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**ECRI CONCLUSIONS
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS
IN RESPECT OF ICELAND
SUBJECT TO INTERIM FOLLOW-UP**

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¹ Except where specifically indicated, any developments which occurred after 8 July 2019, the date on which the response of the Icelandic authorities to ECRI's request for information on measures taken to implement the recommendations chosen for interim follow-up was received, have not been taken into account in this analysis.

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FOREWORD

As part of its fifth round of monitoring work, ECRI has renewed its process of interim follow-up with respect to two specific recommendations made in each of its country reports.

In line with the Information Document on ECRI's fifth monitoring cycle brought to the attention of the Ministers' Deputies on 14 November 2012¹, not later than two years following the publication of each report, ECRI addresses a communication to the Government concerned asking what has been done in respect of the specific recommendations for which priority follow-up was requested.

At the same time, ECRI gathers relevant information itself. On the basis of this information and the response from the Government, ECRI draws up its conclusions on the way in which its recommendations have been followed up.

It should be noted that these conclusions concern only the specific interim follow-up recommendations and do not aim at providing a comprehensive analysis of all developments in the fight against racism and intolerance in the State concerned.

¹ CM/Del/Dec(2012)1154/4.2.

1. *In its report on Iceland (fifth monitoring cycle) published on 28 February 2017, ECRI strongly reiterated its recommendation to enact comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation, taking account of its General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination.*

ECRI is pleased to note that the two antidiscrimination bills mentioned in its fourth and fifth reports were enacted by the Icelandic Parliament on 25 June 2018. The two acts - Act No. 86/2018 on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market and Act No. 85/2018 on Equal Treatment irrespective of Racial and Ethnic Origin - entered into force on 1 September 2018. They are based on Council Directives 2000/78/EC¹ and 2000/43/EC.²

The Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market regulates equal treatment of individuals in the area of employment and covers the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, reduced working capacity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual characteristics and gender expression. ECRI welcomes the broad scope of this act.

The Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Racial and Ethnic Origin applies to equal treatment of individuals in relation to social protection, including social security and healthcare, social advantages, education and access to and supply of goods and services for the public, including housing. The grounds are restricted to racial or ethnic origin. ECRI notes with interest that the act obliges the Government to present a bill extending its scope to cover the additional grounds of religion, disability, reduced working capacity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender characteristics and gender expression, before 1 September 2019. Regrettably, this has not yet been carried out. ECRI encourages the authorities to proceed with this extension which would result in highly progressive and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Iceland.

As they currently stand, the two acts are a positive step forward and welcomed by ECRI. However, gaps in protection against discrimination remain, as pointed out by ECRI in its fifth report (see § 8). In addition, neither of the two acts include the protected ground of nationality, as recommended by ECRI in its GPR No. 7. ECRI therefore considers its recommendation partially implemented.

2. *In its report on Iceland, ECRI strongly recommended that the authorities carry out their plans to bring integration measures and services for refugees from the asylum system to similar levels as for quota refugees under the new action plan on integration of non-nationals, especially as concerns access to housing, employment and Icelandic language classes.*

In January 2019 Iceland's Minister of Social Affairs announced that the Government had approved a strategy to coordinate the reception and integration of *all* refugees, whether they come to Iceland as asylum seekers and are granted international protection in the country or as resettled refugees in cooperation with the UNHCR. The authorities informed ECRI that the first phase of implementation has started.

ECRI notes that the Multicultural and Information Centre will have an increased role in supporting both refugees and municipalities receiving them. The Directorate of Labour will provide free Icelandic lessons and cultural orientation for all refugees. Municipalities will be able to make agreements with the Ministry of Social Affairs to provide services including housing, social counselling and individual plans for all refugees settling in their

¹ Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

² Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

areas. These plans aim to ensure that individuals and families can take advantage of their strengths in order to establish themselves in their new society.

ECRI commends the Icelandic authorities for this important development which treats all refugees on an equal footing, deals specifically with housing, employment and language classes, and has the potential of generating better integration outcomes. ECRI considers its recommendation fully implemented.

