



Ungir  
Umhverfissinnar

# HANDBOOK



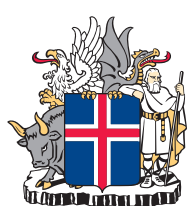
## FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY



**Ungir  
Umhverfissinnar**



**The Icelandic Youth  
Environmentalist  
Association**



**Government of Iceland**  
Ministry of Education,  
Science and Culture

**Special thanks**

We want to thank everyone who has helped with developing and proof-reading this handbook, especially the organization's Executive Board and members.

Additionally we would like to thank the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for funding the project.

**Authors:**

**Pétur Halldórsson & Þorgerður María Þorbjarnardóttir**

**Design and Layout:**

**Axel F Friðriks and Eyvindur Einar Guðnason**

**Translated from original Icelandic version by:**

**Pétur Halldórsson and Þorgerður María  
Þorbjarnardóttir**

**English translation, FIRST EDITION, AUGUST 2020**

**ISBN: 978-9935-9538-1-0**

[Link to original Icelandic Version](#)

**(ISBN: 978-9935-9538-0-3)**

<http://www.umhverfissinnar.is/>

## NAVIGATION INSTRUCTIONS

PREVIOUS PAGE

NEXT PAGE

← NAVIGATE CHAPTERS  
WITH LEFT PANEL

SELECT CHAPTER  
IN TABLE OF CONTENTS TO NAVIGATE

● LINK TO GLOSSARY

● LINK TO WEBSITE

CLICK ON A PAGE NUMBER  
IN GLOSSARY TO NAVIGATE BACK

# 01

## Introduction

Dear Reader

Who is this Handbook for?

What is Environmental  
Advocacy?



# 02

## Governance and Nature in Iceland

Who Influences the Relationship  
Between Society and  
Nature?

Mapping the Relationship  
Between Society and Nature

Laws and Rules Relating to  
Nature

Democratic Legitimacy

Iceland in an International  
Context

# 03

## The Icelandic Youth Environmental Association

Characteristics of the  
Organization

Role Within Governance  
Networks

# 04

## Advocacy

Prioritization

Facts and Perspectives

Public Participation

Participation in the Public  
Discourse

Environmental Advocacy and  
Global Cooperation

Closing Remarks

# 01

## Introduction





**HIGHLIGHTS** —

- Handbook's Purpose
- Examples of What the Handbook Includes
- Advocacy Explained Briefly

## Dear Reader

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association (Ungir umhverfissinnar) was established in 2013 as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and has since then been a platform for young people to participate in environmental advocacy, i.e. promote a better relationship between society and nature. This handbook is based on experience which we, the authors, have gained through participation in the organization's activities. *It is important to keep in mind that the approach and methodology presented here will evolve over time.* Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that this handbook does not include instructions on how to carry out individual projects, but is rather an overview of the general approach we have adopted to positively influence the relationship between society and nature.

### Examples of what can be found in the handbook:

- ~ How to write public comments
- ~ How young people can increase their influence and credibility when interacting with **governments**
- ~ Information about **governance networks** and democratic legitimacy

### Examples of what can not be found in the handbook:

- ~ What is right or wrong in how society interacts with nature
- ~ How consumers can find sustainable products
- ~ How businesses can implement corporate responsibility

## Who is this Handbook for?

The concept of advocacy can to many people seem confusing or unattractive, and it is easy to write off as too complicated for any further attention. This handbook is intended to make advocacy more accessible and understandable to young people who want to have a good future and push for systematic change in favour of the coexistence of society and nature. Everyone must be able to participate in the discussion about how mankind deals with these challenges and it is particularly important to include the perspectives of young people. This is because of the simple fact that young people will be most affected by how society conducts itself today within the limits of our planet. Mankind is experiencing an existential crisis because we have managed to threaten our own wellbeing by exploiting nature too aggressively, and therefore endangering the foundation of all of life's benefits. Clean air and water are no longer freely available, food security is at risk or lacking, and access to

nature is limited. This prevents us from satisfying our basic needs; physical, mental and spiritual. We have to remember that mankind is not the only species on the planet and our actions affect all of nature, both living and geological.

However, it can be difficult and complicated for young people to voice their opinion and have an influence on the decision making within society which affects nature. According to a study conducted by the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association about **Youth Engagement in Land-use Planning** (Annual report 2018-2019, Annex III), young people have little awareness, knowledge or experience in public participation during the process of land-use planning\*. Despite this lack of engagement, the study shows that a large proportion of young people have an interest and will to influence land-use planning and this handbook is our way to respond to that need.

## What is Environmental Advocacy?

To answer this question, we must remember that the role of environmental **non-governmental organizations** (ENGOS) is to promote a better relationship between society and nature. This can be achieved with methods such as education, awareness-raising and by encouraging or pressuring governments and businesses to act more responsibly. Nature cannot speak for itself so we must care for its interests, just as when the rights and interests of children are safeguarded. We must also realize that our own interests are dependent on those of nature. This dialogue, which to a large degree involves interacting with governments, is what advocacy is all about. Advocacy can be a challenging subject and it is often difficult to make an assumption about what exactly is good for nature and society. Often these interests seem to collide and solutions must consequently be well thought-out. Logic and compassion must be continuously applied to make judgements about the best course of action at each given time. The aim is to keep interventions with nature at a minimum, while providing all inhabitants of the planet with good living conditions. The biggest challenge is how to interweave many different interests so none of them get left behind. Good advocacy is based on insight and an understanding of various topics of nature and society, such as ecology, social-sciences, **infrastructure** and **politics**.

★

In the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's study on Youth Engagement in Land-use Planning, a survey was conducted among young people in Iceland about their knowledge, experience and interest regarding the topic.


Participants included 924 young people from all major regions of Iceland and 30 out of 38 upper-secondary level schools. The age-range was 15-30 years old, with most participants aged 16-19 years old (843).

- ~ 35% were aware of their right to submit public comments regarding land-use planning.
- ~ 15% knew or had some idea about how/where to submit public comments.
- ~ 3% had previously submitted public comments.
- ~ 42% stated they would have submitted public comments previously, if they had known how to do it.



# **Governance & Nature in Iceland**





The purpose of this chapter is to describe the context in which Icelandic environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) operate in while pursuing their goal of positively influencing the relationship between society and nature. This includes describing and mapping the various stakeholders involved, including the government or “the system”, and enables anyone to have influence in a more efficient and effective manner. The handbook should be particularly useful for environmental advocates in Iceland, but can also serve as an example for people and organizations in other regions. Later chapters describe the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association’s position in this context (chapter 3), and the approach the organization has used so far based on this framework (chapter 4).

20  
MINUTES TO READ · MINUTES TO READ · MINUTES TO READ

## HIGHLIGHTS

Who Influences the Relationship Between Society and Nature

Environmental Laws and Rules in Iceland

Iceland in an International Context



## 1. Who Influences the Relationship Between Society and Nature?

Everyone can in some way influence the relationship between society and nature. Students can discuss recycling with their peers, **members of parliament** can make **laws** on **nature conservation**, and businesses can become carbon neutral. The influence of different individuals and actors varies, both by its nature and size of impact, but all participants comprise a larger collective whole; society, which has many different effects on nature.

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association is one part of this collective whole, but in order to be able to perform its role successfully, it is necessary to be aware of who else is involved and what characterizes their influence. We must be able to map which different actors influence the relationship between society and nature, what resources they have and what effect their actions have on the overall picture. This makes it easier to find partners, coordinate actions and accomplish the drastic changes we need in order to live in harmony with nature as a global community.

Other topics can be mapped in a similar manner, such as education and **gender equality**. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that all topics are connected in some way, which means that advocacy has a greater impact in proportion to the number of topics we account for. Once we understand how various topics are interconnected, such as all of the **m Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, it becomes easier to recognize and promote holistic solutions.

## 2. Mapping the Relationship Between Society and Nature

### 2.1 The Sectors of Society

**Governments** are among the many actors in society, and usually have a supervisory role regarding society's various aspects. In Iceland, individual **ministers** are responsible for certain topics, such as the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. This does however not mean that the Government controls everything regarding each aspect of society. Instead, the different aspects are in fact controlled by complex interactions between many different groups and individuals. As an example, culture and arts commonly exhibit this limitation of the governments' role, where individual citizens can have a much greater and more versatile influence, e.g. by participating in music bands and TV-production. In comparison, the role of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, is usually much more indirect compared to that of the artists.

To describe these complex interactions in the most simplistic manner, people often refer to the three sectors within society; the public sector (government), the **private sector** (businesses) and the **third sector (non-governmental organizations)**. The public sector has the formal powers of government, the private sector has economic- and commerce-based influence, and the third sector's influence stems from the participation of individuals. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very diverse and everyone has the right to found and join organizations. Examples of different kinds of NGOs include environmental organizations, residents associations, workers unions and sports

clubs. This division of society into three sectors is nonetheless a very crude simplification, which doesn't explain or describe all the nuances of society, such as when an individual participates in two or all three sectors, often in different contexts.

All three sectors can be described in more detail, for example by whether a group or organization is at the community, national or international level. These characteristics make a big difference, and to give a few examples; Icelandic municipalities are very different from the United Nations, neighborhood stores are very different from international companies, and the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association is very different from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

### 2.2 Governance of Society's Relationship With Nature

The manner in which society interacts with nature can have diverse consequences, which can often threaten people's health and livelihood. For this and other reasons, the topic has become one of many where society has collectively agreed to impose rules and restrictions on how members of society can interact with nature. As an example, waste can only be disposed of in a certain manner at defined locations, and carbon emissions are subject to limits. The process by which these kinds of rules and guidelines within society are formed and implemented is called governance. Governance as a concept can be understood in slightly different ways depending on the context. In a narrow sense it can refer to actions of the Government, such as the making and implementation of laws and **regulations**. In a broader sense, however, it can be understood as a combination of diverse communications

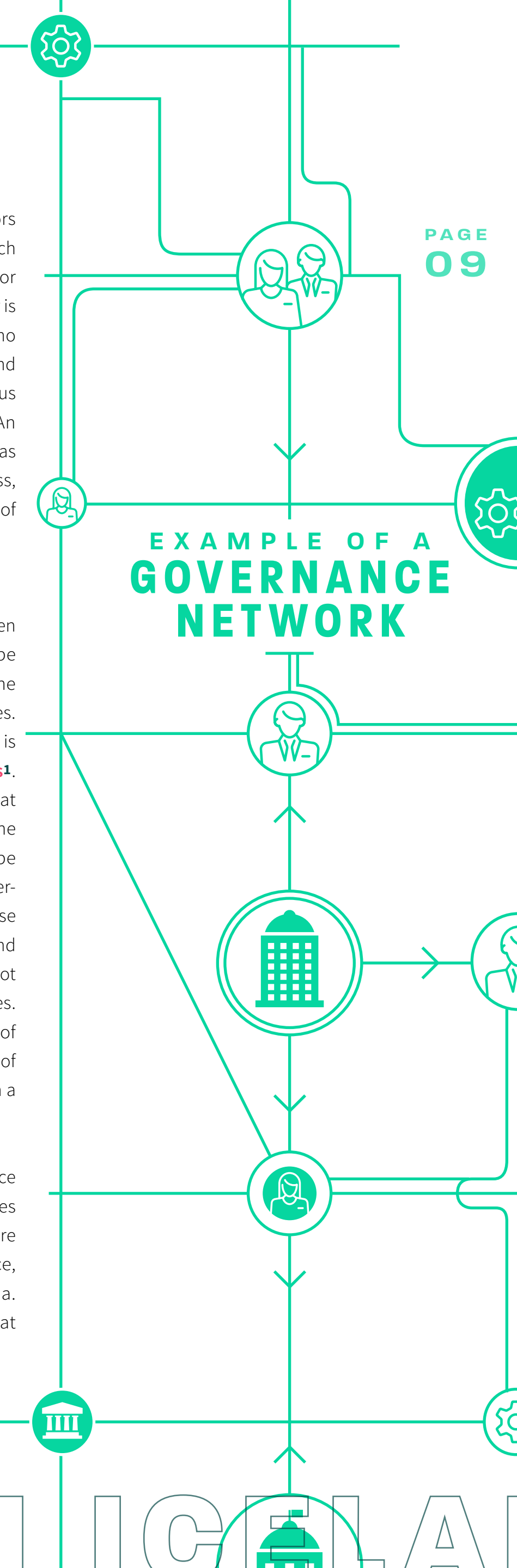
and processes between individuals and actors across society, both formal and informal, which influence a given topic in either a concrete or indeterminate manner. In other words, society is governed by many actors apart from those who possess formal authority (the Government), and it is important to be aware of who these various actors are and how their influence varies. An understanding of complex interactions such as these is sometimes called situational awareness, and is an invaluable asset for practitioners of advocacy.

### 2.3 Governance Networks

The overall picture of the relationship between society and nature is complex, and it can be difficult to define which actors influence the topic and how they interact among themselves. A useful approach to address this challenge is based on the idea of **governance networks**<sup>1</sup>. This approach is based on the premise that the governance of various topics, such as the environment, is too complicated to describe in a simplistic manner, and has the characteristics of a complex system. Furthermore, these complex systems are constantly changing and have a variety of system-wide interactions not described in traditional **stakeholder** analyses. The complex and nuanced characteristics of governance networks are beyond the scope of this handbook, but it is necessary to mention a few fundamental aspects.

First, the participating actors of the governance network must be identified. This can at times be a difficult task, for example when there are influential actors who are difficult to notice, and when new actors step into the arena. An important thing to keep in mind is that

## EXAMPLE OF A GOVERNANCE NETWORK





Thingvellir,  
where Iceland's parliament (Althingi)  
was originally founded in the year 930,  
is intertwined with democracy in Iceland.

governance networks exist whether we are aware of them or not, which means that those who can map **governance networks** have a significant advantage in everything relating to governance. Furthermore, governance networks are neutral in themselves, i.e. neither good nor bad, but what makes the biggest difference is whether individual actors operate in a democratic manner.

When the governance network's actors have been identified, their characteristics and interactions among themselves can be described in a systematic way. To give a glimpse of this methodology, the following items outline how governance networks are mapped but each item consists of several factors not covered here:

**Governance network characteristics taxonomy, as described by Koliba et al:<sup>1</sup>**

- ~ Characteristics of Actors
- ~ Characteristics of Ties Between Actors
- ~ Network-Wide Functions
- ~ Network-Wide Structures
- ~ Complex Systems Dynamics
- ~ Accountability
- ~ Performance Management and Measurement

To give an example, we can look very briefly at the topic of climate change in Iceland. The Parliament (**Althingi**) and the **Ministry** of Environment and Natural Resources are central to the topic due to their power and influence via **government** authority. Then we can look at all businesses and individuals responsible for emissions and sequestration of **greenhouse gases**. An example of an actor participating on behalf of both the public and **private sector** is Green by Iceland (Grænvangur), a cooperation platform between businesses and government on climate issues and green solutions. Within

the **third sector**, we have NGOs such as the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association, the **Icelandic Environment Association (Landvernd)**, and the Consumers Association of Iceland (Neytendasamtökin). Interactions and ties between these actors and many more are of various nature and complexity but all contribute in some manner to Iceland's performance in dealing with the climate crisis.

### 3. Laws & Rules Relating to Nature

#### 3.1 The Structure of Government

Even though the government is not alone in shaping society's behaviour, it most certainly holds a central role regarding its general framework. In Iceland, the **constitution** is the basis on which formal authority is distributed. Iceland is a parliamentary republic, with separated legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. The purpose of this separation is to limit each branch's authority and ensure no single individual or group holds excessive power. **Althingi** (Iceland's parliament), founded in 930, enacts **laws** which the President must sign before they come into effect. More information can be found in Althingi's introductory booklet (**Icelandic** and **English**). **The President** and **63 Members of Parliament** are democratically elected via secret ballots, and the President appoints **Ministers** who lead the Government. The Ministers hold the highest powers of the **executive branch** and are responsible for the implementation of laws, and use administrative tools such as **regulations**. A **Presidential Decree** (forsetaúrskurður) dictates the Government's division into individual ministries and which topics fall under the supervision of each ministry, which can change regularly. The judicial branch's

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Koliba, Jack W. Meek og Asim Zia (2011)  
„Governance Networks in Public Administration and Public Policy“.

role is the resolution of disputes, in accordance to current **law**. As an example, the judiciary has the power to rule a particular construction project unlawful, or even rule a particular legislation unconstitutional.

### 3.2 Public Administration

Generally speaking, the term **public administration** describes the institutions and activities of the **government**, i.e. the **executive branch**, which relate to the implementation of laws. Among common tools used by **ministers** in this process are **regulations**, which provide more details about how laws should be implemented. Currently, in the year 2020, the **Icelandic Government** is comprised of 10 Ministries with 11 Ministers. Operating at the behest of the Government are 169 **agencies**, most of which function at the national level. Exceptions include regional and localized agencies such as regional courts, district magistrates, and most upper-secondary schools. In addition to the national government, Iceland has 72 **municipalities\***, i.e. local governments which have certain administrative roles and responsibilities **according to national law**.

#### 3.2.1 Examples of Laws and Regulations

All public administration operates on the foundation of written **laws** and **regulations**, but it is important to keep in mind that there are also unwritten principles which dictate how they are implemented. These principles are not part of any written legislature, but have instead become established through repeated rulings within the judiciary system. These will not be described further in this handbook. Following are examples of written laws and regulations in Iceland relevant to the relationship between society and nature, but this list is by no means exhaustive:

- ~ **Administrative Procedures Act, No. 37/1993** ([English translation](#))
- ~ **Information Act, No. 140/2012** ([English translation](#))
- ~ **Nature Conservation Act, No. 60/2013** ([English translation](#) of older version from 1999)
- ~ **Planning Act, No. nr. 123/2010**
- ~ **Environmental Impact Assessment Act, No. 106/2000** ([English translation](#))
- ~ **Strategic Environmental Assessment Act, No. 105/2006**
- ~ **Act on Environmental and Natural Resources Board of Appeal, No. 130/2011**
- ~ **Public Health and Pollution Control Act, No. 7/1998**
- ~ **Regulation on (2.) amendment to regulation 660/2015** on Environmental Impact Assessment
- ~ **Regulation on (4.) amendment to regulation 796/1999** on water pollution
- ~ See other **laws** at the **Althingi** website and other **regulations** at the **Ministry of Justice's** website (in Icelandic)

#### 3.2.2 Reading a Legislative Proposal

**Legislative proposals at Althingi**, or bills, are drafted according to certain norms and traditions, as explained in the Icelandic Government's **handbook on preparations and drafting of legislative proposals** (in Icelandic). Every legislative proposal begins with basic information such as its parliamentary document number, name of the bill and by whom it is introduced. Its main contents are divided into three parts; the proposed law amendments, **general comments** and comments specific to each article of proposed law amendment. The general comments should explain the bill's background, purpose, and what it entails in general. This should be done in a simple and transparent manner, so as to make

\* The number of municipalities in Iceland is currently decreasing due to mergers of municipalities with very few inhabitants, which is mostly intended to make governance more simple and cost-effective.

it understandable to the public. In most cases, the quickest way to study a bill is to start reading the general comments (in the middle), before looking into the actual amendment articles (at the top) and the comments for each article (at the bottom).

#### 3.2.3 Examples of Government Institutions

- ~ **The Icelandic Institute of Natural History** is primarily responsible for basic and applied research on Icelandic nature, with a focus on biology and geology. Other roles include the maintenance of scientific specimen collections and databases, the collection of literature on natural history, operation of Iceland's bird-ringing scheme, environmental consultation on use of land and natural resources, and assessment of the conservation status of species, geological formations, habitats, and ecosystems. Other examples include monitoring of Icelandic nature and scientific outreach.
- ~ **The Icelandic National Planning Agency** is mainly responsible for preparing **the National Planning Strategy**, assisting local authorities in preparing spatial plans and revising and approving spatial plans produced by local authorities.
- ~ **The Environment Agency of Iceland** is responsible for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of Iceland's natural resources, as well as promoting public welfare by helping to ensure a healthy environment, and safe consumer goods.
- ~ **The Soil Conservation Service of Iceland** has the task of combating desertification, sand encroachment and other soil erosion, as well as promoting sustainable land use and reclamation and restoration of degraded land. The institution has an informative and entertaining **Instagram account**.
- ~ **The Icelandic Forest Service** provides resources for activities such as those relating to the conservation restoration, afforestation, silviculture and sustainable use of forests. This includes research,

consultation, planning and logistics.

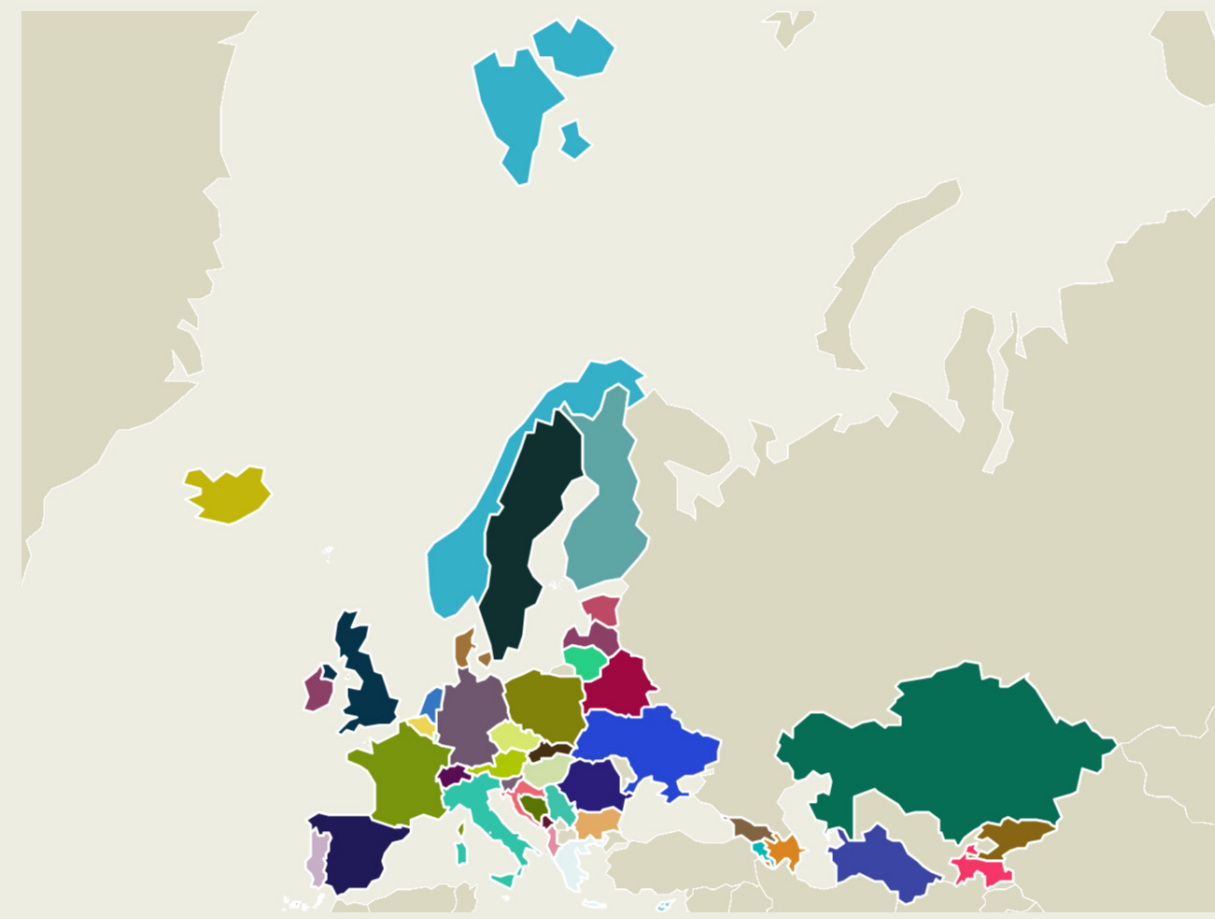
- ~ **The Environmental Health Inspection Committees** are regional institutions of the local **municipality** governments, responsible for monitoring their respective region and inspecting businesses in relation to environmental and health hazards. Originally each municipality operated their own inspection, but today the country is comprised of **10 environmental health inspection regions**.
- ~ **The Information Committee** is an independent appeals committee which makes rulings on disputes regarding information requests to the government.
- ~ **The Environmental and Natural Resources Board of Appeal** is an independent appeal committee which makes rulings on disputes relating to environmental and natural resources, e.g. regarding **construction permits**.
- ~ **The Althingi Ombudsman** is responsible for monitoring the administration of the **State** and local authorities and safeguarding the rights of the citizens vis-à-vis the authorities. The public and **non-governmental organizations** can file complaints to the Ombudsman if they believe government institutions have acted unjustly or unlawfully.
- ~ Other Agencies of the Icelandic National Government can be seen [here](#).

#### 3.3 Judicial System

When a disagreement arises between members of society, whether they are individuals, businesses or government institutions, they have the right to request a ruling on the matter by the judicial system, i.e. courts. The courts have power to make a final decision in the matter, within the scope of their **jurisdiction**, based on their independent interpretation of current law. The **judicial system in Iceland** has eight District Courts (**Héraðsdómstólar**), one Court of Appeal (**Landsréttur**) and one Supreme Court (**Hæstiréttur**).

# AARHUS CONVENTION

## Parties to the Aarhus Convention and their dates of ratification



46 states are members of the Aarhus Convention



AARHUS CONVENTION  
for our environment

Even though everyone has the right to refer a dispute to the relevant court, it can require expenses not affordable to everyone. This is why the Ministry of Justice provides the opportunity for individuals in certain circumstances to request that the government covers some of the relevant costs.

### 3.4 International Agreements

Iceland is a sovereign **state** with full authority over its own **jurisdiction**. Nonetheless, that also means Iceland is free to enter into international agreements, and thereby undergoing external obligations which can in some ways limit its authority. Among the most relevant examples for Iceland is membership of the **European Economic Area (EEA)**, which was ratified by **Althingi** with the Act on the European Economic Area, No. 2/1993. Obligations which Iceland must fulfill include the implementation of **EU-Directives** into Icelandic **law**, although they must first go through the **EEA Joint Committee**.

One of the most important international agreements for environmental organizations in Iceland is the **Aarhus Convention**, which was adopted in 1998 and **ratified** by Iceland in 2009. The Convention obligates member states to provide citizens with opportunities to influence governance, mainly via its themes of **access to information, public participation and access to justice**. **Transparency** is central to the Convention, which is in part meant to deal with democratic deficits such as the secrecy which exacerbated the severity of the **Chernobyl disaster**.

Other international agreements include the **Paris Agreement** on Climate Change based on the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, the **Convention**

**on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**, the **European Landscape Convention**, and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**. This list is not exhaustive.

### 4. Democratic Legitimacy

**Governance Networks** are comprised of complex interactions between many diverse participants, and it can often be difficult to assess whether governance in a particular case is in fact democratic. People can experience lack of transparency and therefore doubt the democratic legitimacy of governance networks. To respond to this, the manner in which participants operate can be constantly scrutinized and improved. Sørensen and Torfing (2005) <sup>2</sup> have described this topic, and remedies can include factors such as the following:

- ~ Politicians are elected in a democratic manner.
- ~ Diverse groups, organizations and individuals within society can actively participate in the governance network.
- ~ Participants are prepared to respond to criticism and partake in an objective and reasonable dialogue.
- ~ Accountability for decisions and actions is well defined, and those involved are prepared to explain and justify their actions.

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association can in a similar manner enhance its democratic legitimacy by systematically applying efforts such as:

- ~ Ensuring board members are elected in a democratic manner.
- ~ Making efforts to know and understand the diverse perspectives of members.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Sørensen & Jacob Torfing (2005) *Scandinavian Political Studies*, bindi 28, nr. 3. „The Democratic Anchorage of Governance Networks“.

- ~ Facilitating an ongoing dialogue among members about the organization's activities.
- ~ Establishing democratic norms and guidelines for the organization's activities.

### 5. Iceland in an International Context

The practice of environmental advocacy is very dependent upon the context and circumstances in which one operates. Factors such as history, culture, language and climate have an influence on how people interact and it is important to be aware of these nuances when reading this handbook. This is why we feel it is important to give a brief introduction about Iceland's characteristics in relation to advocacy, to make it easier for readers to use this information and compare with other regions.

Iceland has a relatively short history of human settlement, most likely dating back to the 9th century. The population is small and sparse, with approximately 360,000 people in a country of 103,000 square kilometers, with 2/3 inhabiting the capital region. The country has a strong tradition of democracy and the world's oldest currently operating parliament (Althingi). Decision makers are usually very accessible to the public, and their discourse is primarily centered around the government's role of serving the public. As a small state, Iceland has limited capacities in the international arena and must usually play a reactive role. Iceland was originally ruled by its inhabitants, but came later under Norwegian and Danish rule, until regaining independence as a republic in 1944.



# The Icelandic Youth Environ- mentalist Association





The purpose of this chapter is to describe the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's position within the context of how society governs its relationship with nature. Examples are given for how the organization can strengthen its position by continually improving its democratic legitimacy. The chapter is based on the framework presented in chapter 2.

MINUTES TO READ · MINUTES TO READ  
**10**  
· MINUTES TO READ · MINUTES TO READ

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Characteristics of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association
- How to Strengthen the Organization's Democratic Legitimacy
- Ties With Other Organizations and Actors

## 1. Characteristics of the Organization

As mentioned in chapter 2.2.3, the governance of society's relationship with nature can be systematically described using a theoretical approach based on the idea of **governance networks**. A fundamental aspect of this approach is the identification of actors participating in a particular governance network, and a systematic description of each actor's characteristics. The following is a brief summary of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's characteristics, and how they might evolve over time.

### 1.1 Goals

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's primary goal is to be a platform for young people to positively influence society's relationship with nature. **Transparency** is central to the organization, and there is no room for hidden agendas. Official goals and operative goals must always be the same. The organization's goals include looking at environmental governance from all angles and advocating for sustainable development, nature conservation and a **circular economy** in accordance with the **United Nations** Sustainable Development Goals. The organization bases its methods on a holistic approach, based on science, knowledge of local conditions, community perspectives, the common interests of mankind, human rights and the rights of nature. Constant improvement of the organization's democratic legitimacy is critical, to prevent individual members from abusing the organization for their own benefit or other private interests. This is explained in more detail in *part 1.4 of this chapter*.

### 1.2 Position within Governance Networks

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association is a non-governmental organization or a member of the **third sector** (see *chapter 2.2.1*). Currently, in the year 2020, the organization has over 1,000 members, which includes a diverse group of young people. The only requirements for admission are identifying as young and adhering to the organization's goals (see also *chapter 3.1.1*). The organization operates at the communal, national and international level, which includes interactions with municipalities, the national government and NGOs in other countries.

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association participates primarily in the governance networks of two topics; on one hand relating to society's relationship with nature, and on the other hand relating to youth empowerment and young people's participation in governance in general. The organization has interactions and ties with various actors in both networks. It holds a unique position within environmental governance as the voice of young people, and a unique position within the network of youth empowerment as experts on environmental topics.

### 1.3 Accountability and Performance Measurements

The organization's Board of Directors and other members who act on its behalf are accountable towards the membership and decisions made at the yearly General Assembly. This means the actions of individuals representing the organization must be based on sound logic and in accordance with the organization's goals, as well as being financially responsible and in line with instructions pertaining to grants given to the organization. In a broader sense, the organization is responsible for enacting its role within society, which includes advocating for **governments** and businesses to act in the interest of nature.

The Board of Directors as a group is collectively responsible for the organization's activities, but does nonetheless have a certain division of roles:

**The Chair** is the organization's spokesperson, has oversight and calls board meetings.

**The Vice-Chair** steps into the role of Chair in their absence.

**The Secretary** is responsible for minutes at meetings, as well as proper storage of the organization's documents.

**The Treasurer** oversees the organization's finances, prepares its annual financial statements and applies for grants.

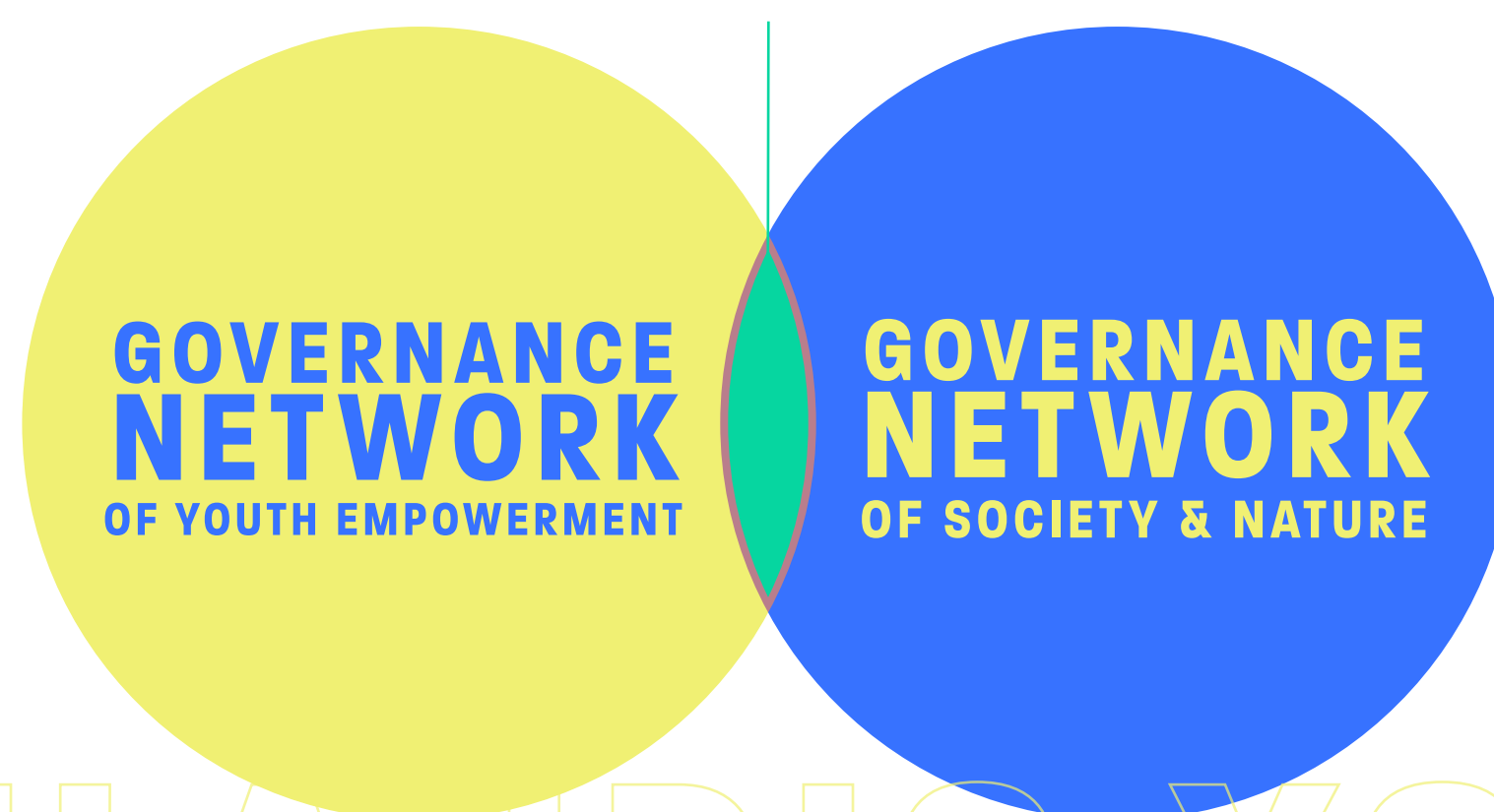
Other boardmembers can take on other individual roles, such as the **organization of events** and **management of social media**.

The organization's performance is measured via metrics such as the number of members, presentations given in schools, public comments submitted, the ratio of successful administrative appeals, and the frequency and extent of media coverage. This varies between years and is compiled in the organization's annual reports. Other ways to estimate performance include keeping track of more subtle aspects, such as what kind of attitudes are expressed towards nature in the public discourse. It is important that the metrics used are in some form based on the organization's bylaws or otherwise stated objectives. These objectives originate from the intent expressed by the founding members, and can be amended by the membership at general assemblies. The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's bylaws can be [found here](#) (in Icelandic).

### 1.4 The Organization's Democratic Legitimacy

The credibility of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association is largely based on constant efforts to maintain and strengthen its democratic legitimacy (see *chapter 2.4*). In essence, this means ensuring the organization's activities genuinely reflect the will and interest of members, and that they are rooted in a meticulous and objective approach. Democratic legitimacy is a prerequisite for the organization's ability to positively influence governance, and should therefore be nurtured with great care.

## ICELANDIC YOUTH ENVIRONMENTALIST ASSOCIATION



Examples of how the organization's democratic legitimacy can be maintained and strengthened:

- ~ The organization is non-partisan and therefore doesn't support individual political parties, either directly or indirectly. However, this doesn't prevent the organization from supporting individual **legislative proposals**, campaigns and other efforts which align with its goals and objectives. All are welcome to join the organization, regardless of political inclination and party affiliation, because its role is after all to encourage the entire political spectrum to work in favour of nature.
- ~ The organization aspires to be accessible to all, regardless of background and language, with a user-friendly website in relevant languages.
- ~ Events are organized in a manner mindful of the varying physical capabilities of people and the promotion of safer spaces. This includes accounting for factors such as wheelchair accessibility and the provision of interpreter services.
- ~ Members can participate in preparing public comments and official letters, but external communications are the Board of Directors' responsibility. As an example, the Board of Directors can assign limited roles to members, such as participating in government-led working groups or running for positions within the **National Youth Council**.
- ~ When members represent the organization at meetings, as permitted by the Board of Directors, they make brief notes to be made accessible to the membership. An example of this is when members of the organization's climate committee attend a meeting with **government** officials to discuss public comments submitted by the organization.

## 2. Role Within Governance Networks

Another fundamental aspect of the '**governance network**' approach, in addition to characterizing individual actors, is the description of interactions among the various actors. The following is a very brief description of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's main interactions with other actors, as well as a brief summary of what resources the organization has to offer.

### 2.1 Resources

An organization's interactions with other actors can be described as multiple exchanges of resources, where it either provides or receives resources from others. The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's main contribution to environmental governance is to project the perspectives, knowledge and passion of young people. This is a very important resource for a governance network which is often characterized by denial, hopelessness and the promotion of biased opinions. Since its founding in 2013, the organization has organized informative and inspiring public events about the relationship between society and nature. Other projects include environmental advocacy training, presentations at upper-secondary schools, and the climate strike under the auspices of the **Fridays for Future** movement. In Iceland, the climate strike has been organized in cooperation with the Icelandic Upper Secondary Student Union (Samband íslenskra framhaldsskólanema, SíF), the National Union of Icelandic Students (Landssamtök íslenskra stúdenta, LÍS), the Student Council of the University of Iceland (Stúdentaráð Háskóla Íslands, SHÍ), and a diverse group of individuals.

Among the most important resources needed by the organization are active members, who can design and implement its various projects. This is achieved by tapping into society's ever growing interest in its relationship with nature, and the will of young people to positively influence that relationship. This often requires funding for costs such as event venues, transportation and wages for the implementation of individual projects. So far, the organization has received money from various funds, both from the national government and the **private sector**.

### 2.2 Ties With Other Organizations and Actors

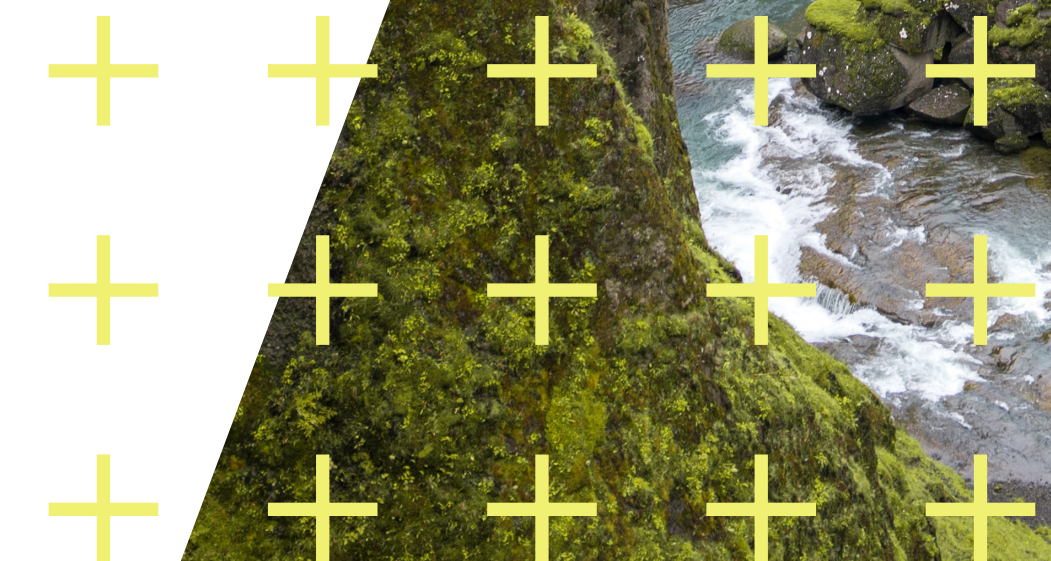
The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association's formal ties with other actors include:

- ~ being a member organization of the **Icelandic Environment Association (Landvernd)**.
- ~ being a member organization of the National Youth Council of Iceland (**Landssamband ungmennafélaga, LUF**).
- ~ having been one of the actors involved in the establishment of the **Arctic Youth Network**.

The organization also has informal ties with various other non-partisan **non-governmental organizations**, both within Iceland and abroad. These ties are important and provide greater opportunities for having a positive influence on governance, and it can be especially beneficial to team up with organizations who focus on topics other than the environment and have different goals. This is because it is always possible to find a common ground where individuals and organizations can work together, and more strength can be gained by aligning different perspectives. Networking also creates a support network, so people don't feel as isolated in their advocacy. Experiencing oneself as part of a larger

collective where many people and organizations join their forces is important for people working in advocacy.

The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association emphasizes innovation in conservation. As an example, this includes working with organizations focusing on other topics, such as **gender equality** and mental health education, and organizing events together about how nature is interconnected with these and other aspects of people's lives. This enables different audiences to come together and gain a deeper understanding of how diverse topics are interconnected. Collaborations such as these are possible because the organization doesn't consider itself as anyone's competitor, but rather a potential collaborator to all, while still maintaining its core values and role of keeping the government and businesses accountable towards nature. Another example of innovation is the organization's involvement in the founding of the **Arctic Youth Network**, established in Reykjavík, Iceland, on **April 11<sup>th</sup> 2019**. If the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association continues on this trajectory, we believe it can grow to become a strong voice within society, acting as an important platform for young people to project their perspectives and enhance their skills as active citizens. In a similar fashion, this includes speaking up for nature and protecting its interests.





# 04

## Advocacy



The purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into how the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association can work towards its goals in an objective and efficient manner. Being aware of the organization's position within governance networks, as described in chapters 2 and 3, is critical. It is also important to keep in mind that this methodology is still being developed and is by no means the only way to take part in advocacy, but merely one example of how an organization can work towards its goals.



## HIGHLIGHTS

**Project Prioritization**

**Examples of Good Practices in Advocacy**

**How I Can Make an Impact**

## 1. Prioritization

All actors within **governance networks** have limited resources at their disposal, such as time and money, and this applies in particular to volunteer organizations of young people like the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association. Prioritization is therefore extremely important, both regarding what projects are chosen and which methods are used to implement them. Not only does this influence how much impact we make ourselves, but also how inspiring our projects are and therefore how easy it is for us to rally others to the cause. People are prepared to put in a lot more effort when projects are of great significance.

### 1.1 What Projects are Most Important?

As we gain greater oversight of activities carried out by other actors in the governance network, it becomes easier to pinpoint where our efforts are most needed and how we can potentially make the biggest positive impact. This can include supporting existing projects or taking on overlooked or neglected causes. In this handbook you will not find detailed instructions for how to prioritize, but the following are examples of questions which can be useful during the process:

- ~ Is the issue global or local?
- ~ Is the issue urgent for the local community and/or nature?
- ~ Is it realistic for us to have an influence given our position within the governance network?
- ~ Do we have the capacity, e.g. time and money, to implement the project successfully?
- ~ Would our actions have a great or small impact?
- ~ Are we engaging with various topics simultaneously, such as climate, conservation, transportation and **gender equality**?
- ~ Would we prevent **irreversible damage to nature**?
- ~ Is the window of opportunity open now or not? E.g.

are there upcoming **law**-amendments regarding the topic or have they happened recently (and therefore unavailable for some time)?

~ Are our goals clear and can we measure our performance?

### 1.2 Key Aspects of Advocacy

Advocacy can be done in many ways. Different approaches can work differently for various actors in different circumstances. This section does not outline the various approaches available, but will instead mention examples of key aspects which have been useful for the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association:

~ **Patience, perseverance, and steadfastness:** The practice of advocacy can be challenging, prolonged and without recognition. Sometimes people react angrily, the situation can seem hopeless, and one can feel too exhausted to continue. At such times, it is important to take a moment to reflect on the values which spurred one into doing advocacy. Doubt is healthy because one can always be wrong, and it can be helpful to consider different perspectives to regain one's footing. Fellowship is crucial during such circumstances, and advice from peers can make it easier to regain an objective view of the challenge at hand. As people working collectively towards common goals we must be supportive of each other, and it is important to use critical thinking and compassion when making hard decisions.

~ **Collective interests:** As important as one's own cause can be, there are always other interests of individuals, groups, communities, societies and nature. Being able to see the broader picture is necessary, so one can intertwine one's projects and solutions with other interests locally and across the world. This is why we must be open to criticism and advice from other sectors of society. Good things to keep in mind include:

- The different realities of people living in urban and rural areas.
- Diversity of cultures, languages, traditions, and perspectives.
- All age-groups.
- Different economic situations of individuals, groups, and communities.
- Individual differences in health and physical capabilities.
- The interests of current and future generations, at least 200-300 years into the future.

~ **Non-partisan approach:** The strength of **non-governmental organizations** such as the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association is partly based on its independence from political parties. This creates an atmosphere where the entire political spectrum is more likely to align with the cause, as opposed to it becoming popularized by one party and consequently rebuked by others. That being said, good communications with all political parties can be very important, e.g. when submitting public comments regarding **legislative proposals**. In this context, the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association is a member of the National Youth Council, where youth wings of political parties are among the member organizations. A non-partisan approach is primarily based on being conscious of not affecting the popularity of individual political parties, either directly or indirectly. This builds trust and credibility, which makes it easier for us to encourage the entire political spectrum to promote nature friendly governance.

~ **Objective approach:** Facts relating to society and nature can often be complicated, and their interpretation subject to circumstances. Because of this, it is important to gather data and information about the perspectives of other **stakeholders**, even though it can often require substantial work. The effort is always worth it because one's ability to deduce and implement the best course of action is dependent on having correct and accurate information.

~ **Credibility:** In order to be taken seriously by others, we must say what we mean and mean what we say. Some people think it's a good idea to always ask for more than they want, with the intention of obtaining an acceptable outcome through compromise, but such an approach is in many ways dishonest and not suitable for the building of trust. Avoiding such games does not mean setting the bar lower, but is rather a way to put more focus on one's actual goals. Being persistent and respectful of other perspectives is a much better strategy for success.

~ **Direct dialogue:** When engaging with other stakeholders it is important to do so on their own terms, and to communicate in a respectful manner. In-person or online meetings can usually provide much more information than e-mail exchanges, and can make it possible to have an open discussion and to learn about each other's background and perspectives. This applies to exchanges with any stakeholder, whether they are individuals, non-governmental organizations, businesses or **government** institutions. We must remember that there are usually many perspectives which we don't understand, and we need to be able to imagine ourselves in the positions of others.



A good cause can turn into its opposite if other good causes are not accounted for.

## 2. Facts and Perspectives

Good advocacy requires knowledge of relevant facts and an awareness of the perspectives existing within the **governance network**. Without this information, it is impossible to form an informed opinion or advocate for one's cause in a credible manner. As can be expected, gathering and analyzing information about facts and perspectives is often time-consuming, so teamwork can be very useful to lighten the load. Such teamwork must be well organized and coordinated, because having oversight is a key factor in advocacy. Active participation of members is therefore a key resource for organizations such as the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association, e.g. within its committees for regions and specific topics. All such work must be done in cooperation with the organization's Board of Directors, because they are responsible for acting on behalf of the organization.

### 2.1 Meetings With Stakeholders

A lot of information is publicly available, such as on the internet and at libraries, but nothing can replace speaking with the people who actually make the content. This is true for all information, whether it comes from institutions, businesses, organizations or individuals. The authors can explain how reports or other kinds of information were created, what are the key points and what information is still being prepared and therefore not yet accessible. The same applies to perspectives, opinions and anecdotes, which can be much better understood through a personal conversation as opposed to reading websites or press statements. Knowledge and understanding of these nuances is the foundation of good advocacy.

#### 2.1.1 Beginning the Conversation

When seeking to meet with a **stakeholder**, a single email or phone call can often suffice to schedule a meeting. However, this can take longer such as when:

- ~ one doesn't know who to speak to, for example within a large institution or company.
- ~ the person is very busy or on leave.
- ~ the person isn't familiar with our organization and/or works at a place where messages from obscure or unknown actors take longer to reach the right person.

When reaching someone takes longer than expected, it is very important to be patient and curb one's frustration. Being level-headed promotes a better first-impression and makes it easier to build good partnerships and a healthy dialogue. Those acting on behalf of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association should always be diligent regarding their conduct, which makes the organization's advocacy and other undertakings substantially more effective. When it is unclear who to contact at an organization, institution or business, the simple solution is to contact the reception via e-mail or phone and ask who oversees the topic or project of interest.

#### 2.1.2 Discussions at Meetings

All good meetings are based on trust and respect. When meeting a stakeholder for the first time, it is especially important to build a good relationship, such as by learning about what they do in general and being ready to share information about one's own organization if appropriate. During discussions of sensitive topics with conflicting opinions, it is very important to be tactful and honest. One should not forget that people can have very strong emotions with regards to nature,

especially at times like these when mankind is experiencing an existential crisis due to our exploitation of nature. The following is a relevant excerpt from the Monologues of Starkaður (1921), by the Icelandic poet Einar Benediktsson; i.e. the third stanza of part III.

---

***“A smile - can transform darkness into daylight,  
as a drop changes the whole surface of a bowl.  
Spirits can break at a single sneer,  
Kindness shall guide in the presence of a soul.  
So often the heartstrings are torn apart,  
by bitter and wholly unjustified scorn.  
How many lament a spiteful glance,  
which will never be taken back?”***

Excerpt from the Monologues of Starkaður (1921), by Icelandic poet Einar Benediktsson (1864-1940)

---

That being said, it is important not to forget the purpose of the meeting; to obtain information about facts and perspectives. In this context, it is not uncommon that people are biased, so it is important to carefully consider their statements, both during the meeting and afterwards.

#### 2.2 Inquiries and Requests for Existing Information

In some cases, stakeholders can be reluctant to answer certain questions and/or share certain documents. This is usually not the case, but can all the same be a hindrance to the public's ability to form an informed opinion. When this happens with the **government**, it is important to remember two things: First, the legitimacy of government is partially based on the public's ability to get answers to reasonable inquiries, and second, the government has a duty to give the public access to most existing documents, as stated by **the Information Act**. Furthermore, government institutions are obligated to advise

citizens on where to seek specific information kept by other government institutions.

#### 2.3 Briefings Within the Organization

It is very important for the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association to keep members updated regarding its activities. This is especially true for information gathered as part of advocacy, which should be summarized briefly after each meeting, with information such as date, topic, outcome and who attended the meeting. It can also be good to add information such as thoughts and reflections about what next steps might be relevant.

Currently, the organization uses topic- and region-specific Facebook groups for such updates, but this may change. What matters is that members should have equal access to the format used at any given time. Members who are unsure what this means exactly or can't find information about the organization are encouraged to contact the Board of Directors and ask.

## 3. Public Participation

Advocacy as such involves a lot of communications with governments, whether they be local, regional, national or international. Citizens elect representatives to hold the formal powers of government, but in order for decision makers to properly perform their duty, they must collectively have good communications with all citizens. Without such a dialogue, the government doesn't have the proper information to understand the interests of society and nature, which hampers the ability of decision makers to perform their role adequately.

Governments can organize this dialogue in many



different ways, but the diversity of relationships between **governments** and citizens will not be covered here. Still, we would like to mention that governments should always emphasize their role of serving society and nature, which can be achieved by focusing on fundamental aspects such as **transparency**, decentralization of power, and equal **access to justice**. Governments must be open to criticism and subject to scrutiny by institutions such as an **Ombudsman**.

Citizens can have many different tools to make the government aware of their perspectives and opinions, but this section will cover the most relevant formal procedures in Iceland, i.e. public comments, administrative appeals, judicial reviews and complaints to the Althingi Ombudsman.

### 3.1 Public Comments

The most simple way for citizens to contribute to governance is the submission of public comments. This can for example apply to **legislative proposals**, **land-use planning** and **environmental impact assessments** for individual projects such as the construction of power plants. Governments must consider written comments, although the degree to which they are implemented is still at their own discretion. Furthermore, the written comments are made public for others to see in order to promote transparency. It is very important to write public comments in a concise manner, in order to make them more easily understood by the government. This applies in particular to technical subjects, and the manner of presentation can have a decisive effect on whether the government can understand and/or will implement the comments. The following are examples of opportunities for citizens to submit public comments:

- ~ Everyone can submit comments to the parliament (**Althingi**) regarding legislative proposals and **parliamentary resolutions**.
- ~ Everyone can submit comments to the government (Ministries) regarding drafts for legislative proposals, i.e. before they enter the parliament, and **regulations**.
- ~ Everyone can submit comments to municipalities (local governments) regarding spatial planning strategies at various levels, such as for the entire **municipality** or specific areas. Comments can also be submitted to the National Planning Agency (Skipulagsstofnun) regarding the **National Planning Strategy (Landsskipulagsstefna)**.

Public comments can vary depending on the context and recipient but it is important that they include:

- ~ Who submits the comments
- ~ To whom the comments are submitted
- ~ Reference to case number if relevant
- ~ Date
- ~ A signature is usually not necessary but gives the comments more gravity and trust, since the signatory is responsible for the comments and should be able to answer questions regarding them.

**A simple, concise, and professional manner of presentation is important for public comments**

Sometimes comments can be submitted via email (or regular mail), but in some instances the government might use a designated website, such as the Icelandic Government's **Samráðsgátt**. In most cases, the website of the relevant government institution includes instructions for how to submit comments. When in doubt, it's best to ask either the relevant government institution or other members within one's own organization or advocacy group.

### 3.2 Administrative Appeals

When the government has made a decision in a specific instance, such as when issuing a **construction permit**, the public can access information about the decision and on what grounds it has been made. If one believes the government hasn't adhered to the **law** while making the decision, such as by omitting mandatory requirements when preparing it, the public has a right to request the decision to be reviewed by the government. In some cases, such revisions are requested by submitting an appeal to the relevant **minister**, but in many cases the appeal is submitted to an independent Appeals Committee. The purpose of the

latter is to prevent government officials from being put in the position of reviewing their own decisions, as a means to prevent bias during the review process. Examples of such committees include the Natural Resources Board of Appeal and the Information Committee.

Submitting such appeals doesn't require payment of any fees, so as to ensure the public's **access to justice**. Furthermore, Appeals Committees provide citizens with instructions on whether and how they can submit appeals.

### 3.3 Judicial Reviews

When government decisions have been finalized and confirmed by the relevant Appeals Committee, it is still possible to request a ruling on the matter within the judicial system, i.e. the courts. Going to court can incur considerable costs, but being able to challenge the government when it seems to have broken the law is an important component of democracy.

### 3.4 Complaints to the Althingi Ombudsman

In addition to the previously mentioned processes, one can also submit a complaint to the **Althingi Ombudsman**, whose role is to monitor the **public administration** of the national and local governments in Iceland, i.e. the **State** and municipalities. Opinions issued by the Ombudsman are not legally binding, which means the authorities aren't strictly required to comply with them, but the Ombudsman's opinions are nonetheless respected and normally followed. This underlines the importance of perseverance in advocacy, and the taking of issues all the way to the Ombudsman when necessary, because Ombudsman opinions can in the long term influence the evolution of laws, public administration and even the **constitution**.



#### 4. Participation in the Public Discourse

In society, a public discourse where any citizen can participate in an open exchange of opinions is a critical component of democracy and governance in general. Knowing how to participate effectively is important, and stories are the best way to share information in a simple manner, although storytelling can be done in many different ways. The Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association has used various platforms for storytelling, such as the hosting of events, giving presentations at upper-secondary schools, participating in the climate strike, writing opinion pieces in newspapers, doing TV interviews, and being active on social media. The possibilities are endless but we must always be conscious of one question: what story are we telling? Potential stories can include the organization's activities in general, individual projects or what topics need more attention within society. The story can also be an individual's personal story, for example about what inspired them to become an active citizen, and why nature matters to them. Recent examples of the organization's storytelling include the co-hosting of events about how nature is interconnected with **gender equality** and **mental health**. The former event was organized in collaboration with **Young Professional Women in Iceland** (Ungar athafnakonur), and the latter in collaboration with **Hugrún**, a youth-led organization for mental health education. At the international level, one example includes involvement with preparing the **Arctic Youth Network's** panel at the **United Nations COP24 Climate Change Conference**, about how **climate change, biodiversity and cultural equality are interconnected**.



##### 4.1 Who is the Audience?

When telling a story, it is important to not only think about the message, but also who within the **governance network** is the target audience. Do we want to inform **members of parliament** about why a legislative proposal is harmful, or do we want to educate the public on how to make compost? Perhaps we would like to inform the **private sector** about the benefits combining carbon-sequestration with ecosystem-restoration, or raise awareness among other **non-governmental organizations** about how our different topics are interconnected. This all depends on what goals we set for ourselves.

##### 4.2 Who Tells the Story?

In addition to identifying the target audience, it is important to decide who tells the story. Should our own organization tell the story individually, or is there reason to seek the cooperation of others?

##### 4.3 How is the Story Told?

Storytelling must always be characterized by tactfulness and respect towards the various groups and members of society. That being said, we must also be able to speak up against extremism and injustice when needed, using objective criticism with a calm composure. In order to gain the attention of society at large, it is important to focus on topics which are relevant to everyone.

##### 4.3.1 Protests <sup>4</sup>

Sometimes, conventional procedures such as public comments and administrative appeals are unavailable, inaccessible or unheeded. This prevents valid comments from contributing to

<sup>3</sup> Fudge, Judy and Glasbeek, Harry J. „Civil Disobedience, Civil Liberties, and Civil Resistance: Law's Role and Limits.“ *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 41.2/3 (2003) : 165-174.

Stephan, M. J., & Chenoweth, E. (2008). *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. *International Security*, 33(1), 7-44.

governance, and can make it necessary to resort to other methods of voicing one's concerns. Such alternatives stem from ideas of **civil disobedience**, which can be interpreted and implemented in various ways. The nuances and semantics of civil disobedience are beyond the scope of this handbook, but broadly speaking it involves the refusal to obey unjust **laws** or rules of society, in order to bring attention to a problem and demand positive change.

In such cases, it can be useful to adopt a version of civil disobedience called **civil resistance**, which is primarily based on not using violence of any kind, whether physical, mental or in the form of property damage. Non-violent protests can be conducted in many ways, such as when individuals or groups of people refuse to work (strike), boycott certain products or publicly share or participate in protest art. The benefits of non-violence are mainly two-fold. On one hand, it makes it harder for detractors to discredit the cause, given it's arguments are based on sound logic. On the other hand, it makes it easier for decision makers to trust and approach the protesters, since they have exhibited peaceful and constructive behaviour. This increases the likelihood of a productive dialogue between citizens and decision makers, and makes governance more transparent and effective.

Freedom of assembly is a human right and one of the foundations of democracy, but protests and civil resistance are in some cases met with unconscionable restrictions or violence by police and **governments**. It is therefore important to be aware of the foreseeable implications if laws are broken, for example if one is likely to get arrested. Further information on such protests is beyond the scope of this book, and the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association does not have any

# CIVIL RESISTANCE

In order for an event or protest to be as effective as possible it's good to keep a few things in mind:

## NUMBERS.

*A greater number of participants makes an event or protest more effective.*

## LOCATION.

*In order for an event or protest to have the intended effect, it must be noticed by people. If for example the aim is to close a road, it must be a busy road. Protests are best placed where politicians will notice them, such as in front of the Parliament building.*

## NO VIOLENCE.

*If anyone in the group is violent or damages property, the cause loses effectiveness.*

## PERSEVERANCE.

*Recurring events are more effective than one-time events.*

## MORALE.

*It's more difficult to break up protests when protesters have good morale. Music, dance, singing, and sharing of food can be very helpful.*

**The aim of such acts are always to disrupt the daily routine of society, in order to raise awareness and demand positive change.**



experience in this regard. Among relevant sources is the **Extinction Rebellion**, who's protesters have systematically put themselves in situations where they're likely to get arrested, and have written instructions on how to conduct oneself peacefully in such situations.

That being said, the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association has made an important contribution to the public discourse in Iceland. This includes participating in the organizing of the climate strike in Reykjavík, held every Friday since February 2019 in the name of **Fridays for Future** Ísland (Loftslagsverkfall), and the writing of opinion pieces in news papers on the topic.

Inspiration for methods used in the climate strike in Iceland has, among other things, come from a book published by the **Extinction Rebellion (XR)** movement, which includes a few good tips on how activism and protests can be made more effective. The Extinction Rebellion's name refers to the increased rate of species extinction in the world, and the movement has been closely connected with and cooperating with the **Fridays for Future** movement.

In the case of the climate strike in Iceland, it has been collaboratively organized by the **Icelandic Upper Secondary Student Union, the National Union of Icelandic Students, the Student Council of the University of Iceland**, the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association, and a diverse group of individuals. At the time of this handbook's publishing, in the year 2020, the climate strike in Iceland has been ongoing for over a year, and musicians, actors and environmental activists from various parts of society have participated. The movement has

received considerable media attention, as well as receiving several awards.

#### 4.3.2 The Media

Since its founding in 2013, the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association has become increasingly visible, and has promoted it's cause via venues such as newspaper opinion pieces. Anyone can submit opinion pieces to news papers, but in order for them to be useful they must be about something that really matters. After being submitted, the time it takes for an opinion piece to be published can vary, from a single day up to a few weeks, so it is important to account for this if the publishing date has an effect on its relevance, for example if it is about a particular current event. Opinion pieces are very different from public comments, and it is important to assume the audience might be unfamiliar with the topic, and they should be very short, concise, fact-based and spoken from the heart.

It has also become increasingly common that media, both Icelandic and foreign, approach the organization to interview members or board members. This is of course very positive, but it is important to keep a few things in mind in such cases:

- ~ The person representing the organization must be familiar with the topic at hand.
- ~ Even though the organization's Chair is its official spokesperson, it might in some cases be more appropriate for other members to speak on certain specific topics.
- ~ The organization must consciously avoid being taken advantage of, for example if asked to advertise projects it didn't take any part in organizing, and which might perhaps include elements of tokenism or greenwashing. Each case must be considered

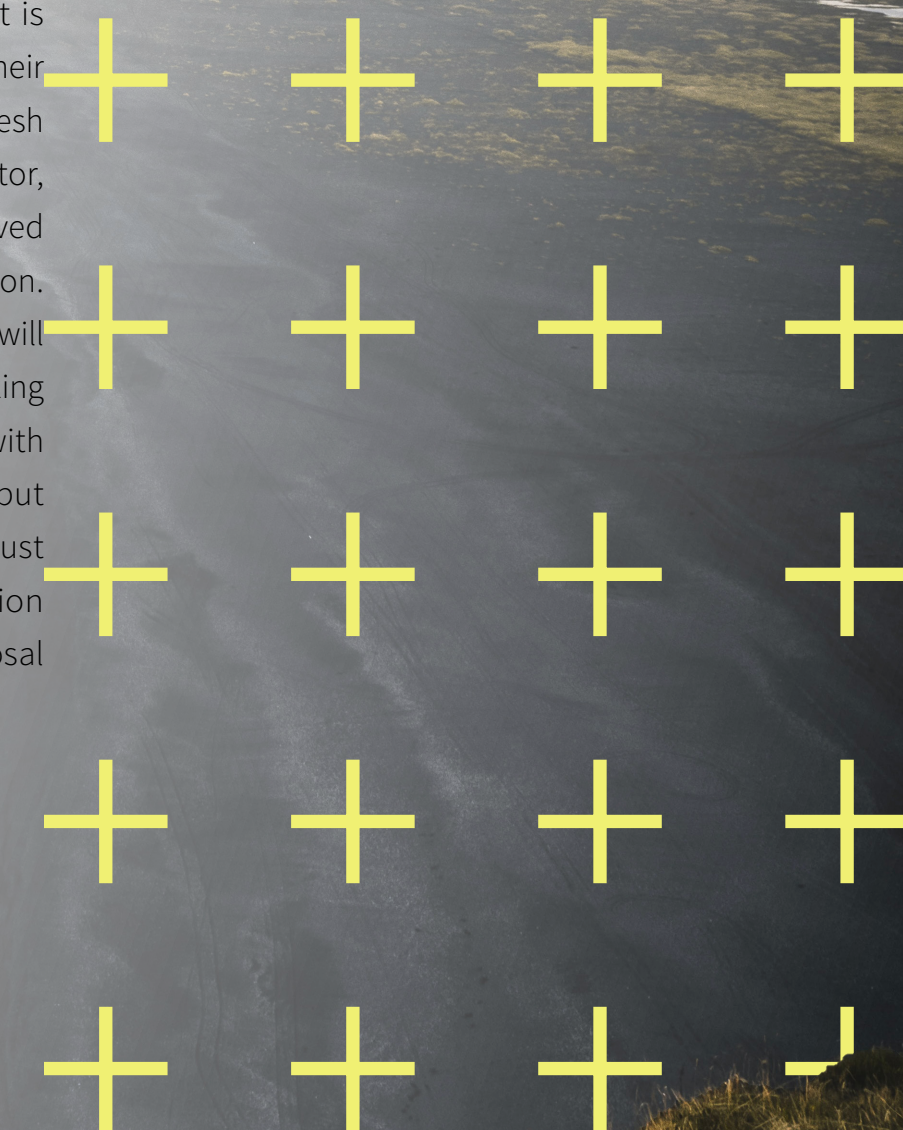
individually, and as an example, it is not the organization's purpose to advertise products for individual businesses, but it can still be relevant to raise awareness among consumers about specific types of environmentally friendly products in general.

#### 4.5 Environmental Advocacy and Global Cooperation

This handbook has provided a simple overview of how the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association has done environmental advocacy in recent years. The methodology is still in its early stages of development, but it is hoped that the publication of this handbook will facilitate a broad discussion about best practices in advocacy, both domestically and internationally. People all over the world are involved in environmental advocacy, using different methods in different circumstances, and we are convinced that by sharing this handbook it will be easier to discuss how to strengthen the global coordination of environmental advocacy and make practical steps towards global sustainability.

#### 4.6 Closing Remarks

Since this handbook is intended to provide guidance, it is important to emphasize that advocacy doesn't require one to know or remember every single detail presented here or elsewhere. People can have a positive impact despite not being experts, and we must be unafraid of expressing our opinions. A common hindrance to young people is lack of self-esteem, so it is important to believe in yourself and remember that your opinion matters. There will always be voices saying young people lack knowledge and the experience to understand what everything is really about, but the best way to gain experience in advocacy is the willingness to try things and being ready to learn from mistakes. It is important that young people pursue what they believe in, and it is good for young people to take advantage of their ability to think about things from a new and fresh perspective. A positive attitude is a key factor, such as the will to understand everyone involved and being unafraid of voicing one's own opinion. By training these kinds of characteristics, one will also improve in other activities; such as speaking in front of groups of people, communicating with all kinds of **stakeholders**, doing research, but most importantly believing in oneself. We must not let society stagnate. Everyone's opinion matters and with the right tools at our disposal we can really make a positive impact.





# Glossary

05



**Access to Justice**

BLS 12, 21

One of the three main pillars of the Aarhus Convention (Article 9), along with access to information and public participation. Access to Justice means the public and non-governmental organizations have the right to 1. demand a revision of a government decision to deny the public access to information, 2. demand a revision of a government decision to issue a permit (e.g. a construction permit), and 3. submit an appeal if environmental laws are believed to have been broken by the government. Furthermore, these procedures should be fair, dealt with in a timely manner and be affordable to citizens.

**Althingi**

BLS 10, 11, 12, 21

The legislative branch of the Icelandic authorities. Founded in 930 at Thingvellir but currently situated in Reykjavik.

**Althingi Ombudsman**

BLS 11, 21

An institution under the authority of the Parliament (Althingi), whose role is to monitor the administration of the State and local authorities and safeguard the rights of the citizens vis-à-vis the authorities. As an example, the public and non-governmental organizations can complain to the Ombudsman if they believe authorities haven't acted according to law.

**Carbon Neutrality**

Many human activities cause the release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. Examples of this include the production of cement and the use of petrol- and diesel powered vehicles. Too much release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere has negative consequences such as global warming and ocean acidification. In order to reverse this process, carbon dioxide can be sequestered from the atmosphere via methods such as the restoration of wetlands and wild forests. Carbon neutrality means ensuring carbon dioxide emissions don't exceed the amount of sequestered carbon. This is often used to describe the aspirations of individuals, businesses or national states, but what really matters is the carbon neutrality of the global community.

**Circular Economy**

BLS 15

An economy characterized by the re-utilization of materials in products which have been discarded, such as damaged furniture, electronics and vehicles. This is opposed to a linear economy, where resources are disposed of after use, most often by burning or being put into landfills. A circular economy is a necessary response to the enormous amount of waste created in the global economy during the recent decades and century.

**Civil Disobedience**

BLS 22

A methodology which involves breaking unjust laws or rules of society in order to bring attention to problems and demand positive change.

**Civil Resistance**

BLS 22

A version of Civil Disobedience with an emphasis on non-violence.

**Constitution**

BLS 10, 21

In the case of Iceland, the constitution is the State's supreme law on which all other laws must be based upon and be in accordance with. The constitution dictates in fundamental terms how the country is governed, and for example how powers are distributed.

**Construction Permit**

BLS 11, 21

A government-issued permit for a specific construction project. Construction projects, whether for housing or power plants, must be in accordance with government spatial planning strategies. Larger projects are also subject to Environmental Impact Assessments.

**Economy / Economic system**

BLS 15

An aspect of society involved with the production, distribution and trade of resources, products and services. Economies are often described as pertaining to specific regions, such as within the jurisdiction of a national state, a number of states (e.g. the European Economic Area) or the all-encompassing global economy.

**Environmental Impact Assessment**

BLS 11, 21

A formal procedure to assess the impact of a proposed construction project or planning strategy on society and nature. The process must include opportunities for the public to submit their comments and influence the process.

**European Economic Area (EEA)**

BLS 12

A shared economic zone of member states of the European Union states and most member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Iceland is a member of the EEA and EFTA. Iceland's membership in the EEA was ratified on the 1st of January, 1994. A shared economic zone is intended to allow everyone within its boundaries to pursue free movement of goods, capital, services, and labour.

**Executive Branch**

BLS 10, 11

The branch of the government concerned with the implementation of laws, which have been created by the legislative branch (Althingi). This includes Ministers, government agencies, municipal committees and staff involved with these institutions.

**Extinction Rebellion**

BLS 23

An international movement advocating for climate action.

**Fridays for Future**

BLS 16, 23

An international movement which involves young people striking to protest the inaction of governments regarding climate change. The name refers to young people assembling every Friday in public places all over the world.

**Gender Equality**

BLS 9, 16, 19, 22

A characteristic of society where gender doesn't affect people's access to opportunities and resources.



**Governance Network** *BLS 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22*

A theoretical approach used to describe how society is governed, for example for specific topics such as the environment. It is based on mapping all participating actors who influence the topic and is built on the assumption that governance has the attributes of a complex system.

**Government (of Iceland)** *BLS 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22*

The country's Ministers, which are appointed by the President and are responsible for implementing Icelandic law. The Government needs majority support of the Parliament (Althingi).

**Greenhouse Gases** *BLS 10*

When sunlight hits the earth, it warms the earth before being reflected back into space. After being reflected on the earth's surface, a portion of the space-bound sunlight hits greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), and is prevented from reaching space. This increases the temperature within the atmosphere and on the earth's surface. Too much increase in greenhouse gases causes global warming, climate change and ocean acidification.

**Icelandic Environment Association**  
*(LANDVERND)* *BLS 10, 16*

The largest environmental non-governmental organization in Iceland, founded in 1969. Main focus areas include soil- and ecosystem restoration, sustainability education, and environmental advocacy. Membership includes 40 member organizations and 6,000 individual members.

**Infrastructure** *BLS 6*

Organizational structures and facilities which are part of society's operations, such as roads, water mains, mobile networks, schools and hospitals.

**Irreversible Damage to Nature** *BLS 19*

Harm or changes to nature which can never be taken back, such as the destruction of geological formations via the construction of dams for hydroelectric power plants.

**Jurisdiction** *BLS 11, 12*

Entire region under the control of a given state, whether on sea or land.

**Land-use Planning** *BLS 6, 21*  
*(SEE ALSO "SPATIAL PLANNING STRATEGY")*

The process of regulating the use of land in an effort to promote more desirable social and environmental outcomes as well as a more efficient use of resources.

**Law** *BLS 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 21, 22*

Written rules which everyone within the State's jurisdiction must adhere to.

**Legislative Proposals** *BLS 11, 16, 19, 21*

A proposal for a new law which Althingi can decide becomes part of national law.

**Legislative Proposal General Comments** *BLS 11*

Information explaining factors such as the legislative proposal's background, purpose, and significance.

**Member of Parliament** *BLS 9, 10, 22*

One of the 63 democratically elected representatives at Althingi, who have the power to change Icelandic national law.

**Minister** *BLS 9, 10, 11, 21*

An individual member of the National Government, responsible for implementing laws regarding specific topics. In Iceland, the Prime Minister is head of the Government, which is today composed of 11 Ministers at 10 Ministries.

**Ministry** *BLS 10, 11*

A government institution under the direct authority of its Minister, with the role of implementing the Minister's obligations and responsibilities.

**Municipality** *BLS 11, 21*

A local government which has certain administrative roles and a degree of independence from the national Government, although its existence is based on laws enacted by the Parliament (Althingi). Municipalities in Iceland are currently 72 (in the year 2020).

**National Planning Strategy** *BLS 11, 21*

The Icelandic Government's national-scale planning strategy which provides coordination for smaller-scale planning strategies. It is divided into four parts for different regions and aspects: 1. The Central Highlands, 2. Planning in Rural Regions, 3. Planning for Residence Patterns and Settlements Distribution, 4. Planning for Coastal and Marine Areas.

**National Youth Council of Iceland**  
*(LANDSSAMBAND UNGMENNAFÉLAGA, LUF)* *BLS 16*

An umbrella organization for youth-led organizations in Iceland. The National Youth Council's goal is to support its member organizations, which are currently 33 (in the year 2020).

**Non-Governmental Organizations** *BLS 6, 8, 9, 11, 16, 19, 22*

See "Third Sector / Non-Governmental Organizations".

**Non-partisan Approach**

BLS 19

Making sure not to support any specific political movement, neither directly nor indirectly, and remaining impartial towards political competition.

**Parliamentary Resolution**

BLS 21

A resolution by the Parliament (Althingi), which serves as a guideline for government policy. Despite their content not being mandatory as is the case with laws, they can nonetheless have a big impact on government policy and governance in general. As an example, parliamentary resolutions can dictate that a particular legislative proposal should be drafted.

**Performance Measurements**

BLS 15

Results which can be measured, such as the number of members, presentations at upper-secondary schools, public comments submitted, the ratio of successful administrative appeals and number of mentions in news media.

**Politics**

BLS 6

Activities and topics relating to how decisions are taken and enforced within groups such as organizations, national states and the global community.

**Presidential Decree**

BLS 10

A binding decision of the President, regarding topics such as what individuals are Ministers of the Government and what topics fall under the supervision of each Ministry.

**Private sector**

BLS 9, 10, 16, 22

Businesses and other for-profit activities which are not owned or controlled by the government.

**Public Administration**

BLS 10, 11, 21

Activities relating to the government's implementation of laws.

**Regulation**

BLS 9, 10, 11, 21

Rules providing further details on how specific laws or law articles should be implemented.

**Spatial Planning Strategy**

In Iceland, municipalities are responsible for land-use planning within their jurisdiction. A strategy for the entire municipality (aðalskipulag) is mandatory, but strategies for specific areas within their jurisdiction (deiliskipulag) and regional strategies in cooperation with other municipalities (svæðisskipulag) are optional. All municipal planning strategies are [available online](#).

**Stakeholder**

BLS 8, 9, 19, 20, 23

An actor (e.g. individual, organization, business or institution) who has something at stake regarding a particular topic or subject. Examples include land-owners where powerplants have been proposed, and environmental organizations when nature might become affected by human activities.

**State (of Iceland)**

BLS 11, 12, 21

The national authorities in Iceland, which are comprised of Althingi, the President, the Government (Ministers) and the Judicial System.

**Third Sector(Non-Governmental Organizations)**

BLS 9, 10, 15

Operations which are neither part of the government nor the private sector. Examples include environmental organizations, residents associations, workers unions, sports clubs, charities and other volunteer organizations. In other words, the third sector is comprised of the activities of people who cooperate towards non-profit goals.

**Transparency**

BLS 12, 15, 21

A way of operating where information about activities is easily accessible to those not involved directly. In the case of the government, it means providing the public with access to information and documents relating to the government's activities and decision making. This enables the public to scrutinize the government's activities, which is one of the prerequisites for a government's democratic legitimacy.

**United Nations (UN)**

BLS 9, 12, 15, 22

An international organization and a cooperative platform for the world's national states, which currently has 193 members (in the year 2020). The United Nations were founded in 1945 after the Second World War, with the aim of preventing war in the future. The organization is comprised of six institutions: General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice, and Secretariat.





**Ungir**  
**Umhverfissinnar**