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Design Policy Mapping in Europe

The following content is drawn from the “Design Policy Mapping in Europe” report. Access and download the complete report using the link:

https://madres.beda.org/en/publications/design-policy-mapping-in-europe/

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Country Profile: Iceland

Country Size: 103,000 sq km
Citizens: 383,567 (2024) | Tendency: rising
GDP per Capita: 82,703.86 $ (2024) | Tendency: rising
EU Innovation Scoreboard: Strong Innovator (2025) | 112,2%
BEDA Member Organisations: Iceland Design and Architecture

Dedicated design policy status

Yes. Iceland stands out in Europe with its *Design and Architecture Policy until 2030*, adopted in 2023. The policy is ambitious in scope, operating as a comprehensive cross-sectoral framework accompanied by a detailed Action Plan for 2023–2026. It envisions design and architecture as key drivers of societal progress, sustainability, and quality of life. Central aims include embedding design thinking into public decision-making, infrastructure planning, education, and business development, while also positioning design as a method for tackling complex societal challenges and supporting cultural identity, sustainability, and economic growth. The policy builds on earlier efforts, most notably *Design as a Driver for the Future 2014–2018*, which established the first framework for recognising design as a strategic national resource.

Design in other policy agendas

→ **Circular Economy Strategy** – *Together Against Waste 2016–2027* mentions sustainable product design and ecodesign. [Integrated]
→ **CCI, innovation, industrial/development, digital strategies** – No strategies or explicit references were identified.

Observations

Iceland offers one of the most comprehensive and future-oriented design policy frameworks in Europe. By combining a long-term vision with a concrete action plan, the policy provides both symbolic and operational weight to design's role in national development. Its cross-cutting integration, spanning governance, business, sustainability and culture illustrates how design can be positioned as a central lever for systemic change. Few countries have managed to create such a cohesive framework, making Iceland an important case for understanding how design policy can evolve from sectoral initiatives into a fully embedded national strategy.

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