



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Eighty-fifth session**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by States  
parties under article 18 of the Convention on the  
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Replies of Iceland to the list of issues and questions in  
relation to its ninth periodic report\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



**Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues and questions  
(CEDAW/C/ISL/Q/9)**

1. Please refer to paragraphs 7–10 and 19–21 of Iceland’s 9th periodic report.

**Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues and questions**

2. As stated in paragraphs 16–18 of Iceland’s 9th periodic report to the committee, the Icelandic government has put emphasis on gender equality in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2022, the findings were presented by the cross-ministerial working group established for the purpose of reviewing actions already taken, as well as proposing actions to mitigate any negative long-term effects of the pandemic on vulnerable groups in Icelandic society. The working group’s report demonstrates that special budget allocations outside the fixed budget for actions against violence during the period of 2020–2021 amounted to ISK 225 million. The budget amount was to a large extent allocated to preventive measures, actions and awareness raising in response to the increase in domestic violence against women and children during the pandemic. Many of these activities were detailed in Iceland’s 9th periodic report to the committee, i.a. paragraphs 53 and 54. The report recommends developing further the infrastructure for supporting victims and perpetrators of violence to guarantee the appropriate support and permanent endorsement of service resources.

**Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues and questions**

3. As discussed in paragraph 23 of Iceland’s 9th periodic report to the committee, the Icelandic government has sought to implement the Convention, like other international agreements, through legislative alignment, thus adapting the internal legal order to such agreements as opposed to incorporating entire international instruments. Iceland enacted its first legislation on gender equality following the International Women’s Year in 1975 and the United Nations world conference on the status of women in Mexico. During the review of this legislation in 1984, it was noted that the committee tasked with drafting the legislation should take note of the Convention, which Iceland had signed in 1980 although it was not ratified until 1985. Since then, the law has been updated on a regular basis, most recently with Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender. Ever since the first enactment, United Nations activity as regards women and equality has been the basis for legislative development and other policymaking on gender equality in Iceland. As an example, the first gender equality implementation plan decided by the Icelandic government in 1986 was based, i.a., on the Convention, and the adoption of forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women by the UN World Conference on the status of women in Kenya in 1985. The implementation plans adopted since then have also been based on the Convention.

4. Article 13 on reconciliation of work and family life and Article 16 (3) of Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, is an example of the implementation of the Convention through legislation. Article 16 (3) states that special consideration to women in connection with pregnancy and childbirth shall not be regarded as discrimination. These provisions have been enacted to comply with Article 4 (2) of the Convention. Another example would be Article 6 (General provision regarding pay equality), Article 7-10 on Equal pay certification and Equal pay confirmation) and Article 18 on prohibition against discrimination regarding terms of employment. These provisions have been enacted to comply with Article 11 (1d) of the Convention.

### **Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues and questions**

5. There are no plans to relocate the Directorate of Equality from Akureyri. In the ministry's opinion, the reinforcement of the Directorate over the past four years makes it well equipped to fulfil its role and serve gender equality throughout the country.

6. The budget allocated to the Directorate of Equality totalled ISK 135,600,000 in 2021, and ISK 141,400,000 in 2022.

### **Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues and questions**

7. The current coalition's program for government lays down that an independent national human rights institution is to be established to meet the UN Paris Principles. The Prime Minister's Office is currently working on a Green Paper on human rights as a part of the preparation for such an institution. Emphasis is put on broad consultation with stakeholders and the public, so the Prime Minister has held open consultation meetings on human rights in all parts of the country. The Green Paper and the information contained therein will be used in the preparation of a draft Bill on an independent national human rights institution, which is to be submitted in the parliament Althingi during the autumn session of 2023.

### **Reply to paragraph 6(a) of the list of issues and questions**

8. The Icelandic government uses gender-disaggregated data for evaluation of its policies and actions on gender equality issues, as well as using such data for equality assessment of projects that do not directly promote equality objectives. A study on the gender pay gap during the period 2008–2020, which Statistics Iceland carried out for the Prime Minister's Office, is one example of a study conducted for the purpose of evaluating actions on gender equality. The study shows a decrease in the gender pay gap during the period, which applies to both employment income, and unadjusted and adjusted pay differential. The gender-based division of the labour market reflected in occupational sex segregation largely explains the existing pay gap, but the effect of education levels and demographic factors on pay gap has decreased, especially in recent years. From 2008 to 2020, the gender pay gap decreased from 36.3% to 23.5%, the unadjusted pay differential decreased from 20.5% to 12.6%, and the adjusted pay differential from 6.4% to 4.1%. The adjusted pay differential reflects whether males and females with identical qualities or factors receive equal pay. The study leads to the conclusion that the gender pay gap is decreasing, and that actions taken by the government are yielding results as regards combating the gender pay gap. However, further action is still necessary. The annual status report on equality mapping data is an example of equality impact assessment with regard to actions which do not directly promote gender equality. It summarises the impact of the current policies and allocation of funds. The government decided in August 2022, once the report's findings had been publicised, that each line ministry should define at least one dedicated gender equality goal in the 2024–2028 fiscal plan, and work systematically towards its progress, i.e. with clearly defined actions in the budget proposal for 2024. The decision was also made to carry out a time-use study in cooperation with Statistics Iceland.

9. The government strives to make gender-disaggregated data available for the purpose of evaluating gender-equality action outcomes. To name an example, social indicators, which are published, measure societal factors for the purpose of enabling the government and the public to monitor social development. Statistics Iceland and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour publish these social indicators.

**Reply to paragraph 6(b) of the list of issues and questions**

10. The working group on gender-disaggregated statistical data has consulted with a number of stakeholders, including ministries, government agencies and representatives of marginalised groups on the situation with respect to gender-disaggregated statistical data. This consultation has highlighted challenges which include, i.a., the sharing, processing and publication of gender-disaggregated data, unnecessary fear of processing data due to privacy considerations, and lack of data that captures gender issues, for example regarding unpaid housework and care taking.

**Reply to paragraph 6(c) of the list of issues and questions**

11. Allocation of public funds through grants is currently under scrutiny based on Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender and Act No 123/2015 on Public Finances. This effort has led to a review of the allocation rules, an increase in the recording of statistical data, and an increased percentage of women being allocated from government funds. Despite this effort, there are no plans to dismantle the funds that specifically provide support to women. This practice is anchored in the legal basis for affirmative action as stipulated by Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender.

**Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues and questions**

12. Icelandic authorities are aware of the gendered nature of the labour market in this country. Numerous ongoing projects aim to counteract this situation. Please refer to Iceland's 9th periodic report, paragraphs 38, 73 and 185 in this respect. The following is in addition to the above-mentioned information:

(a) University students have visited upper secondary schools for the purpose of promoting technological disciplines through the GERT-project. The GERT-project has received support from the ministry and contributes to promoting students' interest in science and technology, as well as studies and jobs that relate to those fields. The role of the web site is to serve as a platform for education and training in the field of science and technology, with emphasis put on the relationship between the economy and educational institutions. The project takes place in cooperation with Félag fagkvenna, an association of women with vocational qualifications. They visit Grades 3 and 4 of elementary schools and introduce jobs in male-dominated vocational fields to counteract stereotyping with respect to those professions;

(b) The National Emergency Number 112 electronic portal on violence includes information on digital violence, <https://www.112.is/en/abuse-in-close-relationships> providing advice for children and teenagers subjected to abuse online. A special education and prevention project for students in Grade 8 of elementary school has been initiated in connection with the project run by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police on measures against gender-based violence online and is operated through the medium of 112. This relates to the action programme on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence against children and young people for the period of 2021–2025, which is discussed in paragraph 70 of Iceland's 9th periodic report to the committee;

(c) The Home and School organisation runs the SAFT cybersecurity project, which signifies community, family, and technology, and is an awareness-raising effort to promote safe and positive computer and new media use among children and young people in Iceland.

## Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues and questions

13. The parliamentary resolution on measures against violence lays out that implementation of the programme will take account of violence, which includes, i.a., physical, sexual, mental, financial, and not least gender-based violence, as well as bullying, hate speech, and the publication on digital media of images that incite violence. All these forms of violence are included in domestic violence and sexual violence.

14. The resolution addresses children and adults, as well as particularly vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, and people of foreign origin, therefore, vulnerable groups have been given special consideration under the implementation of the programme. A special anti-violence task force active during the pandemic took note of the parliamentary resolution while drafting proposals to the minister on actions against violence, as well as the parliamentary resolution on a disability policy and action plan 2017–2021, in addition to a parliamentary resolution on an implementation plan for the issues of immigrants.

15. Examples of actions include the development of the National Emergency Number 112 electronic portal on violence, with emphasis on the availability of information for people with disabilities, as well as those of foreign origin, in addition to grants for the purpose of translating reference material from victim centres and victim organisations into foreign languages, along with recommendations by the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding the process for sexual offences when the perpetrator and/or victim is a person with disabilities.

16. As regards cases with the police nationwide involving bodily harm, aggravated assault, and manslaughter, almost 66% of cases are registered as domestic violence, and a record number of incidents have been reported to the police during the first six months of 2022, compared with the same period in previous years. No special funding has been allocated to the police as regards changed procedures for cases involving domestic violence, and information about funding for actions against gender-based violence is not maintained separately.

17. The majority of emergency call-outs is solved in cooperation with social services and child protection based on specific agreements, and in the spirit of cooperation. The Minister of Social Affairs and Labour has proposed a review of the legal framework for services to victims in cooperation with municipalities. Comprehensive information about funds allocated to services for victims organised by municipalities is not available, but as a rule funding of services and actions to counteract violence in Iceland is provided through a robust social-welfare system, in addition specific measures, and non-governmental organisations are financed entirely from government funds. Attention is also drawn to the fact that during the budgetary procedure, gender dimensions are included through gender budgeting by mainstreaming gender equality concerns into the procedure at every step. Hence, gender perspectives are introduced from the beginning during policy and decision-making, and efforts made to analyse the gender impact of the budget. The aim is for public expenditure measures to uphold the government's gender equality objective. During the period 2016–2021, expenditures involving gender equality actions increased on average by 11.4%.

18. The Minister of Social Affairs and Children, Minister of Justice, and Minister of Health have supported the Directorate of Health, the Reykjavik Area Health-Care Service, and Landspítali – The National University Hospital, i.a. to develop education material on parenting skills made available to all parents before the birth of their child, and during the first 1,000 days of the child's life, through the web site heilsuvera.is. Focus was put on promoting parental skills to minimise the probability

of neglect, abuse and violence against children. Special consideration should be given to parents and children in a vulnerable situation. This included, i.a., developing electronic screening for post-partum depression in mothers.

19. University research and/or research in general is utilised extensively to counteract violence against women and girls. However, it is important to acknowledge that no funding is earmarked to the police for the prevention of violence specifically, but public funding for the police is allocated annually through the State budget and spent on its tasks, including violence prevention.

20. Each year, the police conduct a victims' survey to explore the country's experience of crime, as well as people's view of the police, and the safety of the population. The survey is conducted by the Social Science Institute at the University of Iceland. The survey results are used, i.a., for the prevention of violence.

### **Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues and questions**

21. Please refer to Iceland's 9th periodic report, paragraphs 47–51.

### **Reply to paragraph 10(a) of the list of issues and questions**

22. Amendments made to Article 227 of the General Penal Code related to criminalisation of human trafficking to increase the protection of victims even further, not least applicants for international protection, migrants, foreign nationals, and persons with origins outside Iceland. The aim was also to facilitate the prosecution of those responsible for committing such offences.

23. The amendments were twofold. Firstly, by adding new forms of human trafficking to listed and known patterns of exploitation to afford protection to victims of forced marriage, forced begging or forced criminal exploitation. This reflects comments in GRETA's evaluation report on Iceland in March 2019.

24. In addition, the term "servitude" was added to the legal definition in line with Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol, and comments in the GRETA report. The provision specifically mentions that begging is included in the definition. The same applies to domestic servitude, for example in relation to housework. "Slavery or enslavement" has also been added to the definition in accordance with Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol, and comments in the GRETA report. Enslavement can include debt servitude where a person is made to work towards a debt that may never be fully paid, or residential servitude so that the person is dependent on the perpetrator for housing. Labour trafficking includes forced labour, hardship, slavery, or other abuse of the labour force, subject to the conditions of Article 227(1)(a). "Prostitution" is specified as a punishable offence, whereas prostitution was previously included in the scope of the wording "sexual purposes".

25. The amended provision reads as follows: "Anyone guilty of one or more of the following acts for the purpose of exploiting another person through prostitution, or in another sexual manner, through forced marriage, slavery or servitude, forced labour or forced service, including begging, in order to commit a criminal act, or to remove organs from the person, shall be punished for human trafficking with imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 years."

26. Secondly, amendments were proposed as to the definition of methods of perpetration with respect to human trafficking. On the one hand, references to individual provisions of the General Penal Code were abandoned, as this was considered too restrictive, and on the other hand, new methods of perpetration were

added to the legal definition, such as through violence and abduction. The words “or by taking advantage of the vulnerable position of the person in question” were replaced with “or by taking advantage of the vulnerable position, ignorance or helplessness of the person in question, or by taking advantage of a position of superiority with regard to the person”. The method of perpetration, which involves taking advantage of the human trafficking victim’s difficult situation, the person’s ignorance or vulnerability, or taking advantage of a position of superiority with regard to the person, corresponds to “abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability” in Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol. Explanatory notes to the Protocol interpret the method of perpetration as including instances where the human trafficking victim has no other option but to submit to the perpetrator’s will. By adding “ignorance”, “helplessness” and “taking advantage of a position of superiority”, the authorities should be better equipped to combat labour trafficking, since these situations are characteristic of trafficking offences against asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, and foreign nationals. A position of superiority may include the trafficking victim being financially dependent on the offender.

### **Reply to paragraph 10(b) of the list of issues and questions**

27. The government’s focal points as regards actions against human trafficking, and other forms of exploitation, are considered in the fight against human trafficking, but preventive measures, and actions to tackle human trafficking are always ongoing. The current coalition’s programme for government specifically declares that human trafficking, social dumping, and abuse of foreign workers shall never be tolerated in Iceland. As regards funding for actions to tackle human trafficking, and for the benefit of victims, public funding is agreed on an annual basis for the institutions and organisations discharging responsibilities in this regard, including the police, public prosecutor, courts, social services and welfare systems, as well institutions monitoring the labour market such as Internal Revenue, the Directorate of Labour and others, in addition to non-governmental organisations receiving grants from the public sector in order to exercise their mission. In addition, individual projects designed to combat all forms of violence, and support both victims and perpetrators of violence, receive public funding. Examples include the National Emergency Number 112 electronic portal on violence, where individuals can access information and resources as regards human trafficking and violence, including sexual violence. A police advisory group has also been established and is led by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police, whose role is to advise all police departments in the country as regards human trafficking, both with respect to case analysis and investigation.

### **Reply to paragraph 10(c) of the list of issues and questions**

28. In 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour entered into a grant agreement with Bjarkarhlíð for the purpose of taking over the administration of the implementation team in charge of human trafficking cases, which in the preceding years has been led by the ministry. The team is convened when human trafficking cases arise, or where trafficking is suspected, to coordinate the efforts and response of parties involved in welfare services to trafficking victims during the early stages of a case. The implementation team is composed of members from the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police, Directorate of Immigration, social services in the municipality where such a case has arisen, in addition to social services in the municipality where the victim is legally domiciled, the Women’s Shelter, Directorate of Labour, labour unions, healthcare and other entities, depending on the circumstances.

29. During this period, 23 cases have been reported to Bjarkarhlíð. Almost all of the cases encountered had to do with human trafficking in the labour market, with the rest relating to prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation.

30. Before these cases were reported to Bjarkarhlíð, most parties had been in contact with labour unions, municipal social services, the Directorate of Immigration, police, Stígamót (victims of sexual violence), and the Bjarmahlíð family justice centre for victims of violence in the northern region of Iceland. Most of the cases were redirected from Bjarkarhlíð to police or social services for further assistance, such as financial support, housing, work permits and residence permits.

### **Reply to paragraph 10(d) of the list of issues and questions**

31. Prostitution is frequently one of the manifestations of organised crime such as human trafficking. In March 2020, the office of the National Commissioner of Police published updated implementation information and guidelines for the police as regards human trafficking. This refers to guidelines initially published in 2010 by the National Commissioner of the Police. The previous guidelines, and the updated guidelines from 2020, are partially adapted from the Norwegian police manual on human trafficking and how to identify potential victims and work with potential victims of human trafficking. During review and revision of the information and instructions, existing knowledge, and experience of human trafficking cases within the police was considered, as well as the recognised procedure to follow when interviewing at police facilities. This was adapted to Icelandic circumstance and setting as far as possible. The effort bears testament to increased police attention to this offence category. As regards prostitution, initiatives are essential, and resources must be available for victims of prostitution to assist them with leaving prostitution or emancipation.

32. The police have emphasised working with those responsible for providing services to victims, especially non-governmental organisations, local authorities, and the ministries responsible for welfare issues. Due to the large increase in reports of gender-based violence, both domestic violence and sexual offences, there is less scope for initiatives.

33. Police procedure with respect to those soliciting prostitution, when the police come in contact with those engaging in prostitution, involves interviewing them as victims, and asking whether they are being forced, threatened, or whether they are acting in fear of someone else. Then there are questions as to how the person concerned makes a living, and whether the person is required to hand over funds to someone else. To help find a path out of prostitution, victims are guided and offered assistance, such as from social services, the Women's Shelter, and Bjarkarhlíð, which offers integrated service in one place catered to victims, for example from a social worker, lawyer, through peer-to-peer counselling, etc. They are also made aware that the police are always willing and able to assist, and the procedure for contacting the police is explained. Unfortunately, police experience has shown that few of those soliciting prostitution are willing to engage with the help offered.

34. Information dedicated to the tackling of human trafficking is provided by the National Emergency Number 112 electronic portal on violence, as well as facilitating access to the appropriate resources. The Federation of General and Special workers in Iceland has issued a manual for trade union staff on human trafficking in the labour market, such as signs and response to trafficking, and trade unions have received grants for the purpose of educating about human trafficking (as well as domestic violence), as a part of actions to tackle violence.

### **Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues and questions**

35. Since Iceland's 9th periodic report was submitted to the committee, both parliamentary and local elections have been held. In the parliamentary elections on September 25, 2021, 30 women were elected, with the percentage of women in parliament now having reached 48%. The municipal elections were held in May 2022. During the elections, 64 local councils were elected, with a total of 470 local council representatives. The percentage of women in local governments has now reached 51%, with women outnumbering men for the first time.

36. The government's regional development plan for the period 2018–2024 addresses the importance of maintaining an equal gender ratio in the country's local governments, and encouraging diversity among elected representatives, i.e. by encouraging diverse groups to participate in local government affairs. A special effort was launched in the form of an advertising campaign in cooperation between the government and non-governmental organisations before the last municipal elections. The focus of the campaign was to encourage all candidacies to city council, town council and local government elections, to be mindful of diversity and nominate candidates and lists that represent a diverse spectrum of society.

### **Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues and questions**

37. A report submitted by the working group on a more strategic teaching on sexual health and active prevention of violence in primary and upper secondary schools was circulated to the school community in September 2021, accompanied by a letter from the minister urging school managers and stakeholders to discuss the report in their respective settings.

38. The national curriculum is under revision, which will take some time.

39. Sex education curriculum for all school levels is being developed by the Ministry of Education, and older material has been updated and compiled on a special web site belonging to the Directorate of Education. A central contingency response plan to sexual and gender-based violence for secondary schools is being developed.

### **Reply to paragraph 13(a) and (b) of the list of issues and questions**

40. Universities in Iceland are independent institutions, and university rectors are responsible for recruitment and professional advancement within their institutions. Moreover, trade unions negotiate wage terms and conditions for their members within a central framework. Considering this, the government's policy on the issue is primarily set forth as a general vision and objectives that the institutions are to work towards, and the results are evaluated using the standards published in the fiscal policy. Organisations submit policy documents to the relevant ministry stating how they intend to work towards the government's goals, including statistical data on status, benchmarks, and performance regarding individual standards.

41. The fiscal plan for 2023–2023 (Subject area 21.1 Universities and research activities) sets forth an objective to strengthen research and its framework and includes a benchmark to increase the percentage of women among professors from 33% in 2021 to 36% in 2027, with institutions having to work towards that goal during the period. In addition, many universities have chosen to put special emphasis on this issue in their internal policy documents.

42. The following update addresses both (a) and (b). Higher education institutions in Iceland are fully autonomous and thus responsible for the hiring, promotion and

terms and conditions of the staff they employ. In addition, financial terms and conditions are set by centralised union-based collective bargaining procedures, including parental leave, family leave, and related conditions. Therefore, the actions taken by the Icelandic government are rather in the form of general visions and objectives, where the implementation is entrusted to the institutions, and the outcomes of which are measured in the 5-year national fiscal plan. Public institutions, including those in higher education, produce annual strategic documents to the relevant ministry, on how they seek to meet these objectives, including data on targets and progress made.

43. Within this framework the fiscal plan 2023–2027 has set a target to increase the percentage of female professors from 33% in 2021 to 36% in 2027. The higher education institutions should work towards this goal, and report in the manner described above. Many have chosen to highlight the issue further in their own internal strategies.

### **Reply to paragraph 13(c) of the list of issues and questions**

44. Women and girls with disabilities have the same opportunities as others for education in Iceland. No separate statistics are aggregated on the educational progress of women and girls with disabilities in this country.

### **Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues and questions**

45. The Directorate of Education has formulated a strategy for the publication of educational material, including preparation of a check list for authors of educational material. This check list has been in use since 1996, but updated regularly. The check list states, i.a.:

(a) Educational material should aim at promoting the environment, education towards sustainability, and respect for all life;

(b) Educational material should advocate human rights, and human equality. It should be free of prejudice, for example as regards residence, disability, gender, sexuality, class, or religion. Efforts should be made to counter any attitudes that advocate or perpetuate inequality and racism. Also, where appropriate, a firm stance must be adopted against all forms of violence and oppression;

(c) Care should be taken to discuss the issues of minority groups in a way that enables them to identify with the curriculum. Every human situation should be addressed in a natural and straightforward manner;

(d) Gender discrimination or a unilateral discussion of gender roles should not take place. Approximately the same number of individuals of both sexes should be portrayed in the curriculum, both through texts and pictures, and boys and girls should not be presented only in so-called traditional roles;

(e) Where the curriculum portrays other nations or specific groups, generalisations should be avoided, and care taken to keep the discussion factual and without exaggeration, both in terms of texts and photographs.

46. To put these aims into effect, editors at the Directorate of Education review all material published using the check list as a guide. The entire syllabus is also shared with specialists in the respective fields for comment.

### **Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues and questions**

47. At the end of 2021, the Prime Minister appointed an action group on equal pay and equality in the labour market, subsequently to the working party report referred to. One of the proposals put forth by the former group was to initiate a project along with specific public-sector institutions and appoint an action group for the purpose of that project. The new action group is tasked with submitting proposals for actions to eliminate the pay gap caused by sex segregation in the labour market, and systematic undervaluation of traditional women's jobs. The action group will be active until the end of 2023.

### **Reply to paragraph 15(a) of the list of issues and questions**

48. The National Commissioner of the Police has been developing an implementation plan for equality in law enforcement, in conformity with the parliamentary resolution on a gender equality implementation plan, and the development and implementation of equality indicators for the Police Commissioner. Among other things, this relates to process analysis and a sexual harassment contingency plan, including analysis of the current processes as regards the professional board under the National Commissioner of the Police, the information campaign on sexual harassment, and a review of police training. A survey will be conducted among all members of the police during autumn 2022 to measure work culture and gender relations within the police. This survey is an updated version of the survey conducted in 2013. In addition, other measures adopted by the implementation plan are also included.

49. In 2013, a professional board was established under the National Commissioner of the Police, as one of the measures adopted in response to the results of the survey into work culture within the police in 2013. All members of the police can consult the professional board to seek assistance and guidance. The professional board under the National Commissioner of the Police is a board of independent professionals, which receives inquiries and notifications from victims and other staff members of the police regarding issues that relate to direct and indirect discrimination, gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and bullying within the police. The professional board also assists with the evaluation of situations and decisions on further action, during which the board maintains confidentiality towards the notifying party. Further information, such as information about the number of cases reported to the professional board, is available on its web site.

### **Reply to paragraph 15(b) of the list of issues and questions**

50. Under Act No. 46/1980 on Working Environment, Health and Safety in the Workplace, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health monitors compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations in the field of occupational safety. Under this law, the employer is responsible, i.e., for guaranteeing a safe and healthy working environment within the workplace. To this end, the employer is responsible for conducting a specific risk assessment, which evaluates risks associated with the work regarding safety and health of workers, and risk factors in the working environment. The employer shall also be responsible for drawing up a written programme of safety and health at the workplace, which includes preventive measures, including the prevention of bullying, harassment, and violence, and that a contingency plan is in place in the workplace in the event of such cases arising.

51. Thus, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health is responsible for employers' fulfilling their obligations under the applicable laws and regulations. This

is achieved, i.a., through regular workplace inspection visits to carry out particular functions, such as regarding specific equipment and/or social conditions in the workplace in question. Notifications of bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence in the workplace can be made to the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health. If the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health receives such notification, it conducts an inspection visit at the relevant workplace, and makes sure that a written programme of safety and health is in place, where the appropriate actions are outlined to prevent such conduct in the workplace, as well as actions taken if a complaint or notification is made, or there is a well-founded suspicion of such conduct in the workplace. If such plans have been made at the relevant workplace, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health makes sure that the plan in question has been activated. If it has not been activated, the agency suggests to the notifying party that the matter should be taken up with the employer or their representative. The reason being that staff members of the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health are not allowed to inform the employer that the inspection visit is made due to a complaint, cf. the second paragraph of Article 83 of the Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in the Workplace. If inspection visits by the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health reveal that such a plan does not exist at the workplace in question, the agency urges the employer to comply with their obligations under the relevant regulation. The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health also explains its role to those who submit notifications to the agency, in addition to encouraging the party in question to seek healthcare if they feel that their work environment has impacted their health, such as due to social conditions in the workplace. The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health has no authority under the law to evaluate whether a specific conduct is regarded as bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence under said regulation.

### **Reply to paragraph 15(c) of the list of issues and questions**

52. The project TINNA consists of a comprehensive interdisciplinary cooperation between different parties within the welfare and education system, in addition to functional activity and labour recruitment under the auspices of the Directorate of Labour. The main purpose is to offer participants the possibility of comprehensive services, which promote better quality of life, active participation in the community, and in the labour market, as the case may be. The project is run by the City of Reykjavík, with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The project agreement is in force until the end of this year. The number of participants annually is 40–50 women. In the year 2021, the project reached 53 women and 95 of their children.

### **Reply to paragraph 15(d) of the list of issues and questions**

53. No periodic penalty payments per day have been imposed on companies or organisations with respect to equal pay certification. As this is a coercive measure imposed by an administrative authority, the principle of proportionality is applicable when handling cases where the relevant company or organisation has not fulfilled their obligation with respect to equal pay certification. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operations of the relevant party have been taken specifically into account. The Directorate of Equality has been in close contact with parties who have yet to seek certification and makes assessments on a case-by-case basis, as regards imposing coercive measures.

### **Reply to paragraph 16(a) of the list of issues and questions**

54. During their education, all healthcare workers are instructed and trained in receiving and providing healthcare services to individuals wishing to terminate their pregnancy. The web page of Landspítali - The National University Hospital of Iceland, provides detailed information about termination of pregnancy, including treatment, links to information about the relevant rights and legislation, as well as mental health aspects. Healthcare workers also provide information to individuals about the treatment throughout the procedure.

### **Reply to paragraph 16(b) of the list of issues and questions**

55. All women in Iceland, irrespective of origin, residence, or other factors, enjoy the same easy access to healthcare and information about healthcare services. Information and education on sexual health, including contraception, gender identity, sex and sexually transmitted diseases, is available on the electronic healthcare information platform Heilsuvera. Translation is ongoing of the material on the website into other languages besides Icelandic.

### **Reply to paragraph 16(c) of the list of issues and questions**

56. Advances in mental health services in Iceland have taken place irrespective of gender. This includes developing general mental health teams within the healthcare services, as well as specialised mental health teams within the healthcare services, and psychological services. Preventive measures are also being implemented as part of the action plan to reduce suicides in Iceland.

### **Reply to paragraph 16(d) of the list of issues and questions**

57. During their education, all healthcare workers are instructed and trained in receiving clients, irrespective of the nature of their complaints or people's origins. Action point 16 of the action programme on LGBTI affairs 2022–2025, lays out that access to proper and unbiased healthcare must be guaranteed for trans people, and that the Landspítali Team on Gender Identity and Changes to Sex Characteristics should adopt rules of procedure compliant with recognised rules of procedure at the international level.

### **Reply to paragraph 17(a) of the list of issues and questions**

58. A parliamentary resolution on an implementation plan for the issues of immigrants 2022–2025 was adopted recently by Althingi. The plan lays down that an overall policy should be set out on immigration, refugees, and multiculturalism. This review is expected to finish by the end of 2023. The implementation plan includes an action focusing on violence aiming to ensure that victims and perpetrators of violence who are of foreign origin are familiar with the services and resources available. It also anticipates that service and emergency personnel will receive training in immigration issues, cultural sensitivity, and multiculturalism. The project is expected to be ongoing and address the most urgent issues at any given time. The government has made an agreement with the Red Cross on training for responders in cultural sensitivity and psychological support for refugees, which purpose is to improve the skills staff need to provide guidance to refugees, including in cases of violence. The police have also put specific emphasis on instruction for women who seek

international protection about the help available if they have become victims of violence in Iceland.

### **Reply to paragraph 17(b) of the list of issues and questions**

59. The Multicultural Information Centre operates an office in Reykjavík in addition to its office in Ísafjörður. It also operates a specific information service for immigrants under the title New in Iceland, which consists of a general information service for all immigrants. Individualised service is available by phone, through email and visits during opening hours. New in Iceland also runs an extensive information effort on social media. The Multicultural Information Centre has also been of service in a reception facility for refugees, which was opened after the war in Ukraine broke out, and the rapid rise in the number of applicants for international protection in Iceland. New in Iceland provides information in Icelandic, English, Polish, Arabic, Ukrainian and Spanish.

### **Reply to paragraph 17(c) of the list of issues and questions**

60. The Icelandic government has not put a specific plan in place to support women of foreign origin. Nevertheless, the government recognises the special position of women of foreign origin, who are specifically referred to in government programmes. This includes a parliamentary resolution on a plan of action against violence and its consequences for 2019–2022. The government has also provided support to projects, which specifically aim to reach foreign women, including awareness-raising, preparation of educational material and improved dissemination of information about violence and resources provided by the National Emergency Number 112 electronic portal on violence, 112.is, which has become the main online information service on violence and is available in three languages. This information is available in Iceland's 9th periodic report, i.a. paragraphs 41, 47, 116, 118, 119 and 123.

### **Reply to paragraph 17(d) of the list of issues and questions**

61. During their education, all healthcare workers are instructed and trained in receiving clients, irrespective of the nature of their complaints or people's origins. Educational material on people with disabilities in healthcare has been prepared as a part of an implementation plan as regards issues concerning people with disabilities, which aims to increase knowledge among healthcare professionals about the affairs of disabled people, their rights, health-related needs, etc.

### **Reply to paragraph 17(e) of the list of issues and questions**

62. Provision of healthcare in Iceland is considered very good at all three levels of healthcare. Numerical success in various areas demonstrates as much, such as the longevity of the nation and low child mortality.

### **Reply to paragraph 18(a), (b) and (c) of the list of issues and questions**

63. The Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender No 150/2020, which was adopted in 2020, ensures that discrimination based on gender is prohibited. All women should enjoy the same right to life and work as others, whether they live in rural areas or elsewhere. The government establishes certain rules and regulations,

and initiates specific programmes aimed at tackling rural disparity and systematic improvement.

64. The government's policy entails that prosperous settlements and robust townships exist in all parts of the country, where improved living standards and freedom of residence are promoted, with as equal access as possible to basic services, housing, and diverse employment opportunities. Focus is put on areas where population decline is a long-standing issue, as well as unemployment and monotonous industrial activity.

65. Regional development plans are an important instrument for the government at any given time to influence progress and shape policies in regional affairs for the entire country, as well as individual regions. The main objective of the regional development plan is to equalise the employment and service opportunities of all inhabitants of the country, equalise living standards, and promote sustainable development of the regions. Therefore, regional development plans place strong emphasis on the freedom of residence. This means that public services must be accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live in the country. People's happiness is not least dependent on being able to find a home wherever they choose. Freedom of residence promotes diversification in inhabited areas.

66. Every three years, the minister for regional development submits a parliamentary resolution on a 15-year policy-making regional development plan. This also includes an action programme for the next five years. During the preparation of the policy-making regional development plan for the period 2022–2036 (the current plan), a pilot project was carried out where gender and equality perspectives were scrutinised specifically. This effort was led by the Prime Minister's Office, with the aim of mainstreaming gender and equality perspectives as regards all public planning. The regional development plan was the first to navigate the issue. Gender and equality perspectives are mainstreamed while the regional development plan is realised, and during decision-making, and specific measures modulated for the purpose of promoting gender equality. During the drafting of the plan, the gender equality situation was specifically considered, as well as measures for improvement, as evident in the following table, which is replicated from the Green Paper on regional development plans.

#### Current gender situation

	<i>Status</i>	<i>Opportunities for improvement</i>
Decision-making <i>Male-dominated decision making in regional matters</i>	The percentage of women in municipal governments has risen but this is not reflected in positions of influence within such governments.	There are opportunities for increasing the impact of women when it comes to decision-making in regional affairs.
Urban areas/rural areas <i>Wider gap between men and women in rural areas than in urban areas.</i>	Emigration of women negatively impacts community quality and is one of the symptoms of distressed rural areas. Many indicators also reflect that women bear the responsibility for unpaid housework and care taking and engage in those tasks to a greater extent than men.	To counteract female emigration from rural areas, there must be appealing employment opportunities, secure availability of housing, educational opportunities, and access to basic services, such as healthcare, day care and school, and organisation of transport links must take different needs into account.

	<i>Status</i>	<i>Opportunities for improvement</i>
Employment <i>Gender differentiated in Iceland.</i>	Secure employment is the basic premise for residence, and the gender imbalance in rural areas is closely linked to variable employment opportunities for the sexes outside the capital area. The existing gender gap in rural areas is also caused by the fact that jobs tend to be linked to male-oriented perimeters, such as primary industries, fisheries, agriculture, and industrial sectors. Women, however, tend to take on jobs in the tourism sector, healthcare sector, and public service. Lack of diversity in employment has a strong impact on female emigration from rural areas.	Opportunities exist to better include women through innovation, grants, flexible location working, public office, etc.
Grants and funds <i>Less access to credit for women.</i>	A gender imbalance exists when it comes to borrowed funds, and grants related to regional affairs. The success rate may be equal, but the fact that women are less likely to apply than men indicates that funds do not take the needs and emphases of women specifically into account.	Difference in emphasis between the sexes must be taken note of, as an inherent disparity may exist with respect to criteria and assessment when access to loans and grants is provided.
Community character <i>Gender-difference in the evaluation of these aspects.</i>	When choosing where to take up residence, the community character and a child-friendly environment is especially important to women.	As regards residence and communities, community character, the possibility of integrating employment and family life, child-friendliness, access to education, culture and housing are important factors for consideration.
Transportation links <i>Different gender needs</i>	Generally speaking, women spend less time commuting to work than men. Women are more likely to take work closer to home, whereas men commute longer to and from work than women.	Decisions on commuting are taken based on varying needs, and special consideration must be given to the needs of women when transportation links are organised, not least in more rural areas.

## Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues and questions

67. The core values of Iceland's policy for climate change adaptation reflect the assumption that "different scenarios where the worst case and social impacts of climate change are, i.a., taken into account, especially with regard to vulnerable groups; ... the link between climate hazards and social justice and public health" and the core objectives also reflect that adaptation measures should be designed in such a way that they "ensure a fair and equitable adaptation outcome".

68. The policy also makes numerous references to those who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Groups of people that need to be identified, consulted, and supported with respect to climate change and measures taken in response.

69. In the spirit of gender and equality mainstreaming, gender is one of the core variables considered while designing and implementing measures, and therefore a central theme in Iceland's policy on adaptation to climate change.

70. Iceland's Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change has as part of its core values "different scenarios where the worst case and social impacts of climate change are inter alia taken into account, especially for vulnerable groups"; "the connection of climate hazards to social justice and public health"; and further as part of its core goals it commits to designing adaptation measures that "contribute to just adaptation".

## Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues and questions

71. Please refer to Iceland's 9th periodic report, paragraphs 211–212. The draft Bill on amending the Marriage Act No 31/1993, submitted by the Minister of Justice, was adopted by Althingi in June 2022. Amendments were made to several provisions of the Marriage Act, such as regarding exemption from the minimum age requirement for entering marriage, for the purpose of harmonising law on marriage to international recommendations and views with respect to the age limit for entering marriage. It also enacted the principle considered applicable here in Iceland with respect to recognition of marriage abroad, provided that the marriage was contracted according to the law of the country in which it took place as regards marriage eligibility, and the rules on entering marriage. However, marriage contracted abroad will not be recognised in this country if one or both parties were under the age of 18 when the marriage was solemnised. Under special circumstances, and where it is clearly in the interest of the party who was under the age of 18, a marriage may be recognised in this country if the party in question was 16 when the marriage was solemnised, and the marriage is recognised in the country where it took place. Any marriage, which in other respects is contrary to the principles of the Icelandic legal system or public order, will not be recognised in this country.

72. Amendments were also made to the Marriage Act No 31/1993, through a draft Bill submitted by members of parliament, which was adopted in June 2022. The draft Bill introduced several amendments to the Marriage Act, i.a. as regards the time limit for legal separation, legal separation on account of domestic violence, mediation pursuant to the Act, such as authorising mediation between the married couple separately, and that married couples can obtain a divorce by law without having to apply for judicial separation first, if they both agree, where there are no joint assets or children under 18, or the married couple has entered into an agreement as regards custody of children, spousal maintenance, and other divorce terms. The draft Bill clarifies that the purpose of the above-mentioned amendments is, i.a., to strengthen the position of victims of violence and guarantee their right to end a marriage. These amendments will enter into force on 1 July 2023.

73. The draft Bill proposed two ways to end a marriage on the grounds of domestic violence.

(a) On the one hand, that a party can apply for a divorce by law without having to apply for judicial separation first through the District Commissioner if the other party admits their violation, or has been convicted;

(b) On the other hand, that a party can apply for a divorce by law without having to apply for judicial separation, if police records confirm emergency calls to police due to domestic violence, or other data, such as injury notes or psychological reports, indicate that the party applying for divorce, or a child living in the home, has been subjected to violence by the other party, or an overall assessment of the situation and the available information for other reasons warrants the assumption that the party applying for divorce, or a child living in the home, has been subjected to violence by the other party. Such cases are managed under an expedited procedure before the Courts.

74. Despite the above-named amendments, a comprehensive review of the Marriage Act is intended in the near future.

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