



**International Human Rights
Instruments**

Distr.: General
29 July 2021

Original: English

**Common core document forming part of the
reports of States parties**

Iceland*

[Date received: 20 April 2021]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. General information

A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics of the State

1. Demography

1. On 1st of January 2020 the population of Iceland was 364.134. The population of Reykjavík, the capital and largest city, was 129.770, and the population of the greater capital region was 231.716.

Year	Population Size	Population growth rate (%)	Inhabitants per km ²
2014	326 340	1.0	3
2015	329 740	1.0	3
2016	334 30	1.8	3
2017	340 110	3.0	3
2018	350 710	2.4	3

Year	Population in rural areas	Population in urban areas
2014	20 029	305 642
2015	20 585	308 515
2016	20 679	311 85
2017	21 455	316 904
2018	22 048	330 559

Urban areas: over 200 inhabitants.

Rural areas: Less than 200 inhabitants.

The table below shows the age composition of the Icelandic population for the period 2015–2019.

Total	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
0–9 years	45 677	45 253	45 103	45 107	44 848
10–19 years	43 435	43 408	43 656	44 225	44 914
20–29 years	48 273	49 256	50 887	53 652	55 484
30–39 years	45 150	45 540	46 519	49 155	51 650
40–49 years	42 200	42 288	42 844	44 224	45 597
50–59 years	42 231	42 679	43 242	43 753	43 927
60–69 years	32 080	33 077	34 224	35 378	36 377
70–79 years	18 002	18 869	19 603	20 575	21 716
80–89 years	10 164	10 208	10 240	10 274	10 250
90 years and over	1 888	1 951	2 031	2 107	2 228

The table below shows the dependency ratio (percentage of population under 15 and over 65 years of age) by gender.

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	Men	163 318	165 186	167 27	171 033	177 6
<15 (per cent)	Men	20.8	20.7	20.3	19.9	19.4
65< (per cent)	Men	11.3	11.6	11.9	12.1	12.1
	Women	162 353	163 914	165 259	167 316	170 85

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<15 (per cent)	Women	20.1	20	19.7	19.5	19.2
65< (per cent)	Women	13.1	13.4	13.7	13.9	14

The table below shows birth rate and mortality.

Year	Birth rate (live births per 1000 inhabitants)	Mortality (deaths per 1000 inhabitants)
2014	13.4	6.3
2015	12.5	6.6
2016	12	6.9
2017	11.9	6.5
2018	12	6.4

2. The *life expectancy* in Iceland has remained stable in recent years with the average life expectancy for men 81 years and 84 for women.

3. The *average household size* (number of persons) in 2017 was 2,6. 32 per cent of all households consisted of one person. The share of children living with either their mother or their father was 9 per cent. The number of persons living in a single-mother household was 28.124, and in a single-father household 2.732.

4. In 2020, 55.354 *immigrants* or 15.2% of the population and another 5.684 *persons born in Iceland to two immigrant parents* were registered in Iceland, representing a total of 16,8% of the Icelandic population. In this paragraph, “immigrants” are defined as persons born abroad of two foreign-born parents, and do not include asylum seekers, nor second-generation immigrants. As before, the largest proportion of immigrants were Polish people (20.477) or a total of 37% of all immigrants, followed by persons from Lithuania (5,9%) and the Philippines (3,8%).

5. In 2020, 63% of the Icelandic population were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ísl. Þjóðkirkjan). Over 7% of the population does not belong to a religious organization, while membership of other religious and life stance communities is listed in the table below.

Religious and life stance communities 2020	Members	Percent
The Free Lutheran Church in Reykjavík	10 003	2.7
The Roman Catholic Church Diocese	14 632	4
The Free Lutheran Church in Hafnarfjörður	7 216	2
The Independent Congregation	3 241	0.9
The Asatru Association	4 764	1.3
Zuism	1 213	0.3
The Buddhist Association	1 115	0.3
The Pentecostal Assembly	2 099	0.6
Siðmennt the Icelandic Ethical Humanist Association	3 507	1
Other and not specified	59 118	16.3
No religious organisation	26 114	7.1

2. Economy

6. The Icelandic economy is an open, developed economy operating under the Nordic model, combining a free market economy with a welfare state. It is the smallest economy within the OECD, with 21,5 billion USD in annual gross domestic production GDP (for the year 2019).

7. Iceland is rich in natural resources that represent both traditional and growing sectors of its economy. The island is surrounded by some of the richest and most prolific fishing grounds in the North Atlantic Ocean and fisheries have long been the mainstay of the Icelandic economy.

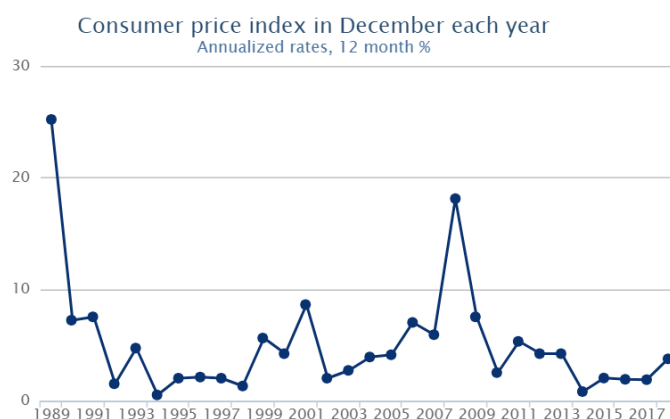
8. Recent technological developments have resulted in the continuous growth of knowledge-based industries and services. The five fastest growing industrial sectors in Iceland over the past few years have been in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry: health technologies (including pharmaceuticals), biotechnology, genetics, biomedical engineering and IT-based equipment production for food processing.

9. Iceland experienced an unprecedented growth in tourism since 2010 and in 2016 the share of tourism had exceeded the share of fishing and fish processing in GDP. In the following years, tourism amounted to over 8% of GDP. However, the Covid-19 pandemic naturally made a difference in 2020 and 2021.

10. Iceland has a high labour market participation rate, both among men and women. In 2019, 74% of women were registered as employed compared to 80% of men. This makes the participation of women in the labour market as one of the highest in the world.

3. Consumer price index

11. Consumer Price Index (CPI) in Iceland averaged 219.14 points from 1979 until 2019, reaching 490.30 points in December of 2020. The below figure illustrates the fluctuations in CPI from 1989 to 2017.



4. Social expenditures

12. The table below shows *social expenditures* (in mill. ISK) and per cent of total government expenditure.

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Housing	13 414	13 969	12 648	11 674
Health	132 779	142 800	155 303	172 233
Unemployment	17 874	14 738	12 282	10 706
Education	130 234	140 544	152 163	160 905
Other social services	161 009	128 366	184 808	199 727
Total social expenditures	455 310	440 417	517 204	555 245
GDP (in bn. ISK)	1 899 680	2 020 546	2 234 999	2 452 970
Social expenditures/GDP	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

5. Health

13. The table below shows infant mortality (deaths within the first year of life per 1000 live births) for the period 2014–2019.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Deaths under one year of age per 1000 live births</i>
2014	2.1
2015	2.1
2016	0.7
2017	2.7
2018	1.7
2019	1.1

14. In the period 2010–2019 one incident of *maternal mortality* occurred (in 2011) and maternal mortality ratio (MMR) was in 2017 estimated to be 4 per 100,000 live births in Iceland.

The table below shows the number of induced abortions by age for the period 2011–2018.

<i>Age</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Under 15 years	2	2	3	3	0	2	2	1
15–19	174	153	141	135	136	135	134	120
20–24	290	306	294	300	228	279	274	261
25–29	187	216	212	227	230	249	278	288
30–34	169	163	155	149	161	172	163	164
35–39	109	97	108	112	112	125	122	160
40–44	35	39	50	28	56	55	65	50
45 years and over	4	4	3	1	4	4	6	5
Total	970	980	966	955	927	1 021	1 044	1 049

15. On 31 December 2018, a total of 427 cases of HIV infection had been reported in Iceland since the disease first began spreading in 1983. Of these, 74 patients had been diagnosed with AIDS and 39 had died of the disease. The table below shows the number of new cases of HIV, AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhoea per year for the period 2014–2018.

<i>Disease</i>		<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
HIV	Men	8	11	20	25	25
	Women	2	2	7	3	13
AIDS	Men	0	2	4	0	0
	Women	0	0	0	0	1
Syphilis	Men	18	15	26	-	-
	Women	1	1	4	-	-
Gonorrhoea	Men	23	37	66	-	-
	Women	12	8	21	-	-

The table below shows the total number of new cases of communicable diseases in Iceland, 2013–2017.

<i>Communicable diseases</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Anisakiasis	-	-	-	-	-
Cysticercosis	-	-	-	-	-
Diphtheria	-	-	1	-	-
Tuberculosis	9	8	6	14	8
Haemorrhagic viral fever	-	-	-	-	1

<i>Communicable diseases</i>	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Smallpox	-	-	-	-	-
Botulism	-	-	-	-	-
Extended Spectrum Beta Lactamase (ESBL)	135	136	208	301	389
SARS	-	-	-	-	-
New variant Creutzfeldt Jakobs Disease (CJD)	-	-	-	-	-
Enterohaemorrhagic E. coli infection	3	1	3	3	3
Giardiasis	23	25	19	26	25
Yellow fever	-	-	-	-	-
Haemophilus influenzae infection type b	-	-	-	-	-
Mumps	0	77	8	8	3
Tularemia	-	-	-	-	-
HIV infection	11	12	28	28	38
Lepra	-	-	-	-	-
Q-fever	-	-	-	-	-
Rabies	-	-	-	-	-
Pandemic influenzae A(H1N1) 2009	112	9	195	1	41
Influenzae A(H3)	17	200	72	588	183
Invasive Haemophilus influenzae	4	1	12	1	3
Invasive pneumococcal infections	24	25	17	17	31
Yersinia enterocolitica, Yersinia pseudotuberculosis	3	1	1	-	3
Campylobacteriosis	143	119	127	119	145
Pertussis	1	4	14	19	15
Chlamydia trachomatis	1 723	1 989	1 965	2 204	1 848
Cholera	-	-	-	-	-
Cryptosporidiosis	2	12	7	11	18
Legionellosis	4	1	4	3	5
Gonorrhoea	38	46	89	100	105
Leptospirosis	-	-	-	-	-
Hepatitis A	-	-	-	5	1
Hepatitis B (acute, chronic)	29	17	59	68	45
Hepatitis C	37	44	91	94	73
Hepatitis E	-	-	-	1	-
Hepatitis non A-E	-	-	-	-	-
Listeriosis	4	-	-	7	2
Poliomyelitis	-	-	-	-	-
Malaria	4	1	2	3	3
Meningococcal disease	1	4	0	3	0
Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)	55	64	80	69	80
Anthrax	-	-	-	-	-
Measles	1	-	1	3	0
Rubella	-	-	-	-	-
Salmonellosis	42	47	35	64	63
Syphilis	23	23	33	52	30
Shigellosis	2	1	-	6	4
Tetanus	-	-	-	-	-

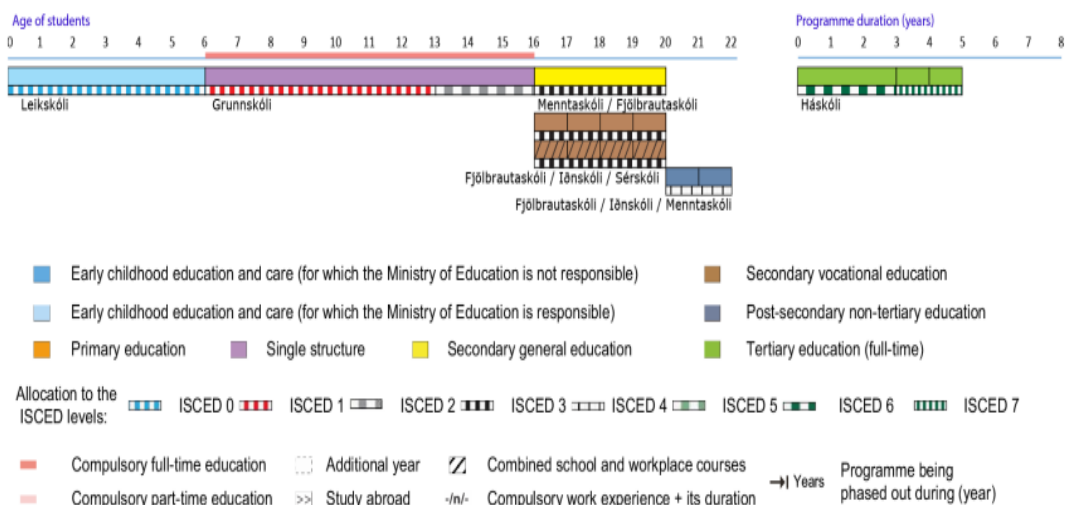
<i>Communicable diseases</i>	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Echinococcosis	-	-	-	-	-
Plague	-	-	-	-	-
Toxoplasmosis	-	-	-	-	-
Typhoid/paratyphoid fever	-	-	4	-	1
Trichinosis/Trichinellosis	-	-	-	-	-
Vancomycin resistant Enterococcus (VRE)	1	44	7	3	9
West Nile Virus Infection	-	-	-	-	-
Brucellosis	-	-	-	-	-

The table below shows the ten leading causes of death in Iceland.

<i>The ten leading causes of death</i>	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Chronic ischaemic heart disease	189	219	194	192	188	194
Male	117	129	118	117	120	110
Female	72	90	76	75	68	84
Alzheimer's disease	122	124	128	142	172	151
Male	38	35	53	46	62	47
Female	84	89	75	96	110	104
Malignant neoplasm of bronchus and lung	140	133	133	117	156	124
Male	66	66	67	48	74	64
Female	74	67	66	69	82	60
Acute myocardial infarction	132	124	120	120	118	117
Male	70	77	71	75	76	79
Female	62	47	49	45	42	38
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	76	82	67	76	95	116
Male	22	34	27	27	42	50
Female	54	48	40	49	53	66
Heart failure	55	71	61	83	80	83
Male	18	30	32	38	50	34
Female	37	41	29	45	30	49
Malignant neoplasm of prostate	43	63	53	56	64	50
Male	43	63	53	56	54	50
Stroke, not specified as haemorrhage/infarction	50	63	59	66	52	48
Male	21	20	24	23	23	22
Female	29	43	35	43	29	26
Pneumonia, organism unspecified	41	63	60	55	61	82
Male	13	34	23	22	29	33
Female	28	29	37	33	32	49

6. Education and training

The figure below gives an overview the structure of the Icelandic education system.



16. Compulsory education is organised in a single structure system, i.e. primary and lower secondary education form part of the same school level, and generally take place in the same school. Education in Iceland has traditionally been organised within the public sector, and there are few private institutions within the school systems. All private schools receive public funding. The proportion of the population attaining tertiary education has increased in recent years, and in 2018 a record number applied for university admissions.

Highest completed education in the population 16–74 years old.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Male					
Single structure education – ISCED 1, 2	34.4	34.3	33.5	29.9	30.5
Secondary general education – ISCED 3, 4	41.7	41.1	41.6	43.8	41.8
Tertiary education – ISCED 5, 6, 7, 8	23.9	24.5	24.8	26.4	27.7
Female					
Single structure education – ISCED 1, 2	38.1	36.3	34.6	30.7	31.4
Secondary general education – ISCED 3, 4	29.2	30.2	29.9	31.6	28.9
Tertiary education – ISCED 5, 6, 7, 8	32.7	33.5	35.5	37.6	39.7

Pre-primary school education

17. Pre-primary education is defined by law as the first level of the educational system, providing education and care for children who have not yet reached six years of age, at which point compulsory education begins. The Preschool Act of 2008 states that the preschool undertakes at the request of parents, the upbringing, caring and education of children at preschool age. The primary goal of all preschool activities shall be children's interests and welfare. All pre-primary schools follow an educational programme, the National Curriculum Guide, issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 2011. Local municipalities are responsible for the operation of pre-primary schools.

Number of children attending pre-primary schools by year and age.

Year	0–2 years old	3–5 years old	Total
2011	6.057	13.102	19.159
2012	6.074	13.541	19.615

<i>Year</i>	<i>0–2 years old</i>	<i>3–5 years old</i>	<i>Total</i>
2013	5.833	13.880	19.713
2014	6.184	13.754	19.938
2015	5.992	13.370	19.362
2016	6.067	13.023	19.090
2017	5.972	13.041	19.013

Primary and lower secondary education

18. Compulsory education is organised in a single structure system, as explained above. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the general administration of any matter governed by the Compulsory School Act of 2008. The operation of regular compulsory schools and the related costs is the responsibility of each municipality. The duration of mandatory education is generally ten years, from ages 6–16 years old. The National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory Schools from 2011 and 2013 with subject areas issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture contains the frame and conditions for learning and teaching based on the principles of existing laws, regulations and international conventions.

Upper secondary education

19. Studies at the upper secondary level are organised as a continuation of compulsory school education. The studies conclude with a final examination such as the upper secondary school leaving certificate, a professional qualification examination, the matriculation examination, or any other formal conclusion of studies. Public upper secondary schools are state-run institutions operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools from 2011 issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture contains the frame and conditions for learning and teaching based on the principles of existing laws, regulations and international conventions.

Higher education

20. The legal framework covering higher education in Iceland is the Higher Education Act of 2006. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture grants accreditation to higher education institutions that fulfil the criteria laid down in national legislation as well as internationally accepted criteria. There are currently seven higher education institutions in Iceland that fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Higher education institutions may be operated either as government-funded or as non-profit organisations or may adopt any other recognised corporate form. However, they may not be operated for the purpose of financial gain.

Students in higher education in Iceland and abroad

<i>Students in higher education</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
University level	19 399	18 41	18 125	17 571	17 255
Male	7 291	6 828	6 558	6 369	6 264
Female	12 108	11 582	10 991	11 567	11 202
Doctorates	491	519	465	469	637
Male	186	198	182	185	262
Female	305	321	283	284	375

Education is categorized by the International Standard Classification of Education 1997 – ISCED97.

<i>Students abroad</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
Male	910	853	796	685	604
Female	1 001	927	817	745	751
Total	1 911	1 780	1 613	1 430	1 355

Students abroad are counted by the number of students who apply for a loan at the Icelandic Student Loan Fund. Other students are not included in these numbers.

Adult education

21. Adult education is aimed at providing adults who have limited formal schooling suitable educational opportunities and facilitating their renewed study, as provided for in Act No. 27/2010. Basic adult education services include three aspects, i.e. firstly, study and vocational counselling, which is a prerequisite for the other two service aspects, validation of prior learning and accreditation of study programmes. The aim of adult education is validating and recognizing professional experience and offering entries to secondary-level education, bridging programmes for Higher Education studies or the labour market.

22. The Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) coordinates the development of career guidance for the target group in cooperation with accredited educational providers around the country. Included in this cooperation are regular seminars organized by ETSC. The Center has placed great emphasis on quality in learning by developing quality indicators for educational providers and by providing training courses for instructors. The quality indicators that ETSC has developed are based on Nordic and European quality assurance system.

Directorate of Education

23. The Directorate of Education was established on 1 October 2015, following the adoption of Act no. 91/2015. The Directorate is an administrative institution in the field of education and its main objective is to improve quality and support progress in education in accordance with law and government policies, best evidence and international standards. The Directorate of Education has taken over responsibilities from the former Education Testing Institute and The National Centre for Educational Materials. The Directorate has also assumed responsibility for certain administrative tasks from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and for new projects such as the implementation of the National agreement on literacy. The Directorates' main tasks are to:

- Provide all school children with diverse and quality education material in accordance with the Icelandic national curriculum guide;
- Monitor and evaluate school progress. Conduct national coordinated examinations and international studies such as PISA;
- Collect, analyze and disseminate information on education and to provide educational authorities, professionals and the public with information and guidance in educational matters;
- Conduct administrative tasks related to the implementation of the national curriculum and qualifications, accreditation of private schools, licensing of teachers and services to students.

Education for all

24. In the autumn of 2018 the Minister of Education, Science and Culture launched the process of preparing a new education policy for Iceland which will be valid until 2030. The education policy will address and prioritise the challenges that Icelandic society faces in education and welfare with regards for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The policy covers all levels of education, including teacher education. The goal is to provide access to

good education at all levels, which optimally meets the needs of individuals, society and the business sector, and to ensure Iceland has an excellent educational system where teachers play a key role. The complete policy was accepted by the Icelandic Parliament in March 2021.

Literacy rates

25. All children aged 6 years to 16 years who are residents in Iceland are required to attend school and learn to speak and read Icelandic. Immigrant students in compulsory and upper secondary schools have a right to Icelandic language classes. Literacy is the key to other studies and one of the fundamental pillars of education according to the National Curriculum Guide from 2011, with emphasis on the importance of writing and reading. On the PISA literacy test in 2018, 90% of 15-year old students scored above the lowest competency level in reading, compared to the average score of 93% in the OECD countries.

26. In rating literacy, the main topic of PISA 2018, 15-year-olds in Iceland score 474 points compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries. Girls perform better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 41 points (OECD average: 30 points higher for girls).

27. On average, 15-year-olds score 495 points in mathematics compared to an average of 489 points in OECD countries. Girls perform better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 10 points (OECD average: 5 points higher for boys).

28. In Iceland, the average performance in science of 15-year-olds is 475 points, compared to an average of 489 points in OECD countries. Girls perform better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 8 points (OECD average: 2 points higher for girls).

Teacher-student ratio in public funded schools

29. In 2017, the student-to-teacher ratio for pre-primary education in Iceland was 6:1, and the ratio for primary education was 9:1.

Number of students for each teacher in primary schools

2013	10
2014	10
2015	10
2016	10
2017	9

The teacher profession and teacher shortages

30. Each year shortages are foreseeable in Iceland at all levels of education, and this has been responded to with broad-based cooperation between the state, local authorities, trade unions of teachers and teacher education institutions. The Icelandic government has responded to the impending shortage of teachers by introducing specific measures aimed at increasing the number of students in teacher education, encouraging graduates to work in the educational system and promoting support for new recruits in teaching. The number of undergraduate students commencing preschool and compulsory school teacher education decreased by 40% in 2008–2018, and in 2018 only about 28% of full-time equivalent positions in Icelandic preschools were manned by preschool teachers. The number of instructors (without teaching qualifications) in compulsory schools has also increased considerably in recent years. As a result of the government's actions, for instance, beginning in the autumn of 2019 students in the final year of a master's program for teaching qualifications at preschool and compulsory level has been offered paid internships and study grants. The act from 2019 on education and recruitment of teachers and head teachers in Pre-schools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools. emphasizes, among other things, competence and flexibility in the work of teachers at all school levels. The support system for professional staff development of teachers at all school levels is being reviewed.

7. Employment

31. After the fall of the Icelandic banks during the economic crisis in 2008, Iceland's GDP decreased by nearly 10 per cent in 2009 and 2010, the country's currency (króna) fell by nearly 50 per cent and unemployment increased more than fourfold and reached its height in 2009.

32. The table below shows monthly unemployment rates for June each year for the period 2006–2018. The temporary spike in unemployment witnessed after 2008 was due to the financial crisis Iceland underwent that year.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
2006	2.9	2.3	3.5
2007	1.7	1.4	2.0
2008	2.2	1.8	2.6
2009	7.5	9.1	5.7
2010	6.0	7.0	5.0
2011	4.7	5.5	3.8
2012	5.2	4.9	5.6
2013	6.4	6.7	6.1
2014	4.6	4.5	4.7
2015	2.9	3.6	2.1
2016	2.2	2.1	2.3
2017	2.3	1.8	2.9
2018	3.1	3.5	2.6

33. 1,396 foreign nationals were unemployed in May 2018, or 4,6 per cent of all foreign nationals in Iceland. This amounts to 31 per cent of all unemployed persons in Iceland.

8. Proportion of international assistance provided in relation to GNI

34. Development cooperation which focuses on the promotion of human rights is financed over various budget chapters. Further information on Iceland's development cooperation can be found under item C, subsection k).

B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State

1. Form of government

35. Iceland is a representative democracy and a parliamentary republic. The Icelandic Constitution provides that State power is exercised by Althingi (the Icelandic parliament), the President of Iceland, the Government and the Judiciary. Parliament and the President are jointly vested with legislative power, while the President and the Government are vested with executive power. Judicial power is vested in the judiciary.

2. Democracy, political parties and the electoral system

36. The legislative assembly of Iceland is Althingi. Althingi is comprised of 63 Members elected for a period of four years and representing six constituencies. In the general election in October 2017 24 women and 39 men were elected to the Parliament. The Speaker of Althingi bears the primary responsibility of ensuring that constitutional provisions regarding Althingi and its rules of procedure are followed.

37. Elections to Althingi are held every fourth year. The voting age is currently 18 years. All Icelandic citizens who have reached the age of 18 are eligible to vote. They also have the right to stand for election, if they have an unblemished reputation. The Icelandic electoral

system is based on the principles of direct election and proportional representation in multi-member constituencies.

38. As of October 2017 eight political parties are represented in Althingi (The Centre Party, with seven members, the Independence Party, with 16 members, the Left Green Movement, with 11 members, the People's Party, with four members, the Pirate Party, with six members, the Progressive Party, with eight members, the Reform Party, with four members and the Social Democratic Alliance, with seven members). The table below shows the distribution of seats in Althingi by party.

<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Number of Seats</i>
The People's Party	4
The Independence Party	16
The Progressive Party	8
The Center Party	7
The Reform Party	4
The Pirate Party	6
The Social Democratic Alliance	7
The Left-Green Movement	11

The table below shows the percentage of men and women in Althingi and various influential positions.

<i>Institution/Position</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Althingi, candidates, 2017	44.6	55.4
Althingi, elected representatives, 2017	38.1	61.9
Government Ministers, 2018	45.5	54.5
Local Government, candidates, 2018	48.4	51.6
Local Government, elected representatives, 2018	47.0	53.0
Municipal managers/mayors, 2019	36.0	64.0
Official committees, councils, 2016	46.0	54.0
Managers of state institutions, 2019	42.0	58.0
Ambassadors, 2020	33.4	66.6
Judges in District Courts, 2017	42.9	57.1
Judges in Appeals Court, 2021	40.0	60.0
Judges in Supreme Court, 2021	42.9	57.1
Managers of active enterprises, 2017	22.0	78.0
Chair persons of active enterprises, 2017	24.0	76.0
Board of directors of active enterprises, 2017	26.0	74.0
Members of Associations of journalists, 2017	38.3	61.7

The table below shows participation in elections (percentage) 2014–2020.

<i>Elections</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Local government elections 2014	66.5
Presidential elections 2016	75.7
Presidential elections 2020	66.9
General elections 2016	79.2
General elections 2017	81.2
Local government elections 2018	67.6

3. The Icelandic Government

39. The Government is formed by the party or parties that have a majority of seats in the Althingi or that constitute a minority capable of governing. Thus, the Government is indirectly selected by the electorate. The Government consists of the Prime Minister and a number of ministers (11 ministers total as of 30 November 2017). The Office of the Prime Minister assists the Prime Minister in leading and coordinating the work of the Government. The ministries are responsible for executing the policies decided by the ministers in the various sectors of the Government administration. Ministers are accountable for all executive acts and their accountability is established by law.

4. Municipalities

40. Iceland is divided into 72 municipalities (2019). The Government delegates autonomous powers in certain policy areas to the municipal councils, as specified by legislation. Much of the public administration is also carried out at this level. Local authorities are responsible for a large share of government projects and services, including the operation of pre-schools, compulsory schools and music schools.

41. Prior to the national elections in Iceland on 10 May 2003, changes were made to divide the country into six constituencies: the northwest and northeast, south and southwest districts, Reykjavík north and Reykjavík south. Previously, Iceland was divided into eight constituencies.

42. Municipal council elections are held every fourth year. The voter turnout for the last elections, held in May 2018, was 67,6 per cent.

5. Legal structure

43. The administration of justice is carried out by the courts of law. On 1 January 2018 a new court level was introduced in Iceland, replacing the former two tiers with a three-tier system. The new court is the Court of Appeal and is a court of second instance, situated between the District Court and the Supreme Court at the highest level. All court actions in Iceland commence in the District Courts, which are eight in number and located around the country. The conclusion of a District Court can be appealed to the Court of Appeal, provided specific conditions for appeal are satisfied. In most instances, the judgment of the Court of Appeal will be the final resolution in the case, but in special cases, and after receiving permission of the Supreme Court, it will be possible to refer the conclusion of the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court.

44. Parallel to the district courts and the Supreme Court, Iceland has two special courts, i.e. the Court of Impeachment and the Labour Court. The Court of Impeachment only addresses cases pertaining to alleged offences by government ministers in the opinion of the Icelandic parliament, Althingi. The Court of Impeachment has only processed one case, following the economic crisis in 2008. The role of the Labour Court is to pass judgments in legal disputes between the social partners on grounds of the Act on Trade Unions and Industrial Disputes.

45. Judicial Administration, a new public agency, also commenced work on 1 January 2018. Judicial Administration's role is to take care of the administrative work of all the courts and represent their interests in dealing with the government, the media and other parties. The Judicial Administration is an independent institution.

46. Public administration agencies are supervised by the Althingi Ombudsman. The Ombudsman monitors the administration of the State and local authorities. The role of the Ombudsman is also to safeguard the rights of citizens vis-à-vis the authorities. The Ombudsman processes complaints concerning administrative decisions at government and municipal levels and may also take the initiative to investigate a matter.

47. Iceland has a civil law legal system and thus Icelandic law is characterised by written law. Major sources of law in Iceland include the Constitution, statutory legislation, and regulatory statutes. Other legal resources are precedent and customary law.

6. National minorities and immigration

48. There was little immigration to Iceland prior to the 1990s, and what little immigration there was came mostly from other Scandinavian countries: around 1% of the population of Iceland in 1900 was of Danish heritage. In the mid-1990s, 95% of Icelanders had parents of Icelandic origin, and 2% of Icelandic inhabitants were first-generation immigrants (born abroad with both parents foreign-born and all grandparents foreign-born).

49. Immigration to Iceland rose rapidly in the late twentieth century, encouraged by Iceland's accession to the European Economic Area in 1994, its entry into the Schengen Agreement in 2001, and the country's early twenty-first century economic boom.

50. The Multicultural Centre provides information on rights and services for immigrants in eight languages. The Icelandic Human Rights Centre provides immigrants with free legal counselling under an agreement with the Ministry of Welfare. Municipalities also provide information on local facilities and services. Interpretation services are provided free of charge in various areas, such as in the judicial system, during criminal investigations, for asylum seekers, and to some extent within the education and health systems.

51. The Icelandic Integration Development Fund has emphasised projects and research to combat ethnic discrimination and racism to strengthen NGOs working with immigrants. Projects have been carried out by non-state actors, such as the National Football Association, the Youth Forum and the Red Cross, with the aim to eliminate prejudice.

7. Recognition of non-governmental organisations

52. Non-Profit Organisations can register with the Icelandic Business Register. However, registration is entirely optional. In 2017, there were 14.494 organisations registered with the Icelandic Business Register.

8. Crime and justice

53. In 2019, the total number of offenses was 93.764. Of those, 75.071 were traffic violations. The number of offenses was similar over the past few years with the average number of offenses from 2016 to 2018 almost 90.000.

54. In 2019, there were 664 police personnel in Iceland. In 2020, there were 42 judges in the District Courts, 15 in the Court of Appeal and seven in the Supreme Court.

55. The death penalty is outlawed by Article 69 of the Icelandic Constitution that sets forth that the death penalty may never be stipulated by law.

The table below shows the number of sexual offenses and assault/violence against a person registered by the police in the period 2014–2018.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Sexual offenses</i>	<i>Assault/Violence against the person</i>
2014	419	1 237
2015	442	1 587
2016	498	1 605
2017	476	1 671
2018	551	1 757

II. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

A. Acceptance of international human rights norms

1. Main international human rights conventions and protocols

56. Iceland has acceded to the following UN human rights conventions:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT);
- The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The status of ratifications is set out in the table below.

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Signature (S) Ratifications (R)</i>	<i>Reservations Declarations</i>	<i>Acceptance of optional procedure</i>
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (ICESCR), 1966	R 22/08/1979		
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ICCPR), 1966	R 22/08/1979	<p>Reservations with respect to the following provisions:</p> <p>Article 10, paragraph 2 (b), and paragraph 3, second sentence, with respect to the separation of juvenile prisoners from adult. Icelandic law in principle provides for such separation but it is not considered appropriate to accept an obligation in the absolute form called for in the provisions of the Covenant.</p> <p>Article 14, paragraph 7, with respect to the resumption of cases which have already been tried. The Icelandic law of procedure has detailed provisions on this matter which it is not considered appropriate to revise.</p> <p>Article 20, paragraph 1, with reference to the fact that a prohibition against propaganda for war could limit the freedom of expression. This reservation is consistent with the position of Iceland at the General Assembly at its 16th session.</p> <p>Other provisions of the Covenant shall be inviolably observed.</p>	<p>The Optional Protocol was ratified by Iceland on 22/08/1979</p> <p>Iceland accedes to the optional protocol “subject to a reservation, with reference to article 5, paragraph 2, with respect to the competence of the Human Rights Committee to consider a communication from an individual if the matter is being examined or has been examined under another procedure of international investigation or settlement.</p> <p>Second optional protocol Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty was ratified by Iceland on 02/04/1991.</p>

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Signature (S) Ratifications (R)</i>	<i>Reservations Declarations</i>	<i>Acceptance of optional procedure</i>
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, (ICERD), 1965	R 13/03/1967	“... Iceland recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals within the jurisdiction of Iceland claiming to be victims of a violation by Iceland of any of the rights set forth in the Convention, with the reservation that the Committee shall not consider any communication from an individual or group of individuals unless the Committee has ascertained that the same matter is not being examined or has not been examined under another procedure of international investigation or settlement”.	
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW), 1979	R 18/06/1985	Amendment of Article 20 (1) of the Convention 08/05/2002	Optional Protocol ratified by Iceland on 06/03/2001
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, (CAT), 1984	R 23/10/1996	“... Iceland recognizes the competence of the Committee against Torture to receive and consider communications to the effect that a State Party claims that another State Party is not fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and, pursuant to Article 22, paragraph 1, of the Convention, that Iceland recognizes the competence of the Committee against Torture to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals subject to its jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation by a State Party of the provisions of the Convention”.	Optional Protocol ratified by Iceland on 20/02/2019
Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC), 1989	R 28/10/1992	On 20 May 2015, the Government of Iceland informed the Secretary-General that it had decided to withdraw the declaration made upon ratification with respect to Article 37 of the Convention.	Acceptance of Amendment to Article 43 (2) by Iceland on 14/01/2000. Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict ratified by Iceland on 01/10/2001.

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Signature (S) Ratifications (R)</i>	<i>Reservations Declarations</i>	<i>Acceptance of optional procedure</i>
		“With respect to Article 37, the separation of juvenile prisoners from adult prisoners is not obligatory under Icelandic law. However, the law relating to prisons and imprisonment provides that when deciding in which penal institution imprisonment is to take place account should be taken of, inter alia, the age of the prisoner. In light of the circumstances prevailing in Iceland it is expected that decisions on the imprisonment of juveniles will always take account of the juvenile’s best interest”.	“With regard to Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Republic of Iceland declares that it has no national armed forces and hence, a minimum age for recruitment is not applicable in the case of the Republic of Iceland”. Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography ratified by Iceland on 09/07/2001.
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (CRPD), 2006	R 23/09/2016		Iceland signed the Optional Protocol to the CRPD on 30/03/2007.
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), 2006	S 01/10/2008		
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW), 1990	Iceland is not a party to this convention.	Iceland has ratified the ILO core conventions on worker’s rights.	

2. Other United Nations human rights and related conventions

Iceland is party to the conventions listed in the table below.

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Ratification (R)</i>
Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948	R 29/08/1949
Slavery Convention, 1926 as amended in 1955	R 17/11/1965
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, and its 1967 Protocol	R 26/04/1968
Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954	R 26/01/2021
Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961	R 26/01/2021
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 1998	R 25/05/2000
United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000, and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	R 16/04/2010

3. Conventions of the International Labour Organisation

Iceland is party to the conventions listed in the table below.

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Ratification (R)</i>
Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29)	R 17/02/1958
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No.87)	R 19/06/1950
Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)	R 15/07/1952
Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	R 17/02/1958
Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	R 29/11/1960
Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	R 29/07/1963
Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) - Minimum age specified: 15 years	R 06/12/1999
Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	R 29/05/2000
Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)	R 24/03/2009
Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)	R 22/06/1990
Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)	R 24/03/2009
Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)	R 30/06/1981
Unemployment Convention, 1919 (No. 2)	R 17/02/1958
Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11)	R 21/08/1956
Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (No. 186)	R 04/04/2019
Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) – <i>Has accepted parts V, VII and IX</i>	R 20/02/1961
Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, 1958 (No. 108)	R 26/10/1970
Occupational Cancer Convention, 1974 (No. 139)	R 21/06/1991
Merchant Shipping (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 147)	R 11/05/1999
Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)	R 21/06/1991
Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)	R 22/06/2000
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159)	R 22/06/1990
Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) – <i>Will enter into force 01 June 2019.</i>	R 01/06/2018

4. Convention of the Hague Conference on Private International Law

Iceland is party to the conventions listed in the table below.

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Accession (A)/ Ratification (R)</i>
Convention on Civil Procedure, 1954	A 21/10/2008

<i>Convention/protocol</i>	<i>Accession (A)/ Ratification (R)</i>
Convention on Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents, 1961	R 28/09/2004
Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters, 1965	A 21/10/2008
Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters, 1970	A 21/10/2008
Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, 1980	A 14/08/1996
Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption	A 17/01/2000

5. Geneva Conventions and other treaties on international humanitarian law

Iceland is party to the conventions listed in the table below.

<i>Convention/Protocol</i>	<i>Accession (A)/ Ratifications (R)</i>
Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick, and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, 1949	R 10/08/1965
Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts	R 10/04/1987
Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts	R 10/04/1987
Additional Protocol III to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 Concerning establishing an Additional Emblem	R 12/07/2006
Convention for the Adaptation of the Principles of the Geneva Convention to Naval War	A 27/11/1909
Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare	R 19/12/1966
Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War	R 10/08/1965
Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field	R 10/08/1965
Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War	R 10/08/1965

6. Conventions of the Council of Europe

Iceland is party to the conventions listed in the table below.

<i>Convention/Protocol</i>	<i>Accession (A)/ Ratification (R)</i>
Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	R 29/06/1953
European Social Charter	R 15/01/1976
Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence	R 26/04/2018

<i>Convention/Protocol</i>	<i>Accession (A)/ Ratification (R)</i>
Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse	R 04/09/2012
Council of Europe Convention on action against Trafficking in Human Beings	R 17/02/2012
European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	R 19/06/1990
Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	R 29/06/1995
Protocol No. 2 to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	R 29/06/1995

B. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level

1. Legislation

57. Human rights are protected in the Constitution and specific legislation in several different areas.

58. Iceland adheres to the principle of dualism. Therefore, ratified international treaties do not assume the force of domestic law, but rather are only binding according to international law. Courts has sought to interpret Icelandic law, as far as possible, in conformity with Iceland's international obligations. The Courts has made several references to international obligations undertaken by Iceland, and it has interpreted both the Constitution and other laws in coherence with such obligations.

The Constitution

59. The Constitutional Act of 1995 introduced fundamental amendments to the human rights provisions of the Constitution. It added a multitude of new human rights provisions to the Constitution and older provisions were rephrased and modernised. Human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of religion, the right to privacy, home and family life and freedom of association and assembly are now guaranteed.

Other legislation

60. Several international conventions have been incorporated into Icelandic law:

- The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, with subsequent amending protocols and the following additional protocols: Nos. 1, 4, 6, 7 and 13;
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

2. Competencies of judicial, administrative and other public authorities concerning human rights

61. All public authorities are obliged to respect and ensure human rights as they are expressed in the Constitution and in human rights treaties that are binding for Iceland, cf. Article 65 of the Icelandic Constitution. Some public authorities have a more general responsibility; for example, the Minister of Justice is responsible for the implementation of international human rights agreements, and the Parliamentary Ombudsman has a duty to help ensure that all public authorities respect and secure human rights.

3. Remedies

62. There are many ways in which a question of human rights may be brought before an Icelandic court or administrative authority, for example in connection with civil or penal proceedings such as a claim for compensation, as a ground for declaring an administrative or a court decision null and void, or as a question of procedure (for example a fair trial) in civil or penal proceedings.

63. Several public authorities and complaint mechanisms address specific human rights issues, such as gender equality and children's rights. On a more general level, an individual has the right to submit a complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman concerning an alleged injustice – including human rights violations – committed by any public authority. The Ombudsman may point out that the decision is clearly unreasonable or contrary to good administrative practice. If he finds sufficient grounds, he may recommend that compensation should be awarded. The opinion of the Ombudsman is not legally binding but is normally followed.

4. The European Court of Human Rights and other regional complaints mechanisms

64. As party to the European convention on Human Rights, Iceland has accepted the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

C. Framework within which human rights are promoted at the national level

1. Introduction

65. The main goal of a constitutional government is to protect individuals from abuse of power by public authorities, and to ensure equal treatment, welfare and democracy. Both the Government and the public administration at national and local levels are bound by Iceland's human rights obligations in the exercise of their authority. The same applies to Althingi and the judiciary. The implementation of human rights instruments in Icelandic law and their status within the legal system is described above.

66. The judiciary is independent of the executive and legislature and has a right and duty to review the constitutionality of acts passed by Althingi, cf. Article 60 of the Constitution. It may also review administrative decisions. Complaints concerning administrative decisions may be submitted to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

67. Responsibility for national implementation of human rights obligations is divided between the ministries, which are all responsible for following up on the recommendations of various treaty bodies within their sectors. Human rights are integrated and mainstreamed into all sectors of government and administration. All ministries and administrative bodies have an obligation to take human rights into account when drafting legislation, drawing up guidelines for administrative practice and adopting decisions.

68. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice has a particular responsibility to ensure that Icelandic law and administrative practice is consistent with Iceland's human rights obligations.

2. National and regional parliaments and assemblies

The Althingi (The Icelandic Parliament)

69. Under the Icelandic parliamentary system, the Government is accountable to the Althingi, which exercises continuous control over the Government's activities, including the protection and promotion of human rights.

70. In the Althingi, as in all government structures, human rights are mainstreamed and considered by each committee and by the plenary when passing legislation and adopting decisions. Althingi does not have a separate committee solely focused on human rights issues. However, the Judicial Affairs and Education committee discusses human rights as part of their regular meetings.

County and municipal authorities

71. Iceland has two administrative levels of government: The state and the local authorities. The local authorities are one of the two sources of governmental executive power in Iceland. The special status of the local authorities is derived from their legal authority of self-government over their own affairs in accordance with the law. This right is protected under Article 78 of the Constitution. Consequently, the local authorities are bound within the legal framework enacted by Althingi.

72. In order to ensure the rights of citizens and the legality of adopted decisions, municipal authorities are subject to state supervision and control. According to Article 102 of the Local Government Act, the Ministry of Social Affairs shall monitor municipal council's performance of their duties. Various matters of doubt which may arise in the implementation of local government issues, shall be subject to adjudication by the Ministry.

73. The municipalities play an important role in the implementation of regional democracy. They are the part of government closest to the general public. In addition to the administrative function of the local authorities, they see the implementation of and bear responsibility for many fundamental services, such as education and social services.

74. In Reykjavík, a special human rights office was established in 2007 with the role of implementing the decisions of the human rights council. The office also works to inform citizens about the city's human rights policy and to safeguard the rights of all citizens.

75. Reykjavík also has a Citizen's Ombudsman, which guides citizens and businesses in communication with the city regarding their rights and provides advice on avenues of appeal for the complaints that are lodged with him.

3. National human rights institutions

76. As of 2020 there is no independent National Human Rights Institution in Iceland, that fulfils the Paris Principles on human rights organisations. The Icelandic Human Rights Centre has partially functioned as an independent national human rights organisation. It does not, however, fulfil the Paris Principles, since those require an independent organisation established by law. It receives public funding to carry out its tasks, such as monitoring the implementation of human rights conventions, additional reporting to international monitoring bodies and commenting on legal bills, publishing printed material about human rights, international cooperation, answering enquiries about human rights issues and supporting the implementation of human rights in Iceland.

The Althingi Ombudsman

77. The Althingi Ombudsman is elected by Althingi for periods of four years. He/she shall fulfil the conditions provided by law for appointment to the Supreme Court. In his/her work the Ombudsman is independent and does not take orders from Althingi.

78. The role of the Althingi Ombudsman is to monitor the administration of the State and local authorities and safeguard the rights of the citizens vis-à-vis the authorities. The Ombudsman shall take pains to ensure that the principle of equality is observed, and that administration is in other respects conducted in conformity with the law and good administrative practices. The Ombudsman also deals with complaints from citizens concerning an injustice perpetrated by the public administration at either level, government or municipal.

79. The functions of the Althingi Ombudsman are set out in Act no. 85/1997. The Ombudsman is appointed by and administratively subordinate to Althingi but acts as an independent body in the exercise of his functions.

80. Conclusions by the Althingi Ombudsman in cases submitted for his consideration are not by law binding on the authorities, yet they are normally followed. Where a public authority does not heed a finding of the Althingi Ombudsman he may recommend that the party concerned be given legal aid in a lawsuit against the authority in question. The Ombudsman reports annually to Althingi on his work, detailing inter alia how cases have been concluded and the subsequent action by the authorities.

The Ombudsman for Children

81. The office of the Ombudsman for Children was established in 1994. The Ombudsman is appointed by the Prime minister to a period of five years. In his/her work, the Ombudsman is independent and not subject to instructions from the authorities. Furthermore, the Ombudsman may freely raise issues and criticise government policy.

82. The role of the Ombudsman for Children is to further the wellbeing of children and to look after their interests, rights and needs vis-à-vis public as well as private parties in all walks of life. The Ombudsman is expected to be a protector of all children up to the age of 18.

83. All matters pertaining to children may be put to the Ombudsman for Children, apart from disputes between individuals. Where the Ombudsman concludes that an indication gives rise to further investigation of a matter he/she will seek information from the parties indicated. The Ombudsman can demand from the authorities all the information he/she deems to be required, such as reports, documents, records and other items.

The City Ombudsman

84. In Reykjavík, there is a special ombudsman for residents of the city, who assists with cases involving violations committed by the municipality. The Ombudsman's role is to safeguard the rights of Reykjavík's residents and deals with several cases involving human rights.

4. Dissemination of human rights instruments

85. The core international human rights treaties ratified by Iceland have all been translated into Icelandic. All international conventions that have been incorporated into Icelandic law are available on the Althingi website and the government website, in English and Icelandic. Most other international agreements are also available in Icelandic via these websites. Hard copies may be obtained from these institutions upon request.

86. Some of the core human rights instruments have also been published in brochures and widely distributed. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has a special website, which offers a wide range of teaching materials, as well as a short version of the Convention. The website was established by the Ombudsman for Children, in collaboration with UNICEF Iceland and Save the Children Iceland. Icelandic translations of the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, are all available in Icelandic through the Althingi website.

87. Judgments by the European Court of Human Rights in cases where Iceland is party to are published on the government website, in Icelandic. The judgments are also available via the Human Rights Centre website.

5. Raising human rights awareness among public officials and other professionals

88. In 2016, the government agreed to implement the ODIHR's (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) Training Against Hate Crime for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE) and Prosecutors and Hate Crime Training (PAHCT) programmes. Police officers and prosecutors were trained as part of these programmes.

89. Article 12 of the Compulsory School Act states that each school shall elaborate a plan on how to organise lifelong learning for its staff so as to achieve the best alignment with the priorities laid down by the school and the municipality and in the National Curriculum Guide. This includes training on democracy, human rights and equality.

6. Promotion of human rights awareness through educational programs and Government-sponsored public information

90. The mainstreaming of human rights in all aspects of Icelandic society has been a long-standing commitment of Iceland. Human rights education in Iceland is an integrated, cross-

curricular part of school culture and working methods, in accordance with the National Curriculum Guide. The Guide is based on six fundamental pillars: literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality and creativity. Each of the fundamental pillars derives from laws on preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school. International conventions to which Iceland is a party are taken into consideration in the policy, for example the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the policy of international institutions of which Iceland is a member.

Preschool system

91. According to Article 2 of the Preschool Act, children's interests and welfare shall be the primary mission of all preschool activities. Preschool practice and methods shall be characterised by tolerance and affection, equality, democratic cooperation, responsibility, forgiveness, respect for human values and the Christian heritage of Icelandic culture.

92. The National Curriculum Guide of kindergartens, laid down by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, has similar objectives. According to the Curriculum, kindergartens should base their activities on a common set of values that are in line with the fundamental pillars of Iceland's education policy, such as to encourage children's broadmindedness and strengthen their moral values, and to lay the foundation necessary for the children to become independent, autonomous, active and responsible participants in a democratic society.

Primary and secondary education

93. According to Article 2 of the Compulsory School Act, the manner of operation of compulsory schools shall be characterised by tolerance and charity, guided by the Christian heritage of Icelandic culture and marked by equality, democratic cooperation, responsibility, consideration, forgiveness and respect for human worth.

94. The National Curriculum Guide of compulsory schools emphasises similar objectives, for example the importance of pupils and teachers alike having knowledge of children's rights as well as human rights in general. The guide further states that in all their working methods, schools have to take into consideration that the human rights of every individual are respected.

7. Mainstreaming of human rights

95. The mainstreaming of human rights has been a long-standing commitment of Iceland. Most recently, an inter-ministerial steering committee was established in 2017 for the mainstreaming of human rights. The committee was founded prior to Iceland's second review under the universal periodic review in 2016. The cooperation established proved successful in coordinating and spurring action for human rights in the run-up to the review. The steering committee is tasked with following up on the recommendations of the review, as well as preparing Iceland's third review in 2021. It also serves as the national mechanism for reporting on and follow-up to the engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms more broadly, including the human rights treaty bodies and special procedures, in addition to the universal periodic review. The committee is also intended to better facilitate cooperation between ministries that have shared responsibilities when it comes to human rights.

8. Promotion of human rights awareness in the media

96. Freedom of expression and the press is guaranteed both through international human rights instruments and in the Icelandic Constitution. The press and other mass media are vital in facilitating debate on human rights questions. They also play a crucial role in highlighting important human rights issues in Iceland. Civil society organisations also use media channels to bring human rights issues to the public agenda.

9. Role of civil society, including non-governmental organisations

97. Human rights defenders, trade unions and industry organisations all play a vital role in the realisation of human rights in Iceland and have laid much of the foundation for democracy and welfare in Icelandic society.

98. The Government provides support to civil society organisations and maintains a constant dialogue with them on human rights issues and challenges, where relevant. This includes open consultation processes on proposed legislation and the preparation of submissions to the human rights treaty bodies.

99. Trade unions and industry organisations are essential for safeguarding the rights of people in the labour market, and negotiate on their behalf, wages and other employment terms in collective wage agreements. They are also instrumental in protecting the right to organise and play a significant role in Icelandic working life.

10. Budget allocations

100. As human rights are mainstreamed in all areas of public administration in Iceland, funding for human rights is not specifically allocated in the national budget, but appears under a wide range of items, such as education, health and welfare, foreign affairs, and courts administration.

11. Development cooperation and assistance

101. International development cooperation is an integral part of Iceland's foreign policy. [Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation 2019-2023](#) stipulates focus areas and objectives, implementation, and efficiency and results. The strategy for International Development Cooperation focuses on the promotion of human rights and gender equality, peace and security, as well as the fight against poverty, social injustice, disparity in living conditions and hunger. It furthermore attempts to ensure internal coherence in Iceland's foreign policy with regards to global economic, environmental and security matters. Iceland's development cooperation focuses on areas in which Iceland's expert knowledge can be applied in the fight against poverty and in reaching the SDGs.

102. Human rights are a cross-cutting issue Iceland's development cooperation and a human rights-based approach is mainstreamed across different mechanisms, to include multilateral and bilateral cooperation, humanitarian assistance and strategic partnership, which entails collaboration with civil society and NGOs, private sector and academia. The total expenditure for Icelandic development cooperation in 2020 was ISK 8.842 billion

103. Four multilateral organisations are of particular importance for the priorities of Iceland's international development cooperation policy: the [World Bank](#), the [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), the [United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women \(UN Women\)](#), and the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#). The Government of Iceland also endeavours to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable in partnership with specialised UN agencies and funds mandated with coordinating and carrying out humanitarian action globally (OCHA, CERF, UNHCR and WFP). Iceland's bilateral partner countries are two in Sub-Saharan Africa: Malawi and Uganda. Iceland's cooperation with the countries aims to improve peoples' quality of life by means of empowerment, capacity building and transfer of knowledge. The long-term objective is sustainable development, economic growth, equality, independence, democracy and the advocacy of human rights.

D. Reporting process at the national level

104. Responsibility for the national implementation of human rights obligations is divided between the ministries, which are all responsible for contributing to the drafting of reports and the follow up to recommendations of various treaty bodies within their sectors. Human rights are integrated and mainstreamed into all sectors of government and administration. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice has a particular responsibility to ensure that Icelandic law and administrative practice is consistent with Iceland's human rights obligations and

coordinates and oversees the drafting of reports and the follow up to recommendations of treaty bodies. This work is coordinated through the Government's Steering Group on Human Rights which is comprised of representatives from all the ministries.

105. Reports are based on information gathered from ministries, government institutions, the Association of Local Authorities, representative associations, public interest associations, academia and the general public as it applies. Special effort is made to consult civil society that works in the field and in particular the Icelandic Human Rights Centre. Finally, draft reports are published in the government consultation portal, thereby providing the general public with an opportunity to express its views on the content.

III. Information on non-discrimination and equality and effective remedies

A. Legal framework

1. The Constitution

106. The principle of equality is specifically addressed in a provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland (see Article 65 of the Constitution, No. 33/1944, cf. the Constitutional Law Act, No. 97/1995), stating that men and women are to have equal rights in every respect. Iceland has also had a special statute intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976.

107. Article 65 of the Constitution also states that everyone shall enjoy human rights and be equal before the law irrespective of sex, religion, opinion, national origin, race, colour, property, birth or other status.

2. Incorporation

108. Before proceeding to ratifying international human rights treaties, the Icelandic Government ensures, through legislative and other measures that Icelandic law is adapted to the provisions of the treaty concerned. In principle, the treaty as such is not adopted into law. This again affects references to treaties by the courts, which generally refer to legislation that might be based on treaties while not referring to provisions of the treaties as such.

3. The Equality Act

109. The Gender Equality Act, No. 10/2008, included actions to implement and monitor the policy represented.

110. In June 2014 an amendment was made to the Gender Equality Act by Act No. 62/2014 (on employment, jobs, etc.). Amongst other, the amendment was made in response to criticism by the EFTA Surveillance Authority because the previous provisions of the Gender Equality Act were not considered as adequately reflecting the wording of certain European Union gender equality Directives as regards direct and indirect discrimination, gender-based harassment and sexual harassment. Also, a new paragraph was added to Article 19 of the Act (on wage equality), authorising the Minister to issue regulations on the further application of the Article, including the introduction of a wage equality standard, e.g. as regards qualification requirements for certification and the conduct of wage equality certification.

111. In 2015 an amendment was made to the Gender Equality Act, by Act No. 79/2015 introducing a prohibition on discrimination in connection with the provision of goods and services. This gave effect to the EU Council Directive 2004/113/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and the provision of goods and services.

112. The aim of Iceland's Gender Equality Act is to establish and maintain equality of rights and opportunities for women and men, to equalise their position in all areas of society, and ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities to benefit from their own enterprise and develop their skills, irrespective of gender. The Act places positive obligations on

government authorities in the field of gender equality; it states that steps are to be taken specifically to improve the position of women with progressive measures and to increase their opportunities in society; these aims are based on Article 3 of CEDAW.

113. The Gender Equality Council, in addition to its advisory role, organises in partnership with the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality a Gender Equality Forum every two years, to encourage a vigorous debate in this field among public and relevant stakeholders.

114. A bill of law (Amendment to the Gender Equality Act 10/2008) that was submitted by the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality and passed by the Parliament with vast majority on 1 June 2017, came into force on 1 January 2018. Companies and institutions employing 25 or more workers, on annual basis, are now required to obtain equal pay certification of their equal pay system and the implementation thereof. The purpose of this obligatory certification is to enforce the current legislation prohibiting discriminatory practices based on gender and requiring that women and men working for the same employer shall be paid equal wages and enjoy equal terms of employment for the same jobs or jobs of equal value. The approved amendments entailed changes to article 19 on Equal Pay.

4. The Anti-Discrimination Acts

115. The Minister for Social Affairs and Equality presented two bills to Parliament on 19 March 2018, one on equal treatment in the labour market, and one on equal treatment of people irrespective of race or national origin. Both bills were passed and the new legislation took effect on 1 September 2018.

116. The new law on equal treatment in the labour market includes a ban on all discrimination of people in the labour market, whether it is direct or indirect discrimination, on the basis of their race, national origin, religion, disability, reduced working ability, age or sexuality. The law is important for promoting active participation in the labour market, which is considered to be one of the best ways to prevent social exclusion and poverty. In the legislation process, the European Union Council Directive 2000/78/EB, on rules for equal treatment in the labour market and economic life, served as a guideline.

117. The new law on equal treatment of people, irrespective of race or national origin is meant to ensure the same principle of equal treatment of people, but outside the labour market in all areas of Icelandic society. In the legislation process, the content of the European Union Council Directive 2000/43/EB, on equal treatment irrespective of race or national origin, served as a guideline.

118. The objective of a clear ban on all discrimination is to encourage active participation of as many people as possible in Icelandic society, irrespective of race or national origin, and to prevent social exclusion of individuals for those same reasons.

B. Institutional framework and effective remedies

1. The Gender Equality Complaints Committee (*Kærunefnd jafnréttismála*)

119. The task of the Gender Equality Complaints Committee is to examine cases and deliver a ruling in writing on whether provisions of Act No. 10/2008 have been violated. The Committee's rulings may not be referred to a higher authority. In cases that may be expected to influence policy on the labour market as a whole, the Committee shall seek comments from the national federations of workers and employers before delivering its ruling. The rulings of the Complaints Committee shall be binding for the parties in question. The parties may refer the Committee's rulings to the courts.

2. The Centre for Gender Equality (*Jafnréttisstofa*)

120. The Centre for Gender Equality is responsible for the administration of the gender equality legislation and provides counselling and education in the field of gender equality. The centre also helps, when needed with preparing complaints for the Complaints Committee. However, the Centre is not an independent institution and works under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Equality.

3. The Gender Equality Council

121. After each parliamentary election, the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality appoints a Gender Equality Council of eleven representatives. The representatives are nominated by the employees' and the employers' associations, various women's organisations, civil society organisations, academic institutions and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland. The council works in close contact with the Centre for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Equality, with particular emphasis on promoting gender equality in the labour market and on the reconciliation of work and family life.

4. Organisation within the central public administration

122. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Equality plays a key role in the efforts to promote an equal rights perspective in all policy areas and at all administrative levels. However, each ministry is responsible for promoting equal rights and preventing discrimination within its sector.

123. Iceland does not have a state discrimination ombudsperson who helps victims take discrimination cases to court. The country's Centre for Gender Equality only deals with gender-related discrimination.

C. Gender equality and specific vulnerable groups

1. Hate speech

124. Article 233 a of the General Penal code of Iceland states that anyone who publicly mocks, defames, denigrates or threatens a person or group of persons by comments or expressions of another nature, for example by means of pictures or symbols, for their nationality, colour, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, or disseminates such materials, shall be fined or imprisoned for up to two years. The Penal Code also includes Articles 125, 180 and 234 that include provisions on some form of hate speech or discrimination.

125. Article 65 of the Constitution includes the principle of equality irrespective of sex, religion, opinion, national origin, race, colour, property, birth or other status.

126. The Media Act, Article 27 states that reporters are not allowed to deliberately inflame hatred on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality or the cultural, economic or social position in society.

2. Gender equality

127. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Acts prohibit discrimination on the ground of gender in all areas of society.

128. The principle of equality is specifically addressed in a provision in the Constitution, see Article 65. It states that men and women are to have equal rights in every respect. Iceland has also had a special statute intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976.

129. When, in the 1940s, Iceland's welfare system began to be established according to the Nordic model, a new image of men's and women's positions began to appear in which women acquired constantly greater rights and equality of standing. Since 1850, when the first legislative step towards gender equality was taken with the introduction of equality in the right of inheritance by daughters and sons, many moves have been made to ensure gender equality in Iceland. According to the World Economic Forum, substantial equality between the sexes has been achieved within the Icelandic system, as acknowledged by its Gender Gap Index. It placed Iceland as the world leader in gender equality for the 12th year running in a survey of 140 countries. The standing of each country is assessed in terms of four measurements: access to health care, educational standard, political participation and economic standing. Each of these key points embraces sub-categories, including, e.g., participation in the labour market, equal pay, earnings from employment and the proportion of women among managers and experts.

3. Equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (LGBTI)

130. Iceland is a committed supporter of LGBTI rights, as is reflected in its voluntary commitment to the Human Rights Council, in which Iceland pledges to continue to advance and advocate the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals. Iceland tops the index when it comes to LGBTI social acceptance, according to a study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development from 2019.

131. Since 1996 discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is subject to penalty under the General Penal Code. The same year, registered partnership between same-sex couples was given the same legal status as marriage except for certain limitations regarding adoptions. In 2010 this difference between marriages and registered partnerships was abolished, and the Marriage Act now applies to both heterosexual and same-sex couples. LGBTI individuals who are in a registered partnership or marriage, can therefore adopt children. However, it can be a difficult process, as adoption legislation in countries where Icelanders seek to adopt from, is most often not the same in regards to LGBTI rights.

132. Act on Gender Autonomy from 2019 (no. 80/2019) ensures the right of every person 15 and older to change their gender registration in Registers Iceland. With the change in gender registration, the applicant also has the right to a name change. No medical requirements can be made for the gender registration change, such as surgical operations, medication, hormonal treatments, psychiatric or psychological therapy. Gender neutral registration is also permitted. The act improves the rights of queer people as Iceland now fully acknowledges the self-determination in gender registration without any medical or psychiatric intervention.

133. In 2020 an amendment to the Act on Gender Autonomy added a provision concerning changes in sex characteristics of children born with atypical sex characteristics. The act now prohibits unnecessary medical interventions on minors born with atypical sex characteristics until the child is able to give informed consent.

134. A new Act on Gender Equality from December 2020 ensures the right of people with neutral gender registration as well as men and women.

135. An Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market from 2018 (no. 86/2018) regulates equal treatment of individuals in the area of employment and covers the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, reduced working capacity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual characteristics and gender expression.

4. Equal rights for persons with disabilities

136. The Equality Act and the Anti-discrimination Acts do not include clauses on anti-discrimination for persons with disabilities. However, the rights of persons with disabilities is guaranteed in the Constitution.

137. Iceland has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

138. Icelandic sign language is given official status through laws Nr. 61/2011 on Icelandic language and sign language. Article Nr. 3 states that any person with the need for sign language shall be able to learn and use Icelandic sign language, as early as language acquisition begins, or from the time that deafness begins. In addition, laws on service and knowledge centre for blind individuals, vision impaired individuals and individuals with a combination of impaired vision and hearing came into force in April 2018.

139. Many persons with disabilities experience obstacles in their daily lives due to lack of accessibility in their physical surroundings. Accessibility is crucial for ensuring full participation in society. In May 2018 a new law on services for persons with long-term needs for assistance was passed in Parliament. The law includes provisions on personal assistance for persons with disabilities, in which the user of the assistance manages it him/herself. Personal assistance is a tool which allows for independent living. The right to live independently and to be included in the community is set out in Article 19 of the CRPD. State parties to the CRPD are obliged to “take effective and appropriate measures” to facilitate the full enjoyment of this right. The new law is a step in that direction.

5. Equal rights for immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees

140. According to the Act on Foreigners Nr. 80/2016, which reflects the UN Refugee Convention, an applicant for asylum in Iceland has the right to accommodation while his application is being processed, as well as financial support and health care. Asylum seekers also have the right to a spokesperson, which can assist them with legal matters relevant for their case. Finally, an interpreter must be available for asylum seekers during their application process.

141. According to the provisions in the Act, persons who are subject to persecution in their home country or face the risk of capital punishment, torture or inhumane or degrading treatment or penalty have the right to asylum as refugees in Iceland. An asylum seeker, who is not deemed to be a refugee, may be granted residence permit on humanitarian grounds provided strong arguments recommend this, such as serious illness or difficult circumstances in the home country.

142. Iceland has adopted the European Union's Dublin Regulation, according to which the member state, where an asylum seeker arrives first, is responsible for processing his/her application. Hence, all applications in Iceland are first considered with regards to whether another member state is obligated to process the application and to receive the applicant again.

143. If the application for asylum has been rejected, the foreign national will be offered accommodation pending his or her exit from Iceland. Asylum seekers have a right to health care until the day they are deported from Iceland.

D. General measures adopted to reduce economic, social and geographic disparities

144. The Nordic welfare model has a relatively large redistribution of wealth through the income tax system, universal welfare systems, a comprehensive, publicly financed education system, an active labour market policy and a flexible labour market. The Icelandic system is a combination of a free market economy and a strong social welfare system, that is meant to ensure that everyone, irrespective of their income and class, has the same right to education, healthcare and thus, the same opportunities for economic progress.

1. Education and training

145. The structure of the education system is designed to attain and maintain social equality in Icelandic society. The education system gives equal access to, and accommodates learning for all individuals, which helps to reduce social inequality. The Icelandic system is based on the principle of inclusive education, in which all children have a right to education that suits their needs. The opportunities should be equal, irrespective of the situation of each child, or its nationality, race, disability, sexuality or anything else.

146. The main problems in the education system in recent years, have been the increasing drop-out rate of children from upper secondary schools, declining literacy rates among pupils leaving compulsory school and slow student progress in upper secondary school. Furthermore, relatively few students enrol in vocational programmes, and those who do, together with students enrolled in preparatory programmes, are less likely to graduate on time.

147. The Government published a White paper in 2015 in education reform, which lays out the main strengths of the Icelandic education system. The main strengths are relatively small achievement gaps between schools, the fact that students generally feel happy at school, and a school system that both flexible and not overly centralised.

148. The White paper also laid out measures to tackle the issues mentioned above. These include an increased emphasis on Icelandic in the National Curriculum Guides, the prioritisation of reading and reading literacy, the reorganisation of the duration of programmes, through the shortening of upper secondary studies, and the restructuring of vocational programmes.

2. Employment

149. Iceland aims to achieve a high level of employment, low unemployment and an inclusive labour market with room for everyone who is able and willing to work. The Directorate of Labour is responsible for implementing labour market policy and handles day-to-day operations of the Unemployment Insurance Fund, the Maternity and Paternity Leave Fund, the Wage Guarantee Fund and many other projects connected to the Labour market. The Directorate also covers registration of job-seekers and has its own database of available jobs at each given time.

3. The National Insurance Scheme

150. Everyone who has been legally resident in Iceland for a certain period of time automatically becomes a member of the Icelandic social insurance system, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, etc. However, certain conditions must be met to become entitled to benefits, for example regarding age, disability and time of residence. Income and family circumstances can also influence entitlement.

151. Social Insurance in Iceland is financed from the State Treasury by tax payments into the treasury and payroll taxes paid by employers and independently working individuals, but there is no other specific premium paid for Social Insurance.

4. Social services

152. The municipalities are responsible for providing social services within their regions. Those unable to support themselves by working are entitled to financial support, which is intended to make the person self-supporting.

5. Other measures to promote social inclusion and poverty reduction

153. Following the economic crisis in 2008 a new steering committee was established to keep track of the social and economic consequences of the crisis for families and individuals in the country, and to make suggestions for actions on behalf of households. The steering committee was named “the Welfare Watch” (ísl. Velferðarvaktin) and still operates today. The Welfare Watch focuses on the welfare and financial standing of underprivileged families with children, particularly single parents and their children and collects data on the situation of those who live in poverty. The committee then updates the Minister of Welfare with status reports periodically with suggestions for improvement each time.

154. The office of the Debtors’ Ombudsman offers free assistance to individuals who have serious difficulties meeting their financial obligations in order to find a balance between financial capacities and financial obligations. If individuals do not speak Icelandic or English, the Ombudsman covers the cost of an interpreter.

6. Measures to reduce geographic disparities

155. The Municipalities’ Equalisation Fund (ísl. Jöfnunarsjóður sveitarfélaga) is a fund operated under the Ministry of Transport and Local Government. The role of the fund is to equalise the different costs and tax income of Iceland’s municipalities with contributions from the fund, on the basis of laws, regulations and rules concerning the operation of the fund. In addition, the fund makes contributions to different federations of municipalities, their institutions, and others, in accordance with the law.

156. The Icelandic Association of Local Authorities is the forum for co-operation between the local authorities. It was established in 1945 by 52 local authorities, and since then, all local authorities in the country have been members. The role of the association is to defend the interests of the municipalities, provide information on particular aspects of local authorities, publish material concerning local authorities, and implement the association’s policies. The association also publishes a magazine on municipal affairs.

Useful websites

[English only]

Althing Ombudsman	https://www.umbodsmadur.is/en
Althingi, the Icelandic Parliament	https://www.althingi.is/english
Central Bank of Iceland	www.cb.is
The Constitution of Iceland in English	https://www.government.is/topics/governance-and-national-symbols/constitution/
Directorate of Education	https://mms.is/directorate-education
Directorate of Health	https://www.landlaeknir.is/english/
Directorate of Labour	https://vinnumalastofnun.is/en
Icelandic Human Rights Centre	http://www.humanrights.is/en
Multicultural and Information Centre	http://www.mcc.is
Ombudsman for Children	https://www.barn.is/english/
Statistics Iceland	https://statice.is/
The Government of Iceland	https://www.government.is/
The Judicial Administration	https://www.domstolasyslan.is/en/?
