

## **Iceland Country Constitution Assignment**

### **1. Features of the State's Constitution**

How often has the constitution been amended? The Icelandic Constitution has been amended seven times.

When was the constitution ratified? The Icelandic Constitution was ratified on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

How many articles does the constitution contain? The Icelandic Constitution contains eighty-one articles.

### **2. System of Government**

Is the country unitary, federal, or confederal? Iceland is unitary.

Do certain regions have autonomy and how is it defined? Iceland does not have certain regional autonomy.

What powers are shared and divided among governments in the country? Althingi and the President of Iceland jointly exercise legislative power. The President and other governmental authorities referred to in this Constitution and elsewhere in the law exercise executive power. Judges exercise judicial power.

### **3. Regime Type**

Is the country parliamentary, presidential, or semi-presidential? Iceland is a Republic with a parliamentary government. Althingi, which is a unicameral legislature of Iceland, and the president of Iceland jointly exercise legislative power. The President and other governmental authorities referred to in this Constitution and elsewhere in the law exercise executive power. Judges exercise judicial power.

If the country is parliamentary, how is the cabinet formed? In Iceland, the President entrusts his authority to Ministers. The accountability of the Ministers is established by law. The President appoints Ministers and discharges them. He determines their number and assignments. The State Council is composed of the President of the Republic and the Ministers and is presided over by the President. Ministerial meetings shall be held to discuss new legislative proposals and important State matters. The meetings shall be presided over by the Minister called upon by the President of the Republic to do so, who is designated Prime Minister.

If the country is parliamentary, is there a figurehead leader, and if so, what is their role? The signature of the President validates a legislative act or government measure when countersigned by a Minister. The President appoints public officials as provided by law. The President may remove from office any official whom he has appointed. The President may transfer officials from one office to another provided that their official remuneration is not reduced, and that they have an option between such transfer and retirement with a pension, or old-age benefits, as prescribed by law.

If the country is presidential, are there term limit? N/A.

If the country is presidential, what types of powers does the president wield? N/A.

If the country is semi-presidential, what is the division of power? N/A.

## **5. Legislative Branch**

Is the legislature unicameral or bicameral? Iceland is unicameral. Sessions of Althingi are held in one chamber.

Does the constitution discuss a committee system? Althingi may appoint committees of its Members to investigate important matters of public interest. Althingi may grant authority to such committees to request reports, oral or written, from officials as well as from individuals.

How is the speaker of the legislature chosen? The speaker of the Althing, which is the "Icelandic parliament is the Birgir Ármannsson," (Wikipedia) is chosen by an election based on the Althingi, who presides over its proceedings.

## **6. Elections and Electoral System**

Does the constitution discuss the electoral system, and if so, what is the system? The Iceland constitution does discuss electoral systems. Althingi shall be composed of 63 members elected by the people by secret ballot based on proportional representation for a term of four years. Electoral districts shall be no fewer than six and no more than seven in number.

Are legislative seats provided for specific groups? Iceland does not have legislative seats for specific groups, however, for each respective electoral district, six seats shall be allocated by the outcome of elections within that district. The number of parliamentary seats for each electoral district shall in other respects be defined by law. Seats other than those allocated to the electoral districts shall be distributed within each respective electoral district to provide individual political parties with representation fully reflecting each party's total number of votes. However, only political parties having received at least five percent of all valid votes cast nationwide shall be eligible for such distribution. If the number of voters on the voting register represented by each parliamentary seat, allocated or distributed, becomes in one electoral district one-half of the number represented by each parliamentary seat in another electoral district.

How often are elections held for various offices? "The president is elected every four years (last 2020), the cabinet is elected every four years (last 2021) and town council elections are held every four years (last 2018)," (Wikipedia).

## **7. Rights and Freedoms**

Are there any group-based rights? The few groups based mentioned in Iceland's constitution pertain to children, elders, and the sick. However, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and belief; the right to form religious associations and to practice their

religion in conformity with their individual convictions; the right to be equal before the law, and enjoy human rights irrespective of sex, religion, opinion, national origin, race, color, property, birth, or other status; the right to choose his residence and shall enjoy freedom of travel subject to any limitations laid down by law. The restrictions on the rights of groups mention that the right of foreign parties to own real property interests or shares in business enterprises in Iceland may be limited by law.

Which types of groups are protected in the constitution? There are a few types of groups protected in the constitution, everyone is guaranteed assistance in case of sickness, invalidity, infirmity because of old age, unemployment, and similar circumstance. For children, the law shall guarantee the protection and care which is necessary for their well-being.

Are specific linguistic, religious, and ethnic-based rights guaranteed by the country? The official religion of Iceland is the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the State Church in Iceland, and is supported and protected by the State.

Are economic rights guaranteed by the country? The only economic rights guaranteed by the country are that everyone is free to pursue the occupation of his choosing. The rights of people to negotiate terms of employment and other labor-related matters shall be regulated by law. Matters concerning taxes shall be regulated by law. The power to decide whether to levy a tax, change a tax or abolish a tax may not be vested in administrative authorities. No tax may be levied unless the levy was permitted by law at the time when the facts occurred on which tax liability is based. The income sources of the municipalities, and the right of the municipalities to decide whether and how to use their sources of income, shall be regulated by law.

## **8. Level of Democracy**

According to Freedom House, what is the current level of political rights and civil liberties in the country? How is it classified by Freedom House Free, Partly Free, or Not Free? In Iceland, Political Rights scored thirty-seven out of forty. For Civil Liberties, Iceland scored fifty-seven out of sixty. Overall, Iceland scores ninety-four out of one hundred. Iceland is classified as Free. *Freedom in the World* assesses Free, Partly Free, or Not Free based on the rights and freedoms of individuals, rather than governments or government performance. Freedom House assesses countries based on if governed separately from the rest of the relevant country or countries; whether conditions on the ground for political rights and civil liberties are significantly different from those in the rest of the relevant country or countries, meaning a separate assessment is likely to yield different ratings; whether the territory is the subject of enduring popular or diplomatic pressure for autonomy, independence, or incorporation into another country; whether the territory's boundaries are sufficiently stable to allow an assessment of conditions for the year under review, and whether they can be expected to remain stable in future years so that year-on-year comparisons are possible; and whether the territory is large and/or politically significant. Iceland is considered Free.

## **9. Corruption**

According to Transparency International, what is the current level of corruption in the country? The current level of corruption in Iceland is 74 out of 100. Iceland ranks 13 out of 100 and 8 countries. Iceland is in the top 15 least corrupt countries.

According to Transparency International, has your country improved, declined, or stayed the same in its level of corruption? Iceland's current level of corruption has gone from 82 in 2012 to 74 in 2021, over ten years, the corruption score has decreased meaning that the corruption levels are higher in Iceland today than they were ten years ago.

## **10. Political Economy**

According to the [World Bank](#) [Links to an external site.](#), what is your country's per capita GDP (PPP)? The World Bank names Iceland's GDP for 2021 at 68,282.8

### **References:**

Wikipedia. 2022. Politics of Iceland. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics\\_of\\_Iceland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Iceland)