

My name is Irina Orlova and I'm a student of Danish School of Media and Journalism in Aarhus. Last spring I got the Nordplus stipend to go to Iceland so that I could do my final project for the school there. The topic of my final exam project was about whaling in Iceland and as a result of my trip I've made a 25 minutes long documentary film. Whaling is a controversial issue. It has spun into Icelandic society over the years. For the past decades the distinct whaling policy of the Icelandic government has been the subject of debate in international relations. Year by year, Iceland is becoming more popular among tourists, the country in recent years has become one of the most desirable tourist destinations. The state is spending a lot of money in promoting the tourism sector. Along with the growing popularity of the country and the tourism sector also grows. Tourists are attracted by the marvelous nature, an amazing opportunity to see the whales in their natural habitat and perhaps taste them? Recently the Icelandic government raised the whaling quota for minke whaling by six per cent to 229 in 2014 – up from 216 this year. Meanwhile the quota for hunting rorquals – which includes fin whales, humpback whales and blue whales – remains at 154.

From the very beginning, the aim of my story was to find out the reason why Iceland still allows commercial whaling, how does it benefit its economy. I wanted to know what is the attitude towards whaling among Icelanders and what do the tourists think about whaling and whether they are going to taste minke whale meat or not. I wanted to find out what are the links between the only one whaling company in Iceland – Hvalur HF and the Icelandic government. As before going to Iceland I've made a deep research on whaling issue and the history of whaling in Iceland – the question which I was particularly interested in was whether minke and fin whales are endangered species in Iceland indeed and whether the whaling is really puts at threat an existence of these marine mammals. The question which interested me the most was why Iceland is still one of the three countries engaged in commercial whaling? The main export wealth in Iceland is fisheries, and fishing is the foundation of the national economy. But as I investigated whale hunting does no benefit Icelandic economy and only harms the tourism sector as a lot of tourist from all over the world just don't want to visit the country which still permits commercial whaling. From the journalistic point of view I have been also wondering why the government is so persistent in the support of whaling. I was sure that there is something going on there. I found out that Kristjan Loftsson has a good links to the government along with Gunnar Bergmann Jonsson, whose father is now Iceland MP and who is helping his son with the business.

Due to the fact that I was doing a 25 minutes long documentary film, I decided to cover several topics. Since this was my first documentary film, it was not easy to tie all these angles into the one whole piece. After reviewing all the captured videos, it seemed to me the most interesting to talk about the relationship of nationalism and whaling, to show the situation between the two industries whaling and whale watching, as well as to dissolve the stereotype that the whale meat - an Icelandic national dish.

To get the answers on all of my questions I've arranged the appointments in advance from Denmark with the people who are more or less connected with whaling industry. As Iceland is a country with the population of 320 000 people

and taking into account that 100 000 of them are living in Reykyavik, there were not so many possible sources involved in the whaling industry. I tried to reach mostly all of them, but often didn't get a reply. But luckily I got in contact with the most important persons for my story, which are Kristjan Loftsson, Sigurstein Masson and Gunnar Bergman Jonsson. They provided me with information on the status of whaling in Iceland. Gunnar Bergmann Jonsson allowed me to film in his factory and talk with the workers, also he described the process of hunting the whale. I also interviewed the researchers from the Marine research institute, CEO's of whale-watching companies, whale-watching boat captains etc. In total there were 15 people I talked to. Worth noting that people really wanted to cooperate and some of them directed me to the people they know and who could be useful for my story. And in a result of my hard work and the help of the Icelandic people I've made my first documentary and passed my exam.

It was such an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. With the help of Nirdplus stipend I've visited a country with such a unique and interesting culture and the most beautiful and breathtaking nature in the world. I went to Iceland for 10 days and even though I was working hard all the time I've managed to see some of the Icelandic nature wonders. In a short time there I've seen the quaint coastal cliffs, glaciers, lagoons with icebergs, waterfalls, volcanoes etc. Also I got acquainted with the people of Iceland during the interviews and daily communication. And I can say for sure that the Icelanders are one of the most friendly and open people I've ever met. They made my stay in Iceland absolutely unforgettable and my work easy and totally enjoyable.