



NEW LABOR AND IMMIGRATION POLICIES OF ICELAND

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office in London has reported on the new labor and immigration policies of Iceland following its meeting with Labor and Immigration officials during the visit of the Philippine Embassy delegation in Reykjavik, Iceland on 14-18 June 2007:

- Issuance of residence and work permits is restricted to two main categories namely, the highly skilled (specialist occupations)/skilled workers and spouses/dependents of work permit holders.
- Work permits issuance to low-skilled non-EU workers, including domestic helpers, has been discontinued. However, for skilled and highly skilled workers, applications submitted by the employers in favor of non-EU workers will be accepted by the Labor Directorate. This is due to the policy of Iceland to attract more workers in this job categories which have skill shortages.
- Work permit applications for Filipino nurses and other skilled workers are accepted in Iceland to address the shortage of nurses in some hospitals. For specialists and skilled positions, recruitment search through advertisement is not required, as in the case of the United Kingdom and Ireland. It is sufficient that employers in Iceland can show proof that there is a shortage for the vacant positions.
- Icelandic language is not a requirement for work permit application. However, employers can require the workers to undergo such language training upon arrival only if it is necessary in the performance of the duties of the worker.

- Preference is given to EU nationals in the low-skilled employment sector in view of the EU enlargement with the accession of 10 new member states and the recent entry of Romania and Bulgaria.
- An employer in Iceland needs to secure both residence and work permit in favor of the foreign worker to be able to enter Iceland. Thus, Icelandic employers must submit their application with the Immigration Directorate to determine if the worker can qualify for the residence permit. Simultaneously, the employer should also submit the work permit application at the Labor Directorate who will determine the employers skills shortage requirement.
- A work permit holder, who is normally given an immigration visa category "C", must have at least one year residency requirement before he is allowed to bring his family and dependents (who will come in under category "E"). Iceland adopts a Green Card visa scheme whereby a work permit holder (and his family dependents) would be entitled to a permanent residency status after a continuous residence of four years.

Based on the official figures of the Labor Directorate, a total of 778 Filipino workers were issued work permits in 2006, making the Philippines the 6th biggest source country of foreign workers and the non-EU country with the largest presence in Iceland. Most of the Filipino workers are in the low skilled category. However, there is a growing number of Filipino healthcare workers, such as nurses and care assistants.

Source: Philippine Overseas Labor Office, United Kingdom
June 2007