

Museum Act

2011 No 141 24 September

Entry into force 1 January 2013.

Any reference in this Act to “the Minister” or “the Ministry” not accompanied by express mention of or reference to a specific field of responsibility shall be understood as being a reference to the **Minister of Education, Science and Culture** or to the **Ministry of Education, Science and Culture** as responsible for the implementation of this Act.

Section I Purpose, scope and definitions

■ Article 1 *Purpose*

The present Act lays down provisions relating to the organisation of museum activities for the purpose of supporting the work carried out by museums to preserve the Icelandic cultural and natural heritage, ensuring that it can be passed on unscathed to future generations, providing access to it for the public, and contributing to increased knowledge of this heritage and an awareness of its place in the global context.

■ Article 2 *Scope*

This Act applies to museums in the ownership of the state and to other museums enjoying accreditation pursuant to the Act.

The Act does not apply to libraries or document archives.

■ Article 3 *Role of museums*

For the purposes of this Act, ‘museums’ are permanently established institutions which are operated in the public interest and not for the sake of profit. They shall be accessible to the public.

The role of museums, through their activities of collecting, cataloguing, preserving, studying, exhibiting and communicating in other ways, is to safeguard the Icelandic cultural and natural heritage, elucidate the country’s cultural, natural and artistic history, expand collections and strengthen documentation work within their specific subject areas, and make their collections and archives accessible to the general public and to academics. Museums shall be guided in their work by the objective of increasing people’s quality of life by enhancing their understanding of the evolution and current state of culture, art, nature and science.

Museums shall carry out systematic collection of objects and documents in order to ensure the most comprehensive representation possible of their specific subject areas.

■ Article 4 *Central museums, accredited museums and special responsibility museums*

Central museums shall be in the ownership of the state and shall serve as principal centres of museum activity in their respective subject areas. They shall be established through Acts of parliament laying down more detailed provisions on their operations.

Accredited museums are museums which have been awarded accreditation by the Minister on the proposal of the Museum Council. Such a museum shall be active in a particular field or geographic area to be specified in its founding documents.

Special responsibility museums are accredited museums which, on a proposal submitted by the relevant central museum, have been entrusted by the Minister with responsibility for specific aspects of museum activity in a particular subject or geographic region.

■ **Article 5** *Other museum-related activities, museums in the making, centres, and exhibitions*

‘Museums in the making’ are such institutions as conduct museum-related activities without meeting all requirements as museums to qualify for accreditation pursuant to Article 10.

‘Centres’ are such institutions as are normally active in the fields of research and communication, rather than in those of collection or preservation.

‘Exhibitions’ are independent business entities active in the field of communication rather than in those of collection, preservation or research.

Museums in the making, centres and exhibitions can be eligible for grants from the Museum Fund to carry out specified projects in collaboration with accredited museums, as stipulated in Article 22.

Section II Organisation

■ **Article 6** *General administration and implementation*

The Minister shall assume responsibility for the general administration of any matter governed by this Act.

The Museum Council shall advise the Minister and other public authorities on museum-related matters.

■ **Article 7** *Museum Council*

The Minister shall appoint a Museum Council for a four-year term. The Association of Local Authorities in Iceland, the Icelandic Museums Association and the Icelandic national committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) shall each nominate one member to the Council. Two members, one of which shall serve as Chair, shall be appointed by the Minister without nomination while the Vice-chair shall be selected from among the other members of the Council. Alternate members shall be appointed in the same manner. The same person may not be appointed as principal member of the Museum Council for more than two consecutive terms. Principal and alternate members of the Museum Council must have expert knowledge of the operation of museums as well as relevant experience or education in this field.

The Museum Council has the following roles:

- a. To supervise museum activities in Iceland;
- b. In cooperation with the central museums, to draft policies with regard to the work of museums and submit them to the Minister for approval;
- c. To discuss and approve the founding documents or statutes of museums;
- d. To discuss proposals for the accreditation of museums or the withdrawal of accreditation before they are submitted to the Minister;
- e. To lay down conditions regarding museum premises, including accessibility standards and safety issues;
- f. To lay down conditions regarding standards for museums’ cataloguing systems and the accreditation of such systems;
- g. To provide the relevant central museum with an opinion on requests or suggestions for the disposal or destruction of museum objects;
- h. To assess the need of a particular area of study or geographic region for a separate special responsibility museum and discuss proposals for such a museum before they are submitted to the Minister by the relevant central museum;
- i. To draw up the Museum Fund’s award rules, to be approved by the Minister;

j. To evaluate applications for grants from the Museum Fund;
k. To undertake other tasks related to the operation of museums as further decided by the Minister.

- The Directors of the central museums shall attend Museum Council meetings *ex officio*.
- The Minister shall decide on the location of the Museum Council.
- The Council's running costs shall be borne by the Museum Fund.

■ **Article 8** *Central museums*

- Three central museums shall operate: the National Gallery of Iceland, the Icelandic Museum of Natural History, and the National Museum of Iceland. They shall serve an advisory role to other museums and promote cooperation between museums and the coordination of museum policies in their respective subject fields.
- The central museums shall take on a leading role with respect to museum-related matters in their respective subject areas, contribute to the strengthening and increased coordination of museum activities, and spearhead the professional collaboration of museums with other parties. Central museums shall endeavour to improve and increase the knowledge and skills of museum workers.
- Central museums shall undertake promotion activities in relation to their respective subject areas both nationally and abroad.
- The central museums shall use their collections as the basis for their educational and promotional activities. The collections shall also be made accessible for research purposes.
- Central museums may not accept donations that are made subject to conditions. The Minister may grant exemptions from this provision where duly justified.

Section III Accredited museums

■ **Article 9** *Accreditation*

- The Minister shall award accreditation to a museum based on a proposal submitted by the Museum Council. With the exception of the central museums, every museum wishing to enjoy the benefits of this Act must apply for accreditation. Applications for the accreditation of a museum shall be directed to the Museum Council. Applications shall contain information about the relevant museum's field of activity, legal form, ownership, mode of funding and annual budget, as well as about its founding documents or statutes and any other requirements for accreditation listed in Article 10.
- Based on a proposal submitted by the Museum Council, the Minister may revoke the accreditation of a museum where the Council considers that the museum in question no longer meets the requirements for accreditation.
- Accredited museums shall be entitled to the use of a special logo designed for the Museum Council for this purpose. Museums for which accreditation has been revoked may not continue to use the special logo of accredited museums.
- Accredited museums may apply for grants from the Museum Fund.

■ **Article 10** *Requirements for accreditation*

- In order to qualify for accreditation, museums must meet the following requirements:
 1. The museum must be in the ownership of a public entity, a non-profit organisation, an association or a company which is capable of ensuring the necessary funding for its normal operation and appoints its board. The museum must not be operated for the purpose of seeking a profit.
 2. The museum must have an independent budget separate from other operations of its owner. The museum's accounts must be signed by a chartered accountant. It must provide the Museum Council with annual reports relating to its activities as well as a financial statement.
 3. The museum must operate in accordance with founding documents or statutes approved by the Museum Council pursuant to Article 7. The founding documents or statutes must