



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Iceland\*

1. The Committee considered the ninth periodic report of Iceland ([CEDAW/C/ISL/9](#)) at its 1989th and 1990th meetings (see [CEDAW/C/SR.1989](#) and [CEDAW/C/SR.1990](#)), held on 22 May 2023. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in [CEDAW/C/ISL/Q/9](#), and the responses of Iceland are contained in [CEDAW/C/ISL/RQ/9](#).

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its ninth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee ([CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8/Add.1](#)). It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its multisectoral delegation, which was headed by Permanent Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, Bryndís Hlökkversdóttir, and included representatives of the Department of Equality and Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Justice and the Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

#### B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party ranked first in the world in the Global Gender Gap Index of 2022. It welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2016 of the State party's combined seventh and eighth periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/ISL/7-8](#)) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Amendments to the Marriage Law (No. 31/1993), abolishing the exceptions to the minimum age of marriage of 18 years and allowing for simplified divorce without the need to apply for judicial separation proceedings for victims of domestic violence, in 2022;

\* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-fifth session (8–26 May 2023).



(b) Act No. 79/2021 to amend article 227a of the General Penal Code (No. 19/1940), criminalizing additional forms of trafficking in persons, including forced marriage and forced labour, and adding psychological and financial violence as violent modalities of human trafficking;

(c) Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave (No. 144/2020), extending the duration of maternity/paternity leave to 12 months;

(d) Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender (No. 150/2020), prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, and mandating public bodies to collect and analyse data disaggregated by gender;

(e) Act on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality (No. 151/2020), clarifying and expanding the oversight role and functions of the Directorate of Equality and the Equality Complaints Committee;

(f) Amendments to the General Penal Code (No. 19/1940), criminalizing digital sexual violence under article 199a, strengthening protection for victims of psychological violence, considering domestic violence to be a sectoral issue rather than a private family matter under article 218b and reinforcing the protection of victims of stalking under article 232a;

(g) Act on Termination of Pregnancy (No. 43/2019), giving full autonomy to decide on the termination of pregnancy until the end of week 22 of pregnancy;

(h) Regulation No. 1030 of 13 November 2017 on the certification of equal pay systems of companies and institutions, requiring companies and institutions with 25 or more employees to obtain equal pay certification of their equal pay system and the implementation thereof.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption or establishment of the following:

(a) Parliamentary resolutions on gender equality action programmes for the periods 2016–2019 and 2020–2023;

(b) Department of Equality and Human Rights as a coordinating body within the Government to lead policymaking in the area of gender equality, in 2019;

(c) Plan of action against violence and its consequences for 2019–2022;

(d) Parliamentary resolution on preventive action among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, together with an action plan for the period 2021–2025, in 2020;

(e) Five-year gender budgeting plan to integrate gender mainstreaming into the formation of the fiscal plan and the draft law on the general budget, in 2018.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following international and regional instruments:

(a) Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2019;

(b) Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, in 2018;

(c) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2016.

### C. Sustainable Development Goals

7. The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of the State party and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.

### D. Parliament

8. The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the Parliament (Alþingi), in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.

### E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

#### **Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations**

9. The Committee welcomes the creation of a special governmental webpage on human rights, which includes an Icelandic translation of the Convention, as well as information on the Committee's individual communications procedure and the Committee's previous concluding observations in English. The Committee also notes that the Convention is part of the general syllabus on international law for legal studies, police studies and refresher courses for police officers. The Committee notes with concern, however, that training provided by the Judicial Administration to judges and other court employees does not cover the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto or the Committee's general recommendations, and there is limited awareness of the Convention among government officials.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party include the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations in the training programmes of the Judicial Administration and in capacity-building programmes for lawyers, judges, government officials, the police and other law enforcement officers.**

11. The Committee notes information on the availability of an online course in the State party on women's rights and the Convention, targeting upper secondary school students. However, it notes with concern the lack of awareness of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations among women, in particular migrant women and women with disabilities, which presents an obstacle to them claiming their rights. It is also concerned about the unusually low number of submissions from women's organizations and women human rights defenders in the context of the consideration of the report of the State party, which may be attributed to the lack of awareness of the Convention.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to raise awareness among women of their rights under the Convention and the**

**remedies available to claim those rights, such as the individual communications and inquiry procedures under the Optional Protocol, including among women's organizations and women human rights defenders.**

#### **Legislative framework and legal status of the Convention**

13. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender (No. 150/2020), prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination (article 16). The Committee takes note of the information provided by the delegation that the State party does not intend to incorporate the Convention into its domestic legal order and that it considers gender-neutral legislation and policies to not hinder the fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention. The Committee also notes with concern:

(a) That the failure of the State party to incorporate the Convention into national legislation may have adverse effects on women's and girls' full enjoyment of their rights under the Convention;

(b) That the use of gender-neutral language in the State party's legislation, policies and programmes makes it difficult to assess the impact of laws on women, in particular women belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and may lead to inadequate protection of women from direct and indirect discrimination and hinder the achievement of substantive equality of women and men, as explained in the Committee's general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention;

(c) That there has been no comprehensive and systematic assessment of the impact of gender-neutral legislation and policies on women, including on the availability of safe spaces for women and on data collection, and no development and implementation of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the achievement of substantive equality of women and men.

#### **14. The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Reconsider its decision not to incorporate the Convention into its national legal order, with a view to ensuring women's full enjoyment of their rights under the Convention;**

(b) **Systematically assess the impact of gender-neutral legislation and policies on women, including on the availability of safe spaces for women and on data collection, and develop and implement temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the achievement of substantive equality of women and men and adequately addressing the situation of women, particularly those facing intersecting forms of discrimination;**

(c) **Include a gender-responsive rather than gender-neutral approach in its legislation and policies, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 28.**

#### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

15. The Committee welcomes the fact that gender mainstreaming is among the objectives of the parliamentary resolution on the gender equality action programme for 2020–2023 and that each ministry is responsible for mainstreaming gender in its policies and decision-making processes, including by appointing a gender equality representative. It also commends the efforts of the State party to introduce gender-responsive budgeting, in line with the five-year gender budgeting plan for 2019–2023. The Committee further notes the designation of the Directorate of Equality as the national equality body, in accordance with directives of the European Union on the

equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of gender, race or ethnic origin, and the establishment of the Equality Complaints Committee, which is tasked with examining alleged violations of Act No. 150/2020 as a non-judicial mechanism. The Committee, however, notes with concern:

(a) Reports on the lack of adequate human, technical and financial resources for the appointment of full-time gender equality representatives at ministries, which impedes the work on gender mainstreaming at the ministerial level and the implementation of Act No. 150/2020;

(b) That the Department of Equality and Human Rights lacks the status of a line ministry and that the Directorate of Equality and the Equality Complaints Committee are reportedly understaffed, which undermines their mandate to ensure that gender equality policies are implemented effectively and to carry out their activities in accordance with Act No. 150/2020 and the Act on the Administration of Matters Concerning Equality (No. 151/2020);

(c) The low number of complaints about discrimination submitted by women to the Equality Complaints Committee (29 complaints received between 2015 and 2020), which can be attributed in part to the lack of awareness among women of the role and mandate of the Committee.

**16. Recalling its general recommendation No. 6 (1988) on effective national machinery and publicity, as well as the guidance provided in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, notably regarding the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of national machineries for the advancement of women, the Committee recommends that the State party consider transforming and elevating the status of the Department of Equality and Human Rights to that of a line ministry responsible for women's affairs, with adequate human, technical and financial resources to coordinate all public policies and strategies for gender equality and the advancement of women throughout the State party, including gender-responsive budgeting, and with gender units operating at the local level, in accordance with Act No. 150/2020, Act No. 151/2020 and the parliamentary resolution on the gender equality action programme for 2020–2023. The Committee also recommends that the State party conduct awareness-raising campaigns among women, in particular migrant women and women with disabilities, on the role and mandate of the Directorate of Equality and the Equality Complaints Committee.**

#### **National human rights institution**

17. The Committee notes the information provided by the delegation on the draft law to establish a national human rights institution, in line with the national human rights assessment conducted by the Prime Minister's Office, which will be submitted to the Parliament (Alþingi) by the end of 2023.

**18. Reiterating its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 14), the Committee recommends that the State party establish a national human rights institution with adequate human, technical and financial resources to carry out its mandate effectively, independently and in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), and provide it with a robust mandate to promote and protect women's human rights and gender equality. It also recommends that, once operational, the national human rights institution should apply to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions for accreditation.**

### Temporary special measures

19. The Committee welcomes the requirement in article 28 of Act No. 150/2020 to achieve equal representation of women and men in appointments made to national and local government committees, councils and boards, as well as to the boards of public companies. The Committee is nevertheless concerned about women's low representation in decision-making positions and on boards of directors in the private sector in the State party, where only 10 per cent of the directors and 26 per cent of the members of boards of directors of the 100 largest companies are women. It also notes with concern the lack of temporary special measures adopted by the State party to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women, in particular migrant women, women with disabilities, rural women and older women, in all areas where they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as in political and public life, education and employment.

**20. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt additional temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, and provide incentives such as gender scorecards, strengthen targeted recruitment and establish time-bound goals and quotas in all areas covered by the Convention, where women, in particular migrant women, women with disabilities, rural women and older women, are underrepresented or disadvantaged, notably in the private sector, in order to increase the number of women who are members of boards of directors and in decision-making positions.**

### Gender stereotypes

21. The Committee notes the measures taken to eliminate gender stereotypes and structural inequalities between women and men in society, the education sector and the labour market in the State party. It notes with concern, however, reports on the prevalence of gender-based hate speech, including via social media, in particular sexist and misogynist speech, against women in political life and women belonging to disadvantaged groups, such as women with disabilities and migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women.

**22. The Committee recommends that the State party criminalize sexist, misogynist and other forms of gender-based hate speech, including against women politicians and women belonging to disadvantaged groups, such as migrant women, women with disabilities and refugee and asylum-seeking women; prevent harassment and threats against them, including by strengthening monitoring and reporting mechanisms and holding social media companies accountable for discriminatory user-generated content; and investigate, prosecute and adequately punish those responsible. It recommends that the State party continue to raise awareness to address discriminatory gender stereotypes and promote positive portrayals of women as active drivers of development.**

### Harmful practices

23. The Committee notes the adoption of the Act on Sterilization Procedures (No. 35/2019), which prohibits carrying out sterilization procedures on persons over 18 years of age without their consent. It notes with concern, however, the explanation by the delegation that forced sterilization is not explicitly criminalized in the General Penal Code, but is covered by the general provision on bodily harm in the General Penal Code (article 218). It also notes with concern reports on forced sterilizations of women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

24. **The Committee recommends that the State party amend the General Penal Code to explicitly criminalize forced sterilization. It also recommends that the State party ensure that no medical interventions are performed on women with disabilities, including those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, without their free, prior and informed consent, and that they have adequate access to sexual and reproductive health services and information in accessible formats, including on family planning and protection from sexual abuse.**

#### **Gender-based violence against women**

25. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the General Penal Code to criminalize digital sexual violence and stalking, to increase protection for victims of psychological violence and to base the definition of rape on absence of consent. It also notes the adoption of the action plan concerning sexual offences for the period 2018–2022 and the new action plan for handling of sexual violence for the period 2023–2025, as well as the parliamentary resolution on measures against violence and its consequences for the period 2019–2022. The Committee further notes the establishment of three family justice centres for victims of violence since 2017, the review in 2019 of the Act on Restraining Orders and Removals from Home (No. 85/2011) and the development and publication of instructions of the Director of Public Prosecutions on the handling of cases of sexual violence when the victim is a person with disabilities. The Committee, however, notes with concern:

(a) The absence of a comprehensive law specifically criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and the inadequate protection from gender-based violence of women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination, including women and girls with disabilities, migrant women and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(b) A study by the University of Iceland in 2021 indicating that 40 per cent of the 32,811 women who participated were victims of physical and/or sexual violence and nearly 25 per cent were victims of rape or attempted rape;

(c) The increase in gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, especially during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the increase in femicide cases in the State party;

(d) Information received that gender-based violence against women is underreported, indicating that while 1,256 new intakes were registered by the family justice centres for victims of violence and the Centre for Survivors of Sexual Violence, only approximately 100 cases of rape were reported to the police in the capital and 325 cases of sexual violence were prosecuted in 2020;

(e) The high number of criminal proceedings concerning gender-based violence against women, in particular rape and sexual violence, discontinued by the State Prosecutor and the low number of convictions, notwithstanding the adoption and implementation of the action plan concerning sexual offences for the period 2018–2022;

(f) The lack of disaggregated data on all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, forced sterilization and cyberviolence;

(g) A 2020 report by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police indicating a disproportionately high risk of domestic violence against women with disabilities and disproportionately low conviction rates in such cases;

(h) The disproportionately high risk of domestic and sexual violence against migrant women and their lack of awareness of available remedies and victim support services;

(i) The limited access for women with disabilities, migrant women and rural women who are victims of gender-based violence to health and psychosocial services and shelters in the State party.

**26. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen efforts to prevent gender-based violence against women by including a zero-tolerance approach in school curricula at all levels and training teachers accordingly, conducting large-scale awareness-raising campaigns, in cooperation with the media, on the criminal nature and socioeconomic harm of gender-based violence and providing adequate victim support services to enable survivors of domestic violence to leave abusive partners or family members;**

(b) **Adopt a comprehensive law on all forms of gender-based violence against women, in particular domestic violence, establish identification mechanisms and take into account the special protection needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, including women with disabilities, migrant women and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(c) **Adopt a new parliamentary resolution to combat gender-based violence, including sexual and domestic violence, against women and girls, with a particular focus on women and girls with disabilities, migrant women and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, and ensure the effective implementation of the new action plan for handling of sexual violence for the period 2023–2025;**

(d) **Address the causes of underreporting in cases of gender-based violence against women and the high rate of acquittals in those cases, provide mandatory capacity-building for judges, prosecutors and the police on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods and on the strict application of relevant criminal law provisions, and ensure compliance of all police departments with the instructions of the Director of Public Prosecutions on the handling and investigation of sexual offences when the victim is a person with disabilities;**

(e) **Ensure that women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, in particular women with disabilities, rural women and migrant women, have adequate access to victim support services and shelters;**

(f) **Raise awareness among women and girls, in particular women with disabilities, migrant women and rural women, of the remedies available to them in cases of gender-based violence against women;**

(g) **Conduct an assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the State party, in particular regarding domestic violence, with the aim of preventing, coping with and overcoming crises and current challenges in a gender-sensitive manner;**

(h) **Ensure the collection and analysis of data on all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including data on domestic violence, forced sterilization, cyberviolence and femicide, disaggregated by age, disability and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator;**



(i) **Implement the recommendations in the Baseline Evaluation Report of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.**<sup>1</sup>

#### **Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

27. The Committee welcomes the adoption of Act No. 79/2021 to amend article 227 of the General Penal Code, criminalizing additional forms and patterns of human trafficking, including forced marriage, slavery or servitude, and forced labour or forced services such as begging, and adding psychological and financial violence as violent modalities of human trafficking. The Committee also notes the establishment of a police advisory group to provide guidance on the investigation of human trafficking cases and the updated instructions for the police on early identification of trafficking victims. The Committee further notes the information provided by the delegation that a new national action plan for child protection for the period 2023–2027 will be submitted to the Parliament in 2023 and will include a focus on unaccompanied minors. The Committee notes with concern, however:

(a) That only 23 victims of trafficking have been identified since 2020 and one case resulted in the acquittal of the accused;

(b) That early identification and referral of trafficking victims to appropriate protection and support services has been delegated to the family justice centre for victims of violence in Reykjavik, under a temporary programme;

(c) That there is no formal process for early identification of child victims of trafficking and their referral to appropriate services;

(d) That there is a lack of information on the provision and implementation of a reflection period for women and girls who are victims of trafficking to decide whether or not they are able and willing to cooperate with the prosecution authorities.

28. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Promptly investigate, prosecute and adequately sentence those responsible for trafficking, ensure the implementation of the instructions for the police on early identification of trafficking victims, and build capacity and allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to the police advisory group to provide guidance on gender-sensitive investigation and interrogation methods in cases of trafficking in women and girls;**

(b) **Conduct a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the process of early identification of victims of trafficking, in particular women and girls, and their referral to appropriate protection support services, with the aim of developing a formal and institutionalized process;**

(c) **Adopt the national action plan for child protection for 2023–2027;**

(d) **Ensure that victims of trafficking are effectively offered the reflection period to which they are rightfully entitled;**

(e) **Continue to provide disaggregated data on the number of reported cases of trafficking, investigations, prosecutions and convictions, on the sentences imposed on perpetrators, and on the reparations and rehabilitation services provided to victims of trafficking in women and girls.**

<sup>1</sup> Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, *GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Iceland* (Strasbourg, 2022).

### **Equal participation in political and public life**

29. The Committee welcomes the fact that the State party has nearly achieved parity in the representation of women (48 per cent) and men in the Parliament (Alþingi), and that 51 per cent of local council representatives, the Prime Minister, 5 out of 12 ministers, three out of seven Supreme Court justices and 6 out of the 15 judges of the Court of Appeal are women. It nevertheless notes with concern women's underrepresentation in the Icelandic police force, on boards of public companies and in the foreign service at the level of ambassador. The Committee also notes with concern the absence of a gender parity quota for electoral lists of political parties.

**30. Recalling its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life and its general recommendation No. 25, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt temporary special measures, such as statutory quotas and preferential recruitment of women, to increase women's representation in the police force, in the foreign service at the level of ambassador and on the boards of public companies;**

(b) **Consider adopting temporary special measures, such as gender parity quotas, as well as incentives for compliance and fines for non-compliance, to ensure that political parties include an equal number of women and men in their electoral lists, especially at the municipal level, to accelerate women's equal representation in political and public life and to strengthen gender equality and inclusion in governance, with the goal of achieving gender parity by 2030.**

### **Education**

31. The Committee welcomes the provision of instruction on equality and gender issues, including gender stereotypes, at all levels of education, in accordance with article 15 of Act No. 150/2020. It also notes the measures taken to diversify academic and professional choices and encourage women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of study and career paths. The Committee notes with concern, however:

(a) That the findings and recommendations of the report of the working group on more efficient teaching about sexual health and the prevention of violence in primary and secondary schools of June 2021 have yet to be implemented;

(b) The lack of information on measures taken to review history books to ensure that the historical roles and contributions of women are adequately reflected;

(c) Reports of bullying of girls in school environments and the lack of information on measures in place to ensure the protection of women and girls from bullying in schools and universities;

(d) The lack of information on measures taken to promote women in academic careers, and the delay in the finalization and adoption of the draft programme on action to halt the withdrawal of women from academic work;

(e) The lack of information on access to inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities and their retention at all levels of education.

**32. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts to integrate gender-responsive, age-appropriate and accessible education on sexual and reproductive health and rights into curricula at all levels of education and adopt an action plan based on the recommendations of the report of the working group on more efficient teaching**

about sexual health and the prevention of violence in primary and secondary schools of June 2021;

(b) Ensure that the historical roles and contributions of women are adequately reflected in school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials, in the context of the ongoing review of the national curriculum;

(c) Develop an anti-bullying policy aimed at providing safe and inclusive educational environments to women and girls free from discrimination, harassment and bullying, and set up confidential complaint mechanisms in schools;

(d) Promote women's equal representation in academic positions, including by adopting temporary special measures, such as statutory quotas and preferential recruitment and promotion of women in academia, and by finalizing and adopting the programme on action to halt the withdrawal of women from academic work;

(e) Ensure adequate access for women and girls with disabilities to inclusive education at all levels and include in its next periodic report disaggregated data on their school enrolment, completion and dropout rates, and access to university education.

### **Employment**

33. The Committee commends the State party for introducing the equal pay certification system, in accordance with articles 7 and 8 of Act No. 150/2020, under which any company and public body or institution with 25 or more employees is required to acquire equal pay certification or confirmation from the Directorate of Equality and renew it every three years. The Committee also welcomes the adoption of the Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave (No. 144/2020), extending the duration of maternity/paternity leave to 12 months. The Committee notes with concern, however:

(a) The reported gender pay gap, with women in full-time employment earning only 87 per cent of men's wages;

(b) Women's underrepresentation in managerial positions in private companies and their concentration in part-time employment, which adversely affects their career development and pension benefits;

(c) The difficulties faced by migrant women in employment, including their exposure to abuse and exploitation, such as long working hours and underpayment, and their low level of representation in the workforce;

(d) Disparities among municipalities in terms of the availability of public childcare, which is accessible only for children from the age of 2 in some municipalities;

(e) Insufficient measures to facilitate labour market access for single mothers and the limited number of single mothers who are beneficiaries of projects to support them in achieving a work-life balance, such as the TINNA project that applies to only 40 single mothers residing in Reykjavik per year.

34. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to close the gender pay gap and eliminate occupational segregation. In particular, it recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Facilitate the work of the action group on the elimination of the gender pay gap caused by horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, strictly enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, regularly**

review wages in sectors where women are concentrated and adopt measures to close the gender pay gap, including through gender-neutral analytical job classification and evaluation methods and regular pay surveys;

(b) **Ensure the effective implementation of the equal pay certification system and provide information in its next periodic report on fines imposed by the Directorate of Equality on companies and employers for violations under articles 7 and 8 of Act No. 150/2020;**

(c) **Adopt measures to ensure the protection of migrant women workers and improve their representation in the workforce;**

(d) **Ensure the provision of adequate and accessible childcare in all municipalities, taking into consideration the 12-month duration of parental leave to avoid gaps in the provision of childcare services;**

(e) **Adopt targeted measures to facilitate access for all single mothers to the labour market and to programmes promoting their work-life balance.**

#### **Sexual harassment in the workplace**

35. The Committee notes that sexual harassment in the workplace is prohibited under article 16 of Act No. 150/2020 and that, under the Act on Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces (No. 46/1980), employers are required to take measures to prevent bullying, harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace. It also notes the establishment of a professional board under the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police, which is mandated to receive complaints of sexual harassment in the police force, the development of an action plan for gender equality in law enforcement agencies, the review of police training, and awareness-raising campaigns on sexual harassment for law enforcement officers. The Committee nevertheless notes with concern reports on:

(a) The prevalence of sexual harassment of women, including migrant women, in the workplace and in sports, and the lack of data on the number of cases investigated and prosecuted, the penalties imposed on those responsible and the reparations provided to victims;

(b) The persistence of sexual harassment of women employed in the Icelandic police force, with only six complaints submitted to the professional board between 2017 and 2019.

36. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, including by:**

(a) **Ensuring the effective implementation of criminal law provisions and Act No. 150/2020 to prevent sexual harassment of women, including migrant women, in the workplace and in sports, in particular in the police force, and ensuring that victims have access to effective remedies and reparations, that complaints of sexual harassment are effectively investigated and those responsible are held accountable, and that complainants are protected from reprisals;**

(b) **Ratifying the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization.**

#### **Health**

37. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to implement the recommendations of the compilation of information on health and health-care services from a gender perspective, which was conducted by the Ministry of Health

in January 2021. It welcomes the adoption of the Act on Termination of Pregnancy (No. 43/2019) and the Act on Sterilization Procedures (No. 35/2019). However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The prevalence of suicides and suicide attempts among women and girls, according to the survey of the welfare and living conditions of students, and among young migrant, asylum-seeking and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(b) That women in the State party are disproportionately affected by mental health conditions, including depression, according to a survey by the Directorate of Health;

(c) Reports on the lack of reasonable accommodation and limited accessibility of health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services, for women and girls with disabilities.

**38. The Committee recommends that the State party conduct a comprehensive study on the disproportionately high rate of mental health issues and the root causes of suicides among women and girls, and take appropriate measures, including early detection programmes, to address mental health issues that lead to suicide among women and girls in the State party, in particular migrant, asylum-seeking and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. The Committee also recommends that the State party adopt measures to ensure the accessibility of health-care services and facilities for women and girls with disabilities and train health professionals on their specific health needs. The Committee recommends that the State party address in its respective programmes and plans concrete and specific measures to tackle the high incidence of Alzheimer's disease and dementia among women. The Committee recommends additional guarantees to provide a safe environment for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in hospitals and other medical environments by providing adequate health services, training and orientation to medical staff and health workers.**

#### **Climate change and disaster risk reduction**

39. The Committee notes that the State party's policy for climate change focuses on low carbon energy supply through the active pursuit of a renewable energy transition, while considering the impact of climate change on disadvantaged groups. However, it notes with concern the lack of a gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies on climate change and disaster risk reduction. It also notes with concern that the climate change adaptation programme has resulted in transport and energy poverty for poor and vulnerable women due to high costs or the inability to access heat for their homes.

**40. In line with its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee recommends that the State party review its climate change, disaster response and disaster risk reduction legislation, policies and programmes to integrate a gender perspective, and ensure that women participate in their development, adoption, implementation and monitoring. It also recommends that the State party assess the impact of climate change specifically on women's access to resources and livelihoods and take measures to ensure that women are not disproportionately affected. It also recommends that the State party redress feminized poverty in the transport and energy sectors by mitigating the cost-of-living impact of its transport and energy system on poor and vulnerable women and by reviewing its regulatory policy on corporate social responsibility to make private corporations more protective of vulnerable and poor populations,**

**especially migrant women, women with disabilities, women living in poverty and unemployed women.**

#### **Economic empowerment and social benefits**

41. The Committee commends the State party for exceeding the European Union 40 per cent threshold of women non-executive directors on corporate boards and for integrating gender considerations into its macroeconomic framework, especially its fiscal policy and tax-setting codes. The Committee is, however, concerned:

(a) That there are still fewer women than men acting as chairpersons of sports clubs, especially local clubs, there are pay gaps in salaries and contract payments for national teams and local sports clubs, and the women's national football team earns 50 per cent less than the men's team;

(b) That the percentage of films directed by women has fallen to 6 per cent, and women are paid less for music composed and receive 19.4 per cent less from the fees collected by STEF, the Composers' Rights Society of Iceland.

**42. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake the necessary measures to:**

(a) **Redress unequal representation of women in the leadership of sports clubs at all levels, and ensure that gender pay gaps in salaries and contract payments are eliminated and there is equal pay for both men's and women's national sports teams;**

(b) **Ensure that STEF, the Composers' Rights Society of Iceland, reviews its differential fee collection and royalty payment system to eliminate discrimination against women music composers and ensure equal pay in the music industry.**

#### **Marriage and family relations**

43. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the Marriage Law (No. 31/1993), abolishing the exceptions to the legal minimum age of marriage of 18 years. However, it notes with concern the lack of information on measures taken to address economic disparities between spouses under the matrimonial property regime of the State party upon dissolution of marriage, to prevent the concealment of joint marital property to the detriment of female spouses and to recognize the rights of women living in de facto relationships to property accumulated during the relationship.

**44. Reiterating its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/ISL/CO/7-8, para. 50), and recalling its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, the Committee recommends that the State party amend the Marriage Law to:**

(a) **Address economic disparities between women and men upon dissolution of marriage, including by recognizing all career-related assets as part of the joint marital property to be distributed between the spouses upon divorce or taken into account in the award of post-divorce periodic payments;**

(b) **Prevent the concealment of joint marital property to the detriment of female spouses;**

(c) **Ensure adequate economic protection of women upon dissolution of a de facto relationship, including by recognizing their equal rights to the property accumulated during the relationship.**

### **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

45. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality of women and men.**

### **Dissemination**

46. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official language of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, Parliament (Alþingi) and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

### **Ratification of other treaties**

47. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments<sup>2</sup> would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, to which it is not yet a party.**

### **Follow-up to the concluding observations**

48. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 10, 12, 16 and 18 above.**

### **Preparation of the next report**

49. **The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the tenth periodic report of the State party in line with a future predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

50. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**

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<sup>2</sup> The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.