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National strategy(ies)

**Sports Act 1998 No 64 12 June.** The Sports Act provides a framework how organized sport work shall be manage in Iceland. The Ministry of Education, science and Culture shall assume overall responsibility for the field of sports to the extent to which it intervenes in that area. For this purpose, the Ministry shall gather information about the practice of sports and sports facilities throughout the country, and promote research in the field of sports. The act applies to physical training intended to improve physical and mental prowess, health and fitness but does not apply to sports activities carried out as part of the regular operations of health institutions or fitness centers. The principal objective of action by central or local authorities in the field of sports should promote opportunities for every one of the public to practice sports under favorable conditions. In cooperation of central and local authorities and independent sports movement, shall take into account the importance of sports activities for purposes of pedagogy and prevention. Physical education shall be part of the curriculum of every compulsory and upper secondary school in Iceland as further set out in Acts for each school level. Also in regulations and curriculum guides applicable to these school levels. Further information are available in English: https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/frettir2014/Thyding-ithrottalog-mars-2015.pdf [1]

**Policy in Sport, of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2010-2015.** The Sport policy is a cooperation work of the parties responsible for the field; state, municipalities and sports organizations. State policy in sport is based on the fundamental view that general sports work in Iceland should be organized by NGOs. It refers to the Organization of the National Olympic and Sports Association, the Icelandic Youth Association, the special federations, sports areas, sports clubs and
departments around the country. The State strategy in sports appears in the State Sports Act and the state financial contributions with the Minister of Education, Science and Culture emphasis, among other things.

The policy of the Ministry in sports issues takes into account the legal obligations of the state under the Sports Act and international act and agreements relating to issues of organizations and NGO’s involved in sports in Iceland. The following objectives shall be pursued:

- The environment and organization of sports work in Iceland will be improved and appointed a special place in Icelandic society.
- Public sports will be strengthened and citizens will be more involved in sports and general mobility.
- The sports activities for children and young people in schools and the activities of the sporting movement (e.g. spot clubs) will be strengthened.
- Competition and achievement sports will be strengthened.
- Most people will have the opportunity to pursue sports in the field of their interest, whether for pleasure, health or in terms of achievement.
- Education and research in the field of sports education will be strengthened.
- Icelandic sports life will always be free from drug abuse.
- The structure of sports work takes into account that everyone has the same opportunity to participate, whether it is training or competition.

To follow this policy, targets, sub-goals, leads and guarantors are set for each case. It is proposed to monitor the progress of sport policy with audits, studies and statistical measurements as appropriate. According to the policy, a special focus is on children, youth, and their opportunities to participate in physical activity in schools, in work, in the environment or in their leisure time. Further information (Icelandic):

[2]

Policy in Sports is currently under review and development according to the timeframe 2010-2015 for the current policy. Expectations are that evaluation on the current policy will be made, concurrently. Those who are involved are the Ministry of Education, science and Culture, The Organization of the National Olympic and Sports Association, the Icelandic Youth Association and municipalities among others.

Policy in sport affairs in Reykjavík 2012-2020 ("Stefna í íþróttamálum í Reykjavík"). According to the role of responsibility that municipalities have in spots in Iceland, Reykjavík the capital city has their own policy. The main features of the policy reflected in following five categories:

- General sports and participation of the families in sports
- Availability for children and youth to participate in sports
- Communication of the city and sports clubs
- Focus on internal work and services of the sport clubs with the inhabitants of the city
- Operation, structure and maintenance sport constructions in Reykjavík

Further information (Icelandic):

[3]
Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

The Organization of the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland (ÍSÍ), is the highest authority for voluntary sports activities in Iceland, cf. the provisions of the Icelandic Sports Act. ÍSÍ is a national association of regional districts/sport unions and national federations. Members of regional districts/sport unions are clubs having the practice of sports in their program. Members of national federations are the regional districts/sport unions. Only one federation may be recognized for each sport. The purposes of the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland (ÍSÍ) are to promote, coordinate and organize sports activities, promote the development of high-performance sports as well as public sports and form, and organize and lead Iceland’s delegations at the Olympic Games.

ÍSÍ is the main organization for 30 National Sports Federations, 25 Regional Sports Districts, about 430 Clubs and over 800 Divisions. ÍSÍ’s members are over 160,000 and sport members are over 90,000 (2014). ÍSÍ operates three divisions; the Sport-for-All Division is the highest authority on public sports, the Development and Education Division and the Elite- and Olympic Division. The most popular sports in Iceland are football, golf, equestrian, handball, basketball, badminton, athletics, gymnastics, swimming and Sport-for-All. The greatest growth has been in golf and equestrian sports. The sport environment has been enriched in recent years with the addition of several new sports. Further information (English): [http://isi.is/english/][4]

The Icelandic Youth Association (UMFÍ), is the national association of local youth associations in Iceland. Its objective is to “Cultivate the people and the country”, and its slogan “Everything for Iceland”. Its associated partners are 19 district societies and 10 directly linked organizations. UMFÍ covers 263 associations with 90,000 members and emphasizes that everybody can take part and that membership is a lifestyle. UMFÍ role is to co-ordinate the activities of the Icelandic youth associations and offer services to our associate associations and our members. Furthermore, UMFÍ represents the youth associations in external relations, for example when dealing with the authorities and foreign bodies.

UMFÍ was founded in 1907 and the main objectives were; members started to cultivate forests, build swimming pools and meeting halls, construct facilities for sports activities, promote general meetings and promote debating societies where people could learn to speak in public. UMFÍ took part in the struggle for the construction of upper secondary schools, which then became the foundation of education in the rural areas. UMFÍ national meetings started in 1909 and have been held 27 times. These meetings have been called the Icelandic Olympics, being the largest and most impressive sports tournament held in Iceland. In 1992 UMFÍ initiated National Youth Sports Meetings (age 11-18), such meetings are held every year during the bank holiday first week in August with great participation in different sports. Participants are usually in company of their parents and family and they do not need to be a part of a team, everyone can participate. UMFÍ activities are very diversified all-round the country, supporting widely diverse cultural programs, while sports play a major part. Further information (Icelandic): [https://www.umfi.is/][5]

Although there is a great involvement of children and young people in organized sporting activities, a considerable dropout starts from the age of 13, according to results of researches (ICSRA). Iceland has numbers of fitness centers, swimming pools, mountains and green areas that are in use for public sports; not organized or organized by grassroots sport activities. Fitness centers become popular amongst young people during their upper secondary school participation and is sometimes kind of an extension for the one that does not anymore qualify for achievement/ competing sport activity teams like for football, handball, basketball etc. Grassroots clubs also offer periphery sports that do not belong under the ÍSÍ umbrella.
ÍSÍ and UMFÍ operate several of activities for public, with involvement of municipalities, work places, schools and so on. Examples of these activities are:

- **Life run** ("Lífhlaupið") ÍSÍ – The objective is to encourage the public to make physical activity a part of their daily routine. Work places and schools participate in a two or three week’s competition in February every year. The competition is divided into three different groups; between schools (students) at the same level (compulsory and upper secondary) and work places. The competition goes for a number of days being active and number of minutes doing physical activity. This competition is known nationwide and thousands of people participate. Individuals can also use the platform or website to compete with themselves all year around. Further information (Icelandic): [https://www.lifshlaupid.is/](https://www.lifshlaupid.is/) [6]

- **Cycle to school** ("Hjólum í skólann") ÍSÍ – The objective is to encourage upper secondary schools students to make an active travel and the benefit is increasing physical activity as a part of their daily routine. Upper secondary schools participate for four weeks in September. Further information (Icelandic): [http://hjolumiskolann.is/](http://hjolumiskolann.is/) [7]

- **Walk to school** ("Göngum í skólann") ÍSÍ – The objective is to encourage students in compulsory schools (age 6 - 16) to make an active travel and the benefit is increasing physical activity as a part of their daily routine. Compulsorily schools participate for four weeks in September. Further information (Icelandic): [http://www.gongumiskolann.is/](http://www.gongumiskolann.is/) [8]

- **Cycle to work** ("Hjólum í vinnuna") ÍSÍ – The objective is to encourage public to make an active travel and the benefit is increasing physical activity as a part of their daily routine. Workplaces participate for three weeks in May. The competition goes for a number of days traveling by bicycle or foot to and from work and number of kilometers traveled. This competition is known nationwide and thousands of people participate. Further information (Icelandic): [https://www.hjoladivinnuna.is/](https://www.hjoladivinnuna.is/) [9]

- **European Week of Sport** ÍSÍ – #BEACTIVE – The main object is to introduce sports and public physical activities throw-out Europe to decrease sedentary behavior. One-week project in September funded by Erasmus+. Further information (English): [https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week_en](https://ec.europa.eu/sport/week_en) [10]

- **Now We Move** UMFÍ – A European project were the main object is to get one hundred million European citizens to be physically active before the year 2020. The focus is on the municipalities to point out what is available in their surroundings and activate different clubs and grassroots to plan activities were people find something of their interest. Further information are available in Icelandic: [https://www.umfi.is/verkefni/hreyfivika/](https://www.umfi.is/verkefni/hreyfivika/) [11] and in English: [http://www.nowwemove.com/](http://www.nowwemove.com/) [12]

- **Women run ÍSÍ** ("Kvennahlaup ÍSÍ") – This project started in 1993 and occurs every year one Saturday in June. The main object is to make it possible for all women to run along, they can choose from different distances (1-10 km). The run takes place in serval of different municipalities around Iceland and in other countries. There is no time tracking, just enjoying being together and physical active. Further information (Icelandic): [https://www.sjova.is/um-okkur/markadsmal/sjova-kyvennahlaup-isi/](https://www.sjova.is/um-okkur/markadsmal/sjova-kyvennahlaup-isi/) [13]

Programmes or project aimed at specific targets groups addressed within the youth population, are targets like children (age 6-16), youth (age 16 to 20) and women according to the projects listed above. One target group has been addressed recently with focus on physical activity; people who seek medical advice at all age. Physical activity by prescription (FaR) was introduced in 2011 as a pilot project. The project has been implemented in all primary care service centers in Iceland. The objective is that general practitiners and other physicians can prescribe exercise to selected patients as part of their treatment programme. The exercise is specified and followed up, and is both an alternative and a supplement to traditional medical treatment. Further information (Icelandic): [https://hreyfisedill.is/about/](https://hreyfisedill.is/about/) [14]
Other activities available for young people including physical activity worth mentioning is the youth sector of **Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue** (ICE-SAR). Young people (age 16-25) have found their longing for action channeled into healthy, interesting and uplifting work. Further information (English): [http://www.icesar.com/youth-groups](http://www.icesar.com/youth-groups) [15]

**Physical education in schools**

**Upper Secondary Education Act No 92** (12 June 2008). The National Curriculum Guide for upper secondary schools, issued by the Minister, lays down the objectives and the organization of schooling at the upper secondary level. The act also applies to upper secondary schools to encourage students to participate in physical exercise. Further information (English): [https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/frettatengt2016/Thyding-log-um-framhaldsskola-juli-2016.pdf](https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/frettatengt2016/Thyding-log-um-framhaldsskola-juli-2016.pdf) [16]

**The National Curriculum Guide for upper secondary school: general section (2012).** Last couple of years the National Curriculum Guide has gone through changes because education in matriculation study programmes has been abridgement from four years to three years. This has influenced the scope and organization of the subject Sports and physical education to an enormous degree. The scope of the subject was uniform between upper secondary schools before the change, 8 (old) credits, 80 min per week every term, but now it ranges from 4 to 12 standardized upper secondary school credits (S-credits). Upper secondary schools have to plan study programmes for students to have an opportunity to take a course unit in sports every term. Upper secondary schools offer students variation of study programmes and they can offer a sport or physical education study programme. Quite a few schools do that in Iceland. Students, who parallel to their studies in an upper secondary school and are engaged in extensive physical training under the auspices of a special sports association and/or athletics association with a trained coach, can apply to the principal to be exempt from specific courses or parts of courses in sports or physical education. Further information (English): [https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/publications/curriculum/](https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/publications/curriculum/) [17]

**The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture conducted a survey in 2011, to get an inside about different issues connected to Sports and physical education in upper secondary schools.** According to that survey, most schools offered one old credit in academic instruction in Sports and physical education and seven old credits in physical activity training. All upper secondary schools had teachers that had physical education as a major in their academic study. Most teachers use the same book and workbook; Training, health and well-being (“þjálfun, heilsa, vellíðan”) for the academic instruction in physical education class. Most teachers plan their physical activity lessons according to their knowledge and material published by the sports unions of ÍSí e.g. football, volleyball, basketball, handball, swimming, badminton, gymnastic, athletics and tennis. Further information (Icelandic): [https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/menttamalaraduneyti-media/media/forsidumyndir/4020967_framhaldsskoli200112.pdf](https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/menttamalaraduneyti-media/media/forsidumyndir/4020967_framhaldsskoli200112.pdf) [18]

According to the Compulsory schools **National Curriculum Guide** three lessons per week (120 min) in physical education is required. Two physical activity lessons and one swimming lesson per week. Compulsory schools can also offer students age 13-16 extra lessons/programmes in physical education as an elective subject every term. Schools are encourage to make outdoor lessons a part of the students timetable and outdoor recess 2-3 times a day (10-20 min each time) is required for age 6-12, but choice for age 13-16. Further information (English): [https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/publications/curriculum/](https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/publications/curriculum/) [17]
Collaboration and partnerships

Show character (“Sýnum karakter”) is a collaboration work of ÍSÍ and UMFÍ. It is an initiative for training the psychological and social skills of children and young people in sports. The ideology for the project is based on the knowledge that it is possible to train and strengthen the psychological social skills of practitioners just as physical skills. Last decades the focus has mainly been on physical and technical skills. The main objective of the project is to encourage coaches and sports organizations to put even more and extra focused emphasis on building a good character among practitioners, with the training of psychological and social characteristics of children and young people. The training of children and young people in sports allows sports clubs to take care of both the upbringing and the elite part of the sporting work, because good characters are well prepared to cope with life and also to succeed in sports. Further information (Icelandic): http://synumkarakter.is/#_ [19]