

New Icelandic Government formed



Prime Minister
Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir

The Government of the Social Democratic Alliance and the Left-Green Movement took office on 1 February. The policy of the Government is to assure an effective administration to carry out urgent measures, particularly for the benefit of households and businesses, and the rebuilding of the banking system. Furthermore administrative reform and measures in favour of increased democracy are on the Government's agenda.

The economic policy of the Government will be based on the programme already established by the authorities and the International Monetary Fund, IMF. The Government will conduct a prudent fiscal policy according to which the fundamentals of the welfare system will be protected.

The two parties agree on the importance of holding early elections, set for 25 April 2009. The Progressive Party will defend the Government against parliamentary motions of no-confidence.

Ten ministers sit in the new government, five men and five women. Two of the ministers are not Members of Parliament.

Prime Minister:

Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, SDA

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Industry, Energy and Tourism:

Össur Skarphéðinsson, SDA

Minister of Social Affairs and Social Security:

Ásta Ragnheiður Jóhannesdóttir, SDA

Minister of Communications:

Kristján Möller, SDA

Minister of Finance, Fisheries and Agriculture:

Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, LG

Minister of Health:

Ögmundur Jónasson, LG

Minister of Education, Science and Culture:

Katrín Jakobsdóttir, LG

Minister for the Environment:

Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir, LG

Minister of Business Affairs:

Gylfi Magnússon

Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs:

Ragna Árnadóttir

Icelanders send woollen clothes to UK pensioners

In the last week of January a container full of woollen jumpers and blankets arrived in the north-east of England after an appeal on the Icelandic radio station Bylgjan. They were handed to local charities in Hull where they will be distributed to pensioners. This effort received widespread attention in the UK media.

Egillssjóður

The Egill Skallagrímsson Fund is a registered charity in Britain under the auspices of the Embassy of Iceland. The main objective of the Fund is to promote the culture and art of Iceland in the United Kingdom and for this purpose it provides financial support for artistic endeavours. Grants are awarded twice a year and are usually given on the basis of artistic merit and financial need. Applications must reach the Embassy before 1 May or 1 November.

During the latter period of 2008, fifteen applications were received and the board of the Fund decided on grants for the following projects:

- **Laufey Arna Johansen** for an art exhibit at Nice08 art fair in Liverpool, November 2008.
- **Björg Þórhallsdóttir** for a concert at the Nice08 festival.
- **Trúbatrix/Iceland** for a planned concert tour of Britain in the spring of 2009.
- A grant to support the cultural programme presented at the **Icelandic 90th Independence** festivities at Cadogan Hall in London on 1st December, 2008.
- Theatre group **Regína** for the educational play "What if", scheduled for performance later this winter.
- **Peter Roy Alexander** for a photography exhibition "INDUSTRIAL ICELAND" at the James Taylor gallery in Hackney, London.
- **Kristín Dagmar Jóhannesdóttir** for the multimedia installation "Ten Tales" where a group of artists explore the boundaries and potential of the book as an artistic medium.
- **Friðrik Erlingsson** for promotional work on the publication of his novel "Fish in the sky" in the UK.
- **Charlie Strand** for promotion of his book "Project Iceland" on Icelandic designers and artists.
- A grant for the promotion of Icelandic artists at the "**Frost Fair**" festival in Newcastle in November 2008.

Funding for The Egill Skallagrímsson Fund is made available by contributions from Icelandic companies in the UK. The members of the board are Ambassador Gunnlaugsson, Archaeologist Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir and Gústaf Baldvinsson, Managing Director of Seagold UK.

Upcoming events

Reykjavík Eyes

The Ambassador will host in February an introduction of the award winning (Universal Design Award 2009), "Reykjavík Eyes" designs of the Icelandic eyewear designer Gunnar Gunnarsson. Andrew Actman Ltd is the manufacturing- and distributing agent in the UK. www.reykjavikeyes.com

Second International Conference on Energy Solutions for Transport

Global pioneers in the worldwide trend of renewable energy for transport will gather in Iceland this fall to explore the most exciting developments in the field. The Conference is sponsored by the City of Reykjavík, Landsbanki and Icelandair and will take place on 14-15 September 2009. For more information see: www.driving.is