher interviewed followed that vein and reported that there is an unusually high percentage of male teachers in School B compared to other secondary schools in Iceland.

There are six administrative positions in School B. Two are filled by women. The Principal and Vice-Principal are men. Other teachers variously fill the positions of project managers, department heads or are only teachers. 17 teachers fill the positions of department and project supervisors, 11 women and 6 men. Women fill these positions in proportion to their number in the workplace.

The vertical gender wage gap has not been discussed in the work place. The position of Vice-Principal was recently filled but no equal rights discussion took place in this respect. The female teacher said that there is, in general, an equal proportion of men and women in the school and that hers is a workplace where everyone is a teacher and the fact of whether they were male or female wasn't really an issue. There were two female teachers from countries other than Iceland teaching in School B.

Wage contracts and working hours

When teachers are employed at the school they are on a temporary contract, after two years they are granted tenure. These contracts have a three months' notice period.

Mandatory teaching is 24 teaching hours per week, the majority teachers in full positions at School B teach for longer than the mandatory teaching hours, and the average teaching week is 30 hours per week.

The employer's representative said that men were more active in seeking fringe benefits and that they worked longer hours than women. If the total wages are examined, the men probably have higher wages but when the basic wage is examined there is no gender difference in the wages. It is also more common for women to be employed part-time than men. When asked about the reasons that men work longer hours than women the employer's representative responded as follows:

I think that men are the primary wage earners in households in the society in general. The women who work part-time here have young children.

The employees of School B were paid a bonus at the end of last year and everyone received an equal bonus based on proportion of employment. Such bonuses are unknown in other secondary schools. The female teacher says that the bonus payment was an incentive and the subject of general satisfaction. The performance evaluation has, however, not been implemented in School B. The evaluation addresses the effort that teachers make to re-train themselves, introduce innovations in teaching and produce new teaching material.

Teachers in School B do not receive any extra benefits. The male teacher, however, said that the school was better equipped than many others.

Training and educational activity

A special continuing-education manager is employed at School B who organises several training courses each year. A survey is carried out among the teachers on what training courses they would like to take part in. The school organises some of the training courses and, in addition, the teachers attend training courses that specifically relate to their subjects. The collective bargaining contract stipulates that teachers should be allocated 80 hours a year for re-education. The training courses are not held during working hours. Participation in the training courses held by the school has, in general, been good. The employer's representative and the female teacher are of the opinion that women are more interested in re-education than men are.

Teachers are not automatically granted a wage increase after having completed training courses. Prior to the last collective bargaining contract, teachers could collect points by attending training courses. When they had collected a certain number of points they were moved up a wage bracket. Now, on the other hand, teachers who attend many training courses can apply for a raise in wages through the performance evaluation, which has, as previously stated, not been implemented in School B. Teachers who make the effort to attend training courses are also more likely to be promoted. Thus, they may benefit more indirectly from courses, even though they are not directly related to wages.

Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover

Frequent changes in staff are not a problem in School B. Men are slightly more on the move although there is no large gender difference with regard to staff turnover. Around two years ago there was an upward trend in the Icelandic economy and it became difficult to get teachers to work. The employer's representative reported that many male teachers came to work at School B at that time but they stayed for a short time. He continued that the same conditions had existed in other schools in Iceland. According to that women seem to be the stable part of the work force within the schools, and men the 'reserve' army, showing up in recessions at the labour market.

Women are more numerous than men in new staff employed by School B. It has proved difficult to obtain young people to teach mathematics, unlike the trends in other departments which the renewal of teachers is not a problem.

Wage agreements and wage negotiations

Teachers' wages are determined in the comprehensive wage contract made by KÍ with the state. School B negotiates its own contracts with the state and this is the first time that this is done. The negotiations committee consists of KÍ representatives, representatives of the school's negotiation committee and the school's administrators. Approximately 10% of the teachers are not members of KÍ. Their contracts are negotiated separately and are similar to the contracts negotiated with KÍ. Extra payment is given to teachers taking on extra projects, which can be of various kinds. Sometimes this entails projects that require work throughout the winter, for example making teaching materials or compiling reports of different kinds, such as the annual report of the school. In such cases an agreement is reached on a fixed number of hours per month. The projects are evaluated. The most recent comprehensive wage contracts with teachers provide for written contracts with each teacher, all of them identical.

The interviewees maintain that the wage gap between men and women is not a part of the comprehensive wage contracts reviewed every four years. Discussion among the teachers of the gender wage gap is not prominent in School B. The two teachers are of the opinion that there is no gender wage gap at the school, but rather that education is the deciding factor when it comes to determining individual wages. The educational background of secondary school teachers is not known. According to a survey carried out by the Association of Secondary School Teachers 74% of the respondents had a teacher's certification and thus

licensed, as compared to 26% who were unlicensed.³⁸ The employer's representative says that "in this context there is of course complete wage equality among the teachers as no one has a special contract".

There is no equal rights plan in place in School B. The female teacher says that the opportunities for men and women are fairly equal within School B. She also says that good computer skills provide increased opportunities. Young people who are starting to teach have greater computer skills than the older ones. This increases their possibilities of getting higher wages because the projects that rely on computer skills are better paid than other projects in School A. The female teacher also says that it is possible that boys are in a majority in this group. The male teacher said that the only gender difference that he is aware of in the school is that there are more men teaching scientific subjects than women. The female teacher said that the teachers' wage system was so nailed down that there was no large wage gap between individuals.

According to the interviewees the teachers are fully informed about the wage system and wage criteria. There is no wage confidentiality in School B, all the teachers have standard contracts. Individuals with the same education receive the same wages. However, information is not released on the wages of individual teachers.

To summarise

The male teachers do accept more work than female teachers which means that the men's total wages are higher than the women's total wages. A vertical gender difference is reflected in the organisation of School B, as 67% of the managers are men and women are 33%. When the next stage below is examined the gender ratio is fairly equal. There is not big consciousness about gender issues in the school, or the gender pay gap, among teachers or other staff in school, and there is a rather common view that all are treated equally. The female teacher says that School B is a good work place with regard to gender equality, as everyone has the same opportunities.

4.2 Fisheries Companies and Fish Processing Companies

Interviews in the field of fish processing were conducted out in two privately run companies. Both companies are situated in the greater Reykjavík area. Firm A is a joint-stock company that operates fishing vessels and a fish processing plant and Firm B is a family-run fish processing company. Firm A is a large company by Icelandic standards with holdings in other companies outside Reykjavík. The total number of employees is 250, men are 72% of the employees and women are 28%. Within TO men are 43% and women 57%. The uneven proportion of men and women in Firm A's total work force is because Firm A also is a vessel operating company. In Firm B, which is smaller, the total number of employees is 73, women are 62% of the employees and men are 38%. Within TO men are 38% and women are 62% .

Firm A

The employer's representative in Firm A is a woman; she holds the position of Financial Manager. Employee representatives are a woman and a man. The woman is the trade-union representative for the fish processing workers in the firm and is both a member of the trade-union council and a member of the union's board of directors. The man is a foreman. They are both specialised fish processing workers. The total number of fish processing workers in the firm is 105, of which 57% women and 43% men.

The vertical hierarchy and the horizontal division of labour

Firm A is a joint-stock company. The top manager of the company is the Managing Director and under him are the Financial Manager, the Fishing Fleet Manager and the Production

³⁸ http://www.ki.is/FF/konnunff.htm#_Menntun

Manager. The fish processing is managed by the Production Manager with the Plant manager under him. Under the Plant Manager are the Supervisor, the Head of Information Processing, the Quality Manager and the Technical Engineer. Two women occupy managerial positions in the company, i.e. the Quality Manager and Financial Manager.

The employees within TO, i.e. within the fish processing plant, are divided into general fish processing workers and specialised fish processing workers. Some of the specialised workers are also employed as foremen and assistants. There are eight foremen, seven men and one woman. Foremen manage fork-lifts, bag packing machines and freezers. There are four assistants in Quality Control, all women. These employees receive 10-20% higher wages. The processing chain reflects the gender segregation of the firm: First the fish is transported into the plant and the fish is received by machines and fork-lifters. This is predominantly “men’s job”. Then the fish is boned and sent to the flow line for further trimming and packing, which is almost exclusively “women’s job”. Finally the fish is frozen, which again is “men’s job”.

Employment contracts and working hours

Fish processing workers in Firm A usually have comprehensive employment contracts with no fixed term. The fish processing workers work on average 50 hours a week, all year round, 10 hours more than the negotiated working hours. In the event that the daily production is not completed during the day, e.g. if a vessel comes in, then work continues in the evening, during the night or on Saturdays. Those working on the bag packing machines work the greatest amount of overtime and the majority are men. According to the interviews, the reasons for this are twofold, on the one hand ‘tradition’, and on the other hand ‘physical strength’. However, if a large amount of fish comes at the same time, both men and women work overtime.

Employees are paid for their overtime, but if the overtime contravenes EC-rules the employee may take an equal number of hours in vacation time. Some of the employees work on shifts, i.e. those working on the bag-packing machine, which is operated 24 hours a day.

Even if there is no fish for processing, workers still get paid, as there are provisions dealing with this in collective bargaining contracts with the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

Firm A has a group bonus system. The group bonus was previously calculated in relation to the production but is currently a fixed amount which increases in tandem with other wage contracts. The group bonus is standardised and all fish processing workers, except foremen, receive the bonus. The bonus is approximately 33% of the monthly wage of fish processing workers. Two years ago the employees required to get the bonus raised, which they succeeded with.

Union membership is universal among fish processing workers in Firm A. Employees have easy access to information on the collective bargaining contracts and regularly receive a newsletter from their trade union. Two of the interviewees, the workers’ representatives, said that there was not much interest among the workers in acquainting themselves with the collective bargaining contracts. Wage confidentiality exists in the firm, although the collective bargaining contracts determine the minimum wage to be paid to general and specialised fish processing workers. Foremen and assistants negotiate directly with the company and usually receive a 10-20% increase.

Training and educational activity

The two women, i.e. the employer’s representative and the female worker, said that the only training courses offered by Firm A which were directly wage-linked are conducted in co-operation with the Fish Processing School. When an employee has attended such a training course he or she becomes specialised and his wages increase. Employees are in general very interested in the training courses, both men and women. The majority of workers who have been employed for more than one year have attended such a training course.

The male employee mentioned other training courses that neither of the others mentioned, i.e. training courses for foremen, fire fighting courses, first aid courses and a training course on safety issues. These courses were only offered to foremen and assistants.

He also said that men were much more interested in such courses than women were. Foremen and assistants can specify these courses when they negotiate their wages or wage increases. Participation in these courses improves the employee's bargaining position although they do not automatically increase wages.

Quite a large percentage of the fish processing workers come from areas outside Iceland, with foreign fish processing workers currently numbering 48 in the company. The interviewees said that the company had held an Icelandic language course for foreigners and a course for Icelandic workers on relations with foreigners.

Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover

The employer's representative said that employee turnover had increased substantially recently. Workers who have been with the company for a long time form a certain core, but the number of these workers is decreasing due to age. Of 105 workers in the fish processing plant, only 18 men and 31 women have worked there for more than five years. Those who have worked the longest are older women.

The female employee said that staff turnover was greater among men than among women. On the other hand, the men who have worked for the company for a long time are for the most part in higher positions in the fish processing plant than other workers.

The employer's representative said that experience with young people (especially Icelandic people) was not good, as they tended to quit fairly soon. In Reykjavik fish processing is not regarded as attractive employment, except as a summer job. This is not the case outside Reykjavik, however, where another viewpoint is dominant and fish processing forms a greater part of the culture.

The fish processing companies' main competitors for labour are the supermarkets. Fish processing companies and supermarkets both operate on the minimum wage market. The supermarkets offer more work and thus more wages.

Many foreigners work in fish processing companies outside Reykjavik and Firm A has made an effort to recruit foreign workers as they are considered a more stable workforce. The relatives of the foreigners working for the company often find employment with the company.

Wage agreements and wage negotiations

Comprehensive agreements are made between the Efling-trade union and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. They provide for wage rates for general fish processing workers, on the one hand, and for specialised fish processing workers on the other. The group bonus, however, is a negotiating issue between the employees and the company. Separate contracts concerning foremen's positions and assistants' positions are negotiated between individual employees and the employer's representative.

In practice, all employees become permanently employed after working three months and that leads to some increase in wages. After having been employed by the company for five years the employee receives an increase in his or her wages and again after seven years.

“Men's” Work and “Women's” Work

All three interviewees in Firm A confirmed the previously mentioned concept of “men's work” and “women's work” within the field of fish processing. The employer's representative described the chain of events as follows:

First the fish is transported into the plant. Men usually take delivery of the fish using machines and fork-lifts. They lift heavy boxes with the fork-lifts. Then the fish has to be boned, a task usually performed by men. Then comes the more delicate part of the work on the trimming flow lines, where the majority of workers are women. Finally, at the end of the processing chain where the bag packing machines are, these are larger machines; it is usually men who take care of this, as well as putting the fish into the freezers. In this respect the men work more with machines.

She went on to say that

Women are better capable of doing the more delicate work than men. They are in the coarser jobs. It does not suit men to do the trimming. Increasingly, women have been seeking the “men’s jobs”. Women are now often employed on board trawlers which was almost unheard of a few years ago, although this is of course changing very slowly. Women are also increasingly taking fork lift tests.

We do not have information on whether all the men who working on fork lifts actually do have fork lift tests. The male employee said that the men worked for the most part in connection with machinery; there is only one woman working on the machines. He said:

It is a difficult work, she can’t do all the jobs. The work is very physical. The packing machinery packs into kilogram bags, places them in boxes (10 bags in a box) which are arranged onto a pallet. It can be hard to lift them onto the pallet, not everyone can do it. Women have been trying to get to work on the machines, but if there are too few who can do everything this becomes a problem. Women find it hardest to arrange the boxes onto the pallets.

The female employee said that of the new employees men were quicker in feeding the packing machine and women were quicker in learning how to trim, she also said that there were, however, exceptions. Comments like this, which reflect a ‘naturalistic’ or ‘essentialist’ conceptualisations of femininity and masculinity, were rather common in the interviews.

Discussion of vertical differences among fish processing workers in Firm A

The trend within Firm A is that the position of foreman is more often held by men than women, and they therefore receive higher wages. Discussions about this vertical difference within the company are not common and are primarily “in joke”.

The female employee said, e.g., that when a male employee is promoted the women usually say: “The only reason you are getting this is that you have a penis ... you don’t normally use your penis at work, you know”. She said that these comments were only made jokingly and that they were probably promoted because of hard work and greater ambition. She also said, however, that there is a little truth in every jest.

The male employee also said that there was not much discussion of vertical differences. On the few occasions that this difference was mentioned it was merely to point out that it was strange that there were so many men in positions of authority. He said that the reason was probably tradition.

To summarise:

In firm A there is both a horizontal and vertical gender differentiation. Of those in managerial positions 91 % are men. The men are more often in jobs connected with fork lifts and various kinds of machines, while the women more often work with quality management. The men more often are in jobs that call for long working hours, and they get extra reimbursement because they work on shift.

An absolute, almost categorical, distinction is made between “men’s work” and “women’s work”. The representative expressed that women were more suitable for more delicate work. They are quicker in boning and trimming than men. Naturalistic approaches are rather common, the employer’s representative doubts for example that women can manage the jobs that require physical strength. Women have started to opt for the typical male jobs, but the changes are slow. There is not much gender awareness within firm A, and no explicit discussion on gender pay gap.

Firm B

Firm B is a privately operated, independent company, a family owned company. The total number of employees is 73, and of these, 65 are in TO, i.e. fish processing workers. 65% of them are women and 35% are men. The employer's representative in Firm B is a woman, she holds the position of Managing Director. Employee representatives are a woman and a man. The woman is the trade union representative for the fish processing workers in the company and furthermore holds the position of assistant within the company. The man works on the machines and holds the position of assistant.

The vertical hierarchy and the horizontal division of labour

As regards the executives of Firm B, the owner of the company is a man and the managing director is a woman. The production and quality manager, also a woman, is under the managing director. The supervisor in the fish processing plant is a man.

Ten employees in the fish processing plant hold positions or perform jobs that are better paid than the general worker. Of these three are women and seven are men. Those working on machines or as assistants receive 10-30% higher wages than general employees. Two of the three women are assistants to the quality manager and one is responsible for overall supervision of the trimming flow lines. Employees working on fork-lifts and on the machines are a total of seven and are all men. Activity assignment is similar to that of Firm A, i.e. women are in quality control and men work on the machines and on the fork lifts. The company's operation takes place on two floors. Fresh fish is processed on one floor and processing prior to freezing is carried out on the other.

Employment contracts and working hours

Almost all the employees working in Firm B are foreigners and the majority are from Asia. Foreign employees have temporary contracts for the first three years, due to work permits, but after that period they acquire green cards and coverage under collective bargaining contracts.. There are 34 employees in the company on such temporary contracts, 23 women and 11 men. The employer's representative says, however, that when workers have been employed for some time and have done a good job they receive an increase in wages.

The fish processing workers work longer hours during the winter than in the summer. The average workload per week is 48 hours but can go up to 60 hours a week with all overtime being paid. Men work more overtime than women as the overtime is linked to the work performed on the machines.

Training and educational activity

Firm B has held a training course in Icelandic for foreigners. The trade union representative says that it is difficult to organise training courses for employees as they come from different countries and speak different languages. She also says that the company sends workers on fork lift training courses. It is usually the men who are offered the option of attending the fork lift training courses. One woman has, however, attended a fork lift training course and this year, two more intend to attend. The employer's representative says that women do not show much interest in the fork lift training courses and have been offered physical fitness courses instead. When employees have acquired a fork-lift license they receive a wage increase.

Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover

The employer's representative said that staff turnover in Firm B is low, only 10-15%, which she says is a low percentage in unskilled labour. Almost no Icelanders apply for work in the fish processing plant, and she added that it is easier to recruit Icelandic men than women. She says that there has been a greater turnover among the women at the plant lately as many of them have been having children and have left on maternity leave. Employees acquire the right to maternity leave after having worked for the company for one year.

She expressed an interesting aspect relating to nationality. She was of the opinion that there was a difference in the men's abilities of trimming depending on what country they came from. Thus, men from Thailand and Vietnam were rather good, but men from the Philippines and Poland, were bad at trimming, just like the Icelandic men. "This is unbelievable, you won't believe me until you see it".

Wage agreements and wage negotiations

Comprehensive agreements are made between the Efling trade union and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The participation of workers in Efling trade union is common in Firm B. However, Firm B is not a member of the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. According to information from the Confederation about 70% of the firm with freezing operations are members.

Employees enter into a standard separate contract with the company. The employer's representative said that the overall rule is to pay employees in the fish processing plant wages that are 20% higher than the minimum wage frame provided by Efling. The company provides its employees with working clothes but there are no other benefits.

The company's bonus system entails that all the employees are paid a fixed rate of 10% on their wages per month. Employees' wages increase with work experience, i.e. after three years and again after five years.

The female employee, who is also the trade union representative for the fish processing workers, said that employees are in general very interested in wages and terms. The work place has wage confidentiality although people do discuss the wages among themselves. It is more usual that the men come and ask for pay rise.

I don't remember any woman coming in here to ask for a better payment. When we appoint them to higher positions they are very glad if it leads to better pay, at least those who work here as unspecified fish workers. When we need people in managerial position we have often considered certain women for the job, but it is not always that they accept it. Maybe they don't believe in themselves, they undervalue themselves.

"Men's" Work and "Women's" Work

There is significant difference in assignments between men and women in firm B. On the whole there are more women than men in positions of authority. However, when looking only at jobs within TO, i.e. in the fish processing, these are extremely gender differentiated with the majority of men in majority in managerial. In general, men work on machines and on the fork lifts while women generally work at the trimming flow lines.

The employer's representative says that she has given up trying to induce the men to trim because they have no interest in it. She also said that when men are employed to trim on land they do a bad job but do a good job trimming if they are out at sea. As mentioned earlier, naturalistic arguments are often expressed on the gender segregation in this context, linking boning and trimming to innate feminine characteristics and physical strength to masculine characteristics (Guðbjörg Linda Rafnsdóttir, 1997). This discourse collides with the recent trend with fish operating vessels, where men perform this job out at sea in return for higher wages, seemingly without difficulties. She said further that work on machines is often accompanied by physically difficult tasks, such as lifting heavy loads, which she said women were often not able to do.

It is clear from this discussion that activity assignment of men and women within the fish-processing sector are strongly related to traditional discourse on femininity vs. masculinity, as well as women's vs. men's work. The discussion on nationality mentioned above, linking men from certain countries to certain abilities, is another angle of this naturalist view, and reveals that the discourse on innate properties and characteristics is not confined to gender.

There is no equal opportunities plan in Firm B. The employer's representative that they are very much in favour of gender equality and therefore do not need a plan. She expressed that she was very supported in favour of gender equality, but that she also knew that men and women 'work differently' and some job tasks simply are not appropriate for women.

That's how it is, despite the women's movement. Besides, all women do not want to change it, at least not me.

However, she stressed that the jobs that required physical strength were not necessarily the best paid jobs in Firm B.

To summarise

There is a significant likelihood that there is a gender wage gap in Firm B. The jobs are extremely gender differentiated, much higher proportion men than women work on fork lifts which is "men's work" and grants about 10-30% higher wages than other jobs. Women are predominantly in trimming, boning and packing, which is "women's work". More men have had fork lift training. According to the employer's representative women are less interested in fork lift training courses and they have been offered physical fitness courses instead. All in all it may be expected that men receive higher wages than women in the fish processing plant of Firm B. Men also work more overtime than women.

The employer's representative emphasises that many women are in top managerial positions. However, men were in majority in managerial positions within the fish processing and in the firm as a whole. Gender pay gap is not much of an issue in Firm B. The employer's representative stresses that it is unnecessary because the firm is so much in favour of gender equality.

4.3. Two engineering workplaces

The interviews with engineering professionals and their employers were carried out in two companies, which are large, by Icelandic standards. Both companies employ a number of engineers. All the interviews were conducted in the greater Reykjavík area. Firm C is a state-run company whose main offices are in the greater Reykjavík area with outposts throughout Iceland. A large number of its employees are engineers. The total number of employees is 352 and women are 12.5% of the workforce. The company's activities are extensive. Firm D is a privately operated engineering firm providing engineering consultancy. The company has been operated for several decades and is well known on the Icelandic market. The company is situated in the greater Reykjavík area. The total number of employees is 75, women are 26% of the employees and men are 74%.

Firm C

An interview was conducted with the personnel department manager who is the employer's representative at Firm C. Also interviewed were two engineers of either gender, both are department managers and of similar age. They have both been representatives for the engineers in the company at the creation of institutions agreements and both are members of the Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers [Stéttarfélagi verkfræðinga, SV]. There are 29 engineers employed by Firm C and of these 4 are women, or 14%. There are no engineers from overseas employed by Firm C. Below is an overview of the company obtained through the three interviews as well as the state of gender affairs in the workplace.

The vertical hierarchy and the horizontal division of labour

Firm C is based on a hierarchical form. Employees receive different wages based on their position on the organisational chart and based on how much responsibility they have. Wage differences between engineers are, however, not great. The top executive forms the roof but there is not much difference between the wages of other employees. In privately operated

companies, however, the difference between the highest paid and the lowest paid can be quite marked.

The top executive of the company and his assistant are both male, below them in the hierarchy are three Division Managers that are all men. Department Managers are 19 and of their number there is only one woman. The majority of the engineers hold some sort of management position: area managers and department managers.

According to the employer's representative, no woman has applied for a position among the top executives. Positions outside Reykjavik have become vacant but no woman has applied. A possible reason is that it is more difficult for the spouse to find work. The employer's representative says that there is a willingness to change this gender ratio. No direct action has been implemented to this end but if applicants for a position are equally capable the gender that is in a minority is hired. The male engineer says that the company has not made any specific effort to change the vertical gender wage gap that exists in the company, he also says that the position held and placement in the organisational significantly affected employees' wages. According to that a gender pay gap can be assumed.

The female engineer said that gender difference with regard to positions in the company is not on the agenda in the workplace. She says, furthermore, that few top executive positions have become vacant in recent years and there are few possibilities for advancement within the institution.

I have the feeling that it is difficult for women to reach a high position in the company, maybe the men say the same.

Wage contracts and working hours

Engineers working for the company receive a fixed monthly salary (with one exception) and are all permanently employed. There is no engineer with a temporary contract at the moment. All contracts with engineers are standardised, however, employment contracts are signed separately with each individual. The contract contains differing conditions based on the employee's position. Engineers employed by Firm C receive monthly wages and overtime on top of that wage. Daily attendance is observed, eight hours per day, and overtime is worked as necessary. The employer's representative maintains that there is no observable difference on the amount of overtime men and women work although it is difficult to evaluate this as the women are so few. All the engineers working for the company are members of SV (Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers). In the opinion of the employer's representative the staff is generally well informed about wage criteria and the wage system.

Firm C has a family friendly policy, flexible hours and working from the home are allowed. All the interviewees agree that the family policy is active. Men have increasingly utilised this flexibility, such as paternity leave. The male engineer commented that the fixed wage contracts are also convenient for parents.

All three interviewees maintained that formal education was important when ranking employees into wage brackets. The institution pays all employees with a university degree the same wages for the same work. Thus, for example, a librarian in the firm gets the same wages as other employees with a university education, since wages are not differentiated according to the field of work. In the majority of companies in Iceland, engineers are more highly paid than university people who have graduated from other fields.

Institution C performs Competence and Performance Evaluations. This entails a certain amount that people receive. Employees usually submit an application for such an evaluation themselves although a superior may also do so. The top executives evaluate the employees and the result of the Competence Evaluation is confidential. The Competence Evaluation is approximately 7-10% of the engineers' monthly wage. The employer's representative is of the opinion that it would be very strange if men and women differed in the Competence Evaluation and says that the only difference could be that the men are less nervous about applying. No female engineer has had a Competence Evaluation.

The female engineer began by declaring that the Competence and Performance Evaluation was a positive matter. She said that it encouraged people and made it possible for them to

increase their wages. She could not, however, imagine herself taking such an evaluation. This was not because she didn't make enough of an effort or wasn't competent enough, but rather because she didn't want to be judged in such a manner. People seem to be nervous about taking the evaluation, it is very stiff and too personal. The male engineer was of the opinion that the Competence and Performance Evaluation is a difficult issue, because evaluating an individual in this manner is a delicate matter. He reiterated that there has been little experience with this system.

The male engineer believed that difference in effort was quite important when employees are ranked into wage brackets and mentioned the Competence and Performance Evaluation in this context. The female engineer was of the opinion that difference in effort should be evaluated to a greater extent than is currently the case.

Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover

High staff turnover is generally not a problem in Firm C, all three interviewees agreed on this point. There is however one position outside Reykjavík that has been difficult to fill due to its situation and the nature of the work. According to the employer's representative this is completely in tune with conditions elsewhere on the labour market.

The male engineer said that no female engineer has resigned from the institution. There are, however, only four women employed at the institution.

Training and educational activity

Firm C has a life long learning policy and staff can attend all kinds of courses and obtain higher education. Employees may be absent from work for up to four months. Employees are generally not obligated to attend the courses, rather they submit their own applications to the courses. Although there is no training manager in the company, the employer's representative says that the company generally does a good job in matters concerning re-education and life long learning.

The courses are generally held during office hours, employees often go abroad to attend courses and receive full wages since the company funds the studies. Employees are active in educational issues, attending a large number of conferences and meetings. The female engineer said that the attitude of the employer is very positive if the initiative comes from employees, which seems to be the case.

If anything, the women show greater interest in attending courses and re-education. The employer's representative said that the reason for this might be that the men are getting older. He also said that the women often attend shorter courses at a time and thinks that the reason for this is that they have small children which means that it is more difficult for them to go abroad for longer periods. However, the possibilities for longer education in Iceland have increased and one of the women has taken advantage of this.

There is no direct link between wage increases and the increased education of the employees, but the employer's representative is of the opinion that the employees are more competent having concluded such courses and are thus more likely to apply for promotions. The Competence and Performance Evaluation also takes employee course attendance into account.

Wage agreements and wage negotiations

The Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers [SV], makes general contracts with the state. The most recent centralised wage contracts that the state made with the engineers stipulated that each government institution must enter into separate institution agreements with the engineers employed there.

Employees do not have access to individual wage terms but information on wage terms for certain positions is available to all. The wage contract is so open that it is easy to find out what wage each employee receives. The institution has made no wage confidentiality requirement and the employer's representative thinks that employees discuss their wages. No information is given on the Competence and Performance Evaluation and information on which employees are evaluated is kept strictly confidential. What is official, however, is that

there are three categories, including a previously determined amount (7-10% of monthly wages) and that has two years duration. The employees can thus get one of these three pre-fixed amounts monthly.

Gender wage difference is not part of the institution agreement. According to the employer's representative this is not necessary as the same wage is paid for the same work. The female engineer was the only woman in the negotiations committee and did not feel that it was necessary to include special provisions on gender issues in the wage contract. Nevertheless she speaks of the difficulty of being a woman in the company but finds it hard to isolate the reasons behind such difficulties.

I have been here for fourteen years and feel that I have not developed much although the same may be true of the men. I just feel that I would have reached further if I had been a man.

The employer's representative says that there is no gender wage difference in the company and that it is not on the company's agenda for this reason.

No specific equality plan is in place in Firm C although the staff policy does address the issue, provision inserted in 1999. The employer's representative says the human resources policy is a policy formulating document that is intended to be followed. He does not have a great deal of faith in an equality plan that is not followed.

There is no bonus system in Firm C. There are no substantial benefits, although employees in certain places receive car subsidies and area managers in certain areas are provided with housing or their rent is paid.

To summarise:

All three interviewees say that the same wage is paid for the same work in Firm C. Thus there does not appear to be a vertical gender wage difference. There is no obvious difference in working hours between men and women. The employer's representative says that it is difficult to estimate, since the women are so few. Firm C has a competence and performance evaluation which can increase the wages of the employees. The employees have to apply for the evaluations themselves. So far, none of the women has done that. The female engineer says that she does not want to be evaluated like this.

There are 29 engineers, and 4 of these are women or 14%. 95% of those in managerial positions are men. In that sense, there is a horizontal wage difference. There is a slow turnover among the staff and only on rare occasions do managerial position have to be filled. The female employee thinks it is more difficult for women than men to progress in Firm C. She has 14 years of work experience and has not managed to climb the grade ladder.

The employer's representative says that there is no gender pay gap in Firm C, and therefore, it is not an issue. There are clear-cut frames regarding wage setting, they are based on position on the one hand, and on the competition and performance evaluation on the other hand.

Firm D

An interview was conducted with the personnel manager, of the company, who is a woman. She was the employer's representative in Firm D. Also interviewed was a male engineer who is an informal trade union representative (not appointed, but operates as such) for the Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers (SV) in the company. He has been employed by the company for a long time and is familiar with personnel matters. And finally, an interview was conducted with a female engineer. She has also been employed by Firm D for quite some time. Both engineers interviewed are members of SV.

Firm D employs 32 engineers of whom only four are women. The company employs one engineer from overseas.

The vertical hierarchy and the horizontal division of labour

Firm D has no organisational chart. This fluid organisation has been one of the company's main characteristics. There are various positions in the company, the stages are project managers and superiors although everyone performs the same jobs. The male engineer says that the company previously had a flat structure but that currently there are division managers and project managers. This change had been made of necessity, to manage projects and customers, not to create a "pecking order" within the company.

There are no direct links between what position employees hold and their wages. The female engineer says that wages depend on how much effort the employee spends on acquiring projects and the nature of the projects. These are the unwritten rules. The male engineer says that he does not know whether employees are paid according to their position as the company maintains wage confidentiality. He is, however, of the opinion that there is a relationship between responsibility and wages. He also reiterates that all bonuses are linked to successful performance and not to the positions held by the employees.

The majority of engineers employed by Firm D are general employees, eight engineers hold higher positions at the moment and they are all men. Much fewer women than men are project managers. According to the female engineer the cause of this could be that the women have less work experience. The employer's representative also talked about the fact that when women are of a childbearing age, 2-3 disappears at a time, and therefore they are unfortunately not employed in higher positions until they have had their children.

Gender difference concerning job positions does not seem to be on the agenda in the company. The female engineer says that strict confidentiality is maintained and that there are no job descriptions available in the company. The male engineer says that the issue solely concerns having the right people in the right positions and cannot see that gender has any effect on who is employed in top positions.

Wage contracts and working hours

All engineers, with two exceptions, are permanently employed in Firm D. The two employees requested temporary employment contracts. The company does not employ any part-time engineers. The engineers are paid a monthly wage and any overtime is added to it. Overtime can vary between months. The employees are responsible for submitting their own overtime. The employer's representative says that the overtime is evenly distributed between the male and female employees.

The employer's representative says that the initial contract is a deciding factor in employee wages but employees can then advance themselves. Formal education is also important in determining what wage employees in Firm D receive. Work experience seems to have substantial effect on the wages of employees at the firm, which is a remnant from previous agreements. The wages themselves are not based on performance but if employees return a profit on a project they may expect a bonus.

Job responsibility, initiative at work and a willingness to accept projects are the most important factors when people's wages are determined, in the opinion of the two engineers. According to the male engineer, the intention behind the company's structure is to activate the employee's initiatives, something similar to a university atmosphere.

Employees of Firm D have temporary, non-standardised, individual contracts. The contract arrangements are extremely open. This is being changed and a new system is expected to be implemented in the coming year. We did not get information on how the new system will be, but the employer said that all employees are going to have a written contract.

Firm D had flexible working hours and employees may work at home. Employees need to fulfil eight hours on average per day and may decide when this is done. All employees have sick leave for their children and the employer's representative says that men utilise these days more than women. Employees may also bring their children to work if necessary.

Training and educational activity

Firm D does not provide any special courses, but employees may attend any courses as long as they can utilise what they learn in their work. There is no obligation to attend courses but the male engineer says that employees are often sent on courses. The company pays all costs and the courses are usually held during office hours. The female engineer says, however, that a course was recently held by the company that was outside office hours. The object of holding the courses is, according to the employer's representative, to increase the employees' knowledge, their development, competence and to widen their perspectives. Approximately half the engineers attended a course last year. If anything, the women have shown greater interest in attending courses than the men.

Engineers are encouraged to attend courses although the initiative usually comes from the employees themselves. The union's contract provides for a specific number of days that employees may use to attend courses.

In-service training affects wage increases and promotion although the link between these factors is indirect. There seems to be a positive atmosphere regarding in-service training in Firm D although the employees are often swamped with work and do not have the time to seek re-education.

Interaction with the external labour market – recruitment and turnover

High staff turnover is not a problem in Firm D, which has managed to hold on to its personnel fairly well although new recruits are common. The emphasis has been on recruiting female engineers into the company and the ratio of women among the new recruits is rather high. Approximately half of the men have been employed by the company for five years or longer but none of the women. No female engineer has resigned from the company and the migration rate of the males is normal.

The female engineer related that the women employed by Firm D are young and have rarely completed their higher education and that more experienced female engineers are needed. She says that she does not know what wages the young women are receiving, they may well be receiving a lower wage than the young male engineers.

Wage agreements and wage negotiations

No comprehensive contract is made concerning wage amounts and wage brackets in engineering consultancies in the private labour market, due to applicable competition laws in Iceland. The price of the engineering consultancies services is primarily based on the wages of the engineers and consultancies are banned from price-fixing. The comprehensive agreement, therefore, only provides for minimum salary increases (hækkanir) and general rights.

Each individual negotiates his wages with the Managing Director of Firm D. The negotiations are based on the comprehensive contracts previously negotiated by SV. The negotiating process is not formalised, it is up to the employee to take care of his terms. There is no one who monitors employee wages, not even the employee's next superior.

The male engineer says that he has encouraged his co-workers to monitor their rights and if they are unhappy with their terms they should make this known. People who are unhappy with their terms are not much use. He is of the opinion that this is a common understanding within the company. The male engineer also says that everyone knows their worth and believes that people behave accordingly.

Private contracts usually stipulate that the wages shall increase after a certain amount of time and sometimes contain a review clause, if this is not the case then wages increase in consideration with work experience. The initiative is also often on the part of the employer who increases the wages of employees who perform well. The male engineer said that the most important issue in a private contract is to insert a review clause, he has encouraged people to do so and such encouragement has also been given by SV.

No one is entirely sure what percentage of engineers employed by Firm D are members of SV. The male engineer feels that their numbers are decreasing, younger people think first and foremost of what they gain by being members of SV and if this gain is small, they can't be bothered.

Engineers in Firm D are not well informed about the wage system and wage criteria, simply because the company maintains wage confidentiality. The only criteria that people have is the annual survey conducted by SV, although participation has been low in recent years. There is also a certain relationship between wages and the issued tariff that can be seen on the company's invoices. All bonus payments are confidential between the individuals and their superior, this part of the wages is not discussed in the work-place. The male engineer relates that there is a large wage difference between employees, the most expensive engineer receives 80% on top of what the cheapest engineer receives.

The employer's representative says that people are not banned from talking about their wages, but no one does, especially not recently. She thinks that the social atmosphere is the cause of this. When questioned about the effects of wage confidentiality the female engineer says:

Women need to be braver, the effect of this system is that those who are the pushiest are most likely to receive wage increases. Wage increases are, of course, also based on performance.

Everyone working on a specific project receives a success-linked bonus. The male engineer talks about that there is also performance encouraging bonus that individuals receive. It is linked to the importance of the employees to the operation of the company and their success rate, this bonus is also linked to management of projects and staff. The bonus is settled each year and is allocated by the owners of the company. Bonuses are not automatically paid and the male engineer says that he would regard it as a rejection if he did not receive this bonus in any given year. When he is asked whether there is any difference between men and women with regard to this bonus, he says that he does not know as the bonus is confidential.

The female engineer is not sure whether individuals receive a bonus, she is rather doubtful of the fact. She said that there is so much secrecy about this system that it is likely that it creates wage gaps. As stated earlier the only criteria that people have is the SV survey which does not give any information about wage differences between men and women.

Gender wage difference is not part of the comprehensive agreement. The employer's representative says that there is no wage difference between men and women in Firm D. She says that she does not know whether men and women get different results from negotiations but when wage amounts are examined there is no difference between the sexes.

There is no equality plan in Firm D. An equality plan is, however, being created and will be ready by next year. The female engineer said that she had pointed out to her employer that in accordance with equality law, workplaces with more than 20 employees should have an equality plan. She makes the point that this does not mean that there is any opposition to equal rights at the workplace, but that this is merely one of the tasks that has not been implemented. She furthermore says that no formal personnel interviews exist. The male engineer says that the reason for the lack of an equality plan in the company is that no-one is particularly thinking about these matters. He says that he has not heard any dissatisfaction expressed regarding equal rights, neither from women nor men.

The employer's representative says that there are no benefits in the company. Both employee representatives say that they do not know if any employees receive substantial benefits. The female engineer reveals that she has asked but not received any answers, she has received clues that some employees receive some benefits. She thinks that there is no woman who receives benefits. She goes on to say that:

I think it is very unlikely that the young women that are beginning work here are aware that they should make demands, they do not know how the system works.

The male engineer has a slight suspicion that there are some employees who receive substantial benefits. It is most likely that employees who were hired last year and in the 2-3 years before that, when there was some tension on the labour market, were able to negotiate more special requirements. In other respects it is down to the initiative of the individual to ask for benefits and there are no direct rules that apply. When he was asked whether benefits were more common among men than women he replied:

The girls are so young and that is probably the reason that there is a difference. But I don't believe that there is a difference between people who have the same length of work experience.

To summarise:

Wage systems and personnel policy is very liberal in Firm D, the organisation has developed in various directions on its own. This system was intended to strengthen the initiative of the individual. The company maintains strict wage confidentiality and it is therefore difficult to make a statement on whether there is a vertical gender wage difference. The female employee believes that the system may cause gender discrimination.

Men hold all the top positions in the company. This may be traced to the fact that the women are young and do not have as much work experience. The personnel manager expressed the view that women were not appointed to managerial positions until they have passed the child birth age, because of the absence it would cause the firm. However, no research has been made on the turnover of men and women in engineering companies.

The workload in the company is heavy and employees are expected to do various work related tasks outside their working hours. The female engineer regards this as abnormal and that this can have a negative effect on employees with families. Thus they miss out on important information that is given in informal social activities in connection with the work but taking place outside regular office hours. There is not much interest in wage and terms issues, nor is there an explicit gender awareness in Firm D.

5. Summary and conclusions

Iceland has a long history of equal opportunities at the labour market. Already in 1945 a law was enacted concerning rights to equal wages within specified occupations. Among these were one of the groups investigated in this study, teachers. In 1961 a law was enacted with the intention to increase the wages of women within specified professions to match those of men. So great was the optimism regarding progress that employers were given six years to implement equal pay. In 1973 a law was passed on "Equal laws council" which was followed in 1975 by a general law on equal opportunities, and thus, Iceland was the first of the Nordic countries to pass a general Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men. Today, almost three decades after the initial efforts to gain equality, Iceland is still far from gender equality at the labour market, with the gender pay gap up to 15-20%.

Since 1986 a specific Governmental Action Policy Plan has been in force with respect to measures for obtaining equal rights for men and women. Five Equal Opportunity Action Programmes have been put into effect since 1986 and the present action program covers the period 2002-2004. The Equal Opportunity Action Programmes have primarily been statements of good intentions at the ministerial level rather than actual action programmes. Benchmarks and time limits have seldom been included and those intentions not realised under the particular period are included into the next action programme. Several measures and action plans have been implemented by different instances in order to promote gender equality. However, they have been rather isolated efforts, with limited effects.

The current Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men is from the year 2000. According to the Act, employers with 25 employees or more appointed, shall actively promote gender equality, i.a. by a equal opportunities plan.

In the present study three occupations groups are investigated: Secondary school teachers, fish processing workers and engineers. Equal opportunities, or gender issues in general, is not a big issue in any of the groups. Nevertheless, there is a gendered pattern existing in all the occupations, although with different configurations.

Among secondary school teachers, the gendered pattern is revealed in different teaching subjects for men and women, different working hours, and less success for women in terms of managerial positions and extra projects. The gendered segregation is rather hidden behind centralised wage system and ostensibly gender neutral organisation of the school system.

The gender pattern is all the more obvious among fish processing workers. The work tasks are strictly divided into "men's work" and "women's work". They are justified with reference to (especially) women's abilities (innate manual skills) or lack of abilities (lack of physical strength). These naturalistic arguments are less often used to justify the work men perform, with the exception of references to men's nationality as their manual skills are concerned.

Within the engineering group the gender pattern is rather subtle. The 'objective' criteria for advancement and progress often hide the masculine overtones of the organisations. Competitive atmosphere, a spirit of individualism and self confidence contributes to the feeling of women as deviants. However, there is not much gender unawareness, and neither men nor women question the premises of the engineers' job situation.

Secondary School teachers

In Iceland practically all schools are run by the state, both compulsory schools and secondary schools. There is a common view in Iceland that the teaching profession has been deprofessionalised in the last decades. The educational system has been expanding with vast organisational and administrative changes in the teachers' job. Wages have been successively decreasing. Icelandic teachers got the right to strike in 1986 together with other civil servants in Iceland. Since then, there have been many strikes with accelerating confrontations. The last strike lasted for more than two months, in November 2000-January 2001. Teachers have centralised collective agreements. The contract following the latest strike lead to a considerable pay rise for the teachers.

Small steps in the direction of individual payment were introduced, in terms of performance evaluation. So far, this has been implemented only in a few schools. There are divided opinions about the performance evaluation among teachers, according to a survey conducted by the Association of Secondary School Teachers. The teaching profession is a gender-balanced group, however, there is a gendered pattern, both in terms of vertical and horizontal segregation as well. In both schools in the present study the principals are male. As a matter of fact, there are not many managerial positions within secondary schools, the organisation is rather flat.

Gender differences between men and women are almost non-existing as regards net wages. However, gross wages reveal a much larger gender difference due to men's longer working hours. More women work part-time than men, and those who work full-time do have shorter working hours than men.

School A

In School A, the principal is male, but the vice-principal is a woman. Men are in majority of the managerial staff in School A, or 64%, while women are 36% is women. Thus, all the educational supervisors are men. The proportion men are 57% in School A and women are 43%. That means that men are over-represented in School A according to the group as a whole. The reason for this is that School A has a special emphasis on practical and vocational training. The performance evaluation system is being implemented at the present time in School A. Both the teachers interviewed are rather negative about it. The gender pay gap is not considered, and they maintain that women are a vulnerable group in this respect. It is worth noting, that the two women interviewees in public employment (one teacher and the other engineer), were had negative opinions on the performance evaluation.

It is considered as unfair by the interviewed teachers that no account is taken of teaching subjects in the centralised contract. This has a gendered aspects as women more often teach languages, arts and humanities which require more preparations and homework, whereas men teach vocational and practical subjects which require less extra work.

Men generally work more overtime than women, which is one of the main reasons for the gender pay gap among teachers. In the latest centralised agreement there was an attempt to reduce the overtime work. School A is working on the issue. Recruitment issues have a gendered aspect, in so far as it is much more difficult to recruit teachers for the natural sciences and computer sciences which are male dominated study fields, than other subjects. That holds true for both School A and School B. No equal opportunities plan exists in School A.

School B

School B is a semi-private secondary school, but is basically run as a public school in the sense that all wages are paid by the state. The main difference is that the students pay fees and the school is to a certain extent sponsored by companies in Iceland. A vertical gender difference is reflected in the organisation of School B, as 67% of the managers are men and women are 33%. The two men interviewed in School B are concerned about the decreasing proportion men among teachers in general. The proportion men in School B are 44% and the proportion women are 56%. However, the male employee expresses the view that there are (still) more men in School B than in other secondary school. Nevertheless, this is not the case. As can be seen from the figures above, men are underrepresented in School B, according to their proportion in the profession.

Besides these concerns, there is not big consciousness about gender issues, or the gender pay gap, among teachers or other staff in school, and there is a rather common view that all are treated equally.

A comparison of School A and School B does not reveal any big difference between private and public schools. There is a better working conditions in School B, which is better equipped than School A, and seems to have a slightly higher social status. In School B the teachers are

granted bonus, where everybody gets the same account in accordance with contracted working time. In School A the performance evaluation has been implemented with individual differentiation. Slightly fewer teachers are members of the union in School B than in School A.

Fish processing workers

Employers of fish processing workers are mainly of two kinds, on the one hand fish processing companies (which do not operate vessels), and on the other hand fishery enterprises that both operate vessels and fish processing. We have one of each in the present study.

There is an extensive division of work between men and women in the fish processing industry. There are centralised wage agreements, with extra payments according to negotiations between the employer and the employee. Trade union membership is extensive. Men are more frequently in better paid jobs, and they work more overtime. There is a wage confidentiality in the, however, it is practiced differently in our two firms.

Firm A

Firm A is a joint-stock company that both operate fishing vessels and a fish processing plant. It is large in Icelandic standards, with 250 employees, with 105 fish processing workers.

In firm A there is both a horizontal and vertical difference between the sexes. Of those in managerial positions 91 % are men. The men are more often in jobs connected with fork lifts and various kinds of machines, while the women more often work with quality management. The men more often are in jobs that call for long working hours, and they get extra reimbursement because they work on shift.

There is a wage confidentiality in firm A, on the request of the corporation, and it is firmly kept.

The male interviewee reported courses as an important source for raising the wages, while the other two interviewed did not mention that. Generally, men are more interested in taking courses that come for higher wage than women are. It is very obvious from the interviews that people in the great Reykjavik area does not regard fish a proper job, and a majority of the fish processing workers are foreign workers. In Firm A, foreign workers are considered a more stable work force, and are sought for.

An absolute, almost categorical, distinction is made between “men’s work” and “women’s work”. The representative expressed that women were more suitable for more delicate work. They are quicker in boning and trimming than men. Naturalistic approaches are common with the firm, the employer’s representative maintains for example that women can not manage the jobs that require physical strength. Women have started to opt for the typical male jobs, but the progress is slow. There is not much gender awareness within firm A, and no explicit discussion on gender pay gap.

Firm B

Firm B is a privately operated, family owned company. It is much smaller than Firm A, the total number of employees is 73. A majority of the workers in Firm B are foreign workers. The wages follow the centralised collective agreements for fish processing workers, with extra payments negotiated with the employer. Trade union membership is rather high among the workers, but the employer is not a member of the Confederation of Employers. Much higher proportion men than women work on fork lift, which is “men’s work” and grants about 10-30% higher wages than other jobs. Women are predominantly in trimming, boning and packing, which are “women’s work”. More men have had fork lift training. According to the employer’s representative women are less interested in fork lift training courses and they have been offered physical fitness courses instead.

The employer’s representative emphasises that there are more women in high managerial positions. However, men were in majority in managerial positions within the fish processing and in the firm as a whole.

Gender pay gap is not much of an issue in Firm B. The employer's representative stresses that it is unnecessary because the firm is so much in favour of gender equality. Nevertheless, she is convinced that man and women work 'differently'. She also believes that there is a difference between people from different countries, especially regarding men's abilities to trim fish. The female labour force is more subjected to turnover, mostly because of childbirths. They are entitled to a parental leave after one year's appointment. Formally, there is a wage confidentiality in Firm B, but the employers discuss their wages freely. There is the same gendered pattern of division of work as in Firm A, and the same ideas about appropriate jobs for men and women respectively.

The difference between Firm A and Firm B

The most obvious difference between Firm A and Firm B is that Firm A is much larger, and it operates vessels, while Firm B only operates fish processing. Firm B is more detached, impersonal corporation, whereas Firm B is a small family-run company with a more informal atmosphere. Women are in majority at the highest managerial level in firm B. Firm A is a member of the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, which Firm B is not.

Engineers

The two engineering companies are both large by Icelandic standards. Firm C is a large state-run company. Firm D is a privately operated engineering firm providing engineering consultancy. The Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers makes collective agreement with the state, which are all-inclusive, i.e. include wage brackets, pay rise and general rights. The union also does comprehensive agreements with engineering consultancies in the private labour market, but they do not include anything concerning wage amounts and wage brackets, due to applicable competition laws in Iceland. They only include minimum salary increases and general rights.

Firm C

The total number of employees in Firm C is 352 and women are 12.5% of the workforce. There are 29 engineers, and 4 of these are women or 14%. 95% of those in managerial positions are men. In that sense, there is a horizontal wage difference. There is a slow turnover among the staff and only on rare occasions do managerial position have to be filled. The female employee thinks it is more difficult for women to progress in Firm C than men. She has 14 years of work experience and has not managed to climb the grade ladder. There is no obvious difference in working hours between men and women. The employer's representative says that it is difficult to estimate, since the women are so few. In Firm C all credentials are of the same worth, regardless of subject. Thus, engineers and librarians are placed in the same wage brackets.

Firm C has a competence and performance evaluation, which can increase the wages of the employees. The employees have to apply for the evaluations themselves. So far, none of the women has done that. The female engineer says that she does not want to be evaluated like this. The employer's representative says that there is no gender pay gap in Firm C, and therefore, it is not an issue. There are clear-cut frames regarding wage setting, they are based on position on the one hand, and on the competition and performance evaluation on the other hand.

Firm D

The company is situated in the greater Reykjavík area. The total number of employees is 75, women are 26% of the employees and men are 74%. The organisation of Firm D is very different from Firm C, as the structure is extremely 'fluid' and no clear structure of positions and grades. There is a wage confidentiality and no one knows about the other's wages. The only point of reference is the annual survey of the Union of Salaried Chartered Engineers, which usually has a very low response rate. The results of the survey are usually not gender disaggregated. The female employee believes that the system may cause gender discrimination.

There is not much interest in wage and terms issues, nor is there an explicit gender awareness in Firm D. The employer's representative believes there is no difference between the working hours of men and women, but has no data to confirm it. It is worth noting that the male employee talked about bonus system which the female employee seemed to be unaware of. Those who are most concerned are those who get highest wages. Since men are more eager in these matters than women, they are often more successful.

The personnel manager expressed the view that women were not appointed to managerial positions until they have passed the child birth age, because of the absence it would cause the firm. However, no research has been made on the turnover of men and women in engineering companies.

The main difference between the private and the public engineering company is that the 'fluid' structure and the wage confidentiality in the private firm opens up for contingent and opportunistic personnel management. Even if a strict organisational logic in the public firm may hide gender discrimination, at least it is more transparent, and thus, probably easier to counteract. Generally, our interviewees believe that there is no gender wage gap as regards net wages, and gross wages are not to be bothered with.

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TOWARDS A CLOSING OF THE GENDER PAY GAP

"Towards a Closing of the Gender Pay Gap" is a project, which comes under the 5th Action Programme's Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) and deals with gender wage differences. It is funded by the European Commission and by national authorities. There are six partner countries in the project: Austria, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. A Steering Committee with members from all the partner countries functions as the governing body for the project. The Norwegian Centre for Gender Equality manages the project.

The objective of the project is to promote equal pay between men and women for equal work and work of equal value and to identify an efficient mix of tools and instruments for promoting equal pay in the context of each partner country in three target occupations: unskilled workers in the food processing industry, engineers and secondary education teachers. The project partners have produced a national report on these occupations.

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