



NATIONAL PROFILE

ICELAND

2019 - 2020



Greetings from Iceland!

Right now, you have either decided or are deciding to volunteer abroad for a period of time. Our National Profile will give you an introduction to Iceland - "The Land of Fire and Ice." It will also provide relevant information about our organisation, AUS - ICYE Iceland.

We look forward to meeting you...

*Best Regards
The AUS - ICYE Iceland Team*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
FACTS ABOUT ICELAND	3
Geography and Land	3
History	6
People and Society	7
Language	7
Economy and Industry	9
Government	9
Religion	10
Leisure and Recreation	10
Public Holidays in Iceland	11
Electricity	12
VOLUNTEERING IN ICELAND	12
Projects	12
Window Dates	12
Host Situation	12
Programme	12
Mentor	13
Pocket Money and Cost of Living	13
Residence Permit / VISA Information	15
What to Bring	15
Important Things to Keep in Mind	16
THE ORGANISATION: AUS – ICYE ICELAND	17
Who Are We?	17
Relevant Contact Details	17
AUS's social activities	18
AUS's events calendar 2015-2016	18
USEFUL LINKS / WEBSITES	19

FACTS ABOUT ICELAND

Geography and Land

Iceland is the second largest island in Europe (103,000 km²) and the most sparsely populated country in Europe, with only three inhabitants per Km² - a total of only 327,780, so you'll have a chance to meet them all... almost at least.

The geographical location of Iceland makes it one of the volcanically most active regions in the world. Situated on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Iceland is a hot spot of volcanic and geothermal activity.



Iceland has a rough terrain, consisting of mountainous lava deserts, plateaus and glacial ice fields. About 11% of the country is covered by glaciers, including Vatnajökull, the largest in Europe, just about the size of The Netherlands.

Almost four-fifths of the country is uninhabited and largely uninhabitable, with most of the population living along the coastline.

Iceland is a country of many extremes. Whilst its landscape can often be harsh and unrelenting, it also has a raw and wild beauty that is both unique and breath-taking. Iceland's coastline is indented by bays, fjords and green valleys. The island boasts 10,000 waterfalls and nearly 3,000 lakes. Iceland is a playground for those who love nature.

Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, is the country's largest city and the world's most northerly capital.





Climate and Weather

The chilliest thing about Iceland is its name! In January, the average temperature in Reykjavik is higher than that in New York.

Thanks to the Gulf Stream, Iceland enjoys a cool temperate ocean climate: cool in summer and fairly mild in winter. The average summer temperature in Reykjavik is 10.6°C / 51°F (in July), whilst the average winter temperature is about 0°C / 32°F (in January). Be aware though... the weather can be rather unpredictable. So if you don't like the weather, you should come back in ten minutes...

The summer nights are bright in all of Iceland, and in the month of June the sun never fully sets in the north. But of course the opposite is true in the winter - short days and very long nights.

During the winter nights, the Northern Lights are often visible in Iceland. Also known as Aurora Borealis, they are undoubtedly one of the most spectacular and beautiful of nature's phenomena. The Northern Lights take many forms and colours, and are often seen dancing across the sky.

¹ Please note that many of the pictures in this National Profile are copyright of our photo genius and volunteer Marie Bastian hoping they will be an inspiration to all of you.





History

Milestones in Icelandic History

- 874** - The first free Norseman, Ingolfur Arnarson, settles in Iceland.
- 930** - Althingi (the Parliament) was established. It is the first known Parliament to be established in the world.
- 999** - Leifur "the lucky" Ericsson discovers North America.
- 1000** - Christianity adopted.
- 1703** - The first complete census made in Iceland. Population = 50,358.
- 1783** - "Skaftáreldar", one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history, begins, killing over half the population.
- 1915** - Production and trade of all alcoholic beverages is prohibited in Iceland.
- 1918** - Iceland becomes a sovereign and independent state within the Kingdom of Denmark.
- 1935** - Production and trade of all alcoholic beverages except beer is allowed again in Iceland.
- 1944** - Iceland breaks off the alliance with the Danish crown and becomes an independent republic.
- 1946** - Iceland joins the United Nations.
- 1949** - Iceland becomes a member of NATO.
- 1955** - Writer Halldór Kiljan Laxness wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1973** - Volcanic eruption begins on Heimaey in the Westman Islands, leaving the island uninhabitable for a few months.
- 1974** - The first Icelandic female priest is nominated.





- 1976** - The last "Cod War" between Iceland and Britain takes place. Iceland wins sovereignty over its fishing grounds.
- 1980** - Vigdís Finnbogadóttir becomes the first woman ever to be democratically elected Head of State.
- 1989** - Pope John Paul II becomes the first pope to visit Iceland.
- 1989** - Icelanders are allowed to buy and consume beer after 74 years of prohibition.
- 1994** - Icelanders celebrate 50 years of independence.
- 1995** - Iceland hosts the World Cup in Handball.
- 2006** - Iceland's population reaches 300,000.
- 2007** - Smoking is banned by law in all restaurants, bars and nightclubs in Iceland.
- 2008** – Iceland's three major banks are nationalised during the global financial crisis.
- 2010** – two Volcanic Eruptions: Fimmvörðuháls and Eyjafjallajökull
- 2018-2019** – Your arrival in Iceland

People and Society



On 1st January 2018, Iceland's population was 348.450. Approximately two thirds of the population live in the capital, Reykjavik, and surrounding areas.

Iceland is a progressive modern European society with a high standard of living and a high level of technology and education.

Icelanders are hard-working and resilient people. On average, Icelanders have one of the longest working days in Europe.

Language

“Icelandic” is the national language. It is a Germanic language, related to Norwegian, Danish and Swedish. Due to the isolation of Iceland, the language has changed very little from the original tongue spoken by the Norse settlers. Icelanders can still read the old Sagas written more than 700 years ago.





Most Icelanders speak fluent English. Other languages that are commonly understood include Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, German and French.

The Icelandic Alphabet:

Aa Áá Bb Cc Dd Ðð Ee Éé Ff Gg Hh Ii Íí Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Óó Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Úú Vv Xx Yy Ýý Zz Þþ Ææ Öö

Notice that the Icelandic alphabet has more vowels than you are used to and also some additional letters you might not be familiar with:

Ð/ð = as soft “th” in English (it is never placed in the beginning of a word)

É/é = as in English “yeah”

Í/í = as the “i” in “marine”

Ó/ó = as in “show”

Ú/ú = as in “too”

Þ/þ = as strong “th” in English

Æ/æ = as in English I such as “Irish”

Ö/ö = as the “er” in fern, without the “r” sound

Useful Icelandic Phrases

Góðan daginn	Good morning / afternoon
Bless	Goodbye
Sjáumst	See you later
Hvað segir þú?	How are you?
Hvað heitir þú?	What is your name?
Gaman að hitta þig	Pleased to meet you
Ég heiti _____	My name is _____
Hvaðan ert þu?	Where are you from?
Ég er frá _____	I come from _____
Hvar er _____?	Where is _____?
Hvað er þetta?	What is this?
Hvað kostar þetta?	How much does this cost?
Ég skil	I understand
Ég skil ekki	I don't understand
Gjörðu svo vel	There you go
Takk (fyrir)	Thank you
Takk fyrir matinn	Thank you for the food
Þetta er mjög gott	This is very good





Afsakið	Excuse me
Ég tala ekki íslensku	I don't speak Icelandic
Talar þú ensku?	Do you speak English?
Getur þú hjálpað mér?	Can you help me?
Já	Yes
Nei	No

Economy and Industry



The currency of Iceland is the Icelandic Krona (ISK).
(1 Euro = 122 ISK, as of May 2018).

Iceland achieved an impressive economic record for most of the 1990s, with one of the highest consistent growth rates in the world and low inflation and unemployment. From 2006 onwards, the economy faced problems of growing inflation.

No doubt, most people have heard about the severe banking crisis that occurred in Iceland in October 2008. Why this happened is a matter for others to analyse and there are already a couple of books available digging deep into the matter, but understandably, volunteers coming to Iceland and their sending organizations ask us about the consequences this development has had on volunteering in Iceland. First of all, it is important to know that financial transactions are functioning again, it is both possible to transfer money to and from Iceland. The Icelandic currency, the crown is still at a historic low so Euros and Dollars are worth a lot here.

Iceland is, however, a different country from what it used to be. Unemployment, formerly not known here for many years, is high and the government is cutting spending in all areas and a country with what used to be the highest standard of living in Europe is now facing a difficult period. But Icelanders have survived volcano eruptions, earthquakes, poverty and a harsh nature for more than a 1000 years and you will feel that it needs more than a couple of crazy bankers to destroy that spirit. Many even say that they feel very positive tendencies within a society restructuring itself and reviewing its cultural values and honouring its traditions and history.

The foundation of the Icelandic economy is renewable natural resources: rich fishing grounds, and hydro and geothermal power. By harnessing the abundant hydroelectric and geothermal power sources, Iceland's renewable energy industry provides over 70% of all the nation's primary energy.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Iceland

Iceland's economy is heavily dependent upon fisheries. While the main industry is fish processing, other main industries include aluminium smelting, ferrosilicon production, geothermal power, and tourism.

Government

Type: Independent since 1 December 1918





Republic since 17 June 1944

Form of Government: Constitutional Republic

Head of State / President: Guðni Th. Jóhannesson

Head of Government: Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir

Government: Coalition between the The Left-Green Movement, the Independence Party, and the Progressive Party

Parliament: Alþingi (63 members)

Religion

Icelanders were mythologists until the year 1000 when Christianity was made the legal religion in Iceland.

Non-Christian religions account for less than 5% of the population and the vast majority of Christians are Lutherans.

Leisure and Recreation

Iceland offers a huge variety of things to do. The country has many activities for all ages and abilities and you can challenge yourself as much or as little as you want.



For the artistically and culturally minded, there is a wide selection of art galleries, museums and festivals.

Thanks to an abundance of hot water, swimming is probably one of the most popular activities in Iceland (*swimming* here loosely defined as sitting in a hot tub relaxing and chatting with friends). Almost every town and village has a swimming pool, usually outdoors, which is filled with hot water and kept open year round. But watch out, sea swimming has become a favourite

amongst volunteers!

There is also a wealth of opportunities for those seeking adventure! Whether its river rafting, whale watching, fishing, glacier trips, caving, unforgettable 4x4 expeditions over the highlands, or other action packed adventures, there's always plenty to do!



Public Holidays in Iceland

1 January	New Year's Day
Maundy Thursday	Thursday before Easter Sunday
Good Friday	Friday before Easter Sunday
Easter Monday	Monday following Easter Sunday
First Thursday after 18 April	First Day of Summer
1 May	Labour Day
Ascension Day	Holy Thursday (6 weeks after Easter Thursday)
Whit Monday	Monday after Whit Sunday (7 weeks after Easter)
17 June	National Day
First Monday in August	Bank Holiday
24 December	Christmas Eve (afternoon only)
25 December	Christmas Day
26 December	Boxing Day (day after Christmas)
31 December	New Year's Eve (afternoon only)



Electricity

Electricity in Iceland is: 220 Volts, 50 Hz, AC.
Plug: 2 parallel round prongs



VOLUNTEERING IN ICELAND

Projects

All the projects we offer are for either 6 and/or 12 months. We do not have projects that start at other times, nor projects for shorter or longer periods. A list of our available projects and their descriptions are available on our website, www.aus.is



Window Dates

AUS – ICYE Iceland receive volunteers every year at the end of February and end of August each year. We require that all volunteers arrive within the specified window dates:

- 21 .- 23.08.18 (programme starting 24.8.2018)
- 26. - 28.02.19 (programme starting 01.03.2019)

Host Situation

The projects of AUS are located all around Iceland, so not all volunteers will live in the capital city, Reykjavik. Depending on the project, the volunteer will live either in the city or in a village. The volunteer may reside at the project, with a family, or in a rented apartment that is shared with other volunteers. Be aware that you might be asked to share a room with another volunteer.

Programme

When the volunteer arrives in Iceland, he/she will begin with the On-arrival Camp, with all the other volunteers from around the world including former Icelandic volunteers. Here the volunteers will be given an introduction to Icelandic life and culture, as well as practical information to prepare them for their stay in Iceland. The volunteer will also be given some basic Icelandic language lessons. (An Icelandic language course will be provided following the orientation camp). At the camp, it is not only



important that the volunteer learns about Iceland, but it is also important to us that we learn about the volunteer and his/her country. We, therefore, encourage the volunteer to bring photos, music and other things from his/her country, so that we can find out as much as possible about where he/she comes from. After the orientation, the volunteer will go to his/her placement.

Mid-term and final camps are also part of the AUS – ICYE Iceland programme. During the mid-term camp, we will discuss how the programme is going and spend time reflecting on the volunteers’ experiences, whilst preparing them for the second part of their program. During the final camp, we will again reflect on the volunteers’ learning process, as well as celebrate their accomplishments and prepare them to return to their home country. It is expected that all volunteers attend the AUS - ICYE camps.

Mentor

Every volunteer will be allocated a Mentor – who will be an Icelandic person that has previously been abroad as a volunteer through AUS – ICYE Iceland. The mentor will keep in regular contact with the volunteer during the programme to ensure that everything is going well and to help with any issues that arise.



Pocket Money and Cost of Living

The volunteer will receive pocket money and also food and/or a food allowance. In some projects, food will be provided. The volunteer will receive a food allowance for meals not provided in the project. Local transport to and from the project will also be provided. The volunteer should keep in mind that Iceland still has a very high cost of living and the pocket money only covers part of the expenses – it is not enough to pay for travelling, clothes, or eating out.

Here is a list of prices for common expenses:
(NB: All prices are in ISK. Prices correct as of April 2018).

Restaurants / Cafés / Bars

Hamburger and fries –	From 1800
Main course –	From 2800
Coffee –	From 800
Beer –	From 2000
Wine –	From 1800

Groceries

Milk –	From 180
Bread –	From 450
Hot Dog –	From 600
Snack bar –	From 300





Recreation & Activities

Cinema ticket –	From 1500
Nightclub entrance –	Usually free / some special events can cost 3000
Thermal swimming pools –	550
Swimming pool pass –	5000 (allows 10 entries)

Transportation

Petrol 1L –	220 (approx).
Flybus to the airport –	3000
Flight/bus to Akureyri (one way) –	25,000
Bus to Selfoss (one way) –	1700



Residence Permit / VISA Information

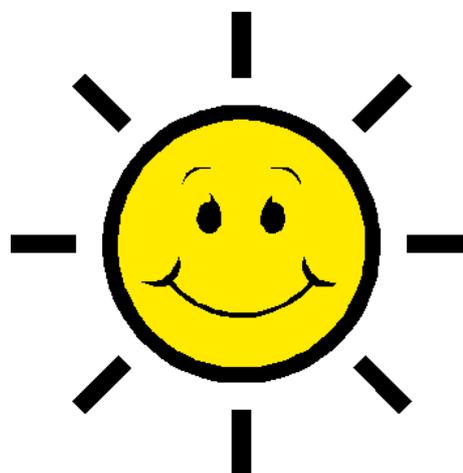
- Citizens within the European Union (EU) / European Economic Area (EEA) do not need to apply for a Residence Permit to participate in the volunteer programme in Iceland (NB: This does not apply to citizens from Bulgaria or Romania however, who do need to apply for a permit).
- All non-EU / non-EEA citizens, and citizens from Bulgaria, Ukraine and Romania, intending to stay in Iceland longer than three months, must have a Residence Permit. An application for a residence permit must have been approved **before** a foreigner arrives in the country.
- Application processing time for a residence permit can be up to 90 days. Therefore, it is important to start the process in due time.
- Together with the application, proof of payment of the visa fee has to be provided, as well as a criminal record, not older than 6 months, translated into English by a certified translator and provided with an apostille stamp issued by the Foreign Ministry of the volunteer's country and a copy of the volunteer's passport which has to be valid more than 3 months exceeding the intended stay.
- AUS will provide the volunteer with an invitation letter and the proof of insurance and offer support with filling in the application.
- When the Directorate of Immigration has granted the residence permit, they send a confirmation of a D-Visa to an embassy representing Iceland, the embassy that has been indicated in the application. Once the D-Visa has been issued at the embassy the volunteer is free to travel to Iceland. Then once the volunteer is here we will change his D-Visa for a residence permit to stay for the duration of his or her volunteering period (from the day of issue of the permit).
- On arrival, AUS – ICYE Iceland will arrange for the volunteer to undergo a medical examination where he/she will be tested for tuberculosis, AIDS / HIV, hepatitis and syphilis. The regulations say that the test can only be done once the volunteer has arrived in Iceland. The fee is currently 35,000 - 55,000 ISK and the volunteer is required to pay this fee.

More detailed and up-to-date information on the application procedure will be provided by AUS directly and can also be found at the Directorate of Immigration's website www.utl.is where you can also find the banking information to transfer the visa fees.

What to Bring

When coming to Iceland, it is essential that you bring with you:

- Warm clothes – woollen sweater, woollen socks and thermal underwear.
- Rainwear (it can rain a lot and because of the wind, you can leave your umbrella at home).
- Hiking boots.
- Sleeping bag (you will need this for the AUS - ICYE camps).
- 4x passport-sized photos (to open a bank account and other practical things).
- And last but not the least... Bring along a big smile and an open mind!





Important Things to Keep in Mind

- Volunteers from outside the European Union (EU) / European Economic Area (EEA), and those from Ukraine, are not allowed to work during their exchange period in Iceland. Please note: If these volunteers take part in paid employment whilst in Iceland, they may be removed from the program. Paid employment is a direct violation of the visa that AUS – ICYE Iceland has issued through the Immigration Department.
- A work permit is not required for citizens within the EU / EEA (except for citizens of Ukraine, as stated above). However, it is very important to note that if a volunteer from the EU / EEA undertakes paid employment, his/her first priority must always be their volunteer project and no other work should interfere with that.
- Some of the projects are located in towns outside the capital city of Reykjavik. Some people can feel isolated in locations outside the city, whilst other people really enjoy it. We encourage the volunteer to read the project descriptions carefully and make sure they accept only a project that suits his/her needs and preferences. If the volunteer is unhappy in the project, they are not necessarily entitled to changing projects. AUS – ICYE Iceland ensures that all project placements are filled, therefore it is unlikely that it will be possible to change projects.
- The Directorate of Immigration does not accept applications for students' residence permits. Volunteers' residence permits cannot be renewed and applying for any other kind of permit will require leaving the country first and applying again from abroad.
- Volunteers are expected to follow the rules / guidelines of AUS – ICYE Iceland (as specified in the Exchange Contract on the last page of the National Profile).

One thing is certain... Your experience as a volunteer will depend a great deal on yourself. Maybe the most important things to keep in mind are:

- To be open to new ideas and new experiences.
- To be ready to learn from those around you and share your experiences with them.
- To learn about and embrace the Icelandic culture. Don't try to impose your culture on others.
- The more you give, the more you get!



Yoko Ono's Peace Column at the Island of Viðey

THE ORGANISATION: AUS – ICYE ICELAND

Who Are We?

AUS – ICYE Iceland:

AUS - ICYE Iceland is an international non-profit youth exchange organisation promoting youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service. AUS – ICYE Iceland has almost 50 years of experience of organising long and short-term exchanges combining home stays with voluntary service in a variety of community service projects around the world. AUS is at the same time an educational organisation with the goal of giving people the opportunity to experience the culture and society of different nations. AUS enables young people to develop their personal skills and broaden their horizon, by giving young people in Iceland the chance to go abroad as volunteers and also by receiving young people from different countries around the world in Iceland.

The organisation is run by homecoming ICYE volunteers and it is also a member of The National Youth Council of Iceland.

Relevant Contact Details

AUS-ICYE Iceland
Pósthússtræti 3-5
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E-mail: aus@aus.is / icye@aus.is



Office Staff:

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Julia Kádár - Office Volunteer

brynjar@aus.is
julia@aus.is



Board Members:

Dagný Sveinbjörnsdóttir	– Chairperson	- formadur@aus.is
Hans Hektor Hannesson	– Treasurer	- stjorn@aus.is
Dagbjört Lilja Kristjánsdóttir	– Secretary	- stjorn@aus.is
Bjarki Fjarki Rúnarsson	– Board Member	- stjorn@aus.is
Styrmir Gunnarsson	– Board Member	- stjorn@aus.is
Rakel Lilja	– Board Member	- stjorn@aus.is
Hrafnhildur Sif Þórólfsdóttir	– Board Member	- stjorn@aus.is

AUS's social activities

AUS is very proud of its social life and puts an emphasis on involving the volunteers, mentors, board and others involved in AUS. Here below is the draft of the AUS's events calendar for 2015-2016. Volunteers will receive a new updated events calendar on arrival to Iceland. The board organises the social events and uses Facebook a lot to advertise and invite to events.

AUS's events calendar 2019-2020

AUGUST

2 – 6 September: ICYE Arrival camp

OCTOBER

Ice skating

NOVEMBER

Halloween party

DECEMBER

18 or 19 December: Christmas party

JANUARY

Mentor meeting

FEBRUARY

Porrablót: Celebration of old winter traditions

22-23th February: Arrival of new volunteers

MARCH

Museum visit

APRIL

Billiard

MAY

Eurovision party



JUNE

24-26 June: Final/Pre-departure Camp

JULY

Camping

AUGUST

Icelandic cultural night

USEFUL LINKS / WEBSITES

General Information:

- Visitor's Guide - www.visitorsguide.is
- Explore Iceland - www.exploreiceland.is
- Iceland Tourist Board - www.icelandtouristboard.com
- What's on in Iceland - www.whatson.is
- City of Reykjavik - www.reykjavik.is

Intercultural Centres:

- Fjölmenningarsetur (Multicultural and Information Centre) – www.mcc.is

News from Iceland:

- MBL - <http://www.mbl.is/mm/frettir/english/>
- Iceland Review - <http://www.icelandreview.com/>
- The Icelandic Grapevine: <http://grapevine.is/Home/>

Weather:

- www.vedur.is

Transportation:

- Reykjavik City Buses - www.straeto.is
- Bus Terminal - www.bsi.is
- Flybus – www.flybus.is



ICYE:



- AUS – ICYE Iceland – www.aus.is
- ICYE International - www.icye.org

Social Pages:

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/sjalfbodastarf>
- The Reykjavik Grapevine – <http://www.grapevine.is/Home/>

EXCHANGEE CONTRACT AUS – ICYE ICELAND

Please read the following rules carefully and then return the signed agreement three months before the start of the project:

- I have read and understood the AUS – ICYE National Profile.
- The ICYE programme is a voluntary program. I am prepared to work an average of 35 hours a week in a voluntary capacity.
- I will accept the host placement and volunteer work that AUS – ICYE Iceland choose for me and I am aware that AUS will try to do so in accordance with my application form, preferences and other information, but cannot guarantee the placement of choice.
- I have read the description of the project I will work in and accept that if I am not happy once in the project, I am not necessarily entitled to changing projects.
- I am prepared to adapt to the lifestyle and culture of Iceland.
- I will do my best to learn Icelandic and I will attend the Icelandic language course provided.
- I understand that the projects need responsible volunteers who have a certain level of English and confirm that I am able to communicate effectively in English.
- I will obey the laws of my host country, Iceland. Violation of the law may lead to expulsion from the program.
- I agree to participate in all the programs / activities organised by AUS – ICYE Iceland, including the orientation, midterm and final camp.
- I will respect the house rules of my hosting place and I agree to make a fair contribution to the household duties.
- I agree to respect the property of the host placement. I am aware that I will be held accountable for all expenses incurred as a result of wilful damage or negligence caused by me.
- If I leave the programme early, due to my own personal decision or as a consequence of me not complying with the rules and regulations of the AUS – ICYE program, I am aware that I will not be refunded any money. I also agree that all travel expenses incurred because of leaving the programme will have to be paid by me.

Applicable for citizens within the EU / EEA (excluding citizens from Bulgaria & Romania):

- I am aware that if I want to work during my exchangee period, my first priority will always be my voluntary project and no other work will interfere with that.

Applicable for citizens outside the EU / EEA (and including citizens from Bulgaria & Romania):



- I shall not seek or accept paid employment during my stay in Iceland. I am aware that I may be removed from the programme if I do so. I am aware that paid employment is a direct violation of the visa that AUS – ICYE Iceland has issued through the Immigration Department.
- I agree to return to my home country at the end of my exchange period. If I intend to stay longer in Iceland, I agree to leave Iceland before seeking a new Residence Permit.
- I am aware that AUS-ICYE Iceland will not assist me in any way to extend my Residence Permit.

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the above rules.

NAME _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____