

# IMMIGRANTS

## Information for foreigners who move to Iceland

Icelandic Society  
Rights and Obligations

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Ministry of Social Affairs

July 1998: 12  
Enska



# INFORMATION FOR FOREIGNERS WHO MOVE TO ICELAND

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Ministry of Social Affairs  
1st edition, July 1998  
ISBN 9979-868-19-8

Published by the Ministry of Social Affairs  
1st edition, July 1998

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Photographs: Courtesy of the Information and Cultural Centre for Foreigners and Vinnan, the organ of the Icelandic Federation of Labour

Útgefandi: Félagsmálaráðuneytið, 1. útgáfa, júlí 1998.

Umsjón með útgáfu: Ingibjörg Broddadóttir

Kápa hönnun: Ydda / Prentun: Grafík / Ljósmyndir: Miðstöð nýbúa og Vinnan, blað A.S.Í.

ISBN 9979-868-24-4

# Country and People

Iceland is located in the North Atlantic, and is the second largest island in Europe, with an area of 103,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It has a cool temperate maritime climate with fairly warm winters and cool summers. The average temperature in January is -3°C to +3°C, and in July 8-15°C. The capital is Reykjavík.

The inhabitants number almost 268,000. About 60% of the population live in and around Reykjavík. The country is part of the Nordic region, and its language is Icelandic. In Iceland there are two levels of government: national and local. Elections at both levels are held every four years. Legislative power rests with the Althingi (parliament), which has 63 members. The currency is the *króna* (plural *krónur*).

## Residence and Employment

### Principal public bodies which foreigners must contact in order to gain basic rights:

Immigration Office (*Útlendingaeftirlit*). Residence permits and visas.

Directorate of Labour (*Vinnamálastofnun*). Work permits.

Reykjavík Municipal Hospital (*Sjúkrahús Reykjavíkur, göngudeild smitsjúkdóma*) and Reykjavík Health Care Centre (*Heilsuverndarstöð, berkladeild*). Medical certificates.

Statistical Bureau (*Hagstofa Íslands, þjóðskrá*). Identity number, registration of residence.

### Registration

A foreigner who comes to Iceland to work goes to the Statistical Bureau (*Hagstofa Íslands, þjóðskrá*), where his/her residence is recorded and he/she is assigned an Icelandic identity number (*kennitala*). If the intention is to remain for more than six months, legal domicile must be transferred to Iceland.

### Residence and Work Permits

Various international treaties affect the status of foreigners who plan to move to Iceland. Citizens of other Nordic countries and the European Economic Area, and refugees, have special status.

Citizens from outside the EEA. A foreigner who comes to Iceland shall have a valid passport, and a visa if applicable. If the intention is to remain for more than three months, an application for a residence permit must be made to the Immigration Office (*Útlendingaeftirlit*) before arrival in Iceland. The Immigration Office replies in writing, granting or refusing a residence permit. When the residence permit is formally issued by the Immigration Office, a passport and medical certificate must be produced. If the applicant intends to work while in Iceland, a work permit must have been issued before arrival in the country. A residence permit is necessary for the issue of a work permit; the employer makes the application for a work permit. A contract of employment must be included with the application. A residence permit grants the right to be legally domiciled in Iceland, which entails various social rights.

Residence permits can be granted for employment, due to family connections or for study. A residence is normally granted for one year. If an extension is desired, an application must be made before the current permit expires. Those who have a tourist visa cannot apply for a residence permit.

The following documents are required in order to begin employment in Iceland: a valid passport, a visa if applicable, medical certificate, residence permit and work permit.

This does not apply to citizens of the Nordic countries or of the European Economic Area. They are subject to special rules, explained below.

Citizens of Nordic countries can move to Iceland without hindrance. Those who intend to stay longer than six months must produce a Nordic change-of-residence certificate from the country they move from. This certificate must be submitted to the Statistical Bureau (*Hagstofa Íslands, þjóðskrá*), within seven days of arrival in the country. In principle, Nordic citizens can remain in Iceland for up to six months without transferring their legal domicile.

Citizens of the European Economic Area may remain in Iceland for three months in search of work, and may make

use of labour agencies. They must have sufficient money to support themselves during their stay. Legal domicile remains in the country of origin. On arrival in Iceland, citizens of EEA countries must have valid travel documents. They do not require a visa, but family members who are not EEA citizens may require visas. If a citizen of the EEA is employed in Iceland, or establishes a business, he/she acquires a right to a residence permit, normally valid for five years.

If EEA citizens bring with them sufficient social security benefit, or demonstrate that they can support themselves, a residence permit may be issued.

Refugees. Iceland is member of the UN Convention on Refugees. The terms of the treaty apply to all those who are granted a residence permit under the treaty. The Icelandic Red Cross has handled reception of refugees on behalf of the government.

## Labour Law

Laws and wage agreements made between employers and employees' organisations deal with rights and obligations on the labour market. These include minimum wage rates. Labour unions play an important role in safeguarding the interests of workers, and they provide information on wage rates and other rights established in wage agreements.

All workers must pay into a pension fund, which pays retirement and disability pensions. Rights to such pensions depend upon the contributions each worker has made. The employer, who also makes a contribution on behalf of the worker, is responsible for making the worker's payments to the pension fund, and deducting the amount from the employee's wages. Labour unions safeguard the interests of their members. Those who work as independent contractors have no right to their assistance.



All employees have a right to holiday. If an employee works for the same employer for a year, he/she has a right to 24 days' holiday, or a certain percentage of his/her wages in lieu. Wage slips should be kept, so that pension fund contributions and holiday can be checked.

The right to unemployment benefit is conditional upon having a valid work permit, and having been legally employed for at least ten weeks during the past twelve months. When a person with a temporary work permit loses his/her job, the right to unemployment benefit is also lost.

## Citizenship

Information on Icelandic citizenship is available from the Ministry of Justice (*Dómsmálaráðuneyti*).

# Parents and Children

## Providing for Children

All parents are under obligation to support their children. If the parents do not live together, the parent who has custody can apply to the district commissioner (*sýslumaður*) for the other parent to pay child support (*meðlag*). This applies only if the non-custodial parent is legally domiciled in Iceland. The obligation to pay child support normally ceases at the age of 18. The State Social Security Institute (*Tryggingastofnun ríkisins*) can handle the payment and collection of child support if requested.

Parents who are married or living together have joint custody of their children until the age of 18, after which the children are legally and financially of age. A mother who is not cohabiting has sole custody of a child, but parents who do not live together can agree on joint custody, or sole custody by either parent.

### **Child Benefit (*barnabætur*)**

The treasury pays child benefit to those who have children to support, for each child under the age of 16, if their income is below a certain level.

### **Names of Children**

A child must be given a name within six months of birth. If the child is not named by christening or other religious ceremony within a recognised religious body, the name must be registered with the Statistical Bureau (*Hagstofa Íslands, þjóðskrá*) on the form provided there.

## **Marriage and Cohabitation**

### **Establishment of Marriage**

Marriages can be performed by priests (clergymen), officers of the recognised religious bodies, and by district commissioners (*sýslumaður*).

Legal implications of marriage. Marriage means that the couple are mutually responsible for supporting each other. If one of the married couple dies, the surviving spouse inherits a certain part of the deceased's assets. The surviving spouse has considerable rights to continue to live in the marital home without dividing the estate among the heirs.

Man and wife each own the assets brought to the marriage, and others acquired later. These are called marriage assets (*hjúskapareignir*). Either party can dispose of his/her assets without the consent of the other, except that the consent of the spouse is required in order to mortgage the family home. Each party is responsible for debts incurred by him/herself.

### **Confirmation of Cohabitation**

Two individuals of the same sex can legally confirm their cohabitation. This is legally equivalent to marriage, with the exception that laws on adoption and on artificial insemination do not apply. Cohabitation can only be legally confirmed if one (or both) of the individuals is an Icelandic citizen, legally domiciled in Iceland.

### **Divorce**

General. Icelandic law provides for two forms of divorce, i.e. legal separation (decree nisi), which applies for a trial period, and final divorce (decree absolute). Separation and divorce are granted either by the district commissioner (*sýslumaður*) or by regional courts.

When a married couple separate or divorce, a decision must be made on which parent shall have custody, on child support payments (*meðlag*) and on division of assets. It must also be whether one party shall pay alimony to the other, and if so, how much. Parents can decide to have joint custody, and if so they must decide with which parent the child is to live.

Custody. If agreement cannot be reached on custody of the child, the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Dóms- og kirkjumálaráðuneyti*) or the courts can settle the dispute, but only if the parents are in agreement on seeking such a ruling. Parents have equal rights to custody of their children at divorce or separation, and a decision on custody of a child shall always be based on the child's best interests.

Visitation. The child has the right to spend time with the parent who does not have custody, unless special circumstances make visitation undesirable for the child, in the judgement of the authorities. The district commissioner (*sýslumaður*) or the courts shall rule on the matter. In general, neither party is required to pay the other alimony after final divorce (decree absolute).

Division of assets. When the assets of a married couple are divided, a 50% rule is applied, i.e. each party receives half the other's marriage assets, after debts have been deducted. Should no agreement be reached on the division of the assets, either party can request a formal division of assets from the regional court (*héraðsdómstóll*).

## **Cohabitation (“Common-Law Marriage”)**

A man and a woman who live together without marriage are not responsible for supporting each other, and are not each other's legal heirs. The 50% rule does not apply to separation after cohabitation without marriage (“common-law marriage”); each party retains the assets brought to the common-law marriage, and acquired subsequently. If an agreement is not reached on division of assets at such a separation, either party can request the regional courts to make a formal division of assets.

Whether a couple are separated after informal cohabitation or after marriage, the same rules apply to custody and support of children.

## **Religion**

Religious freedom applies in Iceland. The national church is evangelical Lutheran, and about 90% of the population are registered as members of this church. Other registered religious bodies number 19. The Statistical Bureau (*Hagstofa Íslands, þjóðskrá*) and the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Dóms- og kirkjumálaráðuneyti*) provide information on these religious bodies. The Bishop's Office (*Biskupsstofa*) provides information on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland. Applications to join churches and other religious organisations should be submitted to priests or other leaders of the groups

## **Local Government Social Services**

### **- Children's Welfare**

Local authorities in Iceland provide a variety of social services, and in many places there are special social service institutions (*félagsmálastofnun*). The right to social services is limited to the community in which one resides, regardless of citizenship or nationality. This right is general: the details of social services provided vary from one community to another.

Social services are e.g.: social counselling, financial assistance, home help, assistance regarding housing, day-care for children, and services for the disabled and the elderly.

### **Social Counselling**

Social service institutes provide social counselling, with the aim of providing guidance on social rights, and also providing support due to individuals' social and personal problems, e.g. counselling to parents in divorce cases.

### **Home Help**

Domestic assistance is provided to those who live at home and cannot cope with domestic tasks and personal hygiene without assistance, due to disability, family circumstances, illness etc.

### **Financial Assistance**

Every individual is obliged to support himself, his/her spouse, and children up to the age of 18; a person who cannot support him/herself and family due to poverty, ill-health, unemployment or other reasons can apply to the local authority for financial assistance.

### **Day-Mothers**

Day-mothers (child minders) provide care for children during the day for payment. They must have a license. In many places the fee paid to day-mothers by single parents is subsidised by the local authority. Information is given by each local authority.

### **The Elderly**

Health care centres and local authority social services committees are jointly responsible for matters pertaining to the elderly. The aim is that the elderly shall receive necessary health and social services, and shall be able to live a normal home life for as long as possible.

## Housing

Local authority staff help make arrangements for housing for those who are unable to do so themselves. Local authorities pay rent benefit. This is based upon a certain amount for each home, and for each child supported by the applicant, taking into account the amount of rent paid, assets and income.

## Child Welfare

Local authorities operate child welfare committees. The aim of the child welfare is primarily to ensure acceptable conditions for children. The main role of the committees is to monitor the circumstances and conditions in which



children live, both inside and outside the home. If a child's circumstances are shown to be inadequate, the child welfare committee shall give assistance in collaboration with parents, e.g. by providing advice on child care, day care, schools and/or work. If collaboration with parents is not successful, it may be necessary to resort to compulsion; in all child welfare work, all actions shall be based on the child's best interests.

The Government Agency for Child Protection (*Barnaverndarstofa*) supervises the work of child welfare committees all over the country.

## Local authority social service institutes:

Community	Address	Tel.
Reykjavík	Síðumúli 39	588-8500
Kópavogur	Fannborg 4	554-5700
Hafnarfjörður	Strandgata 8-10	565-5710
Reykjanesbær	Tjarnargata 12, Keflavík	421-6700
Mossfellsbær	Þverholt 3	566-8666
Sauðárkrókur	Skagfirðingabraut 21	453-6180
Akureyri	Glerárgata 26	460-1420
Húsavík	Ketilsbraut 22	464-1430
Selfoss	Austurvegur 2	482-1408
Vestmannaeyjar	Ráðhús	481-1092

Where no special social services institute exists, applications should be made to the town/village municipal offices.

## Social Security and Health Care

All those who have been legally domiciled in Iceland, or have enjoyed social security coverage in the European Economic Area, for at least the past six months, are covered by health insurance (*sjúkratrygging*). Those who move from an EEA country must produce the form E104 to confirm that they have had continuous coverage for six months, in order to be eligible immediately for health insurance. A summary of the benefits provided by the social security system follows. Application forms for benefit are available at the State Social Security Institute (*Tryggingastofnun ríkisins*) and its representatives in individual communities.

## Medical Costs, Costs for Health Care

Those who are covered by health insurance pay only part of medical costs. Those who are not covered must pay full costs. Senior citizens and the disabled pay lower fees than others for medical services and for medications.

Payment may be made for emergency treatment during the six-month waiting period. An application is made to the State Social Security Institute, which assesses whether the case is an emergency. A sudden deterioration in an existing disease may be counted as an emergency. In some cases the patient pays part of the cost.

### **Maternity/Paternity Leave**

All mothers who are legally domiciled in Iceland and have been so continuously for the past twelve months have a right to six months' maternity leave. Fathers have their own right to two weeks' paternity leave. They may also, with the mother's consent, utilise part of the mother's maternity leave entitlement. Parents on maternity/paternity leave have a right to a parenthood grant and or maternity/paternity benefit from the State Social Security Institute, if they are not entitled to pay from their employer during maternity/paternity leave.

### **Single Parents' Benefit**

Single parents, legally domiciled in Iceland, with children to support under the age of 18 may be paid single parents' benefit (*mæðralaun, feðralaun*).

### **Child Pension (*barnalífeyrir*)**

A child pension is paid to children aged under 18, if one or both parents are deceased or disabled (in receipt of disablement benefit), provided that one of the parents or the child has been legally domiciled in Iceland for at least the past three years.

### **Sickness Benefit (*sjúkradagpeningar*)**

All those aged 16 and over who are covered by health insurance have a right to sickness benefit when ill, if they are not eligible for other benefit or salary.

### **Accident Benefit**

All employees working in Iceland are insured against accidents. Those who work in the home can be insured by requesting this on their tax return. The same can apply to the self-employed and to seamen.

### **Health Services**

Everybody is entitled to health care services. This includes health care, medical and nursing services, rehabilitation, dentistry and ambulance services.

### **Health Care Centres (*heilsugæslustöð*)**

Health care centres offer basic health care, such as: preventative health care, health education, maternity care, baby care, health care for schools, immunization, tuberculosis monitoring, measures against sexually transmitted diseases, psychiatric health care and measures against substance abuse.

### **Antenatal Care and Baby Care**

Care for expectant mothers and babies is generally carried out by health care centres. Nurses and midwives visit new-borns in the home to monitor the health of the baby and family, and to provide information and advice.

### **Doctors**

In general, it is assumed that patients will go in the first instance to their family doctor (*heimilislæknir*). Family doctors (general practitioners) work at health care centres or have their own practices. If the patient's family doctor cannot be contacted, the patient may go to the nearest health care centre.

### **Medical Specialists**

Doctors at health care centres and in their own practice refer patients to specialists if necessary. Patients may, however, go direct to specialists without consulting a family doctor first.

### **Medications**

Medications are available at pharmacies (*apótek, lyfjabúð*). Most are only obtainable with a doctor's prescription. The patient normally pays part of the cost of the medication. Pharmacies also sell various remedies for common ailments; these are sold without prescription, and the patient pays the full cost.

## Admission to Hospital or Emergency Department

Patients are admitted to hospital only at the request of a doctor. In an emergency, however, the patient may go direct to the hospital. Family doctors operate 24-hour emergency services in health care centres all over the country. The doctors' emergency service in Reykjavík is at the Reykjavík Communal Health Care Centre (*heilsugæslustöð*), tel. 552-1230. In the case of accidents and life-threatening or serious illness, patients should go to the Emergency Department (*Slysadeild*) at the Reykjavík City Hospital (*Sjúkrahús Reykjavíkur*).

## Ambulances

Ambulance transport is provided for injured and ill people who cannot travel otherwise. Information on telephone numbers for ambulances is at the front of the telephone directory. The national emergency number for police, fire service or ambulance is 112.

## Dentistry

Dentists operate their own practices. Patients pay for dental care according to a list of fixed charges. Children and young people aged 15 and under have a right to one dental examination per year free. Health insurance pays 75% of the cost of dental work on children aged 15 and under, other than gold fillings, crowns and bridges. For dentistry on young people aged 16, other than gold fillings and bridges, 50% of the cost is paid. In the case of orthodontal work on children, and dentistry for the elderly and disabled, special rules apply on partial payment of costs by health insurance.

An emergency dental service can be contacted on tel. 568-0141.

## Medical Examination for Residence Permit

At the outpatients' clinic for infectious diseases (*göngudeild smitsjúkdóma*) at the Reykjavík City Hospital (*Sjúkrahús Reykjavíkur*), and at the tuberculosis clinic (*berkladeild*) of the Reykjavík Communal Health Care Centre (*Heilsuverndarstöð*), a free medical examination is available. Children are examined at the children's department of the National Hospital (*Landspítali*). Medical examinations in connection with residence permits can also be made at health care centres.

## Interpreters for Users of Health Centres

Patients who do not speak Icelandic have a right to an interpreter to translate information on their health, condition, prospects of recovery, treatment planned, and other possible measures.

# Education

## Play School (Kindergarten)

Play schools are for children under compulsory school age. It is important for children living in Iceland, but not speaking Icelandic in the home, to attend play school, for at least part of the day. If they do so, their studies at primary school, in Icelandic, will be made easier for them. A monthly fee is payable for play school.

## Primary/Lower Secondary School

School attendance is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16. Parents are under an obligation to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are registered and attend school. Tuition and teaching aids in the school are paid for by the local authority.

The school year is nine months, from September to May. The date of the first day of school in the autumn is advertised in the newspapers. If there is any doubt about which school the child is supposed to attend, information is available from the education office (*skólaskrifstofa*) of the local authority. Compulsory subjects include Icelandic, Danish, English, mathematics, social studies,



Christian studies and sport. Parents can make an application to the head of the school for an exemption from certain subjects.

Students whose native language is not Icelandic have a right to special teaching in the Icelandic language. This refers to help with adapting, and support in studies, until the student has learned enough Icelandic to be able to study in an Icelandic school. Students can be exempted from taking the national final examination at the end of compulsory schooling (*samræmd próf*), and take a special final examination in Icelandic instead. Schools have the right to offer studies in the language of bilingual students. Pupils may study in their own language outside school, and gain credits for this in school. Teaching of the native languages of primary/lower secondary school pupils is offered, for instance, at the Information and Cultural Centre for Foreigners (*Miðstöð nýbúa*) in Reykjavík and the Reykjavík Adult Education Centre (*Námsflokkar Reykjavíkur*).

### **Upper Secondary Education**

Compulsory education to the age of 16 is followed by upper-secondary education, which is not compulsory. All those who have completed compulsory education or the equivalent have, by law, the right to upper secondary education. Students pay a registration fee, which varies between different types of study. Tuition is free to students, but they must buy their own books.

Upper secondary school study takes one to four years. Many different courses of study are available: these are vocational courses, academic courses and general courses. Courses are taught in Icelandic, and most of the textbooks are in Icelandic.

The Reykjavík Technical School (*Iðnskólinn*) offers Icelandic tuition for students with other native languages, and this course is credited towards qualifications.

Registration of students in secondary school generally takes place on the first two working days in June. The school year is normally from the beginning of September to May.

### **Icelandic Courses**

Icelandic courses have been offered by the Reykjavík Adult Education Centre and in secondary schools. These courses are intended for students whose native language is not of the Germanic group. The emphasis is on everyday language. Courses normally begin in September and January.

The Reykjavík Adult Education Centre has also offered four-week summer courses in July and August. The course is taught five days a week. Courses are for both adults and children. A creche is provided, and there are play programmes for children, provided by the Reykjavík Sports and Leisure Council (*Íþrótt- og tómstundaráð Reykjavíkur*).

Various schools offer courses in Icelandic. See the list of educational bodies.

### **Adult Education**

Many secondary schools offer various courses for mature students on their curriculum. Vocational and leisure courses are offered by many independent schools/colleges.

### **University Education**

A total of 13 colleges in Iceland now offer university-level education. Admission is normally conditional upon graduation from an Icelandic secondary school (*stúdentspróf*) or the equivalent from a secondary school abroad. Almost all tuition is in Icelandic, while textbooks are often in foreign languages.

### **Study Loans**

The Student Loan Fund (*Lánasjóður íslenskra námsmanna*) makes study loans to Icelandic students, mainly at university level. Nordic citizens who have lived in Iceland for two years have the same rights as Icelandic students, if they do not receive financial assistance from their home country. This can be applied to citizens of other countries, provided that Icelandic students have the same rights in the country concerned.

## Educational Bodies that provide Icelandic Courses for Adults:

Institution	Tel.	Address
Menntamálaráðuneyti	560-9500	Sölvhólgata 4, Reykjavík
Námsstjóri nýbúafraeðslu	552-7741	
Fullorðinsfræðsla- og framhaldsskólastig		Námsflokkar Reykjavíkur
Farskóli Vesturlands	431-2544	Fjölbrautaskóli Vesturlands, Akranes
Farskóli Vestfjarða	456-4215	Framhaldsskóli Vestfjarða, Ísafjörður
Farskóli Norðurlands vestra	453-6400	Fjölbrautask. Norðurl. vestra, Sauðárkrókur
Farskóli Þingeyinga	464-1344	Framhaldsskólinn á Húsavík
Farskólinn á Austurlandi	477-1285	Verkmenntaskóli Austurlands, Neskaupstaður
Farskóli Suðurlands	482-2111	Fjölbrautaskóli Suðurlands, Selfoss
Fjölbrautaskóli Suðurnesja	421-3100	Fjölbrautask. Suðurnesja, Keflavík
Námsflokkar Hafnarfjarðar	555-3444	Strandgata 4, Hafnarfjörður
Kvöldskóli Kópavogs	564-1507	Snælandsskóli, Kópavogur
Námsflokkar Reykjavíkur	551-2992	Fríkirkjuvegur 1, Reykjavík
Endurmenntunarsstofnun HÍ	525-4924	Tækniгарður við Suðurgötu, Reykjavík
Tómstundaskólinn	588-7222	Grensásvegur 16A, Reykjavík
Fullorðinsfræðslan	557-1155	Gerðuberg 1, Reykjavík
Bréfaskólinn	568-9750	Ármúli 40, Reykjavík

## Payment of Taxes

In Iceland, taxes are paid on a pay-as-you-earn system: this comprises income tax and local government tax. Employers must calculate and deduct tax from the salaries paid to employees. Tax is calculated at a rate of 39.20% in 1998; from this, the employer is permitted to deduct a personal allowance (*skattaafsláttur*), provided the employee has handed over his/her tax card. The personal allowance is calculated on the basis of period of residence (from date of arrival to date of departure), and the tax card must be handed to the employer at the start of employment.

All permanent residents of Iceland receive a tax card at the age of 16, after which they are regarded as tax-payers. Those who are not permanent residents of Iceland can get a tax card from the Director of Internal Revenue (*Ríkisskattstjóri*), Laugarvegur 166, Reykjavík, on presentation of their identity number (*kennitala*), residence permit and work permit. Personal allowance can only be deducted from tax paid if the tax card is produced. It is possible to have more than one tax card issued, e.g. if the employee works for more than one employer.

All those who are not permanently resident in Iceland must submit a tax return to the tax office before departure. Final tax assessment is carried out the year after the income was earned, and is completed 1 August of that year.

## Free Legal Assistance

### Parliamentary Ombudsman

If a person feels that his/her rights have been violated by the authorities, he/she can take a complaint to the parliamentary ombudsman (*Umboðsmaður Alþingis*). The ombudsman monitors the public administration at the national and local level. His role is to protect the interests of the citizen viz-à-viz the authorities, and to ensure fairness in public administration.

### Gender Equality

Legislation applies in Iceland on the equal rights of men and women. The legislation emphasises equality in work and pay. An Equal Opportunities Commission (*Jafnréttisráð*) has the job of ensuring that the law is observed. The commission operates at the Equal Opportunities office (*Skrifstofa jafnréttismála*), where information on gender equality is available.

## Children's Ombudsman

The children's ombudsman (*Umboðsmaður barna*) has the role of improving the situation of children and protecting their interests, needs and rights. The ombudsman aims to induce the authorities, individuals and others to fully respect the rights, needs and interests of children. The ombudsman does not deal with specific disputes between individuals, but provides advice to those who bring such cases to his/her attention.

## Information and Cultural Centre for Foreigners (*Miðstöð nýbúa*)

In Reykjavík, an information and cultural centre (*Miðstöð nýbúa*) operates for immigrants to Iceland. Activities at the centre comprise: information service, interpreter service, education, youth activities, and cultural activities, mostly handled by various immigrant societies. The centre provides all general information, e.g. on residence permits, employment and health care. Courses are held to provide information, and interpreters are available in over 40 languages. The centre publishes a newsletter, which is distributed to those who request it.



## Information

It is important for everyone living in Iceland to know what their rights and obligations are, and to know where to go if they have problems, or to defend their rights. In the telephone directory, people are listed by their first name. The same applies to names of Icelandic books at the library. The following list includes various bodies where information and help is available if required.

### Institution

Neyðarlínan  
Tryggingastofnun ríkisins  
Skrifstofa jafnréttismála  
Umboðsmaður Alþingis  
Umboðsmaður barna  
Útlendingaeftirlitið  
Kvennáráðgjöfin Reykjavík  
Kvennaathvarfið  
grænt númer  
Félagsmálaráðuneyti  
Dómsmálaráðuneyti  
Ríkisskattsjóri  
Hagstofa Íslands, þjóðskrá  
Rauði kross Íslands  
Rauðakross húsið  
Miðstöð nýbúa  
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Published by: Ministry of Social Affairs, 1st edition, July 1998.  
Cover design: Ydda / Printed by: Grafik / Photographs: Information and Cultural Centre  
for Foreigners and Vinnan, organ of the Icelandic Federation of Labour  
ISBN 9979-868-19-8