



## ICELAND'S APPLICATION TO JOIN THE EU

Iceland's application reflects our readiness to take the next logical step in strengthening our long lasting relationship with the European Union. Iceland's participation in the process of European integration has grown at a steady pace since its membership of EFTA in 1970. As a member of the European Economic Area and the Schengen cooperation, Iceland has already adopted a significant amount of EU legislation. Iceland shares a common heritage, values and interests with the EU and wants to deepen its contribution to Europe's common goal of ensuring peace and prosperity for its citizens.

### ON ICELAND'S APPLICATION FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

- Iceland submitted an application to join the European Union to the Swedish Presidency on 17 July 2009.
- Iceland's application is based on a parliamentary resolution adopted on 16 July 2009, which empowers the Government to submit an EU application, and upon the completion of accession negotiations to hold a national referendum on membership.
- The parliamentary opinion provides the Government with important parameters as regards the preparation and organization of the accession process. It also identifies and describes Iceland's important interests, including fisheries - the backbone of Iceland's economy - agriculture and regional affairs, renewable energy, public services and social rights.
- EU Foreign Ministers unanimously decided to refer Iceland's application to the EU Commission for an opinion (the "avis") on 27 July 2009. On 8 September 2009, EU Enlargement Commissioner Ollie Rehn delivered more than 2500 questions from the Commission. On 22 October 2009, Iceland submitted detailed answers.
- On 24 February 2010 the EU Commission submitted its favorable opinion to the Council and the European Parliament, where it recommended opening accession talks with Iceland.
- The European Council decided on 17 June 2010 that negotiations should be opened for Iceland's accession to the European Union.
- The Minister for Foreign Affairs appointed the Chief Negotiator, Ambassador Stefán Haukur Jóhannesson, in November 2009. The Chief Negotiating committee consists of ten chairmen of subgroups in various fields and seven other members.
- Iceland highly appreciates the positive response towards the application it has received from all EU member states and other EU aspirant countries. Iceland remains optimistic that the EU – based on the Commission's favorable opinion after Iceland has undergone the same rigorous process as other applicant states – is willing to open accession negotiations in 2010. The Icelandic nation will have the final say in a national referendum on the accession treaty.

### A WELL-PREPARED CANDIDATE

- Iceland is no newcomer to European integration, but an active and long-standing partner in the wider European integration process. Iceland cooperates closely with EU member states as a founding member of NATO (1949), and a member of the Council of Europe (1950), EFTA (1970), OSCE (1975) and Schengen (1996), among others.
- Iceland is a member of the EU's internal market through the 1994 Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) between the



EU and EFTA-members Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. The EEA Agreement provides for the inclusion of all internal market legislation that covers inter alia the four freedoms - the free movement of goods, services, persons and capital throughout the 30 EEA States.

- In addition, the Agreement covers cooperation in other important areas such as research and development, education, social policy, the environment, consumer protection, tourism and culture. A significant amount of EU legislation has thus been adopted into Icelandic law.
- Iceland fulfils the Copenhagen Criteria and enjoys good relations with all EU member states. Iceland contributes to European cohesion and solidarity through financial contributions (Financial Mechanism). As a NATO member, Iceland aligns itself regularly with the Common Foreign Security Policy and has contributed to EU peacekeeping.

#### MEMBERSHIP SERVES MUTUAL INTERESTS

- Having worked side by side with the EU since joining EFTA in 1970, Iceland is now ready for the next step and believes membership serves mutual interests. Iceland's 15 year experience in the EU's internal market through the EEA is vitally important in this respect.
- The global financial crisis and its impact on Iceland has indeed been a political catalyst to EU aspirations. This has precedents in other European countries that applied to join the EU in times of economic crisis. EU membership and later adoption of the euro is a part of Iceland's strategy towards long-term economic stability.
- As an equal partner, Iceland looks forward to making substantial contributions to positive developments in areas such as sustainable fisheries, renewable energy, arctic policy and

the environment, and to strengthening EU integration, competitiveness and social cohesion.

- As the only country entirely within the Arctic, a region of growing interest to the EU, Iceland believes its membership would serve the EU's geographical completeness and strengthen common interests in the High North. EU membership would compliment Iceland's security cooperation within NATO and its 1951 Bilateral Defense Agreement with the United States; it would broaden security arrangements in the Arctic.
- As in the case of other accession talks there will be challenges to overcome. However, the Government of Iceland is confident that with good faith, determination and understanding, Iceland and the EU will find mutually acceptable solutions that respect the EU's fundamental principles and reconcile Iceland's vital national interests.

#### COMMON IDENTITY AND SHARED VALUES

- Iceland is a European country which shares a common heritage and common interests with Europe. Iceland upholds the EU's core values of democracy, human rights and the Rule of Law as reflected in the Copenhagen Criteria. In short: Iceland's home is Europe.
- As a proud exponent of the European model of society, based on strong democratic institutions, free market economy, environmental protection and social cohesion, Iceland has since 1994 contributed to the EFTA/EEA Financial Mechanism aimed at strengthening EU cohesion.
- Iceland looks forward to taking the next logical step towards EU membership and deepening its contribution to Europe's common goal of ensuring peace and prosperity for its citizens.

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*Iceland, with a population of around 320,000, is a constitutional republic with a parliamentary government. Founded in 1944, Iceland joined the United Nations in 1946, became a founding member of the OECD in 1948, of NATO in 1949 and joined EFTA in 1970. With Iceland's accession to the European Economic Area in 1994, Iceland gained access to EU's internal market and joined the Schengen co-operation in 2001. Further information: <http://europe.mfa.is>*