



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

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

**Ninth periodic report submitted by Iceland under article 18
of the Convention, due in 2021***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Preface

1. The Icelandic government has prepared its ninth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, in keeping with Article 18 of CEDAW. The report was prepared in accordance with the 2019 Guidance Note (CEDAW/C/74/3) of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee) and the appropriate chapters of the 2009 Compilation Guidelines on the Form and Content of Reports to be submitted by States Parties to the International Human Rights Treaties (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6).

2. The Prime Minister's Office's Department of Equality oversaw the preparation of the report and was assisted in the preparation of individual chapters by the Government Offices' Equality Representatives and specialists from other ministries. The Department was also assisted by the Government Offices Steering Committee on Human Rights. The plan to prepare this report was notified through the Government Offices consultation portal in April 2021, and the public was offered an opportunity to send in comments and proposals regarding points that should be taken into consideration in the report. Comments were received from the Icelandic Women's Rights Association, the Icelandic Human Rights Centre, the City of Reykjavik, and Iceland's National Association of People with Intellectual Disabilities. These comments mainly consisted of reminders of specific recommendations in the Committee's previous concluding observations, for example regarding violence against women with disabilities, the location and financing of the Directorate of Equality, gender studies education at all school levels, and the gap between the ending of maternal/paternal leave and the beginning of pre-school. Also mentioned was the need for better presentation of information about multiple discrimination and its effects on people's lives and the need to develop tools and procedures to help those responsible for policy development and services to seek ways to prevent it. The draft of this report was open for consultation in the Government Offices consultation portal from the 27 August 2021 till the end of September 2021. One comment was received through the consultation portal from the Association of Women of Foreign Origins in Iceland regarding #metoo stories and their experience of sexual harassment and the importance to work with intersectionality. The report and the next steps in the process was introduced to the NGO's in September. After this process the report was received and translated to English.

3. The report attempts to give an overview of the implementation of CEDAW since the previous report was submitted, i.e. the period from 30 July 2014 to 1 September 2021. It opens with a discussion of the general gender equality measures made by the Icelandic government since the previous report was submitted. This is followed by a description of the implementation of the recommendations in the Committee's previous concluding observations, dated 10 March 2016 (CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8), in keeping with paragraph 6 of the observations. Lastly, other measures will be discussed in relation to each provision of CEDAW.

II. General measures for the implementation of CEDAW

A. Coordination

4. The gender equality policy area has been strengthened within the Government Offices and its framework has changed since the previous report was submitted.

5. At the end of 2017, a gender equality council of Ministers was appointed to coordinate the Ministers' and government's work in the field of gender equality and

to follow up on those emphases in the coalition agreement that broadly pertain to gender equality. Six of the government's Ministers are standing members and other Ministers participate as needed.

6. At the beginning of 2019, the gender equality policy area was transferred to the Prime Minister's Office and a special Department of Equality was established. The Department is intended to act as a coordinating body within the Government Offices, as well as to lead policy-making in the area of gender equality. It has also been entrusted with representing the Prime Minister's Office in matters pertaining to gender equality with respect to individuals, stakeholders and civil society organisations, general information submission to Althingi, the Icelandic Parliament and its committees, as well as carrying out various tasks at the international level. It handles matters concerning equal status and equal rights irrespective of gender, equal treatment irrespective of race and ethnic origin, equal treatment in the labour market, gender autonomy, the Directorate of Equality, the equality complaints committee and the Icelandic Gender Equality Fund. The Department employs four experts and a director, all in full-time positions.

B. Implementation of CEDAW

7. The implementation of CEDAW since the previous report was submitted has entailed legislative amendments, a Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme and other government programmes, as well as cooperation agreements and grants to civil society organisations in the field of human rights and women's rights.

8. The principal legislative amendments to implement CEDAW were made following a complete revision of Act No 10/2008 on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men that was carried out in wide-ranging consultation with social partners and representative associations. The result was two bills that were submitted simultaneously to Althingi in the autumn of 2020 and entered into force at the beginning of 2021: Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender (<https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Act%20on%20Equal%20Status%20and%20Equal%20Rights%20Irrespective%20of%20Gender.pdf>), and Act No 151/2020 on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality (<https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Act%20on%20the%20Administration%20of%20Matters%20Concerning%20Equality.pdf>). The new provisions of the acts will be discussed in the appropriate chapters of this report.

9. The Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme is intended to define the government's policy at any given time and to describe projects that are alternatively intended to throw a light on the gender equality situation or entail direct action to improve gender equality. It was prepared with consideration to the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in accordance with Articles 51 and 52 of the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8). Two Parliamentary Resolutions on a Gender Equality Action Programme have been adopted since the previous report was submitted, one for the period of 2016–2019 (<https://www.stjornarradid.is/library/03-Verkefni/Mannrettindi-og-jafnretti/Jafnretti/Parliamentary%20Resolution%20on%20a%20gender%20equality%20action%20programme%20for%20the%20period%202016-2019.pdf>) and the other for the period of 2020–2023 (<https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Prime-Ministers-Office/Gender%20Equality%20Action%20Programme%20for%20the%20period%20of%202020-2023.pdf>). The actions included in these Programmes will be described in the appropriate chapters of this report, but it should be mentioned that the

Programme for 2020–2023 has been set up in a special dashboard on the Government Offices website, in order to make it easier to follow up on the actions taken.

10. The Icelandic government has placed a special emphasis on preventing gender-based violence since the submission of the previous report. A plan of action against violence and its consequences for the years 2019–2022 was adopted by Althingi in the summer of 2019 and a parliamentary resolution on preventive action among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, along with a fully financed action plan for the period of 2021–2025, was adopted in the summer of 2020. The actions included in the Programmes and plans and their outcomes will be described in the appropriate chapters of this report, but it should be mentioned that a dashboard to measure the implementation of the preventive plan is being prepared and will be accessible through the Government Offices' website. See also a Summary of Government Actions against Gender-based and Sexual Violence and Harassment (<https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Prime-Ministrers-Office/Summary%20of%20Government%20Actions%20against%20Gender-based%20and%20Sexual%20violence%20and%20Harrassment%20.pdf>).

C. Financial contributions

11. Financial contributions dedicated to the gender equality policy area have been increased in keeping with the widening of its scope since the submission of the previous report. According to the Prime Minister's Office, the average increase over the last five years has been around 11.4 per cent from year to year. That number does not include the operating costs for the special Department of Equality or the pay for experts working on projects related to the implementation of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme within the ministries.

D. The UN Sustainable Development Goals

12. Iceland took active part in the negotiations on the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2012–2015. The first systematic steps taken by the Icelandic government included the establishment of a project management board with representatives of all the ministries, the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, Althingi and Statistics Iceland, as well as participating observers from the Youth Council for the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Association. Women are in the majority on the project management board (67 per cent) and both of the participating observers are women. In 2018, the project management board submitted a report mapping out the situation with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals at home and abroad, as well as proposing 65 priority objectives to guide the government towards the implementation of the objectives for the coming years, including four that directly concern gender equality and two that promote gender equality.

13. The Sustainable Development Goals have been integrated with numerous government policies and programmes, as well as the fiscal plan. This offers an opportunity to map out how the implementation of individual Sustainable Development Goals is being carried out, and to estimate the financial resources allocated to them at any given time. There are plans to create an electronic tool for fiscal plan policy-making and its linking to the Sustainable Development Goals. Such a database will give a good overview of the Goals and thus increase the coordination between policies and programmes in different fields of competence.

14. Iceland has, from the beginning, placed a strong emphasis on gender equality within the Sustainable Development Goals. There is an emphasis on gender equality

and empowerment of women in Icelandic foreign policy, which is reflected both through international development cooperation and international advocacy. Respect for the rights of women and a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender is the basis of the government's representation in the international arena.

E. International Obligations

15. Since the previous report was submitted, the Icelandic government has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (The Istanbul Convention), the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention), as well as the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

F. COVID-19 Measures

16. Now during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Icelandic government put an emphasis on looking out for the effects on gender equality. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office's Department of Equality, regularly published information about the gender equality effects of the actions that were taken, as well as mentioning those actions that were specifically intended to promote gender equality. Regular gender analyses were also made of the effects of regulations that were adopted to halt the spread of the pandemic.

17. One of the government's most important actions against violence entailed minimising the social effects of the quarantine measures by keeping preschools and primary/lower secondary schools open and not setting a curfew. Support resources for victims of violence also did not shut their doors but adapted their operations to the quarantine rules. Additionally, a special anti-violence task force was established to manage and coordinate the work on elaborating anti-violence actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 215 million ISK were disbursed to various actions aimed at raising public awareness of domestic violence and violence against children, strengthening services and support measures for victims of violence and supporting the development and implementation of other projects in this field. Stígamót – Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence was allocated a grant of 20 million ISK to respond to the increased strain on its services and to reduce waiting times. Additionally, the Women's Shelter Association received a grant of 100 million ISK to improve the Shelter's housing so that its services could be made available to all women who need it, as well as to support the building of a new half-way house that is accessible to people with disabilities, which opened its doors in the autumn of 2021 to women and children who have been staying at the Shelter and are prepared to start a new life in new place.

18. Furthermore, one billion ISK was used for a one-off payment to hospital and health-care establishment staff, the majority of whom are women in low income jobs, to reward them and soften the increased strain placed on them by the pandemic. Other actions and grants will be described in the appropriate chapters of this report.

III. Implementation of the Committee's latest recommendations

Subparagraphs 8 a), b) and c)

19. The Ministry of Justice has set up a special human rights webpage covering the human rights conventions Iceland is party to, including CEDAW. It includes an Icelandic translation of CEDAW, as well as information on the Committee's complaints procedures for individuals and groups, in keeping with the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, as well as Iceland's reports and the Committee's concluding observations in English. The goal for this report is to publish it both in Icelandic and English, as well as to translate the Committee's concluding observations into Icelandic once they have been received. They will also be published on the Prime Minister's Office website, since that ministry oversees gender equality matters.

20. CEDAW is part of the general syllabus on Iceland's obligations under international laws in law studies, police studies and retraining courses for police officers. The Judicial Administration, an independent administrative body established in 2018, oversees the training and education of judges and other court employees, including human rights. The Administration has not hitherto conducted a special CEDAW course for judges, but courses about human trafficking, domestic violence and the plausibility of testimony in sexual offence cases have been planned for late 2021, in collaboration with the police force and public prosecutor.

21. The Icelandic Women's Rights Association has published an online course on women's rights, based on CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. The course is intended for upper secondary school students. The course material is publicly accessible and includes instructions for teachers.

Paragraph 10

22. The European Union's Directives on equal treatment, No 2000/78/EC and No 2000/43/EC, were introduced into Icelandic legislation by Act No 85/2018 on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race (https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Act%20on%20Gender%20Autonomy%20No%2080_2019.pdf) and Ethnic Origin and Act No 86/2018 (<https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Act%20on%20Equal%20Treatment%20on%20the%20Labour%20Market%20No%2086%202018%20m%20br%20Final%20SENT%20230519.pdf>) on Equal Treatment on the Labour Market. According to the interim provision of Act No 85/2018, the Minister shall, within one year from the entry into force of the Act, submit a bill to Althingi to amend the Act by providing that protection against discrimination on the grounds mentioned in Act No 86/2018 shall also extend to areas of society beyond the labour market. A bill to that effect has been adopted by the government but has not yet been submitted to Althingi.

23. It has become tradition in Iceland to adapt domestic legislation to human rights conventions rather than incorporate them in their entirety. Therefore, the Icelandic government has sought to implement CEDAW through various legislation and actions.

Subparagraph 12 a)

24. Gender mainstreaming has been one of the actions in the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for 2016–2019 and 2020–2023 and a total of 8 million ISK has been spent on that action, in addition to the pay for an expert during that period. A project management team was established by the first

Programme and through the second Programme it became a collaborative project of the project management team, the ministries' gender equality representatives and the gender budgeting project management team. A special gender mainstreaming toolbox has been prepared and published on the Government Offices website and the Government Offices Competence and Educational Centre has conducted courses on the evaluation of gender equality effects.

25. Each ministry is responsible for integrating gender mainstreaming into its policy-making and decision-taking and this is envisaged in various centralised processes. For example, the templates that are used in connection with policy-making and fiscal planning feature gender mainstreaming. Additionally, when drafting legislation, the ministries are obliged to take into consideration and report the effects of bills on the genders, through each stage of law-making. The Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs ensure that this is carried out. Ministries are also obliged to report on the effects of fiscal planning proposals on gender equality and the outcome of the evaluation is taken into consideration in the development of the draft budget. Additionally, a gender equality evaluation shall be included with matters that are put before the government, and the Prime Minister's Office is expected to publish a brief on the follow-up. This is a new procedure that will be implemented in the latter half of 2021.

Subparagraph 12 b)

26. The Directorate of Equality is located in Akureyri. Since the previous report was submitted, the financial contributions allotted to the Directorate of Equality have increased by a scant 70 per cent, an average of 10 per cent from one year to the next, and the number of full-time equivalent units has increased by 1.7, from 7.1 to 8.8.

Subparagraph 12 c)

27. Since the introduction of gender budgeting, a great deal of knowledge about the methods of gender budgeting has been accumulated within the administration, as well as about the gender effects of individual fields of competence and policy areas. Gender budgeting has thus become a codified part of the traditional activities of the administration, promoting increased discussion and decision-taking on expenditure and revenues in the light of gender and equality considerations.

28. In 2018, the government adopted a five-year gender budgeting programme for the period of 2019–2023, with the primary objective of integrating gender mainstreaming into the formation of the fiscal plan and general budget bill. There is an emphasis on working with the gender effects that have already been revealed and to deepen the concurrent analyses to obtain a clearer view of how things stand within the State's different fields of competence and policy areas. To attain the main objective of the programme an emphasis has been, inter alia, put on gendered statistical data, analysis of different fields of competence and policy areas, cooperation, presentation and education. The gender budgeting project management team follows up on the programme under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

29. An assessment of the gender equality aspects of most of the Government Offices fields of competence was carried out for the first time in 2018. An abstract of the assessment was included in the first baseline report on gender budgeting that was published in March 2019. It gives an overview of the status of gender equality within most fields of competence that are included in the fiscal plan. The situation report for the project from March 2021 updated and gave more details about all the work on the

gender equality assessment and included more material concerning challenges in the field of gender equality within individual policy areas. Additionally, a special dashboard has been set up on the Government Offices website to monitor the progress of the programme's projects. According to the dashboard, seven projects had been concluded by July 2021, seven were ongoing and four had not been started.

Paragraph 14

30. No independent human rights institution that fulfils the UN Paris Principles on such institutions has been established in Iceland, but the Icelandic Human Rights Centre has partially filled that role. The Centre promotes human rights by contributing to research, education and discussion on human rights issues, as well as monitoring the status of human rights in Iceland. Near the end of 2019, the Ministry of Justice's financial contribution to the Centre was doubled in order to create a more solid basis for its operations and to enable it to carry out its tasks more effectively.

31. The preparation of a bill on the establishment of an independent national human rights institution began in 2018, but such an institution was not included in the fiscal plan for 2021–2025, and therefore the plans were shelved. In the spring of 2021, the Minister of Justice appointed a working committee to seek ways to establish an independent national human rights institution within the total Treasury expenditure framework, since the current fiscal plan does not provide for such financing. The working committee is intended to make proposals on the legal standing of the human rights institution, proposals on projects that could be transferred to it, e.g. from other institutions that handle human rights monitoring or from the ministries and, as the case may be, proposals on the transfer of staff and capital.

Subparagraph 16 a)

32. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender reinforced the provision on the obligation for public bodies to make a distinction between genders when processing statistical data. It now covers all statistical data processing, since such processing is the prerequisite for the government to be able to apply gender mainstreaming to all policy making and planning. The earlier obligation only covered official statistics about individuals and the gathering of data through interview surveys and opinion polls and their processing and publication.

33. A working committee on the gathering, use and publication of gendered statistical data was established in June 2020 in keeping with the 2019–2023 gender budgeting programme and the 2020–2023 Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme's gender mainstreaming action. The objective of the working committee is to improve the overview of gendered statistical data and promote comparable processes for the gathering and use of gendered statistical data by State and municipal bodies. The committee has also been entrusted with preparing a handbook or other instruction material about gendered statistical data. The committee's work shall be concluded no later than 2023.

34. For other aspects, see the discussion in Chapter II.B on the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme.

Subparagraph 16 b)

35. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender is gender-neutral and remains unchanged from Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No 10/2008 in that respect.

Paragraph 18

36. See the discussion under subparagraph 28 b) on further action against gender-specific education and career choices and subparagraph 28 c) on actions within the academic community.

37. The Directorate of Education maintains an information website dedicated to education, work, skill assessment and counselling, the aim of which is to dismantle gender-specific education and career choices. Educational and career counselling is intended to make it easy for people to make decisions about studies and work base on their interests and strengths.

38. The Directorate of Equality participated in the *Break Free from Gender Stereotypes* project in 2017–2019, with partners in Lithuania, which was supported by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and led by the Estonian Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner’s Office. The aim of the project was to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and gender-specific education and career choices by producing a ten-episode fiction TV series, titled *Why Not?* The series is intended for young people and addresses gender stereotypes and discrimination in a humorous way. Ten short films were produced alongside the TV series, showing alternative endings for scenes from the series, in order to give the audience a chance to see how things could have been different and in that way create a basis for discussion of gender stereotypes. Handbooks were also issued for both teachers and study and career counsellors on how the TV series and short films could be used in teaching. The series, which was filmed in Estonian, can be accessed through YouTube and the Directorate of Equality’s website, with Icelandic subtitles. Additionally, the podcast “Allskyns” (*All Sorts/All Genders*) was produced as part of the project, in cooperation with RÚV 0, the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service that focuses on young people. The podcast explored a variety of different jobs, what gender they were and whether gender really mattered for doing the jobs. Seven episodes were broadcast in Icelandic in 2019 by RÚV 0, exploring the music industry, sports, the education system, the justice administration system, mass media, the business sector and the trades. The episodes are currently available through Spotify.

Subparagraph 20 a)

39. The Istanbul Convention has been ratified. Various amendments have already been made to Icelandic legislation, which will be discussed in the appropriate chapters of this report. The Icelandic body of legislation has also been mapped with reference to the Istanbul Convention, and the issues that should be addressed in Iceland’s national strategy plan have been identified. It has been decided to appoint a steering committee with representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Prime Minister’s Office and other ministries to follow up on the ratification of the Convention.

Subparagraph 20 b)

40. The years 2013 and 2014 saw the publication of the findings of two studies made by EDDA – Research Center, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior. These

included an analysis of the high rate of acquittals in sexual offences. A coordination group appointed by the Minister of Justice drew up a 2018–2022 action plan concerning sexual offences based on these findings; it was introduced in October 2017. Under this action plan, which is fully financed, various actions have been taken to increase the rate of prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators of sexual offences:

(a) The District Prosecutor’s office has been given funding to increase its full-time equivalent units by two, in order to improve the office’s handling of sexual offences;

(b) Fifteen new full-time equivalent units have been added to police departments all over the country, with the aim that all the departments will be capable of investigating and handling sexual offences;

(c) An electronic protocol for the handling and investigation of sexual offences has been prepared and must be used in the investigation of serious sexual offences and domestic violence;

(d) The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions have received funding to enhance the retraining of police officers and prosecutors regarding sexual offences.

Subparagraph 20 c)

41. In June 2019, Althingi adopted a parliamentary resolution on measures against violence and its consequences for the period of 2019–2022, which was prepared by a steering group composed of representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Social Affairs, Health, and Education, Science and Culture. The programme specially focuses on reaching people with disabilities and people of foreign origin with education for the victims of violence about the nature, consequences and manifestations of violence. It also focuses specially on the importance of education for justice administration system staff about the nature, consequences and manifestations of violence taking into consideration the special position of people with disabilities and people of foreign origin.

42. The multidisciplinary procedures used by the Reykjavik Metropolitan police force in domestic violence cases has been implemented by police departments all over the country.

Subparagraph 20 d)

43. Digital sexual violence has now become a punishable offence under a special provision of Article 199 of the General Penal Code No 19/1940. The provision is, however, not limited to digital behaviour, since its main point is protection of sexual privacy, but it is intended to clarify the legal environment and promote better handling of cases within the justice administration system, as well as to fortify the judicial protection of victims.

44. Additionally, two new provisions have been added to the General Penal Code No 19/1940 to increase protection for the victims of psychological violence, i.e. Article 218b on domestic violence, and Article 232a on stalking.

45. The provision of Article 218b of the General Penal Code No 19/1940 emphasises the long-term psychological suffering that domestic violence can cause. The introduction of this provision acknowledges that domestic violence is not a private matter within families, but rather a societal problem that must be stopped through all available means. It protects all children who live with domestic violence,

regardless of whether it is directed at them or not. After the provision entered into force, it has become easier to analyse the extent and frequency of domestic violence and thereby lay a foundation for efficient means to prevent it.

46. The provision of Article 232a of the General Penal Code further reinforces the protection available to victims of stalking, especially women and children. That provision makes it punishable to threaten, follow, monitor, contact or, through other comparable means, stalk another person if the behaviour is repeated and conducive to causing fear or anxiety.

Subparagraph 22 a)

47. In recent years, the Women's Shelter Association has made a systematic effort to provide better services for women of foreign origin. The Association's website is now accessible in seven languages in addition to Icelandic, and counsellors with more extensive language skills have been hired. Interpretation services are also used in counselling and support services for clients.

48. The Women's Shelter Association opened a new shelter in Akureyri in August 2020, for a trial period to provides the same services as the shelter in Reykjavík. The shelters are open around the clock for women and children who need to flee their homes due to violence. The service is free of charge.

49. In order to ensure good accessibility for women with disabilities, the Women's Shelter Association has made an agreement with hotels where they are guaranteed suitable access. That alternative was considered more cost effective and suitable than moving or altering the shelter housing. Women with disabilities have the same access to counselling and expert support at the shelters as women without disabilities.

50. Additionally, the Women's Shelter Association received a grant of 100 million ISK to improve the Shelter's housing by building a new half-way house with access for women with disabilities. It will open in the autumn of 2021 to women and children who have been staying at the Shelter and are prepared to start a new life in new place.

51. The Women's Shelter has appointed a special children's social worker, whose role is to serve children who stay there. The aim is to form a continuum in the service to the child between the Women's Shelter and other parties working with children, such as child protection, social services, etc.

Subparagraphs 22 b) and c)

52. Since the previous report was submitted, three Family Justice Centres for victims of violence have been opened: Bjarkarhlíð in Reykjavík in 2017, Bjarmahlíð in Akureyri in 2019, and Sigurhæðir in Selfoss in 2021. The services are provided in a broad cooperation between civil society organisations, municipalities, health care institutions and police departments in each area, as well as the Women's Shelter Association, the Women's Counselling, the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and others. The three centres provide individuals with counselling and interviews with social workers, police officers and lawyers, free of charge and on their own terms, as well as assistance from municipal welfare services and health care institutions. Clients of foreign origin receive interpretation services if necessary and also information about their rights in Icelandic society. Additionally, the Bjarkarhlíð Family Justice Centre is wheelchair accessible and the needs of women with disabilities are given special consideration, whereas the Bjarmahlíð and Sigurhæðir Family Justice Centres provide off-site services when necessary.

53. Stígamót – Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence was allocated a grant of 20 million ISK to respond to the increased strain on its services and to reduce waiting times due to COVID-19. The Center also received a 10 million ISK grant in July 2021 to enhance services for young people and shorten the waiting lists for victims of gender-specific and sexual violence, as well as around 5 million ISK in August 2021 to shorten the waiting lists even further. Additionally, the collaboration between the Bjarkarhlíð and Bjarmahlíð Family Justice Centres to enhance digital technology and the use of social media in their services received a 5 million ISK grant in 2021.

54. The services of the National Emergency Number 112 has been developed and strengthened. Emergency operators answer both by phone and through an online chat around the clock. The National Emergency Number has also opened an electronic portal (112.is) providing universal information about violence, available in Icelandic, English and Polish. The website includes information on services and resources provided by public bodies, NGOs and private parties. There is also information on assistance aimed at perpetrators of violence as well as on digital violence and human trafficking. On the website there are special information for immigrants and instructions on how they can seek assistance, e.g. from the Multicultural Centre and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre. Work is continuing on the development of the portal with increased educational material for children and an update of the 112 app. Simultaneously with the opening of the portal, a targeted awareness-raising campaign about violence was launched in the media and on social media entitled “Segðu frá” (Report it). The awareness raising was carried out in chapters, where each chapter had a different emphasis on approaching individuals in a specific vulnerable group. This was done in parallel with a general awareness raising on the importance of contacting the National Emergency Number if suspicion about violence arise.

55. The Red Cross 1717 helpline and the 1717.is net chat are open around the clock, with trained and experienced volunteers of all ages answering the phones and replying to messages received. Work has been ongoing to connect the phone helpline and net chat to other bodies providing services and counselling to vulnerable groups, both public institutions and civil society organisations.

56. One other free-of-charge phone helpline operated by the Women’s Shelter Association is open around the clock. Stígamót – Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence has also opened a net chat, but it is not open around the clock.

Subparagraphs 24 a) and b)

57. The General Penal Code’s human trafficking provision of Article 227a (1) was amended in June 2021 by Act No 79/2021. The objective of the amendment is, on the one hand, to increase judicial protection for victims of human trafficking, especially women and children of foreign origin, and on the other hand to make it easier to prosecute perpetrators. It is expected that more human trafficking cases will be investigated by the police and accepted by the justice administration system after the entry into force of the amendment. The cost is expected to stay within the bounds of the financial framework for these policy areas. The amendment added more known manifestations of human trafficking to the provision, including prostitution, forced marriage and forced labour, e.g. housework. References to specific penalty clauses under specific modalities of perpetration were removed, since they were considered to be restrictive, and violent modalities, including psychological and financial violence, were added.

58. In 2020 the Ministry of Social Affairs granted Bjarkarhlíð three million ISK to operate a co-ordination unit that convenes when a human trafficking case arises or when there is a suspicion of a case. The role of the unit is to coordinate the work and

response of the parties involved when it comes to welfare services to victims of human trafficking. The unit includes representatives from the police, the Directorate of Immigration, the social services of the municipality where cases come up, the Women's Shelter, the Directorate of Labor, the trade unions, health care and other relevant parties. This is a two-year pilot project. During the first year 15 cases have been reported to the unit. The project is a part of the parliamentary resolution on measures against violence and its consequences for the years 2019–2022.

59. In March 2020, the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police issued revised and improved information and instructions on procedures for the police on recognising possible victims of human trafficking.

60. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development received a grant from the government to enhance and increase education for police officers and public prosecutors about organised crime, including human trafficking.

61. A human trafficking information portal has been opened at the National Emergency Number (112.is/en/mansal). Victims can seek assistance and counselling through the portal and others can receive information about the characteristics of human trafficking and find resources if they suspect that someone is a human trafficking victim. They will be able to contact an emergency operator who will counsel them on the resources available to victims and others regarding human trafficking. Care is taken to ensure that the victims themselves decide whether and when to bring in the police, except in urgent cases.

Subparagraph 24 c)

62. Four cases were reported to the Icelandic police between April 2018 and January 2021, where six individuals were identified as victims of human trafficking. Four of them were women and two were men. Thirteen other cases were reported where there was suspicion that twelve people had been trafficked. One of them was identified as a victim of trafficking for sexual purposes. Nine of them were women and three were men. The statistics show neither the age nor the nationalities of the victims classified by the purpose of the trafficking, but of the total number, i.e. both the identified and suspected victims, five individuals were aged 0–15, four 16–20, four 21–30, three 31–40, and one 41–50. The age of one victim is unknown and no information is available about the ages of three victims. The people who were identified as victims in suspected human trafficking cases were all of foreign origin. They came from Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Czechia, Venezuela, Ghana, Greece, China, Somalia, Nigeria and the Philippines.

63. The National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police is preparing to establish a police advisory group on human trafficking, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. The group's role will be to provide advice to all Icelandic police departments on the identification and investigation of cases of suspected human trafficking, disseminate information to police department staff, record statistics and have oversight of the human trafficking situation all over the country. The group will have access to a case folder which contains notifications of human trafficking to the National Emergency Number and will review the cases with the aim to analyse the situation in Iceland and ensure the correct handling of cases.

Subparagraph 24 d)

64. The number of women of foreign origin working in so-called champagne clubs has decreased considerably in recent years. In 2018, the Chief of the Reykjavik

Metropolitan Police, in collaboration with the Directorate of Tax Investigations, initiated an extensive investigation of a champagne club in central Reykjavík which featured dancers. There were reasoned grounds to suspect that the women were engaged in strip dancing and prostitution. One of the objectives of the investigation was to shut down the club in order to reduce the availability of strip dancing and prevent human trafficking. The police made arrests, searched the premises and questioned the women at the anti-violence centre in the presence of a legal representative. Since nearly all the women chose to leave the country shortly thereafter, their court statements were taken in advance. The investigation did not uncover any human trafficking, but the club was shut down due to other issues.

Subparagraph 24 e)

65. Stígamót – Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence provides support and counselling for those who wish to get out of prostitution. The Stígamót website includes a special information web page on prostitution and its consequences, as well as an introduction to interview and group counselling. The website is accessible in Icelandic and nine other languages.

Subparagraph 26 a)

66. The percentage of women among trained police officers has risen by 8 per cent in the period of 2014–2021, from 13 per cent to 21 per cent. The Minister of Justice’s law enforcement plan for 2019–2023 includes plans to raise the percentage of women police officers to 30 per cent by 2028 and to raise the percentage of women in management and influential positions by 2.5 per cent in the same time period.

67. The gender ratio in the Supreme Court of Iceland is more equal than ever before, with three women and four men.

68. Systematic efforts have been made to equalise the gender ratio in the Icelandic foreign service, and the percentage of women ambassadors has risen 18 per cent in the period of 2013–2020, from 20 per cent to 38 per cent.

Subparagraph 26 b)

69. The authorities have neither made any special efforts to increase the participation of women in politics nor to increase their number among public officials. The political parties are responsible for arranging their lists of candidates and the rule for appointments to public office is to hire the most qualified candidate. However, the percentage of women in politics and among public officials has risen in recent years:

(a) The percentage of women in parliament reached a historic high in the 2016 election, or 48 per cent, but dropped to 38 per cent in the 2017 election;

(b) The central government is composed of eleven Ministers: five women and six men;

(c) The ratio of women in municipal governments has never been as high as it is now, or 47 per cent following the 2018 municipal elections. However, the proportion of women within the ranks of municipal directors and mayors are lower or 39 per cent;

(d) The percentage of women among heads of central government bodies, including Permanent Secretaries of State, rose by 11 per cent in the period of 2014–2019, from 31 per cent to 42 per cent.

Subparagraph 28 a)

70. The 2021–2025 parliamentary resolution on preventive action among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment is fully financed to the amount of 163 million ISK over that period. The Directorate of Education will prepare learning material on sexual health and sexual behaviours for both primary/lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. The learning material will be accessible through the Directorate’s website, open to all and free to use, and will include detailed usage instructions for teachers and other staff. Additionally, the educational material for school nurses in primary/lower secondary schools will be updated in keeping with this learning material and a promotional campaign about the value of teaching gender studies will be carried out in upper secondary schools, including the value of making gender studies a compulsory subject. At the same time, learning material about sexual health and sexual behaviours will be introduced to upper secondary school teachers.

71. In June 2021, a working group under the auspices of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture submitted its proposals on more efficient teaching about sexual health and active prevention against violence in primary/lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. The report includes a discussion about the ideology of sexual health and comprehensive sex education and sets out proposals about the framework, implementation and monitoring of sex education. The proposals are under discussion and further scrutiny by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. They strongly echo various focus areas and actions that are already under preparation, including the work on the first action plan for the new education policy that will be introduced in the autumn of 2021, the parliamentary resolution on preventive action among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, and the parliamentary resolution on measures against violence and its consequences.

Subparagraph 28 b)

72. Education about equality has increased considerably in Icelandic upper secondary schools in the last decade. An increasing number of upper secondary schools are offering gender studies courses and many schools have made gender studies a compulsory subject in their social science programmes. At the same time, feminist societies have been established within a number of upper secondary schools and more emphasis has been put on gender equality in learning and social life. In pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2016–2019 the Upper Secondary School of Mosfellsbær got a grant from the Gender Equality Implementation Fund to develop the website “Sjálfsmatskvarði” (self-assessment indicators). The website contains two scales that are intended to measure equality in upper secondary schools: a school scale and a teacher scale. It may be safely said that the scales are a great boon, since they can, *inter alia*, be useful for schools to evaluate the implementation of the basic element of gender equality and democracy.

73. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has, in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023, made efforts to equalise the gender ratio of students in upper secondary schools and reduce gender-specific choices in education that should lead to an end to gender divisions in the labour market, through the following measures:

(a) An education fund policy has been under development in the last year to find ways to prevent gender-specific choices of education in certified upper secondary school programmes;

(b) Work is under way to analyse the data according to gender and choices of education in upper secondary schools;

(c) Upper secondary school staff and the Federation of Icelandic Industries have been working on a special campaign called #kvennastarf, where women in industry and technological disciplines are put in the limelight through videos on YouTube, Facebook and other social media in order to challenge gender stereotypes relating to the choice of education and to invite social discourse;

(d) The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Federation of Icelandic Industries and the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities have, in collaboration with the educational community, made videos and other promotional material – under the title “Fyrir mig!”(For Me!) – for distribution on the Internet to promote vocational training and technical qualifications and encourage students to choose education based on what they themselves want;

(e) University students have visited upper secondary schools to promote technological disciplines through the GERT-project and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture allotted a grant to the competition “Boxið” (The Box), which is intended to promote interest in technology and engineering disciplines among girls in upper secondary schools.

74. A new regulation amending workplace studies for internship students was adopted in August 2021, with the students’ interests at heart. It is intended to simplify the system and ensure the entitlement of students to workplace studies. A large-scale system has been implemented to introduce its provisions. Work is under way to establish core schools within the upper secondary school system with the objective of ensuring continuity and opportunities for students to attend workplace studies in the countryside through active collaboration between the core schools.

75. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is also, in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023, making an effort to increase the number of men among new students in basic teacher education and to promote the recognition of the work done by teachers. Since the autumn of 2019, student teachers have received grants and paid work studies in their final year of teacher education. The number of male teachers is expected to rise as the number of teachers increases.

Subparagraph 28 c)

76. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is, in pursuance of the in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023, working on examining the reasons for women’s withdrawal from scientific work, as well as the reasons why men generally receive more academic promotions in the field of science than women, by examining the universities’ promotion systems in the context of family situations and career choices. Data-gathering took place in January to March 2021 and the data is being analysed and actions formulated in cooperation with the universities. A draft programme on action to halt the withdrawal of women from academic work and efforts to improve those factors that affect academic promotions from a perspective of gender and equality is being developed in consideration of the findings and will be ready in 2021.

Subparagraph 28 d)

77. The gender equality counsellor for the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture reviews all new and revised teaching material published by the Directorate of Education with a view to gender equality concerns and submits comments on it, in order to ensure that the strictest gender equality is ensured in both text and images. Additionally, the Directorate of Education uses a gender equality check list during the development and revision of all teaching material it produces.

Subparagraph 28 e)

78. Women's participation in sports was promoted in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023. The actions aimed to lessen the tendency of women to withdraw from sports in their teens, increase their participation in the management boards of sports associations to the same level as men, and enable them to become more active as coaches and referees or judges and in sports activities overall.

79. Additionally, the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland has, in collaboration with the Directorate of Equality, prepared instructions on the preparation of gender equality plans for sports associations.

Subparagraph 28 f)

80. The 2016 Programme of Action on Immigrants' Issues states that children and young people whose native language is not Icelandic shall enjoy the same opportunities for education as other children and young people, and also that systematic efforts shall be made to prevent the withdrawal of immigrant students from upper secondary schools through support at all school levels, including by increasing emphasis on first language teaching. All children of foreign origin are ensured full access to primary/lower secondary schools and various support resources are available for language studies and general education. The percentage of students of foreign origin in upper secondary schools has risen in recent years and their withdrawal rates have dropped.

81. The Directorate of Education oversaw a project on actions to reduce the withdrawal rate in upper secondary schools in 2016–2018: scanning for withdrawals, giving out grants to upper secondary schools to take action to prevent withdrawal, and recording the reasons for withdrawal.

82. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has, in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023, made efforts to develop more efficient resources to prevent the withdrawal from upper secondary schools of students whose first language is not Icelandic, as well as taking preventive and compensatory measures.

83. A working group on a global policy for students whose first language is not Icelandic submitted a draft comprehensive policy in May 2020. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has established a new working group with the aim of improving the well-being and educational achievements of students, with a focus on early support to reduce school avoidance and withdrawal. It is recommended that the working group finish its work in 2021.

84. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture also participated in an inquiry of withdrawal and educational delays in upper secondary education. The first draft of the inquiry report was submitted in October 2020. Statistical analysis and report-

writing are ongoing and the full report is expected to be ready in 2021. The Ministry is also working on a data analyses in relation to withdrawal.

Subparagraph 30 a)

85. An Act on Equal Pay Certification was adopted in 2017 and since the beginning of 2018, companies and state bodies with 25 or more employees have been obliged to acquire gender equality certification. The implementation of the certification is divided into four phases:

(a) Companies and institutions that generally employ more than 250 employees on an annual basis, as well as the Government Offices as a whole, were to have obtained equal pay certification before the end of 2019;

(b) Companies and institutions that generally employ 150–249 employees, as well as public bodies, companies and funds where the state is a majority owner and that employ more than 25 persons on an annual basis, were to have obtained equal pay certification before the end of 2020;

(c) Companies and institutions that employ 90–149 employees shall have obtained equal pay certification before the end of 2021;

(d) Companies and institutions that employ 25–89 employees shall have obtained equal pay certification before the end of 2022; however, companies and institutions that employ 25–49 employees are permitted to obtain an equal pay confirmation instead of an equal pay certification.

86. By the end of August 2021, a total of 312 companies and institutions had implemented the equal pay standard and received equal pay certification. The people employed by these companies and institutions represent around 64 per cent of the employees the equal pay certification provision of the gender equality act was originally estimated to reach, or just over 92 thousand employees.

87. The Act on Equal Pay Certification provides that its implementation shall be divided into phases, where the final phase will be finished by the end of 2022. A new Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender provides for a bigger role for the Directorate of Equality when it comes to equal pay certification and equal pay confirmation, especially supervision of the implementation and progress thereof. The amendment is expected to make this supervision more effective, since companies and institutions are now obliged to submit to the Directorate of Equality all the data that are necessary for it to carry out its supervision. The Directorate of Equality thus carries out regular supervision of the implementation of the Act and sends notifications to the parties involved to remind them of their legal obligations, if necessary.

88. The term of the general provision on equal pay that the reference should be jobs with the same employer was deleted by Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender no 150/2020 in order to align it substantively with EU directive 2006/54/EC, as well as to prevent changes, that may occur to hiring practices in the labour market, from reducing the protection against gender discrimination, e.g. through a development away from traditional employment contracts to a different kind of arrangement.

Subparagraph 30 b)

89. In 2020, the Prime Minister appointed a working group of the social partners that was entrusted with making proposals for actions to eradicate pay differences

caused by gender divisions in the labour market and systematic undervaluing of traditional women's jobs. These proposals are to be submitted by the summer of 2021.

90. Additionally, the provisions on a shorter work week in the 2019 collective pay agreements in the Icelandic labour market have been beneficial to professions where women are in the majority, e.g. in health care and care-taking, and have made it possible for them to increase their employment ratio and thus increase their income and life-time earnings.

91. Act No 144/2020 on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave is intended to enhance the position of women in the labour market and make it possible for them to better harmonise their labour market participation and private lives.

92. Equal pay certification is also an important tool in the effort to eradicate gender-specific pay differences.

Subparagraph 30 c)

93. For financial contributions to the Directorate of Equality, see the discussion under subparagraph 12 b).

94. Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender expanded and clarified the role of the Directorate of Equality in connection with equal pay certification and equal pay confirmation and increased its number of employees by one full-time equivalent unit.

Subparagraph 30 d)

95. See the discussion on actions to promote more diverse career choices for women and men under paragraph 18 and subparagraph 28 b) and the discussion on actions to eradicate pay differences caused by gender divisions in the labour market under subparagraph 30 b).

Subparagraph 30 e)

96. The Ministry of Industries and Innovation is, in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023, making efforts to evaluate whether the objectives of the provisions on gender balance in company management boards have been reached and, as the case may be, whether improvements can be made.

Subparagraph 30 f)

97. Various actions have been taken to try to stop bullying and sexual harassment within the police force. The National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police has issued guiding procedures on bullying and sexual harassment and corresponding rules have been implemented by the Reykjavik Metropolitan police force. Information about other police departments is not available. The police code of ethics has been revised with a special emphasis on bullying and sexual harassment. A special professional board has been established under the auspices of the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police. It handles, inter alia, cases that concern gender-specific and sexual harassment and is composed of independent specialists in various fields connected to gender equality issues. However, relatively few cases of gender-specific and/or sexual harassment have been brought before the committee: one in 2014, two in 2017, one

in 2019, and three in 2020. The numbers do not reflect the estimated number of either victims or perpetrators. In 2015–2016, the Office of the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police took the initiative to launch a national information campaign focusing on awareness-raising about bullying and sexual harassment in workplaces. Participation was optional and therefore it was difficult to reach the intended target groups. The police’s gender equality officer has also compiled educational material about gender equality, morality, good communication and positive morale and published it on the police’s internal website. The 2019–2022 equality and implementation plan of the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police *inter alia* states that its objective is to eradicate gender-specific and sexual harassment, as well as to increase awareness of gender equality issues.

98. The percentage of women police officers has risen since the previous report and was 21 per cent in 2018. However, reports from 2018 show that the work culture is largely to blame for the low numbers of women who have applied for available positions within the police, especially at the higher levels. The 2020–2023 Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme takes this fact into consideration and plans have been made to conduct a follow-up study to examine whether the police work culture has changed following the actions taken after the previous study in 2013. When the results of the follow-up study are available, the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police and the Icelandic police departments, will set out proposals for improving the police work culture.

99. In June 2021, the Office of the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police started using a hiring system, *inter alia* to streamline the hiring process and to be able to collect various statistics about the hiring process, e.g. the number of women applying for each position, the gender ratio of applicants invited to an interview, the ratio of men and women hired and the ratio of women and men who are still employed one year after hiring.

Subparagraphs 32 a) and b)

100. The gap between the maternity/paternity leave and pre-school has been reduced systematically through Act No 144/2020 on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave. The maternity/paternity leave was extended from 9 months to 10 months in 2020 and in 2021 it was extended to 12 months. As for municipal day-care, please refer to the previous report, since the situation is very similar as it was then and the age when children are accepted into day-care varies widely between municipalities.

101. The monthly benefit payments to parents on maternity/paternity leave amount to 80 per cent of their average gross pay. The maximum payments have increased by 62% since the previous report was submitted, from 370 thousand ISK per month to 600 thousand ISK.

Paragraph 34

102. Since 2016, the Minister of Social Affairs and Children and the Mayor of Reykjavík have been working to provide various multidisciplinary services to single parents, through the project TINNA. In the beginning, the project was tailored to the needs of single parents receiving financial assistance in the Breiðholt neighbourhood, but in 2020 the project was expanded to reach every neighbourhood in Reykjavík and to parents receiving invalidity pay to support themselves, as well as to providing information about the programme to other municipalities that are interested in implementing it. In 2020, some 21 of the 63 participants in the programme had left it

and entered the labour market, gone to school or received a disability rating; additionally, the children's opportunities and participation in organised leisure activities had increased considerably.

103. The status of single mothers was improved with Act No 144/2020 on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave, which focuses on making it possible for both parents, whether or not they live together, to reconcile their family and work lives. Each parent is independently entitled to six months of maternity or paternity leave, but they can, however, transfer six weeks of that to the other parent.

Paragraph 36

104. In keeping with the new Termination of Pregnancy Act No 43/2019 (<https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Termination%20of%20Pregnancy%20Act%20No%2043%202019.pdf>), women have full right of self-determination until the end of week 22 of pregnancy, regardless of the reasons behind their decision, and they are entitled to the best health care services available at any given time in connection with a termination of pregnancy. Access to termination of pregnancy is guaranteed in all health-care districts in the country up to at least week 12 of pregnancy. Before a termination is carried out, women can opt to receive information and counselling from doctors, nurses, midwives and social workers, as necessary.

105. All women have the option to receive counselling and information on the use of contraception and how to access it, sex education and counselling and education on the responsibilities of being a parent, as well as counselling and education regarding the assistance available to them in connection with pregnancy and childbirth. All recognised forms of contraception can be obtained from the advisory services on sex and childbirth provided by health care clinics and hospitals around the country.

Paragraph 38

106. In 2016–2018, one third of all patients who entered into treatment at the Vogur detoxification hospital were women, or around 750 per year. Recent research into the frequency of trauma among the clients of the National Center of Addiction Medicine reveals how important it is to provide more diverse resources where account is taken of social elements, traumas and painful experiences that increase the risk of harmful use of alcohol and narcotics. For example, around 75 per cent of the women clients of the National Center of Addiction Medicine (SÁÁ) suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The next several years can be expected to bring more diversity in treatment resources, since in 2020 the Minister of Health allocated a grant of 10 million ISK to The Root – Association for Women's Welfare, to develop Ástuhús, a diverse outpatient ward for women with addiction problems and a history of trauma. It will treat addiction as a complex problem and as the result of other problems, such as violence and social problems, instead of treating addiction as an isolated disease.

107. In 2014–2020, some 55 women in Iceland died by suicide, or 2–15 annually. Suicides among women were most common in the 60 and over age group, but among women aged 15–29 suicide was one of the most common causes of death, just over a third of all deaths. According to a survey of the welfare and living conditions of students, 33 per cent of girls in upper secondary schools had considered suicide and 12 per cent had attempted suicide. Social marginalisation is a factor: young LGBTI people and young people of foreign origin are more likely to attempt suicide. The survey also suggests that self-harm has increased among girls: in 2016 some 13 per cent of girls had harmed themselves five or more times in their life-time, and 22 per

cent of girls had thought about harming themselves five or more times in their lifetime.

108. A survey commissioned by the Directorate of Health shows that women are more likely than men to rate their mental health as passable or bad; the percentages were 29 per cent of women and 25 per cent of men in 2020. The survey was in Icelandic and therefore only reached those who were able to reply to a list of questions in that language, but the Directorate of Health will make efforts to reach people of foreign origin in the next survey that will be carried out in 2022. In Iceland, signs of depression are common in comparison with other countries, and women are more likely than men to show signs of depression: 11 per cent of women compared with 7 per cent of men in 2015. The rate was high in the 15–25 age group: 18 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men.

Paragraph 40

109. Work is ongoing to revise the application rules and working procedures of public competition funds in pursuance of the Gender Equality Action Programme 2020–2023, in order to ensure gender equality and comply with requirements about equal access to funds regardless of gender, as well as to ensure equal access for women and men to artist salaries and allocations from the Icelandic Film Fund. The whole process behind the allocation of grants has been revised, from the preparation of advertisements and applications to the process of evaluating the applications. The application process has been under revision in cooperation with Rannís – The Icelandic Centre for Research so that more factors can be analysed by gender so they can be taken into consideration when choosing projects to support with grants, as well as giving precise gendered information about allocations. Cooperation with the Artists' Salary Board to ensure equal access to artist salary allocations has also been ongoing. The information on the Artist Salary Fund and Rannís websites now includes gendered data. The new 2020 State film policy contains provisions on improving women's participation in film-making and film studies. The policy calls for taking systematic steps to enhance the film-making infrastructure even further, with competitive companies, excellent working environment, gender equality and sustainable values.

110. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has, in pursuance of the Gender Equality Action Programme 2020–2023, compiled the available data on the consumption of culture and how artist salaries are divided between genders and age groups. The Ministry will continue to work with this data with the objective to ensure an equal gender ratio among artists in relation to the availability of culture and art under the auspices of the state.

Paragraph 42

111. See the discussion in Chapter II. D.

112. A total of 87 per cent of the staff of the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources' Department of Climate Action are women, including the Head of Division. The Icelandic state allocates 75 thousand USD to the Women's Environment & Development Organization annually.

Subparagraph 44 a)

113. Statistics Iceland has, in cooperation with the Immigrant Council and in pursuance of the Action Programme for Immigrants' Issues 2016–2019, carried out an analysis of the pay differences between immigrants and natives, based on data from 2008–2017. The analysis shows that immigrants generally receive 8 per cent lower pay than natives. The pay difference varies between jobs, but for the jobs most commonly done by immigrants, the adjusted pay difference is generally between 1 per cent and 16 per cent. Further calculations show that natives receive higher pay than immigrants in jobs most commonly done by immigrants according to Statistics Iceland. For example, the adjusted pay difference was 10 per cent in cleaning jobs and for cafeteria assistants, and 8 per cent in child care work.

114. Following the #metoo stories from women of foreign origin, the Ministry of Social Affairs commissioned a report in 2019 where the main obstacles that women of foreign origin meet in Icelandic society were analysed and the extent of the knowledge about their situation was mapped with a view to using the results as a basis for more detailed studies, policy making and actions. The report shows that women of foreign origin have been very active in the labour market and their participation has, for a long time, been higher than that of native women, although they are often in a more vulnerable position. They often work in monotonous, low-income jobs, are educated above the level of the work they do, find it difficult to get promotions, do more shift work than native women, often work long hours, and often work mostly with other people of foreign origin. Their levels of unemployment are higher than those of native women, especially among those who have legal nationality in another country, and some groups of women of foreign origin, e.g. women refugees, have received little or no information about trade unions and their importance in Icelandic society. The report also shows that more in-depth studies are necessary to investigate possible violence that women of foreign origin are subjected to, and its manifestations. Their position is vulnerable, e.g. because they do not have a social network around them in Iceland and because they can be dependent on an Icelandic husband for a residence permit. Statistical data from the police and others who are involved in working with victims of violence show a higher percentage of women of foreign origin as victims, and research shows that women of foreign origin are often not aware of the resources available to them. e.g. as regards sexual violence. Studies also indicate that there has been a rise in human trafficking and prostitution in Iceland.

115. 2019 also saw the publication of a study of the possibilities for immigrants to work in the public sector, with a grant from the Development Fund for Immigration Issues. The study shows that there are diverse obstacles to the hiring of immigrants by public bodies in Iceland and that there is a long road ahead when it comes to equality for immigrants in the labour market in Iceland. Comparisons show that Iceland is behind the other Nordic countries as regards specific actions, both temporary and permanent, to ensure the adaptation of immigrants to both the public and private labour markets. Eight proposals for improvements to increase opportunities for immigrants to work in the public sector were made on the basis of the study outcome.

116. When the Action Programme for Immigrants' Issues 2021–2024 was prepared, account was taken of the abovementioned 2019 report about obstacles that women of foreign origin encounter in Icelandic society, as well as the abovementioned 2019 study of public sector job opportunities for immigrants. The Action Programme was available for comment on the Government Offices' consultation portal during March and April 2021. The Action Programme included, inter alia these actions:

(a) preparation of an education plan and courses for women of foreign origin who are experiencing social difficulties and do not have a good support network, in order to enhance their support network and enhance preventive measures with the objective of reducing domestic violence and its consequences;

(b) a study of wage difference will be carried out on a regular basis where the cause of the wage difference between immigrants and natives is analysed, the study should take into account new methods, e.g. measurements of language skills, as statistical estimates indicate that the wage gap has not been fully explained by the previous model;

(c) efforts will be made to ensure that the proportion of immigrants in public employment and positions of influence better reflects the demographic composition of society. To this end courses in multicultural management, cultural literacy and cultural sensitivity will be offered to human resources managers, equality representatives and other government officials that hire staff and the handbook on hiring of staff in to government employment from 2007 will be revised with an emphasis on diversity and equal opportunities.

117. In 2016, a cooperation project, “KvennaVinna” (Women’sWork), between the Directorate of Labour, University of Akureyri and Multicultural Council of Akureyri received a three million ISK grant from the Icelandic Gender Equality Fund. The project is mainly intended to support women of foreign origin in the labour market and create worthwhile opportunities for them, e.g. by linking them to local developers and entrepreneurs.

118. The Educational Research Institute has received a 1.5 million ISK grant to study gender-based violence against women of foreign origin. The results will be submitted to professionals and policy-makers within this policy area, with the aim to improve services and support resources for women of foreign origin.

119. The Association of Women of Foreign Origins in Iceland (W.O.M.E.N.) has received a grant of 1.8 million ISK for the project “Þú ert þess virði!” (You are worth it!), which is intended to counter violence against women of foreign origin and is based on raising awareness and increasing access to information, services, support and empowerment among equals.

120. The multicultural organisation Tengja has received two million ISK to empower women of Middle-Eastern origin, inform them of their rights in Iceland and provide them with services in relation to gender-based violence.

Subparagraph 44 b)

121. The Multicultural Information Centre is located in Ísafjörður. Since the previous report was submitted, financial contributions to the Multicultural Information Centre have increased by just over 78 per cent, or on average by 11 per cent from year to year.

Subparagraph 44 c)

122. In 2019, Althingi adopted a parliamentary resolution on the establishment of New in Iceland, an advisory service where immigrants can, inter alia, receive free counselling and information about their rights and obligations in eight different languages, with interpretation services available for other languages.

123. The Directorate of Equality brochure, Your rights – Important information for foreign women in Iceland, was last revised, in cooperation with the Icelandic Human

Rights Centre, in 2019 because of the changes taking place in Icelandic society. The brochure includes information about people's rights in Iceland when it comes to intimate relationships and communication, for example marriage, co-habitation, divorce and ending of co-habitation, pregnancy, prenatal care, termination of pregnancy, custody of children, right of access, violence in intimate relationships, human trafficking, prostitution, pressing charges before the police, free legal aid, and residence permits. The brochure is issued both in print and digital form, in Icelandic, English, Polish, Spanish, Thai, Russian, Arabic and French and is regularly promoted. It is also available through public bodies and civil society organisations that provide services for people of foreign origin.

124. In 2018, the Ministry of Social Affairs concluded an agreement with the Women's Shelter and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre on a project intended to promote the dissemination of information about services and legal resources for women of foreign origin who live in Iceland and have been subjected to domestic violence. Courses are conducted and the teaching is based on the Directorate of Equality's brochure. In addition to organised courses, efforts are made to reach women who are isolated, and also those who are not likely to learn about or attend such courses, e.g. through the Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network, the Red Cross and others.

125. The contractual disbursement from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Icelandic Human Rights Centre for free legal advisory services for immigrants was raised by 10 per cent in 2019 because of the expansion of the advisory service. The Icelandic Human Rights Centre offers this advisory service twice a week at its office, for 4–5 hours, as well as at the facilities of the Bjarkarhlíð, Bjarmahlíð and Sigurhæðir Family Justice Centres.

126. In the summer of 2018, the Minister of Social Affairs allocated a grant to the Women's Story Circle, which is a cooperation project between the Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network and the Reykjavík City Library. The grant has made it possible for the Women's Story Circle to use its operations to disseminate information, e.g. about the resources available to assist women who have been subjected to violence or sexual harassment.

127. In 2018, the Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network in Iceland received a grant of 1.5 million ISK from the Gender Equality Fund to inform women of foreign origin nation-wide about services available to them and about their rights, bring together different parties across professional disciplines to urge them to improve services for immigrants and set up a forum to create an important network of contacts for women of foreign origin all over the country.

Subparagraphs 46 a) and b)

128. See the discussion under subparagraphs 22 a) to c).

Subparagraph 46 c)

129. A new law, Act No 15/2016 on the Execution of Sentences, entered into force at the end of March 2016. The Act improved the conditions for prisoners in various ways and enhanced their rights in compliance with the 2006 European Prison Rules, including a provision forbidding prisoners from entering the cell of prisoners of a different gender and a provision that the genders should always be separated at night. Other than that, prisoners' rights under Icelandic legislation are not specifically gender-based.

130. Conditions for women prisoners have improved since the previous report, with the opening of the new Hólmsheiði prison in the summer of 2016. The prison includes a women's ward with a special visitation apartment where women prisoners can spend time with their children and families in better surroundings.

Subparagraph 46 d)

131. No studies have been made specifically to examine what opportunities there are for women in rural areas to find work, or about violence against women in rural areas. A recent study shows that people who do not have access to diverse specialist health care in the region where they live evaluate their health as being worse than the inhabitants of the capital area do. In view of that, it should be mentioned that a compilation of information about health and health care services from a gender and equality perspective, done by the Ministry of Health, shows that the availability of health care services needs to be increased independently of residence. The government's regional development policy as described in the strategic plan of regional development, has the main objective to guarantee all people in Iceland equal opportunities to work and equal access to services, balancing living standards and promote sustainable regional development all over the country. It has a special focus on regions with long-term depopulation as well as unemployment and a limited scope of economic activities. The current strategic plan extends to 2024 but was revised in 2021 with a special focus on gender and equality perspectives with proposals for measures for improvement. The revised strategic plan addresses the need to increase the percentage of women in municipal governments and to stop women from moving away by providing more access to diverse job opportunities and access to basic services, e.g. health care. Additionally, women must be guaranteed better access to innovation grants, lending criteria must be revised, and the transportation needs of women must be better examined.

132. Women with disabilities must overcome various systemic obstacles in order to participate in the labour market and receive the services they are entitled to, including health care services. The abovementioned compilation of information about health and health care services from a gender and equality perspective done by the Ministry of Health, states that it is necessary to enhance the knowledge and skills of health-care workers for analysing the effects of intertwined elements on health and welfare, for example how gender stereotypes and prejudices connected with disabilities can lead to direct or indirect discrimination that affects equal health and equal access to health care services. A large study that focused on violence against women with disabilities and their access to support resources was concluded at the end of January 2015. Useful information was extracted from the findings and can be used to organise actions that benefit women with disabilities who have been subjected to violence and to improve support for them. Additionally, in August 2020, the Office of the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police prepared an analytical report on violence against people with disabilities that showed that women with disabilities are more at risk for violence than women without disabilities, they do not have good access to support resources and the resources available do not always meet their needs. Around 40 per cent of the people who come to Stígamót– Center for Survivors of Sexual Violence, have disabilities, e.g. developmental or motor disabilities, vision or hearing impairment, mental illness or autism.

133. A total of 7.4 per cent of prisoners in closed prisons are women and they represent 8 per cent of prisoners in open prisons. This year saw the first ever study conducted in Iceland on the experiences of women prisoners with serious addictions and their experience of using the treatment resources available within and outside of prison. The findings show, inter alia, that:

(a) The women did not consider their incarceration to be correctional, saying it had harmful effects on their mental and physical well-being and health;

(b) The women were of the opinion that there was a lack of effective treatment resources within the prison, that there was little available help for them to handle their addiction problems and that there was a lack of work, leisure activities and educational opportunities, which in turn lead to restlessness and idleness and exacerbated their addiction problems;

(c) These women were dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder in addition to other mental disorders, e.g. anxiety or depression, and believed that drug rehabilitation treatment and assistance in dealing with mental problems might have been useful to them. Those who had received such assistance within the prison considered it to have been helpful and they expressed the wish that there was more professional assistance available;

(d) It was mentioned that it is important to provide trauma-specific nursing care for those women who are dealing with serious addiction, as well as a diagnostic procedure.

134. Health care services have improved with the establishment of a capital area primary care mental health team for prisoners, which began its operations in 2020 and is composed, inter alia, of a psychiatrist, psychologists and nurses who serve all the prisons. Additionally, volunteers have offered yoga classes, other fitness activities and mediation for women prisoners. More work and leisure activities are available than in past years, there is an increased focus on prison projects, and a website has been set up to sell goods made by prisoners.

Paragraph 48

135. No specific actions have been taken in response to the Committee's recommendations.

Paragraph 50

136. No specific actions have been taken in response to the Committee's recommendations.

Paragraph 53

137. No specific actions have been taken in response to the Committee's recommendations.

Paragraph 54

138. See the discussion in Chapter II. E.

IV. Measures to implement individual provisions of CEDAW

A. Articles 1 and 2

139. See the discussion above on the implementation of paragraph 10 and subparagraphs 12 b) and 16 b) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

140. The adoption of Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender and Act No 151/2020 on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality has clarified the Icelandic gender equality legislation and made it more complete.

141. The entry into force of Act No 150/2020 entailed various amendments to the definition of gender-based discrimination:

(a) In view of Act No 80/2019 on Gender Autonomy (https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Act%20on%20Gender%20Autonomy%20No%2080_2019.pdf), which permits neutral gender registration, the dualistic-sounding wording of the definition of direct and indirect discrimination was eliminated and the definition now covers individuals with a neutral gender registration as well as women and men;

(b) Multiple discrimination, i.e. when an individual experiences discrimination on the basis of more than one of the reasons for discrimination listed in Acts No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, 85/2018 Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin or Act on Equal Treatment on the Labour Market 86/2018, regardless of whether in combination or double/multiple, is now specifically prohibited in order to promote more equality and increase the judicial protection of the most vulnerable groups of people;

(c) Since the previous wording of the definitions of gender-specific and sexual harassment was, inter alia, considered to place the responsibility on the victim rather than the perpetrator, the wording “unwelcome by” was removed.

142. Additionally, EU directive No 2004/113/EC prohibiting discrimination in connection with the supply of goods and services has been adopted since the previous report was submitted.

143. Act No 151/2020 covers the administration of matters concerning equality across Acts No 150/2020, 85/2018 and 86/2018. It clarifies the role of the Directorate of Equality and the Equality Complaints Committee and thus ensures more complete oversight, increased efficiency and increased ability to handle multiple discrimination:

(a) The role of the Directorate of Equality is defined more explicitly and its supervisory function is clarified, especially as regards the levying of per diem fines, and the Directorate’s power to address multiple discrimination is made more explicit;

(b) Two of the three members of the Equality Complaints Committee are now required to possess expert knowledge in the field of gender equality, whereas earlier this was only required of one member. The fields of expertise are gender equality and equality in a wider sense;

(c) The Equality Complaints Committee is given explicit power to instruct those who have violated the law to take specific measures for improvement, when appropriate, thus making it easier for the Directorate of Equality to follow up on the Committee’s rulings;

(d) The Equality Complaints Committee shall submit, to the Minister concerned, a report on its activities, main findings and guiding rules that may be inferred from the Committee’s findings, inter alia to increase transparency and make it easier for people to monitor the implementation and interpretation of the laws under the Committee’s purview.

144. The financial contributions to the Directorate of Equality have been increased, on average, by a scant 8 per cent from year to year over the last five years. It employs eight people, of which five are women and three are men.

145. The Equality Complaints Committee is composed of two women and one man, and the deputy members are one woman and two men. The Complaint's Committee's work is autonomous and it is independent of other authorities. The Prime Minister's Office's Department of Equality acts as a secretariat for the Committee, handling its record-keeping, sending of documents, secretarial work and other administrative tasks.

146. In 2015–2020, the Equality Complaints Committee received 61 complaints about alleged violation of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, of which 29 came from women, 26 from men and 6 complaints came from unions or institutions. The average processing time was a little under four months. The number of complaints in 2015–2019 was 6–10 per year, but in 2020 the total number was 23. Over the whole period, there were forty complaints that concerned hiring for positions or appointment to office, two concerned dismissals and retirement, nine concerned terms of employment and seven concerned other issues. In ten of the cases concerning hiring, the complaints committee ruled that there had been discrimination against a woman, and in eight cases that no discrimination had taken place. In four of the cases concerning terms of employment, the complaints committee ruled that there had been discrimination against a woman, but never that there had not been discrimination, and in other cases the complaints committee ruled that there had been one instance of discrimination against a woman and in three cases that there had not been any discrimination. A total of nine complaints were dismissed on account of being outside the complaints committee's purview or because they were submitted after the time limit for complaint had expired. During that time period, one complaint was withdrawn and one was dismissed, in both cases the complainant was a woman.

B. Article 3

147. See the discussion above on the implementation of subparagraphs 12 a) and c), paragraph 14 and subparagraph 16 a) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

148. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender provides that a proposal for Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme shall be submitted to Althingi every four years instead of within one year from each parliamentary election, thus ensuring that it is regularly submitted to Althingi. An evaluation of the status and results of the Gender Equality Action Programme's actions is a part in the Minister's report that shall be included with the proposal for a new Parliamentary Resolution on Gender Equality Action Programme.

149. Since the previous report was submitted, two Parliamentary Resolutions on Gender Equality Action Programmes have been adopted, for the periods of 2016–2019 and 2020–2023, and the financial contributions to the Gender Equality Action Programme have increased on average by 15 per cent from year to year over the last five years.

150. The Prime Minister's Office has prepared a special dashboard on the Government Offices website where the status and progress of the actions under the Parliamentary Resolution Gender Equality Action Programme 2020–2023 are shown in graphics; additionally, it is possible to read in more detail about the status of each action. According to the latest update, from April 2021, some 16 per cent of the actions have been concluded, 61 per cent are well under way, and work has started on 23 per cent of them. No action is still in the beginning phase. All the ministries are involved in the Gender Equality Action Programme and are responsible for the implementation of specific action.

151. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender abolished the arrangement whereby the Minister concerned was obliged to convene a Gender Equality Forum within one year of each parliamentary election, in order to ensure that the Forum is held regularly. The current arrangement is that it shall be convened biennially, independently of elections. Since the previous report was submitted, two Gender Equality Forums have been convened, in 2018 about the expansion of the concept of equality, and in 2020 on the interplay between gender equality and environmental matters in connection with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

152. Althingi established the Gender Equality Fund on the occasion of the 2015 centennial anniversary of women's suffrage in Iceland. One hundred million ISK were allocated from the Fund each year in 2016–2020, for studies and projects aiming to promote gender equality. In 2021, the Fund allocated 25 million ISK, but henceforth the allocations will take place biennially, with a total of 60 million ISK being allocated in 2023 and again in 2025.

153. Iceland's third national strategy plan for Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security covers the period of 2018–2022. It focuses on wide-ranging harmonisation and education directed at those local parties that play a key role in the safety of women, including as regards vulnerable women, human trafficking, women refugees and applicants for international protection.

154. Various agreements have been concluded with a view to enhancing and developing cooperation and collaboration between the authorities and civil society organisations involved in gender equality and human rights matters, including:

(a) A cooperation agreement with Samtökin '78 – the National Queer Association of Iceland for funding of 20 million ISK to conduct educational activities and provide services and counselling about LGBTI issues;

(b) A cooperation agreement with the Icelandic Women's Rights Association for funding of 10 million ISK to provide counselling, educational activities, courses and information regarding gender equality, both locally and abroad.

C. Article 4

155. Act No 151/2020 on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality provides that the Directorate of Equality shall forward comments and proposals on specific actions in the field of gender equality to the Minister and other authorities.

156. Although Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender provides for equality between women, men and people with a gender neutral registration, its provisions, which state that the ratio of women to men shall be about equal at any given time and aim to equalise the opportunities these two groups have for participation in society remain unchanged from the previous gender equality legislation; however, efforts have been made to ensure the status of individuals with a gender neutral registration through special provisions. As an example, an amendment was made to the act on the article on participation in committees, councils and boards in the public sector in connection with the rights of people with neutral gender registration. It is further stipulated that measures should be taken to ensure that the proportion of women and men is as equal as possible and not less than 40 per cent in the case of more than three representatives. In order to ensure the status of people with neutral gender registration, it is now stipulated that an equal proportion of women and men shall not prevent the nomination and appointment of people with neutral sex registration, but the proportion of women shall never be less than 40 per

cent, as it is always necessary to not impair the participation of women in decision-making.

D. Article 5

157. See the discussion above on the implementation of paragraph 18 and subparagraphs 20 a) to d), 22 a) to c), 44 a) and c) and 46 d) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

158. The Icelandic government has focused strongly on efforts to prevent gender-based violence since the previous report was submitted, and therefore it is difficult to give a comprehensive overview of all the actions taken.

159. It is worth mentioning two amendments to the judicial environment of gender-based violence, in addition to the ones described in chapter III:

(a) In 2018, the concept of consent became the central point of the definition of rape in Article 194 of the General Penal Code No. 19/1940 and rape is therefore considered to have taken place when consent was not freely stated;

(b) The handling of restraining orders was simplified in 2019 with an amendment to Act No 85/2011 on Restraining Orders and Removals from the Home, and the legal position of victims, especially those of domestic violence, was strengthened thereby;

(c) In 2018, the Director of Public Prosecutions set out instructions on the handling of sexual offences when the perpetrator and/or victim is a person with disabilities, since it is important to adjust the investigation to each individual case because people with disabilities are a diverse group and each person has different needs.

160. The Parliamentary Resolution on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences 2019–2022 was prepared by a coordination group composed of representatives from four ministries, in consultation with key people from all regions of the country. Its tasks are threefold: to promote awareness of violence and its consequences through preventive measures and education, improve working methods and procedures within the justice administration system, and enhance support for victims. The ministries involved in the programme are responsible for its implementation.

161. In March 2018, the Prime Minister appointed a steering group of five ministries on comprehensive improvements with regard to sexual violence. It was, *inter alia*, intended to make proposals on legislative amendments with the objective of strengthening the position of victims all over the country. For this purpose, a social criminologist wrote a memorandum setting out fifteen proposals. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Office of the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police have already responded to part of them:

(a) According to Instructions No 1/2020 on Notifications to Victims and Legal Representatives, the public prosecutor's office is obliged to ensure that victims of sexual offences and their legal representatives are notified where the case stands and about its handling, as well as when accused persons are placed under provisional arrest, when they are released, and when acquittals are appealed;

(b) It is a procedure for all police departments outside of the capital area to notify the victims of sexual offences when their cases are dismissed at the prosecution stage by calling them into a meeting with a representative of the public prosecutor and their legal representative, whereas in the capital area such notifications are handled by the district public prosecutor's office.

162. A parliamentary bill on amending the Code of Criminal Procedure No 88/2008 has been drafted in relation to the memorandum's other proposals, inter alia with the aim of improving the legal position of victims of sexual offences, including victims with disabilities. The bill was drafted by the Ministry of Justice and is ready for submission. The bill contains the following proposals:

(a) The obligations of the police to give information to victims should be increased and the principal policy shall be for victims' legal representatives to have access to all case documents that concern the victims instead of those documents that concern the victims alone;

(b) Victims should be able to file a request for compensation at the appellate stage even though the accused person has been acquitted by the district court;

(c) Victims should be able to enjoy the assistance of a legal representative when giving a statement before Court of Appeal (Landsréttur) even though their case is not being heard by the court;

(d) Judges should be able, in certain instances, to decide that the statement of a victim with disabilities shall be taken in specially equipped premises and bring in an expert to assist in taking the statement;

(e) Witnesses with disabilities should be permitted to be accompanied by a qualified supporter when giving a statement, e.g. a rights protection officer for disabled persons, whether before the police or the courts.

163. The steering group on comprehensive improvements with regard to sexual violence was also entrusted with a complete revision of preventive measures and education within the education system and society as a whole, with the objective of eradicating gender-based violence. In 2020, Althingi, on the basis of this work, adopted a parliamentary resolution on preventive actions among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, as well as a fully financed the programme for the period of 2021–2025. This programme sets out, for the first time, comprehensive amendments based on prevention and education integrated into teaching and youth and leisure activities at all educational levels, in a wide-ranging collaboration with institutions, scholars and civil society organisations involved in prevention and education. A special steering group led by the Prime Minister's Office is tasked with following up on the programme's 26 actions and harmonising the work. Starting in October 2021, the Department of Equality will post the progress of the actions in a dashboard and follow up on it with regular updates.

164. In 2020, 55 million ISK was granted to civil society organisations that serve vulnerable groups, to respond to the increased strain and to give general support to their clients because of the consequences of COVID-19. The following actions have received support:

(a) The awareness-raising project "Þú átt von" (You have hope) which made the available resources visible on social media, increased educational activities and disseminated information throughout society with an emphasis on showing victims of violence that they do have a hope for a better life;

(b) Improvements within the police force, the prosecutor's offices and court system, educational activities and preventive measures for different age groups, and assistance in getting clear handling of the cases of victims of electronic aggression;

(c) Actions by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police intended to prevent repeated offenses in domestic violence and violence against children in order to stop the perpetrators' continuing criminal behaviour and ensure the safety of children in violent cases, and to encourage perpetrators to seek the help of treatment / rehabilitation specialist to stop violent behaviour;

(d) An online elaboration of a cognitive treatment method for trauma, in collaboration between the psychology services of the National University Hospital, the Directorate of Health's National Centre for e-Health and the Development Centre for Primary Healthcare in Iceland;

(e) Enhancing parental skill training that is open to all parents before the birth of their child and for the first 1000 days of the child's life, provided through the "Heilsuvera" website (heilsuvera.is), with a focus on enhancing parenting skills and thus reducing the risk of neglect, abuse and violence against children, especially children who are in a vulnerable situation;

(f) The creation of an electronic domestic violence procedure at the "Heilsuvera" website, aimed at improving health care workers' procedures and responses to the symptoms of domestic violence;

(g) An analysis of how violence against people with disabilities can be recorded into the police case file system without violating their right to protection of personal data, so that analyses can be made of notifications of violence against people with disabilities;

(h) Peer-to-peer learning courses for people with disabilities, with the aim to increase awareness of legal rights, self-understanding and body respect, with a focus on discrimination and different manifestations of violence and how to seek assistance if the participants consider themselves to have been subjected to violence or to have had their rights violated;

(i) Professional advice to NGO's, both within interest organisations of people with disabilities and those who provide services due to violence. This will be done in the form of data review, consultation with professionals and advice on policy for violence against people with disabilities. The aim is to promote information for people with disabilities about existing services and that services for victims of violence will be made more accessible to people with disabilities;

(j) Preventive education against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment for young people aged 15-20 with neurodevelopmental disorders based on teaching young people ways to nurture their own sexual health, self-image and boundaries in communication as well as to identify manifestations of violence, resources and support for those affected.

165. Since the previous report was submitted, the Judicial Administration has conducted courses for judges about rape, in keeping with Article 194 of the General Penal Code No. 19/1040.

166. Additionally, various other measures have been taken to implement Article 5 of CEDAW:

(a) The Directorate of Equality backed the project *Break the Silence - Tearing Down Walls and Building Bridges*, which supported multidisciplinary cooperation on domestic violence issues through networking and education, with a special focus on those marginalised groups that are most at risk for domestic violence;

(b) The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has set out Instructions no 4/2017, where all chiefs of police and district prosecutors are requested to make rape cases a special priority, as well as cases concerning violence against children, violence in intimate relationships and cases where the perpetrators are children;

(c) The City of Reykjavík received a grant of 85 million ISK to finance temporary housing for homeless people with diverse problems, including housing for women who have been subjected to violence;

(d) In pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme 2016–2019, 12 million ISK were used each year for treatment resources for individuals who subject others to violence in intimate relationships;

(e) Iceland's actions during its presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2019 included an international #metoo conference with over 800 participants;

(f) The government allocated 15 million ISK to an international conference of organisations that fight against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment that was held in Iceland on August 16–18 2021.

E. Article 6

167. See the discussion above on the implementation of subparagraphs 24 a) to e) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

168. Victims of human trafficking who are at risk of persecution upon return to their native countries on account of being trafficking victims are considered to be refugees under the new Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016 (https://www.government.is/library/04-Legislation/Foreign_Nationals_Act.pdf). An employee of the Directorate of Immigration has attended the EASO human trafficking course *Train the trainer*. Additionally, the Directorate has prepared:

(a) Operating procedures for its employees to recognise possible victims of human trafficking and ensure that the persons in question receive information about their legal position and all available assistance;

(b) A handbook for its employees on how to conduct interviews with possible victims of human trafficking and on responses for both the employee in question and for victims.

169. In 2018, police departments around the country received increased financial resources to add full-time equivalent units for detectives to boost investigations of prostitution and human trafficking. The majority of cases of human trafficking for sexual purposes have arisen in the jurisdictions of the chiefs of the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police and the Police of the North-Eastern Region, and the added financing has been put to good use in both jurisdictions. Additionally, since 2018, the chief of the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police has taken the initiative to carry out regular investigations of the purchase of the services of prostitutes.

170. A total of 14 cases of purchase of the services of prostitutes were recorded in the police case file system in 2018, 84 in 2019, 62 in 2020, and 3 so far in 2021. Charges have been pressed in a total of 11 cases of purchase of prostitutes' services since 2017, but most of them have ended with the payment of a fine to the police and have therefore rarely been prosecuted.

171. A total of 11 cases of offering, arranging or requesting others to have sexual relations with another person have been recorded in the police case file system since 2018, and since 2016 there have been 8 recorded cases of persons basing their employment or livelihood on prostitution on the part of others. Charges were pressed in two of these cases. Two cases concerning violence against women in prostitution were notified to the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police in 2020–2021.

172. In 2018, the Judicial Administration conducted a course for judges about human trafficking.

F. Articles 7 and 8

173. See the discussion above on the implementation of subparagraph 26 b) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

174. The percentage of women serving on and appointed to ministry committees, councils and boards has risen in recent years and is now 51 per cent. The percentage is highest in the Ministry of Health, or 56 per cent, and lowest in the Ministry of Transport and Local Government, or 43 per cent.

175. Although the proportion of women in local government has risen, figures have repeatedly shown that men are more likely to be re-elected than women, and research has shown that the work culture at the local government level is shaped by traditional ideas of politics rather than men.

176. Gender ratios within municipal committees and councils following the 2018 local elections are almost equal when looking at the overall numbers, with 51 per cent women and 49 per cent men. There is, however, a gender imbalance, both between municipalities and within them. For example, women form a large majority in Reykjavík and men form a large majority in Kópavogur. There is a tendency within municipalities for there to be more women serving on welfare committees and more men on planning and construction committees. For the country as a whole, women make up 47–55 per cent of the principal members of committees and councils, 45–61 per cent of alternative members, and 42–64 per cent of chairpersons, with the exception of the Suðurnes region, where 29 per cent of chairpersons are women.

177. In 2020 there were 26 women judges, out of a total of 64. Three of the Supreme Court's seven judges were women, the Court of Appeal (Landsréttur) had six women judges out of a total of 15, and the district courts had 17 women among its 42 judges. Some 17 women served as judicial law clerks, out of a total of 26.

178. The Director of Public Prosecutions, who is the highest prosecuting authority, is a woman and the Deputy Director is a man. They have ten public prosecutors working for them, of which seven are women. The District Prosecutor, the second highest prosecuting authority, is a man and his Deputy is a woman and 36 of their total staff of 63 are women.

179. The government has placed an emphasis on gender equality issues in the international arena in recent years:

(a) Iceland held the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2019 and focused on youth, sustainable tourism and the marine environment;

(b) The Prime Minister of Iceland has been the Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders since 19 February 2020;

(c) Iceland leads an Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence within the UN Women Generation Equality Forum and has been one of the leadership countries of the campaign since 1 July 2020;

(d) On 18 September 2020, the International Equal Pay Day was celebrated for the first time at the initiative of Iceland. It will be celebrated for the second time in 2021 and the government will stage a national event as well as participating in an event under the auspices of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC).

180. Iceland's obligations within the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence pertain to actions that have the aim to eradicate gender-based and sexual violence and harassment in Iceland, as well as projects that will be implemented as part of international cooperation and development cooperation. Iceland has a total of 23 obligations, the aim of which is to eradicate gender-based violence through increased

preventive action, improved consultation on actions against violence and reinforcement of services and support resources for both victims and perpetrators. An emphasis will be put on reaching boys and men through preventive measures and taking action against digital sexual violence and making improvements within the justice administration system that will follow up on the government's actions in this policy area. The Icelandic government will also triple its core contributions to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in the next two years to increase the Fund's flexibility to provide services to victims of sexual violence in conflict areas where the need is most dire at any given time, and increase its contributions to UN Women by one million USD for the next two years.

181. Since 2020, GEST – the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme has been operated under the GRÓ – Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change under the auspices of UNESCO and is part of Iceland's international development cooperation. GEST has been located at the University of Iceland since 2009. The aim of providing professionals from developing countries, conflict areas and former conflict areas with training in their own field and enabling them to work better for equal status for women and men in their home countries. A total of 152 students from 25 countries have completed diploma studies at the master's level since the beginning, of which 123 since 2014.

G. Article 9

182. Since the previous report was submitted, the independent right of stateless individuals to international protection has been ensured by Article 39 of the Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016. Additionally, previously stateless children will now keep their Icelandic citizenship even if it is revealed, after they reach the age of five, that they do have foreign citizenship, in keeping with Article 1(2) of the Icelandic Nationality Act No 100/1952 (<https://www.government.is/publications/legislation/lex/2017/12/21/Icelandic-Nationality-Act-No.-100-1952/>).

183. The number of applications for Icelandic citizenship is fairly stable from year to year and gender to gender, but it is interesting to note that women are more likely to apply through the Directorate of Immigration and men through Althingi. For example, in 2019, some 1182 persons applied for citizenship, including 134 women and 50 girls and 210 men and 70 boys who all applied through Althingi and 328 women and 79 girls and 236 men and 75 boys who all applied through the Directorate of Immigration.

H. Article 10

184. See the discussion above on the implementation of subparagraphs 28 a) to f) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

185. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender amended the legislation so that instead of students at all school levels receiving education about gender equality, as provided for by the previous gender equality Act No 10/2008, students at all school levels shall now receive suitable education about equality and gender which includes education about gender stereotypes, gender-specific study and career choices and issues concerning people with disabilities and LGBTI people. The Icelandic Teachers' Union received a grant from the Gender Equality Fund in 2020 and is using it to provide practical equality and gender studies courses for primary/lower secondary school teachers.

186. Eight of the 29 actions in the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023 concern education and sports and youth activities. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is working, in keeping with the Programme:

(a) To increase children’s education and knowledge about their rights. For that purpose, the Ministry has revised the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child website, which contains information about children’s rights suitable for children, parents and teachers. The Ministry has also supported UNICEF to develop and implement the Rights Respecting Schools programme, as well as general education about rights through school and leisure activities;

(b) To examine the reasons for withdrawal from organised sports and youth activities from a gender perspective and other factors;

(c) To equalise participation in all elements of social activities in upper secondary schools by gender, including students of foreign origin and students with disabilities, in cooperation with the Icelandic Upper Secondary Student Union and the Association for Principals in Iceland;

(d) To have the cooperation platform of the universities’ gender equality officers manage, inter alia, gender equality education within the universities, examine stereotypes within the universities and convene an annual information meeting to promote knowledge and collaboration within the platform.

187. Additionally, the actions of the Parliamentary Resolution on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences 2019–2022 pertain to education and sports and youth activities. The efforts of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in keeping with the programme include establishing quality requirements for exemplary work in sports and youth activities, with an emphasis on equality, healthy communications and a culture where violence cannot thrive, and also for all sports and youth organisations to have received a certification of exemplary work by 2022.

188. Act No 45/2019 on the Sports and Youth Activities Communication Counsellor was adopted following the declaration made by women in sports in connection with #metoo, where they stated that they would not tolerate the discrimination, violence and harassment that had, up until then, been tolerated in sports. The Act is intended to ensure that sports and youth activities are conducted in a safe environment and that children, teenagers and adults, regardless of their gender or other characteristics, will be able to practice sports or youth activities and seek assistance free of charge or seek to have their rights upheld in relation to incidents and misconduct that takes place, without having to fear the consequences. The Sports and Youth Activities Communication Counsellor assists those organisations or associations covered by the Act to establish action plans, and assists individuals, who participate in sports and youth activities, who have been subjected to violence or harassment. The Communication Counsellor takes a neutral stance in these matters, gives counselling in keeping with the best available knowledge at any given time and takes care to treat those who seek assistance with respect and tactfulness.

I. Article 11

189. See the discussion above on the implementation of subparagraphs 30 a), b) and e), 32 a) and b) and paragraphs 34 and 36 of the Committee’s previous recommendations.

190. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender clarified the provisions on equal pay certification and equal pay confirmation. It also provides that companies and institutions that have received equal pay certification or

confirmation shall renew it every three years and also that the competent Minister shall carry out an evaluation of the results of equal pay certification and confirmation every three years. It is estimated that the total effect of the equal pay certification and equal pay confirmation reaches around 1200 companies and institutions and 150 thousand employees, or around 75 per cent of the workforce in Iceland.

191. The government concluded a cooperative agreement with the Association of Businesswomen in Iceland. The Association receives five million ISK per year throughout 2019–2021 to develop the “Jafnréttisvögin” (*Equality Scale*) measuring instrument to monitor the situation and development of gender equality in the management and executive boards of Icelandic companies, with a view to promoting increased gender equality in the Icelandic business sector and equalise the position of women on management and executive boards of Icelandic companies.

192. In September 2021, the Minister appointed, in keeping with an interim provision of Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, a working group to specifically address pay transparency and set out possible proposals for legislative amendments to prevent pay inequality from being maintained through pay secrecy in workplaces.

193. Five of the 29 actions in the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023 concern the labour market, including:

(a) Software has been developed to carry out job categorisation and pay analysis that make it easier for companies and institutions to implement equal pay systems, and the Prime Minister’s Office is working to ensure that all companies and institutions with more than 25 employees will have received equal pay certification or confirmation before the end of 2022;

(b) Statistics Iceland is working on a study of gender pay differences in the public and private labour markets for the Prime Minister’s Office, and a working group on the re-evaluation of women’s jobs, composed of ministry and social partner representatives, is working to submit proposals for actions to eradicate gender pay differences caused by gender divisions in the labour market.

194. In recent years, the Minister of Social Affairs and Children has allocated annual grants to women who are developing business ideas or projects. 40 million ISK were allocated in 2021.

195. The Regulation on Measures against Bullying, Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Harassment and Violence in Workplaces entered into force in 2015. It provides that commercial operators shall establish for themselves a plan on prevention and actions to handle gender-based violence and gender-based and sexual harassment. The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health oversees this work.

196. In 2021, the Action Team on Violence launched a project to increase education about domestic violence and human trafficking, which will be carried out by the union representatives for the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB). The educational material will be accessible to the public via the National Emergency Number 112 violence web portal.

J. Article 12

197. See the discussion above on the implementation of paragraphs 36 and 38 and subparagraph 46 d) of the Committee’s previous recommendations.

198. In January 2021, the Ministry of Health’s mapping of the health of the population and health care services from a gender and equality perspective was

finished and work has started to implement proposals for improvements to better take into consideration the different health care needs of the genders.

199. In 2021, the Minister of Health, in consultation with the Primary Care of the Capital Area, decided to launch a pilot project on a special health care services for women within the primary care operation, as there are indications that women's specific health problems are not being met properly. The Primary Care of the Capital Area received an additional ISK 60 million for the project, of which the Icelandic Health Care Development Center will receive ISK 15 million to ensure the acquisition of knowledge in this field and to disseminate the knowledge nationwide. The plan is to open one women's clinic within the Primary Care of the Capital Area, staffed by full-time health professionals who have experience and knowledge of the subject, e.g. doctors, nurses and midwives. An emphasis will be on being able to identify and respond to the problem in question, as well as having accurate and evidence-based information available to other healthcare professionals, women and the general public.

200. Since Act No 35/2019 on Sterilisation Procedures entered into force, sterilisation procedures are only permitted if requested by individuals over the age of 18 and are only permitted for individuals under 18 when it can be assumed that being fertile will have serious effects on the life or health of the individual in question and this assumption is backed up by the attestations of two doctors and the consent of a specially appointed legal guardian.

K. Article 13

201. See the discussion above on the implementation of subparagraph 28 e) and paragraph 40 of the Committee's previous recommendations, as well as the discussion on the implementation of Article 10 of CEDAW.

202. In 2020, all parents supporting children were paid a COVID-19 child benefit supplement. Those receiving earnings-related child benefits received 42,000 ISK and others received 30,000 ISK.

203. The Icelandic Regional Development Institute provides loans of up to 70 million ISK for the operation of businesses where women own at least 75 per cent of the shares.

204. In 2020, the agreement between the Women's Loan Guarantee Fund – Svanni, which provides loan guarantees for companies with a majority ownership by women, was reviewed and a new agreement on continuing the operation for the next four years was signed by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Industries and Innovation and the Mayor of Reykjavík, in pursuance of the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023.

205. Act No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender added a special provision on the prohibition of gender-based discrimination in after-school activity centres, organised sports and leisure activities, as well as an obligation to ensure the same in learning and teaching, training, working methods and daily communication with students and practitioners.

L. Article 14

206. See the discussion above on the implementation of paragraph 36 and subparagraph 46 d) of the Committee's previous recommendations.

207. According to Article 13 of Act No 151/2020 on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality, municipalities are obliged to establish a gender equality plan at the beginning of each term of office, taking into consideration the municipalities' obligations under Acts No 150/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, No 85/2018 on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin and Act No 86/2018 on Equal Treatment on the Labour Market. The Directorate of Equality's supervision of the making of the municipalities' gender equality plans covers 72 municipalities. By the end of 2020, some 62 municipalities (86 per cent) had returned the requested documentation, two (3 per cent) were still working on them and 8 municipalities (11 per cent) that had a population under 150 had been exempted.

208. The Directorate of Equality conducted open courses on how to put together gender equality plans, on gender mainstreaming, the legal obligations of municipalities, etc., for municipal and school employees in Egilsstaðir, Selfoss, Akureyri and Ísafjarðarbær.

209. In December 2019, the Institute of Public Administration and Politics, the Research Centre for Municipal Matters, and the Directorate of Equality conducted a three-day online course on how to prepare gender equality plans and implement gender mainstreaming.

M. Article 15

210. No special measures have been taken to implement Article 15 of CEDAW since the previous report was submitted.

N. Article 16

211. In 2016, Article 225(2) of the General Penal Code made it a punishable offence under Icelandic legislation to force another person into marriage or to undergo another comparable ceremony, even if it has no legal standing.

212. In 2017, the Minister of Justice decided to proposed amendments to the Marriage Act no. 31/1993 with the aim to abolish the exemption from the 18-year age requirement of the Act. In the spring of 2021, the Minister of Justice submitted a bill of amendment that proposed that the exemption in question be abolished. The bill did not pass, but the bill is to be resubmitted at the autumn session of 2021. In the last ten years, four exemptions have been granted to girls aged 16–17. The last exemption was granted in 2016 and no application for an exemption has been received since.
