

## **Statement by the Federation of General and Special Workers (SGS) and the Farmers Association of Iceland (BÍ) on Volunteers**

National associations in the labour market have shared responsibility for the development of the labour market and the rights and obligations applicable thereto. The shared goal of associations of employers and wage earners is to ensure a competitive labour market where these parties negotiate for wages and other employment terms in collective wage agreements. They are under obligation to ensure that the rules applicable to the labour market are followed.

These parties share the task of making sure that the wages and employment terms of manufacturing and service companies and farms are in accordance with Icelandic law and collective wage agreements.

If collective wage agreements are not respected, this undermines the operation of other companies and disrupts the basis for normal competition and a healthy employment sector.

In light of this, SGS and BÍ believe in the importance of a mutual understanding of volunteer work in the employment market.

It is worth reiterating that it goes against collective wage agreements and employment market principles for volunteers to replace wage earners in general work for the economic activity of companies and farms. For these jobs, the provisions of collective wage agreements apply, cf. Article 1 of Act No. 55/1980 on Working Terms. Wage earners have carried out this work and will therefore not be replaced by volunteers. Contracts of employment with individual wage earners stipulating poorer employment terms than those provided for in the collective agreements are invalid.

Volunteer work nevertheless has a long history, and such work is important for charities and cultural or humanitarian efforts. There is also a long tradition of volunteer work in particular agricultural tasks, e.g. when friends and family take part in round-up for a very brief period of time. This kind of volunteer work is not disputed, as it is well-established and has not been a matter of contention.