

Design as a Driver for Future

Icelandic Design Policy 2014–2018



2 This document sets forth the Icelandic Government's Design Policy, which is based on recommendations from a steering group appointed by the Minister of Industries and Innovation in collaboration with the Minister of Education, Science, and Culture in early 2011.

Members of the steering group were Sigurður Þorsteinsson, Industrial Designer (chairman), representing the Minister of Industries and Innovation; Sóley Stefánsdóttir, Graphic Designer and then Jóhannes Þórðarson, Architect, representing the Minister of Education, Science, and Culture; and Halla Helgadóttir, representing the Iceland Design Centre. This is the first time that an official policy has been formulated for the field of design, as has been done in many of our neighbouring countries.

Many countries around the world have adopted official design policies including Finland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Singapore, and South Korea. Finland, for instance, prepared a comprehensive design policy over a decade ago, in order to support the economy and bolster its competitive position. Experts have concluded that the implementation of Finland's design policy has made a significant impact on the country's economic growth and competitiveness in the wake of the economic crisis of the 1990s.

The Icelandic Design Policy for 2014–2018 is scheduled for review in 2016.



This policy is introduced because...

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- ... Design is one of the drivers of increased value creation, enhanced quality of life, and sustainability.
- ... Design is a methodology, a way of thinking, and a process that attempt to bridge the gap between creativity and innovation, between technology and the user, and between sciences and market-centred sectors.
- ... Design touches upon on all areas of our existence, from the development of business, society, and the economy to the development of ideas, projects, products, services, processes, and events.
- ... Design belongs to administration, institutions, politics, businesses, and homes.
- ... Design draws strength from Iceland's uniqueness as a country and a people.
- ... Everything man-made in our environment – cities, buildings, systems, and objects – is designed.

Design is

In the Design Policy presented here, the word design is used as a collective term for various fields that unite creation and practical solutions. In uniting these elements, design links creativity and innovation and shapes ideas for the production of good, useful items for users and buyers. Design is defined as creative energy used to achieve a specific purpose.

In recent years, general understanding of the role of design has increased, as has awareness of how design fuels innovation in all areas. Among countries that have made notable progress in this area are Finland, Denmark,

4 Holland, the United Kingdom, Estonia, South Korea, and Singapore. In addition, the European Union has declared that design is one of the key disciplines in its EU 2020 Flagship Initiative - Innovation Union.¹⁾ In the European Commission's 2009 report *Design as a driver of user-centred innovation*,²⁾ the following conclusions are drawn:

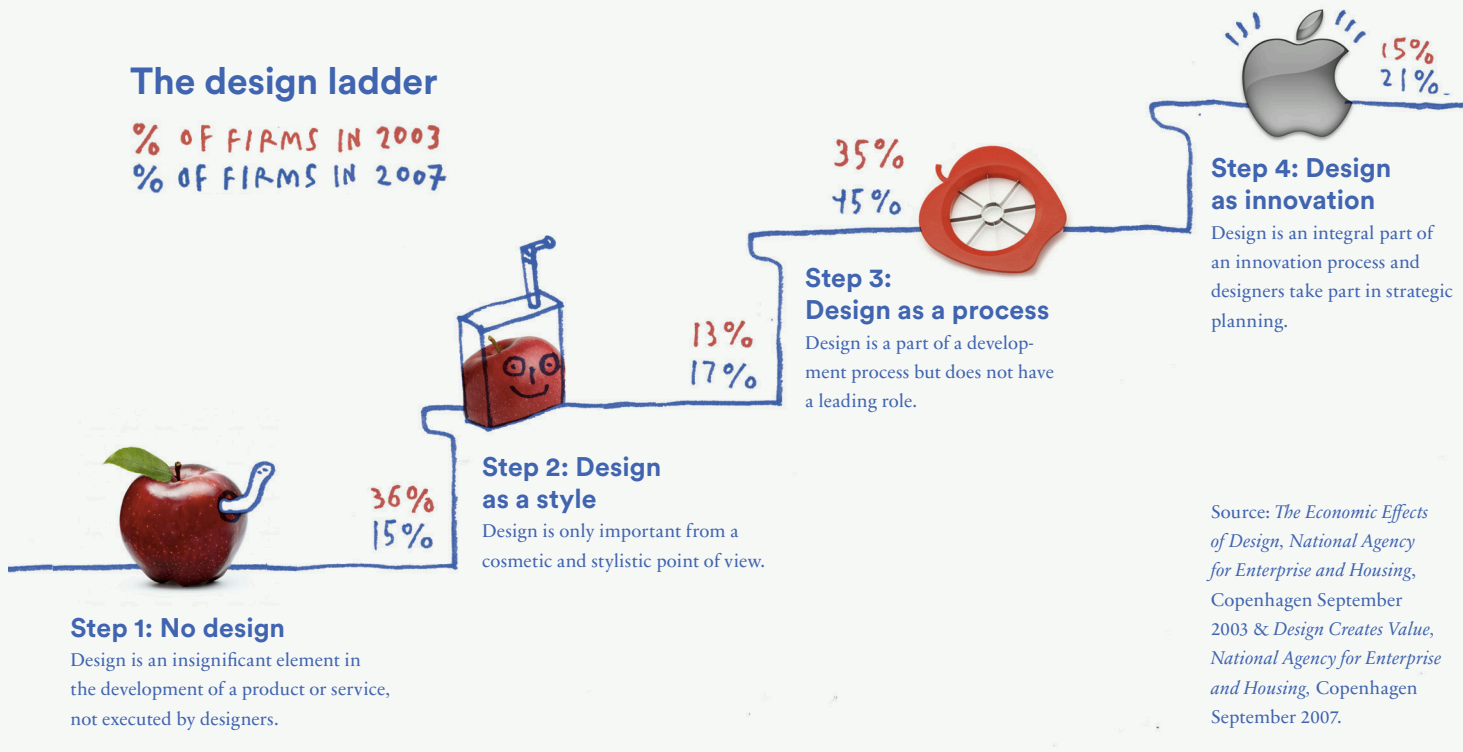
- Companies that invest in design tend to be more innovative and more profitable and to grow faster than those that do not.
- Emphasising the commercial use of design has a positive impact on national competitiveness.
- Although often associated with aesthetics and the 'looks' of products only, the application of design is much broader. Design methodology is useful for integrating environmental and economic factors into the development of goods, services, and systems.
- Design as a driver and enabler of innovation complements more traditional innovation activities such as research.

In 2003, two Danish institutions – the Danish Design Centre and the National Agency for Enterprise and Housing – published a report³

on the economic effects of design for business and public administration. The main purpose was to study the economic benefits of design and develop methods to measure the profit from investment in design and design promotion. The study covered more than a thousand companies over a five-year period. It revealed a 22% advantage in revenue growth among the firms that invested in design, in addition to increased job creation and exports. The report presented the methodology used – the so-called design ladder – which is considered a useful tool to assess how far individual countries or firms have progressed in utilising the potential of design for value creation. The higher a firm is positioned on the design ladder, the more important design is to the company's overall policy. The findings were clear: The potential of design is poorly utilised when its use is limited to making goods, services, and packaging more attractive. The higher a firm is positioned on the design ladder, the more successful it is. Following this, the Danish government approved a four-year design policy as one of five ways to promote economic development, called "Denmark in the cultural and experience economy." One part of the policy, the so-called Design Icebreaker Scheme, aimed at encouraging small and medium-sized companies to utilise design for the first time.

The design ladder

% OF FIRMS IN 2003
% OF FIRMS IN 2007



Source: *The Economic Effects of Design*, National Agency for Enterprise and Housing, Copenhagen September 2003 & *Design Creates Value*, National Agency for Enterprise and Housing, Copenhagen September 2007.

A driver for success and economic growth

In order to unleash the power of design, a number of factors must work together. This Design Policy emphasises three pillars:

- **Education and knowledge** – good schools, sound practical training, and a strong research community.
- **Designers' work environment and support system** – effective and conducive to dialogue among designers, other sectors, and the business support network.
- **Awakening** – in companies, the public sector, and society at large, concerning the potential that design represents.

2 EU Commission: *Design as a driver of user-centred innovation* April 2009, SEC(2009) 50.
3 *The Economic Effects of Design*, National Agency for Enterprise and Housing September 2003.

Education and knowledge

Enhance the importance of design in primary and secondary schools

Initiative 1: Availability of teaching materials on design for primary and secondary schools

Responsibility: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture and National Centre for Educational Materials.

Execution: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture; National Centre for Educational Materials; and publishers of upper secondary school teaching materials.

Objectives:

- Enhance understanding of materials, methods, and skills in idea work where workmanship and work with materials are applied in order to coordinate thought and manual skill.
- Emphasise creative thought and independent, professional work habits, with satisfaction and positive attitudes as a guiding principle.
- Mobilise workplaces, schools, museums, and professional personnel to present an ambitious programme for the development of teaching materials and methods.

Description: Special emphasis must be placed on creation, with the aim that students will utilise study materials in as many primary school courses as possible in a positive and constructive way. The main emphasis must be on the entire process, from idea to presentation. It is important to

encourage students in as many different ways as possible, stressing that the result is not only a physical product but also a system or service. Teaching materials aim at training students in presenting their ideas and in reading and understanding texts that discuss culture and visual arts. It is important that students be able to apply various presentation methods, through moulding, drawing, and use of digital media and words, either verbally or in writing. It is critical to instruct teachers in the preferred methods of teaching design.

Initiative 2: Strengthening of specialised upper secondary school study programmes in art and design

Responsibility: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Execution: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Objectives: To strengthen and expand the activities of upper secondary schools that offer programmes of study emphasising creative thinking and development of ideas based on the premises of the visual arts.

Description: It is necessary to ensure that there is a selection of strong study programmes that aim to prepare students wishing to study in creative fields at the university level. Current programmes of study shall be mapped and the need for specialisation assessed, with consideration given to drop-out rates, as well as to opportunities for further study and the economy's need to strengthen the framework for idea-centred work. A framework shall be formulated to administer and strengthen initiative, creativity, and re-thinking within society at large. It is important to create the appropriate framework for the study programmes, so as to provide for the flexibility to move outside the framework in order to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach and collaboration with the overall economy.



8 Initiative 3: Strengthening of education and continuing education of primary and secondary teachers of design-related subjects

Responsibility: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Execution: Universities and bodies involved in continuing education of teachers.

Objectives: To offer teachers an education in design at all educational levels, incorporating the premises and processes of design fields and with emphasis on professionalism and progressiveness, based on Icelandic conditions.

Description: The aim shall be to train competent and effective teachers to teach arts subjects, with particular emphasis on design – teachers who can work with students and artists from various arts and design-related disciplines. It is important to place strong emphasis on enhancing teachers' personal competency with targeted training in setting personal and professional objectives that challenge students' independence. The study must open the opportunity for collaboration among arts and design-related disciplines, thereby paving the way for new possibilities in education.



Strengthen and expand research-related university studies in design

Initiative 1: Development of research on design: its effects and possibilities

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Execution: Universities, Iceland Design Centre and Innovation Center Iceland.

Objectives: To carry out research on the effects of design on development in the economy. The results of the study shall be used to understand and assess the possibilities and economic benefits of design in economic activity and to define and assess the effect of design on the quality of life. The study shall be repeated at intervals of three to four years.

Description: Research is a forum for knowledge creation (which may

include artistic creation), collaboration, and communication. Research should encourage creative thinking and a critical attitude towards the topics of our time. It takes place under the leadership of professionals in universities; at workshops, lectures, and symposia; and in institutions and firms. Researchers gain understanding and experience of important teamwork in their individual research projects and in larger cross-disciplinary collaborative projects.

Initiative 2: Linking of university education in design with other university-level disciplines

Responsibility: Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Execution: Icelandic universities.

Objectives:

- To develop collaborative processes and to integrate design, technology, and science, with cooperation among businesses, universities, institutions, and other societal groups.
- To enhance collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, with research that applies design methodology to real topics within society.
- To use design methodology for research, promote increased knowledge creation, and strengthen discourse on design.
- To create a forum for the development of methodology and procedures to bring ideas to fruition. To research and develop sustainability with design, thereby contributing to improved coexistence of human beings and nature.

Description: To strengthen the forum for collaboration among academic disciplines in research-related university studies, with clear links to the business community. This requires strong research-related university studies in design, as design always entails collaboration and cooperation. Research-related university study programmes in design create opportunities for broad-based collaboration across disciplines. In a research-related, multi-disciplinary programme of study where strong emphasis is placed on applying design thinking to real tasks in society, individuals are trained in independent, critical work habits. Diverse study programmes are brought together for discussion and collaboration under the leadership of professionals from various disciplines. Research-related workshops are launched with students and instructors from various study programmes, and the projects are directly related to the business sector.

Work and support environment

Designers' work environment and support system must be effective and must encourage dialogue among designers, other sectors, and the business support network.

Use funds and support systems in a targeted manner

Initiative 1: Systematic increase of the importance of design in competitive funds and public institutions

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Objectives: To promote design as a natural and integral part of projects, development, and research in all fields.

Description: To work systematically towards ensuring that design is viewed as an inalienable part of all discussion of creation, research, and development, in part by ensuring that design professionals participate in selection and adjudication committees for funds intended to strengthen the economy.

Initiative 2: Ensuring the future of a design fund

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Iceland Design Centre, Rannís, or Innovation Centre Iceland.

Objectives: To promote rapid development in the field of design in Iceland. To enhance the possibilities for firms and projects in the field of design to achieve much more rapid results than would otherwise be possible.

Description: A design fund is a project fund, development fund, and export fund aimed at strengthening projects in the fields of design and architecture.

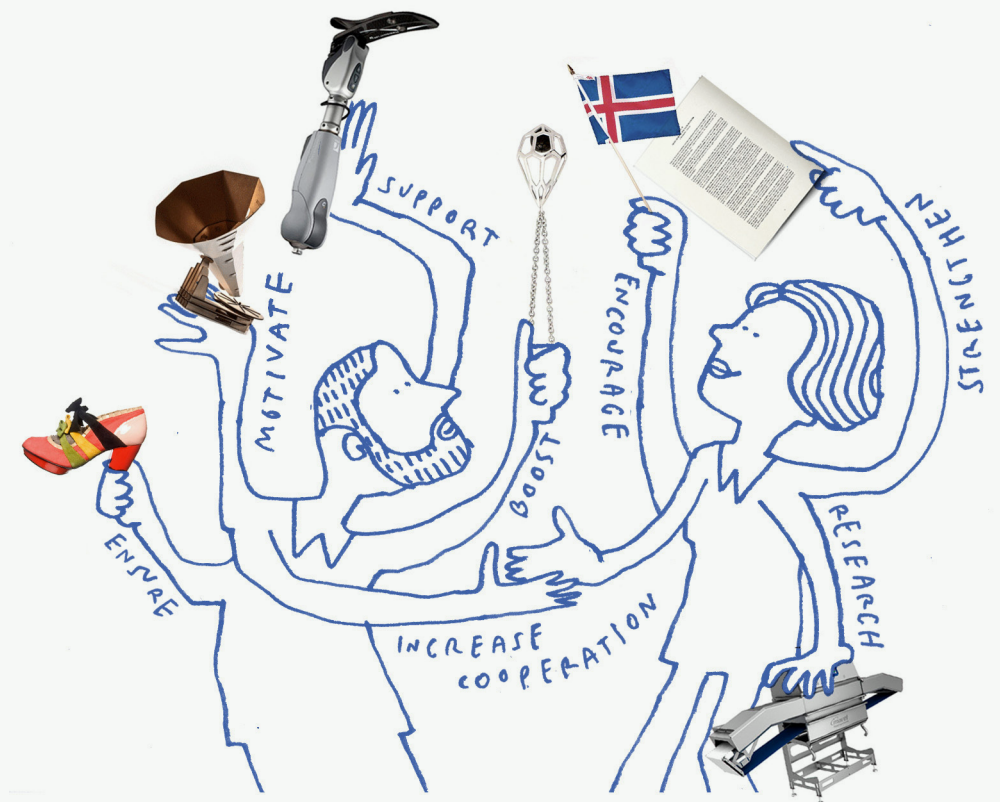
Initiative 3: Improvement of econometrics in the field of design in Iceland

Responsibility: Ministry of Finance.

Execution: Statistics Iceland and/or University of Iceland Research Centre for Creative Studies.

Objectives: To gain an overview of the scope of corporate activities that are based on design (architecture, clothing design, product and industrial design, graphic design, jewellery design, textiles, and ceramics).

Description: To organise econometrics pertaining to design so that it is possible to work systematically towards the development of the sectors, in part based on statistical information about the scope of such activities in Iceland and their exportation.



Initiative 4: Improvement of competitive conditions of companies in the field of design in Iceland.

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Ministry of Industries and Innovation, tax authorities, Directorate of Customs, and Iceland Design Centre.

Objectives: To enhance the possibilities for Icelandic firms in the design field to stimulate exports of their products.

Description: It is necessary to review the regulatory framework governing firms in the field of design, to examine the legislation on the importation of prototypes or samples, Compare VAT rules in Iceland and EU countries and imports from Iceland through EU countries.

Initiative 5: To strengthening of the Iceland Design Centre

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Objectives: To develop and enhance professional, targeted work habits for the development of design in Iceland. To ensure consistency between projects and funding allocated to the Iceland Design Centre.

Description: To build up a strong Iceland Design Centre as the first port of call for firms, administrators, and public institutions in connection with projects in the field of design. The Centre shall provide information, consultancy, and promotion and training.



Break the ice by supporting specified projects

Initiative 1: Expansion of the number of support and ice-breaking projects in the field of design

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Iceland Design Centre, in collaboration with Innovation Center Iceland.

Objectives: To increase innovation in Icelandic firms, strengthen production and exports through increased collaboration between designers and firms, and encourage firms to increase their investment in design projects.

Description: The Iceland Design Centre's sister organisations in the Nordic countries have undertaken projects in this area, with notable success; therefore, it is possible to import procedures, work habits, and knowledge to Iceland.

Ensure that the authorities lead by positive example

Initiative 2: Encourage the authorities to choose Icelandic design as a product and in the development of projects and services

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Iceland Design Centre, State Trading Centre, and Government Construction Contracting Agency.

Objectives: To enhance respect for and visibility of Icelandic design and its role in trade in Iceland and abroad.

Description: Always emphasise Icelandic production and design in institutions, buildings, public projects, services, and systems, as well as in all promotional materials, including in films. The Danes do this, for instance, on purely business premises. In this way it is possible to make much more rapid progress and support domestic firms so that their potential for success abroad will increase exponentially. The focal point is to ensure that Icelandic design is always at the forefront in public sector outposts, whether in Iceland or abroad.

Promotion

Design can be of pivotal importance in enhancing value and the quality of life. But we can – and must – do better, and this is why it is essential that the public, the business sector, and the authorities be made aware of the benefits.

Exhibit and promote the benefits of design

Initiative 1: Expand promotion of design in Iceland and professional promotion of designers and their companies abroad

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

Execution: Iceland Design Centre, in collaboration with experts in the pertinent fields.

Objectives:

- Systematically enhance understanding among firms and institutions by acquainting them with the positive effects of design on projects, services, systems, companies, and society.
- Accelerate the growth and success that can be achieved with systematic promotional projects.
- Increase the number of domestic and international collaboration projects.
- Step up professional promotion of Icelandic design abroad and work systematically at such promotional projects.

Description: Support major promotional projects such as Design March, the Icelandic Design Awards, the Museum of Design and Applied Art, and a variety of design exhibitions in Iceland and abroad. Create promotional materials on the success of design in Iceland. Prepare specialised presentations on the value of design for firms, administrators, politicians, and the media. Integrate policy and areas of focus when allocating funding to foreign promotional and export projects, so that the funds provided by the authorities for such projects will be used in a manner consistent with the objectives set by the Iceland Design Centre in collaboration with professionals concerning larger promotional projects in the field of design abroad.



Undertake strong and effective promotional work abroad

Initiative 2: Ensure the independence of professional promotions of designers abroad

Responsibility: Ministry of Industries and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, and Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Execution: Iceland Design Centre, in collaboration with the Promote Iceland agency.

Objectives: Enhance the position of Icelandic design within the administrative system and further the development of targeted, professional work habits.

Description: Distinguish between:

Professional promotion – promotional projects where designers, design companies, or groups of designers participate in promotional projects abroad, on their own initiative or by invitation. These projects are undertaken based on objectives set by professionals.

National promotion – projects where the promotion of professional disciplines or individual designers is part of a larger promotional project whose main emphasis is on the promotion of Iceland and its natural environment, culture, and people.

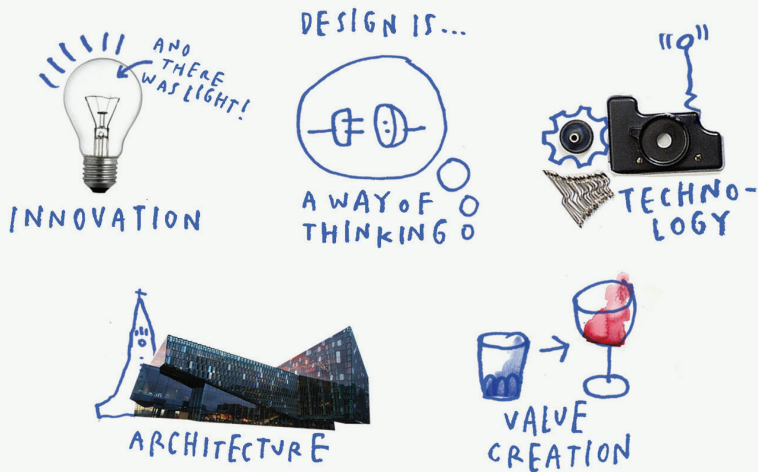


The success of the Design Policy

This Government Design Policy is presented for a period of five years, in broad consultation between the authorities and the design community. The review of the Policy will commence in 2016.

In order to ensure the Policy's success, a steering group will be established, with members appointed by the Ministry of Industries and Innovation, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. The steering group will comprise stakeholders whose role is to assess the status of the initiatives defined in the Policy and to facilitate the necessary communications among the parties concerned.

The Ministry of Industries and Innovation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, will be responsible for the work carried out by this consultation and execution group.



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Ministry of Industries and Innovation

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Ministry of Education, Science and Culture