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**Iceland's 6th periodic report under the International Covenant on  
Civil and Political Rights**

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## I. Preface

1. Pursuant to Article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (hereinafter the Covenant), the Icelandic government has compiled its 6th periodic report on the implementation of the Covenant and the optional protocols thereto. The report contains responses to the list of issues of 22 September 2021, drawn up by the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/ISL/QPR/6). The report was prepared in accordance with the 2010 Guidelines issued by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (hereinafter the Human Rights Committee or the Committee), and the relevant chapters of the 2009 compilation of guidelines issued by the UN human rights treaty bodies (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6). The report aims to reflect the implementation of the Covenant since the last report was submitted, that is from April 2010 to September 2022.

2. The Department of Equality and Human Rights in the Prime Minister's Office oversaw the drafting of the report, in cooperation with the Government Offices Steering Committee for Human Rights, which is composed of representatives from all the line ministries. The department was also assisted by specialists from other ministries in the writing of individual chapters. Efforts were made to have ample consultation with stakeholders during preparation of the report. The intended preparation of the report was made public during the summer of 2021 on the government's consultation portal, enabling comments and suggestions for items to accentuate in the report. Comments were received from the City of Reykjavík and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and Þroskahjálp – Iceland's National Association of People with Intellectual Disabilities. In comments submitted on behalf of the City of Reykjavík it was pointed out, that although major human rights advances had been made in recent years, opportunities for improvement still abound, not least as regards government action to combat prejudice and hate speech. Comments submitted by the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and Þroskahjálp criticised the government's lack of action as regards impaired opportunities in the labour market for people with disabilities, as well as the fact that no independent human rights institution has been established. The government was also urged to implement a national human rights plan and it was highlighted that a group of women has lodged a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights on account of procedural violations with respect to sexual offence and domestic violence cases.

3. A draft version of the report was published on the government's consultation portal in September 2022, calling for opinions and comments on its content. Non-profit organisations were also encouraged to submit additional reports on the implementation of the Covenant directly to the Committee. Two opinions were received, from the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and Þroskahjálp, and the Icelandic Red Cross. The Icelandic Human Rights Centre and Þroskahjálp addressed issues concerning gender-based violence, the rights of persons with disabilities and the situation of sentenced prisoners. Previous comments regarding an independent human rights institution and a national human rights plan were also reiterated. The opinion provided by the Icelandic Red Cross presented several recommendations with respect to the affairs of applicants for international protection.

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## **II. Replies to the list of issues prior to reporting**

### **A. Reply to paragraph 1 of the Committee's list of issues**

4. An update on the situation with respect to the Committee's Concluding Observations (CCPR/C/ISL/CO/5) will be provided in the replies to paragraphs 2 to 22 of the Committee's list of issues below. The reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues therefore only refers to the status as regards concluding observations 14 and 16.

5. As regards concluding observation 14, the specific obligation incumbent on the authorities to investigate the possibility of a marriage of convenience where a spouse intending to migrate to Iceland is younger than 24 years old, has been abolished with the Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016. The main reason being, that there is no reason to investigate independently whether a marriage of convenience exists if both parties are clearly at a similar age and likely to be equals. Since the law entered into force, an independent examination only takes place if the outer circumstances of the married couple or cohabitants warrant such an investigation, among other things if there is a large age discrepancy, such as ten years or more, especially if the domestic person, to whom the residence permit is affixed, is the elder party. Gender must also be considered, as the position of foreign women in a marriage may be more vulnerable due to traditional gender roles and gender-based violence. This underlines that age, in and of itself, does not indicate whether a marriage of convenience exists or not.

6. As regards concluding observation 16, a specific section dedicated to human rights has been set up on the Government Offices' web site, with information on human rights treaties that Iceland has ratified, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The treaty is available in Icelandic and English, as well as information on procedures for individuals for bringing complaints before the Committee, pursuant to the optional protocol to the Convention. Iceland's periodic reports are also made available, as well as the Committee's concluding observations in English. The aim is to publish this report in Icelandic and English, in addition to translating the Committee's concluding observations into Icelandic once they have been received.

7. No awareness-raising of the treaty and the Committee's last concluding observations has taken place within the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government since the last report was submitted. However, the Icelandic government has generally put greater emphasis on human rights and human rights monitoring. In 2017, a special Government Steering Committee on Human Rights was appointed, its role being, among other things, to supervise the delivery of reports on the implementation of human rights treaties and follow-up with respect to concluding observations from human rights treaty bodies. The steering committee has set about enhancing the framework for concluding observations from human rights treaty bodies. Responsibility for the human rights policy area was also transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Prime Minister's Office at the beginning of 2022 to increase the importance of human rights and reflect the fact that human rights cut across policy areas within the Government Offices and municipalities in Iceland. The Prime Minister's Office has initiated review of human

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rights issues in the form of a green paper on human rights. This effort has been conducted in cooperation with organised interest groups and the public, among other things through open meetings on human rights issues around the country, hosted by the Prime Minister. The minister attended every meeting and engaged in direct conversation with attendees about human rights issues. In addition to the prime minister being in attendance, each meeting programme included a lecture given by a visiting lawyer holding a PhD in human rights law. The meetings were well attended, sparking discussion, and raising awareness of human rights in general. The project will include compiling the principal observations made by treaty bodies in recent years.

8. The Judicial Administration, an independent administrative body established in 2018, oversees training and education of judges and other court employees, including in the field of human rights. Thus far, the agency has not organised specific courses on the Convention for judges, but in recent years courses on the Aarhus Convention have been organised, as well as cases brought on the basis of the Hague Convention, respect for private life and data protection in court proceedings, interviewing minors, the effects of solitary confinement on detainees, legal protection of disabled people, issues concerning legal age, and compulsory internment and human trafficking. The knowledge and information officer at the Judicial Administration oversees and manages needs assessment with respect to training for judges and staff members of the courts and develops action programmes accordingly. During needs assessment, the knowledge and information officer consults with a specific judicial education board to which the Icelandic Judges' Association appoints members.

**B. Reply to paragraph 2(a) and (b) of the Committee's list of issues, *cf.* concluding observation (para.) 4**

9. There are no plans to incorporate the Convention as a whole. International obligations are generally not ratified in Iceland until the rights prescribed therein have been guaranteed in Icelandic legislation. The General Penal Code No 19/1940 was amended, for example, leading up to the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The amendments mainly involved enacting a specific provision on intimate partner violence and a provision on forced marriage. The rights of persons with disabilities pursuant to the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities were also guaranteed by enacting Act on Services for Disabled People with Long-term Support Needs No 38/2018, following the treaty's ratification, with its provisions being taken specifically into account when drafting the bill.

10. Human rights treaty bodies have applied dynamic interpretation of human rights treaty provisions, with the scope of the treaty provisions expanding accordingly. Hence, the Icelandic government has sought to address that through legislative enactment. This is reflected, among other things, in the work procedure adopted by the cabinet of ministers in the preparatory stage of government bills, which entails that assessment should always be made as to whether the substantive content of prospective legal acts is compatible with existing obligations under international law. Rules to this effect have been in force since 2010. To include a few examples of the implementation of human rights treaties to which Iceland has

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acceded, protection against multiple discrimination has been guaranteed through the adoption of Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender No 150/2020, in accordance with interpretation by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Amendments have also been made to the provision on non-refoulement through the Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016, which is in conformity with criticism made by the UN Human Rights Committee.

11. Searches conducted in the database providing on-line access to cases decided by the Icelandic courts for the period applicable, as regards this report, do not yield examples of cases where the courts invoke or directly apply the provisions of the Convention. This may to some extent be attributable to the fact that Icelandic courts chiefly apply the provisions of the Constitution and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms where human rights are concerned. However, there are a few examples where the parties themselves rely upon the provisions of the Convention.

**C. Reply to paragraph 3 of the Committee’s list of issues, *cf.* concluding observation (para.) 4**

12. Two of Iceland’s reservations to the Convention were withdrawn subsequent to their review. On the one hand, the reservation to Article 10 of the Convention as regards the principle of separation of juvenile detainees from adults in detention facilities and, on the other hand, to Article 14(7), which stipulates that no one shall be liable to be tried or punished again for an offence for which the person has already been finally convicted. However, the decision has been made that the reservation to Article 20(1), which stipulates that any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law, will not be withdrawn, referring to the position outlined in the reservation that the provision could limit the freedom of expression. The Icelandic government is of the opinion that the reservation conforms to the purpose and objectives of the Convention.

**D. Reply to paragraph 4 of the Committee’s list of issues, *cf.* concluding observation (para.) 5**

13. In recent years, the Icelandic government has set out to establish an independent human rights institution in compliance with the UN Paris Principles. In 2018, preparations started for drafting a bill on establishing an independent human rights institution. However, the institution was not provided for in the fiscal plan 2021–2025, and as a result the plans were not developed further. The Minister of Justice then appointed a working group during the spring of 2021, tasked with seeking ways to establish an independent human rights institution within the boundaries of the total government budget. The working committee was tasked with drafting proposals on the legal status of the human rights institution, proposals for tasks that could be transferred to the institution, e.g., from other institutions which conduct human rights monitoring or line ministries and, where applicable, proposals for transferring staff and funds. The project did not succeed, among other things due to parliamentary elections in the autumn of 2021.

14. The government’s coalition agreement, which dates to autumn 2021, sets out that an independent human rights institution is to be established. In preparation, the

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Prime Minister's Office is currently conducting a review of the status of human rights issues in Iceland in the form of a green paper, with a special view to human rights monitoring. It is assumed that a draft green paper will be introduced through the government's consultation portal at the beginning of 2023. At the same time, preparations will start on the independent human rights institution. It is expected that the bill on such an institution will be presented to the parliament Althingi in the autumn of 2023.

15. It is worth mentioning that the Icelandic Human Rights Centre has partially functioned as an independent national human rights institution in Iceland. The centre promotes human rights by promoting research, education and discussions on human rights issues, as well as monitoring human rights status in Iceland. However, the centre is not in compliance with the Paris Principles as it is not founded in law. At the end of 2019, the operating grant provided by the government to the centre was doubled to create a stabler foundation for its operation and enable it to better carry out its role.

#### **E. Reply to paragraph 5 of the Committee's list of issues**

16. In recent years, the Icelandic government has stressed its commitment to open and transparent governance. Two legal acts guaranteeing open and transparent governance entered into force on 1 January 2021. On the one hand, Act No 40/2020 on the Protection of Whistle Blowers, and Act No 64/2020 on Prevention of Conflicts of Interest within the Icelandic government offices, on the other hand. The former act provides whistle blowers with protection, irrespective of whether they are employed by the public or the private sector. The second act creates a comprehensive framework designed to prevent conflict of interest among the most senior management within the government offices of Iceland, i.e., ministers, permanent secretaries, directors, and ambassadors. The act obliges those yielding the highest executive powers, and special advisers to ministers, to inform publicly of any relevant interests or gifts received. The Prime Minister's Office keeps a register of this information and makes it partly available to the public. It also provides which secondary occupations or tasks are compatible with the roles of the foregoing parties and which not, in addition to prohibiting activities involving any kind of speaking on behalf of private agents to the government and seeking to influence the government's work for commercial purposes. Transparency with respect to communication with such agents is also prescribed. Moreover, measures taken by the Icelandic government to prevent corruption are largely based on incorporating and implementing the international agreements in this field to which Iceland has acceded.

17. Since the last report was submitted, seven cases that relate to corruption within the executive branch have been investigated. Two police officers have been prosecuted and convicted. One of them provided confidential information in exchange for valuables while he was a part of an anti-narcotics division. The other committed embezzlement from funds accrued from traffic violation payments. A former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs was also convicted of insider trading. At present, a case referred to as the "Fishrot" is under investigation. The case involves alleged bribery payments made by an

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Icelandic undertaking active in the fishing industry to senior officials in the Namibian government.

18. Pursuant to Article 5(1) of Act No 40/2020 on Protection of Whistle Blowers, undertakings and other places of work with 50 employees or more are obliged to establish rules in consultation with employees, regarding procedures in cases of internal whistle blowing by employees about legal violations or other reprehensible conduct, i.e., internal whistle blowing within an undertaking or place of work or whistle-blower complaints to the police or other appropriate monitoring bodies. The rules shall be in writing and define procedures within the workplace as regards internal whistle blowing, including receiving, handling, and processing of notifications of possible violations of the law, or other reprehensible conduct. The rules shall be accessible to all members of staff and may not in any way limit their rights under the law. The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health has published a model of rules of procedure for whistle blowers, in accordance with paragraph 2 of the provision, to make it easier for undertakings to establish internal processes. The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs sets rules for public organisations and legal entities under public ownership, whereas municipal governments set rules for workplaces in municipalities. Draft rules were published on the government's consultation portal at the end of 2021, but at the time of submission of this report comments received are being reviewed. Subsequently, the rules will be published. Under paragraph 3 of the provision, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health monitors that employers establish rules pursuant to the provision and can impose per diem fines on those who neglect this measure.

19. No specific plan has been made to implement a more robust framework for conduct for public servants and increase the capacity of the Parliamentary Ombudsman to counter corruption.

20. In 2019 and 2020, the budget for the District Prosecutor's Office was increased by 100 million ISK to enhance money laundering monitoring capacity within the police financial intelligence unit specifically, as well as investigation and prosecution of complex economic crimes, including foreign bribery offences. Following the increase, five more employees in full-time equivalent units have been added to the police financial intelligence unit. Likewise, funding for the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police was increased by 80 million ISK in 2019 and 2020 to add four employees in full-time equivalent units to the money laundering investigation team.

#### **F. Reply to paragraph 6 of the Committee's list of issues**

21. With Act No 47/2015 amending the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Police Act (appointment of the public prosecutor, investigation of economic crimes, etc.), which entered into force on 1 January 2016, the office of the special prosecutor was discontinued and its tasks involving investigation and prosecution of economic crimes entrusted to the new district prosecutor's office. A special economic crime unit operates within the district prosecutor's office, where a great deal of expert knowledge and experience has accrued regarding investigation and prosecution of complex tax and economic crimes. When investigating bribery offences, the district prosecutor can employ all existing investigative methods pursuant to rules No 516/2011 on special methods and actions of the police in the investigation of criminal

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cases, decoys, informants, delivery under surveillance, shadowing, and other investigative techniques.

22. The restoration of the Icelandic financial system following its collapse in 2008 has taken place in parallel with the European Union's extensive review of financial market regulations, which through the Agreement on the European Economic Area have become part of the regulatory framework in Iceland. The purpose of legislative amendments tabled in recent years has been to strengthen the financial market, increase the resilience of financial undertakings to shocks, and to create a solid legal framework for preserving financial stability and financial supervision.

23. Major amendments have been made to Act on Financial Undertakings No 161/2002, including increased requirements for the quantity and quality of equity capital. Therefore, financial undertakings should be better equipped to address operational difficulties. New rules on increased liquid assets also contribute to the capacity of financial undertakings to meet their payment obligations. Rules have also been created for the supervisory review and evaluation process by the Financial Supervisory Authority of the Central Bank of Iceland, as well as capital buffer and leverage ratio. Rules relating to governance have also been created. Focus has been on clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and duties of management boards, as well as a comprehensive review of rules on risk management, stable financing and internal control of financial undertakings.

24. New legislation on the restoration and resolution procedure for financial undertakings also aims at limiting the damage caused by troubled financial undertakings. Its objective is to minimise the likelihood of shocks or distress for financial undertakings to preserve financial and economic stability. The aim is also that in the event of such difficulties, negative effects will be minimised, among other things by guaranteeing the continuation of systemically important functions and protecting depositors, while limiting the risk of demand for the state treasury's intervention.

25. Following the financial crisis, efforts have been made step-by-step to strengthen preparedness to preserve financial stability. A financial stability council was established in 2014, as well as a systemic risk committee, which provided its assistance to the council. Through cooperation between the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Financial Supervisory Authority and the Central Bank in the council, macro-prudential tools were applied in this country for the first time and have been employed systematically since then. When the Central Bank and the Financial Supervisory Authority were consolidated in 2020, the role of the Financial Stability Committee changed somewhat, and many of its tasks were transferred to the financial supervisory committee of the Central Bank. The role of the financial stability committee continues to involve coordinating the preparedness of public entities when financial stability is at risk.

26. During the last ten years, comprehensive changes have been made to structures and practices in relation to supervision in the financial market to increase consistency and follow-up capacity with respect to case handling. The activities of the Financial Supervisory Authority changed extensively, with investments made in human resources and information systems. Financial resources of the Financial Supervisory Authority almost quadrupled between 2007 and 2019, expressed in terms of each year's price level, and full-time equivalent units grew from 44,7 to



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115,9. One of the main changes to the working practices of the Financial Supervisory Authority since the collapse of the financial system was the adoption of risk-based supervision. Risk-based supervision divides supervised entities into impact categories in accordance with the possible impact of their business interruption on financial stability and the interests of customers and prioritises projects accordingly. Furthermore, the powers of the supervisory authority have been increased, legal authority to impose penalties has been expanded, and maximum amounts of administrative fines have been raised significantly.

27. The European Union established three new regulatory bodies in the European financial market, namely *EBA* (banking market), *ESMA* (securities market) and *EIOPA* (pension fund and insurance market). Their purpose is to ensure closer cooperation between Member States' financial supervisory authorities, and to support the uniform application and interpretation of rules in Europe. Daily supervision of the markets and financial undertakings is, as before, in the hands of the supervisory authorities of individual countries. Furthermore, the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) was established for the purpose of assessing and monitoring systemic risk and identifying possible threats to financial stability in the European Union. Iceland is a member of these institutions through the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

28. At the beginning of 2020, the Financial Supervisory Authority was merged with the Central Bank of Iceland, among other things with the aim of promoting financial stability. General comments to the bill which became Act on the Central Bank of Iceland No 92/2019 expounded that benefits of closer financial supervision, financial stability and monetary policy would best be achieved through consolidation, i.e., to increase efficiency and clarity as regards accountability, and to improve administration during decision-making, use of information, and the possibility of increased quality of analysis and overview.

29. The new Act on the Judiciary No 50/2016, which was adopted by Althingi in 2016 and entered into force on 1 January 2018, made several important changes intended to reinforce the independence of the judiciary. The most significant change involved establishing the Judicial Administration, a specific independent administrative organisation which forms a part of the judiciary. The purpose behind establishing the organisation is to promote and strengthen joint administration of the courts and promote coordination in the handling of affairs concerning their internal operations. The legislative act gave the courts considerable autonomy, as regards the organisation of their internal matters, with several tasks transferred to the organisation as they are not of a constitutional nature, which would be subject to control by the Minister of Justice. This includes appointing the chief judge of the district courts, decisions with respect to judges' leave, and appointment to the committee on judicial functions, which handles complaints against judges. The Judicial Administration was also tasked with working systematically towards continuous training of judges and other staff members of the courts, overseeing the courts' information and technology issues, and issuing uniform rules on various issues concerning the activities of the courts. It is worth mentioning that the National Audit Office published a report on the administration of the courts in 2020, where the rules of the new act on the judiciary were unequivocally considered to have strengthened the standing and independence of the courts as the third branch of government.

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30. Another important legislative novelty in the act concerns the courts' finances. It is now the task of the Judicial Administration to make assessment and prepare proposals to the Minister of Justice for delivering necessary funding to the courts. If the proposals by the Judicial Administration are deviated from, the minister shall inform the Althingi Budget Committee of the underlying reasons, in addition to having to report any deviations in the budget bill. Although the minister is not obliged to adopt the proposals made by the Judicial Administration unchanged, it is assumed that the minister will generally not deviate from them, except in very special cases. In that case, the minister is to draw Althingi's attention to the fact that there are differences of opinion between the executive branch and the judiciary about the finances of the latter. This arrangement seeks to strengthen the position of the judiciary against the executive branch and ensure that Althingi is fully aware of the judiciary's views before decisions on funding are taken.

31. Act on Prevention of Conflicts of Interest within the Icelandic government offices No 64/2020 entered into force on 1 January 2021. Since then, there is a statutory ban on the most senior officials within the government offices, i.e., ministers, permanent secretaries of state, directors, and ambassadors, taking on lobbyist roles for six months after leaving their former position in the Government Offices of Iceland. The term lobbyist refers to individuals who speak on behalf of private individuals vis-à-vis the government and seek to influence its activities for commercial purposes. However, the prime minister may grant exemptions from the rule if there is clearly little or no risk of conflict of interest, e.g., when the proposed job is fundamentally different from the public duties that the person previously performed.

**G. Reply to paragraph 7 of the Committee's list of issues, *cf.* concluding observation (para.) 6**

32. Since the submission of the last report, Icelandic equality legislation has been amended and made more comprehensive and broader in scope. Administration of equality issues is now addressed through specific legislation, or Act No 151/2020, which applies horizontally across three sections of law, i.e., Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender No 150/2020, Act on Equal Treatment Outside the Labour Market No 85/2018, and Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market No 86/2018. With the entry into force of Act No 150/2020, multiple discrimination was prohibited specifically, i.e., when a person is discriminated against on the basis of more than one discriminatory parameter of Act No 150/2020, Act No 85/2018 and Act No 86/2018, whether intertwined or double/multiple. This novelty is intended to promote equality and increase legal protection of those in the most vulnerable position. Act on Equal Treatment Outside the Labour Market No 85/2018, initially only applied to equal treatment outside the labour market irrespective of race and ethnic origin. With Act No 63/2022 amending the Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin (additional discrimination factors), the discrimination factors religion, life stance, disability, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, sex characteristics, and gender expression, were added to Act No 85/2018. Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market No 86/2018 provides for equal treatment in the labour market irrespective of the same factors, i.e., race, ethnic origin, religion, life stance, disability, reduced functionality, age, sexual orientation,

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sexual identity, sex characteristics and gender expression. It may also be noted that with Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender entering into force, the definition of gender not only includes males and females but also individuals who register as non-binary. The amendment was made following the enactment of Act on Gender Autonomy No 80/2019, which permits individuals to opt for non-binary gender registration in Registers Iceland.

33. The role of the Directorate of Equality and the gender equality complaints committee was clarified with Act on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality No 151/2020, ensuring better overview and increased effectiveness. The role of the Directorate of Equality is clarified, not least as regards levying of per diem fines, in addition to providing the organisation with clearer legal authority than before to address multiple discrimination. 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, respectively. The gender equality complaints committee is provided with clear legal authority to instruct perpetrators to take specific measures to remedy the situation when appropriate, which makes it easier for the Directorate of Equality to follow up on the committee's decisions. The gender 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, among other things to increase transparency and make it easier for people to monitor the implementation, and interpretation of the laws under the Committee's purview. In the future, the committee's case law will be more accessible, not least with respect to case-law development.

34. Act No 54/2013 amending the Media Act No 38/2011 (ownership and amendments) amended the media act to permit the levying of fines for hate propaganda, *cf.* Article 56(1)(g) now in effect. Act No 38/2011 has not been amended specifically to extend its application to social media.

35. The scope of Article 233(a) of the General Penal Code No 19/1940 has been extended since the last report. Since 2014, the provision applies to gender identity, and since 2022 to ethnic origin, disability, and sex characteristics. Now, trans people, intersex people and disabled people are protected by the provision, in addition to groups previously protected under its scope.

36. Gender-specific harassment and harassment which relates to race, ethnic origin, life stance, disability, reduced functionality, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender expression, is classified as discrimination under Icelandic gender legislation in all sectors of society, *cf.* Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender No 150/2020, Act on Equal Treatment Outside the Labour Market No 85/2018, and Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market No 86/2018. The equality complaints committee handles complaints submitted before the committee, and delivers written decisions on whether the provisions of the act have been breached.

37. In addition, the Prime Minister appointed a working group on hate speech in the spring of 2022 to respond to indications of increasing hate speech in Icelandic society. The working group is tasked with working on coordinated measures against hate speech, among other things based on race, skin colour, ethnic origin, gender identity and sexual orientation.

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**H. Reply to paragraph 8(a), (b) and (c) of the Committee’s list of issues, cf. concluding observation (para.) 7**

38. The act on equal pay certification entered into force on 1 January 2018, where the implementation of equal pay certification is divided into phases to begin with. By the end of 2022, all undertakings and organisations, which fall under the scope of the act on equal pay certification, should have completed the implementation and acquired equal pay certification. The smallest undertakings in the general labour market (25–49 employees) have the choice to implement the equal pay standard and obtain equal pay certification, or request equal pay confirmation from the Directorate of Equality.

39. Pursuant to Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender No 150/2020, the minister shall conduct assessment of the equal pay certification and equal pay confirmation every three years. The act on equal pay certification is estimated to extend to around 1200 undertakings and institutions and 150 thousand employees, or around 75% of the workforce in Iceland.

40. At the end of September 2022, a total of 407 undertakings and institutions had implemented the equal pay standard and received equal pay certification. People employed by these undertakings and institutions represent around 70% of the employees that the equal pay certification provision of the gender equality act was originally estimated to reach, or just over 102 thousand employees.

41. Certification bodies carry out the implementation of equal pay certification, with four parties having been granted temporary authorisation to conduct audits and certify equal pay systems in undertakings and institutions, pursuant to the equal pay standard ÍST:85.

42. Act No 151/2020 provides for the extended role of the Directorate of Equality as regards equal pay certification and equal pay confirmation, not least supervision of the implementation and progress of equal pay certification. Undertakings and institutions are obliged to provide the Directorate of Equality with all the information it needs to carry out its monitoring tasks, subject to per diem levies. The Directorate of Equality thus monitors the implementation of the law regularly and sends notifications to the parties to remind them of their legal obligations, if necessary.

43. In recent years, the Icelandic government has made various efforts to counteract gender segregation in the labour market. For example, staff members of upper secondary schools and the Federation of Icelandic Industries have been focusing on a specific campaign, under the hashtag *#kvennastarf*, where women in industry and technological disciplines are put in the limelight through videos on YouTube, Facebook, and other social media, to challenge gender stereotypes as regards vocational training and encourage social discourse. Efforts have also been made to increase the number of men among new students starting undergraduate teacher training, and foster recognition of the teaching profession. Since the autumn of 2019, grants have been provided to student teachers, as well as paid internship during the final year of teacher training. The number of male teachers is expected to rise along with the general increase in the number of teachers. The Prime Minister appointed a working group dedicated to the labour market and the public sector to re-evaluate jobs held by women. The group was tasked with submitting proposals for measures to eliminate the gender pay gap which stems from a gender segregated

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labour market. Subsequently, an action group on equal pay and gender equality in the labour market was appointed, tasked with a development project on the assessment of the value of jobs. The group's period of appointment ends at the end of 2023.

44. A working group on a comprehensive gender equality plan for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was appointed in May 2021 and completed its task in December of the same year. A policy and action programme on gender equality was prepared. To increase the percentage of women in the foreign service, efforts are being made, on the one hand, to have recruiting procedures and promotions reflect the aim of a 40/60 male-female ratio in the duty stations of the foreign service. To that end, information about gender ratios in duty stations is summarised. The positions of head of office are advertised on the foreign ministry's internal web site, and all ambassadors and minister counsellors have the option to express interest. However, efforts are being made to level the ratio of women and men in management positions. This is achieved through summaries of gender ratios among managers, along with equal pay certification. As of September 2022, four men and four women hold senior management positions in the foreign ministry. In addition, 17 men and nine women assume the position of head of mission/ambassador in diplomatic missions, and 21 men hold the position of ambassador and ten women.

45. The percentage of women within the courts has increased, despite no specific measures having been taken for that purpose. At the end of 2021, 45% of judges were women, or 28 of 63, and just over 50% are judicial assistants, or 11 of 21.

46. In accordance with the gender-equality implementation plan, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has investigated reasons behind the loss of women in the sciences, and that men are promoted more frequently than women. The results of the investigation and proposals for remedy were published in a report in January 2022. The results will be considered while preparing an action programme to counteract the loss of women in academia, focusing on factors that affect academic promotions from a gender and gender-equality perspective.

47. Since the Directorate of Equality has consistently accentuated efficient education and consultancy, as regards statutory factors pertaining to undertakings, institutions, and local governments throughout the country, such as equal pay certification/confirmation and preparation of gender equality programmes, it can be assumed that the relevant parties are well informed about gender equality issues, and the requirements stipulated by gender equality legislation. As regards individuals, it can generally be assumed that those who feel that their rights under equality laws have been infringed upon are familiar with the complaints procedure before the gender equality complaints committee, and that consultation may be sought from the Directorate of Equality.

## **I. Reply to paragraph 9 (a) and (b) of the Committee's list of issues**

48. Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market No 86/2016 does not apply to different treatment of individuals in the labour market on the grounds of nationality, *cf.* Article 1(2). However, amendments were made to several bodies of law, which relate to rights of workers in the labour market, with Act No 75/2018 on the Rights and Obligations of Foreign Undertakings which Send Employees to Iceland

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Temporarily and terms of employment for their staff and other legislation (protection of rights in the labour market, EEA issues). The aim of the law is to provide the Icelandic government with a better overview of the domestic labour market as regards the operations of foreign service providers in the country, and the status of foreign workers employed by such undertakings in the country. The law also introduced several provisions relating to the chain of responsibility of user undertakings in the construction industries or civil engineering to Act on Posted Workers and Obligations of Foreign Service Providers No 45/2007. A comparable obligation by user undertakings was also incorporated into Act on Temporary Agencies No 139/2005, which is not limited to particular industry sectors.

49. Discrimination against people with disabilities during recruitment decisions is prohibited pursuant to Article 8(1) of the Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market. Pursuant to Article 10 of the act, the employer shall also take the appropriate measures, if necessary, under specific circumstances, to enable disabled individuals to have access to and take part in work, on the condition that this is not too cumbersome for the employer. People with disabilities must also be given priority for jobs within the government and municipalities if they have equal or better qualifications than other applicants to the positions, *cf.* Article 22(3) of Act on Services for Disabled Persons with Long-term Support Needs No 38/2018.

**J. Reply to paragraph 10 of the Committee’s list of issues, *cf.* concluding observation (para.) 9**

50. ‘Break the Silence’ (*Byggjum brýr, brjótum múra*) is a three-year collaborative programme on cooperation in domestic-violence cases which ran from 2017 to 2019. The project’s aim was, among other things, to strengthen the infrastructure that already existed in Iceland to combat violence against women more efficiently by empowering experts within the system who work with clients. The focus of the project was to share experiences of methods which have been successful in the fight against violence in intimate relationships, create connections between professionals, offer education, and promote awareness-raising for the entire population. The project was carried out in cooperation between the Directorate of Equality and the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Welfare, National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police, the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police, the police force in the north-eastern region of Iceland, the police in the southern peninsula, the City of Reykjavík, and the town of Akureyri. All these parties contributed expertise and shared experiences of their work against violence in intimate relationships with victims and perpetrators. Seven educational and networking meetings were held, with a total of over three hundred participants. The aim of the meetings was to activate the procedural rules of the National Police Commissioner and establish a more formal cooperation between professionals. Special educational meetings were also held with professionals, with a total of about one hundred participants. Thirteen educational videos were also prepared to increase knowledge of violence among professionals. The videos are known to have been used in continuing education for professionals, such as the police and social workers. During the span of the project, three conferences aimed at professionals were organised. Topics included police investigations, risk of escalation of violence, harmful effects of violence on the foetus and pregnant women, effects of violence on marginalised groups,

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development of the scale of domestic violence, model projects and procedures, and research in domestic violence in Iceland. A domestic violence awareness-raising campaign under the heading ‘You have hope’, was subsidised during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The awareness-raising project made the available resources visible on social media, increased educational activities, and disseminated information throughout society, with emphasis on demonstrating to victims of violence that there is hope for a better life. Five videos were produced, in which four victims describe their experience of violence and seeking help. These videos are now available as part of the content of the 112-web portal, which is described in more detail below. The radio series ‘*Kverkatak*’ was also produced as a part of the awareness-raising, to deepen the public’s knowledge of violence, where the situation of victims of violence and the resources available to them are addressed.

51. In March 2022, the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Commissioner, and the National Emergency Number launched an awareness campaign against nightlife-related sexual violence. The message delivered through the campaign to everyone affected was clear and simple: ‘*Be alert – is everything OK?*’ Advertisements directed at people on a night out and people around them have encouraged everyone to stay alert and check any situation without hesitation by simply asking: Is everything OK? If not, people are advised to contact National Emergency Number 112 by phone, on the internet or through a dedicated app.

52. In 2021, the Judicial Administration organised a course on human trafficking, domestic violence, and the credibility of testimony in sexual offence cases, in cooperation with the police and the public prosecutor. Courses for judges on rape under Article 194 of the General penal Code No 19/1940 have also been organised under the auspices of the Judicial Administration.

53. Emphasis has been put on promoting training and knowledge among the police, prosecuting authority and the judiciary as regards investigations and handling of criminal violence against disabled persons, as it is known that disabled people, not least disabled women, are more prone to being subjected to violence than non-disabled people. The national disability action plan for 2017–2021 provides for increased knowledge in the law enforcement system as regards investigation and handling of criminal violence against people with disabilities. In 2018, the Rights Monitoring Unit and the Centre for Police Training and Professional Development hosted a symposium on the legal security of people with disabilities and cooperation between rights protection officers and the police. The principal objective was to increase the exchange of information and cooperation between the rights protection officers, police, and the public prosecutor’s office. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development also conducts training for active police officers on the different manifestations of violence in the lives of disabled people. The aim behind the courses is that professionals in law enforcement gain deeper understanding of the history of disabled people, and how violence can manifest differently in the lives of disabled people as opposed to those who are non-disabled and that professionals are able to engage with disabled people with more sensitivity to their traumas, life experiences and accessibility needs, thus forming the necessary trust which increases success in working with disabled people, whether they happen to be victims, defendants or witnesses in cases involving violence.

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54. The Landspítali hospital training unit and the Development Centre for Primary Healthcare in Iceland work together to provide education about domestic violence, symptoms, and remedies. Educational material has been published and made available on the web site of the Development Centre for Primary Healthcare. The material is intended to provide general information about domestic violence to staff members of health establishments, to promote awareness-raising and discussion, as health care professionals may be in a key position to detect symptoms and guide victims with respect to resources. Training courses on domestic violence and how to respond have also been held for professionals in health care centres and hospitals during the past eight to ten years, in cooperation with midwives at Landspítali. Last winter, procedure policies were created and made accessible to all on the web site of the Development Centre for Primary Healthcare. The procedure policies anticipate, among other things, that questions regarding violence are asked when medical history is determined, with the intent to help health care workers to ask questions, show support and guide their clients.

55. A booklet published by the Directorate of Equality detailing important information for immigrants in Iceland and their rights, last revised in 2019, contains information, for example, on people's rights in Iceland as regards intimate partner violence, and ways to report it to the police. The booklet is issued in print and digital form, in Icelandic, English, Polish, Spanish, Thai, Russian, Arabic and French, and promoted regularly. It is also available through public bodies and civil society organisations which provide services to people of foreign origin. The police have also put increased emphasis on educating women who apply for international protection about the resources available with respect to gender-based violence, and which rules and standards apply in this country.

56. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour has been involved with various projects to strengthen the standing of women of foreign origin, and to increase knowledge about social assistance and judicial remedies for women who have been subjected to domestic violence or other gender-based violence. This includes '*Know your rights – knowledge is power*', a cooperation project between the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and the Women's Shelter. The aim of the project is to promote education about services and legal remedies available to women of foreign origin, who have been subjected to domestic violence, or other gender-based violence. The booklet published by the Directorate of Equality serves as the starting point for courses and education provided. In addition to organised courses, efforts are made to reach women who are isolated, and those who are not likely to hear of or attend such courses, e.g., through the Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network, the Icelandic Red Cross and others.

57. The government's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic aimed at minimising the societal effects of quarantine measures, thus reducing conditions that can lead to increased risk of violence. For example, preschools and compulsory schools were kept open and curfews were not imposed. Service resources for victims of violence were not closed either but adapted their services to the quarantine rules. At the beginning of the pandemic, a special anti-violence action team was appointed to respond to the increased risk of violence towards women and vulnerable groups, including children. The aim of the task force was to manage and coordinate efforts to elaborate targeted action against violence, especially domestic violence, and violence against children, and initiate general awareness-raising of violence. The



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team was also entrusted with pursuing other general actions pertaining to education, services and support relating to violence, in keeping with proposals in the plan of action against violence and its consequences for 2019–2022 adopted by Althingi during the summer of 2019. A proposal for a parliamentary resolution on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment among children and young people, along with an action plan for 2021–2025, was also taken into consideration. During preparation of the action, the team consulted widely with professionals, interest groups and others active in violence related matters. The government provided a grant amounting to EUR 1,649,942 to the team’s projects and counter contributions were also made by cooperating partners. Stígamót – Centre for Survivors of Sexual Violence was allocated a grant of 20 million ISK to respond to the increased strain on its services, and thus reduce waiting times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The centre 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. A pilot project to open a women’s shelter in the northern part of the country was funded and has now become well-established. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour allocated 25 million ISK to projects which included measures against violence, including projects aimed at women of foreign origin. The project ‘Domestic Peace’ offers specialised treatment for perpetrators of violence and was granted additional funding to respond to increased demand for services during the pandemic. A new resource, ‘*Take action*’, was launched for people who are concerned over their sexual behaviour, or have committed sexual violence.

58. One of the team’s main tasks was to develop and strengthen the services of the National Emergency Number and open an electronic information portal on violence on the web site 112.is in Icelandic, English and Polish. Emergency personnel respond by phone and through on-line chat 24 hours a day. The web site contains information about services and resources provided by public entities, non-profit organisations, and private entities. It also contains information about assistance to perpetrators of violence, as well as on digital violence and human trafficking. The web site includes special information for immigrants and guidance on where they can seek assistance, among other things from the Multicultural Centre and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre. The development of the portal will continue with added educational material for children and updates for the 112 dedicated app. Simultaneously with the launching of the web portal, a targeted awareness campaign about violence was launched, both in the media and on social media, under the heading ‘*Speak up*’. The awareness-raising has been carried out in phases, where each phase emphasises approaching individual vulnerable groups, along with general awareness-raising about contacting the National Emergency Number if concerns about violence arise.

59. Intimate partner violence was enacted as a specific punishable offence in the General Penal Code No 19/1940 by Act No 23/2016 amending the General Penal Code (the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence). The provision emphasises the long-term psychological suffering that domestic violence can cause. Enactment of this provision acknowledges that domestic violence is not a private matter within families, but rather a societal problem that must be prevented through all available

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means. It protects all children who live with domestic violence, regardless of whether it is directed at them specifically 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. At the same time, efforts have been made to guarantee due process for victims of domestic violence through the following means:

a. Victims' surveys conducted by the police in recent years have shown that 7% of respondents have been subjected to domestic violence, and 7–20% have reported it to the police. Therefore, the government has set the clear aim that along with reducing the number of offences, the goal is for 35% of victims to report violence to the police in 2027. For that purpose, the police have established a clear procedure for handling and registration of domestic violence cases and responded to calls in cooperation with social services and child protection services in the municipalities. In addition, the 112 electronic portal on violence has provided information material on domestic violence and resources available, as well as raising awareness of the importance of reporting through the National Emergency Number 112. Accordingly, reports of sexual offences have increased significantly. In 2021, for example, there was a 37% increase in reports of rape compared to the year before. Looking at the first half of 2022, the number of domestic violence notifications to the police has never been greater, compared with the same period during the preceding seven years.

b. The National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police was tasked with developing specific measures intended to prevent repeated offences as regards cases of domestic violence and violence against children. The aim of the action is to stop continued criminal conduct by perpetrators in cases of violence, guarantee the safety of children in cases of violence, especially with respect to domestic violence and sexual violence, and encourage perpetrators to seek specialised assistance as regards treatment/rehabilitation to stop the violent behaviour.

c. In recent years, cooperation in domestic violence cases has gained a foothold in Iceland and proven its effectiveness in the fight against intimate partner violence. The cooperation aims to coordinate and improve the procedures of the police, social services, child protection and civil society in such matters, and to promote increased knowledge sharing in the field among professionals who work with clients. The procedure dates to 2013 and began with a pilot project initiated by the chief of police in the Southern Peninsula and the social services in the district, and the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police has now published the procedure.

d. In June 2022, Althingi approved the bill submitted by the Minister of Justice amending the Act on Criminal Procedure No 88/2008 as regards improving the legal status of victims of crime, disabled people and their family members, *cf.* act No 61/2022 (improved legal status of victims, disabled people, and family members). The legal amendment seeks to improve the legal status of victims who have nominated or assigned legal guardians, for example in domestic violence cases. The amendments include increasing the information obligation of the police towards victims, as well

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as access to documents for the legal counsel, in addition to amendments intended to ensure that victim compensation claims are admitted at the appeal stage, even if the defendant has been acquitted at the district court stage. Victims should also be able to act with the assistance of legal counsel when giving statements before Landsréttur (the court of appeal), even though they themselves are not seeking relief directly from that court.

e. The State Prosecutor has also issued instructions for prosecutors, RS: 1/2020 on notices to victims and legal counsel, with the intent to increase information provided to victims, among other things when defendants are placed in custody or released from custody, and where it is urgent that victims are informed.

60. The statutory definition of rape provided in Article 194 of the general penal code was amended in 2018, which put the concept of consent at the centre when defining the concept of rape. Therefore, the legal definition of rape entails that consent has not been expressed freely.

61. The 2021–2025 action plan on preventive measures against sexual and gender-based violence has been fully funded. This plan sets out, for the first time, comprehensive improvements on the basis of prevention and education, integrated teaching and youth and leisure activities at all educational levels, in wide-ranging consultation 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 plan's 26 listed actions and coordinating activities. The Prime Minister's Office has also prepared a specific dashboard on the Government Offices' website where the status and progress of the action programme is followed and presented through graphics. In addition, reading in more detail about the status of each action is made possible. According to the latest update in April 2022, 23% of the actions have been concluded, 23% are well under way, and work has started on 39% of them. About 15% of the actions are still in the initial stage.

62. A working group on sexual offences and gender-based violence is functional and led by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police. The group is supposed to support the development of cooperation between the police and partners against violence and its consequences, including formal services for victims of sexual offences, and promote general awareness of gender-based violence in society. During the group's endeavours, special attention is paid to vulnerable groups, which experience has shown to be at greater risk of violence. The working group is also careful to coordinate the recommendations of the government's action plans in the fight against gender-based violence and emphasises wide consultation within that area.

63. The government's coalition agreement stipulates that the action plan for the handling of sexual offences, which is applicable until the end of 2022, will continue to be pursued, with preparations starting for a new programme to replace it already at the beginning of 2023. A working group appointed by the Minister of Justice has already started preparations for renewing the current action programme.

64. Fifteen new full-time equivalent units have been added in police departments all over the country, with the aim that all the departments will be capable of investigating and handling sexual offences cases. An electronic protocol for the

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handling and investigation of sexual offences cases has been prepared and is obligatory in the investigation of serious sexual offences and domestic violence. 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 handling of sexual offences. The interdisciplinary procedure initiated by the chief of the Metropolitan Police as regards domestic violence cases has been implemented by police all over the country. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has set out instructions, RS: 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. A working group on case processing time has produced a report on the status of case processing time in the criminal justice system, with actions being taken in the coming periods to shorten case processing times, whether within the police, prosecution authority or as regards enforcement.

65. A web-based version for cognitive processing of trauma for victims of violence is under development. The project is carried out in cooperation with the psychology services of the National University Hospital (Landspítali), the Directorate of Health's National Centre for e-Health, and the Development centre for primary healthcare in Iceland.

66. In June 2022, a parliamentary resolution on an implementation plan for immigration issues for 2022–2025 was adopted. One action set out in the plan aims at victims and perpetrators of violence of foreign origin being familiar with the services and resources available. It is also anticipated that service and emergency personnel receive training in immigration issues, cultural sensitivity, and multiculturalism. The action involves guaranteeing that education and resources for victims and perpetrators of violence around the country consider the needs of immigrants who do not speak Icelandic or English sufficiently, and that the needs of children will be given special consideration. Furthermore, that courses will be offered for front line staff of service organisations and experts in local services, such as social workers, study and career advisors, nurses, teachers, and police, on the complex manifestations of violence. Emphasis will be put on Nordic cooperation and bringing experts from other Nordic countries to the country, to share their knowledge and experience.

67. Civil Society organisations and institutions have been supported to work on projects that include actions against violence, including projects specifically aimed at women and domestic violence. Among the many projects undertaken are:

- a. Research of gender-based violence against women of foreign origin with the aim of improving services and support measures for women of foreign origin.
- b. A project aiming to empower young girls in vulnerable situations.
- c. A project aiming to prevent violence against women of foreign origin.
- d. A project aiming to empower women of Middle Eastern origin, inform them of their rights in Iceland and services with respect to gender-based violence.

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- e. Education aimed at clients of the Women's Shelter on the effects of domestic violence, including children.
  - f. A project aiming to encourage teenagers to take part in the fight against gender-based violence and sexual violence through education and support.

## **K. Reply to paragraph 11 of the Committee's list of issues**

68. Act on Gender Autonomy No 80/2019 emphasises the general principle of law contained in Act on Patients' Rights No 74/1997 that no treatment may be carried out without the patient's consent, and that consent shall as far as possible be provided in writing with respect to permanent changes to a person's genitals, sex glands, or other sexual characteristics of individuals. The provision provides for stricter requirements to the form of consent, which shall invariably be provided in writing. The plan was to address changes to the sex characteristics of children in the act; however, further scrutiny was considered necessary. Therefore, a temporary provision of the act stipulated that the minister was to appoint a working group tasked with, among other things, addressing matters concerning intersex minors and drafting a bill amending the act on gender autonomy, which would lay down the main viewpoints and rules applicable in the future to changes to the sex characteristics of intersex minors.

69. The bill became Act No 154/2020 amending the Act on Gender Autonomy (atypical sex characteristics). After the act entered into force, unnecessary surgical procedures on intersex minors are prohibited. The act now stipulates that carrying out surgical procedures on intersex minors who are unable to provide consent is prohibited unless the operation is completely necessary for medical reasons. Permanent changes to the sex characteristics of children under the age of 16 born with atypical sex characteristics shall only be made in conformity with the will of the child, *cf.* paragraphs 2 and 6 of Article 11a of Act No 80/2019. However, if a child is unable to give its consent due to its young age, or is for other reasons unable to express its will, the child's sex characteristics may be changed if so required for health reasons, following a detailed assessment of the need for such changes, and of their consequences in the short and long term. Social and psychosocial grounds and reasons relating to outer appearance do not qualify as health reasons.

70. The act also provides that in cases where the child is unable to provide informed consent due to young age, or is, for other reasons, unable to express its will, certain safeguards must be considered when changing sex characteristics of children younger than 16 who are born with atypical sex characteristics, if treatment entails surgical operation due to a short urethra (*hypospadias*), or medication to treat micropenis. As for any assessment of the need for operations or medication, general rules apply, such as Act on Patients' Rights No 74/1997. The above-mentioned permanent changes to sex characteristics shall not be performed unless a detailed assessment of possible advantages of their result in the short and long term has been undertaken, including the consequences of not performing a surgical operation, or providing medication or postponing it until the child can express its will, *cf.* Article 11a(6).

71. The Prime Minister will appoint a working group before the end of 2023 to review the exceptions in the light of the experience gained, and development of

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research and knowledge and best practice in the field of human rights. The group shall especially provide an assessment of 11a(5), including whether the provision should be deleted.

**L. Reply to paragraph 12 of the Committee’s list of issues**

72. During the latest review by the UN Committee against Torture, the Icelandic government agreed to start efforts to include torture as a specific crime in the general penal code, by enacting a definition pursuant to Article 7 of the Convention. Preparations are expected to start during winter 2022–2023.

73. Preventive action by the Parliamentary Ombudsman has mainly involved visits to places where people are or may be deprived of liberty. Visits have not been announced in advance in all instances. During visits, housing conditions and facilities are scrutinised, and specific emphasis put on speaking in private to those dwelling there. Following each visit, a detailed report is published presenting the results, and, where applicable, recommendations for actions to improve conditions for those deprived of liberty and minimise risk of torture, or other inhumane or degrading treatment. The reports are published on the web site of the ombudsman, among other things to provide insights into the situation of people deprived of liberty. Summaries of these reports are available in English through the following link: <https://www.umbodsmadur.is/opcat/heimsoknir-og-skyrslur>. The Parliamentary Ombudsman follows up on any recommendations. Since the ombudsman took over this role, nine visits have taken place, among other things to prisons, detention facilities, secure wards and the Landspítali emergency psychiatric ward.

74. Recommendations made by the ombudsman have generally been taken seriously, and actions taken in response in many cases. For example, work is under way to amend the Patients’ Rights Act No 74/1997 for the purpose of reducing the risk of inhumane treatment. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Health, are currently cooperating to clarify the legal framework and ensure better protection against inhumane treatment in secure custody and secure forensic detention. A bill is being prepared with the aim to ensure that implementation is in conformity with human rights and legal security, and to guarantee the appropriate support, training, and treatment for those subjected to such measures, as well as ensuring safety, both for those subjected to specific measures and the whole community.

75. The ombudsman also communicates widely with domestic authorities, civil society, and multinational human rights institutions for the purpose of reaching the objectives of monitoring and preventive action, which the role of national preventive mechanism entails.

**M. Reply to paragraph 13 of the Committee’s list of issues, *cf.* concluding observation (para.) 10**

76. The principle of non-refoulement has been enacted with Article 42 of the Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016, as well as being referred to in other provisions of the act. Iceland is also bound by the principle pursuant to obligations under various

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international human rights treaties, such as the Convention relating to the status of refugees, and recognised principles of international law.

77. The main objective of the Foreign Nationals Act is to guarantee humane and effective handling by the authorities, as regards matters concerning foreign nationals in the country. Chapter III of the act includes detailed provisions on the procedural rules applicable in international protection cases, such as on individual assessment, reception centre, applicants' rights, and implementation. Chapter IV of the act contains detailed substantive rules on international protection, such as grounds for protection, the refugee concept, persecution, statelessness, humanitarian grounds, etc. Therefore, the act emphasises defining and organising the process involved when applicants for international protection seek protection, from the moment the application is submitted and until the application outcome.

78. The Directorate of Immigration is responsible at the first administrative stage, and the Immigration and Asylum Appeals Board at the appeals stage, for the assessment of whether the applicant for international protection is eligible for protection in Iceland, or should be expelled, pursuant to the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016, and regulation on Foreign Nationals No 540/2017, notwithstanding the procedural rules contained in the administrative Act No 37/1993, such as the principles of procedural guidance, due inquiry, equality and the obligation to consider objections. During assessment, the applicant's account, documentation submitted and information available about the situation in the country of origin, or the receiving country, such as reports and data from international associations, non-governmental organisations, or other States, are considered. While making the above assessment, the Directorate of Immigration and the Immigration and Asylum Appeals Board also consider the procedural rules and processes they have adopted to guarantee compliance with the laws and regulations applicable to their functions. The procedural rules are intended, among other things, to guarantee professional case handling and uniform working practices of staff members.

79. Pursuant to the above, all applications for international protection are handled on the basis of streamlined methodologies and reviewed and assessed on an individual basis with regard to specific circumstances in each case. It should be emphasised that during this procedure all applicants have the legal right to an advocate at both administrative levels. The Foreign Nationals Act also assumes that foreigners whose applications for international protection have been rejected can initiate court actions to seek annulment of final decisions at the administrative level. Last, foreigners in this position who await expulsion can at any time appeal to the Immigration and Asylum Appeals Board. Initiation of proceedings before the courts or appeals do not postpone the legal effect of final decisions on expulsion.

80. The Icelandic government is generally not of the opinion that there is a "backlog of asylum applications", by international comparison. Pursuant to the applicable law on foreign nationals, strict procedural deadlines are in place and followed. The government also emphasises that effectiveness in handling applications must not be at the expense of due inquiry or the quality of decisions. That said, the Icelandic government continuously reviews developments within the protection system to guarantee that it can handle in a humane and effective manner the large and varied number of asylum applications received in Iceland. This relates, among other things, to processing times for applications, but also to high-quality

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decision making, adequate services, and that available funds are utilised in the best way possible. It may be highlighted, for example, that the bill amending the Foreign Nationals Act, which will be submitted to the Althingi in the fall of 2022, includes amendments intended to increase effectiveness and high-quality decision making at the administrative level, with a view to humanitarian concerns.

**N. Reply to paragraph 14 of the Committee’s list of issues**

81. The concept “stateless person” is defined in Article 3(20) of the Foreign Nationals Act No 80/2016 pursuant to the 1954 Convention relating to the status of stateless persons, i.e., a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law.

82. Any decision regarding the question of statelessness of a person is handled by the Directorate of Immigration. Enacting rules regarding the directorate’s assessment was not considered applicable. The minister has the power to create such rules, but that measure has not yet been taken. On the other hand, the Directorate of Immigration has, in cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency, issued a Proposal for a Standard Operation Procedure, SOP, which is intended to serve as a guide for the assessment of international protection applications made by stateless asylum applicants.

83. In recent years, the Ministry of Justice has made efforts towards Iceland acceding the UN Conventions on statelessness, and several legal amendments have been made to align domestic legislation with those treaties. For this purpose, the ministry has engaged in effective cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency. The incentive behind such cooperation has been, among other things, a campaign by the agency aiming to eradicate statelessness, which started in 2014 and will run until 2024. Iceland acceded the treaties on 26 January 2021, with entry into force on 26 April 2021.

**O. Reply to paragraph 15 of the Committee’s list of issues**

84. The government issued its emphases on actions to combat human trafficking and other forms of exploitation in 2019. The focal points entail actions to be taken to raise public awareness, educate employees and increase institutional knowledge among the professional classes of how to better understand the nature of human trafficking and identify trafficking. The focal points are divided into four categories, i.e.; prevention, protection, investigation and prosecution and partnership. These categories entail various actions conducing to, among other things, legislative review, improving victims’ access to assistance and protection, and increased education and guidance regarding child victims of human trafficking. A steering group on action against human trafficking and other forms of exploitation is tasked with implementing the actions, following up on them and developing policy. The group is composed of representatives from the public sector, and various other entities who have experience and expert knowledge in this field. The implementation of the actions is well under way.

85. In 2020, a national referral mechanism was established to coordinate procedures and responses to suspected human trafficking, among other things by bringing in the necessary experts, as well as working on prevention and education,



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and promoting societal awareness. Strong emphasis has also been put on increasing knowledge within the police, the public prosecutor, and other professional bodies of human trafficking, prostitution and organised crime. Domestic and international courses have been organised for this purpose. In the spring of 2021, the Icelandic Red Cross organised three courses for people who may encounter victims of human trafficking and manifestations of trafficking.

86. In the spring of 2021, amendments were made to Article 227a(1) of the General Penal Code No 19/1940 to increase judicial protection of human trafficking victims further, and facilitate prosecution of perpetrators. The number of human trafficking cases investigated by police and proceeding through the law enforcement system is expected to rise following the amendment. Additional known patterns of human trafficking were added to those listed in the provision, for example prostitution, forced marriage and forced service, such as assistance with housework. References to specific penalty clauses under specific modalities of perpetration were removed, since they were considered restrictive, and violent modalities, including psychological and financial violence, were added.

87. In 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs entered into an agreement with Bjarkarhlíð about a pilot project, which entails supervision of the implementation team in charge of human trafficking cases. The team is composed of parties involved in welfare service to human trafficking victims at the early stages, and is convened when human trafficking cases arise, or where there is suspicion of trafficking, for the purpose of coordinating the functions of the parties and their response. When there is suspicion of human trafficking, the relevant professionals on the implementation team are brought in, for example an expert from the Women's Shelter when women and children need assistance, counselling and/or a place to stay. Fifteen cases have been reported since Bjarkarhlíð took over the supervision of the project.

88. A human trafficking information portal has been opened on the web site [112.is/en/mansal](http://112.is/en/mansal). Victims can seek assistance and counselling through the portal, with others able to obtain information about the signs of human trafficking and seek available resources, where there is suspicion that an individual is a victim of human trafficking. Contacting an emergency operator who will provide advice about resources available to human trafficking victims and others is also made possible. However, care is taken to ensure that victims themselves control whether and when to bring in the police, unless the matter is of great urgency.

89. Municipalities are obliged to provide welfare services, financial assistance, safe housing, and counselling to victims of human trafficking. Female victims have access to the Women's Shelters in Reykjavik and Akureyri. A similar shelter for men is not available, but access to appropriate housing is always guaranteed, if necessary.

90. In March 2020, the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police issued revised and improved information and instructions on procedures for the police as regards identification of possible victims of human trafficking. The Centre for police training and professional development also received a grant from the government to enhance and increase education for police officers and public prosecutors about organised crime, including human trafficking. The National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police is also preparing to set up a police advisory group on human trafficking, in consultation with the Ministry of Justice. The group's role will be to provide advice to all Icelandic police departments on the identification and

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investigation of cases of suspected human trafficking, disseminate knowledge to police staff and maintain statistics and information about the status at national level as regards human trafficking. The group will have access to a folder containing notifications of human trafficking to the National Emergency Number and review the cases for the purpose of analysing the situation in Iceland in this regard and identifying the most appropriate channels.

**P. Reply to paragraph 16 of the Committee's list of issues**

91. See also replies to paragraph 9(a) and 15 of the Committee's list of issues. As reflected by the reply to paragraph 15, Article 227a of the General Penal Code No 19/1940 on human trafficking was amended in the spring of 2021. The amendments were adopted for the purpose of strengthening even further the legal protection of human trafficking victims, not least migrant workers, foreign nationals, and people of foreign origin. On the one hand, the listed purposes of human trafficking were expanded and now extend to servitude, slavery, or enslavement. Servitude also includes domestic servitude, for example in relation to assistance with housework. Enslavement includes, for example, debt servitude where a person is made to work towards a debt that may never be fully paid, or residential servitude so that the person is dependent on the perpetrator for housing. Trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation includes forced labour, hardship, slavery, or other abuse of the labour force, subject to the conditions of the provision. On the other hand, amendments were made to the provision with respect to methods of perpetration. The method of perpetration where the offender takes advantage of the victim's ignorance or vulnerability, or their own superiority was added. The amendments should make it easier for the authorities to fight trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, as the scope of Article 227a now also includes situations where a person does not have access to the appropriate protective equipment, is made to live in unsuitable accommodation and/or is not paid the agreed wage pursuant to collective agreements, for example due to ignorance, vulnerability or through threat.

92. In the autumn of 2019, competent authorities in the labour market (the police, Directorate of Internal Revenue and the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health) reached an agreement on formal cooperation and consultation with respect to criminal activities in the labour market. The group is meant to cooperate in monitoring the labour market based on the legal authority of each institution, not least for preventive purposes. The group is also intended to respond to and work closely with other parties as appropriate.

93. The government has funded several projects in this area for that purpose, for example educational material for the workplace on human trafficking, including training material for trade union representatives and other staff members. Trade unions, civil society organisations and other parties have also engaged actively in raising awareness of human trafficking.

94. With Act No 75/2018 on the Rights and Obligations of Foreign Undertakings which send employees to Iceland temporarily and terms of employment for their staff and other legislation (protection of rights in the labour market, EEA issues), an amendment was made to add specific authority to the Foreign Nationals' Right to Work Act No 97/2002 to permit granting a foreign national, who had previously been granted a residence permit as a possible human trafficking victim or as a human

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trafficking victim pursuant to the foreign nationals act, a temporary work permit in this country due to special circumstances, subject to certain conditions. This was enacted to make it possible for possible victims of human trafficking, who stay in Iceland during police investigation into human trafficking, to join the domestic labour market if they so choose, as they have been granted residence permit in the country based on their status as a possible victim of human trafficking. Human trafficking victims are also able to take part in the labour market in this country once their case has been concluded as a human trafficking case, provided they have been granted residence permit for victims of human trafficking. The view is taken, among other things, that it can be expected that participation in the labour market can, at least in some cases, be a step towards those individuals being able to obtain footing again after having been potential victims of human trafficking, or victims of human trafficking.

**Q. Reply to paragraph 17 of the Committee’s list of issues**

95. As stated in the government’s response to paragraph 3 above, Iceland has withdrawn its reservation to Article 10 of the Convention as regards the principle of separation of juvenile detainees from adults in detention facilities. Article 44 of the execution of sentences Act No 15/2016 lays down the general principle that detainees under the age of 18 shall serve sentences in a special establishment under the supervision of child protection authorities, or through other form of custody. On the other hand, detainees under the age of 18 may be imprisoned if specialist evaluation has concluded that it is in the person’s best interest considering special circumstances pertaining to that person, and pursuant to the UN Convention on the rights of the child. The provision foresees that the minister will create further rules with respect to custody of young detainees at the age of 15–18 who have been given unsuspended prison sentences, but no such measure has been taken yet.

**R. Reply to paragraph 18 of the Committee’s list of issues**

96. The State Prison and Probation Administration runs four prisons, two open prisons and two closed facilities. Work, on-site/distance learning, and other organised activities for prisoners are offered in all facilities but to a varying degree. All prison facilities offer outdoor, fitness and recreational activities. A selection of products made in prisons run by the State Prison and Probation Administration is available on the web site [fangaverk.is](http://fangaverk.is). Activities include, for example, car washing, outdoor work on the surrounding plot and maintenance, work in the workshop during assembly and packing, license plate and sign making and repairs, construction, various types of cleaning, farm work and fish farming, cooking etc. Prisons also offer different types of studying options and therapeutics.

97. Newly arrived prisoners and remand prisoners are given priority by medical staff. Each shift starts with providing service to these individuals. However, prisons do not have in-house doctors and nurses available every day. Therefore, it can take up to three days from the time when a prisoner enters detention until a meeting with health care staff is possible, unless a decision is made at prison guards’ discretion that the person needs to see a doctor without delay, or the person itself feels that

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need. In such cases, a doctor is called out or the person in question is taken to hospital.

98. The Icelandic authorities have focused on mental health services to curb drug use in prisons. A specific mental health team was therefore established in January 2020 and made lasting through the provision of permanent funding at the beginning of 2022. The team is run by the Reykjavik Area Health-Care Service and services the whole country. This is a multidisciplinary team, focusing on recovery and providing individualised mental-health care, including treatment for addiction. The team's services are intended for prisoners serving time or on remand, but as things have developed the team increasingly follows up on prisoners on probation. The team's services are available to all prisoners and waiting time is short, with same-day interviews available every weekday, or within days, depending on the service needs of individual clients, assessed on a case-by-case basis. The mental health team's approach centres, among other things, on harm reduction philosophy and consists of motivational conversations, supportive therapy, treatment for co-occurring disorders, drug therapy and/or interviews reflecting the client's needs, and supplementary therapy for substance abuse as appropriate. The mental health team engages in effective cooperation with the treatment unit at the State Prison and Probation Administration regarding the implementation of treatment in prisons and has already initiated group mental health education courses. The implementation has progressed quite well, and further cooperation is planned in this regard.

99. Monitoring visits by the Parliamentary Ombudsman are conducted by the authority's own-initiative inquiry unit. The authority employs experienced lawyers and a psychologist, dedicated to this monitoring function. The ombudsman also consults specialists, such as doctors, who also take part in the monitoring along with the authority's staff. The monitoring team at each time is composed with the view to the location and activities of the facility subject to the monitoring. There are at least two representatives from the Parliamentary Ombudsman during each visit. Visits by the Parliamentary Ombudsman generally aim at examining the conditions for those staying in the facility, in particular a) facilities on site, for example accommodation, food and hygiene, b) communications with others staying there and members of staff, but also others outside the place of stay, c) procedures relating to any kind of security measures or coercion, but also record keeping and handling of data on such matters, d) health and access to health care staff as well as their knowledge, experience and presence, and e) engagement with respect to work, studies, treatment and recreation. Each visit is followed by a report drafted to present the findings, and, where applicable, recommendations for improvement as regards the respective operation. The reports are published on the web site of the ombudsman. In addition, the ombudsman submits a report on such monitoring to the Althingi.

## **S. Reply to paragraph 19 of the Committee's list of issues**

100. Services provided by the prison mental health team are intended for individuals who are serving time in prison, and therefore without access to mental health care at their usual healthcare centre, or other institutions. The services also include those on probation. The prison mental health team services all prisons in the country and cooperates closely with the State Prison and Probation Administration, as well as social services. The team provides general mental health services, such as

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diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders, substance abuse, and ADHD. The service is multidisciplinary, and either provided face to face in prison, or through phone consultations or teleconference. The prison mental health team also refers to other mental health services, such as admission to psychiatric units if necessary while serving time, and other services necessary at the end of prisoners' sentence.

101. Chapter III of the Legal Competence Act No 71/1997 lays down provisions applicable to compulsory internment, as well as involuntary treatment of those subject to compulsory internment. Otherwise, mental health treatment without consent is not addressed in Icelandic legislation. Compulsory internment both relates to involuntary hospitalisation and commitment of individuals who are of age, and when an individual who has been hospitalised voluntarily is kept there unwillingly. A bill amending the Patients' Rights Act No 74/1997 (use of compulsion) was submitted in parliament during the 151st legislative assembly, intending to provide necessary coercive measures with adequate legal basis in compliance with the Constitution, as well as human rights treaties and international obligations undertaken by the Icelandic State. The bill is attributable to comments made by the Parliamentary Ombudsman following OPCAT-monitoring of three closed wards of the Landspítali Psychiatry Department in the autumn of 2018. The bill was submitted to the welfare committee of the Althingi for consideration but did not proceed. The welfare committee proposed several amendments to the bill, which were adopted. The bill was resubmitted during the 152nd legislative assembly, but after the first reading the Minister of Health decided to recall the bill and refer to a consultative group to address views by user groups and possible amendments to the text. The working group is still active. The bill is on the legislative calendar for the 153rd legislative assembly, with a view to submitting it to the parliament in February 2023. Article 28 of the legal competence act states that an individual under compulsory internment in hospital without specific authorisation from the District Commissioner shall not be subject to coercive medication, or other coercive treatment, unless the physician on call has made the assessment that the person poses a threat to others, or the life or health of the person is at risk. Decisions about coercive medication, or other coercive treatment, in such cases shall be notified to a senior consultant as soon as possible, who will then take decisions on any continued treatment. A person subjected to an involuntary stay in hospital for treatment with authorisation from the District Commissioner shall only be subject to coercive medication, or other coercive treatment, pursuant to decision by a senior consultant. The Minister of Health may create further rules on coercive medication or other coercive treatment, but no such measure has been taken yet.

**T. Reply to paragraph 20 of the Committee's list of issues**

102. Article 198 of Act on Criminal Procedure No 88/2008 has not been subject to revision. However, plans have been made for revision of the provision during the legislative review undertaken by the Ministry of Justice during winter 2022–2023.

**U. Reply to paragraph 21 of the Committee's list of issues**

103. Act No 6/2013 amending the Act on Registered Religious Communities No 108/1999 (philosophical organisations, child membership of registered religious

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communities and philosophical organisations etc.) partially took the recommendations of the Committee into account. Under the Parish Tax Act No 91/1987, a specific amount is paid from the state treasury each month, from income tax collected, to national church congregations, and registered religious communities and philosophical organisations. A certain amount is paid based on each individual 16 years and older registered in a particular organisation. No amounts are paid from the state treasury on account of individuals who are not registered in any religious or philosophical organisation.

104. Any religious or philosophical organisation which has made a registration request to the District Commissioner pursuant to the Registered Religious Communities and Philosophical Organisations Act No 108/1999, *cf.* Act No 6/2013, and meets the criteria of the legislation, is allocated a portion of the parish tax through a monthly contribution if registration with the District Commissioner has been successful. The District Commissioner has supervision over whether religious or philosophical organisations fulfil the legal criteria for registration.

105. The Act on Parish Tax and Act on Religious and Philosophical Organisations guarantee that all registered religious and philosophical organisations receive the same monthly amount as the National Church of Iceland per every registered person.

## **V. Reply to paragraph 22 of the Committee's list of issues**

106. An anti-violence action team was appointed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to navigate and coordinate the implementation of actions against violence. The team's actions that specifically concern children were: (a) enhancing the activities of the Barnahús (Children's House); (b) supporting vulnerable children to decrease their likelihood of committing violent offences; (c) enhancing cooperation between systems in relation to the processing of family matters and children's issues; and (d) increasing access to information about parenting skills on the web site [heilsuvera.is](http://heilsuvera.is), for the purpose of reducing the likelihood of violence against children. Additionally, the services provided by the National Emergency Number were developed and enhanced to make 112.is the portal people turn to in case of domestic violence or violence against children. At the same time, awareness-raising efforts took place, among other things, to urge children to contact 112 and disclose their experience of abuse.

107. In June 2019, a plan of action against violence and its consequences 2019–2022 was adopted. Its principal aim was to promote awareness of the issue through prevention and education, improve working methods and procedures within the justice administration system, and to enhance support for victims. Various measures outlined in the plan relate to the protection of children against violence, especially through education and preventive measures. The measures already implemented and relating to the protection of children against violence include:

- a. The development of a website with educational material about violence, including examples of procedures and toolboxes that school staff at all school levels can use when there is suspicion of violence, neglect, etc. Efforts are being made to enhance knowledge of the UN Convention on the rights of the child, and to make the Convention a foundation of all activities involving children.

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- b. A sports and youth activities communication counsellor commenced duties at the beginning of 2020. The communication counsellor is an independent entity that can assist and guide those who consider themselves victims of violence or discrimination in sports or youth activities.
  - c. Support provided to the association Home and School for the *SAFT* and ‘*No hate*’ projects will continue. The projects concern raising awareness of children’s safe use of technology attempts to counter hate propaganda, racism, and discrimination on-line.
  - d. Study materials about equality and gender issues are being prepared for preschools, compulsory and upper secondary schools to support prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment.
  - e. A resource centre for violence against children has been established, and is tasked with maintaining information, statistics, research, and other matters regarding violence against children.

108. A proposal for a parliamentary resolution on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment among children and young people was adopted by Althingi in the summer of 2020, along with an action plan for 2021–2025. Its aim is, among other things, to promote preventive measures among children and young people. The preventive measures are integrated with teaching and school activities at all school levels, and take place in activity centres and youth centres, in sports and youth activities, and other recreational activities. The actions included in the plan are fully funded and various parties within the administrative system are responsible for the implementation of specific projects, with follow-up coordinated by the Department of Equality and Human Rights in the Prime Minister’s Office. A specific dashboard on the web site of the Government Offices provides an overview of the progress of the actions in question.

109. Preparations are under way, pursuant to the action plan, for an interactive on-line course providing basic education about sexual and gender-based violence and harassment for people who work with children and young people. The approach centres on material prepared in connection with the course ‘*Protect them*’ (*Vernðum þau*), which authors are specialists at Barnahús. The course will be offered in four versions with four target groups in mind: preschools, junior grades of compulsory schools, together with leisure centres, senior grades of compulsory schools together with community centres, and upper secondary schools. Special additional material specifically aimed at professionals who work with disabled children and young people will also be prepared. Development of the courses is well under way, and it is assumed that contracts will be concluded with designers and undertakings for the purpose of creating an interactive solution for tracking how many people have taken advantage of the courses soon. Other measures stipulated by the program aim to make sure that all staff members at kindergartens, compulsory schools, leisure centres, sports and youth activities, other leisure activities, community centres and upper secondary schools, attend the on-line course, in addition to using the course to increase knowledge among staff in health care services for infants and toddlers about indications of violence. It is also foreseen that these groups will receive further training provided by the appropriate parties.

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110. Emphasis has been placed on educating people about the mandatory reporting requirement to child protection authorities, especially mandatory reporting for those who work with children. Said plan on action against violence includes an action intended to increase education about violence among people who work with children, emphasising the mandatory reporting pursuant to the child protection act.

111. Detectives investigating physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children attend special courses dedicated to such offences. The police and child protection authorities work closely together to investigate offences against children. The police are obliged to prepare electronic investigation files when investigating sexual violence. This provides a better overview of cases for both police and prosecutors, as well as preventing errors in the investigation, resulting in higher quality investigations and prosecutions. Technical skills of police officers have also been increased as regards social media, which has resulted in more effective investigations and prosecutions and led to sentencing.

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