

Foreign Service of Iceland Act

No. 39/1971, 16 April

Entered into force on 11 May 1971. Amended by [Act No 86/1989](#) (entered into force on 14 June 1989), [Act No. 83/1997](#) (entered into force on 6 June 1997), [Act No 126/2011](#) (entered into force on 30 September 2011) and [Act No 130/2016](#) (entered into force on 1 July 2017).

Article 1

The Foreign Service of Iceland shall conduct foreign affairs and protect, in all respects, the interests of Iceland vis-à-vis other states. The Service shall be particularly concerned with the protection of the interests of Iceland in the following fields:

- 1) political and national security affairs;
- 2) foreign trade; and
- 3) cultural affairs.

The Foreign Service is charged with the conclusion, on behalf of the President, of agreements with other states, unless an exception is made from this rule by legislation or by presidential decree.

Furthermore, the Foreign Service shall protect and assist Icelandic nationals vis-à-vis foreign authorities, institutions and individuals.

Article 2

The Foreign Service is composed of the [Ministry] ¹⁾, embassies, permanent missions to international organizations and consulates.

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 3

Administration of the Foreign Service rests with the [Ministry] ¹⁾, which ensures that the laws and regulations governing the conduct of foreign affairs are carried out.

[The Permanent Secretary of State of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is in charge of the daily running of the Ministry, together with other staff to whom this task is delegated.] ¹⁾

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 4

Embassies, permanent missions to international organizations and consulates shall be maintained in such locations abroad where they are considered necessary for the purpose of protecting the interests of Iceland.

The locations of embassies, permanent missions to international organizations and consulates shall be laid down by presidential decree (cf. Article 7). ¹⁾

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Althingi shall be consulted regarding decisions under this article.

¹⁾*Presidential Decree 8/2018.*

Article 5

The [Minister] ¹⁾ may charge the head of an embassy to serve as the head of embassies in more than one country, or with serving simultaneously as a permanent representative to international organisations.

Heads of embassies and other embassy staff may be charged with consular functions along with their other duties.

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 6

The heads of diplomatic missions are ambassadors or minister-counsellors. The heads of permanent missions to international organizations are permanent representatives and the [Minister] ¹⁾ may grant them the title of Ambassador while they serve in this capacity, in cases where they have not already been appointed ambassadors.

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 7

Consular officers are either permanent [staff members] ¹⁾ of the Foreign Service, career consuls, or selected to serve the Foreign Service as honorary consuls. The latter need not be Icelandic nationals. They receive no salary, but their office expenses may be paid to some extent if considered necessary.

Consuls general serve as heads of consulates general, consuls serve as heads of consulates and vice-consuls serve as heads of vice-consulates.

¹⁾[Act 83/1997, Article 152](#)

Article 8

Staff members of the Foreign Service, other than honorary consul, are classified into the following categories, at home and abroad:

Category 1: Permanent Secretary of State. Ambassadors.

Category 2: Director General, Minister-Counsellors. Consuls general.

Category 3: Directors. Counsellors. Consuls.

Category 4: Officers A-Grade. Secretaries of embassy. Vice-consuls.

Category 5: Officers B-Grade. Assistants.

In addition, the staff of the Foreign Service includes the Archivist of the [Ministry], ¹⁾ book-keepers, secretarial staff and other personnel, as may be determined by the [Ministry]. ¹⁾

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 9

[The [Minister] appoints those [officers] ¹⁾ listed in categories 1 and 2 of Article 8 for a term of 5 years at a time. However, honorary consuls may be appointed for an indeterminate length of time. Other employees are recruited.]²⁾

¹⁾[Act No 130/2016, Article 8](#) ²⁾[Act No 83/1997, Article 153](#)

Article 10

[Members of the Foreign Service are required to serve either abroad or in the [Ministry] ¹⁾, as determined by the [Minister]. A new appointment is not required when an officer is transferred from one post to another or between positions within the same category as defined in Article 8 but his or her term of office is prolonged for five years when the transfer takes place.] ²⁾

¹⁾[Act No 126/2011, Article 51](#) ²⁾[Act No 83/1997, Article 154](#)

Article 11

In addition to staff listed in Article 8, persons may be engaged by the Foreign Service for a specified period of time for the purpose of undertaking special assignments, for example as

commercial attachés, fisheries attachés, press attachés or cultural attachés. Commercial attachés shall seek markets for Icelandic products and in other respects facilitate commerce with other countries.

During the time that persons on special assignments serve in the Foreign Service in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article, they shall, as appropriate, be subject to the same rules as [permanent staff members]¹⁾ of the Foreign Service carrying out similar duties.

¹⁾[Act 83/1997, Article 155](#)

Article 12

The [Ministry]¹⁾ shall have a library on international law and foreign affairs.

The [Ministry]¹⁾ handles registration of all agreements between Iceland and other states, as well as their publication.

The Archivist of the Ministry shall, as a rule, in addition to his or her other duties, be in charge of the library and the registration and publication of agreements.

Scholars shall be allowed the use of the Ministry's library, subject to the approval of the Minister.

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 13

Members of the Foreign Service receive salaries in accordance with the general rules governing the salaries of civil servants. Additionally, members of the Foreign Service who serve abroad shall receive post allowances based on the cost of essentials (food, housing, etc.), and other particular local conditions. Furthermore, those members of the Foreign Service who are posted abroad for protracted periods shall receive a remuneration for part of the costs incurred in sending their children to school in Iceland. The post allowances shall be determined by rules issued by the [Minister]¹⁾ after consultation with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Althingi. In the same manner, rules shall be issued concerning the payment of medical expenses incurred by members of the Foreign Service serving abroad.

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#)

Article 14

Members of the Foreign Service are not permitted to undertake employment outside the Foreign Service, except in special circumstances and subject to the approval of the [Minister].¹⁾

In other respects, members of the Foreign Service shall be subject, as appropriate, to the provisions of the Rights and Obligations of Civil Servants Act. [However, it is permitted to depart from the provisions of Article 7 of that Act as regards officers listed under category 1 of Article 8 of this Act.]²⁾

The provisions of this article do not apply to honorary consuls.

¹⁾[Act No 126/2011, Article 51](#) ²⁾[Act No 83/1997, Article 156](#)

Article 15 ...¹⁾

¹⁾[Act 86/1989, Article 16](#)

Article 16

Expenditures incurred under this Act shall be paid from the Treasury.

Article 17

Fees for official acts performed by members of the Foreign Service shall be collected in accordance with instructions issued by the [Minister] ¹⁾ in the form of regulations. ²⁾

¹⁾[Act 126/2011, Article 51](#) ²⁾[Regulation 353/1999](#).

Article 18

The [Minister] ¹⁾ issues general staff rules for members of the Foreign Service and determines their duties. ²⁾

¹⁾[L. 126/2011, 51. gr.](#) ²⁾[Regulation 625/1999](#). [Regulation 55/2004](#).

*[This translation is published for information only.
The original Icelandic text is published in the Law Gazette.
In case of a possible discrepancy, the original Icelandic text applies.]*