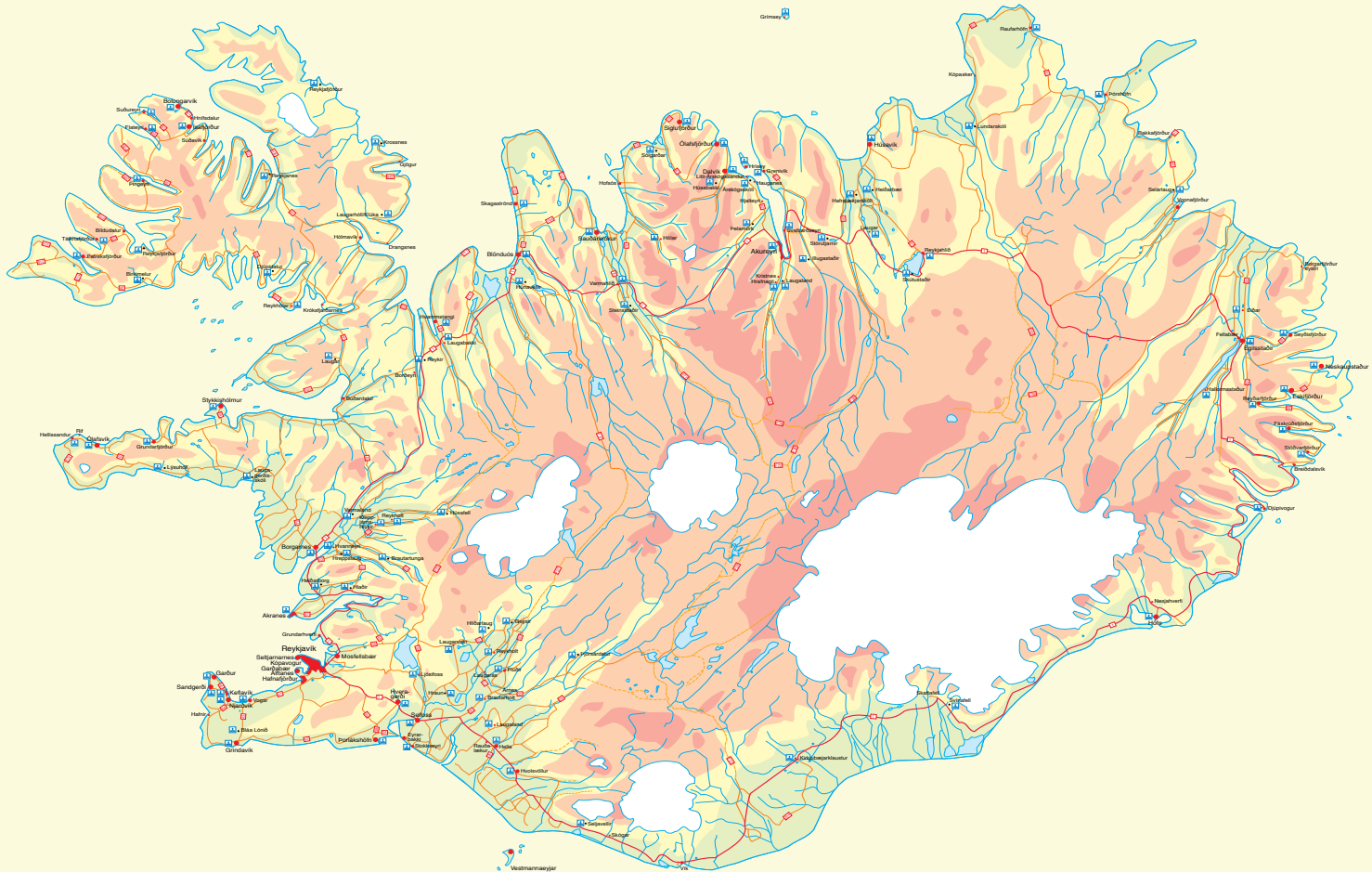




VINNUMÁLA
STOFNUN

Living and working in Iceland







Welcome to Iceland

Moving to a new country takes courage. It also creates exciting opportunities and new beginnings. Taking the time to learn what to expect - and what is expected of you - will help you make the most of your opportunities. This brochure is intended to help you over the many hurdles faced when moving to a new country. This brochure answers the questions most frequently asked by those moving to Iceland. It focuses on employment and working life and aims at giving the basic facts as well as guiding you to the sources of accurate information.

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Introduction to Iceland

- general information



Geography

Iceland is located in the North Atlantic, and is the second largest island in Europe, with an area of 103,000 square kilometres. About 75% of the land is more than 200 meters above sealevel with most of the land being high plateaus and mountains. Glaciers cover 11,200 square kilometres while suitable agricultural land only covers 1,400 square kilometres. Only the coastline is inhabited, and there are no inhabitants in the central highlands.

Climate

Contrary to popular belief, Iceland has rather mild, coastal weather. The average summer temperature in the capital Reykjavik, is 10.6°C/51°F in July. The highest recorded temperature in the capital area is 24.7°C/77°F. The average winter temperature in Reykjavik is about 0°C/32°F in January. A branch of the Gulf Stream flows along the southern and the western coast greatly moderating the climate. This brings mild air from the Atlantic which in contact with colder arctic air results in a climate that is marked by frequent changes in weather and often strong wind. Furthermore this leads to more rainfall in the southern and western part than in the northern part of the island. During summer the nights are bright throughout Iceland and in June the sun in the North never fully goes down.

History

According to ancient written sources, the Norwegian chieftain Ingólfur Arnarson was the first permanent settler in Iceland in 874. Over the next centuries, people of Nordic and Gaelic origin settled in Iceland. Iceland went under the Norwegian king in 1262 and later the Danish king. Iceland became an independent democracy on June 17, 1944 and has a written constitution and a parliamentary form of government. The people of Iceland celebrate the 17th of June as their Independence Day.

For ages Iceland was among the poorest countries in Europe and the population never exceeded 70.000 people. In the 20th century the industrial revolution finally found its way to Iceland with the industrialisation of the fishing fleet. In less than a century the Icelandic society has changed dramatically, now being one of the richest countries in the world with a population of around 316.000 people.

Today Iceland is a highly developed country. In 2007 Iceland together with Norway ranked first on the United Nations´ Human Development Index. Iceland is also number one in Europe when comparing the competitiveness of countries according to IMD´s World Competitiveness Yearbook and the world´s sixth in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

Icelanders have the second highest life expectancy in the world. When a person is born he or she can expect to live for 81,8 years.



Government

According to Iceland's constitution, the government is divided into 3 branches; the legislative, the judicial, and the executive branches. Althingi, where laws are made and amended, is the legislative branch. Executive branches, such as the ministries, directorates and various other government agencies, carry out laws. Judicial power lies with the Supreme Court and the district courts. The president is elected by direct popular vote for a term of 4 years, with no term limit. The president's role is mostly ceremonial. Most executive power rests with the government. Althingi is the legislative body of 63 members from 6 districts, elected for a term of 4 years by popular vote. Anyone who is eligible to vote can stand for parliament. A cabinet of ministers stays in power until the next general election or a new government is formed. There are currently eleven ministers and one prime minister. The ministers usually sit in Althingi.

Iceland has a universal suffrage, which means that every Icelandic citizen over eighteen can vote in the parliament election. Foreign nationals who have had legal residence in Iceland for five years can vote in local government elections. Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish citizens are though granted the right to vote after three years of residence. Only Icelandic citizens have the right to vote in national elections.

Language

Icelandic is one of the Nordic languages, it resembles the Norse language as it was spoken centuries ago. Icelandic is the official language and is used almost exclusively in all areas of daily life in Iceland. A large majority of Icelanders also speak English as a second language as well as Danish or another Scandinavian language. Usually a fair knowledge of these languages is a precondition for many unskilled and technical jobs in Iceland and knowledge in

Icelandic is not necessarily required. Learning the Icelandic language gives you though a great advantage and enhances your chances to find a more specialised and better paid job.

Information on where you can learn Icelandic follows later in this brochure.

Religion

Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Iceland by the Constitution. There is a State church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, to which over 85% of the population belongs.

Congregational activity is not strong and church attendance is low. Still the church plays a significant role in all major occasions in Icelander's lives.

Driving in Iceland

People from the EEA countries who hold a valid, standardized European driver's license are not required to exchange their license. Europeans without this type of standardized license must exchange theirs for an Icelandic license. In Iceland drivers are obliged by law to use headlights at all times day and night. Passengers in the front and back seats of automobiles are required by law to use safety belts. Be aware that outside the capital area driving conditions may be difficult. Large sections of highways are not paved and have a loose gravel surface.

For more information regarding driving in Iceland contact any tourist information centre in Iceland. Or visit the site www.us.is/page/english which holds information on driving in Iceland in several languages.

Currency and banks

The unit of currency used in Iceland is the Krona, abbreviated ISK, the world's smallest currency. At the time of writing this brochure

(13 May, 2008) 1 € = 122 ISK. Be aware that the Krona can fluctuate substantially. You can check the rate of the ISK at www.sedlabanki.is. All banks exchange the most common currencies and it is a good idea to exchange your currency as there are very few shops in Iceland that accept foreign currency. If the banks can not exchange your currency it is likely that Forex can. Forex is located in the tourist information centre in Bankastræti 2, Reykjavik and in Turninn Smáratorg 3 Kópavogi. Forex exchange rate is though usually less favourable than the banks. Most shops and businesses accept all major credit cards. Debit and credit cards are commonly used in Iceland even for very small transactions. After you find a job you will need a bank account as most employers deposit the pay checks directly. Most banks are open weekdays from 09:00-16:00 but some have branches with longer opening hours. To find a branch near you see: www.spar.is, www.glitnir.is, www.landsbanki.is or www.kaupthing.is.

Time

The local time in Iceland is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) all year round. In Iceland the time is one hour later than Central European time during the winter, but two hours later in the summer time.

Keeping in touch with home

To call to Iceland - The country code for Iceland is 354. No area code is necessary as all domestic calls are local.

To call from Iceland - Dial 00 (the "+" sign on your mobile) for an international line, then the country code followed by the area code and finally the phone number. Sometimes the cheapest way to call abroad is to use an international calling card.

For more information and key figures about Iceland see www.mfa.is, www.island.is and www.iceland.is.



Working in Iceland



The Icelandic economy is relatively small but growth and input have been sufficient to provide Icelanders with living standards that are among the highest in the world. In 2005 the economic growth in Iceland was 7.5%, 2.6% in 2006 and 3,8% in 2007. Use of renewable natural resources such as the country's rich fishing grounds and its hydro-electric and geothermal power capacity are the most important sources of export income. Diversification is though increasing with fast growing sectors including software and biotechnology industries, financial sector, tourism and the export of fisheries know-how. With a relatively young and well-educated work force, Iceland is increasingly complementing its natural resources with industries capitalising on human resources and technology.

The Icelandic labour market has for decades been characterised by a constant demand for labour. The demand has been especially high the last few years due to a booming economy, and the labour demand has mainly been met by workers from other EEA countries.

Although the Icelandic economy is now going through a certain recession with decreasing labour demand we still expect a continuing demand for EEA workers in some sectors.

The construction sector is estimated to slow down in 2008 and 2009 i.e. depending on lack of credit supply. On the other hand public works by the state and municipalities will increase. Around 40% of all workers in the construction sector in 2007 were non-Icelandic, the majority from other EEA countries. In the fish industry the proportion is even higher. There are drawbacks in the fish-

Iceland in 2007

- Economic growth 3,8%.
- Employment rate 85%.
- Unemployment rate 1%.
- Foreign citizens living in Iceland constituted 6,8% of the total population and around 10% of the labour force.
- The largest groups of immigrants in Iceland are from Poland, Lithuania, Germany and Denmark.
- Minimum salary for unskilled workers was 137.752 ISK (1.129 €) and the average salary was approx. 330.000 ISK (2.704 €). The average working hours were 42 hours per week.
- Average taxes on salaries: 24,4%.
- The main foreign currency earnings were marine products (41,8%), aluminium (26,%) transport (15%) and tourism (13%).

ing industry due to cost cuts and continuing rationalisations and technological advances. The tourism sector keeps expanding with continuing labour demand. Some sectors are mainly filled with foreign labour, such as horticulture and agriculture, seasonal jobs in the meat industry, service jobs, etc. We do not see any signs of change there.

Due to the diversification and globalization of the Icelandic economy over the past decade the demand for highly skilled specialists has become more prominent. There is excess demand for skilled engineers. Icelandic engineering companies foresee a need for a few hundred engineers in the next few years. There is also demand for skilled programmers, system administrators and skilled health personnel. If things keep on progressing along the projected lines, in the coming years, we only see an increase in the excess demand in the growth sectors and the only way to meet this demand is to increase the number of specialist recruitments from outside of Iceland.

All in all, we expect a continued demand for EEA workers on the Icelandic labour market. The main elements of uncertainty are further large scale investment and infrastructure projects, conditions on international financial markets and the currency exchange rate.

You can always see some of the available vacancies in Iceland on EURES websites: <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/> and www.eures.is. If you are looking for work in a specific profession you can also contact the EURES office and our advisers will help you get in contact with relevant companies.

A list of the most needed professions in the Icelandic labour market is regularly updated on our website: www.eures.is

Finding a job in Iceland

There are a number of ways to go about job searching, but it is a

good idea to start looking for a job before you move to Iceland. Visiting the EURES Job Mobility Portal is a wise first step: www.eures.europa.eu > search for a job. The portal contains great variety of job opportunities. The website also contains general information on living and working in Iceland and information about the current situation on the labour market. You will find complementary and more specific information on the Icelandic EURES website: www.eures.is. For all EURES job vacancies in Iceland, you are requested to fill out an on-line application form at www.vinnumalastofnun.is/eures. Make sure you fill out the form thoroughly to give the most accurate description of you and your qualifications. It's important that you list all previous work experiences and education, both in your home country and abroad. It is vital that your contact information is accurate and telephone numbers and e-mail addresses active. In case you have made a CV you can attach it to your form. Still you should fill in all the fields in the form as it enables EURES to find your application when a job that meets your qualification becomes available. The form must be filled out in English.

Please do not use ordinary mail as it is simply too slow.

When you have filled out and submitted the application form you are welcome to contact the Icelandic EURES advisers at eures@vmst.is to discuss your job opportunities. Your local EURES adviser can also assist you. To find your local EURES office, go to: <http://europa.eu.int/eures> > EURES advisers.

Below are some other ways to search for a job in Iceland. For best results, you may wish to use all of the methods listed below.

Private employment agencies [ráðningarþjónustur]: You may, free of charge, register with one or more employment agencies.

...ar dukist siostailin aratug



They will tell you what information you need to have readily available. For instance, a curriculum vitae/résumé, certificates, diplomas and references. Employment agencies are listed later in this brochure.

Read the [classified] advertisements section in the local newspapers The three largest papers in Iceland are *Morgunblaðið* (www.mbl.is), *Fréttablaðið* (www.visir.is) and *24 stundir* (www.mbl.is/mm/24stundir). The employment section (Atvinna) comes out on Sundays in *Morgunblaðið* and *Fréttablaðið*, but there are often daily advertisements. Sometimes it pays to put in your own advert for employment. Note that most job advertisements are in Icelandic.

Speculative applications: If you know what kind of business you want to work for you may want to send them your application with CV, call them directly or visit them and ask if there are any positions available. Also visit their website where open vacancies within the company are often listed. EURES can also help you find suitable enterprises.

Contact local branch of your professional or trade union (stéttarfélag): They have information on the current employment trends within your profession and can give advice on where to start looking.

Contacts: Tell everyone you know in Iceland that you are looking for employment. Word-of-mouth via family and friends often gives good results.

Are your diplomas valid in Iceland?

Before travelling to Iceland, it is wise to find out which jobs are open for persons with your qualifications. You can also have your diploma assessed for equivalence and recognition in Iceland.

The basic principle is that valid qualifications to practice a certain profession in your homeland are also valid in other EU/EEA coun-

tries. Higher degrees, 3 years of studies [BA, BSc, BS] and vocational studies with a secondary school education, should be recognized all over the EU/EEA.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for coordination of recognition procedures in Iceland. The ministry does not process all applications for recognition. Individual ministries handle the recognition for their respective spheres, for instance the Ministry of Health is responsible for recognition for medical and health professions. The best place to begin collecting the information you need is the website: www.menntagatt.is

An assessment of equivalence of your diplomas will make it easier for Icelandic employers to evaluate your knowledge and skills. It may also help you to get a better job with higher pay. However, lack of Icelandic language skills will limit your options for a qualified job considerably.

Europass

Europass is a standard folder that helps people to make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood around Europe. Europass consists of five documents: two documents (Europass curriculum vitae (CV) and Europass Language Passport) you can fill in yourself; and three other documents (Europass Certificate Supplement, Europass Diploma Supplement and Europass Mobility) filled in and issued by competent organizations. Europass is supported by a network of National Europass Centres, you will find a link to the Europass office in Iceland at www.eures.is. You can find more information about Europass and your local Europass Centre at: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

Curriculum Vitae/Résumé

In Iceland the usual practice is to enclose a resume/CV with your job application. The CV should preferably fill just a single page.

Most people attach a photo, and while that is optional it may help. While the details provided in CVs vary a great deal here is a list of the information that should be included. The information should be in reverse chronological order (most recent information first).

Personal details - name, address, telephone numbers, e-mail address, date of birth and marital status.

Education - this section contains your formal qualification. It should include when you studied, the name of the school, degree, and in what area your degree is.

Work experience – this is a very important part of your resume. Include a brief description of each job/position, name of the company and when you worked there.

Other qualifications – here you should mention your language skills; spoken and written. You can also describe your computer skills, whether and what kind of drivers licence you have and other relevant qualifications.

Positions of trust/personal interests – describe in a few lines non-professional interests and leisure activities. If you have lived abroad before by all means mention it.

References – it is very important to name at least two people that will give you a good referral. State the names, job title, telephone numbers and e-mails for these individuals. Contact your referrals and make sure you have their approval. You can find an example of an Icelandic CV at www.eures.is.

Cover Letter

When you send in a job application or a CV you should also include a cover letter. The letter should not be longer than one page. Your cover letter is an important marketing tool which highlights your most attractive qualifications as a potential employee. While you may use the same CV for every job you are applying for you should write a different cover letter for each job

you apply for. Consider the following when writing the letter:

- If you are responding to an advertisement be sure to read it carefully, and make sure you respond to what it asks for.
- Explain why you want this particular job.
- Make it clear to the recipient that you are familiar with the company, the required qualifications and furthermore, how you satisfy these.

The Job Interview

Most Icelandic employers using the EURES service make their recruitment decisions after few telephone conversations and e-mail correspondence with the applicants. For those that are already in Iceland when job hunting the norm is to be called in for an interview. Whether you are interviewed in person, over the phone or by e-mail, the interview provides a good opportunity to ask questions concerning aspects of the job. For instance, what is the job description? Does the job entail a lot of physical activity? How long is the workday? Starting and finishing times, lunch and coffee break schedules, etc. Also, ask what the salary is, both for normal working hours and overtime, and when salaries are usually paid. Do not be afraid or hesitant to ask questions. It is also a good idea to acquaint yourself with the company and its practices to be better prepared for the job interview.

The Job Application

For most unqualified and blue collar jobs, employers in Iceland use standardized application form to screen potential employees. You find these application forms on the job agencies' websites. The forms are usually only available in Icelandic except the EURES application form www.vinnumalastofnun.is/eures. Employers use the application to determine who they are going to call for a job interview so you should be careful to fill it out correctly.

JOB AGENCIES

EURES

EURopean **E**mployment **S**ervices

Engjateigi 11
Tel.: 554 7600

www.eures.is
eures@vmst.is

Vinumálastofnun

Public Employment Services

www.vmst.is

There are EURES Recruitment Officers
in all PES branches

Reykjavik area:

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmhb

West Iceland (Akranes):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmvl

Westfjords (Ísafjörður):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmvf

North West Iceland (Blönduós):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmve

North East Iceland (Akureyri):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmve

East Iceland (Egilsstaðir):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmal

South Iceland (Selfoss):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmsl

South West Iceland (Reykjanesbær):

www.vinnumalastofnun.is/svmsw

Capacent

(Vacancies for specialists)

Borgartún 27
Tel.: 540 1000

www.capacent.is
capacent@capacent.is

Ninukot

(Jobs in agri- and horticulture,
tourism and child care)

P.O. Box 12015, 132 Reykjavik
Tel.: 561 2700

www.ninukot.is
ninukot@ninukot.is /
eyglo@ninukot.is

Ráðningarþjónustan ehf.

Krókhálsi 5a

Tel.: 588 7700

www.radning.is
radning@radning.is/
ewa@radning.is

Vinna.is

Borgartúni 27
Tel.: 511 1144

www.vinna.is
radningar@vinna.is/
monika@vinna.is

Job.is (job agency on-line)

Tel.: 552 3335

www.job.is
nettengsl@job.is

Strá MRI

Suðurlandsbraut 6, 4th floor

Tel.: 588 3031

www.stra.is
stra@stra.is

HH Ráðgjöf

Fiskislóð 81

Tel.: 561 5900

hhr@hhr.is
www.hhr.is

Hagvangur

Skógarhlíð 12

Tel.: 520 4700

www.hagvangur.is
radningar@hagvangur.is

Ábendi ehf.

Bankastræti 5

Tel.: 517 5050

www.abendi.is
abendi@abendi.is

Starfatorg

Vacancies within the public sector

www.starfatorg.is

Starf.is

Hlíðasmári 15, Kópavogur

Tel.: 820 3799

www.starf.is
starf@starf.is

Mannval

Tel.: 564 4264

www.mannval.is
mannval@mannval.is

Student Employment Office

<http://studentamidlun.is/english>

Recruitment agency for

young people, 17-25 years old

Vinnumiðlun ungs fólks

Hinu húsinu, Pósthússtræti 3-5

Tel.: 411 5500

<http://vuf.is>
vuf@vuf.is

Reykjavík

Working for the municipality

www.reykjavik.is > Störf í boði

Talent ráðningar

<http://talent.is>

Hendur ehf

www.hendur.is

Taxes and workers rights



Everyone working in Iceland must pay taxes. The taxation system in Iceland is a PAYE system (Pay-As-You-Earn). Employers are required to calculate and deduct taxes from all salaries and wages paid out to employees. There is one main income tax bracket which in 2008 is 35.72%. All those with a tax card are entitled to a personal tax credit of 34.034 ISK per month. This means that usually about 27% of your wages goes to taxes after the personal discount. Income under 90.006 ISK a month is free of income tax. The Internal Revenue (Ríkisskattstjóri), issues tax cards. Applicants must have an identification number (kennitala), and be prepared to show personal identification with a picture. In order to have the right amount of tax deducted, you have to give your employer your tax card. To receive a tax card go to your local or inland tax office. You find their addresses at www.rsk.is > International > Addresses.

Example showing how tax is calculated

Salary for one month	150.000
4% deduction of pensions premium	6.000
Taxable income	144.000
Tax rate 35,72% x 144.000	51.432
Personal tax credit	34.034
Withholding tax.	17.398
Paid salary after taxes.	<u>126.602</u>

If you work on a farm, room and board is a part of your salary and is also subject to taxes. Other deductions from your salary are union dues 1% and pension premium 4% (the employer then pays an extra 8% to your pension fund).

For every year you work in Iceland you must fill out and submit a tax return. It is usually due in March each year. When leaving Iceland you are also expected to send an income report to the tax authorities a week before you leave. This is done because your final taxes must be calculated, in some cases there may be a partial refund. Final assessment takes place on the basis of the tax return in the end of July the year following the tax year. If your withholding tax was higher than your assessment you will get a refund, and if you did not pay enough you must pay the difference. If you have an agent in Iceland who can claim your tax refund or pay for you the residue, he must have a written permit from you to receive the payment. If you do not turn in a tax return, the tax authorities estimate your income and tax you accordingly. This esti-

Internal Revenue

(Ríkisskattstjóri)
Laugavegur 166
105 Reykjavík
Tel.: 563 1100
www.rsk.is



mation is usually high and can cost you dearly. To avoid a bill from the Icelandic tax authorities later on when you have returned home make sure your tax return is sufficient.

Most people nowadays do their tax return on-line and it is quite simple as a lot of the information is filled in advance by the authorities. Instructions are also available in many languages on the Internal Revenue webpage: www.rsk.is > international.

Those who need assistance with understanding or completing their tax return should contact their trade union or the Intercultural center. It is also possible to speak to the local tax authority or the Internal Revenue Directorate (Laugavegur 166). You can also seek the help of registered auditors (many Icelanders do so) but be aware that you need to pay for their service.

Workers rights and labour laws

In Iceland the collective agreements between unions and employer's associations are generally binding, which means that they also apply to non-union members. 90% of the labour market is covered by collective agreements. Wages and other terms of employment concluded in collective agreements are legal minimum terms. Salaries lower than what is stated in the collective agreement are illegal. The minimum wage depends on both education and work experience, e.g. the minimum wage for a qualified and experienced carpenter is much higher than for an unskilled worker. Therefore make sure that you have all papers on your education and/or work experience and that you are getting paid accordingly. You can find a link to your union where you find further information on terms of employment at www.asi.is.

The common practice is though that people negotiate individually with their future employers about their salaries and other terms of employment, these wages are called market wages because they are determined by supply and demand on the labour market.

Most people that work in the private sector earn closer to market wages than the union rates. According to the union rates the minimum salary for unskilled worker is 137.752 ISK (1,129 €, (May 2008)) per month for full time job. As you can see on the table below, the difference between union rates and market salaries can range significantly. Learning the Icelandic language substantially increases your career options and earning possibilities.

Union rates versus market wages (per month) – few examples

	Union rates	Market wages
Labourers	1.129 €	1.557 €
Tradesmen	1.701 €	2.644 €
Nurses	1.762 €	2.954 €*
Engineers	1.710 €	4.316 €**

1 € = 122 ISK – 13 May 2008

*Wages include regular overtime and shift differential.

**Engineers with masters degree and five years of work experience.

Below are some outlines of the basic rights of workers:

- **Contract of Employment** – Workers are entitled to a written job contract no later than two months after first day of employment. A verbal contract is legally binding the first two months. The contract should include the type and place of work, the hours, a short job description, wages, vacation pay, paydays, and the job ratios. It is illegal to work without a contract. You can find a job contract in English at www.eures.is.

- **Pay Statement (payslips)** – Collective agreements require that payment of wages must be accompanied with a written pay statement (payslip). Here is an example how a payslip should look like:

Launaseðill					
Pétur Pétursson		120385-2199	Útborguð laun kr. 104.805		
Efstabóli 5			greidd með ávísun		
102 Reykjavík			Launatímabil: Agúst 2006		
Launataxti	Launa- og frádráttarlíðir	Fjöldi eininga	Ein.verð	Fjárhæð kr.	Fjárhæð frá áramótum
011.00	Mánaðarlaun	1,00	122.383	122.383	367.149
011.00	Yfirvinna	10,00	1.377	13.770	34.425
	Orlof		10,17%	13.847	40.840
	Laun samtals			150.000	442.414
	Skattstofn			144.000	415.889
	Reiknaður skattur		36,72%	52.877	152.707
	Frá dregst persónuafsl.			29.029	87.087
	Afdregin staðgreiðsla			23.848	65.820
	Lífeyrissjóður			6.000	17.697
	Stéttarfélagsgjald			1.500	4.424
	Orlof lagt á reikning			13.847	40.840
	Frádráttur samtals			45.195	128.781
	Útborguð laun			104.805	313.633

- **Overtime** – A full time job is 173,3 hours per month or approximately 40 hours a week. If you work more than these hours you are entitled to overtime pay. For one hour overtime you get 80% extra on your regular pay. For example if you get 1000 ISK per hour, you get 1800 ISK per hour when you are working overtime.
- **Periods of rest** – Workers are entitled to a minimum consecutive period of 11 hours of rest during each 24-hour period and at least one day of rest per week immediately succeeding the daily minimum period of rest.

- **Vacation pay (orlofslaun)** – The general rule is that you are entitled to two vacation days for each month worked. In all wage contracts, there is a clause concerning holiday allowance. The holiday allowance should be calculated at the time of each wage payment. The minimum amount is 10.17% of your basic salary. There are four ways in which your vacation wages can be paid. The money can be paid each month into a special bank account (orlofsreikningur). You can keep track of the amounts as they are shown on your monthly payslip. Secondly, the money can be paid with the last paycheck you receive before you take your vacation. Thirdly, you receive your normal salary while on vacation. For those who have worked overtime over the year, extra vacation pay can both be paid into your account or be paid when your vacation starts. The fourth way is to get the money paid in one lump sum when your contract is over or when you stop working for that company. It is not advisable to have your vacation pay paid as a part of your monthly wages.

If you are in doubt or suspect that you are not being treated fairly by your employer you should turn to your union, the EURES office or the Inter-cultural Center.

- **Work during public holidays** – When you work during public holidays you should be paid overtime which is 80% extra to your daytime wages. For other major holidays there is yet another wage schedule (stórhátíðar kaup). If you work on Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, New Years Day, White Sunday/Pentecost or the 17th of June,



ask what your wages should be as they are sometimes considerably more. The same applies if you work after 12:00 pm on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve. It should be noted that the rules on working hours and salaries paid on legal and contractual holidays may be different for those who work on shifts. For shiftworkers, there may be a special shift bonuses paid in addition to the fixed salary. There may also be special conditions regarding winter vacations. Remember that the wage schedule agreed upon by your union only state the minimum wages and conditions, and therefore you can not legally be hired for lower wages than those stipulated in that agreement. On the other hand, it is possible for an individual to negotiate higher wages and better conditions.

- **Flat Wages (jafnaðarkaup)** – Some employers offer a flat wage, that is, they pay the same rate no matter whether you work, day, nights or weekends. Flat wages are not part of the minimum wage agreement package and are illegal. In most cases, it is slightly more than minimum wage for regular day wages, but not as much as the overtime rate. Individuals should be careful to ensure that the salary offered is in accordance with the minimum wage. Remember that it is illegal for employers to pay anything less than the minimum wage and it is, therefore, not advisable to accept any such offer. If after pointing this out to the employer, he does not change his offer, contact your union or The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (Alþýðusambandið).
- **Pension Funds** – In Iceland it is mandatory to pay to a pension fund. The employee pays a percentage of his

salary (4%) and the employer's contribution is 8%. Pension funds are transferable between EEA countries and are paid in the country of residence by the time of retirement. The employee may also choose to have a voluntary private pension saving (viðbótarsparnaður) in which the employee pays 4%, the employer pays 2%, and the state pays an additional 0.4% in the form of a tax discount. For information regarding pension funds visit: www.ll.is/?i=18

- **Sick Pay and Compensation for Accidents occurring while on the Job** – From the first day of employment, the employee has the right to receive daily wages for up to three months after a work related accident (vinnuslysaun). Work related injuries include injuries occurring while working, while running errands connected your job and also on the way to and from work. To receive sick pay you must have worked for at least one month for the employer. After one month the employee has the right to two paid sick days every month. The amount of sick days increases after 2, 3, and 5 years worked for the same employer. For further information see: www.tr.is/media/erlend-mal/English.pdf
- **Instructions on occupational health and safety in Iceland** – can be found in many languages on: [www.vinnueftirlit.is/is/utgafa/fraedslu- og_leidbeiningarit](http://www.vinnueftirlit.is/is/utgafa/fraedslu-og_leidbeiningarit)
- **Termination of Employment** – The Icelandic labour market is flexible when it comes to recruiting and laying

off staff. Both employers and workers are though subject to notice periods. The notice periods vary between unions and also depend on the length of employment. The general rule is that if you have worked less than three months the notice is one week, a month if you have worked for 3-6 months and 3 months if you have worked for longer than 6 months. Termination should always be accompanied by a written letter. Your union can give you more detailed information about their notice period rules. You find their addresses on:

www.asi.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-7/24_read-30

EXCEPTION – The above does not apply in the case of temporary employment with a specific period of employment specified in the contract. Termination cannot take place unless both parties agree. If you are dismissed before your contract is finished, contact your trade union.

- **Shop Steward or Union Confidant (trúnaðarmenn)** – Companies that employ five people or more usually have one employee who acts as a liaison officer between the union, the company's management and employees. This representative should have all the information concerning the rights and obligations of employees. He or she also sees to it that all rules are being adhered to. If you have any questions about your rights or obligations it is a good idea to discuss them with the union confidant at your workplace. If there isn't any such person that you know of you can contact your union, the EURES office or the Intercultural Center (Alþjóðahús) for assistance.

- **Public holidays** –There are 15 public holidays in Iceland. They are called “red days” as they are marked in red on Icelandic calendars.

For more information about labour laws contact the The Icelandic Confederation of Labour www.asi.is. The confederation has published brochures about workers' rights in 9 languages. These brochures as well as ASI's handbook, “Icelandic Labour Law, A Summary of Basic Rights and Obligations on the Private Labour Market” can also be found on www.eures.is.

Don't forget:

- ✓ To save all your pay slips and to make copies of your time card.
- ✓ That your union contract only insures your minimum rights.
- ✓ To request membership in your union in writing. Just because you are paying dues doesn't always mean that you are enrolled.
- ✓ That your union membership entitles you all kinds of service from the unions, such as legal assistance in labour disputes, vacation housing, reimbursements for language classes, professional training, and discounted prices at sports clubs.
- ✓ To look over your pay slip and to ask questions if you don't understand what the deductions are for. The usual deductions are for vacation pay, union dues, taxes and pension funds.
- ✓ Do not hesitate to ask questions regarding your rights. If you have inquired at work, called your union and you are still not sure, call The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (Alþýðusambandið) tel. 535 5600, The EURES office tel.: 554 7600, The Multicultural and Information Centre (Fjölmenningarsetur) tel.: 450 3000 or The Intercultural Center (Alþjóðahús) tel.: 530 9300.

Housing and cost of living



While it is of course best to secure accommodation before you move to Iceland this may not always be possible. If you need a temporary accommodation during your first days in Iceland, a guesthouse or youth hostel may be the best short term solution while you are looking for a more permanent housing. The cheapest options are the Youth Hostel www.hostel.is, Sundlaugavegur 34, 105 Reykjavik, tel.: (354) 553 8110 and the Salvation's Army Guesthouse www.guesthouse.is, Kirkjustræti 2, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: (354) 551 1106. The minimum price for one night is around 18 € (Summer 2008). For a listing of hotels and guesthouses in Iceland go to: www.gisting.is.

Rental Housing

The Icelandic market for privately owned homes and apartment flats is large, around 75-85% of the housing stock. The market for rentals is therefore limited. Rent in Reykjavik and the capital area is generally more expensive than in other areas. To find an apartment you may want to use all of the tips below.

- Put up advertisements – you may put up an ad saying that you are looking for a flat on billboards of universities, supermarkets, local kiosks, community centres, health care clinics and any other public notice boards. Also read the advertisements there and see if there is any accommodation available.
- Word-of-mouth – Tell everyone you know, even people you work with that you are looking for an apartment. Often apartments for rent are not advertised in the papers as they are rented through acquaintances before people get the chance to advertise them.
- Use the internet – The following websites that are connected to the newspapers have listings that are updated daily. These ads are all in Icelandic. Look for “Húsnæði í boði” on the following sites: www.visir.is, www.mbl.is, and www.vbl.is.
- Use online rental agencies – www.leiga.is, www.rentus.is and www.leiguibudir.is. Note that all these websites are in Icelandic.
- Advertise in the newspapers – for a small fee you can place an ad stating that you are looking for a room or an apartment.
- Use the rental agency Leigulistinn - in exchange for a monthly fee of 3.350 ISK this agency provides their customers with a current list of available housing for rent. Call everyday and ask if there are any new listings. Leigulistinn, Skipholt 50b, 105 Reykjavík, tel.: (354) 511 1600, www.leigulistinn.is.

When renting a house or a flat it is usual to pay a month in advance and a security deposit. You should always have a written, signed lease. For more information on leases or to print out a lease in English, Polish or Icelandic, go to:

<http://eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/forms/>



Rent Subsidies (Húsaleigubætur)

All those who are renting a flat, have signed a lease for at least 6 months, and are at least 18 years of age may apply for compensation. Application forms are in the reception areas of your local Social Service Office (þjónustumiðstöð). Each application is valid for one year, therefore, applications must be renewed annually. There are social service offices in all municipalities in Iceland and several offices in Reykjavik. For information about your Social Service Office call 411 1600. Or visit www.reykjavik.is > Social Advisory Services. Further information: www.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-skjol/rent.pdf

Note: If you rent in an industrial complex or some other form of housing that is not a legal residential area you will NOT receive rent subsidies.

Social Welfare Flats /Public Housing

It is possible to apply for rental housing through the municipal authorities. The term for these apartments is „félagslegar leiguíbúðir“ or social welfare flats. These apartments are intended for citizens who are experiencing socio- and economic hardships. There are certain conditions for getting this kind of housing and they can vary from one municipality to the next. The applicant must have had a legal residence in the municipality for a period ranging from 6 months to three years and there is also an upper limit for both income and assets. To apply visit your local Social Service office. Further information: www.reykjavik.is > Public Housing.

Buying a Flat

All those who have a residence permit may buy a flat in Iceland. For more information on purchasing a home contact your bank or

the State Housing Finance Fund (Íbúðalánasjóður). Their website has information in English, Polish, Serbian, Croatian and Danish.

Íbúðalánasjóður

Borgatúni 21
105 Reykjavík
Tel.: 800 6969
www.ils.is

You should never sign your name to anything unless you understand, completely what you are signing.

Cost of living

The minimum cost of living for one individual per month is around 110.000 ISK (902 € (May 2008)). You should expect to pay 50.000 ISK a month for renting a single room with access to kitchen and bathroom. For a small apartment you pay at least 80.000-90.000 ISK a month. The average price per square meter is about 1.500-1.800 ISK in the suburbs but higher in the downtown area.

The supermarkets “Bónus” and “Krónan” usually offer the lowest price on food. Here is a short list of average prices of some every day items in the capital area.

Bread (1 kg.)	1,30 €
Milk (1 l.)	0,69 €
Coffee (500 gr.)	2,12 €
Bread cheese (1 kg.)	8,75 €
Chicken (1 kg.)	3,25 €
Red apples (1 kg.)	1,30 €
Onion (1 kg.)	0,53 €
Beer (1 pint in winestore)	1,55 €
Big Mac meal (with drink and fries)	6,80 €
Hot dog from a stand	1,80 €
Bus ticket	2,30 €



Reykjavík area bus card:

3 months:	104,00 €
1 month:	45,90 €
Gasoline (1 l. 95 okt.)	1,30 €

Note: The numbers are from May 2008, 1 € = 122 ISK. Income, cost of living figures and the rate of Euro can vary from time to time.

Registering as a legal resident in Iceland



A citizen of an EEA/EU country (except for Romania and Bulgaria) may stay and work in Iceland for up to three months from arriving in the country, or stay for up to six months if seeking employment. In addition Swiss and Faroese nationals can work in Iceland without a work permit.

If you intend to stay longer than three months you must apply for a residence permit. It is recommended that you do so directly after arrival in Iceland or as soon as you have found a job. The

conditions for receiving a resident permit for an EEA citizen are that you can provide for yourself.

To apply for a residence permit go to The Directorate of Immigration (Útlendingastofnun) located at Skógarhlíð 6, 105 Reykjavík. You can also print out the application form and find related information at www.utl.is.

All EEA/EU citizens are free to set up a business in Iceland.

See: www.invest.is

The 30 EEA countries are:

Austria

Belgium

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Denmark

Estonia

Finland

France

Germany

Greece

Hungary

Iceland

Ireland

Italy

Latvia

Liechtenstein

Lithuania

Luxembourg

Malta

Netherlands

Norway

Poland

Portugal

Slovakia

Slovenia

Spain

Sweden

United Kingdom

(Bulgaria and Romania)*

*The Icelandic government has decided to apply temporary restrictions for citizens from Bulgaria and Romania. The restrictions will be in effect at least till 1st of January 2009. This means that Bulgarian and Romanian citizens need work permit to work in Iceland. Information on work permits: www.eures.is



When you apply for a residence permit you will need to submit the following:

- A completed application form for a residence permit signed by the applicant.

The Directorate of Immigration

Útlendingastofnun
Skógarhlíð 6
105 Reykjavík
Tel.: 510 5400
www.utl.is

- A valid passport, the validity of the passport must extend at least three months beyond the expected stay in Iceland.
- 1 passport-size photo
- Icelandic Personal ID Number - kennitala
- Verification of employment – a copy of your signed contract of employment. This should include the duration of the contract and whether it is a full or part-time employment.
- You will be asked to present proof of health insurance. This is done with an E-104 certificate issued from your home country. If you are not eligible for this insurance you may purchase a 6 month health insurance package at most private insurance companies in Iceland.
- Confirmation of school admission when applying for a residence permit for the purpose of studying.
- Certificate of custody when applying for a child younger than 18 years old.

When the application has been processed, the applicant will be informed by a written notification. The average processing time is about 60 days. The fee for a first permit of a person over the age of 18 is 4000 ISK and 2000 ISK for persons under the age of 18.

Your application will not be processed until it has been paid for. A first-time residence permit for an EEA/EU foreigner is usually issued for five years. However, if the job contract is for longer than three months, but shorter than one year, the permit is issued for the corresponding period. A first-time permit for a dependant family member of an EEA/EU foreigner will be issued for the same period of time as the wage-earner's permit.

EEA citizens do not need a work permit. Non-EEA citizens married to EEA citizens are also free to move to Iceland, but must have a work permit before taking up employment.

Residence Permits for Children under 18

Only legal parents or guardians may apply for children under 18 years of age. When applying for a residence permit for a child under 18, the applying parent or guardian must show proof of housing that meets requirements concerning the number of individuals in residence. The parent needs to show sufficient income to provide for himself and the child. A parent who applies for a residence permit for a child needs to earn at least. 82.015 ISK per month. Couples need to earn 150.152 ISK per month.

Children born in Iceland

Children of foreign citizens born in Iceland do not automatically receive a residence permit; this needs to be applied for after the birth of the child. It is very important to do this, especially in cases where the child is taken out of the country, e.g. on summer vacation to the parents country of origin. Children who have not attained citizenship must have a residence permit in order to re-enter the Schengen area.

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR RESIDENCE PERMITS BEFORE THEY EXPIRE.

What should I do first after entering Iceland?

1. Visit the EURES office: www.eures.is
There you get help and advice on finding a job and apartment, applying for an ID number (kennitala) and other necessary formalities.
2. When you have found a job:
 - Sign a contract of employment (see example on www.eures.is).
 - After receiving a kennitala you can open a bank account.
 - Apply for a tax card.
 - Apply for a residence permit.
 - Make sure that you know your rights. For instance are you being paid the correct wage?
3. When you find an apartment or place to live be sure and fill out a change of address form at the national Registry: www.thjodskra.is

If at any time you need help or information contact the EURES office (www.eures.is) or the Intercultural Center/Alþjóðahús (www.ahus.is).

Personal ID number (kennitala)

All people born in Iceland and all people legally residing in Iceland are issued an Icelandic personal identification number. This number, kennitala, is issued by the National Registry (Þjóðskrá). This personal ID number is a ten digit number. The kennitala is very important in Iceland and is widely used to identify people, for instance it is necessary for health care, banking, enrolling in schools, and even renting DVD's.

The kennitala is your identity number. Your kennitala is connected to you and all your personal information such as, your name, your legal address, your age, and your civil status.

Only an institution, business or employer may apply for your kennitala. Usually employers apply for a kennitala on behalf of their employees. If you have not yet found a job the EURES office can help you apply for a kennitala.

Whenever you move back to your native country or change

address, you must notify the National Registry by filling out the proper forms. All personal information connected to the kennitala is guarded by strict laws, regulated by the Data Protection Authority in Iceland.

The National Registry/Þjóðskrá

Borgartún 24

Tel.: 569 2900

www.thjodskra.is

What should you bring with you?

- A valid passport, which does not expire for at least 3 months past the period that you want to stay.
- Documents for transferring your health and social security rights. The E-104 certificate for health and sickness insurance if you are here for employment, or your European Health Insurance card if you come as a tourist as it is only valid for short term stay (3 months or less). If you do not bring these documents you are not insured the first 6 months of your stay and have to pay in full for all medical assistance and medicines.
- Diplomas and certificates proofing your education and/or vocational training. It is a good idea to translate your documents into English and/or Icelandic before coming to Iceland.
- Have your former employers or colleagues write references for you. The references need to be in English and/or Icelandic.
- Contact your local social security service and tax office to find out how working in Iceland will affect your status regarding taxes and benefits, and be sure to obtain the appropriate forms and certificates.
- Sufficient funds to get you started until your first salary. For instance money for accommodation, rent deposits, food, application processing fees for residence permit etc. (be aware that pay day is usually the first day of the month so it may be a while until your first pay check).
- Enough money for a return ticket in case you change your mind about staying in Iceland or you don't find a suitable job in Iceland.
- The E-301 form in case you happen to get unemployed after working for some time in Iceland.



Unemployment benefits and social security



Unemployment

Persons aged 16-70 years are entitled to unemployment benefits if they have been working legally for at least 3 months in Iceland. The premium to the Unemployment Insurance Fund is paid by your employer (Employers' contribution, Tryggingagjald). You are entitled to unemployment benefits if you are:

- unemployed
- living in Iceland (have a residence permit or are a citizen of one of the Nordic countries).
- have worked legally for at least 3 months during the last 12 months
- actively seeking a job
- capable of working and willing to take all general job offers

If you have worked in Iceland for three months in at least 25% position you have earned the right to minimum benefits, which entitles you to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the basic rate. With the E-301 form which is a statement of your work periods in your home country/ other EEA country, you can transfer your rights to unemployment and thus become eligible to full benefits, given that you have altogether worked full time for 12 months. It is therefore wise to take with you an E-301 form when coming to work in Iceland. From the 1st

of February 2008 the basic rate of unemployment benefit is 136.015 ISK per month. The first three months you will receive income based benefits which are 70% of your average wages the last six months but never more than 220.729 ISK per month.

If you are unemployed and receiving unemployment benefits in your home country you can come to Iceland to search for a job on benefits from your home country for up to three months. To transfer your benefits you must obtain an E-303 form at your local employment service. In the same way people who receive unemployment benefits in Iceland can apply for E-303 to search for work elsewhere in the EEA.

For more information visit: www.vinnumalastofnun.is or www.eures.is

Social Security

Before moving to Iceland you should contact the social security agency or health insurance programme where you were insured prior to your arrival to Iceland to obtain an E-104 form. The form will ensure you health insurance coverage in Iceland immediately on the transfer of residence. If you intend to stay for longer than three months in Iceland you need to apply for a residence permit from the Directorate of Immigration and submit an E-104 certificate to the SSSI (State Social Security Institute, Tryggingastofnun) as soon as possible. The SSSI then issues a



certificate of health insurance. A citizen of an EEA State who does not possess a residence permit, and is therefore not registered as a resident in Iceland, cannot enjoy health insurance coverage. In order to secure health insurance at the start of employment, the best course is to apply for and obtain a residence permit before coming to Iceland. Further information on residence permit visit: www.utl.is

Private insurance companies cannot issue E-certificates.

Social Security Institute

(Tryggingastofnun ríkisins)

Laugavegur 114-116

Tel.: 800-6044

www.tr.is

If you don't intend to stay for longer than three months you should bring with you the European Health Insurance Card. That ensures you health insurance coverage on a temporary stay up to three months.

Those who are covered by social security in Iceland are entitled when needed to hospitalization, general medical assistance by physicians and specialists, home nursing, x-ray exams, per diem sickness benefits, physiotherapy, medications, dental treatment for children, occupational injury insurance, invalidity pensions, old-age pensions, death grants and child pensions.

Employees who are temporarily posted in Iceland by their employers can continue to enjoy coverage under the public health insurance scheme of their home countries, subject to certain conditions, with all the applicable rights and obligations. Such employees can apply for an E-101 certificate from the insurance agency in the home country, together with an E-106/European health insurance card. This applies also to self-employed persons. The certificates need to be presented to the SSSI for registration.

If you can not obtain the necessary documents from your home country (E-104/101), you can buy a private health insurance to cover the six months period until you get coverage by the public insurance system. See for example: www.tryggingamidstodin.is

For further information please consult the SSSI website, www.tr.is.

Parental Leave Fund

(Fæðingarorlofsjóður)

Strandgata 1, 530 Hvammstangi

Tel.: 582 4840

www.faedingarorlof.is

Parental leave

Parents who have been working in Iceland for at least six months prior to the birth of their child are entitled to payments from the Parental Leave Fund for up to 9 months. Both the father and the mother have a three months period exclusively to his/her disposal and the three months left the parents can arrange between themselves at their own convenience.

Payments from the Parental Leave Fund are dependent on your average salaries during a 12 months period that ends 6 months before the birth of the child. Payments during parental leave are 80% of your past salaries, though never less than 103.869 ISK¹ a month given you have been working 50% or more. The payments never exceed 535.700 ISK a month. Parents who have had residence in Iceland for 12 consecutive months, but have been outside the labour market or studying are also entitled to certain minimum payments following the birth of a child. Full time students are entitled to 103.869 ISK a month and those who have not been working outside the home or in less than 25% job are entitled to 45.324 ISK. The Directorate of Labour administers the payments from the Parental Leave Fund. Further instructions and applications are available in English on: www.faedingarorlof.is

Working in Iceland with a family back home

Those working in Iceland and have spouse and children back home are entitled to child benefits. To be granted the benefits you have to send in an E-411 (obtained from the Social Security Institution in your home country) to the Inland Revenue Office in the municipality where you are staying in Iceland. (For the office in Reykjavik see: www.skr.is). You also have to submit information about your spouses income from the tax authorities in your home country.

¹All amounts apply to year 2008.

Occupational Injury Insurance

If you get injured in the course of work, such injury is normally covered by occupational injury insurance. The same amount applies to all persons and is decided by law. Invalidity pensions and death grants in respect of accidents are paid, as are child pensions. Also, medical and medicinal costs etc., already paid by the injured person can be reimbursed. Those who have so requested in their tax returns are also insured against injury sustained during housework. Further information can be found at: www.tr.is/media/erlend-mal/English.pdf

Health Care

Iceland is divided into health care regions, each with their own primary health care centres, some of which are run jointly with the local community hospital. The primary health care centres are responsible for general treatment and care, examination, home nursing as well as preventive measures such as family planning, maternity care and child health care and school health care. The health care centres are open from 8 – 16 Monday to Friday for those who have made an appointment. From 16 – 18 doctors are available for consultation without an appointment but you can expect a somewhat higher fee. This service is open to all regardless of insurance. Those that can not show proof of insurance will though pay higher fees. To find the health care centre closest to your home look for “Heilsugæslustöð” in the phonebook. If you are in the capital area you can also find the information at <http://www.heilsugaeslan.is/?PageID=14>.

For medical problems that arise after closing time of the health care centres you can use a service called “Læknavakt”, located at Smáratorgi 1, Kópavogur, tel.: 1770 or you can call 848 2600 if you are close to Akureyri.

Læknavakt is open on a walk-in basis from 17:00-23:30 weekdays, and from 09:00-23:30 on weekends and holidays.

The service charges higher fees for its service than the health care centres as it is an after-hours service.

Telephone lines are open for advice and house call requests between 17:00-08:00 on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends and holidays.

According to recent laws concerning patients' rights, individuals who are covered by national health insurance, and do not speak Icelandic as their first language or mother tongue are entitled to an interpreter at no charge to themselves. Note that usually you have to request this service in advance.

Emergency services

Emergency and trauma service (Slysa- og bráðamóttaka) is located at the National University Hospital (Landspítali-háskólasjúkrahús) in Fossvogur, just off Bústaðarvegur in 108 Reykjavík.

If you are not sure if your injury is an emergency you may call the hospital at 543 2000 and ask them for advice. If you need immediate assistance or an ambulance then call 112. Be prepared to state your name, what the problem is and your location.

Health Center for uninsured individuals, tourists and employees

All individuals staying in Iceland without having gained the right to health insurance can visit the Health Center (Heilsuverndarstöðin). Everybody who has resided in Iceland for 6 months or more are insured, and citizens of the EEA should be insured from their arrival given that they bring with them the E-104 certificate. Uninsured patients always pay a higher fee for health care service.



Please note that this is only a short term alternative, after a six months stay all immigrants have gained full access to the Icelandic health care system. Heilsuverndarstöðin, Barónsstígur 47, 101 Reykjavík, tel.: 458 9060, 2nd floor entrance off Barónsstígur www.heilsuverndarstodin.is.

**Emergency Telephone
number**

For Police, Ambulance or Fire:

call 112

Education in Iceland



A fundamental principle of Icelandic education is that everyone should have equal opportunities to acquire an education, regardless of sex, economic status, residential location, religion, possible handicaps, and cultural, social or ethnic background.

The education system is divided into four levels:

Pre-school (leikskóli) - for children between the ages of 2 and 6.

Primary school (grunnskóli) - 6-16 years of age.

Upper-secondary school (framhaldsskóli) - For those who are 16-20 years of age or anyone that has completed compulsory education or has turned 18 years of age.

Higher education or university (háskóli) – For those that have completed upper-secondary school and have a matriculation examination “stúdentspróf” or equivalent.

Pre-schools

You can apply for a pre-school placement for your child when the child is 6 months old. Applications can be found at the pre-schools, the pre-school head office at Fríkirkjuvegur 1 or online at <http://rafraen.reykjavik.is/pages/umsoknumleikskola/>. Parents pay a monthly fee to have their child in pre-school. Pre-schools are to be available to all children who have not reached compulsory school age. Very few pre-schools accept children less than one year old, and the youngest children are usually 2 years

old, although there are some exceptions. In municipalities where there may be insufficient room to accommodate all applicants, the children of single parents and students are often given priority. Until you get your child placed in a pre-school you can find a day care mother (dagmamma). Day care mothers take care of children in their own homes and this service is administered by the social services of the local municipal authority.

For more information go to your local pre-school, your local service centre or contact the main office in your community. Information about pre-schools for parents of foreign origin is also available on: <http://reykjavik.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2600>

Office of Education Reykjavik

Fríkirkjuvegi 1

Tel.: 411 7000

www.leikskolar.is

menntasvid@reykjavik.is

Hafnarfjörður

Þjónustuver bæjarins (city info)

Strandgata 6

Tel.: 585 5500

www.hafnarfjordur.is

Kópavogur

Fannborg 2, 2nd Floor

Tel.: 570 1600

helgam@kopavogur.is

Primary School

Primary school is compulsory and free of charge. According to Icelandic law all students with a different mother tongue than Icelandic have the right to two hours a week of special teaching in Icelandic while they are getting a grasp of the language as the language of instruction is Icelandic. In some areas of the country there are reception schools (móttökudeild). In Reykjavík these schools offer one-year classes for students from 9 – 15 years of age, who do not have enough knowledge of Icelandic to enable them to attend regular classes. After this students may attend their local school where they may still receive extra help if needed. For more information about special reception schools contact your local school office or social services in your neighbourhood. Information brochure on elementary schools for parents of foreign origin is available in many languages:

<http://reykjavik.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-1493>

Upper secondary schools

Education at the upper-secondary level is free but students pay a registration fee and the cost of textbooks. Students in vocational education also pay a material fee. Education at this level is not compulsory but around 90% of all students continue to upper-secondary school. After matriculation examination (stúdentspróf) they have the right to enter university. There are about 40 upper-secondary schools in Iceland. There are no student loans available for students in upper secondary schools. There is however tax discounts available to parents. This discount is not automatic like

child benefits. Parents must fill out the appropriate information on their tax forms. The amount of the discount is affected by the student's income. For more information about this call the tax office (Ríkisskattstjóri, Laugavegi 166) at 563 1100 or check their homepage at www.rsk.is. Parents are obligated by law to financially support their children until they are 18 years of age. Students between the ages of 18-20 years old who are studying or learning a trade may apply for an extension of support. The student makes this request at the SSSI.

Higher education

The University of Iceland runs the Office of International Education, which is a service organization for all higher education institutions in Iceland. For information regarding higher education please visit www.ask.hi.is or send an e-mail to ask@hi.is. You can also visit their office at Háskólatorg University of Iceland, it's open from 10.00 to 12.00 am. and 12:30 -16:00 pm. (tel.: +354 525 4311).



Icelandic for foreigners



The following schools offer Icelandic lessons for foreigners:

Mímir-símenntun ehf.

Grensásvegur 16a. Skeifan 8, Öldugata 23, Þönglabakki 4 [Mjódd].
Tel.: 580 1800, www.mimir.is, mimir@mimir.is
Evening and day classes. Private lessons and special classes for those speaking Polish, Russian, Scandinavian, Thai, Vietnamese and Eastern European languages. Mímir also offer work related Icelandic lessons in the work place.

Framvegis

Miðstöð um símenntun (The comprehensive college)

Fjölbrautarskólinn v. Ármúla, Ármúla 12
Tel.: 5814914, www.fa.is/framvegis/

Alþjóðahús (The Intercultural Centre)

Hverfisgata 18, tel.: 530 9300, www.ahus.is, info@ahus.is
Icelandic lessons with an emphasis on daily language, speech and communication. They also offer work related Icelandic, Icelandic for parents and courses on writing and reading Icelandic as well as teaching for specific language groups and specially designed courses for the work place. Day and evening courses. For more information call 530 9300 or send an e-mail to info@ahus.is

Betri árangur (Better Results)

Suðurlandsbraut 6, tel.: 897 7995 ik@mk.is
Icelandic courses with special emphasis on personal service and the needs of each student. There is also a course where parents may attend with their children. Small groups.

Námsflokkar Hafnarfjarðar

Miðstöð símenntunar í Hafnarfirði

(Center for Continuing Education in Hafnarfjörður)

Skólabraut 1, tel.: 585 5860

www.namsflokkar.hafnarfjordur.is

For beginners and more advanced. Classes are taught both in Námsflokkar and in the work place.

Endurmenntun Háskóla Íslands

(Continuing Education - University of Iceland)

Dunhagi 7, 107 Reykjavík, tel.: 525 4444, www.endurmenntun.is, endurmenntun@hi.is Courses are divided between written language, grammar and spoken language.

Landnemaskólinn

(The Settlers School)

Courses organised by the trade union Efling. For information, call Efling tel.: 510 7500, efling@efling.is or Ingibjörg Stefánsdóttir at Mímir-símenntun tel.: 588 7222 or www.mimir.is

Kvöldskóli Kópavogs (The Kópavogur Evening School)

Located in Snælandsskóli on Furugrund, 200 Kópavogur, tel.: 564 1507, 564 1527, www.kvoldskoli.kopavogur.is, kvoldskoli@kopavogur.is

On-line Courses

www.vefskoli.is Námsflokkar Reykjavíkur offer distance learning on the internet.
Tel.: 551 2992, gigja@inwind.it

www.icelandic.hi.is Icelandic Online. Free Icelandic lesson on the internet. Managed by Hugvísindadeild Háskóla Íslands [the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Iceland].

Outside the capital area

Alþjóðastofan (Akureyri Intercultural Centre)

Rósenborg, Skólastígur 2, 600 Akureyri. Tel.: 460-1234, astofan@akureyri.is, www.menntasmidjan.is 5 levels of Icelandic for foreigners. Specializes in courses for foreign women.

Fjölbrautarskóli Norðurlands Vestra (Junior College Northwest Iceland)

Skagfirðingabraut 21, 550 Sauðárkrúkur, tel.: 455 8000, www.fnv.is, fnv@fnv.is

Þekkingarsetur Þingeyinga (Húsavík Academic Centre)

Garðarsbraut 19, 640 Húsavík, tel.: 464 0444, www.hac.is, hac@hac.is

Fræðslunet Austurlands (Centre for Adult Education Eastern Iceland)

Tjarnarbraut 39e, 700 Egilsstaðir, tel.: 471 2838, 892 2838, www.fna.ism, fna@fna.is

Fræðslunet Suðurlands (Centre for Adult Education Southern Iceland)

Tryggvagata 25, 800 Selfoss, tel.: 480 8155. www.sudurland.is/fs/, fraedslunet@sudurland.is

Miðstöð símenntunar á Suðurnesjum (Centre for Adult Education Southwest Iceland)

Skólavegur 1, 230 Keflavík, tel.: 421 7500, www.mss.is, mss@mss.is

Símenntunarmiðstöðin á Vesturlandi (Centre for Adult Education Western Iceland)

Bjarnarbraut 8, 310 Borgarnes, tel.: 437 2390, www.simenntun.is

Fræðslumiðstöð Vestfjarða (Centre for Adult Education, Westfjords)

Suðurgata 12, 400 Ísafjörður, tel.: 456 5025, www.frmst.is, frmst@frmst.is

Viska: fræðslu og símenntunarmiðstöð Vestmanneyja (The Educational Centre at the Westmen Islands)

Strandvegur 50, 900 Vestmannaeyjar, tel.: 481 1950. www.viska.eyjar.is

Important Contact Information



EURES European Employment Services

Engjateigi 11

Tel.: 554 7600

EURES Advisers: Dröfn Haraldsdóttir, Valdimar Ólafsson, Þóra

Ágústsdóttir & Árni Steinar Stefánsson

www.eures.is

eures@svm.is

The Intercultural Centre

(Alþjóðahús)

Hverfisgata 18

101 Reykjavík

Tel.: 530 9300

www.ahus.is

info@ahus.is

Multicultural and information centre

(Fjölmenningarsetur)

Árnagata 2-4

400 Ísafjörður

Tel.: 450 3090

www.fjolmenningarsetur.is

info@mcc.is

Office of International Education

(Alþjóðaskrifstofa háskólastigsins)

Neshagi 16

107 Reykjavík

Tel.: 525 4311

www.ask.hi.is

ask@hi.is

The Educational Gateway

National reference point for assessment and recognition for vocational qualification

(Menntagátt)

<http://menntagatt.is>

menntagatt@menntagatt.is

(no visiting address)

Government and municipality agencies:

Directorate of Labour

(Vinnumálastofnun)

Hafnarhús v/Tryggvagötu

150 Reykjavík

Tel.: 515 4800

www.vinnumalastofnun.is

Directorate of Immigration

(Útlendingastofnun)

Skógarhlíð 6

105 Reykjavík

Tel.: 510 5400

www.utl.is

Statistics Iceland

(Hagstofa Íslands)

Borgartún 21a, 150 Reykjavík

Tel.: 528 1000

www.hagstofa.is

National Registry

(Þjóðskrá)

Borgartún 24, 150 Reykjavík

Tel.: 569 2900

www.thjodskra.is

Occupational, Health and Safety Authority

(Vinnueftirlitið)

Bíldshöfði 16

110 Reykjavík

Tel.: 550 4600

www.vinnueftirlit.is/is/utgafa/fraedslu_og_leidbeiningarrit

The State Social Security Institute

(Tryggingastofnun Ríkisins)

Laugavegur 114

105 Reykjavík

Tel.: 560 4400

www.tr.is

The Ministry of Social Affairs

(Félagsmálaráðuneytið)

Hafnarhús v/Tryggvagata

150 Reykjavík

Tel.: 545 8100

<http://government.is/>

eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/immigrants/english

The Ministry of Health and Social Security

(Heilbrigðis og tryggingamálaráðuneyti)

Laugavegur 116

150 Reykjavík

Tel.: 545 8700

<http://government.is/>

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

(Menntamálaráðuneytið)

Sölvhólsgrata 4

101 Reykjavík

Tel.: 545 9500

<http://government.is/>

Directorate of Customs

(Ríkistollstjóraembættið)

Tryggvagata 19

150 Reykjavík

Tel.: 560 0300

www.tollur.is

Directorate of Internal Revenue

(Ríkisskattstjóri)
Laugavegur 166
150 Reykjavík
Tel.: 563 1100
www.rsk.is

Board of the Unemployment Insurance Fund

(Stjórn atvinnuleysisstryggingasjóðs)
Hafnarhúsið v/Tryggvagötu
150 Reykjavík
Tel.: 511 2500

Reykjavik Social Services

(Félagspjónustan í Reykjavík, þjónustumiðstöðvar)
www.reykjavik.is
> English
> Social Advisory Services

Unions:

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour

(Alþýðusamband Íslands)
Sættúni 1
108 Reykjavík
Tel.: 535 5600
www.asi.is

Federation of Skilled Construction and Industrial Workers

(Samiðn)
Borgartún 30,
105 Reykjavík
Tel.: 535 6000
www.samidn.is
postur@samidn.is

Efling Union

(Efling stéttarfélag)
Sættún 1
105 Reykjavík
Tel.: 510 7500
www.efling.is
efling@efling.is

The Commercial Workers' Union

(VR, Virðing—réttlæti)
Kringlunni 7
103 Reykjavík
Tel.: 510 1700
www.vr.is
vr@vr.is

SFR Union of Public Servants

(SFR-Stéttarfélag í almannaþjónustu)

Grettisgötu 89

105 Reykjavík

Tel.: 525 8340

www.sfr.is

Association of Academics

(Bandalag háskólamanna)

Lágmúla 7

108 Reykjavík

Tel.: 581 2090

www.bhm.is

NGO'S**Icelandic counselling and information centre for survivors of sexual violence**

(Stígamót)

Hverfisgötu 115

105 Reykjavík

Tel.: 562 6868 / 800 6868

www.stigamot.is

Women's Shelter

(Kvennaathvarfið)

PO Box 1486,

Box 121

Tel.: 561 1205, 800 6205

www.kvennaathvarf.is

kvennaathvarf@kvennaathvarf.is

The Icelandic Red Cross

(Rauði Kross Íslands)

Efstaleiti 9,

103 Reykjavík

Tel.: 570 4000

central@redcross.is

www.redcross.is

Alcoholics Anonymous

(AA Samtökin á Íslandi)

Tjarnagata 20

101 Reykjavík

Tel.: 551 2010

www.aa.is

Foreningen Norden I Island

(Norræna félagið)

Óðinsgata 7

101 Reykjavík

Tel.: 551 0165

www.norden.is

Do you need information concerning the Icelandic society?



MULTICULTURAL AND
INFORMATION CENTRE

FJÖLMENNINGARSETUR

We answer in your language

English: 450 3090 / 450 3000

Polski: 470 4708

-Telegazeta w j. Polskum na stronie - 138

Srpski/Hrvatski: 470 4709

-Vijesti na srpskom/hrvatskom; strana - 139

ភាសាខ្មែរ: 470 4702

EURES or EUROpean Employment Services role is to facilitate and promote the free movement of workers to counter regional imbalances in the EEA. All 30 countries of the European Economic Area + Switzerland take part in EURES through their Public Employment Services. EURES has a human network of more than 700 EURES advisers across Europe. The partnership is coordinated by the European Commission. EURES started its operation in Iceland in 1995 under the Directorate of Labour. There are currently three EURES advisers and one EURES manager operating in Iceland.

Dröfn Haraldsdóttir, Þóra Ágústsdóttir, Valdimar Ólafsson and Árni Steinar Stefánsson, The Icelandic EURES team.
Reykjavík, May 2008



PRENTVINGINSLA: LETURPRENT 2008



EURES IS
Engjateigur 11
105 Reykjavík

EUROpean Employment Services, www.eures.is

Directorate of labour
Hafnarhúsinu
Tryggvagötu
150 Reykjavík



**VINNIMÁLA
STOFNUN**