

**Joint ECE/UNDP Workshop on  
Gender Statistics for Policy Monitoring and Benchmarking  
(Orvieto, Italy, 9-10 October 2000)**

## **ICELAND**

### **COUNTRY REPORT - PRODUCERS**

Papers submitted by Iceland<sup>1</sup>

#### **The institutional mechanism**

Statistics Iceland has the general responsibility for official statistics in Iceland. Through the years it has collected, processed and published various individual based statistics by sex and as new fields get routinely covered in the statistics the more gender based statistics have become available. At Statistics Iceland there is a general understanding for the importance of gender based statistics and efforts are made to collect, compile and publish data by sex where applicable.

One staff member is partly engaged with issues on gender statistics.

Two booklets have been produced especially on gender statistics *Women and Men in Iceland*, in 1994 and 1997. They present key statistics on the status of women and men and cover most aspects of society from gender perspective including the population, health, education, employment, wages and income and decision making. The booklets are both in Icelandic and English. A new one is being prepared.

Statistics Iceland has also taken part in special national projects where gender statistics have a key role like in the preparation of the national report to UN World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995, and on a committee and report on women health, on women and science etc..

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Since 1985 Statistics Iceland has cooperated with the other Nordic statistical offices in gender statistics and a working group on their behalf has produced three publications *Women and Men in the Nordic Countries. Facts and figures* 1988, 1994 and 1999, with the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The group has also had a few workshops/seminars on gender statistics in relation to women conferences. The members of the network have contact by telephone and e-mails mostly but meet only time to time e.g. back to back to other meetings/conferences. This Nordic network on gender statistics has now an extension to the Baltic states.

Statistics Iceland has also provided gender based statistics for various other international publications as those of UN/ECE.

The Office on Gender Equality in Iceland (from Sept.1 2000 The Equal Status Bureau) has also produced some gender based statistics.

### **Cooperation and communication**

Cooperation and communication with data users is sometimes formal as in the cases mentioned above (special projects/reports) but it is also on informal basis and contacts made now and then when needed.

### **Existing goals**

In 1976 the Equal Rights Act came into force replacing Equal Pay Commission Act from 1973. The object was to contribute towards equality and the equal status of women and men in as many spheres as possible. This act was replaced by a new one in 1985 and that one by another in 1991. The existing act 96/2000 came into force in May 2000 bringing about some changes e.g. in the organization of these matters.

The aim of the new *Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men* is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men and thus promote gender equality in all spheres of society. Following measures are stated to reach that aim:

- a. Gender mainstreaming in all spheres of the society
- b. Working on the equal influence of women and men in decision-making and policy-making in the society
- c. Enabling both women and men to reconcile their occupational and family obligations
- d. Improving especially the status of women and increasing their opportunities in the society
- e. Increasing education in matters of equality
- f. Analysing statistics according to sex**
- g. Increasing research in gender studies.

The Minister of Social Affairs is in charge of the implementation of the act and The Equal Status Bureau is to monitor the implementation.

On item f. the Act states further in article 21 that “in the production of official statistics on individuals and in interview and opinion surveys information should be collected, compiled, analysed and presented by gender unless specific circumstances such as protection of privacy speak against it”.

There also exists a parliamentary resolution on a 4 years plan of action on matters of equality. It was first introduced in 1986 but the latest is from 1998 and is for the period 1998-2001. It is drawn upon proposals from the ministries and the Equal Status Council and it states what special measures the government intends to establish for improving the situation of women and men such as on employment and wages, education, representative bodies, social matters etc. In the action plan there is an article on official gender based statistics and it is said to be the cornerstone in the work towards equality.

## **Gender issues**

### **List of gender statistics**

A list of gender indicators or statistics has not been compiled in Iceland neither on behalf of the governmental authorities or the statistical office. The specific publications *Women and Men in Iceland* reflect though a list of statistics most widely requested and used and also give a picture of what is available.

The working group that prepared the Nordic publications mentioned above made a list of indicators some years ago and pointed at the main gaps within the Nordic countries at that time.

### **Main data gaps and quality problems**

There are some areas better covered than others with respect to gender statistics. Population, labour market, education, elections are reasonably well covered, other areas of influence, wages and income, health and households are also covered to some extent but need improvement. Statistics on violence and crime in general have been poor. Data on time use is lacking as time use surveys have not been conducted in Iceland. Statistics on unpaid work is also lacking. There is a need for introducing gender in the basic data collection on individuals wherever it is not already present and that may need special measure. There is also need for more gender based statistical analyses from existing material like survey data. Mainstreaming is rather a new way of thinking and it will probably take time for it to be taken for granted. It has been pointed out that some new official reports on relevant issues tend to lack the gender perspective.

### **Improvements**

Labour market surveys started in 1991 and are now run twice a year providing much needed statistics by sex in that field regularly. Routine data collection on graduations started 1996 and on personnel in schools in 1998 providing new gender based statistics in those fields.

Health statistics by sex are partly based on registers (causes of death, cancer, etc.) and partly on surveys or other sources. Health interview surveys are rare and have more often been addressed to specific health issues and then included in rather than the general picture. One such was though conducted in 1998, but little results have been published as yet. Tobacco use surveys have been made on regular bases since 1987. There has been one national survey on violence, in 1996 and on nutrition in 1990. A survey on health promotion has been conducted twice, in 1994 and 1996. All these surveys have provided data by sex. Regular statistics on use of medicine by sex have not been available but there are plans for improving that.

The State Social Security Institute has published statistics on recipients of social security benefits by type of benefits for many years but only since 1996 by sex.

Some developments are taking place within statistics on wages and income giving prospects for much needed better statistics in that field.

### **Key areas for improvements**

Examples of areas where improvements are needed are e.g. wages and income, economic ownership, positions of influence as managers, boards of enterprises etc., some areas within health, in science, time use, unpaid work.

### **Main groups of users and**

It is hard to say who are the main users of gender statistics but there certainly are various groups like politicians, people in the administration, teachers, students, media and the public in general. The booklets on women and men can be seen as special publications on gender statistics. Other routine publications include various statistics by sex such as the Statistical Yearbook, Labour Market Statistics etc. Some publications or reports dealing with special issues also provide gender statistics.

### **Other activities**

In the near future measures should be made to inform providers of data and/or statistics of the new legal framework for collecting, compiling and presenting statistics of individuals by gender.

### **Comments on the overall use of gender statistics**

It is hard to say to what extent gender statistics is used in the formulation and monitoring of national policies. It seems limited. But the Minister of Social Affairs has to submit to Althingi (parliament) a report every two years on the status and development of issues concerning equality between the sexes. There gender statistics are cited.

### **Gender statistics or any other information**

There is a new policy within Statistics Iceland, which implies that its publications should go on the Web site <http://www.statice.is/>. Some of them have been placed there already like the Statistical

Yearbook 1999, and the Labour Market Statistics. There it is possible to access tables in excel format. Text in tables is both in Icelandic and English. Printed publications will be available as well.

### **Comments**

A website on gender statistics and related issues could be very useful. It should have a list of indicators (agreed upon), publications, existing networks, other interesting websites and a list of laws and regulations national as well as international with reference to gender statistics as legal framework is of great importance to further the development of gender statistics.

Guidelines for how to use gender statistics e.g. in policy-making might be appropriate on the Website too.

A data base with regularly updated gender statistics in European Countries (as well as others if possible) accessible through the internet would be practical. The country profiles from the new ECE publication on gender statistics now at the ECE website are a very good start.