

Proposal for Parliamentary Resolution

on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023

By the Prime Minister.

Althingi resolves, in keeping with Article 11 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. [10/2008](#) to adopt the following governmental Action Programme for Gender Equality for the years 2020–2023:

A. THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

1. The Icelandic Gender Equality Fund

A summary is to be made of all projects that have received grants from the Icelandic Gender Equality Fund which was founded in 2015 through parliamentary resolution No. 13/144 in celebration of the centenary of the granting of suffrage to women in Iceland and amended by parliamentary resolution no. 19/149 of 2019. The primary role of the Fund is to finance or support projects and research designed to increase gender equality in Icelandic society and internationally. The Fund has been allocated ISK 100 million annually for a term of five years from 2016–2020. The summary shall be made with regard to the objectives of the Fund and shall include an assessment of whether and how they have been fulfilled.

Time-frame: 2021–2022.

Cost estimate: ISK 1 million.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Upholds goal 5 and promotes its integration with the other sustainable development goals.

2. The Gender Equality Implementation Fund

A total of ISK 40 million of the state budget shall be allocated to government ministries' gender equality projects during the period of 2020–2023. The projects can be cooperative projects between ministries within the Government Offices of Iceland or between ministries and government institutions or the academic community, having the objective of using outcomes, experience and knowledge in the field of gender equality or to introduce proposals that can be regarded as the results of projects within the government's Action Programme. The Prime Minister's Office shall call for applications from the ministries and allocate grants following an expert assessment by the Department of Equality. Revised rules for the Fund and an application form shall be presented to the ministries by the end of 2019.

Time-frame: 2020–2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 40 million.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Upholds goal 5 and promotes its integration with the other sustainable development goals.

3. Gender equality officers of the ministries

The ministries' gender equality officers operate under the provisions of Article 13 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. [10/2008](#). The role of the gender equality officers is to address and monitor gender equality activities within the areas of competence of the ministries in question and their subordinate bodies, including involvement in gender mainstreaming within each ministry's field of competence. The gender equality officers shall acquire a knowledge of gender equality issues and shall operate according to approved procedural and educational programmes. The work of gender equality officers shall include the following:

- a. Following up on the projects defined in the government's Action Programme for Gender Equality and submitting progress reports to the Centre for Gender Equality.
- b. Participating in and giving guidance in the making of gender equality assessments of government bills.
- c. Participating in shaping and introducing a comprehensive schedule for gender mainstreaming in the policy-making and decision-taking of the ministries and government bodies.
- d. Revising the working procedures and educational programmes for the gender equality officers.
- e. Revising the working plans for the gender equality officers, which shall be ready within one year of the entry into force of the Action Programme. The working plan shall align all the projects allocated to the gender equality officers.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 1 million to educate gender equality officers.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.c, 10.3 and 16.6.

4. The Government Offices' Gender Equality Programme

The Government Offices' Gender Equality Programme for 2017–2020, which was drawn up in accordance with Article 18(2) of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. [10/2008](#), shall be reviewed during the term of validity of the government's Action Programme for Gender Equality. The ministries' gender equality officers shall be in charge of the review and of following up on the Gender Equality Programmes on behalf of the ministries' Permanent Secretaries and in collaboration with the Centre for Gender Equality.

Time-frame: To be finished in the spring of 2020.

Cost estimate: Within the funding allocation for each ministry.

Responsibility: Gender equality officers of the ministries and the Prime Minister's Office.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: The project mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.c, 5.2, 5.5, 8.5, 8.8, 10.3, 10.4 and 16.6.

5. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has been a long-running project within the Government Offices, including in connection with the government's previous gender equality action programmes and programmes for gender budgeting. During the term of validity of the Programme, an integral four-year plan on gender mainstreaming in the policy-making and decision-taking of the ministries and state institutions shall be drawn up and introduced. This plan shall take into consideration the mainstreaming projects that have already been implemented by the ministries and government institutions, especially projects regarding the assessment of the gender equality aspects of

government bills and projects in connection with the introduction of the Public Finance Act, No. [123/2015](#), including drawing up formats for policy-making and a plan to introduce gender budgeting for the period of 2019–2023. The project is carried out in collaboration between the gender mainstreaming project management team and the ministries' gender equality officers as well as the project management team for gender budgeting. The Plan shall include the following:

- a. Proposals for the introduction of gender mainstreaming into the activities and policy-making of ministries and government institutions, especially statutory plans and planning by ministries and governmental institutions.
- b. Proposals on how the results of gender equality assessments can be used in an improved way during the drawing up of bills and in other policy-making.
- c. Mapping and proposals on improving the collection and use of gender-specific information and data, as well as utilisation of research, to support policy direction and decisions that take gender and gender equality perspectives into account.
- d. Proposals for education and training.
- e. Proposals for projects within the competence of each ministry, first as experimental projects and then as an integral part of their regular activities and procedures.
- f. Proposals for the follow-up of projects.
- g. Proposals for periodic consultation and collaboration of all those who play a key role in the field of gender mainstreaming.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 4 million to implement the projects and to pay the salary of an expert.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with the ministries' gender equality officers and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 10.3, 10.4, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.b and promotes the integration of goal 5 with other sustainable development goals.

6. Gender budgeting

Gender budgeting shall be carried out under a five-year implementation plan. An annual gender equality assessment shall be carried out for areas of competence and policy areas in the public sector and the main outcomes shall be published in a baseline report at the start of each year, which shall serve as a basis for decisions regarding objectives and emphases within these areas of competence and policy areas. These emphases shall be reflected in the five-year fiscal plan and in each year's budget bill. The project management team shall make proposals on the follow-up of the implementation plan, including evaluation criteria for all the ministries. The gender budgeting methodology shall be further utilised, on the basis of the experience gained from using it, during discussions and decision-taking regarding state expenditure and revenues. The gender budgeting project management team shall actively consult and collaborate with the gender mainstreaming project management team, as well as with the ministries' gender equality officers, on the policy-making and decision-taking of the Government Offices and government institutions.

Time-frame: Ongoing project.

Cost estimate: Salary of a full-time expert.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the project management team for gender budgeting.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.c and 10.4.

7. Gender equality and regional policies

A policy-making regional development plan for the period of 2018–2024 was drawn up and adopted according to Act No. [69/2015](#) on Regional Planning and Initiatives. The aim of the project is to assess the impacts of gender equality measures in the regional development plan and in allocations to regional policies, and shall include the following:

a. Reviewing the measures in the regional development policy with regard to gender and gender equality perspectives with the aim to evaluate the positions of women and men, including examining whether there is a gender imbalance, discovering its nature and what the possible impacts of the measures may have on gender equality.

b. Examining any allocations to regional development from a gender equality perspective.

c. Analysing the results and developing methods in the form of counterweight or gender equality measures to address a possible gender imbalance in the regional development plan and allocations with a view to upholding the perspectives of general equality and gender equality.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Up to ISK 3 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Transport and Local Government.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.a, 5.c, 8.5, 11.a, 16.6 and 16.7.

B. THE LABOUR MARKET – EQUAL PAY

8. Equal pay certification and equal pay standard

The introduction of equal pay certification in keeping with the government's policy, as it appears in the government's coalition agreement and the Act on Equal Pay Certification, No. [56/2017](#), shall continue so that all companies and institutions that generally employ more than 25 persons on an annual basis will have obtained certification of their equal pay systems before 2023. The implementation and follow-up of the following projects shall continue during the term of validity of the Action Programme:

a. Education and promotion of the accredited certification of equal pay systems on the basis of the ÍST 85:2012 standard, *Equal wage management system - Requirements and guidance* (the Equal Pay Standard) and the Act on Equal Pay Certification shall be carried out. The development of rules and regulations regarding equal pay certification resulting from the introduction of the Equal Pay Standard shall continue within the Government Offices' steering group for certification and accreditation matters, which is composed of representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Industries and Innovation, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the Centre for Gender Equality, as well as the review of the criteria for the certification service providers and monitoring of the equal pay certification process.

b. The Centre for Gender Equality shall gather information on the certification of the equal pay systems of companies and institutions and publish it on the Centre's website and in the minister's report on the situation and development of gender equality.

c. Software shall be developed for job classification and pay analyses to make it easier for companies and institutions to introduce equal pay systems.

d. Updating of the Equal Pay Standard shall continue.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office and the Centre for Gender Equality in

collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 8.5, 8.8, 16.5, 16.10 and 16.b.

9. Gender equality in the labour market

One of the main objectives of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. [10/2008](#), is gender equality in the labour market. Over the term of validity of the Programme, the implementation and follow-up to projects that are, inter alia, based on the proposals of the government and social partner organisations' Action Group on Equal Pay that operated between 2012 and 2018, shall be carried out:

a. The prerequisites for the appointment of a government and social partner organisations' coordination group on equal pay and gender equality in the labour market shall be explored.

b. Research shall be carried out on the pay differences between men and women in the entire labour market, as per the provisions on equal pay certification in Act No. [56/2017](#) which state that the minister shall, every two years, make an assessment of the results of equal pay certification, in collaboration between the government, social partner organisations and Statistics Iceland. In addition, a special examination shall be made of the effects of equal pay certification on the development of pay, employee benefits and job development opportunities of men and women, including with regard to the effects of having children on the financial situation of parents.

c. The Centre for Gender Equality shall, in collaboration with social partner organisations, follow up on the proposals of the Action Group on Equal Pay regarding measures to reduce gender-based education and career choices.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 5.c, 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 10.3 and 10.4.

10. Equality in company management positions

An evaluation shall be made of the implementation of the legal provisions on gender balance on companies' boards that were added to the Act on Public Limited-liability Companies, No. [2/1995](#), and the Act on Private Limited-liability Companies, No. [138/1994](#), as they were amended by a special amendment act, No. 13/2010, that entered into force in 2013. The project includes:

a. Examining whether the objectives of the new provisions have been reached.

b. Scrutinising the body of legislation and examining what the real benefits are with regard to the provisions of the Gender Equality Act on the equal influence of women and men in society.

c. Identifying ways to improve the situation, if necessary.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Up to ISK 3 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Industries and Innovation.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.5, 5.c, 10.2, 10.3 and 10.5.

11. Equality and parental leave

The right to parental leave shall be increased from nine months to twelve months in two stages in the 2020–2021 period. Each parent shall have the right to five months of parental leave and additionally a right to two extra months that is not bound to either parent, that they can arrange at will. The objective is, inter alia, to bridge the gap between the parents finishing their full parental leave and the admittance of the child into preschool, thus ensuring that both parents get an opportunity to care for their child without a major disruption of either parent's employment participation, as well as balancing work and family life.

Time-frame: 2020-2021.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Social Affairs.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 1.3, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.c, 8.1, 8.8 and 10.4.

12. The Women's Loan Guarantee Fund

The operation of the Women's Loan Guarantee Fund – Svanni – shall be continued. The objective of the Fund has been to support innovative women's business projects by providing guarantees for loans. This project was run on the basis of the previous Action Programme, with an agreement between the owners, in the period of 2015–2018. The agreement with the owners shall be revised during the term of the new Programme.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Industries and Innovation in collaboration with the city of Reykjavik.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.5, 5.a, 5.c, 8.1, 8.3, 8.5, 8.10 and 9.3.

C. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

13. Implementation of the Istanbul Convention

A policy-making national plan shall be made with regard to enforcing the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) from 2011. The project is in conformity with Article 10 of the Convention, which provides for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures made due to obligations under the Convention. The national plan shall also have the objective to create an overview of the introduction of laws, regulatory actions and other measures, including data collection and research, as per Article 11 of the Convention. At the same time, preparations shall be made for Iceland's first hearing before the Convention's supervisory committee for the implementation of its obligations, which will take place in 2021. The national plan shall be drawn up in consultation with other ministries, government institutions, local governments, non-governmental organisations and other concerned parties and shall include the following measures:

- a. Searching for models in the national plans of other member countries of the Council of Europe.
- b. Forming a timed national plan with objectives, measures, progress indicators and responsible parties.
- c. Evaluating the local enforcement of the Convention's provisions with regard to legislations and other measures.

- d. Preparing a status report on the implementation of the Convention.
- e. Offering presentations and education about the Convention and the national plan via the Government Offices' website and in other fora.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with the steering group for integral improvements with regard to sexual violence, and the ministries which have representatives in the group.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.6 and 16.10.

14. Equality within the police force

Efforts shall be made to increase the number of women on the police force and to ensure that the police force's work culture is conducive to equal opportunities for career advancement, continuous education and training for women and men, as well as opportunities for both men and women to serve in management positions and positions of authority. The objective is to balance the gender ratio, overall as well as within the different police ranks. The project entails, inter alia, an analysis of the workplace culture, job advancement and levels of withdrawal from the police force, by gender, using the following measures:

- a. A follow-up investigation shall be made to discover whether the workplace culture within the police force has changed since the measures taken following the 2013 investigation on the reasons why there are so few women police officers, on the workplace culture and gender relations within the police force.
- b. Gender-specific data on hiring, appointments, job advancement, withdrawal rates and reasons for withdrawals shall be gathered and analysed, as focused and systematic collection of gender-specific data is an important prerequisite for having reliable information on the status of men and women within the police force and to reach the objective of increasing gender equality within the police force.
- c. The police force's hiring process shall be analysed in order to promote a better, more transparent process.
- d. The gender equality officers of the agencies and the gender equality officers on the gender equality committee shall be given leeway and time to fulfil their duties.
- e. Proposals shall be made for improvements with regard to the outcomes of points a–d above, in order to ensure that more women join the police force and to promote diversity, cf. the previously mentioned objectives, as well as to improve the workplace culture within the police force and improve the hiring process.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police and the Icelandic police agencies.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.5, 5.c, 8.8, 10.3 and 16.6.

D. GENDER EQUALITY, EDUCATION AND CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

15. Gender equality in education

15.1. Men and teaching

Efforts shall be made to increase the number of new students in basic teacher training,

especially men, and thus speed up recruitment within the teaching profession. The project entails facing the challenges brought on by the increasing average age of teachers and the withdrawal of newly graduated teachers from teaching, which has led to children in preschool and primary and lower secondary school not getting the education they are supposed to have. Special focus shall be directed at rural areas, where the percentage of unqualified teachers is generally higher than in urban areas. The project entails, inter alia, the following measures:

- a. Recruitment of teachers shall be increased, with a special focus on ways to increase the number of men.
- b. More recognition shall be given to the work of teachers.
- c. New teachers shall be given more support during the first years of their careers.
- d. Proposals shall be made as to how the quality and harmonisation of teachers' job development can be increased and how their working environment can be permanently improved.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Within the budgetary framework of the cooperation board for the job development of teachers and school managers.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the cooperation board for the job development of teachers and school managers.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.a, 4.c, 5.1, 10.3, 10.4 and 16.6.

15.2. School withdrawal rates of boys and students with a native language other than Icelandic

The causes of withdrawal from school at the upper secondary level shall be examined, especially among boys and students with a native language other than Icelandic. At the same time, the results of research and other knowledge regarding the causes of withdrawals from school shall be used in policy-making, inter alia to form more focused solutions to prevent withdrawals, as well as preventive and compensatory measures.

Time-frame: 2020–2021.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6, 4.c and 5.1.

15.3. Gender equality and gender-based educational choices

Efforts shall be made to balance the gender ratio in upper secondary education and to reduce gender-based educational choices and thereby a gender-divided labour market where educational choices affect both the choice of career and continuing education.

Measures shall include:

- a. Efforts shall be made to gather information, research and map the gender ratios in all student groups and service items of the upper secondary educational system and then to change the supply and mechanisms of education in upper secondary schools and continuing education, including with regard to the development in the other Nordic countries with a view to counteracting gender-based stereotypes.

- b. Education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics as well as vocational education at the upper secondary level shall be made more accessible and interesting for students, with an increased emphasis on augmenting the role of girls in order to level the gender imbalance.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 2 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in collaboration with the project Schools and Technology, under the auspices of GERT – a collaborative project of the Federation of Icelandic Industries, the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities and the Ministry.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, and 10.3.

15.4. Gender equality in upper secondary schools' social activities

Efforts shall be made to equalise the participation of the genders in all types of social activity within upper secondary schools, including among students of foreign origin and disabled students. Measures shall be formulated in collaboration with the Icelandic Upper Secondary Student Union.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 1 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.7, 5.1, 5.5, 5.c, and 10.2.

16. Gender equality and safety

16.1. Gender equality and safety in preschools, primary and lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools

Efforts shall be made to promote education and knowledge about gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, threats and violence among children and young people, as well as all employees of preschools, primary and lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. This educational programme shall be adapted to the age and level of maturity of the children and young people, and knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child shall be promoted.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 1 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.a, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.c.

16.2. Gender equality and safety in sports and youth activities and prevention against gender-based withdrawal from sports

Efforts shall be made to increase safety and gender equality in sports and youth activities through measures designed to uproot gender-based negative stimuli and violence and to ensure that everyone can seek help or pursue their rights with regard to incidents and misconduct that may arise, without fearing the consequences. The objective is to promote a safe environment regardless of the gender or status of children, adolescents and adults in other respects within the sports and youth activities movement. The project's measures shall include:

a. Electronic access to criminal records shall be ensured in order to enable sports and youth activities' organisations to enforce the Youth Act, No. 70/2007, and the Sports Act, No. 64/1998, according to which sports and youth activities' organisations are forbidden from

employing individuals who have received punitive sentencing due to contraventions against the provisions of Chapter XXII of the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940. The same applies to individuals who have received punitive sentencing due to contraventions against the provisions of the Narcotics Act, No. 65/1974, in the last five years. This provision only applies to those who serve as volunteers in sports activities.

b. The reasons for withdrawal from organised sports and youth activities shall be investigated specially with regard to gender and other factors.

c. The Communication Counsellor for Sports and Youth Activities, who works under the auspices of the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, shall ensure that sports and youth activities are conducted in a safe environment and that children, adolescents and adults, regardless of their gender or other status, can practice sports or youth activities and can seek help or pursue their rights with regard to incidents and misconduct that may arise, without fearing the consequences.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: A total of ISK 2 million, as well as ISK 12 million annually for the Communication Counsellor's activities.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.2, 5.c and 10.2.

17. Gender equality at the university level

17.1. Cooperation between the universities' gender equality officers

Efforts shall be made to continue the cooperation between the gender equality officers of the Icelandic universities, including on writing on Wikipedia.is, gender equality education, examining stereotypes within the university community and the annual informative lecture to promote knowledge and cooperation. Measures will include the following:

a. The forum for the universities' gender equality officers shall draw up a joint project and budget estimate for the periods of 2020–2021 and 2022–2023, with performance-related objectives and evaluation criteria.

b. A presentation shall be made on the implementation of projects.

c. An annual report on the implementation of projects shall be drawn up, taking the project plans into consideration.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 3 million in total

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2 and 10.3.

17.2. Gender equality and university positions

The reasons for women's withdrawal from scientific work shall be examined, as well as the reasons why men generally receive more academic promotions in scientific work than women, by examining the universities' promotion systems in the context of family situations and career choices. An action programme shall be drawn up, taking the results into consideration, in order to reduce the withdrawal of women from academic work and to work on the factors that affect academic promotions from a perspective of gender and gender equality.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 2 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 10.3, and 16.6.

18. Gender equality, culture and art

Efforts shall be made to ensure an even gender ratio among artists with regard to the availability of culture and arts under the auspices of the state, as well as demand (consumption of culture). The main measures to be taken during the Action Programme's term of validity shall include:

a. State cultural institutions shall draw up and implement gender equality plans with objectives and evaluation criteria covering allocations from public funds and the cultural and artistic events held by the institutions, with a view to ensuring an equal gender ratio.

b. Gender book-keeping shall be introduced in order to catalogue and store gender-specific information that shall be made accessible through the institutions' websites.

c. The ministries' and government institutions' consumption of culture shall be examined with regard to gender and gender equality perspectives, checking whether this consumption is in conformity with the gender ratio of allocations to artists from public funds.

d. The ministries and government institutions shall draw up and implement gender equality plans with objectives and evaluation criteria pertaining to their cultural consumption, including the buying and leasing of works of art. Gender book-keeping shall be introduced in order to catalogue and store gender-specific information that shall be accessible through the ministries' and institutions' websites.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 2 million in total

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 4.7, 5.1, 5.5, 10.3, and 16.6.

E. MEN AND EQUALITY

19. Men and #metoo (#églíka)

Efforts shall be made to raise awareness about the responsibilities and roles of men with regard to the #metoo (#églíka) disclosure of gender-based and sexual harassment and violence. The project shall, inter alia, cover the relationship between gender-based and sexual harassment and violence on the one hand and ideas about masculinity, boundaries and consent on the other. The proposals of the Action Group on Men and Gender Equality and the work that has been carried out as part of the official response to #metoo (#églíka) shall be taken into consideration in the project work. The Centre for Gender Equality is responsible for the project and its implementation, in consultation with and, as the case may be, collaboration with the Icelandic academic community, social partners, non-governmental organisations and authorities.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Prime Minister's Office and the Centre for Gender Equality.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5, 10.3, 16.1, 16.2, and 16.10.

20. Men and health-care

Men's use of the electronic service gateway *Heilsuvera*, which has the purpose to enable

easier access to information about health and its influencing factors for the public, shall be promoted. At the same time, efforts shall be made to ease and equalise people's access to data from their own medical files and to promote safe communication with doctors or health-care staff. The website therefore has both a preventive and service function. The project is carried out in collaboration with the Directorate of Health and entails the following:

- a. Examining the reasons why men's and women's use of the website is so unequal from a viewpoint of gender-based influencing factors.
- b. Examining the general and gender-based usage with a view to factors like age, marital status, residence and origin.
- c. Making proposals on specific measures to be taken in order to even out the ratio of men and women and increase general use of the website, inter alia with regard to the aforementioned factors.
- d. Proposals with regard to point c shall then be introduced.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Fits within the funding appropriations.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Health.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 3.8, 5.1 and 10.3.

G. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

21. Gender and consumption

Efforts shall be made to raise awareness of the circular economy, the environmental and social impacts of the fashion and textile industries and the power of consumers to promote decent and more environmentally sound manufacturing methods with an emphasis on socially responsible consumption of fashion clothing, and on reuse and recycling. The objective of the project is to have an impact on consumer behaviour in the spirit of social responsibility in order to improve conditions for women, both as manufacturers and as consumers, by informing the public, and especially women, of all the costs – literal as well as metaphorical – of the manufacturing and disposal of textiles. The objective is also to integrate gender perspectives into measures to prevent waste in order to reduce wear on resources and generation of waste and to increase reuse and recycling. In this manner, women's quality of life can be safeguarded and further promoted by creating opportunities in green employment and innovation with a focus on gender and environmental considerations, negate wage inequality in the international arena and have a positive impact on the working environment of women workers in the textile industry. The project shall be operated in collaboration with, inter alia, the Environment Agency of Iceland, the Consumer Agency, the Red Cross, the company Aftur and Iceland University of the Arts, and entails the following measures:

- a. Gathering data about production, procurement, use and consumption of textiles.
- b. The data is to be set forth in such a way as to be useful for educational purposes.
- c. Setting up a website containing information for the public and companies about the impacts textile production and consumption have on the environment and on gender issues.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: ISK 1.5 million.

Responsibility: The Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Conforms to all the sustainable development goals but mainly upholds goals 5.a, 8.4, 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 10.3, 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 13.2, 13.3, 16.b, 17.14 and 17.16.

22. Men's participation in gender equality activities

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall place an emphasis on the role of men in gender equality activities in the international arena. This shall include holding 'barber-shop' conferences within the international bodies Iceland is a member of, e.g. the World Bank, in order to urge men to shoulder their responsibilities in the field of gender equality. This shall also include presenting Iceland's point of view on this issue within the international bodies Iceland is a member of and in bilateral relations with other states. Icelandic men shall be encouraged to support the aims of the UN Women HeForShe campaign in accordance with Iceland's obligations under the UN Women IMPACT campaign. Collaboration within the Icelandic governmental system shall be increased, as well as collaboration with non-governmental organizations. The objective of the project is to increase men's ownership of and participation in equal rights activities.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goal 5.

23. Introduction of equal rights certification in development cooperation

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall introduce equal rights certification into Iceland's international development cooperation in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during the term of validity of the Action Programme. The main objective of the certification is to support the Ministry and Iceland's embassies in Lilongwe and Kampala in their internal development cooperation strategy work, with a special emphasis on external activities in the field of gender equality. The implementation process begins in June 2019 and the estimated end of the certification process is in January 2021. The plan is for Iceland to become the first of the member states of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to implement such a gender equality certification process.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Conforms to all the sustainable development goals but mainly upholds goals 3.1, 3.2, 3.7, 4.1, 4.5, 4.a, 5.4, 6.1 and 6.2.

24. Equal opportunities for the genders in international trade - "Gender equality in export"

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall focus on clearing away gender-specific trade obstacles and spread the knowledge about gender equality that has been gained in Iceland, e.g. through EEA Grants. The Ministry shall purposefully "market" gender equality projects in the 15 states that are eligible for EEA Grants, in order to disseminate local experience and knowledge to them. Additionally, efforts shall be made to utilise fully the funds available in order to iterate the importance of the gender equality focus and further build up the reputation Iceland has made for itself as a country of gender equality, and the ideology that Iceland wishes to spearhead in the international arena.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall strive to have gender equality provisions inserted into international trade agreements, under the auspices of EFTA as well as in other bilateral agreements. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall furthermore continue to bring up gender equality in discussions within the World Trade Organisation and follow up on the declaration

on the empowerment of women and participation in international trade that was signed by over WTO 120 states during the ministerial meeting of the Organisation in 2017. The declaration was made through the efforts of a working group led by Iceland, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Botswana.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs shall make an effort to raise the number of women working on trade matters within the Ministry, for example in making trade agreements and free trade agreements, in committees and working groups in the field of international trade, and as members of official or ministerial trade delegations abroad.

Time-frame: 2020-2023.

Cost estimate: Financed.

Responsibility: The Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Mainly upholds goals 5.1, 5.4, 8.3, 8.5, 8.7 and 8.8.

Explanatory report.

The Prime Minister has made a proposal for parliamentary resolution on the government's seventh Action Programme for Gender Equality in keeping with Article 11 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, No. [10/2008](#) (the Gender Equality Act) The Action Programme for Gender Equality is intended to define the role of the authorities at any given time and describe projects that are either meant to throw a light on the positions of the genders or entail direct measures to increase gender equality.

The first general law on the equal status of men and women came into force in 1976: the Act on Equality Between Men and Women, No. [78/1976](#). Women and men have enjoyed formal gender equality under the law since then and the authorities have had an obligation of initiative to strive to create genuine gender equality. The first Action Programme was proposed in December 1986 in keeping with the revised Gender Equality Act (No. 65/1985) which was adopted at the end of the UN Decade for Women (1976–1985) and was, inter alia, based on the resolutions of the UN World Conferences on Women. In the same year, the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women was ratified by Althingi. Since then, the Gender Equality Act has been revised three times (in 1991, 2000 and 2008) in holding with societal changes and development in the international arena. This proposal for a parliamentary resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for 2020–2023 is submitted after having received proposals from the ministries and the Centre for Gender Equality and with consideration to the discussions of the Gender Equality Conference, as per Article 10 of the Act, which was held for the fifth time in march 2018. The proposal was submitted to the Gender Equality Council for presentation and then for comment to the Government Offices consultation portal. A total of six comments were received and were presented to the relevant ministries. The comments received led to one amendment but will otherwise be kept for reference for the Programme's implementation. This proposal is accompanied by a report on the situation and development of gender equality in 2015–2017 that the Minister for Gender Equality submitted to the Gender Equality Forum in 2018. Also amended to the proposal is the minister's reply to an enquiry in Althingi on the status of the projects of the current Gender Equality Action Programme (2016–2019).

A great deal of progress has been made since the first Gender Equality Act entered into force. The importance of this policy area has increased considerably and in the international arena Iceland is regarded as exemplary with regard to legislation, the government's focus on fulfilling the obligation of initiative in the field of gender equality, and the success in implementing legally mandated projects. The steps forward include a considerable increase in

the number of women among elected representatives and amendments to the legislation intended to ensure an equal ratio and influence of women and men on public committees, councils and boards and on the management boards of companies. Purposeful steps have also been taken to negate gender-based pay differences and the Act on Maternity and Parental Leave has likewise promoted a change of attitude and equalised the position of women and men in the labour market. Iceland has, for a long time (2009–2018), been at the top of the World Economic Forum's list of states with the highest measured gender equality. The Forum's analysis evaluates each state based on four key factors: access to health care, educational level, participation in politics and economic situation. Each key factor is analysed and data is gathered on participation in the labour market, pay equality, income from work and the gender ratio among managers and professionals. The image drawn up in the World Economic Forum's assessment does not, however, give an overall view of the position of women and men and this applies especially to the labour market. Gender-specific choices of education and gender ratios within occupations characterise the Icelandic labour market and despite the fact that women's labour force participation has for a long while been the highest among the OECD member states, women are more likely to work part time jobs and as of yet their opportunities for job advancement seem to be not as good as that of men. The legally mandated gender quotas for the management boards of public limited-liability companies, corporations and pension funds has had a positive effect on gender ratios, but the development is slower with regard to increasing the number of women managing directors and chief executive officers of the largest companies in the economic sector, where men still form a large majority. The results of research done by Statistics Iceland in collaboration with the government and social partner organisations' Action Group on Equal Pay in the period of 2008–2016 reveals a steadily decreasing gender pay gap, with an adjusted pay gap of 7,4 % during that period. Non-adjusted pay differences are also becoming rarer, but still exist. The division of the period of 2008–2016 into three-year periods show that non-adjusted differences went from 4,8 % in 2008–2010, down to 3,6 % in 2014–2016.

The Gender Equality Act provides for the principle that women and men shall receive equal pay for work that is of equal value and comparable, and that the criteria used to determine pay shall not entail discrimination based on gender. The government has, in collaboration with social partner organisations placed a high emphasis on projects that are intended to equalise the position of women and men in the labour market and root out gender-based pay differences. In June 2017 Althingi adopted a Bill amending the Gender Equality Act, which entailed a legal obligation for companies and institutions that generally employ more than 25 persons on an annual basis to obtain equal pay certification on the basis of the ÍST 85 standard, *Equal wage management system - Requirements and guidance*. The equal pay standard is a management tool that enables employers to install and maintain a pay system that ensures pay equality for the genders in workplaces.

In the last several years the discussion about the importance of men's participation in gender equality activities has become louder and it is considered imperative for policy-making within this policy area to take account of the position of both genders, since the objective is for the measures to increase the quality of life and opportunities for all. Women's participation in the labour market led to a change in the attitude towards the roles and division of work of the genders in society, and as an example of this a great majority of men now utilise their right to parental leave. Research shows that mothers and fathers place a strong emphasis on there still being a need for improving parents' opportunities to coordinate the duties placed upon them by work and family life. The government's decision to increase the right to parental leave to a total of 12 months in 2020, where each parent gets five months and they get two extra months that are not bound to either parent, is a step towards creating more balance.

In the last several years, the government has focused on projects with the objective of stopping gender-based violence, sexual harassment and violence in intimate relationships. This work has been focused on a broad consultation between different professional classes and there is an ongoing project to promote better working procedures and a change of attitude inside and outside the administrative system. Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir appointed a steering group on comprehensive reform with regard to sexual violence. The group's main role is to promote progressive and harmonised government measures against gender-based violence and sexual and gender-based harassment and to put Iceland into the vanguard of the fight against all kinds of violence. The group's projects include the formation of a policy against digital violence, proposing methods to promote the legal status and right to compensation for victims of sexual offences and making proposals for harmonised official responses to the #metoo movement, both with regard to society as a whole as well as the Government Offices and their institutions as employers.

Gender equality is a key emphasis in the government's coalition agreement and the aim is for ongoing measures in the field of gender equality, both here at home and in the international arena. In light of the increased significance of gender equality in general, the current government's focus on this policy area, the Gender Equality Act's provisions on gender mainstreaming in all of the Government Offices' and state institutions' policy-making, as well as the far-reaching dimension of gender equality, the policy area was transferred to a special Department of Equality under the Prime Minister's Office. This was done by adopting the government's proposal for parliamentary resolution, No. 1/149, on the altered organisation of ministries within the Government Offices of Iceland. The Directorate oversees the future policy-making for gender equality and a total review of the administrative organisation of gender equality matters. It is intended to play a central role in leading and coordinating the government's gender equality activities. This arrangement is in line with the Prime Minister's Office's main role, which is to lead and coordinate the activities of the ministries under the administration of the Prime Minister. The review of the administrative organisation of gender equality has the objective to increase the visibility of the policy area, coordinate projects and to mainstream gender considerations into the policy-making and decision-taking within the Icelandic Government Offices. This is in line with the increased emphasis, both locally, cf. the government's Gender Equality Action Programme, and internationally, on mainstreaming as a methodology to reach the objectives of increased equality between women and men in all areas of society.

The Prime Minister's proposal for a parliamentary resolution on an Action Programme for Gender Equality for the next four years is intended to encompass the government's most urgent projects within this policy area. It is not an exhaustive listing of the projects that are considered to be urgent. The proposal entails a Programme that is divided into five Chapters and 24 projects that are scheduled to be carried out during its term of validity. This arrangement is meant to ensure that the government's emphases and prioritisation in the area of gender equality are clearly shown.

The proposal continues to place an emphasis on gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming in all policy-making and decision-taking. To that end, a special focus will be placed on the collection of gender-specific data and statistics, as well as collaboration with Statistics Iceland on analyses and research. Mention should also be made of the government's ongoing emphasis on the implementation of the Act on Equal Pay Certification and measures designed to increase gender equality in the labour market which focus, inter alia, on the harmonisation of family life and work life and increased gender equality in the management boards of companies. The Chapter on gender-based violence and sexual violence defines the government's projects regarding the implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul

Convention), which Iceland ratified in 2018. The project is, inter alia, part of the preparations for Iceland's first hearing, which will take place in 2021. There are also projects that have, on the one hand, the objective of increasing the participation of men and boys in all gender equality activities and on the other hand for all policy-making within the policy area to take better note of their social position. The proposal includes projects that entail an increased emphasis on gender equality within schools, continuing cooperation between the universities' gender equality officers, research into the withdrawal of women from scientific work, boys' withdrawal from upper secondary education, and to decrease gender-based choice of education, inter alia with measures to increase the participation of girls in education in the fields of technology, science and mathematics. Efforts will also be made to ensure an even gender ratio among artists with regard to the availability of cultural events and art under the auspices of the state, as well as demand (consumption of culture). Efforts will also be made to take into account the gender equality perspective in the implementation of the regional development plan.

Finally, it is worth mentioning Iceland's international obligations in the field of gender equality. Iceland has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its optional protocol and has urged other states to enforce its provisions in full. The proposal provides for a project on the introduction of gender equality certification in Iceland's development cooperation in collaboration with the UN Development Programme, UNDP, and for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to continue to emphasise the role of men in gender equality activities in the international arena. The Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources has defined a project on gender and consumption where efforts are to be made to raise awareness of the circular economy, the environmental and social impacts of the fashion and textile industries and the power of consumers to promote acceptable and more environmentally sound manufacturing methods with an emphasis on socially responsible consumption of fashion, reuse and recycling. An emphasis will also be placed on making the voices of women heard with regard to climate issues and for provisions regarding gender mainstreaming to be included in international agreements on trade, environment and climate. Iceland will continue to support the fight for gender equality in the international arena in various ways, not least by being a progressive nation and a model for all things concerning gender equality and a leader in the safeguarding of human rights and progress in the world.

A. THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The Icelandic Gender Equality Fund, which was founded on 19 June 2015 in celebration of the centenary of suffrage for women in Iceland, funds projects and research that aim to promote gender equality in Icelandic society and worldwide. The Fund receives an annual allocation from the state budget for five years, ISK 100 million annually from the beginning of 2016 to the end of 2020. The Fund's administration was transferred to the Icelandic Centre for Research, Rannís, at the beginning of 2019. At the same time, some additional focus points were added to the criteria for determining who would be given allocations to finance projects with the aim of negating gender-based and sexual harassment, gender-based violence and violence in intimate relationships, as well as to educate young people and take preventive measures. According to the proposal, in 2021–2022 a summary will be made of the projects and research projects that have been granted allocations from the Fund, taking into consideration the Fund's objectives.

The Gender Equality Fund is administered by the Prime Minister's Office. The objective of the Fund is to promote the government's gender equality work by granting allocations to projects within the ministries of the Government Offices. The Fund is administered according to rules No. 100/2019, on allocations from the Gender Equality Fund. According to Article 1,

the Fund's objective is to „promote follow-up to projects from the Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action programme so that the results, experience and knowledge gained through the projects can be utilised“.

Article 13 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. [10/2008](#) provides for gender equality officers within the ministries. The role of the gender equality officers is to address and monitor gender equality activities within the areas of competence of the ministries in question and their subordinate bodies, including involvement in gender mainstreaming within each ministry's field of competence. Gender equality officers have a wide range of responsibilities and operate under the Government Offices' working procedures and Gender Equality Programme, which further define their role. Gender equality officers make their own activity plan, the objective of which is to organise and coordinate their work and give an overview of the projects they are responsible for. Gender equality officers oversee the implementation of the Government Offices' Gender Equality Programme and projects within the Action Programme for Gender Equality, as well as other projects they are entrusted with. A legally mandated brief of the progress of the gender equality officers' projects shall be sent to the Centre for Gender Equality along with their annual explanatory reports. It is important for gender equality officers to be given the opportunity to acquire expert knowledge in the field of gender equality by attending courses, lectures and continuing education courses on the development of expert knowledge in the policy area in accordance with the education programme.

The first Government Offices Gender Equality Programme was adopted in 2013, following a wide-ranging consultation with the participation of the staff, whereas before that time each ministry had been operating under its own programme. The Government Offices' second Gender Equality Programme will be in force until March 2020. The objectives of the Action Programme's projects are to ensure, for the Government Offices' staff, the rights provided for in Articles 19–22 of the Gender Equality Act on equal pay and the introduction of the equal pay system, equal opportunities for employment, continuing education and other factors that will increase job skills, harmonise family and work life, as well as measures against gender-based and sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. Each ministry is responsible for enforcing the Government Offices' Gender Equality Programme. The ministries are free to prioritise projects and likewise to determine more projects to be undertaken, via special action programmes for each ministry.

Gender mainstreaming in policy-making and decision-taking is a method for reaching gender equality objectives. The UN Sustainable Development Goals underline the importance of gender equality as both an independent goal and a horizontal goal that encompasses all issues and policy areas. International organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have also placed an emphasis on the importance of mainstreaming for good governance practices.

The Chapter on objectives in the Gender Equality Act, No. [10/2008](#), provides that measures shall be taken towards gender mainstreaming in all policy-making and decision-taking within all sectors of society. Gender mainstreaming is also provided for in Article 17 of the Act: „Gender mainstreaming shall be applied to all policy-making and decision-taking by the ministries and by government institutions operating within their fields of competence. The same applies to all decision-taking within the ministries and institutions as the case may be.“ A mainstreaming project management team was appointed by the then Minister for Social Affairs and Equality on 27 December 2017. The team's role was to draw up a plan for implementing gender mainstreaming into policy-making and decision-taking within the Government Offices and government institutions. Work will continue on a comprehensive implementation plan that will take into account the mainstreaming projects that have already been implemented within the ministries, including in connection with the government's previous Gender Equality Action Programmes, gender equality assessment of government

Bills, the implementation of the Public Finance Act, No. 123/2015, and the plan to introduce gender budgeting for the period of 2019–2023.

Gender budgeting has been applied in drawing up the general budget since 2009. Until 2015 it was mainly a matter of emphasising project work in conjunction with creating knowledge. Gender budgeting became a legal requirement under the Public Finance Act, [No. 123/2015](#). Since then, there have been ongoing efforts include gender mainstreaming in work processes in connection with the fiscal plan and the drawing up of the general budget, with an emphasis on analysing the gender situation within public competences and policy areas. In 2018 the government adopted a five-year plan on gender budgeting for 2019–2023. In the same year, a gender equality assessment was carried out for all the fields of competence of the Government Offices. An abstract of the gender equality assessment was included in the first baseline report on gender budgeting that was published in March 2019. It shows the gender equality situation within all fields of competence within the fiscal plan. Since the introduction of gender budgeting, a great deal of knowledge about the methods of gender budgeting has been accumulated within the administration, as well as about the gender effects of individual fields of competence and policy areas. Gender budgeting has thus become a codified part of the traditional activities of the administration, promoting increased discussion and decision-taking on expenditure and revenues in the light of gender and gender equality considerations.

Althingi adopted a parliamentary resolution on a policy-making regional development plan for the period of 2018–2024 on 11 June 2018. The Plan lays out the state's policy on regional matters and is intended to promote positive regional development and increase regional competitiveness, as well as that of the country as a whole. The main objective of the regional development plan is to equalise the employment and service opportunities of all the inhabitants of the country, equalise living standards and promote sustainable development of the regions. The Plan includes 54 measures, costing in total ISK 3,5 billion during the period, that will either lead to direct measures or to integration with measures within other official plans, in order to reach the aforementioned main objective. The aim is, with regard to the objectives of the regional development plan and the government's emphasis on gender equality, to make gender equality assessments of the individual measures of the regional development plan for 2018–2024 and of the allocations of funds for them with regard to the perspectives of general equality and gender equality.

B. THE LABOUR MARKET – EQUAL PAY

The Act on Equal Pay Certification entered into force on 1 January 2018. The enforcement of the Act will continue in a focused manner, as the objective is for all companies and institutions covered by it to have received equal pay certification by the end of 2023. Ways will be sought to make the implementation process of equal pay systems as smooth as possible, both for the official and public market, including by developing a tool for job classification and pay analysis and an improved equal pay certification toolbox on the Government Offices' website. Targeted work will also be undertaken for promotion and education activities concerning accredited certification of equal pay systems under regulation No. 1030/2017 on the Equal Pay Certification of Companies and Institutions on the Basis of the Equal Pay Standard. Additionally, regular impact assessments will be made of the effects of the Act on pay development, employee benefits and job development opportunities of men and women. The Centre for Gender Equality gathers information on the certification of the equal pay systems of companies and institutions and publishes a brief in the minister's biennial report on the situation and development of gender equality. The regulatory framework for the implementation of the certification service provider's assessments and the monitoring of the equal pay certification process will be reinforced and the equal pay certification standard, *ÍST 85 Equal wage management system - Requirements and guidance*,

will be updated.

The government and social partner organisations' Action Group on Equal Pay was first appointed by the Minister for Welfare in December 2012. The Action Group was appointed for two years with a possibility of extension, and its appointment was extended twice, or until the end of 2018. The minister appointed the chairperson and the Action Group was composed of representatives of the cross-industry organisations of wage earners in the labour market and their contracting parties, i.e. the Icelandic Federation of Labour, the Federation of State and Municipal Employees, the Icelandic Confederation of University Graduates, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Teachers' Association of Iceland, The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities and the Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise. A specialist from the Ministry of Welfare worked with the Action Group. The Action Group was, according to its official duty regulation, inter alia expected to coordinate research into gender-based pay differences, oversee the introduction of the equal pay standard, make proposals for policy development regarding ways to alter the gender-based division of work in the Icelandic labour market and disseminate information and advice on equal pay to institutions and companies.

During the term of validity of the government's new Action Programme, efforts will be made to follow up on the projects set out in the proposals of the Action Group on Equal Pay and Gender Equality in the Labour Market. The proposals are based on research, projects and consultation within the Action Group and assume, inter alia, that regular, labour market-wide research into the pay differences between men and women will continue. Specific attention will be paid to investigating the effects of the introduction of equal pay certification on pay differences and pay development in the labour market. There is a shortage of research into how the responsibility of taking care of others is divided when family duties overlap with working hours, e.g. with regard to children's sick days, teacher's professional development days and parents' school-related activities. Research shall also be made into the lack of transparency regarding pay information, its effects on the gender pay gap and the development and structure of collective pay agreements in the labour market shall be reviewed in order to evaluate whether gender-based pay differences can be traced to systemic factors within them.

The Act on Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards entered into force in 2013 (cf. Act No. [13/2010](#) Amending the Act on Public Limited-liability Companies and the Act on Private Limited-liability Companies). The Act states that the boards of public and private limited-liability companies that employ more than 50 employees on an annual basis shall have a representative of each gender when the board is composed of three persons and when there are more than three board members, a minimum ratio of 40 % shall be ensured for each gender. The objective of the amendment was to promote a more equal ratio of women and men in power positions within public and private limited-liability companies, with increased transparency and improved access to information. This aim of the legislation reflects the objectives of the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, which states that efforts shall be made to equalise the influence of women and men in society.

In 2014 the Centre for Gender Equality, in collaboration with the Icelandic Stock Exchange, the Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise and the University of Reykjavik, conducted a survey of the governance of Icelandic companies with the aim of, inter alia, examining how successful the companies that fall under the legislation had been in fulfilling this legal obligation. The survey showed an increase in the number of women on company boards. It also showed that the attitude towards the legislation was developing into a more positive direction, and that the opinion of the board members on whether the legislation would improve the governance was positive. However, the survey did show that the selection process for the boards was weak, but in order to be able to draw any concrete conclusions

about the results of the legislation it would have to be clear that the most qualified individuals had been chosen to serve on the board. The researchers pointed out that for a further survey of the effects of the legislation, further research must be made to determine what real influence women serving on boards have on their governance and whether an increased diversity on boards will lead to a change in procedures and better decision-taking. The Minister of Tourism, Industry and Innovation will evaluate the legislation on gender ratios on corporate boards during the period of validity of the government's Action Programme for Gender Equality. An analysis would be made of whether the legislation's objectives were being fulfilled and what its real benefits are, including with regard to the objectives of the Gender Equality Act on the equal influence of women and men in society. Following the analysis, work would be started on analysing ways for improvement, should it be considered necessary.

The objectives of the Act on Maternity and Parental Leave, No. [95/2000](#) are to ensure that a baby can enjoy being with both its parents and to make it possible for parents to harmonise family and work life. One of the main challenges in fulfilling the objectives of that legislation is to ensure that both parents have the chance to care for their baby during parental leave without a considerable disruption of their economical or employment situation. Statistics supplied by the Directorate of Labour suggest that since 2009, the number of fathers who utilised their right to parental leave fell steadily until 2014. During the revision of the parental leave system in the last few years the government has therefore focused on raising the maximum payments to parents who utilise their right to parental leave in order to increase the likelihood that parents, especially fathers, will fully utilise their right to parental leave. Therefore, the maximum payments to parents on parental leave have been raised incrementally from ISK 500,000 per month in 2017, to ISK 600,000 for parents of babies that are born, adopted or permanently fostered on or after 1 January 2019. The number of fathers who utilised their right to parental leave went up with the raising of the maximum parental leave payments. In 2020–2021 the aggregate right of parents to parental leave will be increased from nine to twelve months in two steps, where each parent will have an individual right to five months of parental leave, plus an additional two months of shared rights. The longer parental leave will benefit the parents of babies who are born, adopted or permanently fostered after, respectively, 1 January 2020 and 1 January 2021. These measures are made in accordance with the proposals of the Working Group on Future Policy With Regard to Parental Leave, which stated that the principal object should be for both parents to fully utilise their right to parental leave.

Svanni – the Women's Loan Guarantee Fund, has been operated in its current form since 2011 and is owned by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Industries and Innovation and the City of Reykjavik. The aim of the fund is to continue to support innovative women's business projects by providing guarantees for loans. The project has been operated in collaboration with financial institutions and consultants in the field of project implementation. A report issued by the Fund's governing board in 2019 states that the Fund has received a total of 158 applications and a total of 22 loan guarantees have been granted to date. The Fund's governing board has been planning its revision and has made proposals to its owners regarding its continuing operations and future role and during the new Programme's period of validity the Fund's operations will be revised.

C. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) entered into force on 1 August 2018. The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding international convention that takes a comprehensive approach to eradicating violence against women and provides for the rights of victims and obligations for public entities to ensure preventive measures, give protection and

assist women who are victims of violence, educate the public, authorities and specialists, and to offer solutions and therapy to perpetrators. Iceland's ratification of the Istanbul Convention is in keeping with the government's objectives on measures to eradicate gender-based and sexual violence, including violence in intimate relationships. The implementation of an Action Plan under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, regarding the treatment of sexual offences within the justice system in 2018–2022, is part of the fulfilment of that objective, as is the appointment of a steering group on comprehensive improvements with regards to sexual violence, which, inter alia, is working on proposals for measures against digital violence, responses to the #metoo stories of women and a revision of policies with regard to preventive measures and education on sexual violence and harassment.

The project to draw up a policy-making national plan on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention is based on Article 10 of the Convention, which provides for the definition of the responsibilities of the public sector for coordinating, implementing and monitoring of measures inherent to their obligations under the Convention. The national plan will also have the objective to create an overview of the introduction of legislation and government measures for the implementation of the Convention and to prepare for Iceland's first hearing before the Council of Europe's supervisory committee for the implementation of its obligations under the Convention, which will take place in 2021.

The Icelandic police's workplaces are characterised by a great deal of gender division between departments, especially among police officers, where the ratio of women to men decreases the higher up the ranks one looks. A 2013 survey of work culture and gender relations within the police force revealed that although women were 17–33% of graduates from the police training program in 1999 to 2013, the percentage of women among low-ranking police officers was only 12.6 %. At the same time, research has shown that people tend to feel more comfortable working in mixed workplaces, especially where services to the public, both men and women, characterises the work carried out, such as law enforcement. It is therefore important for the service to take both genders into consideration and that the work environment be an attractive place for individuals regardless of their gender.

The percentage of women has increased since the survey was made and had risen to 21 % in 2018. However, the survey also revealed a bigger percentage of withdrawal from the job by women than by men, which was, inter alia, traced to the work culture within the police force, which was characterised by bullying, sexual harassment and negative attitudes towards women. Manifold measures were made following the survey, including education about gender equality. Despite the measures taken, not many women have applied for available positions within the police force, especially in the upper ranks. Reports from 2018 on the challenges and opportunities in the equal rights activities within the Reykjavik area police force show that workplace culture, negative attitudes towards women and the process used in hiring and promotion are the dominating reasons. The results show that around half of the staff think that the position of women within the agency is worse than that of the men, while the other half thinks that the gender equality situation is just fine. There are considerable differences between the genders, with the majority of the men thinking that the positions and opportunities of the genders are equal, whereas only a small percentage of the women believes this to be the case. The objective of the project is to address the above-mentioned challenges by making a follow-up survey of these factors and taking measures based on the outcome.

D. GENDER EQUALITY, EDUCATION AND CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Work on drawing up an educational policy to be used until 2030 is ongoing. It will focus on education for all and on giving everyone a chance to develop on their own terms and foster

their talents for studying, sports and other interests. In order for this to happen, all gender imbalances within the educational system need to be corrected and gender equality education must be increased even more, cf. the Action Programme's proposals for measures. The main issue to be addressed is to take measures to decrease gender-based withdrawal from upper secondary education, which is higher for boys than for girls and can be partially explained by different results from exams at the end of lower secondary school. The withdrawal of boys and of children of foreign origin will therefore be specifically examined, since the PISA-results indicate that these groups have an increased likelihood of withdrawal. The collection and analysis of data for this group of students must be improved, followed by a definition of key numbers so that the development of withdrawals can be monitored and appropriate measures taken. Measures to reduce gender-based education choices will continue, such as the presentations for girls in the 10th grade of lower secondary school to show them the opportunities for continuing education in computer science, engineering and other sciences that were made in collaboration between the University of Reykjavik and the government and social partner organisations' Action Group on Equal Pay, with a grant from the Gender Equality Fund. Efforts to increase the number of men in the teaching profession and balance the gender ratio in the ranks of scholars, both of which affect what kinds of role models children and young people can see, shall continue, as well as the dissemination of knowledge and creative efforts. The consultation forum of the universities' gender equality officers will continue to operate. Its objective is to raise awareness and support the creation of knowledge about gender equality within the university community. At the same time, gender equality education for teachers will be continued, along with the dissemination of practical information about educational materials suitable for students in preschools, primary and lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. A safe educational environment, free of gender-based and sexual harassment, threats and violence will continue to be promoted. Special emphasis will be placed on the safety of children, young people and adults in sports and youth activities, in relation to the Act on Youth Communication Officers that was adopted by Althingi on 15 May 2019, and other proposals that were made in a 2018 report by a working group on measures against sexual harassment and violent behaviour in sports and youth activities. Finally, the allocation of funds for cultural and artistic activities, as well as demand by the state, will be examined from the perspective of gender and gender equality.

E. MEN AND EQUALITY

The subject of men and gender equality spans most areas of gender equality matters. In the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. [10/2008](#) a specific provision states that the Centre for Gender Equality shall increase „the level of activity in gender equality issues, i.e. [*sic*] by greater involvement of men in gender equality work“. In the last several years the Centre for Gender Equality has participated in research projects, both locally and abroad, with the objective of explaining the effects of ideas about masculinity on issues including health, quality of life, participation in caring for others and the development of the labour market. In light of the stories of women and girls under the #metoo hash tag, it is proposed that awareness should be raised on the effects of ideas about masculinity on gender-based and sexual harassment and violent behaviour, personal boundaries and consent.

In 2017 the percentage of Icelanders over the age of 18 using the website *Heilsuvera* to communicate with healthcare providers was 13 %. The goal is to increase this percentage to 30 % by 2020 and to 60 % by 2023. Data on those logging into Heilsuvera are analysed by gender and age and the data from 1 June 2016 to 18 November 2018 indicate that a considerably larger number of women logged into Heilsuvera during that time period or 63 %, while men were only 37 % of users. The gender ratio evens out after the age of 70 and the same applies to log-ins by parents on behalf of their children. Correspondingly, women use

healthcare services more than men. It can be assumed that women bring children more often to healthcare centres than men do, since it would reflect the fact that women are more likely to do unpaid work in caring for others and looking after the home. However, men use Heilsuvera as much as women do when it comes to monitoring their children's health, but they do not use it for communications regarding their own health until after they turn seventy. After that age there is no discernible gender difference in the use of the website. This lines up with research results that show that generally speaking, women are more likely than men to think they are in poor health and men are less likely to seek medical attention than women. This may be a possible explanation for why men use Heilsuvera less than women do. The objective of the project is to examine the reasons behind the differing usage of men and women on the one hand and men by age on the other, with the aim of increasing the number of male users along with increasing the general usership of Heilsuvera.

F. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The fashion and textile industries are among the biggest producing industries in the world, as well as being resource heavy and causing extensive pollution on a global scale. There are multiple and manifold challenges to be faced at the provision and production end of the circular economy. Large corporations in the fashion industry put their production up for tenders to the lowest bidders, who exploit the conditions in production areas where the workers earn as little as 2 USD per day. This industry therefore bases its existence on cheap labour, mostly composed of young women. The environmental impacts of this industry are very bad and include both water-intensive production methods and the use of dangerous chemicals that in many places are dumped into the surrounding area without purification, causing environmental damage and negative impacts on the living conditions of the inhabitants. The production's climate impacts are also extensive, as consumption of clothing has increased by 60 % since the year 2000 and worldwide the total carbon dioxide emissions from the production of fashion items is thought to be 5 %, mainly due to the coal used to produce energy for the factories. The useful life of each article of clothing has likewise become shorter, thus increasing waste, which is a persistent and growing problem. Therefore, the industry as a whole has a negative impact on the ecosystems of the earth, which has a domino effect that has the biggest impact on the poorer and less powerful sections of society. Consumers affect both the demand and the dominating production and business models which are reflected in the pay and working conditions of women labourers, the exploitation of natural resources and the impacts on the environment around the production facility. There are countless opportunities to do better, both with regard to the circumstances of women labourers as well as those of others who are affected by the fashion and textile industries. Therefore, the Action Programme proposes a project to educate consumers and raise their awareness of the effects their own consumer behaviour has on the conditions and rights of women at the places of production and on their livelihoods, as well as the impacts of the production on natural resources and the environment. The project will also aim to underline the importance of reuse and recycling.

Gender equality is one of Iceland's key points of emphasis within the United Nations Human Rights Council and within other international institutions. Iceland and Suriname took the initiative in creating a venue for men to discuss gender equality matters in 2015, so-called barber-shop conferences, where men are urged to shoulder responsibility and apply themselves for the good of gender equality. A specific emphasis was placed on the most widespread human rights violation in the world, which is violence against women. The barber-shop conferences are Iceland's contribution to the UN Women HeForShe campaign and the Icelandic government and UN Women have designed a toolbox for how best to hold barber-shop conferences and events intended to empower men to participate in gender

equality activities. In the last few years, the Icelandic diplomatic service has held 15 barber-shop conferences within international organisations which Iceland is a member of, e.g. the United Nations in New York, at NATO headquarters, the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. The Icelandic government has also held barber-shop conferences within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in Althingi. The proposal here is to continue on the same path towards increasing the ownership and participation of men in gender equality activities.

The policy for Iceland's international development cooperation in 2019–2023 is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals' vision of the future as well as placing respect for human rights and gender equality at the fore. One of the ten Sustainable Development Goals the policy sets is a special goal designed to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition, there is an emphasis on incorporating gender mainstreaming into most projects and contributions to development cooperation, as well as supporting advocacy in this policy field. Policy-making work in keeping with this policy was begun within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Directorate for Development Cooperation in 2018, in order to elaborate a strategy for implementation in the field of gender equality within the fields of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, to support the implementation of an entirely new development cooperation policy, especially objectives and emphases on gender equality. The Directorate for Development Cooperation considers that by improving the inner management processes and knowledge of its staff about gender equality and gender mainstreaming, it will promote a more efficient implementation of the development cooperation policy. To this end, the Directorate for Development Cooperation examined several methods and afterwards decided to introduce a gender equality certification process using the methodology of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which was designed for institutions in the field of development cooperation. The Directorate designed and introduced a gender equality tool in 2011, the *Gender Equality Seal Programme*. It is proposed that the UNDP gender equality certification be introduced, making Iceland the first of the OECD and DAC member states to introduce gender equality certification into bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. The process begins with a thorough analysis and evaluation of the situation, followed by a plan for improving the internal work and implementation of the policy. At the end of the process, an external certification is carried out by the UNDP's experts.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Iceland's diplomatic missions serve a large number of companies seeking to enter foreign markets, especially small and medium sized enterprises that in many cases are managed by women. The Promote Iceland Agency is part of this policy area and falls under Act No. [38/2010](#), with subsequent amendments. The Ministry's trade services are carried out in close cooperation with 17 bilateral Icelandic diplomatic missions in Asia, Europe and North America. There are 12 trade and cultural attachés working in this field and rendering varied services related to trade and cultural activity efforts by Icelandic companies. The majority of the trade attachés are women, and the number of women serving as ambassadors in bilateral diplomatic missions is growing. The foreign service works closely with the Promote Iceland Agency, the Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise, the Iceland Chamber of Commerce and bilateral Chambers and other organisations in the field of foreign trade. The Promote Iceland Agency is working on making a long-term governmental and economic sector policy for foreign trade that will guarantee and clarify the prioritisation of the marketing of Iceland and marketing projects that will give the best support to increased exports and professional and swift support for the companies that will give measurable returns in increased exports of goods and services. The long-term policy will be adopted by the newly established export and marketing committee. The committee has 36 general members, in addition to five ministers, and 55 % of the members and their alternates are women. The

Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also working on even more effective ways to equalise the ratio of women on trade mission committees and other committees and working groups pertaining to foreign trade. Part of this process is also to continue to develop the reputation (trademark) Iceland has built up as a country of gender equality and the ideology Iceland wishes to be a leading model for in the international arena. At Iceland's initiative, the EFTA model for agreements is now being updated to add provisions by which signatory states commit themselves to establishing a trade environment offering equal opportunities to both genders, to enable the empowerment of women, remove gender-based obstacles in international trade and ensure equal rights for both genders in the labour market. Emphasis will be placed on clearing away gender-specific trade obstacles and spreading the knowledge about gender equality that has been gained in Iceland, e.g. through EEA Grants. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs will strive to have gender equality provisions inserted into international trade agreements, both under EFTA and in other bilateral agreements. These provisions will oblige the signatory states to create together a trade environment of equal opportunities for both genders, enable the empowerment of women, remove gender-based obstacles in trade and ensure equal rights for both genders in the labour market. Additionally, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will continue to bring up gender equality in discussions within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and follow up on the declaration on the empowerment of women and participation in international trade that was signed by over 120 WTO member states during the ministerial meeting of the Organisation in 2017 and which was drawn up by a working group led by Iceland in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Botswana.

Attached document I

Report by the Minister for Social Affairs and Equality on the situation and development of gender equality affairs in 2015–2017

www.althingi.is/altext/pdf/150/fylgiskjol/s0102-f_I.pdf

Attached document II

Reply by the Minister for Social Affairs and Equality to an enquiry by Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir on the projects of the Parliamentary Resolution on an Action Programme for Gender Equality, parliamentary document 787, case no. 254, 149th legislative assembly.

www.althingi.is/altext/pdf/150/fylgiskjol/s0102-f_II.pdf

