

Criteria for conducting election observation in Iceland

According to Article 138 of the Election Act no. 112/2021, domestic and foreign election observers from institutions or organisations can obtain authorisation from the National Electoral Commission to observe the conduct of elections. These guidelines are intended for the National Electoral Commission and election observers.

The conduct of elections on election day is primarily in the hands of senior electoral commissions of municipalities, while counting in parliamentary elections, presidential elections, and referendums is the responsibility of senior electoral commissions of constituencies. Senior electoral commissions of municipalities are responsible for counting votes in municipal elections.

The National Electoral Commission supports the electoral commissions and delivers all election materials in elections other than local elections.

Requirements for organisations or associations for election observation

Election observers who are part of national or international organisations or associations may be authorised to conduct election observation in Iceland if certain conditions are met. Individuals are generally not authorised to observe elections. The results of the election observation are expected to be public and in accordance with international standards. The National Electoral Commission and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may invite associations or organisations to conduct observation, or they may themselves request the National Electoral Commission to conduct election observation in Iceland. In order to conduct election observation, it must be clear that the observation is in accordance with national and international laws and regulations.

Application for election observation

The National Electoral Commission receives applications for election observation, except in the case of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, where the Ministry for Foreign Affairs mediates communications. However, the National Electoral Commission always issues identification cards to election observers.

Applications for election observation must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the election. The following information must be included in the application:

- Which elections are requested to be observed and what the purpose of the observation is.
- Information about the organisation or association applying, such as role, activities, and ownership/company form.

- Name and date of birth of election observers.
- A copy of the election observers' passport with photo and passport number.
- Contact information during their stay in Iceland, including phone number and email address.

In order to assess applications, organisations or associations may be asked for additional information, for example:

- The organisation's or association's previous experience with election observation and related reports.
- A website with information about the organisation or association, its election observation methodology, and the purpose of the election observation.
- Methodology for election observation, e.g. with reference to international standards.
- The reason why there is interest in conducting election observation in Iceland.

The application must be sent electronically to the National Electoral Commission along with relevant supporting documents at postur@landskjorstjorn.is.

Conducting election obseravation

All election observers who come to observe elections and have been authorised by the National Electoral Commission will be issued with identification cards from the National Electoral Commission, which they must carry while performing their duties. All election observers are required to attend a meeting of the National Electoral Commission held before election day to receive a briefing on the election arrangements and to review the rules that apply to the conduct of elections. They are also expected to familiarise themselves with the applicable laws and regulations governing the conduct of the elections.

Election observers shall notify the electoral commission at the polling station or counting station of their arrival and departure. They shall perform their duties diligently and courteously and shall comply with laws, regulations and other instructions and meeting rules in force in each location. Election observers shall not obstruct the conduct of the elections. They are not authorised to guide, assist, or participate in the conduct of the election or counting.

The National Electoral Commission assumes no financial or other liability for election observers or parties associated with them.

The National Electoral Commission does not mediate visa applications. If election observers require a passport visa to enter the country, it is up to the Directorate of Immigration or the appropriate embassy to provide such visa.