



# Iceland's report on Beijing +25

Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)



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# Introduction

In 2020 the global community marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Leading up to the anniversary, member states are to submit country reports, that will form part of regional reports, which in turn will be collated in a global report to celebrate Beijing +25.

The global community has come a long way since the first Women's Conference in Mexico in 1975 and the first World Plan of Action adopted in Beijing in 1995. The ongoing global review of the Beijing Plan of Action and the ambitious aim of the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a momentum to review both our progresses and challenges, as well as an opportunity to strengthen our political efforts for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, once and for all.

Iceland is fully committed to implementing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development both nationally and internationally. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been integrated into government policy on social, economic and environmental affairs, with a particular emphasis on building a peaceful and just society, free from fear and violence.

The promotion of human rights for all, including LGBTI persons, is a cornerstone in Iceland's foreign policy and its international development cooperation - in line with Agenda 2030 and the Government's domestic priorities. In particular, Iceland has been a vocal champion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a key driver for the achievement of the SDGs. The Icelandic government regards gender equality and women's empowerment as a policy priority. This is reflected both in Iceland's international development cooperation and all international advocacy calls for the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls as a prerequisite for peace, progress and development.

Further, gender equality is generally a priority when Iceland is chairing regional co-operations. In 2019 Iceland holds, among other things, the Presidency of the Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Nordic Baltic Constituency of the World Bank. Gender equality issues are among Iceland's focus areas in the United Nations Human Rights Council, which is clearly reflected in its presentations and advocacy.

The SDGs serve as guiding principles in Iceland's development cooperation, as the government's main goal in development work is to reduce poverty and hunger and to promote general welfare based on gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. New initiatives aim to build public-private partnerships in international development cooperation, as the SDGs will not be met unless the private sector is a part of the solution.

Internationally, Iceland shares its expertise in gender equality, land restoration and the use of sustainable natural marine and energy resources through its international cooperation contributing to global progress on SDGs 5, 7, 13, 14 and 15. The promotion of human rights for all, including LGBTI persons, is a cornerstone in Iceland's foreign policy and its international development cooperation - in line with Agenda 2030 and the Government's domestic priorities. In particular, Iceland has been a vocal champion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a key driver for the achievement of the SDGs.

The World Economic Forum's latest report, published in December 2018, states that gender equality is nowhere greater than in Iceland, based on the Forum's methodology. Iceland topped the Gender Gap Index, which includes 144 countries, for the tenth year in a row. Despite real success in many areas, Iceland still faces variety of challenges and has a long way to go before closing remaining gender gaps.

The first comprehensive Icelandic legislation on equal rights and equal status of women and men was adopted in 1976. Government policy on gender equality was formulated and a special Gender Equality Council established to enforce the legislation. The legislation was amended by law in 1985, 1991, 2000, and 2008, and is currently under revision to both build on the progress made and to meet both prevailing and new challenges to the status of gender equality.

Iceland continues to work to secure de jure and de facto gender equality, to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls in order to leave no groups or individuals behind.

# About the report

This report reflects the continued commitment of Iceland as a UN member state to be accountable to gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women and answers a questionnaire issued by the UN to its member states. The report was prepared in accordance with the guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews issued by UN Women. It primarily cites examples of measures that the Government of Iceland has implemented in the field of gender equality and provides an overview of selected achievements, challenges and priorities during the past five years and for the five years to come. Thus, the report does not provide an overall or exhaustive description or analysis of the status of women's rights and gender equality in Iceland.

The reports consist of six parts corresponding to the questionnaire issued by the UN to its member states. Several of the questions in the questionnaire largely overlap. Iceland has chosen to provide a coordinated answer to the questions in the six overarching dimensions of the questionnaire. This is done to deliver a holistic report which can be read without consulting the questionnaire. Civil society organizations in the area of gender equality have submitted examples of projects contributing to the implementation of the BPfA. These are provided in an appendix.

The Prime Minister's Office of Iceland has coordinated the reporting process, including all relevant ministries and public authorities. The report's main aim is to describe primary achievements, challenges and priorities in the progress towards gender equality providing examples of government policies, projects/interventions/measures and new legislation.

## Framework for the Icelandic gender equality policy and coordination mechanisms

The purpose of the overview in this chapter is to provide information about the structure and status of gender equality in Iceland including the context, as well as the legal and practical aspects of gender equality in Iceland.

### International conventions

The Icelandic Government signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 24 July 1980. The date of ratification was 18 June 1985. The Optional Protocol to the Convention was acceded to 6 March 2001. The Icelandic Government accepted the Inquiry procedure under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the same date. Regarding the scope of restrictions, limitations or derogations from the provisions of the treaties, justifying circumstances and the timeframe envisaged for their withdrawal, reference is made to the common core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.26 of 24 June 1993).

In April 2018, Iceland ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of 2011 (Istanbul Convention). The Convention provides for the rights of victims/survivors and the obligations of public bodies to protect and assist women subjected to violence, to educate the public, government and professionals, to take preventive measures against violence, and provide solutions and treatment for perpetrators of violence.

Icelandic law is based on a dualistic system, whereby international conventions ratified by Iceland must be incorporated into national legislation through legal amendments. Legal amendments to ensure that national legislation conforms with the Istanbul Convention were introduced ahead of the ratification as in the Icelandic legal system, stipulations in international agreements cannot be directly applied to individuals or entities without implementing legislation. However, existing laws must be interpreted in accordance with international law, both customary law and international agreements.

### Legal Framework

The principle of equality is specifically addressed in a provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland (see Article 65 of the Constitution, No. 33/1944, cf. the Constitutional Law Act, No. 97/1995), stating that men and women shall have equal rights in every respect. The Constitutional Act of 1995 introduced fundamental



human rights provisions to the Constitution with older provisions repealed or amended. Human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of religion, the right to privacy, home and family life, and freedom of association and assembly are now guaranteed. Iceland's long-term objective is to ensure that universal human rights and fundamental freedoms become a reality for everyone in Iceland as is stated in Article 65 of the Icelandic Constitution.

The first legislation addressing gender equality in Iceland was adopted in 1911<sup>1</sup> (Act no. 37/1911) which concerned their right to education, scholarships and work of women in the public sector. Nearly fifty years later, in 1961, the next step was taken with the adoption of Act no. 60/1961 about parity of wages for women and men in, inter alia, factory, retail and office work, as well as other work still often considered as "women's work".

The first comprehensive gender equality legislation was adapted in 1976. The law's main objective was to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects. The Act was revised in 1985, 1991, 2000 and lastly in 2008 when a new Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008 (hereinafter 'the Gender Equality Act') was adopted. The Gender Equality Act is relatively broad in scope, covering the whole range of gender issues. The substantive provisions apply both outside and within the labour market, including prohibiting discrimination and sexual harassment, wage equality, coordinating family and working life, equal access to education and more. The Act permits, for example, special measures to be taken to equalize the position of the genders in the labour market and stipulate that appropriate consideration is given to pregnancy and childbirth as to prevent disadvantage to or discrimination against women. The Gender Equality Act aims to establish and maintain equality and equal opportunities and thus equalize the status of women and men in all areas of society.

This aim shall be reached by:

- Gender mainstreaming in all spheres of the society
- Increasing education and awareness-raising on gender equality
- Working towards equal influence of women and men in decision-making and policymaking in the society

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<sup>1</sup> Act no. 37/1911 about the right of women to education, scholarships, and office.

- Analyzing statistics according to gender
- Increasing research in gender studies
- Working against wage discrimination and other forms of gender-based discrimination on the employment market
- Working against gender-based violence and harassment
- Enabling both women and men to reconcile their work and family life
- Changing traditional gender images and working against negative stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men.

During the last decade, several legislative changes addressing gender equality issues have taken place. The legislation has been amended by Acts No. 162/2010, No. 126/2011, No. 62/2014 and No. 79/2015, No. 117/2016, No. 56/2017.

In 2017, the Gender Equality Act was amended a new sub-article was added to article 19 which states the principle of equal pay for men and women. These changes came into force on January 1 2018. The article stipulates that companies and institutions employing 25 or more workers are required to obtain equal pay certification of their equal pay system and its implementation. The purpose of this obligatory certification is to enforce the current legislation prohibiting discriminatory practices based on gender and enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value for men and women working for the same employer. Later in this report a discussion on equal pay certification will follow.

Currently, both the Gender Equality Act and the equality administration are under revision. The point of departure is to ensure the relevance of the law and the administration considering latest national and international developments with regard to equality, human rights protection and anti-discrimination.

## A new Anti-Discrimination Legislation

A comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation was adopted in the Icelandic Parliament on June 25 2018, entering into force 1 September the same year, namely, the Act on Equal Treatment on the Labour Market, no. 86/2018, and the Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Racial and Ethnic Origin, no. 85/2018. The Act on Equal Treatment on the Labor Market applies to the equal treatment of individuals on the labor market, irrespective of their racial and/or ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, reduced working capacity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual characteristics or gender expression.

The Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Racial and Ethnic Origin applies to equal treatment of individuals outside the labor market. That means e.g. in relation to social protection, including social security and healthcare, social advantages, education and access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing.

The acts are modeled on the EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and the EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. However, the Act on Equal Treatment on the Labor Market no. 86/2018 introduces more protective grounds compared to the EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC.

The acts do not cover differences of treatment based on nationality and are without prejudice to provisions and conditions relating to the entry into and residence of third-country nationals and stateless persons in the territory of Member States, and to any treatment which arises from the legal status of the third-country nationals and stateless persons concerned.

The Prime Minister's Office supervises the acts. The Directorate for Equality is responsible for the application of the acts. Furthermore, individuals that consider that violations of the acts have been committed can submit their cases to the Gender Equality Complaints Committee. Cases shall be submitted to the Complaints Committee in writing within six months of the date when the alleged violation of the acts was known, or from the time when a situation regarded as an infringement of the acts came to an end, or from the time when the person concerned became aware of the alleged violation.

## State Administration general and coordinative responsibility

### Prime Minister's Office

The policy area of gender equality moved from the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare to the Prime Minister's Office on 1 January 2019. The primary role of the Prime Minister's Office is the enforcement of the Gender Equality and Anti-discrimination Acts as well as overall governmental coordination. The move has also the potential to advance further policy making on gender equality and gender mainstreaming of policies and decision in all lines of ministries and state institutions.

### The Directorate of Equality

The Directorate of Equality is an institution under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office which supervises the implementation of the Gender Equality Act, provides advice, public education and information concerning gender equality for the government and municipal authorities, institutions, companies, individuals and non-governmental organizations and initiates special work, research and projects in the policy field. It also helps, when needed, with preparing complaints for the Gender Equality Complaints Committee.

### The Gender Equality Council

The Prime Minister appoints a Gender Equality Council after each parliamentary election. It consists of eleven representatives from the social partners, organizations of the women's movement, and the association of local authorities. The task of the council is to work on policymaking of gender equality issues with emphasis on the labor market and on the reconciliation of work and family life.

### The Equality Complaints Committee

The Equality Complaints Committee has been in place since 1991. It consists of three lawyers appointed for period of three years. The task of the Equality Complaints Committee is to examine cases and to deliver a ruling in writing on whether provisions of the Gender Equality and the Anti-Discrimination Acts have been violated. The Committee's rulings may not be referred to a higher authority. In cases that may be expected to influence policy on the labor market, the committee shall seek comments from the national federations of workers and employees before delivering its ruling. The rulings of the Complaints Committee shall be

binding for the parties to each case. The parties may refer the committee's rulings to the courts. The Directorate of Equality, the Gender Equality Council and the Complaints Committee operate independently of each other.

## Gender Equality Officers

The Gender Equality Act introduces gender equality officers (GEO) in each ministry. They are, according to the law, supposed to have "expert knowledge of gender equality issues" while reality is that only one officer in the Ministry of Education and Culture is a full-time expert. The other officers serve as GEO on top of their actual job and with different level of expertise on gender equality issues.

## The Gender Equality Forum

According to the Gender Equality Act, the Minister responsible for Gender Equality shall issue a report on the status and development in the area of gender equality and host the Gender Equality Forum to discuss the report with stakeholders. The report shall provide an overview of the progress made on implementing the Governmental Action Plan on Gender Equality as well as other issues reflecting the objectives of the Gender Equality Act. The report and the forum are to be conducted bi-annually or twice during each government's four-year mandate period. The forum has been convened four times since the entry into force of the 2008 Gender Equality Act, e.g. in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2018.

## Ministerial Committee on Equality

In December 2017, the government approved the appointment of a Ministerial Committee on Gender Equality in accordance with the government's objective to increase the focus on gender equality issues. The Prime Minister chairs the Committee and other members are the Minister of Social Affairs and Children, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, and the Minister of Health.

Such a committee had first been established in 2009 consisting of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. The aim was to elevate the status of gender equality issues within the Government, to ensure that gender perspectives were taken into account while considering measures to stimulate the economy and austerity measures, and close the gender pay gap. Its role, together with the Ministry of Justice, was also to combat human trafficking and intimate partner violence.

## The local authority's equality committees

Following local government elections, the municipalities appoint Gender Equality Committees. In recent years, larger municipalities have widened the scope of their equal opportunities work from focus on solely gender to an overall equality approach. Hence, the city of Reykjavík has a human rights committee and a human rights policy since 2006, instead of a gender equality committee and a gender equality plan and is increasingly focusing on prevention and response to intersectional discrimination. Moreover, Akureyri has a society and human rights committee, and Hafnarfjörður has a democracy and a gender equality committee.

## Government Policies for Gender Equality

### Plan of Action for Gender Equality

Within a year from the election of a new parliament, the Minister for gender equality must submit a proposal for a parliamentary resolution on a four-year plan of action for gender equality. In the creation process of the resolution, the Minister receives proposals from individual ministries, the Directorate of Equality and the Gender Equality Council and reflects on the progress made at the bi-annual Gender Equality Forum.

The Plan of Action for Gender Equality aims to address the gap between the objectives of the Gender Equality Act or political aspirations and the reality on the ground by introducing a set of special measures or interventions intended to correct the identified gender equality deficits and securing gender equality in Icelandic society. As such, the Action Plan illustrates the government's emphasis and priorities in the field of gender equality issues at each time. The parliamentary resolution on the plan of action for the years 2016-2019 was passed by the parliament in September 2016. It was the sixth resolution on this subject since 1986. The plan outlines 21 measures to be implemented during the four-year period. It is divided into several chapters, each addressing a different thematic area/focus.

The 2016-2019 Action Plan for Gender Equality's point of departure are the objectives of the Gender Equality Act, the gender equality provisions of other legislation and the aspirations set out in the Agreement of the Coalition Partners. As such, the Action Plan is a compilation of "special measures" trying to cover the gap between the legal objectives or political aspirations and the reality on the ground. A new Action Plan for Gender Equality for the period 2020-2023 consisting of 24 interventions will be submitted to parliament in September 2019. Some of the interventions are continuation from the current plan while others are new.

### The Icelandic Gender Equality Fund

A parliamentary resolution from June 2015 established the Icelandic Equality Fund with the aim to fund projects and research promoting gender equality both nationally and internationally. The fund receives 100 million Icelandic Krona annually for five years. One of the key contributions of the fund is enabling more evidence-based policy and decision making in the area of gender equality. Grants from the

fund have been allocated four times and have funded a total of 113 out of 360 applications.

## Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Budgeting

Gender mainstreaming was first mentioned in the Icelandic context in the governmental Plan of Action in 1998. The 2008 Gender Equality Act made gender mainstreaming a legal requirement as follows: “gender mainstreaming shall be observed in all policy-making and planning on the part of the ministries and the public institutions operating under their realm. The same shall apply, as appropriate, to all decision-making within ministries and institutions.”

In 2008, the Directorate for Equality started working on a project called Side by Side, a gender-mainstreaming project funded by the EU Progress Programme. The aim of the project was to implement and develop gender mainstreaming into all national policies and activities in Iceland. The project began with providing training in gender mainstreaming for top managers in ministries in order to ensure their support and understanding of gender mainstreaming. Training was also provided for the middle managers of the government ministries, the division and department heads in the ministries and municipalities, as well as the top management of key public agencies and municipalities. A brochure for managers on gender mainstreaming was published as well as a handbook, which has been used in two universities in courses in gender studies and public management. The work on gender mainstreaming has continued in different fields, mainly focusing on gender responsive budgeting.

The implementation of gender responsive budgeting in Iceland started in 2009. To begin with, the focus was on information gathering, planning and strategizing. A Steering Committee was appointed with participants from all ministries and a project manager was hired by the Ministry of Economics and Financial Affairs. In the years 2010 to 2011, all ministries worked on pilot projects regarding gender responsive budgeting. There were seventeen projects in total and the results were presented in the 2012 state budget proposal. The pilot projects led to increased knowledge in gender budgeting and some of them did result in changing work processes and decisions.

As of 1 January 2016, the Organic Budget Law No. 123/2015 entered into force. The law makes gender budgeting a legal requirement. In 2015, the government approved a five-year plan for the period 2015-2019. This new plan emphasizes utilizing gender budgeting in decision making processes. Other emphasizes are;



participation of all ministries, integration of gender budgeting into daily operations, learning by doing, knowledge creation, gender impact assessments of law proposals, analysis of gender effects of budget proposals, short-term projects, gender budgeting included in the state budget proposal, gender disaggregated statistics, cooperation and education. Lastly, at the end of year 2017, a working group was appointed by the Minister of Equality to develop a comprehensive plan for the implementation of gender mainstreaming of policies and decision of all ministries and state institutions. The work of the group is still in progress.

In addition, a handbook on preparation of bills of laws issued by the Prime Minister's Office is a guiding document stipulating gender assessments of governmental bills of laws. Gender impact assessments in legislative drafting are generally performed by public servants in charge of drafting a law or policy and in consultation with the gender equality expert in each ministry.

## Gender Disaggregated Data

Gender statistics are compiled in a regular manner as a part of monitoring compliance with the Gender Equality Act and for implementing gender budgeting since it was introduced in the year of 2009. In collaboration with Statistics Iceland, the publication *Women and Men in Iceland* is published every year both in Icelandic and English by the Directorate of Equality. In addition, besides regular sex-disaggregated labour statistics, Statistics Iceland has in collaboration with the Action Group on Equal Pay (cooperation between the social partners and the Government) published several researches and statistics on gender equality in the labour market with a focus on labour market trends, wages and the gender pay gap for the period 2008-2016. Such research will continue in the future as part of the monitoring the implementation of the Act on the Equal Pay Certification from 2017. Statistics Iceland furthermore publishes data on various social groups including immigrants disaggregated by sex, country of origin and residence while statistics is lacking about other groups such as persons with disabilities and queer people.

## SECTION ONE: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

In a global context Iceland has been successful when it comes to gender equality and has been at the top of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for ten consecutive years in a row, indicating that it is the country with the narrowest gender gap. There has been great progress since the first comprehensive legislation on equal rights and equal status of women and men was adopted in 1976 but there are numerous challenges that still need to be addressed, such as closing the gender pay gap, securing equal political and economic power between women and men, and eliminating gender-based violence. The main lesson learned in Iceland is that gender equality does not come about of its own accord. It requires hard work to secure progress whereas the collective action and the solidarity of the women's movement is vital in fostering political will, and development of tools such as legislation, gender budgeting and mainstreaming and sometimes gender quotas or special measures to achieve progress.

The following chapter describes first the top priorities over the past five years, 2014-2019, and the corresponding achievements as well the main challenges in the same period, corresponding to the questionnaire issued by UN Women to member states.

### Equality in the labour market

The Icelandic business sector and the country's labour market have undergone great changes in the past few decades. A welfare system which supports a high degree of participation in the job market and occupations that require large numbers of workers have created the conditions for a high level of employment. Participation in the labour market, by both sexes, is the highest recorded in Iceland of all the OECD countries, or almost 81,2%. The Icelandic labour market is, however, characterized by high gender segregation and gender-based choice of education and training is still very much apparent. One consequence of this is that a low proportion of women are employed in managerial position and in general women seem to have fewer possibilities to develop their careers. Horizontal divides are evident in occupations that relate to caregiving and education where women are the vast majority. Men's occupations have tended, traditionally, to relate to industrial production, technical occupations and manufacturing. Due to these divides, the

consequences of the economic recession following the banking collapse of 2008 for men and women on the labour market were different.

Participation by women in the labour market (78%) has increased steadily over the past few decades and the difference between the sexes in this respect has been reduced. Although the level of participation has declined slightly it is still, notwithstanding the recent economic breakdown of 2008, the highest among Western countries. The past decade has seen a contraction in the figure for men and a rise in that for women. Working hours have shortened somewhat and the gap between hours worked by men and women has been reduced. Nevertheless, men still work longer hours than women and the working day is for both women and men generally long in terms of international comparison. A survey of the labour market by Statistics Iceland in the fourth quarter of 2018 showed that among those who were in employment in the week of the survey, the average number of full working hours per week was 38.9, being 34.7 hours for women and 42.5 for men. For those in full employment, the average was 44.3 hours: 40.9 for women and 46.5 for men. For those in part-time work, the average was 23.1 hours: 23.6 for women and 22 for men.

Most working people in Iceland are in full-time employment; more women than men are however employed part-time. In 2018, a third of women on the labour market were in part-time jobs compared to 13.5% of men.

## Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

From 2012-2018 an Action Group on Equal Pay composed of representatives from the Government and the social partners worked on different projects aiming at increasing gender equality in the labour market. One of its tasks was to supervise the implementation of the Icelandic Equal Pay Standard, a management requirement standard, which was published in 2012 and passed through Parliament under a special provision in the Gender Equality Act. In 2013 a Pilot Project for the implementation of the standard was launched. During the pilot best practices to tackle common problems were developed and a toolbox and a data tool for job classification and pay analysis were created.

In 2015, the Action Group on Equal Pay published findings of two studies it had made, a study of the gender pay gap covering the entire labour market on the one hand and an extensive report on the standing of women and men in the Icelandic labour market on the other. The study on the gender pay gap for the period of 2008-2013 was made by Statistics Iceland and drew on a large database covering

wages and various issues relating to the position of workers. In 2018, the data was updated with additional years, 2014-2016, whereas data quality on education and occupations had been approved. The whole dataset comprises about 615 thousand observations for individuals aged 18 to 67. In recent years the gender pay gap has been reduced, and it continues to narrow from year to year. The gender pay gap indicator has been defined as unadjusted i.e. not adjusted according to individual characteristics that may explain part of the earnings like occupation, education, age, years with employer etc.

The adjusted gender pay gap measured 6.6% in 2008 but was down to 4.5% in 2016 using an ordinary least squares method for each year. The gender pay gap can be decomposed into explained and unexplained parts by using the whole dataset. The unexplained part of the pay difference was estimated to be 4.8% for the years 2008-2016 while the explained part was 7.4%. The latter reflects what is explained by the model in the analysis while the unexplained is what the model cannot explain. If the whole period is broken into three-year periods the unexplained part of the gender pay gap has decreased from 4.8% in the years 2008-2010 to 3.6% in the years 2014-2016.

The data furthermore showed that more women than men held university degrees, while men were in positions of authority in most cases. The data also showed that the unexplained gender pay differential is age-related, being largest in the upper age groups. It was also revealed that the differential could to a large extent be traced to the gender divide on the labour market. This includes the vertical divide (by level within each occupation) and the horizontal divide by occupational sector.

In the report *The position of women and men in the Icelandic labour market* an attempt was made to chart out the position of the sexes in the Icelandic labour market and within appropriate context, examine the many factors determining their position. The report also contains proposals on different measures to promote greater equality on the labour market. The report states that there is a high degree of equality in the framework of law in Iceland. Nonetheless, surveys and studies reveal that women's jobs are underestimated and a persistent gender pay gap is to the disadvantage of women, without exception, and results, amongst other things, in their accruing lower pension entitlements.

The report confirms also, that even though a great deal of progress has been made, women and men still hold different positions in the Icelandic labour market. The community draws increasingly on women's resources in managerial positions even though there are still obstacles in their way. As has been stated above,

women are more likely to work part time and to drop out of the labour market in order to pursue unpaid care-giving jobs. The report also shows that employers are more reluctant to invest in women's professional development. Examination of staff engagements and professional development reveals the existence of gender discrimination, with men more often being offered higher wages. Women are also more likely to accept the first wage offer they are made, while men tend more often to present a counter-demand for higher wages. Thus, a wage differential can come into being right at the beginning of the engagement process. Among the proposals put forward in the report is a call on the government to bridge the 'care-giving gap' between maternity leave and the child's admission to pre-school. At present, this is bridged largely by the mother taking long maternity leave and adapting her involvement in the employment market to the needs of the family. The authors of the report also point out that responsibility for greater equality on the labour market lies not less with the directors of institutions and companies than with the workers. Employers must urge men to take paternity leave and give both male and female employees flexibility in order to shoulder responsibility for their families.

## Equal Pay Standard and Legislation on Equal Pay Certification

Even though Iceland has been ranked in the first place in international comparisons regarding gender equality, in practice, equality has not been achieved in all areas of Icelandic society. This applies not least to the domestic labour market, where many surveys and studies have revealed an entrenched gender pay gap, generally to women's disadvantage. Notwithstanding the clear intention of the legislature, ever since the first legislation on equal pay was passed in 1961, followed by the passing of the Gender Equality Act in 1976, undertakings by the Icelandic state under international conventions and numerous measures taken by the government to promote gender equality in the labour market, gender equality in terms of equal pay has yet to be achieved in Iceland.

Occupational pension entitlements are influenced by the gender pay gap resulting from, among other things, the share of women compared to men having a part-time work (34% among women compared to 12% among men in year 2018).

Subsequently, the gender pay gap translates into a pension gap. At the same time, in case of limited pension entitlements based on previous earnings, individuals are entitled to basic social insurance to compensate or mitigate the lack of payments from an occupational pension fund resulting in a less of gender pension gap than

otherwise would be the case. There is also the possibility to have a pension plan, a private pension account, which is voluntary and optional.

A bill of law, amendments to the Gender Equality Act, was passed by the Icelandic Parliament with a vast majority on June 1 2017 and came into force on January 1 2018. Companies and institutions employing 25 or more workers, on an annual basis, are required to obtain equal pay certification of their equal pay systems and the implementation thereof. The purpose of this obligatory certification is to enforce the current legislation prohibiting discriminatory practices based on gender and requiring women and men working for the same employer to be paid equal wages and enjoy equal terms of employment for the same jobs or jobs of equal value.

The new legislation makes Iceland the first country in the world to require employers to obtain certification on the basis of requirements of a management requirement standard (in this case, the *Standard ÍST 85 Equal Pay Management Systems - Requirements and Guidance*) to prove they offer equal pay for work of equal value regardless of gender. The Standard ÍST 85 ensures professional working methods in order to prevent direct or indirect discrimination. The Equal Pay Standard is an administrative tool designed to establish and maintain gender equality in wages within a workplace. Equal pay certification under the standard is designed to confirm that when decisions on pay are taken, they are based only on relevant considerations.

## Work-family conciliation and efforts to increase the proportion of fathers taking paternity leave

One of the objectives of the Gender Equality Act is to enable women and men to co-ordinate family and working life. The Act also imposes an obligation on employers to take the necessary measures to enable women and men to co-ordinate their working duties and responsibilities towards their family. To this end, the Act emphasizes measures by employers to increase flexibility in the organization of work and working hours, so that both families' and businesses' needs are considered. This includes facilitating employees' return to work after maternity/paternity leave, or in taking leave due to unavoidable and urgent family circumstances.

The Act on Maternity/Paternity and Parental Leave No. 95/2000 aims at ensuring that a child spends time with both its father and mother, as well as enabling both women and men the ability to co-ordinate family and working life. According to the act women and men are entitled to paid maternity/paternity leave and unpaid

parental leave. As the leave was adopted in year 2000, it was a ground-breaking legislation as it included one of the most generous paternity leave entitlements in the world. The joint leave entitlement was extended from six months to nine; parents who are active in the labour market are paid 80% of their average salaries during leave and the payments come from a specific fund, financed through an insurance levy. Furthermore, parents have equal rights, as the leave is distributed evenly between both parents. Fathers have three months' individual and non-transferable leave; mothers have three months and the parents then have three months to share as they wish. The law of 2000 has been a success, as 90% of fathers use their right to paternity leave. Recent studies indicate that the positive effects of the Icelandic paternity leave include a more equal distribution of domestic responsibilities as well as a more equal standing in the labour market in the first years following the leave.

## Women in Management

In Iceland women have been outnumbered by men in powerful positions in politics as well as in parts of the labour market. A gender quota for government committees and larger companies is a part of a wider plan to improve the participation and representation of women at all levels. Article 15 of the Gender Equality Act prescribes that equal representation of men and women shall be ensured and not lower than 40% in national and local government committees, councils and boards (when there are more than three representatives in a body). This also applies to the boards of publicly owned limited companies and enterprises in which the state or a municipality is the majority owner.

In 2010, as research had repeatedly shown that although substantial improvements had taken place in the gender composition of middle management within corporations, the ratio of women in top-management and corporate boards had not changed much in the past ten years and few women had manager-positions in larger corporations. The social partners and business stakeholders thus continued to push for an improvement concerning women's representation and participation on corporate boards and in top management positions. To ensure more progress on these issues, the Minister of Economic Affairs submitted to the parliament a legislative proposal to amend the law on public limited companies no. 2/1995 and private limited companies no. 138/1994. Parliament approved the proposal and the changes entered into force in 2013. The aim is to ensure that corporations take actions in improving the ratio of women and men in their businesses.

The first step was to introduce a gender quota that made it mandatory for companies with 50 employees or more, on an annual basis, to have both women and men on their company boards. If the board-members are more than three, the percentage of either women or men should not be less than 40%.

The number of female board members has increased rapidly since the enforcement of the law, from 13.5% to 44.5%, and the percentage of women in executive positions increased from 13.3% to 22.8%. However, the law did not have the intended spill over effect on the number of women as board chairmen or in executive managerial positions. Today, no female is a CEO for a company listed at Nasdaq Iceland and 90% of CEOs among the 100 largest companies are male.

## Eliminating violence against women and girls

Among the aims stated in the Gender Equality Act is to combat gender-based violence and harassment. In the past few years there have been intensive public discussions on matters related to violence and sexual abuse. Hence, the Icelandic government continues to focus on sexual violence and has implemented various measures aiming at combatting violence against women and girls. Moreover, an on-going criticism towards the criminal justice system has led to several changes being made to the legislation and practice.

In 2006, the parliament adopted amendments to the General Penal Code No.19/1940 dealing with domestic violence. Among other things, the new legislation introduced heavier punishments. Furthermore, the government issued a Plan of Action to deal with domestic and sexual violence. The Plan of action focuses on children as well as women. The aim is to increase preventive actions and hence contribute to a more open discussion about violence by changing attitudes regarding these matters in society. This is seen as a leading step in preventing gender-based violence, violence against children and sexual abuse.

In 2007 amendments were adopted to the General Penal Code dealing with sexual offences. It includes among other things, broadening of the definition of rape, that until then had been rather narrow and now also carrying heavier punishments than before. In 2009, amendments to the General Penal Code made the purchasing of sexual services illegal, making prostitution decriminalized, while the buyers are criminalized. Hence, Iceland followed the Swedish path, after a nine yearlong campaign by the women's movement and female parliamentarians.

In January 2013, the Government established an inter-ministerial committee to coordinate measures in order to combat sexual violence, especially against children,



and find ways to strengthen the law enforcement and prosecution procedures in dealing with such cases. The committee's task was also to make recommendations on how to ensure effective resources for victims of sexual violence. In April 2013, the committee issued a report where 27 suggestions for improvement, 15 of which were considered a high priority. These priority recommendations included measures such as a new facility for the Children's House and expanding its operations, increasing the cooperation of law enforcements, the prosecution offices and Government Agency for Child Protection nationwide, increasing the number of police officers who investigate sexual offences and advance measures aimed at sexual offenders, such as treatment.

In addition, the Minister of Justice has adopted an Action Plan on Handling of Sexual Offences by the Judicial System, and the Government has provided additional funding for implementation of actions based on it. They include increasing the number of employees of the Police and District Prosecutor, increasing continuing education and improving police investigation facilities and procedures for handling sexual offences.

In 2014, several ministers signed a comprehensive co-operation statement to combat violence. Subsequently, a parliamentary resolution on an action plan for the years 2019-2022 with a focus on prevention, provision and protection for all forms of violence was approved by parliament in June 2019.

In March 2015 the National Commissioner of Police issued new rules of procedure for cases of domestic violence. The rules are in accordance with the Restraining and Exclusion Orders Act, No. 85/2011 which provides the police with the power to effectively remove the perpetrator immediately from the home and to issue restraining orders in order to protect the victims from further violence or threats.

The aim is to make these measures more effective and to provide better support and protection for the victims. The new rules take an account of an experimental project awarded a prize for innovation in public administration. The Project, entitled Keeping the window open, is a cross-sectorial co-operation project of the police and the social services, aimed at improving the first response of the police and the quality of investigations, to prevent repeated offences and to provide better support to victims and perpetrators.

A legislation on the future structure of the prosecution was passed by the Parliament on 30 June 2015. The amendments provided for the establishment of a new National Prosecution Authority which will be in charge of the prosecution of

cases in Iceland's district courts. The new Authority began operations in 2015 and works with police commissioners in the exercise of prosecutorial authority and the investigation of criminal cases. Under the new structure, prosecution in sexual offence cases comes under the National Prosecuting Authority which means that decisions to drop a case or withdraw prosecution can now be appealed to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

A plan of action against trafficking in human beings was approved in 2013 by the government at the time, covering the period 2013-2016. The emphasis has been on raising awareness. An educational team has held awareness-raising meetings all over the country to bring the issue home to local communities. The focus has been on how to identify victims and on the legal aspects of this crime. It is hoped that through coordinated guidelines and identification procedures it will be possible to establish a basis for a response team which can be contacted and brought in to deal with suspected cases of human trafficking in any part of the country.

In 2018, an amendment to the 1st paragraph of Article 194 of the General Penal Code pertaining to sexual offences entered into force stressing the importance of consent entered into force. The paragraph prior to the amendment was as follows: "Any person who has sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with a person by means of using violence, threats or other unlawful coercion shall be guilty of rape and shall be imprisoned for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 16 years. 'Violence' here refers to the deprivation of independence by means of confinement, drugs or other comparable means." The Article as amended: "Any person who has sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with a person without her/his consent shall be guilty of rape and shall be imprisoned for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 16 years. Consent is only relevant if given freely. Consent is considered irrelevant if given after using violence, threats or other unlawful coercion. Violence refers to the deprivation of personal liberty by means of confinement, drugs or other comparable means." The amendment is in line with 2016 recommendation from the Icelandic Human Rights Office arguing that the Article as it was put more emphasis on technical aspects of rape or how the rape was committed rather than on the issue of consent referring to the Istanbul Convention which recommends that sexual assault laws emphasise that "consent must be given voluntarily as the result of the person's free will assessed in the context of the surrounding circumstances."

In 2018, the Minister of Equality deposited the instrument of ratification in respect of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against

women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention). The Convention entered into force in Iceland on August 1 2018.

The following chapter introduces and discusses measures taken by the Icelandic government to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

## Immigrants and integration

The goal of the Icelandic integration policy is to ensure that all residents of the country enjoy equal opportunities and are active participants in all aspects of society. Social services, health care and education are provided on an equal basis to everyone registered in the country. The Immigrants Affairs Act, No. 116/2012 is aimed at promoting the active participation of all persons in society regardless of their nationality or origin. This objective is to be achieved in part by integrating the interests of immigrants into public policy formulation, administration and services, with broad-based co-operation and increased education and communication of information to the public on immigration matters.

The Minister responsible for immigration and refugees appoints a six-person Immigration Council to advise him/her professionally on drafting immigration policy and on encouraging co-ordination and consultation between ministries, local authorities and other areas of public administration, and undertake other tasks. The Minister presents a resolution to the Icelandic parliament proposing a four-year action Program for immigrants' issues, after having received the comments of other ministries, agencies, the Multicultural and Information Centre and the Immigration Council.

The Multicultural and Information Centre is a special agency operating under the Immigrant Affairs Act and working towards its objectives. The agency has the fundamental role of facilitating communications between individuals of different backgrounds, and to enhance the services provided to foreign citizens residing in Iceland and to those interested in moving to Iceland. The Multicultural Centre offers assistance and counsel through phone in Icelandic, English, Polish, Serbian/Croatian, Thai, Spanish, Lithuanian and Russian.

Immigration to Iceland has gradually increased in recent years. In 2010, 6,8% of the population had an immigrant background, while in 2018 the rate was 12,6% which include first and second generation of immigrants. The policy of the Icelandic authorities is to ensure that foreign citizens enjoy equal opportunities in the labour market. After the financial crisis in 2008 there was rising unemployment among

immigrants. In recent years the unemployment rate has decreased. The parliamentary resolution emphasizes that the number of immigrants in public offices corresponds with the demographics of society and to ensure that immigrants have access to the labour market in accordance with their educational level and professional experience. There is a very high participation of immigrants in the Icelandic labour market, or 84,2%, which is the highest in OECD countries. In the first quarter of 2019, on average 192,232 individuals (16-74 years), were employed in Iceland. Of those employed, women were 90,315 or 47.0% and men were 101,918 or 53.0%. The number of employed immigrants (16-74 years) was 36,844 on average or 19.2% of the total number of employed.

Early 2019, Statistic Iceland, in cooperation with the Immigrant Council, issued a report of analysis of pay gap, considering the worker's background. This is the first time that Statistics Iceland conducts this kind of analysis. The results show that immigrants have generally lower earnings than locals. It is estimated that immigrants have on average almost 8% lower earnings than locals, and that is considering key demographic and employment related factors, available in the databases of Statistics Iceland. However, the results show that pay gap's size varies between occupations. The pay gap is in general greater in occupations common for immigrant workers, or between 1% to 16% conditional pay gap. The results also show that immigrants have in general lower earnings than locals with the same education, or between 11% and 15% conditional pay gap. The results also indicate that there is a pay gap among immigrants. Most notably, immigrants from the other Nordic countries have on average higher earnings than other immigrants from different background. The research is based on 215,000 observations on earnings based on background, for the years 2008-2017, which come directly from companies' payroll systems and are uniform and precise. It is not common for an analysis of pay gap differences to be based on a sample this large encompassing such a long period. The data does not fully cover all economic sectors in Iceland and is limited with regards to hotel and restaurant services. It is important to keep the strengths and weaknesses of the study in mind when the results are interpreted.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://statice.is/publications/news-archive/wages-and-income/analysis-on-pay-gap-by-background-2008-2017-10943/>

The Multicultural Centre has also provided information of various types of immigrants, including public administration, family affairs, education and the school system, finance, and the health services. For example, under the heading *The Family* there is a discussion of various forms of families, the Marriage Act and the rules on divorce, the rights of queer people and single parents. Also, to be found there is information on maternity, paternity and parental leave, child maintenance payments and child benefit payments.

The Icelandic Human Rights Centre provides immigrants with legal counselling under an agreement with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Children and similar arrangements exist in some local authorities, e.g. Reykjavík City's Human Rights Office provides special services for immigrants regarding facilities and services provided by the city authorities, and in Akureyri (the main town in the north of the country), the International Centre provides information on various aspects of life and society in Iceland. All this information is similar to that which is available through the homepage of the Multicultural Centre, which is referred to above.

In 2010, the Directorate for Equality published a booklet entitled *Your Rights. Important information for women of foreign origin in Iceland*. This was published with support from the EU Progress Fund and in collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare. It has been reprinted many times with revised text in 2014 and 2019. It contains information of various types on the Icelandic justice system and Icelandic society, and on gender equality, residence permits, separation and divorce, custody of children, parent-child access rights and finances, amongst other things. It also gives information on assistance, e.g. the addresses, telephone numbers and homepages of institutions and NGOs. The booklet is published in six languages in addition to Icelandic. It is available at the Directorate for Equality, at district commissioners' offices and municipal offices all over the countries. It is also accessible on-line via the homepage of the Directorate for Equality.

## Women living with disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) consisting of 50 articles concerning the human rights, dignity and independence of disabled people was signed without reservations by Iceland in 2007 and ratified 20 September 2016.

The ratification has activated projects related to awareness-raising, training and education. It has also included Iceland in the monitoring system of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Several amendments were

made to Icelandic law in preparation for ratification of the convention and further amendments are in preparation in order to bring Icelandic legislation fully in line with the Convention, including in elections, law protection and personalized assistance.

According to the Act on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 88/2011, all persons with disabilities have access to the assistance of special rights protection officers, who are employed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and whose role is to assist persons with disabilities in matters concerning their rights.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, changes have been made to the legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities with the aim of supporting their independent living and the right to choose the people hired to assist them in their daily lives, which empowers disabled people, gives them control of their own lives and can prevent violence.

Recently special attention has been paid to the issue of violence against persons with disabilities, notably women. In 2013 the Ministry of Welfare commissioned a report on Disabled women and violence and the results were clear, action was called for. The study showed that disabled women are more likely to have experienced violence than non-disabled women and that they do not have sufficient access to support services for survivors of violence. Subsequently, the Ministry of Welfare produced new educational material for staff providing services to persons with disabilities to inform about violence against disabled women and to increase expert knowledge and skills of the staff on how to deal with such matters. Furthermore, the ministry provided funding for the publishing of material with sexual education for persons with disabilities which addresses the difference between sex and violence, consent and how to set boundaries and about living in intermate relationships. Stígamót, the counselling centre, for victims of sexual violence was granted additional funding for an expert who works only with disabled people.

A new legislation on sterilization was approved by the Parliament on the 7th of May 2019. The key legislative change compared to the previous law is that sterilization is now only allowed on persons over the legal age of 18 years when they have given their informed consent. All previous articles permitting the procedure of sterilization on persons with disabilities have now been removed from

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<sup>3</sup> For further information on the role and function of the Rights protection officers:

[http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar\\_sidur/Act-on-the-protection-of-the-rights-of-disabled-persons-No-88-2011.pdf](http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/Act-on-the-protection-of-the-rights-of-disabled-persons-No-88-2011.pdf)

the legislation. The only reasons allowing for sterilization either on a minor or on a person without their consent is when their fertility can pose a serious risk to their life or health. Two doctors need to verify the medical reasons for the procedure and the approval of a specially appointed guardian needs to be obtained as well.

### Women with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities

In June 2019, the Icelandic Parliament approved a bill of law on gender recognition that addresses new and changed attitudes towards official registration of gender and increased rights of trans people. The law permits individuals 15 years of age and older to define their gender on their own terms and determine their public registration in that regard.

Children under the age of 15 are also granted this authorization with the consent of their parents/guardian or if an expert committee accedes to the child's request to change the registration of its gender. The law confirms the right of individuals to change their gender as registered to accord with their own gender identity, without having to undergo a medical diagnosis and medical treatment or satisfy requirements for behavioural conditioning. Furthermore, the bill authorizes registration as neither male nor female.

The law also permits an individual who has applied for international protection in Iceland to request that in the individual's registration certificate, according to Article 34 of the Foreign National Act No. 80/2016, the individual's gender will be registered in accordance with the individual's gender identity, even though it is not in accordance with the individual's registration certificate in the individual's home country.

## Priorities for the coming five years

In the gender equality policy area, two main objectives are defined, namely, to eliminate the gender pay gap and gender-based violence. These objectives correspond to the SDG targets 8.5 and 5.2, respectively. SDG target 8.5 aims to “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.”

### New Action Plan on Gender Equality

New Action Plan on Gender Equality for the period 2020--2023 was agreed upon by the Government in its meeting 30th August 2019 and a resolution containing the plan submitted to Parliament for approval the same date. The Action Plan's point of departure are the objectives of the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008 (the Gender Equality Act), the gender equality provisions of other legislation and the aspirations set out in the Agreement of the Coalition Partners. The Action Plan can be described as a compilation of “special measures” aimed at covering gender gaps or the gaps between the objectives of the laws and the political aspirations of the Government on one hand and the reality on the ground on the other. As such, the plan reflects the priorities of the Government in the field of gender equality.

The new Action Plan for Gender Equality consists of 24 interventions. Each of the 10 ministries is responsible for at least one intervention. Thereof, the Prime Minister's Office responsible for gender equality, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are responsible for ten, four and three interventions, respectively. Some of the interventions are continuation from the current 2016-2019 Action Plan on Gender Equality such as gender mainstreaming while others are new such as special prevention and protection measures in response to the #MeToo revelations addressing gender-based and sexual harassment, intimidation and violence in sports, recreation and leisure activities for children, youth and adults.



## Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

Iceland is fully committed to the implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development both nationally and internationally. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been integrated into government policy on social, economic and environmental affairs, with a particular emphasis on building a peaceful and just society, free from fear and violence. Domestically, the Government aims to identify and better serve marginalized groups in society and to build partnerships to address the large environmental footprint of modern lifestyle. Iceland is still a net contributor to climate change, but heads for carbon-neutrality at the latest in 2040. Internationally, Iceland shares its expertise in gender equality, land restoration and the use of sustainable natural marine and energy resources through the operation of four United Nations Universities in Iceland and other international development co-operation, contributing to global progress on SDGs 5, 7, 13, 14 and 15. The promotion of human rights for all, including LGBTI persons, is a cornerstone in Iceland's foreign policy and its international development co-operation - in line with Agenda 2030 and the Government's domestic priorities. In particular, Iceland has been a vocal champion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a key driver for the achievement of the SDGs.

### International actions

For many years the Icelandic Government's projects and contributions, both in bilateral or multinational co-operations, have promoted gender equality and the status of girls and women. In its bilateral development co-operation with the partner countries Malawi and Uganda, and in other focus countries such as Mozambique, Palestine and Afghanistan, Iceland has, among other things, supported projects concerning maternity and infant health, as well as equal access to education, water and sanitation, and peace and security. UN Women, which is one of the focus agencies in Iceland's multilateral development co-operation and, a leader in international policy making on gender equality, plays a coordinating role among UN agencies working systematically towards increasing the participation of women in all areas of government, political, cultural, legal and socio-economic affairs.

Icelandic foreign policy places major emphasis on gender equality and empowerment of women, which is reflected both in international development co-operation and in international advocacy. This emphasis is reflected in Iceland's priorities in chairing of regional co-operation mechanisms. In 2019 Iceland holds, among other things, the Presidency of the Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic-Baltic Constituency of the World Bank.

Additionally, Iceland is an active member of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) together with ILO, UN Women, OECD, Jordan, Switzerland, South Africa, New Zealand, Germany, Australia, Republic of Korea, Panama, Canada, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and International Organization of Employers (IOE). The aim of EPIC is to accelerate progress towards SDG target 8.5 by leveraging expertise across a diverse range of stakeholders through concrete actions on the ground and in workplaces.

The Icelandic government also supports the UN University Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme at the University of Iceland, which, through interdisciplinary research, teaching and dissemination, is to promote gender equality and social justice in developing countries and conflict areas. Since the establishment of the program in 2009, a total of 132 fellows have graduated with a post-graduate diploma in international gender studies, thereof 43 men and 89 women from 22 countries. The program enrolls 20-25 fellows every year from developing, conflict and post-conflict countries where the main aim is to enhance the capacity of fellows to contribute to gender equality in their home countries. The UNU-GEST program contributes to women's economic empowerment on multiple levels. During the last years, a number of final assignments have been directed to women's economic empowerment either being an important analysis of current processes/systems or proposed projects to further enhance the economic empowerment of women.

Since 2011, Iceland has used the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) methodology, the so-called Gender Equality Policy Marker, a statistical tool for analysing development projects with regard to whether donations and projects are aimed at promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Today, Iceland is the third-highest state on the DAC donor list showing the proportion of development funding that goes to gender equality issues. Figures from 2016 to 2018 show that over 80% of Icelandic contributions went to projects promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.<sup>4</sup> In terms of the share of development aid allocated to gender equality issues, Iceland ranks third from the top on the OECD-DAC donor list showing the proportion of development funding that goes to gender equality issues.

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<sup>4</sup> OECD, March 2019, Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Donor Charts.

Moreover, figures show that 70% of all development assistance is gender mainstreamed and 20% of all projects are targeted explicitly for gender equality. Respect for women's human rights and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender is the basic theme of the government's proposals, including concerning gender and reproductive rights, women's rights to participate in all areas of society, including areas concerning peace and security, and the importance of men promoting gender equality, as this is the key to sustainable development and general well-being. Human rights and gender equality are also a key priority in Iceland's engagement at the United Nations. Gender equality was prominently featured in our voluntary commitments for the Icelandic term as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, clearly reflected in presentations and advocacy of Iceland. In line with this commitment and our membership of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) Iceland initiated a resolution at the 41st session of the Human Rights Council with other EPIC members on equal pay. The resolution underlined the fundamental rights nature of equal pay for work of equal value and the importance of taking progressive action to tackling the root causes of discrimination that leads to pay inequality.

The resolution also laid out a number of policy actions that State should take to achieve equal pay, such as strengthening legal and policy frameworks, recognizing and redistributing unpaid care and take innovative measures such as through pay analysis and transparency and gender pay audits, as well as certification and review of pay surveys.

The resolution also importantly recognized the importance of supportive family policies and other measures to tackle the so-called motherhood penalty, such as putting in place childcare and other care services as well as the provision of maternity, paternity and family leave. This initiative received broad support in the Human Rights Council with close to 70 countries sponsoring the resolution. The resolution was adopted by consensus in July of 2019.

## Eliminating Violence against women and girls

At the beginning of 2018, the Prime Minister appointed a Steering Committee for Comprehensive Reforms concerning Sexual Violence. The group's main role is to promote progressive and harmonized governmental action against sexual violence and sexual and gender-based harassment, and to place Iceland at the forefront in combating all types of gender-based violence. The Steering Committee is to advise the Prime Minister and the Ministerial Committee on Gender Equality in formulating

policy on sexual violence, gender-based violence and sexual harassment in Icelandic society. The Steering Committee is to pay particular attention to the multifaceted discrimination against women of foreign origin, women who live in economic insecurity, disabled women, and LGBTI women.

Among the Steering Committee's tasks is to make proposals for implementing actions provided for in a new action plan for improvements in the handling of sexual offences within the criminal justice system and to decide on further improvements. The Steering Committee is to monitor the implementation of the action plan and use its influence to provide adequate funding for it.

In April 2018, Iceland ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of 2011. The Convention provides for the rights of victims and the obligations of public bodies to protect and assist women subjected to violence, to educate the public, government and professionals, to take preventive measures against violence, and provide solutions and treatment for abusers. In addition, the Minister of Justice has adopted an Action Plan on Handling of Sexual Offences by the Judicial System, and the Government has provided additional funding for implementation of actions based on it. They include increasing the number of employees of the police and District Prosecutor, increasing continuing education and improving police investigation facilities and procedures for handling sexual offences.

The Steering Committee, appointed by the Prime Minister, promoted the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe's Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Moreover, the group has presented proposals for a coordinated response to the #metoo revolution in Government Offices and their institutions, as an employer, and will also make proposals for a community-wide response. In addition, the Steering Committee is developing a policy for action against digital/online sexual violence.

### Follow up on #MeToo

The past years a few movements against sexual assault and violence have taken place in Iceland. The focus of these movements has been on sexual abuse or violence taking place in women's private lives. The #metoo movement came with a new perspective as it exposed the prevalence of systematic harassment, violence and everyday sexism that women across various layers of society are subjected to.

In Iceland, the #MeToo pioneers were female politicians, doctors, lawyers and priests who spoke up about sexual harassment, discrimination, gender-based

violence and everyday sexism that women across various layers of society still are subjected to. The movement also shed a light on intersectional realities of migrant women and women in low paid jobs while there are still groups of women whose stories have not yet surfaced, such as women with disabilities who may be subjected to different forms of discrimination. The demand of the voices, who spoke up, was to shift the shame from the survivors over to those responsible for the violence. They did not focus on an individual person or on a singular crime, but instead highlighted the social malignancy and the structural inequalities as such.

Following the #metoo movement, the government in Iceland signed an agreement with representatives of labour market organizations to jointly take a decisive action against sexual harassment, bullying and violence at work. Furthermore, the Ministry of Welfare has set up two task forces, one with the aim to work on further improvements in preventing sexual and gendered harassment, bullying and violence in the Icelandic labour market and a committee whose main task is to investigate how common sexual harassment, gendered harassment, violence and bullying are in Icelandic workplaces and how employers are doing in preventing any such incidents taking place. Previously no such research has been done with a representative sample from the Icelandic population. The group started working in 2018 and the research will be conducted in several stages.

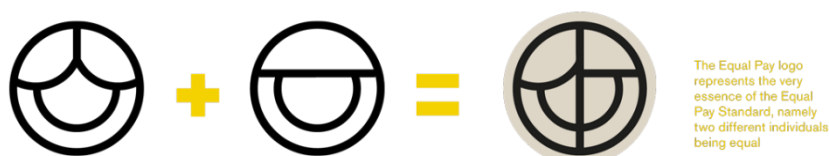


As a part of the Icelandic Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2019, the Government will host a Nordic/International Conference titled '#MeToo - Moving forward', which will take place in Reykjavik between the 17-19 September 2019.

The conference will explore the #MeToo movement in an international context: Why it gained such momentum in 2017 and different impact on sectors, societies and countries. What the movement tells us about the intersections of gender, sex, race, class, religion, ethnicity, age, disability and sexualities. As well what impact the #MeToo movement has already had and might have in the upcoming years. Furthermore, the Icelandic presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers has initiated a joint Nordic Project which aims at developing a three-years research program on sexual harassment in the Nordic Labour Market. The goal is a research driven knowledge boost to strengthen the quality of preventive measures and promote a sustainable work environment free from sexual harassment and includes all the Nordic Countries and several sectors within the Nordic cooperation focusing on the question why sexual harassment and violence is underreported in the Nordic Countries.

## Right to work and rights at work - Equal Pay

As already introduced, an Equal Pay Certification law makes it mandatory for Icelandic companies and institutions of 25 or more employees to implement all the steps contained in the so-called Equal Pay Standard and afterwards undergo an independent audit to have it certified that they offer equal pay for work of equal value. The law is based on a “compromised consensus” as the Equal Pay Standard was developed in a close collaboration between the government and the social partners with the technical support from the national standards body of Iceland. A key feature of the law is its evidence-based approach and the fact that it transfers the responsibility of equal pay from the individual employee over to the employer who needs to prove, by means of a certification, that there is no wage discrimination within their company or institution.



The obligatory equal pay certification is to be implemented in stages over a period of 4 years. Subsequently, around 1200 employers employing 147.000 staff members need to receive equal pay certification December 31, 2022.

## Gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting

Two primary measures have been used by the Government to advance gender equality, namely the prioritization made in its four-year Action Plan on Gender Equality and gradual steps towards gender mainstreaming. The Action Plan on Gender Equality has been stipulated by law since 1985 and its key contribution to the advancement of gender equality in its role in addressing gaps between the status of gender equality on the ground and the objectives of the Gender Equality Law. Secondly, the implementation of gender mainstreaming, which is a legal requirement according to Article 1 and 17 of the Gender Equality Act, began with gender-based assessment of the impact of proposed legislation. Such an assessment is one of the quality standards that governmental bills of law are measured against during the legislative process. Gender mainstreaming of other policies has gradually been implemented within the framework of gender budgeting as of 2009 and in conjunction with the entry into force of the Organic Budget Law in 2015 overseen by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in coordination with the Ministry responsible for equality policies. Continued and more comprehensive gender mainstreaming of policies and decisions of all ministries and state institutions is a work in process prioritized by the Prime Minister's Office and the Government.

A handbook on preparation of bills of laws issued by the Prime Minister's Office is a guiding document stipulating gender assessment of governmental bills of laws. Gender impact assessments in legislative drafting are generally performed by public servants in charge of drafting a law or policy and in consultation with the gender equality expert in the ministry.

The 2019-2023 implementation plan for gender budgeting is another guiding document. As of 1 January 2016, the Organic Budget Law from 2015 entered into force. The law makes gender budgeting, which began in year 2009, a legal requirement in Iceland. Prior to the introduction of the law, gender budgeting had mainly been conducted through individual projects combined with education and skills building in the area of gender analysis. Today, the Government works with 34 expenditure areas and 101 functions and all these are connected to the budget in line with the principles of performance budgeting. Subsequently, the focus is on integrating gender budgeting into the budget cycle and thereby moving away from the previous project-based approach.

As such, the gender budgeting approach aims to ensure that gender and equality perspectives are taken into account while decisions around the expenditure (policy) areas and the functions are made, instead of doing the analysis afterwards.

This move has been implemented in steps. In 2017, the first steps towards incorporating gender perspective in the budget cycle was taken where the focus was placed on 10 expenditure areas. In the year 2018, the focus was on making analysis for all the 34 expenditure areas. The findings were incorporated into a single baseline report. Templates have been designed to improve policy making, namely template to use for baseline assessment and analysis of policy interventions from a gender and equality perspective and a template to use while formulating policies based on the findings from the assessment and the analysis. The intention is that the findings will inform in the decision-making / policy-making process in near future as to bring decision and policy making in line with the stipulations of the Gender Equality Act. How to do that is being developed by a working group appointed at the end of year 2017 to design a comprehensive implementation plan on gender mainstreaming in all policy and decision making of the ministries and state institutions.

## UN Women's HeForShe

The Icelandic Government promotes women's rights under UN Women's HeforShe IMPACT 10x10x10 initiative, whereby it has committed to closing the gender pay gap by 2022, achieving gender parity in the media by 2020 and engaging the male population in Iceland in achieving gender equality. In addition to the Barbershop initiative, which aims to engage men at the international level, the Government has partnered with the UN Women national committee in Iceland to promote gender equality among Icelandic men. Gudni Th. Johannesson, President of Iceland, is one of ten heads of states who serve as HeForShe IMPACT Champions.



## SECTION TWO: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

This section covers progress across the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. The following chapter introduces action taken by the Icelandic government in the last five years in three selected areas to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment.

### Girls and STEM

The Girls in STEM day has been held in Reykjavík University for six consecutive years. Around 1000 girls from elementary schools take part in the day in Reykjavík and Akureyri. It is Reykjavik University in collaboration with the Federation of Industries and private companies who stand behind the project. This year, the project received funding from the Gender Equality Fund at the Prime Minister's Office. The aim of the Girls in STEM day is to introduce the various opportunities in technical education and career, break down gender stereotypes and show girls the diversity that characterizes the technology industry.

During the day this year, girls from 9th grade in elementary schools were invited to Reykjavík University where they participated in various workshops. In the workshops the girls were presented with challenges in for example web design, programming and artificial intelligence. Following the workshops, the girls were invited to select a visit to one of the technology companies participating where women IT specialists welcomed the girls and gave them insight into the various opportunities for girls in the field.

### Prevention of discrimination and sexual harassment in workplaces

The Gender Equality Act prohibits direct and indirect gender discrimination both of which are defined in Article 2 as follows:

1. Direct discrimination: When one individual receives less favourable treatment than another of the opposite sex in comparable circumstances.
2. Indirect discrimination: When an impartial requirement, standard of reference or measure affects either sex more heavily than the other, unless this is appropriate, necessary or justifiable in terms of impartial considerations independent of gender.

In case of alleged violations of the law, individuals can submit claims to the Gender Equality Complaints Committee (GECC) which role is to examine cases and deliver a written ruling on whether provisions of the Gender Equality Act, the Act

on Equal Treatment on the Labour Market and the Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Racial and Ethnic Origin has been violated. Most cases relate to alleged labour market discrimination, mostly with respect to hiring, dismissal and wage discrimination in case of work of the same or equal value. In case of a ruling confirming a breach of the law, the respective employer can contest the ruling and the employee seek compensation by taking the case to civil court as the GECC does not have enforcement authority. The role of the Complaint Committee is currently under revision.

The employer has an important role to play in preventing gender-based and sexual harassment as stipulated in Article 22 as follows: "Employers and the directors of institutions and non-governmental organizations shall take special measures to protect employees, students and clients from gender-based or sexual harassment in the workplace, in institutions, in their work for, or the functions of, their societies, or in schools. If a superior is charged with alleged gender-based or sexual harassment, he or she shall be non-competent to take decisions regarding the working conditions of the plaintiff during the examination of the case, and the next superior shall take such decisions."

The Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces, No. 46/1980, Article 65, also stipulates that each employer is responsible for making a written plan of safety and health pertaining to the workplace including risk assessment and protection plan.

A regulation on measures against mobbing, gender-based and sexual harassment and violence in the workplace was submitted. It defines more clearly the obligation of each employer to introduce preventive and protective measures, the proper response in cases of mobbing, as well as gender-based and sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. The role of the regulation is to stress the duty of the employer to address these issues in a competent way such as by introducing procedures on how to file complaints and measures to address such complaints.

The regulation also makes it mandatory for employer to make his/her employees aware of the prevention and the response plan and the procedures in place. The law and the regulation apply equally to public and private entities, namely industry based, government and NGOs. The Administration of Occupational Safety and Health and the Directorate for Equality are responsible for monitoring compliance with the Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces and the regulation and the Gender Equality Act respectively. These monitoring bodies have collaborated around raising awareness around the issues.

Further, on governmental level, both gender equality plan and prevention, protection and response plan to address gender-based and sexual harassment and violence are in place. In the wake of the #MeToo in Iceland, an assessment of the prevention, response and protection measures and procedures in place across all ministries was conducted in the spring of 2019. The conclusion was that gender-based and sexual harassment was not common while there was indication that victims were hesitant to come forward with their claims in a formal way and in case they did, were rather discontent with the case proceedings. Based on the findings, the steering committee issued several recommendations to address these matters in more competent way.

### Promotion of the Equal Pay Legislation

The Icelandic government aims at closing the gender pay gap in 2022 and now employers are in the process of implementing the 2018 Law on Equal Pay Certification. As earlier discussed in the report, the law was developed in a close collaboration between the government and the social partners and requires companies and institutions of 25 or more employees to undergo an audit to ensure that they offer equal pay for work of equal value. In short, this law is an enforcement tool to realize the objectives of the 1961 legislation that prohibited gender discrimination in wages. It also fulfils the demands of international conventions and treaties, such as the conventions of the International Labour Organization and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women.

In May 2019, department of equality at the Prime Minister's Office in Iceland conducted a survey on the implementation of equal pay certification by the Standard among the 76 companies and institutions that had received equal pay certification before the end of April 30 2019. The response rate was 76.5%.

According to the results 81% of the respondents were rather or very satisfied about having implemented an equal wage management system by the Standard and to have received the certification, 16% were moderately satisfied and only 2% rather dissatisfied. Most of the respondents felt that the process of implementing the equal pay certification had a positive effect on job satisfaction in their workplaces and that it had increased their visibility and efficiency. Moreover, employers stated that they used the results of wage analyses to improve the payroll system. A total of 60% corrected salaries of individuals that were measured too low and 11% corrected wage groups that were too low. Lastly respondents said that they looked at more

gender equality related factors than was expected from the requirement standard, for example number of women's administrators, appointment to boards and committees, gender ratio when measuring job classification, training, career development and retraining and education.

There were also examples of employers who have discovered that long term members of staff had fallen behind in wages as companies and institutions try to compete for new talent. This loyalty penalty tends to be extremely gendered and runs the risk of discriminating against older employees.

The challenges and shortcomings employers mentioned were that implementing the Equal Pay Standard is a big bureaucratic task which demands good human resource management and quality control mechanism to be in place. Moreover, the result demonstrated that the certification process itself is time consuming and that the certification industry still is in the process to meet the qualification requirements. Currently, a steering committee for certification and accreditation with representatives from three ministries and the directorate of equality is working on further developing criteria and regulations for the Equal Pay Mechanism system. This work includes efforts to develop a toolbox for both the public and the private sector and an analysing tool for job classification and pay analyses.

### **Mechanism for women's equal participation in decision-making**

In 2010, the Icelandic Government decided to follow the lead of Norway and legislate a 40-60 gender quota in corporations. Following an amendment to the laws on public limited companies (No. 2/1995) and private limited companies (No. 138/1994), companies that have over 50 employees are obligated to have both women and men on their company boards and if the board-members are more than three, the percentage of women or men cannot be under 40%. These changes took effect in 2013 and the quota had an immediate impact. The share of women on the board of directors in the largest companies with 100-249 staff members more than doubled from 17.5% in 2010 to 36.1% in 2015. The increase was more moderate in smaller companies with 50 - 99 staff members. In recent years, the share of women on board of directors in companies with 50 staff and more has been around 33% while their share in the 100 largest companies has reached the quota limit of 40% and 19% of the chairs are women. Still, only 10% of CEO's and 22% of senior managers are women. That inspired the Association of Women Business Leaders in Iceland - FKA - to initiate a project called The Balance Scale

which aims to motivate companies to do better in reaching gender balance highlighting to the link between more diversity and better performance.

In 2019, the Prime Minister's Office and the Association of Women Business Leaders in Iceland (FKA) renewed an agreement on government support for the Equality Balance Scale originally signed in 2017 by the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality with FKA. The aim is to promote a more equal share of women and men at the executive level of corporate governance in Iceland, with the target 40/60 gender ratio of corporate executives in 2027, while the approach to engage companies on voluntary basis. In the first year of the project, about 50 directors of companies signed the *Balance Declaration* committing themselves to be agents of change and do better. The FKA initiative and the support of the Government is driven by the principle of equality and the fact that more diverse representation in senior management of companies is likely to generate more profits compared to more homogenous ones. This is among other things confirmed in two reports done by McKinsey and Company in 2015 and 2018, and a report from the Peterson Institute for International Economics from 2016. The 2018 McKinsey report - *Delivering Through Diversity* - shows that gender diversity in management positions increases above-average profitability up to 21%.<sup>5</sup>

Iceland has emphasized the importance to monitor the development of these issues and create indicators that measure the status on regular basis with the aim to build up a knowledge base for governments, companies and scholars, to see whether legal requirements for gender quotas have been met. These indicators can further be used to impact and promote participation of women in leadership positions and encourage policy changes in all fields to work for gender equality both in the labour market and the business sector. Freyja Vilborg Þórarinsdóttir, lawyer and political scientist outlined in her report *Equality and Economic Reality - Stock Market Index 2018*<sup>6</sup> two gender indexes which highlighted the real impact of women decision making on the listed market gender ratios in positions of influence, with the aim of promoting gender equality in the labour market.

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<sup>5</sup> For further information: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/karstenstrauss/2018/01/25/more-evidence-that-company-diversity-leads-to-better-profits/#50aabfa11bc7>

<sup>6</sup> Freyja Vilborg Þórarinsdóttir: Jafnrétti og efnahagslegur veruleiki - Kynjavisitala á kauphallarmörkuðum. March 2019.

## Strengthening Parental Leave

Public services like affordable, quality childcare (97% of Icelandic children from age 2 to 5 attend publicly funded nurseries) and well-funded parental leave for mothers and fathers have been instrumental for increased gender equality in the labour market in Iceland.

The Act on Maternity/Paternity and Parental Leave from year 2000 aims at ensuring a child spends time with both its parents as well as enabling both women and men to coordinate family and working life. Since the adoption of the Act in 2000, parents have generally exercised their right to maternity/paternity leave with about 90% of fathers taking up their paternity leave. Research also showed that the law had the intended effect to increase men's proportion of domestic work and childcare. From 2008 onwards, the proportion of fathers availing themselves of all their exclusive paternity leave or part of their joint right to leave has however been going down with average number of leave days used by fathers going from 103 days in 2008 to 76 days in 2017.<sup>7</sup> The development after 2008 indicates that even in the most gender-equal settings, the gender balance in family care is very vulnerable to ceilings on leave payments as between year 2000-2008, there was no ceiling. The development after 2008 also reflects the impact of the gender pay gap upon taking paid parental leave among other things.<sup>8</sup>

The leave is financed through an insurance levy order to which all employees contribute. Based on the Act on Maternity/Paternity and Parental Leave a parent acquires the right to payments from the Maternity/Paternity Leave fund after she/he has been active on the domestic labour market for six consecutive months prior to a birth of a child or the date on which a child enters the home in the case of adoption or permanent foster care. The parent then earns a right to a monthly payment which shall amount to 80% of her/his average total monthly wages up to a certain maximum amount. In recent years, the Government has worked towards raising this maximum amount with the most recent amendment dated January 1 2019 where the maximum amount on the monthly payment was raised from 520.000 to 600.000 Icelandic krona.

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<sup>7</sup> Statistics Iceland, Viðtakendur og greiðslur vegna fæðingarorlofs 2001-2016 (Recipients and payments for maternity / paternity leave 2001-2016), px.hagstofa.is.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Welfare, May 2015, Staða kvenna og karla á íslenskum vinnumarkaði: (Status of women and men in the Icelandic labour market:) Staðreyndir og staða þekkingar (Facts and current knowledge).

The Government also plans to extend the maternity/paternity leave from nine to twelve months total. According to the Fiscal Policy statement for the years 2020 - 2024 as submitted to parliament, it is anticipated that when the extended parental leave will be fully implemented, each parent will have an independent and non-transferable right to a five-month leave and both parents will have a joint right to two additional months that they can divide freely. Furthermore, it's anticipated that these amendments will be fully implemented as of 1 January 2021. However, it shall be noted that no amendments to the respective law have yet been presented to the Icelandic legislative parliament.

### Participation of men and boys in care and domestic work

Discussion on male involvement in gender equality issues has grown more prominent, and the current government Action Plan on Gender Equality pays special attention to men and gender equality.

There is a tradition of including men in the discussion of gender equality in Iceland dating back to the 1990's. In December of 2018 an action group on men and equality was appointed, by the then Minister for Social Affairs and Gender Equality. The group was mandated to put forward proposals for implementing suggestions previously put the Minister for Welfare by a previously selected working group on the same issues, working from the years 2011 to 2013. The action group will be making suggestions on actions to the Prime Minister, now responsible for gender equality, by the end of year 2019.

Proposals will include ways in which to tackle participation of men in female dominated sectors of the labour market as well as tackling enrolment and retention in female dominated programmes within higher education - programmes such as nursing and preschool education. The action group is also responsible for delivering suggestions for increased participation of men in the discussion of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, following the #MeToo movement.

From 2017 the Directorate for Equality has been involved in programmes and projects to increase men's participation in issues of gender equality. Together with the University of Akureyri, Iceland and the Norwegian organization Reform have carried out a study into gendered organizational structures of nursing programmes in the Nordic countries. A research project involving men's participation in parental leave was conducted in cooperation with Hungarian partners, EP Vantage Consulting Kft, and was concluded in spring of 2018.

## SECTION THREE: Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

### TINNA pilot project

TINNA is a pilot project of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the welfare department of the City of Reykjavik. TINNA's goal is to support single parents who have been on financial aid at Breiðholt communal service centre. As well increase the quality of life for the parents and their children by having available diversified services. The long-term goal of TINNA is that the children of the parents who use TINNA's services, will not live in poverty.

### The Icelandic Welfare Watch

The Welfare Watch was launched by the initiative of the Icelandic government in the beginning of 2009 to monitor the social and financial consequences of the financial crisis for families and households in Iceland, assess the measures already taken, propose improvements, and implement them on behalf of the government. The Welfare Watch has been staffed by representatives of various stakeholders, e.g. the labour market, municipalities, government agencies and ministries - all parties who in one way or another are connected to the welfare system and work on welfare issues. The Welfare Watch has played a crucial role and helped improve the situation of various groups in society who needed support. It has also been an important forum for discussing the issues surrounding the disadvantaged in society. It is, however, still important to monitor developments and receive proposals for improvements.

### The Nordic Welfare Watch

The Nordic Welfare Watch was a research programme financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2014 - 2017 and was a part of the Icelandic Presidency programme 2014. The project was divided into three separate projects:

1. The Nordic Welfare Watch - in response to crisis,
2. Welfare consequences of financial crises and
3. Nordic welfare indicators.

The aim was to study the effects of financial crises on the Nordic welfare systems and to find out how the Nordic welfare systems could meet the challenges the following years and to contribute to informed policymaking in welfare matters. The emphasis was on bringing together the most qualified experts in the Nordic



countries in each field. This approach yielded broad joint Nordic knowledge and solidarity on the content of the five reports published on behalf of the projects. Numerous networks formed during these projects are still active today. Another important result of the Nordic Welfare Watch was the formulation of two concrete proposals. One is a proposal called *Nordic Welfare Forum*. It addresses a joint Nordic forum that is to be held biannually to deal with future challenges to the welfare systems. This forum offers two arenas: a venue for discussion of urgent welfare issues at the top of the political agenda, and a platform for presenting results from academic circles regarding impending challenges that have not yet risen to the top of political agendas. The second proposal is called *Nordic Welfare Indicators*. It is a system of 30 Nordic Welfare indicators (NOVI) set up to monitor welfare trends and policy making in the Nordic countries.

## Improving health services for women and girls - sexual and reproductive health and rights

Act on Termination of Pregnancy was adopted by Parliament in May 2019, repealing the previous Act on Abortion dating back to 1975. The new legislation introduces two key amendments. Firstly, it codifies the personal autonomy and self-determination women have over their own bodies. Previously, women who wanted to have an abortion needed to have the abortion approved by either two doctors or a doctor and a social worker up until the end of the 16th week. After that a committee consisting of a doctor, social worker and a lawyer decided on whether the abortion could be permitted by law. In practice, women had good access to abortions, while in legal terms they did not enjoy the right to decide for themselves. Secondly, the abolished legislation defined specific cases where abortion would be permitted after the end of the 16th week. These cases were when there was a strong likelihood of serious birth defects, genetic disorders or other serious defects. This was viewed as being in violation of article 8 of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and therefore the new legislation does not make any distinction to the reasons for a woman's choice to have an abortion. Women, including women under the age of 18 are, according to the new legislation, guaranteed the right to healthcare in relation to abortion on demand up until the end of the 22nd week of pregnancy. The legislation guarantees women the right to abortion, even when a healthcare worker is not willing to perform the abortion, and women's access to counselling from various healthcare workers, e.g. doctors, nurses, midwives and social workers.

The legislation on Medicinal Products was changed at the end of 2018 so that nurses and midwives will be allowed to prescribe medicinal products for birth control. It is also intended that the national health insurance will take part in the cost of birth control medicinal products for specific groups of women, those of vulnerable groups.

Increased access to primary care health services is mentioned in Iceland's health care plan to 2030. Primary health care in Iceland is free of charge for children under 18 years old and from the 1 January 2019 primary health care also became free of charge for people with disability pension and people over 67 years old.

## SECTION FOUR: Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

### Intimate partner violence

*Keeping the Window Open* was a pioneering project on policing model dealing with domestic abuse which led to the introduction of a new standard operational procedure applying to the management of domestic violence cases by the National Commission of the Police at the end of year 2014. The new procedure is currently being introduced and implemented in all police districts through a follow up project titled *Breaking the Silence - End Violence Against Women* lead by the Directorate of Equality and co-funded by the rights, equality and citizenship Programme of the EU. The model aims to improve procedures in dealing with cases of domestic and intimate partner violence in order to ensure safety in the home, improve services for victims/survivors and offer treatment to offenders. It is also intended to improve the position of children in violent households and place a special focus on providing services to immigrant women and victim with disabilities. Consequently, the number of cases in which the offender is removed from the home has risen as well as the number of restraining orders issued. Furthermore, parliament has adopted an amendment to the Penal Code which explicitly criminalizes domestic violence in compliance with the Istanbul Convention.

In the current government agreement, it is stated that the new plan of action on improvement in the handling of sexual offences will be implemented and financed in full. Under the plan, allowance is made for strengthening the mechanisms in the criminal justice system with the aim of improving the position of victims/survivors in the system and upgrading and coordinating services to victims across the country, not least in the healthcare system. The legal environment in which sexual offences are processed will be examined with the aim of improving the standing of those who press charges regarding sexual offences.

### Other harmful practices

During the autumn of 2017, the #MeToo movement spread across the world. Women from different educational and occupational backgrounds shared their experience of sexual harassment, violence and abuse that accumulated into a joint call for action. That resulted in a range of measures, from new legislation, to surveys as well as awareness raising and training efforts.

In the wake of the #MeToo, the administration of Occupational Safety and Health has undertaken several initiatives to increase the awareness and impact of the laws and regulations relating to mobbing, gender based and sexual harassment, and violence in the workplace. From February through May 2018, it hosted for instance seminars for senior-level ministerial employees and lectures for ministerial employees in cooperation with the government office of Iceland and the Directorate for Equality. These two agencies also produced a 2018 calendar displaying the definitions of mobbing, gender-based and sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

The social partners have also taken action on their own and jointly. At the end of December 2017, women within the labour union sent a letter to the leadership of the labour movement (Icelandic Confederation of Labour, Icelandic Confederation of University Graduates, Federation of State and Municipal Employees and Icelandic Teachers' Union calling for increased equality education for the employees of the labour movement, improved regulation on safety and security in the workplace and within the movement and plan to improve management of cases of sexual harassment, abuse and violence.

In January 2018, Business Iceland (the federation of employers) issued a declaration stressing respectful communication and relations as key values and zero tolerance to harassment and abuse. It also stressed the collective responsibility of employers ensuring proper response to and prevention of harassment and abuse. Poster was produced with the declaration.

Representatives of labour market organizations together with the government have also signed an agreement to jointly take decisive action against sexual harassment, bullying and violence at work. The Prime Minister's Office has as well sent a letter to government institutions where they are asked to comply with the legislation and the regulation in this area.

In November 2017 the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality announced the establishment of two working groups and one task force. A working group to map and assess the following: (1) the level or prevalence of sexual harassment, intimidation, abuse and violence, as well as bullying in the labour market (survey among employees and employers categorising the respondents as victims (survivors), witnesses and perpetrators); and (2) the plans in place to prevent and respond to actual or alleged violations (survey among employers). A special task force will have the role to ensure the implementation of the proposals of the working group.

A working group to map and define the treatment needs of persons at risk of becoming or actual violent offenders in their intimate relationships and suggest ways to improve violence prevention and education.

In December 2017 the Ministry of Welfare and the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health hosted a meeting on the need to improve measures aimed at primary prevention of sexual and gender-based harassment, abuse and violence focusing on the culture and the associated risks in the workplace, as well as risk mitigation and management.

In January 2018 the Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Equality representing the Government and the representatives of the social partners signed a Declaration of Will on taking serious action against sexual harassment, abuse and violence in the workplace in a meeting initiated by the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health under the heading: *Workplace Harassment - No Thanks!*

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports announced the establishment of a working group in response to the #MeToo stories of women in sports. The working group began its work in March and in August issued a report including recommendations on how to improve the prevention and response to gender-based sexual harassment, abuse and violence within the sports movement. Following the report, the Minister submitted a bill of law establishing an independent body to receive and manage complaints pertaining to mobbing, gender-based and sexual harassment and violence in sports and recreational pursuits for youth and adults which was approved as law on 25 May 2019. The new body also has the role to disseminate information and guide the respective associations and parties on how to prevent, report and respond to violations.

Lastly, Capacent in Iceland began working with companies that want to address the fact that fewer women compared to men get ahead inside companies by analysing and addressing the implications of the working culture in place, including the level of sexism; communication and organisational structure; equality policy and salary structure; and role models, all of which can have implications for women's careers and gender equality within companies.

### Introduced or strengthened measures on violence

In March 2016, Iceland amended its criminal law regarding domestic violence. Before the amendment there was only a reason for increasing sentence regarding close relationships, but no special article about the act itself. The article is gender

neutral, but the goal of the amendment was to update the law with reference to the ratification of the Istanbul convention.

The article (no. 218 (b)) now says that any person who, repeatedly or seriously, poses a threat to the life, health or well-being of his or her present or former spouse or cohabiting partner, to his or her descendant or the descendant of his or her present or former spouse or cohabiting partner, to an older person in his or her direct blood-line, or to other persons who live with him or her in the home or are in his or her care, by means of violence, threats, deprivation of freedom, coercion or in another manner, shall be imprisoned for up to 6 years. A gross violation may be punishable by up to 16 years' imprisonment. When the seriousness of the violation is assessed, consideration shall be given to whether the injured party suffered major physical injury or damage to his or her health or whether the violation was fatal. Furthermore, consideration shall be given to whether the violation was committed in a particularly painful or injurious manner, whether it lasted a long time or whether the perpetrator grossly abused his or her superior position vis-à-vis the injured party.

Iceland amended its criminal law in 2018 regarding rape. It stipulates that sexual intercourse or participation in a similar sexual act needs to be consensual. Otherwise, the act constitutes rape. The law also stipulates that consent is considered irrelevant if given as a result of the use of threats of violence or other unlawful coercion.

In March 2019 Iceland amended its restraining order and expulsion of abusers from their home act in order to clarify mild remedies, make a clear difference between restraining order and expulsion, as well to revise the law and update in accordance with development and implementation.

### **Introduced or strengthen measures for survivors of violence**

Bjarkarhlíð, a family justice centre for survivors of violence began its operation in February 2017. The centre brings together services for survivors of violence in one location. It provides support to a range of individuals belonging to different groups of people rendered vulnerable by their status such as persons with disabilities, migrant women, and the elderly people. The centre is the result of a cross-sector collaboration between government ministries, police, local government, and grassroots organisations. The different partners coordinate to provide an integrated service for survivors of violence in an accessible and approachable way. Similar centres have been successful in the United States of America and across Europe,

which demonstrates that this is a service which can be easily transferred to different locations. Integrated service makes it easier for people to reach out, so they are more likely to try to break the circle of violence they are in. It also creates trust in the “system”, has pre-emptive value, improves social culture and sends the message that violence will not be tolerated.

Bjarkarhlíð offers: 1) counselling, support and information for survivors of violence, 2) coordinated services under one roof, 3) individual interviews, 4) legal consultation, 5) consultation with social works and 6) service for survivors of human trafficking. All services in the centre are free of charge.

The Women's Counselling is an NGO founded in 1985 and offers legal and social work counselling for women. Their main goal is to give counselling and support women, on any given matter. Women can receive services through a phone, email communication or in person. Their services are free of charge and those who seek their services do not have to give their name or any other personal data. The Women's Counselling offers also counselling to official bodies on all matters regarding women and women's rights and has a permanent seat with other women's rights associations in Iceland on the Equal Rights council.

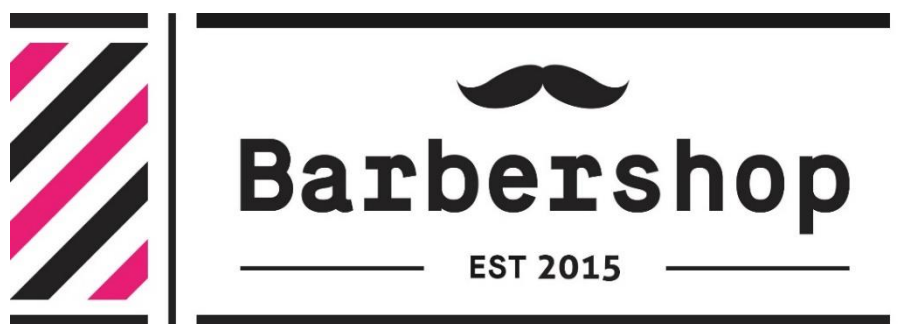
## Barbershop

Iceland has taken on a strong leadership on the issue of engaging men and boys for gender equality. As a part of that commitment, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has organized so-called Barbershop discussions around the world. The Barbershop concept brings men to the table as partners for gender equality and encourages them to look at their own attitudes and behaviour and how they impact the achievement of gender equality.

The Barbershops Conferences have been held abroad, including at NATO, UN, Nordic Council of Ministers and Council of Europe, and at home such as in the Icelandic Parliament and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Barbershop concept was developed jointly by the Permanent Missions of Iceland and Suriname to the UN in New York, in the context of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2015. The first conference was introduced by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Suriname at the UN General Assembly in September 2014.

The concept looks at innovative ways for men to mobilize and motivate other men to address discriminatory stereotypes of masculinity. It identifies ways for men to talk about gender equality in a comfortable and safe environment and addresses

how male leaders can drive this dialogue forward. Through their own behaviour, men can work toward the positive transformation of social norms, examine the role of men as change agents on gender equality who take responsibility for their actions and encourage other men to join in. This will help stimulate a grassroots dialogue among men and build on the progress made by recent movements such as the HeForShe campaign. The intended outcome of the Barbershop concept is a commitment by participants to assume their responsibility and realizing gender equality. A special focus has been on efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls - one of the critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.



Finally, the National Committee and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs developed a Barbershop toolbox to make the Barbershop available to all HeforShe's who want to engage men and boys in their communities, workplace, school or elsewhere. It contains activities adapted from various experts in this field, such as Michael Kimmel, as well as from MenEngage Alliance and Promundo. The toolbox can be accessed at the HeforShe website (<http://www.heforshe.org/en/barbershop>).

## Stígamót

Stígamót is an Education and Counselling Center for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Violence. Since it was established in 1990, its main focus has been twofold: firstly, providing various free services for survivors of sexual violence (including individual interview sessions and self-help groups), and secondly, raising public awareness regarding sexual violence. Development of new contextual approaches, methodologies and the advocacy for improved policies and practices regarding sexual violence and abuse has been an integral part of Stígamót's work from the start.



In the last few years, the organization has been increasingly focused on improving both its outreach and services for various marginalized groups, including disabled survivors, male survivors, and most recently, Stígamót has upscaled its efforts in working with the issue of sexual violence against and among youth. As the majority of survivors who come to Stígamót (around 70%) were subjected to sexual violence when they were under the age of 18, and a large segment of our work is focused on early trauma, our organization stresses the importance of early prevention.

One of the crucial shifts in recent years has been a more prominent emergence of survivors' voices. Stígamót has contributed to this development by producing videos where survivors appear in person, sharing their experiences of sexual violence. As a result, spaces of action and resistance have been multiplying, and young women and men have been bringing these issues into the debate, highlighting where society and its institutions are not fulfilling their role in preventing and addressing the various forms of sexual violence. In addition, the call for men's participation in combating violence against women has also become more explicit. In all of this, prevention measures are crucial, both as part of formal education curriculum but also through media and various forms of direct activism. In the last few years Stígamót has developed two specific prevention education projects: Sjúkást/"Crazy Love" focusing on raising awareness amongst youth about violence in intimate relationships; and Bandamenn/Allies, a training program for Engaging Men on combating Sexual Violence against Women.

## Sjúkást - Crazy Love

The last few years have seen an increase in actions and initiatives addressing sexual violence towards youth and violence in intimate relationships among youth in Iceland. It has, however, been pointed out that not only do prevention education initiatives need to be more extensive and sustainable, they also need to address more concretely the issues that youth are dealing with, not ignoring their realities but respecting and providing the appropriate information, skill sets and services. Stígamót developed an annual prevention campaign titled 'Crazy Love' in 2018. The campaign focuses on raising awareness amongst youth (ages 13 - 19) on violence in intimate relationships. The campaign stresses the importance of consent, boundaries and relationships. At the center of the project is an extensive information resource/webpage that provides various educational materials about different forms of relationships and violence, including tools to identify and address abusive behaviour. Other topics include sex, pornography, gender equality and feminism, activism and information on how to seek help. The campaign takes place

in February and March each year and includes a variety of actions done in cooperation with youth groups, centres and associations. The campaign also uses social media, in addition to traditional media and different print materials to raise awareness. Each year the aim is to highlight new issues relevant to youth - the 2020 campaign will focus on pornography, its effects and consequences, and provide tools for young people, to think critically about their porn use.

## Bandamenn - Allies

Stígamót has developed a training workshop for men who want to engage in combating violence against women. The objective of the programme is for the participants to achieve a deeper understanding of a broad set of issues and concepts relevant to gender-based violence, including an overview of how the debate has developed globally and in Iceland, and why it is crucial that more men are engaged on the topic. The overall goal of the programme is to support the agents of change, including professionals in their home institutions and peer groups who are committed to engaging in a transformative dialogue and working with beneficiaries to create spaces of change. The objective is also to create a sharing and learning space for men, in order to better understand and articulate their role in this debate, as well as design ways and strategies on how to get involved. The training is based on Stígamót's practice and the survivor-based approach to addressing and combating gender-based violence.



## Breaking the Silence

The Directorate of Equality project *Breaking the Silence* got funded by Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. The general objective of the project is to send a clear message of no tolerance of violence against women and girls in order to eliminate violence against women. The specific objectives and planned activities to reach this goal are:

1. Increased awareness of men and boys: An awareness raising campaign in media especially targeted at men to motivate men to contribute actively in the fight against violence against women and girls and to reach potential offenders, get them to evaluate their behaviour and seek treatment.

2. Increased knowledge of professionals in key positions to stop violence against woman and girls: Specialized seminars with external experts who will teach professionals to recognise the symptoms of violence, know the consequences and the treatments and solutions that are available through stop violence day aimed at specific groups of professionals. As well to stop violence days in rural areas with information campaign and bringing together the professionals in the area and on-line information centre.
3. Reach vulnerable groups by making information material for vulnerable groups of woman and girls, such as disabled, immigrants, elderly and LGBTI people. As well have professionals work with the groups.
4. Learn from others and give back by organising European conference on good practices to end violence against women and girls and have on-line information centre where all information concerning the project will be in one place available to all.

The expected results of the project are an increased awareness of gender-based violence in society and an increased capacity to react to suspicion of gender-based violence, especially targeted at men and boys and professionals in direct contact with offenders and victims of gender-based violence. The project will increase knowledge about the existence and the need to stop violence against women and girls as well as making people aware of their civic duties when it comes to reporting violence or suspicion of violence not least against children.

The expected result of the awareness raising campaign is a more open debate on violence against women and girls in society, especially amongst men and boys. The campaign will motivate men to speak up, take a stand and work as a safeguard in the prevention of violence against women and girls. Hopefully the campaign will also increase the number of men willing to contribute actively in the fight against gender-based violence. Our aim is also to reach potential offenders and get them to rethink their behaviour and seek available help.

The focus on increased knowledge of professionals in key areas to stop violence against women and girls with targeted seminars is expected to leave us with better informed professionals that can react to signs of violence and intervene appropriately especially when it comes to vulnerable groups. Offering professionals open seminars all over the country will hopefully result in better informed professionals that are able to intervene if they suspect violence against women and girls.

The brochures with appropriate information for vulnerable groups, (disabled women, young women, pregnant women, the elderly, migrants and ethnic minorities and LGBTI people) about violence against women and girls, is expected to reach potential victims and inform them about their rights and how to seek assistance for

themselves and others. The brochures will also inform relatives of battered women and girls and professionals about the danger, signs and consequences of violence and build better safeguards for vulnerable groups of women and girls.

The project's website will be opened and made assessable to all interested in learning about violence against women and girls. On the website visitors will be able to acquire knowledge about the signs of violence and the possible consequences, human rights and where to seek help in cases of gender-based violence. The website will provide invaluable education material and support for victims and professionals, NGOs, public officials, the police, the media and public and private institutions offering help and services for victims and treatment for offenders.

The expected results of the European conference are to show others the results of our project and to give us and others an opportunity to learn from others who are working on elimination of violence against women and girls.

### Heimilisfriður - Domestic Peace

Treatment for men and women who are violent relationships, located in Reykjavik. Domestic Peace is available for everyone that believes that he/she uses domestic violence and wants to do something about it. The project started in 1998 and since 2006 it has been funded by the Ministry of Welfare. Even though officially funded the clients pay a low consultation fee as a part of their motivation to enter therapy. From the beginning the project has been a part of ATV (Alternative to Violence), located in Oslo, Norway. Domestic Peace gets both supervision and training from ATV.

The ideological background that the project uses is to look at violence as a psychological problem that must be dealt with accordingly. Most of their clients have poor reaction-skills. Especially in challenging situations the only way they know how to react is to use aggressive / violent behaviours. The task is therefore to teach other methods / behaviours. Psychological methods are used to deal with the problem, such as CBT, Attachment theories, psychoeducation and trauma-treatment models.

Most of the clients are dealing with a mixture of the following types of violence:

- Physical violence
- Psychological violence
- Material violence
- Sexual violence
- Latent violence

The therapeutic process is that everyone begins in individual sessions and gets psychological evaluation. After this evaluation the person can either go into group therapy or continue in individual therapy. Due to the complexity of the situations being dealt with, the therapy is up to 2-3 years. The clients come voluntarily. So even though majority of them are referred to by official sectors such as the child welfare, women's shelter, Bjarkarhlíð (support for offers) and the police, they are voluntarily in therapy and can leave whenever they like. They are urged to take responsibility, and to see that they can change and hold out to be a better person.

The project serves the whole country. There is an outpost in Akureyri (Northern Iceland) and in some cases, skype sessions are used with clients if needed. Since the beginning of, over 1.100 clients and spouses have sought therapy. In 2014 the University of Iceland did a Survey on behaviour, quality of life and social relationships of clients and their spouses, based on clients and spouses attending treatment from 2006-2013. In short, the result showed that both clients and their spouses were satisfied attending the program. The survey also showed that incidents of violence decreased considerably after therapy and the participants were better in dealing with challenging situations at home.

## SAGA

The SAGA (Stress-And-Gene-Analysis) cohort is a unique nationwide study on the impact of trauma on women's health lead by the University of Iceland, in collaboration with deCODE Genetics. All women living in Iceland, 18-69 years were invited to participate in an extensive online questionnaire assessing health and trauma history. Participating women provided an informed consent for record linkage to the nationwide health registers as well as to genetic data at deCODE Genetics. In July 2019, approximately 32,000 women had enrolled in the study. The SAGA cohort aims to be one of the largest scientific undertakings specifically designed for improved understanding the impact of trauma on women's health and the potential genetic underpinnings of varying trajectories of health after exposure to such trauma. As such, the results may in the future contribute to prevention and

treatment of adverse health consequences suffered by the large populations exposed to trauma. The study is funded by the European Research Council and the Icelandic Research Fund.

## Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours

The agreement among the coalition parties includes action to tackle gender-based and sexual violence perpetrated by means of modern information technology or digital violence. At the 62th meeting of the Convention of the Status of Women in March 2018, the Ministry of Welfare in collaboration with the Parliament of Iceland, the Icelandic Women's Rights Association, and the Icelandic National Committee of UN Women hosted a side event on digital gender violence and hate speech: the role of men, the legislation and implications for democracy. The aim of the event was to raise awareness around the gendered reality of online abuse and hate speech with women disproportionately affected as certain form of abuse online, such as image based sexual abuse and threats of sexual violence is directed in vast majority towards women. Nevertheless, legal responses to online abuse, hate speech and threats are generally gender neutral, often missing the severe implications that the harsh reality of misogyny and digital gendered violence and abuse can have on women's participation in the democratic discourse taking place online, namely holding back their public participation. In terms of measures taken by the Government, the issue was addressed in the report of the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality on the status and development of gender equality for the period 2015-2017 published in March 2018. The same month, a Steering Group was appointed by the Prime Minister on comprehensive reforms pertaining to the status and rights of survivors of sexual violence. The Group has also on its agenda to form a policy to address digital violence. In February 2019, under the auspices of the Group, a conference was hosted on digital violence with a group of experts addressing the manifestation of such violence, prevention and protection against it both by law and otherwise, shortcomings and required reforms. Currently, the Group is forming a policy with the assistance of an expert to be completed in 2020, including legal amendments.

## Introduced and strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions

In June 2019, a comprehensive action plan to address violence and its consequences for the period 2019-2022, was adopted by parliament. It addresses prevention against gender-based and sexual violence perpetrated by digital means.

In addition, under the auspices of the steering group on comprehensive reforms pertaining to the status and rights of survivors of sexual violence, a policy including recommendations on legal reforms is being developed to better address digital violence both prevention and protection.

## Legal reforms to combat discrimination and gender-bias in media

On the April 15 2011 the Icelandic Parliament adopted a new Media Act No. 38/2011. The Act implements the Audio-visual Media Services Directive and promotes gender equality in the media. According to Article 52 of the Media Act, the Media Commission has the authority to prohibit the transmission of audio-visual material that is considered contrary to the provisions of the legislation including the Articles above and has the authority to revoke audio-visual media broadcasting licences in case of serious and repeated violations.

According to the Act media shall submit annual report to the Media Commission containing various information including representation of the genders such as the proportion of men and women among persons interviewed in news and current affairs programming and the share of men and women among the staff of the media outlets within each job designation.

Article 1 of the Gender Equality Act contains the objectives of the law. Among them is to work against negative stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men which corresponds to an article in the Media Act which calls on media service providers to take measures to counter stereotyped gender images.

In addition, the Media Act, contains the general principles applying to commercial communications and teleshopping, also corresponds to the said objective article of the Gender Equality Act stipulating, among other things, that commercial communications and teleshopping shall not include or promote any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, the Media Act, stipulates to democratic principles and prohibition against hate speech and incitement to criminal behaviour, respectively, make media service providers responsible for respecting human rights and equality. Media service providers shall take care to meet requirements regarding impartiality and accuracy in their comments on news and news-related content and ensure that a variety of opinions are expressed, including both those of men and women. Moreover, media service providers may not incite people to criminal behaviour. They shall be forbidden to encourage hatred in the

media on grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, nationality, opinion or cultural, economic, social or other standing in society.

The Gender Equality Act pertains to advertisements and stipulates that advertisers and those who design or publish advertisements shall ensure that the advertisements are not belittling or disrespectful towards either sex or that they do not run contrary to gender equality in any way. Such advertisements may not be published in the media or any other public venue.

### **Promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media**

Iceland has taken decisive steps to achieve gender parity in the media, in line with its commitment to reaching parity across the media industry by 2020. A transparent analysis of the representation of women in Icelandic media was undertaken for the years 2014 and 2015. It focused on analysing the respondents and participants in news and several domestic shows, both in radio and on TV. The result was startling, as the balance between women and men had not changed for 15 years. Men were around 70% of all those appearing in radio and TV, while women were only 30%. The study went on to find that this applies to those on the other side of the microphone as well, i.e. anchors, reporters and journalists were also predominantly men. The media was presented with these numbers and most have taken steps to affect change in their organization. Further studies are planned to monitor developments.

Additionally, a special committee was established in 2015 to explore ways to promote women in television and cinema. This included for example that rules applicable to grants awarded by the Icelandic Film Fund are being reviewed to pay more attention to gender equality. A special project is ongoing to empower women to engage in media studies and filmmaking. In collaboration with the Association of Icelandic Upper Secondary Pupils and the National Broadcasting Service (RÚV), an agreement was reached on a gender quota system for a popular television quiz, in which boys had almost exclusively taken part.



## SECTION FIVE: Participation and accountability in peaceful and inclusive societies

### Mechanism for women's equal participation in decision-making bodies

Under Article 15 of the Gender Equality Act, care is to be taken when making appointments to state and municipal committees, councils and governing boards, to ensure that the proportions between the genders are as even as is practicable, with not less than 40% of seats occupied by each gender when there are more than three members. This also applies to public limited companies and enterprises which are in majority state or municipal ownership. In 2008, women accounted for 37% of the members of committees, councils and boards within the Government ministries. In 2012 this figure reached the 40% limit and in 2017 women were 48% of all members in committees in all ministries.

### The portrayal of women and gender-bias in the media

Two reports on the media and gender were commissioned in 2015 and 2018. Both were published as a part of the bi-annual report of the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality on the development and status of gender equality and in conjunction with the Gender Equality Forum hosted every second year. The first report covered the period 2013-2015 while also including a reference to a secondary source - a study done for the period 2009-2013 by the Association of Women in Business. The second report covered the period from 2011-2016. Both reports contain statistical data and analyses done by media and gender experts.

Different from the first report, the latter one included an analysis on the topics women and men were asked to comment on as politicians, experts or opinion makers and the gender balance with regard to each of the 28 listed topics including environmental issues, foreign affairs, fisheries, police matters, educational issues and gender equality. On all topics except social affairs 51.9% of the persons interviewed were women. On gender equality issues 67.9% were women and the share of men interviewed was in the range from 52.4% to 87.3%. The second report also indicated that the gender of the reporter or the host of the TV or radio programmes in question or the team of reporters/hosts influenced the selection of persons asked for an interview.

These reports have served as a tool to hold the media accountable to the letter and the spirit of the applicable law, generating response and discussions among the media outlets. Both reports also appeared to have encourage better performance by the media as indicated by the best practice section about the efforts made by the National Broadcasting Service to create more gender balance both among its staff at all levels and the persons invited on its news and other programmes using gender auditing as a tool to monitor the implementation of its gender equality strategy and publishing the findings on-line. What remains still is to address the gender imbalance in terms of the different topics women and men are asked to address.

### Women's rights and equality in foreign and development policy

Iceland has had a consistent policy promoting women's rights and gender equality as a part of its foreign and development policy since the 1990s reflecting the international development towards more rights-based human security and democracy promotion in bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The first holistic policy for Icelandic Development Cooperation was developed for the years 2005-2009 based on four pillars: (1) human resources, equality and economic development, (2) democracy, human rights and governance, (3) peace, security and development and (4) sustainable development.

In 2008, the first comprehensive legislation on International Development Cooperation entered into force and the first gender equality policy of the Icelandic Development Cooperation was introduced. According to an independent assessment, commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) in February 2008, the Icelandic Development Cooperation had reached the goal of becoming one of the cornerstones of Icelandic foreign policy, where contributions to development cooperation were more than one third of the total expenditure of the MFA. In terms of multilateral aid, Iceland has been the most dedicated supporter of UN Women, as well as UNFPA, in line with its support to sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls. It has also supported the gender and gender mainstreaming programmes of other international organizations, such as the World Bank and the OECD, and hosts four UN Universities, including the Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme, while gender mainstreaming forms a constituent part of the learning in the other three Universities, namely the UN Universities training programmes on Fishers, Geothermal and Land Restoration.

## Measures to support women, peace and security

Iceland was among the first states to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in 2008. An evaluation of Iceland's second NAP, conducted by the UN University's Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (UNU-GEST), found that the implementation was in general successful, but recommended improving training for implementing partners and seconded gender experts as well as more focused advocacy activities. It also set forth specific recommendations for each of the NAP's four pillars and encouraged an increased internal and national focus of the third NAP. In 2018, Iceland's third NAP was presented. As before, the NAP relies on the four main pillars of UNSCR 1325 implementation: 1) Training and advocacy, 2) Participation, 3) Prevention, protection, relief and recovery, and 4) Partnership and collaboration. A major shift is towards a results-oriented action plan for improved results measurement and while the NAP reflects a continued emphasis on areas where success has been achieved in the past, there is also an increased domestic focus. Harmonization, supervision and monitoring methodology has been revised, as well as the framework for civil society cooperation. Furthermore, training is considerably increased in order to enable Iceland to be a powerful advocate for the message conveyed in UNSCR1325. To this end, key parties within the Icelandic administration and in relevant institutions are engaged to ensure coordinated training efforts.

As a part of the advocacy mission of the new NAP, a session titled *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325; Women, Peace and Security; from Awareness to Action* was a part of at the Women Political Leaders Conference held in Iceland in November 2018. The event was hosted by the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with Höfði Reykjavík Peace Centre, and the Embassies of the Nordic countries in Reykjavík, as well as the Embassies of Canada, the US and the UK.

As an example of Iceland's efforts in the international sphere is the continued collaboration with UN Women and its mission *Promoting Women and Girls' Effective Participation in Peace, Security, and Recovery in Mozambique*. The program aims, inter alia, at strengthening women and girls' capacity to meaningfully participate in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as enhancing the national capacity to implement and generate knowledge on women, peace, and security. The program has provided crucial technical support to Mozambique's first NAP and has implemented a scoping study on services to women survivors of violence, ongoing interventions and the level of women's participation. As a part of the program, Iceland has supported the training of experts from Mozambique through the United

Nations University Gender Equality Studies and Training Program (UNU-GEST) in Iceland. Iceland has also recently engaged in a similar partnership with UN Women and the government of Malawi to develop and finalize the NAP for Malawi.

Furthermore, in 2018 the gender balance for Icelandic experts deployed to various peacekeeping and humanitarian missions was 50/50 and funds mobilized by Iceland to humanitarian crises are intended to ensure the gender sensitivity of humanitarian action through coordination, advocacy, technical support and capacity development, in line with the Government of Iceland's foreign policy and priorities.

Funding for Iceland's NAP activities is primarily channelled through the Defence Directorate and the Directorate for International Development Cooperation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for the NAP's strategic direction and coordinates activities in cooperation with all relevant parties. A steering group led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs monitors each activity and submits an annual progress report for the duration of the third NAP. In addition, the Parliament of Iceland is kept informed of the progress each year.

### Women's role and the gender perspective in the implementation of peace agreements - Nordic network of women mediators

Inspired by a similar initiative in southern Africa, the Nordic governments endorsed the creation of the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) network at the Nordic-African Foreign Ministers' meeting in April 2015. The NWM was officially launched in Oslo on 27 November 2015, followed by an international launch at the United Nations in New York in March 2016.

The NWM is a network of women from the five Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden - with professional expertise relevant to conflict mediation, peacebuilding and negotiations. They share a commitment to sustaining peace through the inclusive and meaningful participation of women in all phases of peace processes. NWM is an instrument for the involvement of women in advocacy and operational engagement.

The NWM network aims to reach out to actors engaged in peace processes, transitional processes and post-political settlement processes and institutions. Interacting with other similar women's networks will be an important component. The NWM network also aims to make women's competence in this area more visible, to counter arguments about the shortage or low availability of women with mediation expertise.

The NWM mission is to enable Nordic women mediators and peacebuilders to advance the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in all phases of peace processes, to contribute to achieving and sustaining peace.

To achieve the mission of the network, the NWM will work according to the following objectives.

To strengthen women's participation in peace processes at all levels, including by:

- Amplifying the voices of women mediators and peacemakers in conflict affected areas

Advocating for all peace processes to be inclusive;

- Developing and fostering partnerships with other mediation and peacebuilding networks and organisations; and
- Creating and supporting joint activities among members and with partners, as appropriate.
- To strengthen Nordic women actively involved in international peace-making efforts, including by:
  - Enabling the sharing of experiences, knowledge and know-how among members, including through networking opportunities;
  - Promoting and supporting members in their functions, as well as drawing on that expertise across networks.
  - Facilitating access and providing networking opportunities with mediating and peacebuilding actors globally.

The membership of the network comprises Nordic women with diverse professional experiences, ranging from foreign affairs and international law to multilateral or regional organizations, such as the UN, the EU and the OSCE as well as civil society. Network members have expertise on a variety of issues relevant to all phases of peace processes, including mediation, ceasefire arrangements, constitutional reform, civil-military relations, international humanitarian law, human rights, communications and inclusive strategies. Promoting women in negotiations, mediation and all phases of peace-making is at the heart of the work of the NWM.

The NWM is a collaborative forum composed of national networks in each of the five Nordic countries. It meets once a year with around ten women participating from each country. Hosting of meetings rotates between the Nordic countries. A contact group representing participating Nordic ministries serves as a strategic-level

coordinating body. A group of operational partners from the five Nordic countries (contact details below) are responsible for the organization and implementation of all network activities whether at the national or at the Nordic level. The operational partners play a central role in convening and organizing the annual Nordic-level meeting. An advisory group consisting of senior Nordic women mediators and peacebuilders provides input and advice on the overall substantive direction of the NWM. At the national level, each network may have its own profile.

## Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme

The United Nations University Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (UNU-GEST) is an important part of Icelandic development cooperation efforts. The objective of the programme is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries and post-conflict societies through research and education. Its main target group is junior professionals working for government, educational institutions and civil society organisations in developing countries and post-conflict societies. The two main components of the Programme are a research programme and an educational programme, which ranges from short courses and on-site training, to a diploma programme in international gender studies and scholarships for masters and PhD programmes.

The GEST post-graduate diploma programme (30 ECTS) in international gender equality studies consists of six teaching modules, taught by leading experts in their respective fields. From the outset, gender, peace and security has been an important part of the curricula, but fellows write an applied project proposal for implementation on an issue related to their work or area of interest and expertise. The focus is exceptionally practical as studies are geared towards generating sustainable change by fellows' activities in their home countries. To date, 132 fellows have graduated from the diploma programme, but an external evaluation from 2017 revealed many important macro-, meso-, and micro-level results in the partner developing countries that the UNU-GEST had contributed to and the programme was assessed to be an effective mechanism for capacity development of professionals in developing countries. As an example of its advocacy and outreach efforts, GEST has co-hosted three international conferences on Women, Peace and Security since 2009. GEST remains one of the primary partners for the Government of Iceland in its efforts to support training, education and advanced research in the field of women, peace and security.

## SECTION SIX: Civil Society Initiatives

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Kvennafri - Women's strike</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	Federations of labour unions (BSRB, ASÍ, BHM, KÍ) and the Women's Movement (Kvenréttindafélag Íslands, Kvenfélagasambandið, W.O.M.E.N. and more).
Target population	Icelandic women and society as a whole
Description of activity	The historic women's strike of 1975 has been repeated several times. The last time was October 24, 2018. On that day, Icelandic women walked out of work at 2:55 pm, when they have earned their share of wages, according to calculations. The biggest event was in Reykjavík, but women also gathered all around the country. Historically, the main focus of the day has been the gender pay gap, but issues connected to the #metoo movement were also on the agenda in 2018.
Link to further information	<a href="http://www.kvennafri.is">www.kvennafri.is</a>
Budget	8.500.000 ISK.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Report on day care</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	BSRB - Federation of State and Municipal Employees
Target population	Government and municipal authorities, society as a whole
Description of activity	A lot of families struggle with the so-called care gap, after maternity/paternity leave is over and before the child can go into day care. This affects the participation of parents, and especially women, in the labour market. BSRB was aware that information on day care was not readily available and took on the task of gathering that information from municipalities around the countries. The results were published in a report.
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.bsrb.is/static/files/Utgefid_efni/skyrsla-bsrb-um-dagvistunarurraedi-mai-2017.pdf">https://www.bsrb.is/static/files/Utgefid_efni/skyrsla-bsrb-um-dagvistunarurraedi-mai-2017.pdf</a> - Only in Icelandic
Budget	Work done by employees of BSRB.
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	There are divergences when it comes to day care options between municipalities in Iceland. Children have no legal right to day care, which

	is different from the other Nordic countries. The average care gap is 3 to 6 months.
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<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Better maternity/paternity leave</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	BSRB, Federation of State and Municipal Employees, and ASÍ, Icelandic Confederation of Labour
Target population	Government and society
Description of activity	After the economic crash of 2008 the maternity and paternity leave schemes went through major cuts. The labour federations decided to start a campaign, gathering stories from parents under the hashtag #betrafæðingarorlof (better maternity/paternity leave). The federations demanded changes to the schemes, that payments would be raised, and the leave increased from 9 to 12 months. A Facebook page was also opened.
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/betrafaedingarorlof/">https://www.facebook.com/betrafaedingarorlof/</a>
Budget	
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	Since the campaign the payments have been raised and the government has made plans to increase the leave from 9 to 12 months.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Pilot projects for a shorter work week</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	BSRB, Federation of State and Municipal Employees, the Icelandic government and Reykjavík municipality
Target population	Workers in the public sector
Description of activity	In recent years one of the main issues of BSRB has been to shorten the work week. In 2015, the first pilot project was started with Reykjavík municipality and then another with some government institutions in 2017. In most of these the work week was shortened from 40 hours to 36. There is a gender dimension to this, as data shows that women in Iceland still handle more of the unpaid care work and work within the home than men. The pilot projects were followed closely, and reports have been published with the results.
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.bsrb.is/is/skodun/malefnin/stytting-vinnuvikunnar">https://www.bsrb.is/is/skodun/malefnin/stytting-vinnuvikunnar</a>
Budget	



Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	The results from surveys among employees and employers that have taken part have been largely positive. Morale has gone up, stress has gone down, people are happier, and they feel there is a better balance between work and life. The productivity has stayed the same.
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<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Combat Social Isolation and Promote Integration</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant women living in Reykjavík, Iceland
<b>Peer Counselling</b>	<p>Peer counselling is a support 'helpline' for women of foreign origin in need of support and or counselling by women with sufficient knowledge and experience who may have shared similar experiences here in Iceland. This is a voluntary, confidential service offered by the members W.O.M.E.N. This service is free to all women of foreign origin.</p> <p>We provide women of foreign origin residing in Iceland information regarding their rights and obligations as a woman, wife or mother residing in Iceland. Women look to us seeking information related to issues regarding immigration, educational and professional valediction, health and social security issues, the labour market and/or union rights, divorce and child custody issues, voting and various welfare issues such as housing and or services provided by local municipalities. Increasingly women look to us for information regarding domestic violence, child welfare/protection services, sexual discrimination/violence and or harassment. We are also experiencing an increase in questions regarding rights related to discrimination based on origin gender and/or religion. We also offer information regarding opportunities for a social networking and combatting isolation through our organization W.O.M.E.N.</p> <p>Our volunteers are of all ages and nationalities and we offer counselling services in many languages including Icelandic, English, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Serbian, German, Thai, Malay and Spanish.</p> <p>Counselling takes place in our office every other Tuesday evening from 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. The languages offered each week are posted on our Facebook page and private group.</p> <p>W.O.M.E.N. regularly offer training and access to information regarding services and rights for our members who participate as peer counsellors.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="http://womeniniceland.is/en/projects/peer-counseling/">http://womeniniceland.is/en/projects/peer-counseling/</a>

Budget	No budget - a volunteer - based project
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<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Combat Social Isolation and Promote Integration</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant women living in Reykjavík, Iceland
<b>Icelandic Courses</b>	W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland together with The Soroptimist chapter for a suburban area in Reykjavik Iceland, organized informal chat sessions in Icelandic. The goal of the project was to support women of foreign origin learning Icelandic as a measure of integration with opportunity for both professional and social integration. The idea came from chapters of the Soroptimist movement in Iceland to meet women of foreign origin in small groups for discussion and support in learning Icelandic. It was not a formal Icelandic course, but rather an opportunity for informal discussion. This was a voluntary project and therefore free for all participating women.
Link to further information	<a href="http://womeniniceland.is/en/projects/learn-icelandic-2/">http://womeniniceland.is/en/projects/learn-icelandic-2/</a>
Budget	No budget this is a completely volunteer based project

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Combat Social Isolation and Promote Integration</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant women living in Iceland
<b>Empowerment Courses for Women of Foreign Origin</b>	<p>A collaborative project with various female Psychologists of foreign origin living in Iceland. (English, Polish and Spanish speaking).</p> <p>The workshops were part of a project that W.O.M.E.N in Iceland devised called "Knowledge is power" where we have offered empowerment workshops for women of foreign origin living in Iceland. Women were provided with information and tools for coping with issues which have hindered them either before during or after the immigration process here in Iceland.</p> <p>With funding we were able to provide 4 courses for groups of women between 12-16 participants in two separate municipalities in the Capital region of Iceland. In addition to the 4 empowerment workshops we were also able to provide two self-defence workshops for mothers and</p>

	daughters. This project and these workshops were made possible through funding from the Development Fund for Immigrant Affairs.
Links to further information	<a href="http://womeniniceland.is/en/empowerment-workshop-reykjanesbaer/">http://womeniniceland.is/en/empowerment-workshop-reykjanesbaer/</a> <a href="http://womeniniceland.is/en/events/self-defense-workshop/">http://womeniniceland.is/en/events/self-defense-workshop/</a>
Budget	500.000ISK was granted for the project by the Ministry of Welfare through the Development Fund for Immigrant Affairs (Þróunarsjóðs innflytjendamála) All funds granted for the project paid for the professionals and meeting costs. All work provided by our organization, planning and assisting with workshops was on a volunteer basis.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Creating a social network promoting integration through creative outlets</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant and Icelandic women living in Reykjavík, Iceland
<b>Women's Story Circle</b>	<p>W.O.M.E.N. - Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network and the Reykjavik City Library embarked on a joint project 10 years ago called The Women's Story Circle.</p> <p>The objective of this Women's Story Circle which has taken place the first Sunday of the month every month in the Reykjavik City Library in order to create a forum for women to share their stories, be they personal or literary, giving them an opportunity to meet in an informal atmosphere in order to share their cultural backgrounds. The Women's Story Circle also provides an opportunity to women of foreign descent to practice their Icelandic in a relaxed environment and to learn more about Icelandic culture, literature and traditions.</p> <p>This past year we received additional funding from the Ministry of Welfare in relation to our work with the #MeToo women of foreign origin stories. Our work exposed the need for further integration on a social platform. W.O.M.E.N of foreign origin provided volunteer services but used funding from the Ministry to provide additional services and opportunities for women. Included in those services were; creative writing workshops, reading circles, a closed creative art support group under the guidance of psychologists for victims of domestic and sexual abuse, various informational lectures regarding rights in the labour market, human rights, health care, music workshops and various</p>

	creative art projects including dance, theatre, pod casts and informative walks through Reykjavík and neighbouring suburbs.
Budget	A completely volunteer based project. Reykjavík has provided an undisclosed amount of funding. In July of 2019 we were awarded a 5 million ISK. kr. grant for one year to provide additional services listed above. Only a nominal administration fee went to women most of the funding flowed to outside specialist services and materials.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Creating a social awareness of rights and services</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant and Icelandic women living in the seven regions of Iceland
<b>MeToo Women of foreign origin living in Urban areas</b>	This project was initiated in 2018-19 as a result of findings regarding the #MeToo movement in Iceland and the lack of support provided to marginalized women of foreign origin living in Iceland. W.O.M.E.N's found that women of foreign origin had less access to information regarding both services and their rights when living in situations of domestic violence and or sexual harassment/violence in both society and the workplace. The aim of this project was to collaborate with service providers and experts in the area of gender-based violence throughout the countryside as isolation is increased the further one travels from the capital area.
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/womeniniceland/photos/a.64226488581120/2171204302917163/?type=3&amp;theater">https://www.facebook.com/womeniniceland/photos/a.64226488581120/2171204302917163/?type=3&amp;theater</a>
Budget	This project was funded through a grant from the Gender Equality Office, total of 1.5 million ISK kr. All funding provided was delegated to travel expenses and materials in relation to meetings being held across the country.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Creating Awareness of rights and responsibilities /integration assistance</b>
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Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant and Icelandic women living in the Capital region of Iceland
<b>Health Talks with Healthcare professional</b>	A member of W.O.M.E.N's board is specialized as practitioner nurse with midwife licencing. She was awarded a small grant (300.000ISK) from the Ministry of Welfare to conduct meetings providing women of foreign origin information regarding rights and responsibilities in relation to the Health Care system and facilities in Iceland often with emphasis on Childbirth and Women's Health issues. The talks spanned from information regarding rights within the Icelandic Healthcare system, insurance obligations and various services provided at various levels of the Health care system.
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/events/393275808168080/">https://www.facebook.com/events/393275808168080/</a>
Budget	No budget on behalf of the organization, all the funds went to pay the nurse practitioner, all costs for meetings. Any work done by organization was done on a volunteer basis.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Creating Social Networking Opportunities/ Integration assistance</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant and Icelandic women living in the Capital region of Iceland
<b>World Food Cafe</b>	<p>The World Food Cafe is a monthly event supported by W.O.M.E.N. The event is open to all women in Iceland. This monthly event started several years ago as a way to bring women from different cultures together and to learn about different ethnic cuisines and share a lovely evening enjoying good food and good conversation.</p> <p>The World Food Cafe started with guest participation where guests would learn about the food being prepared while helping to prepare the meal by cutting vegetables or adding ingredients to the dish, but now as this was very time consuming, we do it quite differently.</p> <p>Now women volunteer their time for one evening to share the cuisine from their home country. Usually they receive help cooking the meal. The evening starts with the chef introducing the dishes, followed by them sharing a short story or some information about the cuisine and what it means to their countrymen. We also welcome chefs to bring music and decorations from their homeland. Guests enjoy a lovely</p>

	meal, good company and hopefully learn something new about their host chef's favourite cuisine from their homeland.
Link to further information	<a href="http://womeniniceland.is/en/projects/the-world-food-cafe/">http://womeniniceland.is/en/projects/the-world-food-cafe/</a>
Budget	A volunteer-based project.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Awareness of Rights and Responsibilities / Integration assistance</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	W.O.M.E.N. WOMEN OF MULTICULTURAL ETHNICITY NETWORK IN ICELAND
Target population	Migrant and Icelandic women living in the Capital region of Iceland
<b>16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence</b>	<p>W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland has participated in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign since 2005. Every year, from November 25 - December 10, various activist associations organize events in order to raise public awareness about causes and consequences of gender violence.</p> <p>The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute coordinated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership in 1991. Participants chose the dates November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women, and December 10, International Human Rights Day, in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights. This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including November 29, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, December 1, World AIDS Day, and December 6, which marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. The 16 Days Campaign has been used as an organizing strategy by individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels.</li> <li>• Strengthening local work around violence against women.</li> <li>• Establishing a clear link between local and international work to end violence against women.</li> <li>• Providing a forum in which organizers can develop and share new and effective strategies.</li> <li>• Demonstrating the solidarity of women around the world organizing against violence against women.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating tools to pressure governments to implement promises made to eliminate violence against women.</li> </ul>
Budget	A volunteer-based project.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>One Billion Rising Iceland</b>
Name of CSO	UN Women Iceland
Target population	The general public in Iceland
One Billion Rising Iceland	UN Women Iceland has celebrated the awareness raising event, One Billion Rising seven years in a row (2013-2019). Many people (approx. 3.500) rise every year all around the country and dance against gender-based violence. The largest event takes place in Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik, but more than ten smaller events are held simultaneously in smaller cities/villages around Iceland. All major workplaces, universities and other schools in the capital area are invited to join the movement and fight gender-based violence by joining this rave party during lunchtime hours. Every year, UN Women Iceland focuses its attention on a problem that has been high on the agenda in Iceland or worldwide. The event has become an annual symbolic event in the fight against violence against women in Iceland and gets a huge media attention every year.
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/womeniniceland/photos/a.64226488581120/2171204302917163/?type=3&amp;theater">https://www.facebook.com/womeniniceland/photos/a.64226488581120/2171204302917163/?type=3&amp;theater</a>
Budget	200.000 ISK
Relevant information/ data	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs6V89rksus&amp;t=3s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs6V89rksus&amp;t=3s</a>

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Empowering Women Through Dialogue</b>
Name of CSO	Icelandic Feminist Initiative (IceFemIn)
Target population	All women
Description of activity	IceFemIn - Icelandic Feminist Initiative - is a movement founded in 2017 by Icelandic women who have been active feminists for many years and have a broad experience in politics and activism, especially by founding, shaping and working within and for <i>The Women's Alliance</i> (Kvennalistinn). The initiative has the aim to share our experience of founding a new political movement and to tell the story of how initially a handful of women in Iceland managed to make themselves heard and initiated a fundamental change in their society. IceFemIn offers

	talks, workshops, seminars, participation in conferences, consultations and assistance with developing strategies and strengthening women's movements and co-organizing different kinds of events. The purpose is to empower women, inspire them and encourage them to improve their situation and development in the society towards gender equality.
Link to further information	<a href="http://www.icefemin.is">www.icefemin.is</a>
Budget	250.000 ISK
Relevant information	<a href="http://www.icefemin.is">www.icefemin.is</a> - both in Icelandic and English

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Work in Iceland - Equal Rights</b>
Name of CSO	ASI - Icelandic Confederation of Labour
Target population	Migrant workers in the labour market
Description of activity	<p>"Einn réttur ekkert svindl!" The aim of the project <i>Work in Iceland - Equal rights</i> is to inform women and men, working in Iceland, about their rights in the labour market. It's done by producing brochures and other promotional material in several languages. The project is also a platform for workplace inspection by union representatives. The inspectors visit workplaces and inform employees about their rights and collective agreement. The workers can contact the work inspectors to seek assistance with their cases regarding salary or work conditions. The union inspector can also assist or forward information to the right authorities in cases of human trafficking or modern slavery for further assistance.</p> <p>The project is important and valuable for migrant workers, women and men, to have an increased voice regarding equal rights in the labour market.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="http://www.ekkertsvindl.is">www.ekkertsvindl.is</a>
Budget	3.000.000 ISK

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Empowering Women in Trade Unions</b>
Name of CSO	ASI - Icelandic Confederation of Labour
Target population	Women in decision-making bodies within affiliated unions of ASI
Description of activity	As ASI represents 65% of the Icelandic labour market, it has a great responsibility to promote equality in the labour market.



	<p>ASI implemented an action plan with performance measures for the promotion and empowerment of women in decision-making bodies throughout its affiliated unions. The plan covered the period 2012-2016 and was prolonged in 2016 and then again in 2018.</p> <p>The action plan consists of seminars, conferences and FB group for networking.</p> <p>The labour movement must be prepared to adopt to changes in society and embrace gender equality and diversity.</p>
Budget	ASI adopts a yearly budget to cover activities aiming at promoting gender balance and gender equality.
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	<p>The lesson learnt by the project is that it's important to give women the opportunity to flourish on their own terms.</p> <p>According to statistics, more women are holding leadership position within the unions since the project started.</p> <p>At ASI Congress in October 2018 a woman was elected as the president of the Confederation. First women to hold that post since the Confederation was formed in 1916.</p>

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>A Class in Politics, for Immigrant Women</b>
Name of CSO	Icelandic Women's Rights Association
Target population	Migrant women living in Iceland
Description of activity	The Icelandic Women's Rights Association held a seven-week course for migrant women living in Iceland, with the aim of giving them the tools to succeed in politics. This course will introduce the women to the largest political parties and associations in Iceland and taught them how to quickly start working within their chosen party. The students were introduced to the inner workings and "unwritten rules" of Icelandic politics, practiced how to speak clearly and publicly, and got the opportunity to meet other women who share your interests in politics. The goal of the course was that students would leave with a concrete plan on how to run for office, whether it be in a civil society or political office.
Link to further information	<a href="http://kvenrettindafelag.is/2017/a-class-in-politics-for-immigrant-women/">http://kvenrettindafelag.is/2017/a-class-in-politics-for-immigrant-women/</a>
Budget	2.000.000 ISK
Relevant information/ data	Report available by e-mail at <a href="mailto:postur@kvenrettindafelag.is">postur@kvenrettindafelag.is</a> .

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Feminist Forum - Kynjathing</b>
Name of CSO	Kvenréttindafélag Íslands / Icelandic Women's Rights Association
Target population	Women's rights associations in Iceland, feminist associations in Iceland, gender equality and civil rights associations in Iceland, political parties in Iceland, and the general public.
Description of activity	Kynjathing is a yearly feminist forum held in Reykjavík in Iceland. Civil societies and activists' groups can book sessions, for free, to hold lectures or other activities to introduce their work. The Kynjathing is meant to strengthen the bonds between the different civil societies in Iceland that work on gender equality and civil rights, as well as giving these groups a platform to introduce their work to the general public. The conference is free for all, both those who schedule activities during the conference as well as to the general public. Kynjathing was first held in March 2018, and will next be held in November 2019, and every year after that.
Link to further information	<a href="http://kynjathing.is">http://kynjathing.is</a>
Budget	1.500.000 ISK
Relevant information	Report available by e-mail at <a href="mailto:postur@kvenrettindafelag.is">postur@kvenrettindafelag.is</a> . Only in Icelandic

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Equality in leadership</b>
<b>Name of CSO</b>	<b>Association of Women Business Leaders in Iceland (FKA)</b>
Description of activity	<p>FKA is a non-profit professional network for women Icelandic business leaders. It was founded in April 1999 and its core was to support women to manage and grow their business and networking.</p> <p>FKA's largest projects:</p> <p>FKA hosts around 100 events per year that focuses mainly on promoting the role and aims of the association. It has also focused on four socially responsible projects that affect the society.</p> <p>Equality in Boards:</p> <p>This project took place from 2009 - 2013</p> <p>The main objective was to get 40% equality in boards and work on gender equality laws and corporate governance</p> <p>The partners were: Confederation of Icelandic Enterprises, Icelandic Chamber of Commerce, Political parties and Creditinfo</p>

	<p>Equality in Media:</p> <p>This project started in 2013 and is ongoing. The main objective is to promote women in media, both with a yearly event in collaboration with the general media in Iceland, but also in co-operation with the national broadcasting service (RUV) on specialized Media training with women.</p> <p>The partners in this projects are mainly: Media, Universities, Political parties, Creditinfo and RUV.</p> <p>#MeToo:</p> <p>The project started in 2017 and is ongoing. The main objective is to follow through the effects that the #MeToo movement had on the business society in Iceland and educate companies on good corporate governance in relations to these affairs.</p>
Time period	2017-2027
Target population	The business society in Iceland.
Description of activity	<p>Main goal:</p> <p>By 2027 there will be 40/60 ratio in top management teams in Icelandic companies. Further, to increase the balance between genders in top layers of management in Iceland and by 2027 there will be 40/60 ratio in top management teams in Icelandic companies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage Icelandic businesses to be role models for other nations.</li> <li>• Coordinate and compile numerical information about the role of women and men in boards and executive management.</li> <li>• Host events and education on the importance of diversity in boards and management teams.</li> <li>• Provide annual recognition for companies that have achieved the objectives of Leadership Equality.</li> </ul> <p>Funding partners in the project are various and the project is funded by: The Prime Minister's Office, Sjóvá Insurances, Morgunblaðið Media Group, Pipar TBWA.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="https://www.fka.is/jafnvaegisvog-fka/">https://www.fka.is/jafnvaegisvog-fka/</a>
Budget	Funded by the partners
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	Project still ongoing.
Relevant information / data	<a href="https://www.fka.is/jafnvaegisvog-fka/maelabord/">https://www.fka.is/jafnvaegisvog-fka/maelabord/</a>

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Various projects</b>
Name of CSO (civil society organization)	Soroptimist International Union of Iceland
Target population	Women living in Iceland
Description of activity	<p>The projects of Icelandic Soroptimists have throughout the years varied in size, scope and duration. The following account is based on projects conducted by the clubs in 2018-2019. The main focus areas of a total of 75 projects that year are: Education (19), Empowerment (25), The Eradication of Gender-based Violence (10), Women 's Health (15) and Sustainability and Environment (6). Likewise, the nature of the projects vary, ranging from grants and scholarships to young female students and academics (including disabled women), empowerment programs for young girls, women's leadership training, financial support to single mothers and poor mothers locally, social support and education to migrant women in Iceland, support to women with cancer, to parental skill's courses for first time mothers. On the national level the most significant long-time project is financial and material support to the Icelandic Women 's Shelter, consisting in particular of contributions to the building of apartments for women and their children leaving the shelter and establishing independent living from their abusers. In addition to the fore mentioned, Soroptimists in Iceland are partners to several transnational and international projects, i.e. supporting Children Villages in Lithuania and various water projects in India and elsewhere.</p>

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Gender and Climate Change in Uganda</b>
Name of organisation	UNU-GEST
Time period	June 2019
Target population	Specialists from Karamoja region, Bududa and Mbale in Uganda, representing different sectors within local governments and representatives of CSOs.
Description of activity	In partnership with the Ugandan Government; Climate Change Department and Makerere University, with the support of the Icelandic Foreign Ministry, UNU-GEST conducted a short training course of Gender and Climate Change in Mbale town, Uganda. The training was attended by 30 specialists from Karamoja region, Bududa and Mbale

	<p>representing different sectors within district local governments, and representatives of CSOs. The short training course of Gender and Climate Change builds on the curriculum and training initiated, developed and piloted in partnership with the UNU-GEST Programme at the University of Iceland, and the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University in Kampala 2011-2013. This effort was part of a larger umbrella partnership between the Government of Uganda (GoU), the Ministry for Water and Environment (Climate Change Unit) and the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development in Uganda, and the three Nordic development partners in Uganda; Iceland, Norway and Denmark.</p> <p>The short course is designed to bridge the gap between the acknowledgement that climate change has gender specific-effects and impacts and the importance of adopting a gender approach to finding solutions to the causes and effects of climate change. The main intention of the short course, therefore, is to provide a comprehensive link between gender and climate change and to advance gender-responsive policy and practice when addressing the challenges of climate change. An external evaluation conducted in 2013 deemed this short course highly successful, with positive impact beyond the planned outcomes, recommending that development partners should further explore initiatives related to the short course, both within and outside of Uganda.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="https://gest.unu.edu/en/news/unu-gest-short-course-gender-and-climate-change-in-uganda">https://gest.unu.edu/en/news/unu-gest-short-course-gender-and-climate-change-in-uganda</a>
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	Mission report still under development
Relevant information / data	<a href="https://gest.unu.edu/en/education/short-courses-and-training/gender-and-climate-change">https://gest.unu.edu/en/education/short-courses-and-training/gender-and-climate-change</a>

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Teaching Gender to Youth: Education Outreach in Malawi</b>
Name of organisation	UNU-GEST
Time period	May 2019
Target population	56 Malawian teaching students, teachers and education administrators.
Description of activity	Bilateral development cooperation between Iceland and Malawi spans nearly thirty years, with support to several projects in Mangochi

	<p>District, the most recent being Mangochi Basic Service Programme. Similarly, owing to the support of the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, UNU-GEST has welcomed 23 students from Malawi since 2013, and has formed an Alumni Country Chapter in order to foster dialogue and exchange of resources, knowledge and project ideas for the advancement of gender equality in Malawi.</p> <p>UNU-GEST has since mid-year 2017 worked on formulating the course Teaching Gender to Youth with the objective to provide practical tools and critical understanding on how to advocate and develop curricula for teaching gender equality at schools. The course is tailored to the needs of teachers, curriculum developers, educational administrators and policy makers. A pilot version of the course was taught in the UNU-GEST post-graduate diploma program in Spring semester 2018 for an audience of 24 fellows from 14 developing countries.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="https://gest.unu.edu/en/education/short-courses-and-training/traing-gender-to-youth">https://gest.unu.edu/en/education/short-courses-and-training/traing-gender-to-youth</a>
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	Mission report still under development.
Relevant information / data	<a href="https://gest.unu.edu/en/education/short-courses-and-training/traing-gender-to-youth">https://gest.unu.edu/en/education/short-courses-and-training/traing-gender-to-youth</a>

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Promoting women and girls' effective participation in peace, security and recovery in Mozambique</b>
Name of organisation	UNU-GEST
Time period	February 2017- January 2020
Target population	Police and military in Mozambique.
Description of activity	In 2017, UNU-GEST became a partner in the UN Women Mozambique-led project, "Promoting women and girls' effective participation in peace, security and recovery in Mozambique," working with UN Women in Mozambique and Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Maputo, Mozambique. The project contributes to the mission of UNU-GEST, which is to use a multidisciplinary approach to promote gender equality and social justice in developing, conflict and post-conflict countries through high-quality, collaborative, and policy-relevant research, and by strengthening the capacity of professionals, scholars and organizations. The role of UNU-GEST in the project is to educate stakeholders in its academic programme and to support research

	<p>efforts in a scoping study carried out by UEM in 2018. The project runs from 2017 to 2020.</p> <p>The objective of the project is to contribute to the governance and education on Women Peace and Security in Mozambique. Expected outcomes are six Mozambican experts with post-graduate diplomas from UNU-GEST with an emphasis on Women Peace and Security and gender mainstreaming and in 2018, the first three specialists completed the programme.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="https://gest.unu.edu/en/research/promoting-women-and-girls-effective-participation-in-peace-security-and-recovery-in-mozambique">https://gest.unu.edu/en/research/promoting-women-and-girls-effective-participation-in-peace-security-and-recovery-in-mozambique</a>
Impact, evaluation results and lessons learnt	Project still ongoing.

<b>Name of Initiative</b>	<b>Women Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Energy in Africa</b>
Name	UNU-GEST
Time period	June 2017
Target population	Representatives from governments, non- government organizations, civil society, financiers, women entrepreneurs, multi-lateral agencies, private sectors, Regional Economic Communities (RECs).
Description of activity	<p>The Workshop on “Women Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Energy” (WESE) was held in Gabon on 13-14 June 2017 with the theme “Unlocking Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Energy”. This was held under the auspices of sixteenth African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN 16). The organizers of the workshop were the Government of Gabon, the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iceland, United Nations University-Gender Equality Studies and Training (UNU-GEST), UN Women and Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).</p> <p>The workshop was held back-to-back with the AMCEN-16 to bring to light the role that women can play across the energy value chain to expand economic opportunities and alleviate energy poverty. The workshop was aimed at identifying the main barriers and challenges that hinder the establishment growth and development of women entrepreneurs, including micro- to small and medium sized enterprises, serving the different markets, including last mile energy market. The convening of experts from 16 countries informed AMCEN-16's key</p>

	<p>messages and recommendations for incorporation into the AMCEN outcome document.</p> <p>The outcomes of this workshop were presented to the African Ministers of Environment, and gender equality concerns were included in the 2017 AMCEN action agenda on gender and sustainable energy as well as the project pipeline of the UN Environment Africa Office in order to accelerate sustainable energy for all in Africa and in particular at the national level.</p>
Link to further information	<a href="http://theargeo.org/WESE/outcome.pdf">http://theargeo.org/WESE/outcome.pdf</a>



