

**Universal Periodic Review  
(12<sup>th</sup> session, 3-14 October 2011)**

**Contribution of UNESCO**

**ICELAND**

**I. Human rights treaties which fall within the competence of UNESCO and international instruments adopted by UNESCO**

1. Table:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	-	<i>Reservations to this Convention shall not be permitted</i>		Right to education
Convention on Technical and Vocational Education. 1989	-			Right to education
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972	19/12/1995			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003	23/11/2005			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005	01/02/2007			Right to take part in cultural life

## II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

### 1. Right to education<sup>1</sup>

2. Constitutional framework: The Constitution of Iceland (17 June 1944), as amended in June 1999, stipulates in its article 76 “The law shall guarantee for everyone suitable general education and tuition.”
3. Legislative framework:. A new Pre-Primary School Act entered into force on 1 July 2008 where the main emphasis is on children’s welfare and interests.
4. A new Compulsory School Act No. 91/2008 was adopted in 2008. One of the main emphasis is to increase the municipalities’ authority of compulsory school affairs and strengthen school autonomy. Also to ensure that compulsory school children get the appropriate study support and that specialist services are coordinated with the main focus on the child’s needs.
5. A new Upper Secondary School Act entered into force in 1 August 2008. The upper secondary schools have to July 2011 to fully comply with provisions of the Act. One of the main objectives of the Act is to enforce pupils’ rights to acquire education by the duty of the authorities to provide education until the age of 18.
6. The new Higher Education Act No. 63/2006 requires all higher education institutions to adopt the three-cycle degree structure in line with the Bologna process. In the same year, a National Qualifications Framework has been adopted, and according to the new Act all programmes offered by higher education institutions must be accredited by the Ministry of Education by 2008.
7. The Act on the Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Pre-School, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School will come into force in 2011.
8. According to a 1996 regulation concerning the instruction in Icelandic for pupils whose mother tongue is not Icelandic, such pupils shall, as far as it can be arranged and with the agreement of the local municipality in question, receive instruction in their own mother tongue. The aim of such instruction is to ensure that these students practice both languages, and thus maintain their mother tongue by actively using it.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sources:*

- i) Eurydice, Information on Education Systems and Policies in Europe, National system overviews on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms, 2010 Edition, Iceland September 2010, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national\\_summary\\_sheets/047\\_IC\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_IC_EN.pdf) (Accessed 5/01/2011);
- ii) International Bureau of Education, Profile of the education system of the Republic of Iceland, <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/worldwide/unesco-regions/europe-and-north-america/iceland/profile-of-education.html> (Accessed 5/01/2011).

9. In March 2010, an important milestone was reached when the Icelandic Parliament passed a new legislation on adult education (Adult Education Act), which aims specifically at raising the skills level of people with little or no formal education and enhancing their possibilities for participating in a democratic society.

## **2. Right to take part in cultural life**

10. Legislative framework: - (a) To implement the 1972 World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention, the following legislative framework is in place in Iceland: National law on cultural heritage/natural heritage, Nature Conservation Act, National Architectural Heritage Act, National Planning and Building Act, Environment Impact Assessment Act. (b) There is no specific legislation to protect World Heritage sites in general.

11. Institutional framework: To implement the 1972 World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention various departments are established, such as the Environment and Food Agency, the Archaeological Heritage Agency, the National Museum, the National Architectural Heritage Board, and Nature Conservation Committees. However the conservation of cultural and natural heritage is not institutionally integrated.

12. Cooperation: In the framework of the 1972 World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention, Iceland maintains the international cooperation on World Heritage with other Nordic countries and with UNESCO and the European Council. Iceland also cooperates with UNESCO on issues linked with the implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

13. Work with civil society: 1972 World Heritage Convention: local communities and NGOs usually participate in working groups and nature conservation meetings.

14. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints: The implementation of the 1972 World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention is characterized by increased cross-sectoral (nature – culture) cooperation at the governmental and institutional level as well as strong interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation, involving NGOs and local communities. The creation of a National Cultural and Natural Heritage Committee and the existence of several funds for the protection of cultural heritage, alongside with the international cooperation with other Nordic countries, UNESCO and the Council of Europe play an important and positive role in the implementation of the 1972 WCH Convention.

15. However, there is no specific planning legislation to protect World Heritage sites. NGOs are not involved in protecting archaeological heritage and there is no information on relevant training institutions. The presentation and general awareness about the World Heritage sites are not adequate.

### **3. Freedom of opinion and expression**

16. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints: Iceland has an open, free, and pluralistic media landscape. Self-censorship is practiced to avoid publishing libellous material. Internet access is unrestricted.

17. On 16 June 2010, Iceland's parliament approved the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative (IMMI) that calls on the government to draft legislation in line with its recommendations for the protection of media, journalists and bloggers. The law seeks to "to strengthen freedom of expression around world and in Iceland, as well as providing strong protections for sources and whistleblowers".

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Right to education**

18. Iceland should be encouraged to ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960).

19. Iceland should be encouraged to ratify the UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989).

#### **Right to take part in cultural life**

20. In order to advance the right to take part in cultural life UNESCO recommends to enhance the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) through the following measures:

- i) to consider adopting specific planning legislation to protect World Heritage sites;
- ii) to consider involving NGOs in protecting archaeological heritage and to develop information on relevant training institutions;
- iii) to improve the presentation and general awareness of World Heritage sites;
- iv) to increase the country's participation in the international cooperation.