Contribution of Iceland to the European Research Area objectives

Introduction

This short report gives an overview of the contribution of Iceland to the European Research Area (ERA) objectives with reference to the European Commission Communication from 17 July 2012 - A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth. The aim of the report is to give an input to the ERA progress report.

Iceland is fully committed to the objectives of the European Research Area and has participated in a number of programmes and activities aimed at ERA's realisation. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has recently expressed interest in being peer reviewed in the context or ERAC during the latter part of 2013 or first half of 2014.

Key features of the Icelandic Research and Innovation system

The research and innovation system in Iceland is based on two legislative acts from 2003 (2/2003 and 3/2003) and Act No. 75/2007 on Government Support for Technology, Research and Industry Development.

The Science and Technology Policy Council (STPC) was established in 2003 with the role of promoting scientific research and encouraging technological progress in Iceland, with the ultimate goal of strengthening the cultural foundations and increasing the competitiveness. The STPC is the main body responsible for developing and adopting the general policy for science and technology. The council is chaired by the Prime Minister, and in addition up to 7 ministers sit on the council. Sixteen members from the public and private sector are appointed to the council. The full council meets four times a year.

Council members, apart from the ministers form two advisory committees: The Science Committee and the Technology Committee. The Science Committee is an advisory body for
research policy while the Technology Committee is an advisory body on technological development and innovation.

![Diagram of RANNIS and its funds]

The Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS) supports research, research studies, technical development and innovation in Iceland. RANNIS cooperates closely with the STPC and provides professional assistance the preparation and implementation of science and technology policy in Iceland. RANNIS administers competitive funds and strategic research programmes, coordinates and promotes Icelandic participation in collaborative international projects in science and technology, monitors resources and performance in R&D and promotes public awareness of research and innovation in Iceland. RANNIS reports to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and operates according to the Act on Public Support for Scientific Research (No. 3/2003).

Innovation Center Iceland encourages innovation and promotes the advancement of new ideas in Icelandic economy by providing active participation and support to entrepreneurs and businesses. Innovation Centre Iceland is under the auspices of the Ministry of Industries and Innovation and operates according to the Act on Government Support for Technology, Research, Innovation and Industry (no. 75/2007).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has the overall responsibility for higher education on Iceland. The legal framework covering higher education in Iceland is the Higher Education Institution Act no. 63/2006. This framework act applies to all educational institutions providing higher education leading to a degree and which have been accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, according to rules on accreditation no. 1067/2006. Each higher education institution is accredited in particular fields of study and subdivisions therein.

There are currently seven accredited higher education institutions in Iceland. University of Iceland, University of Akureyri, Agricultural University of Iceland and Holar University College are public higher education institutions and are subject to the Act on Public Higher Education Institutions no. 85/2008 with amendments. Reykjavik University, Bifröst University and Iceland Academy of the Arts are private institutions and operate under structural charters approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. All higher education institutions receive state funding. The Ministry concludes performance-related contracts with all higher education institutions under its administration.
The Icelandic Quality Board for Higher Education monitors the quality of the education offered in accordance with the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework. Quality assurance of higher education institutions, both in regards to research and teaching, is carried out by an internal evaluation of higher education institutions as well as by periodic external evaluation.

A new Policy on Public Universities was introduced in 2010 to safeguard the activities of the public universities by establishing a collaborative network, with the possibility of a merger. The policy and its agreements enable students at to take courses at each of the four public universities.

**Priority 1 of the ERA objectives - More effective national research systems**

*Member States are invited to:*

- Introduce or enhance *competitive funding* through calls for proposals and institutional assessments as the main modes of allocating public funds to research and innovation, introducing legislative reforms if necessary
- Ensure that all public bodies responsible for *allocating research funds* apply the core principles of *international peer review*

The national policy on science and research is outlined in a three year policy plan issued by the Prime Minister’s Office. The policy for 2010-2012 was dedicated to the importance of fostering and strengthening research and innovation in Iceland under the guiding principles of cooperation and sharing; quality and rewards and international research and innovation.

The Science and Technology Policy Council (STPC) is currently drafting a new research and technology policy for the period 2013-2015. The science and the technology committees of the STPC published a report in December 2012 „Ný sýn – breytingar á vísinda- og nýsköpunarkerfönum“ (New vision – changes in the science and innovation system) was published in December 2012 that lays the foundation for the new policy. (See: [http://www.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/Skyrslur/ny-syn-des-2012.pdf](http://www.forsaetisraduneyti.is/media/Skyrslur/ny-syn-des-2012.pdf)). The focus is on global challenges, especially human resources and recruitment of young scientists. Also on how collaboration and productivity – with focus on enhanced cooperation between universities and research institutions that are working in the same disciplines and how funding and investment in research and innovation, both in the public and private sectors can be increased.

Iceland has already achieved the EU goal of 3% of the GPD being allocated to research and development. Iceland still aims higher, and one of the goals in *Iceland 2020* is that by 2020, 4% of the GDP shall be allocated to research, development and innovation. The aim is not in a unilateral increase in public funding, but rather by encouraging investment by the private sector in research, development and innovation. This can be accomplished by a more favourable environment for innovation, through mutual research funds or other incentive measures, such as tax incentives. A new legislation on tax incentives was passed by the Parliament in late 2010, aiming at encouraging companies to invest in research and development, and is already having some impact.
Priority 2 of the ERA objectives - Optimal transnational co-operation and competition

**Member States are invited to:**

- **Step up efforts to implement joint research agendas addressing grand challenges**, sharing information about activities in agreed priority areas, ensuring that **adequate national funding is committed and strategically aligned** at European level in these areas and that common ex post evaluation is conducted.
- **Ensure mutual recognition** of evaluations that conform to **international peer-review standards** as a basis for national funding decisions.
- **Remove legal and other barriers** to the cross-border interoperability of national programmes to permit joint financing of actions including cooperation with non-EU countries where relevant.

International cooperation is vital for the development of research and innovation in Iceland. Iceland has been participating in European programmes in the fields of education and research since 1994.

Currently Iceland is participating in one JPI namely the JPI on healthy and productive seas and oceans. Iceland is also an active partner in nine ERA-NETs (M-era.net, EraSME, CORNET, EuroNanoMed, HERA, NORFACE, MARIFISH, MATERA+, SEAS-ERA).

Iceland participates in a number of ERA-Net projects some of which have the objective of becoming established Article 185 initiatives in the future. Eurostars has been running as an Article 185 initiative since 2008, with Icelandic participation from the start. Iceland has not had an official policy towards participation in Article 187 initiatives. However, Icelandic organisations participate in Innovative Medicines and Hydrogen and Fuel Cells initiatives.

Iceland also participates in the Joint Nordic Initiative: Excellence in Research on Globalization (Nordisk topforskningsinitiativ inden for globalisering) and Nordice.

Iceland has signed a number of bilateral agreements with third countries such as the US, China and India.

**Effective investment in and use of research infrastructures**

**Member States are invited to:**

- **Confirm financial commitments** for the construction and operation of ESFRI, global, national and regional RIs of pan-European interest, particularly when developing national roadmaps and the next Structural Fund programmes.
- **Remove legal and other barriers to cross-border access to RIs**

Iceland has participated in the preparatory phases of several ESFRI infrastructures (CLARIN, ESSurvey, EPOS, LIFEWATCH, BBMRI, ECRIN, ELIXIR, ESSneutrons) and are currently involved in the next phase. Iceland also is a member of other international infrastructures such as EMBL, GBIF, GEANT, ICDP, IODP, NOT.
Icelandic research establishments and funding rules are traditionally open to researchers’ mobility, although financial resources have been scarce. RANNIS has actively participated in the EURAXESS service network, which provides practical assistance to mobile researchers and their families. All Icelandic universities have, furthermore, signed the European charter for researchers and the code of conducts for their recruitment.

Iceland has had a special statute intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976. The current Gender Equality Act dates from 2008. The Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008 (English translation can be found here).

The aim of the act is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men, and thus promote gender equality in all spheres of society. All individuals shall have equal opportunities to benefit from their own enterprise and to develop their skills irrespective of gender.

This aim shall be reached by:
- Gender mainstreaming in all spheres of the society
- Increasing education and awareness-raising on gender equality
- Working towards equal influence of women and men in decision-making and policy-making in the society
- Analysing statistics according to gender
- Increasing research in gender studies
- Working against wage discrimination and other forms of gender-based discrimination on the employment market
• Working against gender-based violence and harassment
• Enabling both women and men to reconcile their work and family life
• Changing traditional gender images and working against negative stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men

The act included several improvements including:
• A minimum quota of 40% in governmental (state and municipal) committees and councils, if the body consists of more than three members.
• Gender mainstreaming institutionalised.
• Employees have the right to disclose their wages.
• Advertisements in media that are derogatory i.e. which demean, debase or disrespect women or men or counteract the equal status of women and men, are banned.
• Prevention against gender-based violence is prioritised.

The Government has highlighted gender mainstreaming as a key method within the governmental sector in accordance to the act on gender equality (No. 10/2008, art. 17). Since 2008 the Centre for Gender Equality has been working on a project called Side by Side, a gender-mainstreaming project funded by the EU Progress Programme. The aim of the project is to implement and develop gender mainstreaming in national policies and activities in Iceland. Further information: http://samstiga.is/samstiga/?D10cID=NewsDouble

Since 2009 there has been a focus on gender responsive budgeting in Iceland and this is reflected in a recent parliamentary resolution on a four year gender equality action programme 2011-2014. Althingi has passed five action plans on measures to implement gender equality since 1985. The current plan is based on experience from previous action plans which have been based on special projects for each ministry, but this one will be split into thematic areas. This is done to ensure that all ministries will also focus on themes like gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. Gender mainstreaming is required in all government policies and in decision making, according to the Act on Gender Equality. Other thematic areas of the action plan include: government, the labour market, gender pay gap, political representation, gender-based violence, education, engaging men in gender equality, and international cooperation. See: http://jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/Gender%20Equality%20Action%20Programme%202011-14.pdf

Gender balance in education and research is of major concern for Iceland. Iceland has participated in the Helsinki group on Women and Science from the beginning and has been working together with other European countries in establishing comparative statistical information on women in science in Europe.

In 2012 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture took part in a Nordic project on gender balance in academia. The aim of the project was to compare the developments in gender equality legislation, statistics and policy in the Nordic countries and find good examples of successful instruments and measures that have improved the gender balance in academia in these countries. The report presents relevant research policy issues and challenges in the Nordic region that are important to analyse in a gender and gender equality context. The report concludes with a number of recommendations targeted towards decision makers and other relevant actors within the Nordic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers and other pan-Nordic institutions that are designed to consolidate the field of gender balance in research into an overall policy and research field in the Nordic countries. These recommendations include the development of a Nordic programme of action that sets specific
recruitment targets for top-level positions in academia, the establishment of a Nordic policy-oriented network, a Nordic research programme and a pilot project on Nordic education and research statistics. (See: http://www.norden.org/no/publikasjoner/publikasjoner/2013-513 - Summary available in English).

Other recent and current activities in this area include:

- a study for gender balance in all research and innovation funds
- a study for gender balance in universities
- gender equality prize for universities

- Funds and public support for scientific research should systematically collect information on the gender composition of expert councils, applicants and grantees, and grant amounts. If an uneven distribution is found between the grantees of either sex it should be examined whether action should be taken to correct this inequality, for example, by making grant applications more accessible, or reviewing the allocation rules.

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<th>Priority 5 of the ERA objectives - Optimal circulation, access to and transfer of scientific knowledge</th>
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<td><strong>Member States are invited to:</strong></td>
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<td>● Define and coordinate their policies on access to and preservation of scientific information</td>
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<td>● Ensure that public research contributes to Open Innovation and foster knowledge transfer between public and private sectors through national knowledge transfer strategies</td>
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<td>● Harmonise access and usage policies for research and education-related public infrastructures and for associated digital research services enabling consortia of different types of public and private partners</td>
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<td>● Adopt and implement national strategies for electronic identity for researchers giving them transnational access to digital research services</td>
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The STPC has set in motion plans to implement a comprehensive information system for the outcomes of research and innovation carried out by Icelandic researchers (similar to CHRISTin or Pure/Elsevire). However, a thorough time and implementation schedule is not available at this moment.

**Summary**

- Iceland has participated in the EU framework programmes for research and development as an associated country since 1994.
- Iceland is committed to the realization of the European Research Area and participates in its governance structures. An ERA peer review will be conducted in 2013/2014.
- The Iceland 2020 Policy Statement takes into account European policies including some of the objectives of the ERA.
- Regarding research funding, the aim remains to raise the level of expenditure on R&D from currently 2.7% of GDP to 4% of GDP by 2020 as stated in the Iceland 2020 Policy Statement. To attain this objective, the government continues to offer tax incentives to private companies for R&D spending. The objective is to improve competitive conditions of innovative firms.