

## **Proposed amendments** to the Icelandic Constitution<sup>1</sup> (unofficial translation)

### **Article 1**

After Article 78 of the Constitution, three new articles, Articles 79-81, are inserted, with a corresponding change in numbering:

#### **a. (Article 79)**

Iceland's nature is the foundation of all life in the land. Responsibility for protecting nature and the environment is shared collectively by all and the protection shall be based on precaution and long-term vision guided by sustainable development. The maintenance of natural diversity shall be promoted and the productivity and prosperity of ecosystems.

Everyone shall enjoy a healthy environment. The public may roam freely and stay on the land for legitimate purposes. Nature shall be well treated and the interests of landowners and other right holders respected. More detailed provisions for the content and extent of the right to roam shall be made by law.

The right of the public to access information on the environment and the effects of any developments thereon and to participate in the preparation of decisions affecting the environment, shall be provided for by law.

#### **b. (Article 80)**

Iceland's natural resources belong to the Icelandic people. They shall be utilised sustainably and for the benefit of all inhabitants. The State controls and oversees the management and utilisation of these resources on behalf of the people.

Natural resources and territories that are not subject to private property rights fall under national ownership. Nobody can obtain ownership or permanent utilisation in respect of these resources and territories and rights pertaining to them. These resources and territories may never be sold or pledged. The legislature and the executive hold the right to their control and disposal on behalf of the people.

As a general rule, an appropriate fee shall be charged for authorisations to utilise natural resources and territories belonging to the Icelandic State or those falling under national ownership. The granting of usage authorisations shall be based on law and equality and transparency shall be respected. Such authorisations never lead to permanent ownership or irrevocable control over natural resources or territories that fall under national ownership.

#### **c. (Article 81)**

Fifteen percent of eligible voters can demand that a promulgated act of law from Althingi be put to a general, secret and binding vote. The demand shall be submitted to the Minister within six weeks from the publication of the act and the vote shall take place no earlier than six weeks and no later than four months after a certified demand has been submitted. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister submitted this bill to Althingi on 25 August 2016 on the basis of proposals by the Constitutional Committee.

budget, supplementary budgets, acts on matters concerning taxation and acts adopted to fulfil obligations under international law will not be put to a referendum according to this paragraph.

Fifteen percent of eligible voters can furthermore demand that a resolution by Althingi according to article 21 [ratification of treaties] be put to a general, secret and binding vote. A law that is adopted by two-thirds of votes in Althingi may stipulate that the same applies to resolutions that have legal implications or contain important policy formulations. The demand must be received by the Minister within six weeks from the adoption by Althingi and the vote shall take place no earlier than six weeks and no later than four months after a certified demand has been submitted.

Althingi may rescind an act or repeal a resolution before a referendum takes place, in which case it will not be held.

To reject an act or resolution according to this article, a majority in a referendum, but no less than a quarter of eligible voters, must vote against it.

A law adopted by two-thirds of votes in Althingi shall further provide for start dates and representation for petitions, the form and collection of signatures, the dissemination of information, the implementation of referendums and settlement of disputes in court.

## **Article 2**

This Act enters immediately into force.