

**Group of Experts on Action against Violence
against Women and Domestic Violence
(GREVIO)**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Report submitted by Iceland
pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 1
of the Council of Europe Convention
on preventing and combating violence
against women and domestic violence
(Baseline Report)**

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Baseline report by the government of Iceland

**- on legislative and other
measures giving effect to the
provisions of the Council of
Europe Convention on
Preventing and Combating
Violence against Women and
Domestic Violence
(Istanbul-Convention)**

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1. Introduction

Iceland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereafter the Istanbul Convention) in April 2018 and the Convention entered into force in August of the same year.

The public administration is responsible for the implementation of the Convention in Iceland, with support from the various NGOs involved in the fight against violence whose role is to provide victims of violence with various services and counselling.

The Icelandic government places strong emphasis on human rights regardless of gender and on ensuring everyone can live without violence in their lives. For many years the government has therefore emphasised efforts against gender-based violence and in recent years a number of actions have been taken aimed at combating domestic violence and sexual violence.

This is the first time that the Icelandic government has compiled a report on the implementation of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in Iceland. For the preparation of the report, the Minister of Justice appointed an expert working group led by the Ministry. Other experts came from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In preparing the report, assistance was sought from a number of NGOs and institutions, e.g. the Department of Equality in the Prime Minister's Office, and the Directorate for Equality. Information was also obtained from the Department of Culture and the Media in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Directorate of Education. Information was received from the National Commissioner of Police (RLS), the Director of Public Prosecution, the Prison and Probation Administration and the Directorate of Immigration, as well as from local authorities.

Other information was obtained from the websites of those NGOs referred to in the report, such as the Women's Shelter, Stígamót [a centre for survivors of sexual violence] and [Family Justice Centre] Bjarkarhlíð, and from the website of the Icelandic Journalists' Association and the Directorate of Education.

2. Integrated policy and data collection

A. Strategies and action plans

In 2006, the government introduced the first Action Plan on Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence. Since that time, action plans concerning gender-based violence have been in force, aimed at combating domestic violence and sexual violence against women and children, improving the legal status of and facilities for victims of violence and strengthening prevention efforts against violence. The platform of the current government states that one of the tasks of the new government is to work on reform in the handling of sexual offences.¹ Substantial improvements have been made in this area in the intervening years, and the fight against gender-based violence in Iceland has expanded greatly.

Action Plan for the Handling of Sexual Offences (2018-2022)

In 2016, a consultation group was appointed by the Minister of Justice on the handling of sexual offences within the justice system, composed of experts from the Ministry, the police, the bar association, the prosecutors' offices, the National University Hospital (LSH) and the courts. The group was asked to review the results of research where, among other things, proposals were made for improvements, and it was the task of the consultation group to take decisions on them. The objective of the group was to create an action plan that would ensure citizens' legal security, in addition to ensuring high-quality, efficient and fair proceedings, increasing trust in the justice system, shortening procedural time and ensuring clear and coherent work processes within and between units of the system. In October 2017, the Minister of Justice presented an Action Plan for the Handling of Sexual Offences 2018-2022. The actions were allocated to the various units of the justice system, with strong emphasis placed on actions related to victims, the accused and prevention and education. Implementation of the actions is well advanced. The police districts have, among other things, received increased funding to increase the number of police investigators and prosecutors and to prepare procedures for the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences. The funding was used to

¹Summary of Government Actions, p. 8.

develop a digital plan of investigation in the police records system, which must be used in investigating serious sexual offences and domestic violence. The purpose is to increase the quality of investigations and expedite handling of cases; the plan has given good results so far. Education and training of police officers and prosecutors in handling sexual offences has been increased.

Government's Emphases in Measures Against Human Trafficking and Other Forms of Exploitation (2019-)

In 2009, the government introduced the first action plan on human trafficking. In March 2019, the Minister of Justice presented the current Emphases in Measures Against Human Trafficking and Other Forms of Exploitation, the Government's third action plan in this area. It includes 10 actions concerning preventive measures (Prevention), assistance, support and protection (Protection), investigation and prosecution (Prosecution) and co-operation and consultation (Partnership). The Minister of Justice subsequently appointed a consultation group on human trafficking, which is composed of 35 parties from public bodies, NGOs, municipalities and private companies, all involved in one way or another with these issues. The group's task is to implement the 10 measures; to this end three subgroups were established comprised of experts in three fields, i.e. Prevention, Protection and Prosecution. The main manifestation of human trafficking in Iceland in recent years has been in the form of sexual abuse, i.e. prostitution. With the establishment of the National Referral Mechanism in Iceland, assistance has been provided for victims of human trafficking in any form; however, victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes are entitled to assistance from the Women's Shelter, Stígamót, LSH's emergency reception for victims of sexual violence etc. The same applies to all manifestations of violence.

Parliamentary Resolution on a Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences.

In June 2019, the Icelandic parliament Althingi passed a Parliamentary Resolution on a Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences. The plan was prepared by a steering group composed of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The plan covers violence in different manifestations and the actions cover physical, sexual and psychological violence. The plan has three main elements, i.e. awareness-raising, that includes prevention and education; response actions, which concern procedures and case handling; and empowerment, that emphasises support for victims of violence. In drafting the plan, broad consultation was held with public bodies, NGOs and other

stakeholders. Meetings were also held with key actors in each part of the country, with the aim of reinforcing regional consultation on prevention, procedures and support for victims of violence. The plan provides for a national consultation meeting to be held annually with representatives of public bodies, NGOs and other relevant parties. The actions, which require collaboration and co-operation across ministries and areas of responsibility, are consistent with the government's platform pledge to work systematically against violence in society. The relevant ministries are responsible for its review in collaboration with public bodies, NGOs, the academic community and other relevant parties, as a new plan is to be submitted to Althingi in the autumn of 2022.

Parliamentary Resolution on Preventive Actions among Children and Young People against Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Harassment, together with an action plan for 2021-2025

In 2020, Althingi passed Parliamentary Resolution No. 37/150, on Preventive Actions among Children and Young People against Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Harassment, together with a plan of action for the years 2021-2025. Emphasis is placed on integrating prevention with teaching and school activities at all school levels, in leisure centres and community centres, in sports and youth activities and other leisure activities. The prevention plan includes 26 actions divided into six main components and among 18 responsible parties. A special steering group has been appointed, led by the Prime Minister's Office, whose role is to monitor the plan's projects and co-ordinate the work.

The Association of Local Authorities in Iceland has also hired a special prevention officer who will support the local authorities' school offices in providing education and preventive actions against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. In addition, the Directorate of Education is working on the preparation of educational material for pre-schools, compulsory and secondary schools, which, together with sports, youth and leisure activities, play a key role in the implementation of the program.

Parliamentary resolution on an Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2020-2023.

In 2019, Althingi passed Parliamentary Resolution, No. 16/150 on a National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2020-2023. Among other things, it includes measures to combat gender-based and sexual violence. Under this plan, a strategic national plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention will be drawn up in consultation with government agencies, municipalities, NGOs and other stakeholders. Preparations for the national plan have begun in the Prime Minister's Office. Icelandic

legislation has been examined with reference to the Istanbul Convention. The work has focused on examining whether changes need to be made to Icelandic legislation in order to fulfil the provisions of the Convention. Proposals were also gathered for the next steps towards Iceland's first national plan, which the Ministry is currently preparing in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice.

B. Allocation of financial resources

The Icelandic government does not have a comprehensive overview of the allocation of funds and grants that have been provided in connection with the fight against violence against women and domestic violence in Iceland. The majority of the appropriations fall under traditional budgeting, i.e. the state budget legislation, to the relevant public authority. These include the police, health services, social services and child protection. The mandatory services of local authorities are to a large extent financed by their budgets. In addition, the state provides funding and subsidies for certain measures intended for victims and perpetrators of violence.

In some cases, additional funding is allocated to finance new action plans and plans in this area, and in other cases, funds are allocated upon the implementation of specific actions during a specific period of the action plan.

The Parliamentary Resolution on a Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences did not receive funding. The ministries responsible for the actions presented have therefore prioritised tasks within their financial framework. The total cost is estimated to be approx. EUR 2.1 million. The Parliamentary Resolution on Preventive Actions among Children and Young People against Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Harassment, together with an action plan for 2021-2025, is fully financed with a budget of approx. EUR 1.1 million during the period.

That portion of the Parliamentary Resolution on an Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2020-2023, which deals with measures to implement the Istanbul Convention, is fully funded within the budgets of the five ministries involved.

To follow up on the government's action plan on the handling of sexual offences, the government provided around EUR 2 million, of which EUR 1.6 million is supplementary annual funding to strengthen the police.

The government's Emphases in Measures Against Human Trafficking did not receive special appropriations. These are to a great extent part of the statutory tasks of the relevant agencies and offices. However, the Ministry

of Social Affairs did provide EUR 40,406 to establish a co-ordination unit in the Family Justice Centre Bjarkarhlíð for victims of human trafficking.

C. Civil society co-operation and support

NGOs play an important role in the fight against gender-based violence in Iceland. The public administration works closely with the organisations and utilises their knowledge and experience in introducing changes to legislation and in measures to fight gender-based violence.

In preparing action plans and policies, the expertise and experience of NGOs is sought and representatives from them obtained to work on actions in consultation with public authorities.

The public administration also provides various types of support for the activities of non-governmental organisations and public bodies working in the fight against violence towards women and domestic violence. There are examples of NGOs receiving budget appropriations, ministries concluding service agreements or providing grants for activities or for specific projects, cf. the following.

The Women's Shelter organisation was founded in 1982 and opened the Women's Shelter the same year in Reykjavík. The organisation runs an emergency shelter for women and their children when their homes have become unbearable due to violence by their spouses or other household members. The shelter also assists women who have been raped or who are victims of human trafficking. The organisation receives budget appropriations of approx. EUR 539,000 annually. A similar amount is received annually in the form of donations and grants from various sources and benefactors. The organisation has also received public funding for specific projects related to the shelter's work, including a project that involves supporting women financially in finding safe housing while receiving counselling at the same time, based on the ideology of "Housing First". In 2020, there was also a EUR 673,446 contribution from a special investment effort by the government to renovate the emergency shelter, improve accessibility in a new halfway house and prepare the construction of a new emergency shelter that will replace existing facilities. The organisation was also awarded a grant for a pilot project to provide an emergency shelter in North Iceland.

Bjarkarhlíð, a service centre for victims of violence, opened in February 2017 in Reykjavík. It provides multi-disciplinary counselling and support for victims of violence. All services by advisory parties are provided under one roof, with the aim of making it easier for victims to seek help. Bjarkarhlíð is a joint project of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the City of Reykjavík, the Ministry of Justice, the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police, Stígamót [a centre

for survivors of sexual violence], the Women's Shelter, Drekaslóð [an education and service centre for victims of violence and their families], the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and Women's Counselling. Bjarkarhlíð works according to the ideology of the Family Justice Center Alliance, one of the leading organisations dealing with domestic and sexual violence in the US and elsewhere. Bjarkarhlíð is a member of the European Family Justice Center Alliance. Each year, the government provides around EUR 135,000 for Bjarkarhlíð's activities, in addition to which the Ministry of Social Affairs provides around EUR 100,000. The project is one aspect of the Action Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences. The City of Reykjavík provides facilities for the operations. The Ministry of Social Affairs has also signed a two-year contract with Bjarkarhlíð to administer a human trafficking team as a pilot project; the total amount is about EUR 40,400.

Stígamót is a counselling and education centre working to fight sexual violence, which began its activities in March 1990. The organisation provides services and counselling to victims of sexual violence. It receives budget appropriations of approx. EUR 538,000 annually. The organisation has also received various public grants for specific projects. In 2020, the Ministry of Social Affairs provided the organisation with an additional grant of EUR 134,689 due to increased demand for its services, and the Prime Minister's Office provided the organisation with a grant of EUR 67,344 in June 2021.

Drekaslóð, an education and service centre for victims of violence and their families, was established in 2010 in Reykjavík. Drekaslóð offers victims of violence various services, such as personal counselling, support groups and various types of information on a peer-to-peer basis. Victims of all forms of violence are welcomed. The government's contribution in 2021 is EUR 84,180.

Heimilisfriður, which has been in operation since 2006, provides treatment for those who use violence in close relationships. For a number of years, the Ministry of Social Affairs has concluded annual agreements with Heimilisfriður for specialised psychological services and treatment for men and persons of all genders who have used violence against their partners. In addition to providing treatment for perpetrators of violence, Heimilisfriður is intended to provide education and training on violence in close relationships and its consequences to professionals and the general public. The annual contract with Heimilisfriður amounts to EUR 94,282, plus an additional contribution made in 2021 of EUR 87,548. The allocation makes it possible to keep the cost of treatment to a minimum and thus facilitate access to the resource.

In 2021, the Ministry of Social Affairs provided EUR 13,469 to set up the Take the Step ²initiative. Take the Step is a new remedy for individuals who have used or feel they are likely to use sexual violence, whether online or personally against others, and who want to seek help. Such a resource has not previously been available in Iceland, except for children and young people. The project is based on a UK model and is manned by five psychologists who have experience and knowledge in this field.

The Prime Minister's Office has concluded a co-operation agreement with the Icelandic Women's Rights Association on counselling, education, seminars and the provision of information on gender equality in Iceland and abroad. The main objective of the agreement is to have the Women's Rights Association provide various types of education, including information material in Icelandic and English, open meetings and school study material, on gender equality issues in electronic or print format. One of the Association's goals is to combat gender-based and sexual violence in all areas of society. The agreement is for three years, during which the Prime Minister's Office pays the Women's Rights Association EUR 67,344 annually to carry out the tasks covered by the agreement.

Around 35% of Iceland's population lives in non-urban areas. There the following associations receive funding from the government to provide support and counselling to victims of violence.

Aflið is an organisation for victims of domestic and sexual violence in North Iceland providing support and counselling to victims of violence. The government has for years provided a financial contribution to the organisation amounting to around EUR 121,220 euros annually.

Bjarmahlíð, a service centre for victims of violence in North Iceland providing services similar to that of Bjarkarhlíð in Reykjavík, has been operating since 2019 with support from the government of EUR 80,813 per year.

Sigurhæðir, which offers services for victims of gender-based violence in South Iceland is a new remedy, which includes co-ordinated counselling, support and treatment for women and their families. The government has provided EUR 23,570 euros for its operation.

In drafting the Parliamentary Resolution on the Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences (see Section 2.A), extensive consultation was held with NGOs, public agencies and other

² <https://www.112.is/en/stop-the-abuse>

stakeholders. The work began with a large workshop including over 100 participants, which laid the foundation for the plan. Participants came, for instance, from NGOs, local authorities, healthcare institutions, LSH, the Directorate of Health, trade unions, universities and ministries. The steering group also held regional consultation meetings around the country, aimed also at laying the foundations for regional co-operation between public bodies and NGOs against violence, as provided for in the plan.

Drafting the Parliamentary Resolution on Preventive Actions among Children and Young People against Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Harassment, together with an action plan for 2021-2025, was carried out in broad consultation with NGOs. A seminar was held on prevention of and education on sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, and ideas for the preparation of the plan were presented. Two consultation meetings were held, where NGOs and other stakeholders were given the opportunity to present their views and ideas. The draft resolution was made available on the government's consultation portal for comments. As a result, NGOs are partners in most of the action plan projects.

In 2020, the government provided a special financial contribution of EUR 1,649,942 to a temporary action team against violence, in particular domestic violence and violence against children, which is discussed in more detail later in this report.

The consultation group on human trafficking (see 2.A) has 35 members, 7 from NGOs whose role is to provide appropriate services to victims of violence and trafficking. Representatives of NGOs are also involved in the implementation of actions under the action plan.

D. Official bodies for coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Prime Minister's Office are responsible for co-ordinating and implementing measures to combat violence against women and domestic violence, and the Ministries of Social Affairs and Justice chair working groups in the field, which include representatives from other ministries, public agencies and NGOs as well.

Following the presentation of the Government's Emphases in Measures Against Human Trafficking and Other Forms of Exploitation in 2019, 35 parties from both public agencies, NGOs and private companies involved in these issues in one way or another were appointed to the Consultation Group on Human Trafficking. The role of the group is to implement actions to fight human trafficking. The Ministry of Justice chairs the group. The

group includes representatives from the Women's Shelter, Stígamót, Stop the Traffic Iceland and Bjarkarhlíð. The implementation of the measures has proceeded well and a major portion of them have been fully implemented, including a project establishing a co-ordination centre for victims of human trafficking, which Bjarkarhlíð manages.

The Directorate for Equality is an agency under the Prime Minister's Office. The agency is responsible for public administration with regard to equality as governed by equality legislation, i.e. the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, the Act on Equal Treatment Irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin and the Act on Equal Treatment in the Labour Market. The statutory role of the Directorate for Equality is, among other things, to work on prevention of gender-based violence, gender-based harassment and sexual harassment in collaboration with other public authorities and organisations that deal with such prevention in particular. The total budget allocation to the Directorate for Equality for the year 2021 is approx. EUR 1.1 million. In addition to its managing director, operations manager and lawyers, the institute employs four specialists with diverse education in social sciences and gender studies.

In 2016, a consultation group was appointed by the Minister of Justice on the handling of sexual offences within the justice system, composed of experts from the Ministry of Justice, the police, the bar association, the prosecutors' offices, the National University Hospital and the courts. The group was asked to review the results of research where, among other things, proposals were made for improvements, and it was the task of the consultation group to make decisions on them. The group's objective was to create an action plan that would safeguard citizens' legal security in addition to ensuring high-quality, efficient and fair proceedings, increasing trust in the justice system, shortening procedural time and ensuring clear and coherent work processes within and between judicial systems. In October 2017, the Minister of Justice presented an action plan for the handling of sexual offences for the years 2018-2022.

To implement the plan for Preventive Actions among Children and Young People against Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Harassment for 2021-2025, based on a Parliamentary Resolution on the same subject from the year 2020, a steering group was appointed, for which a co-operation committee of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Education and Culture, the Minister of Social Affairs and Children and the Minister of Health is primarily responsible, with the Directorate for Equality chairing the group on behalf of the Prime Minister. The steering group consists of representatives of the government, while those responsible for individual projects come from sub-agencies, municipalities and NGOs. The National

Association of Local Authorities has a prevention representative in a full-time position following up on the plan's projects. An editor at the Directorate of Education works in a 50% position on building expertise in curriculum development that supports the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. The expert directing the steering committee fulfils this task in tandem with other duties. The first year of the plan's implementation is now underway. The total budget allocation to the action plan for the year 2021 is approx. EUR 286,000.

An expert was recently engaged on a temporary basis by the Ministry of Health to formulate and implement harmonised procedures for healthcare institutions providing services to victims of domestic violence. The project is carried out in collaboration with healthcare institutions, the Directorate of Health, the Developmental Centre for Primary Healthcare in Iceland, the police and social services authorities.

Following the #metoo revolution, the then Minister of Social Affairs and Gender Equality appointed a working group on more diverse measures for perpetrators of violence. The working group was tasked with mapping and defining the need for services for perpetrators of violence and those who are at risk of committing violent crimes. In addition, the group was tasked with submitting proposals for appropriate remedies and also how prevention and education could be strengthened with the aim of preventing violent crime. The group's report was submitted to the Minister in January 2020.

A large working group on empowerment and sex education, appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture in 2020, has submitted its proposals to the Minister on the implementation of sex education and education on violence prevention at the primary and secondary school level.

E. Data Collection

Within public administration there are various agencies whose role is to manage data related to, among other things, the Council of Europe's Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The Service Division of the National Commissioner of Police (RLS) keeps track of police statistics. The National Commissioner of Police regularly publishes statistics, as does the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police (RMP), which has a special information and planning department. Crime reports are published monthly and crime statistics yearly, which include information on all types of violence. Information on suspects/persons indicted is published every other year. This information is available on the police website (www.logreglan.is).

The government can also request data from the police records system from RLS's service department, and the Ministry of Justice regularly calls for such data in order to get an overview of the situation in various areas, e.g. concerning gender-based violence. Data can be requested disaggregated by gender, age, nationality etc.

Statistics can also be requested from each individual police district, as well as from courts, the Attorney General and District Commissioners. In 2015 updated protocols came into effect for the police on the handling of domestic violence cases due to increased emphasis on the issue. Considerable changes were made to the documentation of such cases as a result and updated in 2018.

Statistics on violence and its overall extent are not currently collected at a single location. Most agencies and NGOs publish annual reports containing statistical information.

The Bjarkarhlíð and Bjarmahlíð service centres for victims of violence publish an annual report that contains statistical information regarding their activities, including information on gender, users' reasons for coming and type of violence, nationality, relationship with perpetrator, residence, age, employment status, level of education, disability, etc. Users are also asked to complete a service survey. The annual report is published on the centres' website and distributed to the media.

The Women's Shelter publishes annual statistics on the number of women who come for consultation or stay in the shelter, the number of days of stays, manifestations of violence, nationality, place of residence, relationship with perpetrators, where women go after their stay in the shelter, as well as the number and age of children. The annual report is published on the organisation's website.

Stígamót, an organisation helping victims of sexual violence, publishes annual statistics on the number of victims, number of consultations, gender, nationality, age, disability/impairment, residence, manifestations of violence etc. Various information is also published about the acts of violence, including where they took place, how long they lasted, from where the victim had sought help previously and what the consequences of the violence were. Its annual report is published on the organisation's website and distributed to the media.

Drekaslóð, a service centre for victims of violence, publishes annual reports which include information on the number of clients, their gender, manifestations of violence, gender of perpetrators, number of consultations, number of relatives receiving assistance and counselling.

Heimilisfriður, which offers treatment remedies for perpetrators of violence, does not publish annual reports but collects statistical data when requested pursuant to its agreement with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This includes information on the number of clients, their gender, place of residence, age, employment status, referrer, number of children in the home and the involvement of child protection and the police in cases.

The Child Protection Agency (CPA) collects monthly data on the number of incident reports to child protection committees, among other things in connection with violence. These are classified as: a) emotional violence, b) if a child witnesses domestic violence, it is recorded separately and is then recorded as domestic violence, c) physical violence and d) sexual violence. Recently, the CPA has noticed an increased need to collect specific information on digital violence and plans to add that information. The CPA also regularly gathers information from the Barnahus, which deals with cases where there is suspicion that children have been subjected to sexual harassment or violence. The information includes whether a child was subject to psychological/physical violence or witnessed violence.

In 2020, formal work began in Government Offices on the development of a dashboard, with the establishment of a ministerial steering group on a dashboard for child welfare. The group consists of representatives from seven ministries, as well as the Children's Ombudsman, Statistics Iceland and the National Association of Local Authorities. The main aim in developing the dashboard is to present a comprehensive picture of children's welfare in Iceland by analysing the statistical data available in the field. The data are classified according to reliability, frequency of measurements, accessibility, etc. An analysis is also being made of where data collection is lacking and about which groups and issues it is important to obtain further data. The dashboard work is an attempt to collect statistical data on various issues and groups of children, to ensure that the authorities have an overview of aspects which concern the welfare of children in Iceland, an overview based on recent and accessible data. The aim of the dashboard is also to ensure that the available statistical data is used effectively in enacting legislation, policy-making and assessment of the impact of actions by public bodies, the state and municipalities.

Data on violence against children is an important aspect of this work. At present, the government mainly receives data on violence against children from the Child Protection Agency, which maintains statistics on both reports to child protection and questionings that take place in the Barnahus. The government also receives information from the police records system (LÖKE) and the Director of Public Prosecutions maintains statistics on the outcome of cases concerning offences against children.

It is also hoped that a special dashboard on violence can be developed, based on the same software solution as the dashboard on child welfare.

F. Research conducted or supported by the Government

Numerous studies concerning gender-based violence have been carried out over the years in Iceland. Various institutions and NGOs have also conducted research on the situation concerning violence against women in Iceland, both before and after the period concerned here.

In February 2018, a report was published by the National Commissioner of Police, funded by the Gender Equality Fund, on challenges and opportunities in gender equality work by the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police (RMP). The principal objective of the study behind the report was to increase knowledge of the status and development of gender equality issues within RMP, to disseminate it and to lay a solid foundation for directed policy-making work in the field. The report specifically addresses bullying and sexual harassment.

Under the Parliamentary Resolution on an Action Plan for Gender Equality, a follow-up study will be carried out to examine whether there has been a change in the work culture within the police since action was taken following a 2013 study on the reasons why there are few women police officers, on work culture and gender relations within the police. The report on the study is expected to be submitted in June 2022.

Two accounts were prepared for the Prime Minister's steering committee on comprehensive improvements to combat sexual violence: one on ways to strengthen the legal position of victims, in May 2019, and another on legal protection of sexual privacy, including proposals for improvement, in January 2020.

Grants have also been allocated from the Gender Equality Fund for various studies, including research on the experience of victims of sexual violence in a virtual reality courtroom; two doctoral studies on ways to empower victims after gender-based violence; a study of violence in close relationships from the perpetrator's perspective; a doctoral study on digital sexual violence; a doctoral study in public health science on the health consequences of violence; a study of the different manifestations of digital violence in the Nordic countries; and a study of the scope, nature and cost of domestic violence.

G. Population based surveys

In 2010, the Centre for Child and Family Research (CCFR) [of the University of Iceland] published a report with the results of a study of male violence against women in close relationships. The study was conducted at the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security with the aim of gathering knowledge about the nature, extent and consequences of physical and sexual violence that women are subjected to by men. The report dealt primarily with male violence against women in close relationships, but also dealt with violence against women who were not in close relationships. The results were based on a telephone survey of a random sample of 3,000 women throughout Iceland between the ages of 18 and 80, taken from the national register. In the survey, more than 42% of the women said that they had been subjected to violence at some point since the age of 16, while just under 4% said that the violence had taken place in the past 12 months (autumn 2007-2008). Around 30% of the women said they had been physically abused, and just over 24% had been sexually abused. Over 22% of women said they had been subjected to violence in a close relationship at some point since the age of 16.

At the end of January 2015, a major research project entitled Access to Specialised Victim Support Services for Women with Disabilities Who Have Experienced Violence was completed. In addition to the Icelandic Centre for Disability Studies [at the University of Iceland], participants in the project included research institutes and universities in Austria, Britain and Germany. The study was supported by the European Commission's Daphne III programme. The two-part study included both women with disabilities and persons who had worked with victims of violence. The results showed that violence against women with disabilities is a common problem in all four European countries that took part in the project, including Iceland. Practical materials were prepared based on the project results, which can be used for planning actions to benefit women with disabilities who have been victims of violence and improve support for them. Guidelines and fundamentals were developed for effective support for women with disabilities who have been victims of violence, as well as proposals for measures to improve support. Booklets, short reports and other material for distribution on the results of the study were also prepared.

The School of Education at the University of Iceland is currently working on a study, with a grant from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Justice, entitled Violence Against Immigrant Women: Establishing a baseline through a quantitative survey. The research is on immigrant women's experiences of gender-based violence through a representative sample survey which maps risk factors & correlations, i.e. race, ethnicity,

residency status and familial support. Using a survey of a representative sample of immigrant women, the data will map primary risk factors and potential correlations, such as residency status and familial support. The aim is to use the results to inform public debate and policy development to increase awareness of the scope and challenges immigrant women face and highlight the need for culturally relevant responses based on their diverse personal and professional status. The primary goal is to increase participation of immigrant women in challenging and changing a system that is currently unresponsive to their particular needs.

The Women's Shelter has also prepared several reports with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs. The report *What Does Mom Say? - Children of foreign origin in the Women's Shelter*, published in 2020, deals with the situation of children of foreign origin who fled their homes due to violence and had to stay in an emergency shelter as a result. It focuses, among other things, on how the child's mother experiences the support and services she has received from the system for the child, because he or she lives in a violent home. The report *The Foreign Women in the Women's Shelter - What would have helped?* was also published in 2020. The aim of the report was, among other things, to find what would have helped the women get out of the violent relationship earlier. They were also asked about their experiences of violence, background information was gathered on the women as well as the perpetrators, the proportion of foreign women with injuries was calculated and the involvement of the police and the healthcare system examined. A review is made of what happens to the women once their stay concludes and in some instances the information is compared with the situation of Icelandic women who turn to the Women's Shelter. In 2018, the Shelter published a report entitled *The Feelings and Experience of Victims of Domestic Violence and the Personality Traits of Perpetrators*.

3. Prevention

A. Campaigns and programmes

The Icelandic government emphasises the importance of preventive work in combating violence. It is important that people know the main manifestations of violence and remedies in cases of violence. The government believes that education and targeted responses are an important part of prevention and raising awareness that violence will not be tolerated. The government also believes that extensive co-operation contributes to a better society and that it is necessary to co-ordinate the responses to all forms of violence and increase consensus on actions when violence of any kind occurs.

Action team against violence

Due to increased risk of domestic violence following the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, the government decided in May 2020 to take targeted actions and raise awareness against violence, in particular domestic violence and violence against children. The Minister of Social Affairs and Children and the Minister of Justice appointed a temporary action team with the task of directing and co-ordinating work on implementing measures in broad consultation with relevant stakeholders. The team's work focused on raising general awareness of violence against children and domestic violence, strengthening services and support remedies for victims of violence, and supporting the development and implementation of other projects in this field. The action team was also tasked with following up on other general measures related to education, services and in connection with violence, following proposals in the Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences. The team's assignment was to last from May 2020 to 31 January 2021. It delivered regular progress reports to the Ministers, together with a final summary of the actions and results of the team's work. The government provided funding of EUR 1,649,942 to the project. In addition, various partners have made additional contributions to individual actions.

The team's main projects were to strengthen the Emergency Line's services and open an information portal on violence on the website www.112.is, which has since been translated into English and Polish. The website also contains information on assistance for perpetrators, on digital violence and human trafficking. Development of the portal is continuing with the addition of educational material for children and an update of the 112 app. In tandem with the opening of the portal www.112.is, a targeted awareness-

raising campaign on violence was launched in the media and on social media with the slogan *Tell Someone*. The campaign has been implemented in stages, each stage focusing on reaching individual vulnerable groups, while at the same time raising awareness generally that 112 should be contacted if concerns arise about violence. Work is underway on developing a web version of cognitive processing trauma therapy for victims of violence. The project is a collaboration of the psychological services of the psychiatric ward of the National University Hospital, the National Centre for E-Health at the Directorate of Health and the Developmental Centre for Primary Healthcare in Iceland. The web version is expected to be ready in the autumn of 2021. Work is underway to develop digital processes for domestic violence cases to improve the procedures and responses of healthcare professionals when patients report on domestic violence or there is suspicion of it.

The National Commissioner of Police was tasked with working on specific measures aimed at preventing repeated offences in cases of domestic violence and violence against children. The aim of the measures is to stop perpetrators of violence from continuing criminal behaviour, to ensure the safety of children involved in violence, especially domestic and sexual violence, and to encourage perpetrators to seek the help of a treatment/rehabilitation specialist to stop the violent behaviour.

Education on domestic violence and human trafficking by shop stewards and union representatives of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and public service workers' confederation BSRB will also be increased. Educational material will be prepared for use in the shop steward training of the trade unions' educational department, Félagsmálaskóli alþýðu, sent to member associations of ASÍ and BSRB, used in education for inspectors and other employees of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and will be accessible to the public on the 112 portal on violence and human trafficking.

Grants totalling EUR 168,361 were awarded to NGOs and organisations for projects involving action against violence, including projects specifically targeting women and domestic violence:

- cognitive behavioural therapy for families who abuse their children;
- a project aimed at reducing violence related to substance use and domestic violence, empowering women and increasing their resources;
- education for clients of the Women's Shelter on the consequences of domestic violence, including for children;
- a project that involves empowering young girls in a vulnerable position;

- a project aimed at involving young people in the struggle against gender-based violence and sexual violence by providing education and support to enable them to develop their own actions to educate their peers on limits, consent, violence and healthy relationships;
- a study on gender-based violence against women of foreign origin, aimed at improving services and support measures for women of foreign origin;
- a project aimed at combating violence against women of foreign origin.
- a project which aims to empower women from the Middle East, educate them about their rights in Iceland and about services for gender-based violence;
- treatment options for women in prisons to deal with trauma and violence in an artistic way;
- a project of the National University Hospital, which involves preparing educational material for health professionals about domestic violence. The project aims to increase the understanding and confidence of health professionals to open a discussion about domestic violence.

The Government's Emphases in Measures Against Human Trafficking and Other Forms of Exploitation include measures that concern, among other things, raising awareness and increasing expertise. The role of the National Referral Mechanism for trafficking includes promoting awareness of trafficking in human beings within the community. One aspect of the implementation of the measures was the establishment of an information portal on human trafficking on the website www.112.is/mansal. The website is both an information portal for victims of human trafficking, where they can seek help and resources, and for the general public to familiarise themselves with signs of human trafficking and how to seek help if human trafficking is suspected.

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and Stop The Traffic Iceland, in collaboration with the Icelandic Red Cross, have at the request of the Ministry of Justice initiated a campaign, in the form of advertising and/or educational material, directed at the general public and potential victims of human trafficking.

In recent years, a broad co-operation in domestic violence cases has become established in Iceland and has proven its value in the fight against violence in close relationships. The co-operation is aimed at co-ordinating and improving procedures of the police, social services, child protection and NGOs in such cases and increasing knowledge-sharing in the field among professionals who work with people. The co-operation began in

2013 with a pilot project of the chief of police and social services in the Suðurnes region; the National Commissioner of Police has now published the procedure, cf. discussion in Section 5.B.

Break the Silence is a three-year collaborative project on co-operation in domestic violence cases that was carried out between 2017 and 2019. The project was supported by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program of the EU and developed by the Directorate for Equality. The project had two objectives: firstly, to reinforce the existing infrastructure in Iceland to make it more effective in combating violence in close relationships, by strengthening experts within the system who work with people. Secondly, awareness raising, under the heading "There is HOPE". Emphasis was placed on showing victims of violence that there is hope for a better life. The experience of victims and perpetrators of leaving such situations behind them with the support of professionals was highlighted and the diverse services available to people were presented. A special website, www.jafnretti.is/von, was opened in Icelandic, English and Polish. Five videos were made in which four actual victims spoke of their experiences of violence and how to seek help. The videos focused on vulnerable groups. The videos were nominated for the 2018 Icelandic Advertising Awards, in the category Advertising for the Public Good. The videos are now part of the content of the portal 112. In order to deepen public knowledge of the issue, the radio series Kverkatak (Choke Hold) was produced as part of the awareness-raising. It consisted of four 50-minute episodes produced by Icelandic National Broadcasting in the autumn of 2018. They describe the situation of victims of violence and discuss the resources available to people as a way out of such a situation. The series was nominated for the 2019 Journalist Awards.

B. Inclusion of teaching material in formal education curricula

Pre-schools are the first level of education in Iceland, after which all children aged 6-16 are obliged to attend compulsory school. The upper secondary school level is organised as a continuation of compulsory school study. The role of compulsory schools is, among other things, to promote students' participation in a democratic society, encourage students to be open-minded and strengthen their understanding of the individual's obligations to society. The same applies to upper secondary schools; however, their role also includes strengthening students' sense of morality, responsibility, open-mindedness and tolerance, and training them in equality and critical thinking.

Ever since the first Gender Equality Act was passed in 1976, Icelandic schools have been obliged to educate students about gender equality and to prepare both boys and girls for equal participation in family and work life. Under Art. 15 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, No. 150/2020, students must receive appropriate equality and gender education including, among other things, education on gender stereotypes, gender-based study and career choices and issues of disabled and LGBT people.

The Directorate of Education recently compiled a detailed list for teachers, with a breakdown by school level, of educational material on sexual violence. It includes educational material in a variety of formats, such as books, short films, booklets and websites. Examples of titles are: "Plain Talk About Violence", "The Body is a Miracle - respecting your body, for children" and "Stick Up for Yourself!".

In 2020, Althingi passed Parliamentary Resolution No. 37/150, on preventive actions among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, together with a plan of action for the years 2021-2025 (for further discussion, see Section 2.A). The actions include work to make educational and study materials for preschools, compulsory schools and secondary schools to support prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment available on the web of the Directorate of Education in 2021. An editor has begun work at the Directorate whose role is to build knowledge of curriculum development that supports prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, including the preparation of study material in gender equality and gender studies. The staff of preschools, primary schools, leisure centres, upper secondary schools, as well as staff and volunteers of sports and youth work and other leisure activities, will receive training on sexual and gender-based violence and harassment and prevention. The aim is to ensure that all employees receive a minimum of training through an online course and that about 90% will have completed the online course by the end of 2025. Work is underway on updating the Handbook on the Welfare and Safety of Children in Preschools with regard to prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. The update looks at precautionary measures that reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment taking place within preschools or in connection with preschool activities, including trips organised by preschools.

Particular attention is paid to the needs and circumstances of marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities and children who have a mother tongue other than Icelandic. The intention is to have by 2021 a team in each compulsory school whose role will be to ensure teaching about

gender-based and sexual violence and harassment in all grades that is appropriate for the pupils' age and development. The team will provide teachers and other staff with support and advice in educating and discussing sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, and will also ensure staff have adequate knowledge and training. The team will also seek to ensure a co-ordinated response by staff, taking different groups and individuals into consideration, in cases where children try to report violence and harassment. Particular attention will be paid to signs of this in the context of discussion related to prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment.

The aim is to ensure that all school levels have access to quality study material, appropriate to each level, that promotes prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. A comprehensive review will be made of the instructional and teaching materials currently available, and this updated or reissued as appropriate. New interactive materials will be prepared, suitable for students of varying age and maturity, on actions against violence and its consequences. Special consideration will be given to the specific needs and circumstances of different genders, individuals and groups, such as disabled children, LGBT children and children who have a mother tongue other than Icelandic. It will also be ensured that study materials reflect children's use of digital technology. The aim is to have study material accessible on the website of the Directorate of Education and open and free for everyone to use before the end of 2023.

Efforts are being made to educate adolescents about sexual and gender-based violence and harassment through community centres. Stígamót is tasked with continuing the education of community centre staff that has taken place in connection with the Sick Love campaign. This will establish the practice of requiring young people who attend the annual community centres' dance to receive first education at their community centre. An examination will be made of other possibilities for further prevention work in community centres, aimed in particular at training community centre staff in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, such as through the Violence Prevention School.

C. Initial training of professionals

In the curriculum of initial training of professionals, f.ex. in university, there are subjects that address f.ex. prevention and detection of violence, gender equality and the needs and rights of victims.

In the Police Science Programme which is taught at the University of Akureyri, a course on Violence and Power is taught that explores violence with particular reference to gender and power structures. Another course on Police Psychology has a discussion on sexual offences and domestic violence and stalking and a course on Cybercrime and Current Issues in Policing encounters on child sexual exploitation material amongst other.

Other departments in various universities nationally address violence in one way or another. Information on the number of professionals who received initial training is not available (therefor it was not possible to fill out the table).

The project Break the Silence, which was described in Section 3.A, was aimed among other things, at reinforcing the infrastructure that already exists in Iceland to combat violence against women more effectively, by strengthening experts within of the system who work with people. The main focus of the project was to share experiences of actions that have been successful in fighting violence in close relationships, form relationships between professionals, offer education and raise awareness for all Icelanders. Implementation of the project was carried out in a collaboration of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Welfare, National Commissioner of Police, Reykjavík Metropolitan Police, police in Northeast Iceland, police in Suðurnes, City of Reykjavík and Town of Akureyri. All of the above parties contributed expertise and shared experiences of their work against violence in close relationships with victims and perpetrators. As the project covered the whole country, it was divided into police districts. The procedures of the National Commissioner of Police in domestic violence cases were used as a basis for co-operation between professionals within each area. Seven educational and liaison meetings were held with a total of over 300

participants. The objective of the meetings was to put into practice the protocols of the National Commissioner of Police and establish more formal co-operation between professionals. Special educational meetings were also held with professional groups, attended by about 100 participants and 13 educational videos were prepared to increase professionals' education about violence. The videos are lectures by professionals, all of whom work with women and children who have been victims of violence, as well as experts who work directly with victims and perpetrators. These include Heimilisfriður, the Women's Shelter, Women in Iceland and Bjarkarhlíð. Among other things, they discussed how to identify victims and perpetrators, responses and remedies to domestic violence, and services for vulnerable groups, such as disabled people, people of foreign origin and LGBT people. The videos have been used as educational material for staff of institutions, municipalities and NGOs. They are also known to have been used in continuing education courses for professionals, such as the police and social workers, and in courses, secondary school instruction and at the university level. When the project concluded they had over 1500 views, and are still open and accessible online. During the period of the project three conferences were also held for professionals. Conference topics included police investigations, the risk of escalating violence, the effects of violence on the foetus and pregnant women, the effects of violence on marginalised groups, the development of the extent of domestic violence, exemplary projects and procedures and research on domestic violence in Iceland.

Emphasis has also been placed on strengthening the education and knowledge of the police, the prosecuting authority and the judiciary in the investigation and treatment of violent crimes against people with disabilities, as disabled people, especially women with disabilities, are known to be

more likely to experience violence than non-disabled people. In 2018, the Director of Public Prosecution issued instructions to the police and prosecutors on the handling of sexual offences where an accused and/or victim was disabled. The National Action Plan for the Disabled 2017-2021 calls for additional expertise in the justice system in investigating and handling violent crimes against people with disabilities. In 2018, the Rights Monitoring Unit and the Police Science Programme held a seminar on the legal security of disabled people and co-operation between rights protection officers and the police. The main goal was to increase mutual education and co-operation between rights protection officers, the police and prosecutors.

The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development now runs courses for active police officers on manifestations of violence in the lives of people with disabilities. The aim of the courses is to give law enforcement professionals a deeper understanding of the history of people with disabilities and how violence in the lives of people with disabilities sometimes manifests itself in different ways than in the case of the non-disabled, and to enable professionals to deal with the disabled with greater sensitivity for their traumas, life experiences and accessibility needs, and in so doing instil trust that improves success in working with people with disabilities, whether in the case of victims, accused or witnesses of violence.

D. In-service training of professionals

	NUMBER OF PROFESSIONALS TRAINED	MANDATORY NATURE	AVERAGE LENGTH OF CURRICULUM	PERIODICITY	FUNDING SOURCE	BODY MANDATED TO CARRY OUT/CERTIFY	TRAINING EFFORTS SUPPORTED BY
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						IN-SERVICE TRAINING	GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS
Police and other law-enforcement officials	225		Approx. 4 hours		Budget	Centre for Police Training and Professional Development	x
Prosecutors	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Judges	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social workers	2	n/a	6 hours	n/a	n/a	n/a	x
Medical doctors	11	n/a	6 hours	n/a	n/a	n/a	x
Nurses and midwives	106	n/a	6 hours	n/a	n/a	n/a	x
Psychologists, in particular counsellors/ psychotherapists	10	n/a	6 hours	n/a	n/a	n/a	x
Immigration/asylum officials	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Educational staff and school administrators	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Journalists and other	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

media professionals							
Servicemen and women	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

In addition to the health care professionals listed in the table, radiologists, occupational therapists, practical nurses, secretaries and other non-specialised people have also been trained.

In 2019-2020, seven courses were held at the Centre for Police Training and Professional Development, which were attended by almost 230 people, both police officers and prosecutors. These were the courses Break the Silence, referred to earlier in this report; a basic course on criminal investigations and questioning of demanding accused; a special course on investigation of sexual offences; and a course for shift managers. Finally, 80 participants attended the course on combating online sexual abuse. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development has ensured that special training will be available which police officers must attend in order to advance between career levels within the police. The training is based on the procedures of the National Commissioner of Police on domestic violence. The Icelandic Prosecutors' Association and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution have also provided instruction on the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences.

E. Support programmes for perpetrators

For a number of years, the Prison and Probation Administration has offered persons who have used violence in close relationships a course on anger management focusing, among other things, on violence in close relationships. The course examines the definitions of gender-based violence. These courses have been held annually, or more often when needed. Participation in the course is optional and does not only involve violence in close relationships. It has also been possible to offer individual treatment to some of the persons treated. The length of the courses and treatment options does not provide an opportunity for a specific assessment of the impact of the instruction.

The Prison and Probation Administration has established procedures to safeguard the interests of victims while a person is serving his/her sentence. This procedure is primarily aimed at preventing communication

between the perpetrator and the victim, except after careful consideration and with the interests of the victim given priority.

The Prison and Probation Administration has also assessed further violent behaviour with a risk assessment tool developed for this purpose - with the aim of finding appropriate ways to reduce the likelihood of further violent behaviour. In the most serious cases (sentences of 5 years or more), such an assessment has been made of persons who have used violence in close relationships.

Funding for education and courses for perpetrators provided by the Prison and Probation Administration comes from the institution's budget.

For a number of years, the Ministry of Social Affairs has concluded annual agreements with Heimilisfriður (see Section 2.C above) to provide treatment for persons who use violence in close relationships, for specialised psychological services and treatment for women and men who have used violence against their partners. In addition to providing treatment for perpetrators of violence, Heimilisfriður is intended to provide education and training on violence in close relationships and its consequences to professionals and the general public. The staff of Heimilisfriður diligently fulfil this role and have provided education throughout the country for a variety of groups. In 2014, an evaluation of the resource was carried out to find out about the attitudes of those who seek treatment and examine what changes occur in the behaviour, quality of life and social interactions of men seeking consultation treatment. The evaluation was also intended to find out what changes occurred in the situation of women when their partner attends treatment. In 2020 around 100 individuals sought treatment at Heimilisfriður, but since the advent of COVID-19 the demand for the service has increased significantly. Half of those attending came for

treatment voluntarily, while others were referred to the resource by other parties.

The annual contract with Heimilisfriður amounts to EUR 94,282, plus an additional contribution made in 2021 of EUR 87,548. The allocation makes it possible to keep the cost of treatment to a minimum and thus facilitate access to the resource.

F. Support programs for sex offenders

Individualised treatment is provided in prisons for persons who have been convicted of sexual violence. All those who have violated a child (usually a girl) are offered treatment during their sentence.

Individual therapy is also offered to persons who have used sexual violence against adults. The treatment is based on cognitive behavioural therapy, motivational conversation, the Good Lives Model and takes into account the needs of each individual. The Prison and Probation Administration's psychologists carry out the treatment. The number of people in active treatment at any given time varies according to the composition of the prison population but, as a rule, individuals in prison for violation of a child are about 10% of the prison inmates. Counselling sessions define what is meant by gender-based violence. A risk assessment has also been used to assess the intervention and effectiveness of the treatment.

The Prison and Probation Administration has established procedures to safeguard the interests of victims while a person is serving his/her sentence. This procedure is primarily aimed at preventing communication between the perpetrator and the victim, except after careful consideration and with the interests of the victim given priority.

Funding for education and courses for perpetrators provided by the Prison and Probation Administration comes from the institution's budget.

In 2021, the Ministry of Social Affairs provided EUR 13,469 to set up the Take the Step initiative. Take the Step is a new remedy for individuals who have used or feel they are likely to use sexual violence, whether online or personally against others, and who want to seek help. Such a resource has not previously been available in Iceland, except for children and young people. The project is based on a UK model and is manned by five psychologists who have experience and knowledge in this field.

G. The private sector and the media

The awareness-raising project Break the Silence, described in Sections 3.A and 3.C above, was developed in collaboration with the private sector. It involved an advertising agency, filmmakers and programme producers of Icelandic National Broadcasting. The project began with a certain basic framework, but in other respects the conceptual work and presentation of material was in the hands of private sector experts. A key factor in the collaboration on the development of the material was consultation between the private sector experts and the project management who were experts in the field, as well as the project's consultation group from NGOs working with victims of violence.

In connection with projects carried out by the above-mentioned Action Team against Violence, concerning especially awareness-raising and education, discussions have taken place with the media, social media and the telecommunications sector, and various types of collaboration undertaken. Icelandic National Broadcasting (RÚV) has addressed the issue in various ways, for example, by covering violence in its children's programming Krakka RÚV, which is aimed at children and young people, and has drawn attention to where help is available, etc. The news commentary programme Kveikur on RÚV produced a special episode on

domestic violence last year, focusing on the risk of increased domestic violence during the corona virus epidemic. Following contact with telecommunications companies on how they can contribute in this regard, some of them have already complied with the proposals. Talks have also been held with the largest social media operators, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat, about possible collaboration in the field of education and prevention, which has been well received and is now in further development.

H. Self-regulatory standards (for the ICT sector and the media)

The Media Act, No. 38/2011, prohibits hate speech and incitement to criminal conduct. The media are not permitted to systematically incite hatred on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, ethnicity or cultural, economic, social or other status in society. Furthermore, a media outlet that disseminates audio and video material may not disseminate material that could adversely affect the development of children, in particular material that involves pornography or unwarranted violence.

I. Measures to encourage protocols or guidelines

Under Icelandic law, employers must establish a prevention and response plan that addresses gender-based violence and gender-based and sexual harassment. All employers are obliged to include this in their written plan for safety and health at work, as provided for in Regulation No. 1009/2015, on Measures against Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Harassment and Violence in the Workplace. In addition, employers with 25 or more employees are obliged to do so when drawing up a gender equality plan in accordance with Act No. 150/2020, on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender. The State Occupational Safety and Health Administration monitors the former plan and the Directorate for Equality the latter.

In 2021, as previously mentioned, a project under the auspices of a special action team against violence was launched concerning violence and the

workplace. The project involves increasing education on domestic violence and human trafficking by shop stewards and union reps of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the public service workers' confederation BSRB. The educational material will be used in the shop steward training of the trade unions' educational department, Félagsmálaskóli alþýðu, sent to member associations of ASÍ and BSRB, used in education for inspectors and other employees of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and will be accessible to the public on the 112 portal on violence.

J. Other taken or planned measures to prevent violence against women

On 1 July 2020, it was announced that Iceland would be one of the leaders in the Generation Equality Forum initiative, under the auspices of the UN agency for gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women. The initiative is to work on improvements in areas where women and girls are still at a disadvantage, in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The five-year campaign is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and was launched to mark the 25th anniversary of the fourth UN Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

The Icelandic government is leading an action coalition on gender-based violence and has been working on its main emphases and shaping commitments to actions and projects for the next five years. Iceland's commitments include both actions aimed at eradicating gender-based violence and sexual harassment and violence in this country, as well as projects that will be carried out through international co-operation and development co-operation. Iceland has 23 commitments aimed at eradicating gender-based violence through increased prevention, improved consultation on measures against violence and the strengthening of services and support measures for both victims and perpetrators. Emphasis will be placed on better reaching out to boys and men with prevention

actions, together with actions to combat digital sexual violence and improvements to the justice system, following up on government actions in this area.

The Icelandic government will triple its core contribution to the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, in the next two years. The agency plays a key role in providing services to victims of sexual violence in conflict areas and provides core funding with the flexibility to respond where the need is greatest at any given time.

In collaboration with UN Women, the Icelandic government is launching a campaign focusing on the participation of men and boys in prevention and actions aimed at eliminating gender-based and sexual violence against women and girls. To this end, Iceland will increase its contributions to UN Women by USD one million in the next two years.

4. Protection and support

A. Information on support services and legal measures available to victims

Section 3.A described the COVID-19 Anti-Violence Action Team. One of the team's actions was the opening of a digital portal on violence for victims, perpetrators and relatives. The website www.112.is has been turned into an information outlet concerning everything related to violence, and a help line has been opened with emergency services via online chat. The site contains information on solutions for victims, perpetrators and relatives. The information on the site is in Icelandic, English and Polish. There are also links to the websites of the relevant resources, which are, among other things, discussed in Section 2.C above.

The Directorate for Equality publishes the booklet *Your Rights*, with important information for immigrants in Iceland. It was first published in 2010, but is reviewed regularly, most recently in 2019. The booklet discusses the rights of individuals in Iceland when it comes to close relationships and communications, for example, marriage, cohabitation, divorce and separation, pregnancy, maternal care, abortion, child custody, access rights, violence in close relationships, human trafficking, prostitution, complaints to the police, legal aid and residence permits. The booklet was published in printed form and online in Icelandic, English, Polish, Spanish, Thai, Russian, Arabic and French. The text of the booklet was prepared in collaboration with the Icelandic Human Rights Centre. The booklet is regularly advertised and is available at public institutions and NGOs where people of foreign origin seek services.

In 2020, *New In Iceland*, a counselling centre for immigrants, was opened under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. People can contact the counselling centre with all types of questions, including issues concerning domestic violence, for information on services and remedies for violence. The service is without charge and is carried out in complete confidentiality. Staff at the counselling centre speak English, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Lithuanian, Russian and Icelandic, and telephone interpreting is available in other languages.

The Act on Criminal Procedure, No. 88/2008, provides for the rights of victims. Pursuant to Art. 40 of the Act the police are obliged, if appropriate, to advise victims of their rights under the law. Under Art. 41 the police

are obliged to appoint a legal advisor for the victim if investigation of the case is directed at a sexual offence, and also if violence is involved and it can be assumed that the victim has suffered significant physical or psychological injury due to the violation, or if the victim has been violated by a person close to him/her. Under Art. 45, the role of the legal advisor is to safeguard his/her client's interests and provide assistance in the case, including the bringing of civil actions.

According to the fifth paragraph of Art. 63 of the Act on Criminal Procedure, the police shall call in an authorised court interpreter or another competent person to interpret the proceedings. If a legal advisor needs an interpreter to interpret his or her communication with a client outside the courtroom or with the police, the cost will be covered by the court or the police, depending on the outcome of the case. The prosecuting authority must also obtain an interpreter for court sessions. The Act on Criminal Procedure and the General Penal Code (GPC) are available in English on the website of the Ministry of Justice.³

At the upcoming parliamentary session, the Minister of Justice will present a bill amending the Act on Criminal Procedure, No. 88/2008, which is intended to improve the legal position of victims in more serious cases involving physical assault and sexual violence, providing for information disclosure on the progress of the case, greater access to documentation by the legal advisor, allowing compensation claims to be admitted at the appeal stage despite the acquittal of an accused by the District Court, and authorising the appointment of a legal advisor for the victim at the appeal stage even if the victim's claim for compensation is not under review.

The National Commissioner of Police's protocols for handling and documenting domestic violence cases were updated in September 2018. Police officers must follow the protocols when handling domestic violence cases. According to Art. 8 of the protocols, which deals with assistance to victims and guidelines, police officers must be aware of the remedies available to victims and inform them of them; the main remedies are listed in an appendix to the working procedures. The victim shall also be informed of an information booklet for victims of crime available on the website of

³[https://www.government.is/publications/legislation/\\$LisasticSearch/Search/?SearchQuery=&Ministries=Ministry+of+Justice&Themes=&ContentTypes=](https://www.government.is/publications/legislation/$LisasticSearch/Search/?SearchQuery=&Ministries=Ministry+of+Justice&Themes=&ContentTypes=)

Government Offices,⁴ containing information on victims' rights and the course of criminal proceedings in general.

The website of the Director of Public Prosecution, www.saksoknari.is, contains practical information on the course of criminal cases in the judicial system for victims of crime.

B1. General support services

Local authorities are obliged by law to ensure their residents' financial and social security, including providing services, assistance and counselling when it comes to social difficulties, financial assistance and housing issues.

The social and welfare services of the municipalities provide diverse types of support to children and their families, including in connection with violence. With regard to the first response to domestic violence, procedure of the National Commissioner of Police for domestic violence cases has been adopted throughout the country, which means that when the police are called in due to domestic violence where children are present, a child protection worker shall be informed of the state of affairs and requested to immediately come to the scene. If children are connected to the home or parties to a case, the on-call employee of the child protection committee shall be informed of the case and his/her involvement requested. If there are no children living in a home that is a scene of domestic violence, the victim must agree to have the police have a social services employee summoned. The social services employee is the victim's support on the ground and accompanies the victim through a medical examination and investigations, if the victim agrees.

Services following violence are not harmonised among municipalities, but the social services offer various support measures such as social workers/counselling, psychological services and financial assistance. Victims are directed to other options such as the services of Bjarkarhlíð, the Women's Shelter, Stígamót/Drekaslóð etc. as applicable and as available at the respective location.

One of the consequences of violence in close relationships is abuse of alcohol and narcotics. The Ministry of Social Affairs provided support for a project under the auspices of the Women's Shelter and The Root, an

⁴<https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/innanrikisraduneyti-media/media/Utgafa/brotatholar.pdf>

Association for Women's Welfare, which consists of education for women who have used the shelter services. This consists of education on self-image and communication, trauma and violence, the consequences of violence and ways to re-build.

The Ministry of Social Affairs has issued rules on local authorities' financial assistance in special cases involving foreign nationals who are not domiciled in Iceland. They deal with assistance to individuals who are unable to leave Iceland or support themselves temporarily in the country without the assistance of the Icelandic authorities.

B2. Healthcare and social services

All individuals, regardless of gender and status, are entitled to healthcare services, cf. Act No. 40/2007, on Healthcare Services. No distinction has been made on the basis of a woman's status for access to such services, i.e. in statistical data or research.

In February 2007, the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Iceland published "Clinical Guidelines for Nurses: On screening, assessment and the first response to domestic violence against women". In 2013, clinical guidelines for assessment and response to violence in close relationships were published in accordance with the rules that apply to the preparation of clinical guidelines at LHS. Healthcare professionals are offered courses on the use of the guidelines. The Ministry of Health is currently working on formulating and implementing procedures for services to victims of domestic violence in the healthcare system. This work is scheduled for completion in 2021.

The Department Education and Research of LHS and the Developmental Centre for Primary Healthcare in Iceland co-operate on education on domestic violence, its symptoms and remedies. The educational material is intended to provide general information to employees of healthcare institutions about domestic violence in order to promote awareness and increased discussion. Courses are also held for professionals who work with pregnant women on how to screen for mental distress during pregnancy. Healthcare professionals can be in a key position to spot symptoms and point out remedies to victims of violence.

B3. Number of female victims of violence assisted by health and social services

Domestic violence has as of yet not been registered as a reason for seeking medical assistance in health records and therefore this information is not available, although this is to be rectified, cf. Section B.1.3. In 2020, an article was published on the extent and nature of domestic violence as recorded in LSH data, which stated that over a 10-year period there were a total of 1454 visits to LSH by women where the reason given was domestic violence (1.69 per 1,000 women in the capital area).

No information was obtained on the total number of women who received assistance from municipal social services due to domestic violence. Recording of cases is not co-ordinated between municipalities and does not necessarily include the gender of the victim. However, according to information from the City of Reykjavík, which is the largest local authority with approximately 1/3 of the country's population, in 2020 the number of on-site calls linked to domestic violence was 228. Of these, women were victims in 188 cases.

C. Information on complaints mechanisms

Under Art. 41 [of the Act on Criminal Procedure] the police are obliged to appoint the victim a legal advisor if an investigation concerns a violation of Chapter XXII of the GPC (sexual offences) and the victim so requests. However, a legal advisor must always be appointed if the victim has not reached age 18 when the investigation begins. The police are also obliged to appoint the victim a legal advisor at the latter's request if the investigation concerns Chapter XXIII (violence) or Chapter XXIV (violation of personal freedom) of the GPC and it can be assumed that the victim has suffered significant physical or psychological injury as a result of the violation or has been violated by someone close to him/her. Further details concerning legal advisors are found in Articles 40-48 of the Act. Under Art. 45, the role of the legal advisor is to safeguard his/her client's interests and provide assistance in the case, including the bringing of civil actions.

The police website, www.logreglan.is, provides information on how to contact the police, whether the matter is urgent or not, and an appointment can be made with the police complaint reception desk. The emergency helpline can be contacted by calling 112 or by webchat on the website www.112.is. The emergency helpline can refer the person calling to the police or give the person advice regarding appropriate measures to take.

At Bjarkarhlíð, a centre for victims of violence in the capital area, a staff police officer can receive a complaint about violence, after which the case is referred for further investigation to a police station.

D. Specialist women's support services

The Women's Shelter in Reykjavík and Women's Shelter in Akureyri are open 24 hours a day; there is no charge to women and children who dwell in the shelters. Advice and support is offered in the form of consultations with a specialist, as well as the possibility of staying in the shelters. In 2020, 153 women and 117 children stayed in the emergency shelters. A total of 620 women came to the shelter in Reykjavík for consultations; there is no waiting list. There are fourteen full-time equivalent positions in the shelter in Reykjavík and one in Akureyri. The Association for Women's Shelters runs both the shelters with support from the state and the local authority.

Bjarkarhlíð in Reykjavík is a service centre for adult victims of violence of all genders. It is open from 9 am to 5 pm weekdays. Five employees work in Bjarkarhlíð. Bjarkarhlíð is a joint project of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the City of Reykjavík, the Ministry of Justice, the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police, Stígamót [a centre for survivors of sexual violence], the Women's Shelter, Drekaslóð [an education and service centre for victims of violence and their families], the Icelandic Human Rights Centre and Women's Counselling. It collaborates closely with other professionals, such as the police and lawyers. The contribution of the partners varies and may include a work contribution or financial support. In 2020, 827 individuals sought assistance from Bjarkarhlíð, of which 83% were women. Bjarkarhlíð's service is free of charge.

Bjarmahlíð, Bjarkarhlíð's sister organisation in Akureyri, has 1 employee; 110 individuals came for consultations there in 2020. Sigurhæðir opened in March this year in the town of Selfoss. It follows the methodology of a Family Justice Center, like Bjarkarhlíð and Bjarmahlíð, and has 4 employees. Anyone may seek assistance from Sigurhæðir, regardless of gender, and the service is free of charge.

Stígamót is a counselling and education NGO working against sexual violence. The organisation is located in Reykjavík but also provides services in non-urban areas. It has 11 employees. It is open from 9 am to 5 pm weekdays. A total of 885 individuals came to Stígamót for consultations in 2019. Anyone may seek assistance from Stígamót and the service is free of charge.

LHS in Fossvogur has operated an emergency reception for victims of sexual violence since 1993. The purpose of the emergency reception is to ensure the well-being and security of those who seek assistance due to sexual violence. It aims at reducing or preventing the psychological and physical trauma often resulting from sexual violence. The service is not contingent upon a decision on a complaint to the police, but at the emergency reception a forensic examination of the victim is carried out. All persons received are offered legal advice and assistance in filing a complaint in connection with the case; however, the decision on this is up to the victim. A group of specialised nurses work in LHS's emergency reception, together with physicians specialised in treating gynecological disorders. Victims also have access to psychological services linked to the emergency reception, who work in LHS's psychiatric division. The emergency reception is financed under the hospital's budget, it is open 24 hours a day, accessible to everyone and the service is free of charge. There is close co-operation between the emergency reception, the police, child protection and the social services. In 2020, 120 women came to the emergency reception.

E. Telephone helplines

In Iceland, the emergency helpline 112 has played a key role in providing help quickly and safely to those who need it around the clock, including in situations of domestic violence and violence against children and human trafficking. Helpline personnel have received good training in answering such calls and assessing their importance; they are well acquainted with the resources available. If on-site assistance is not required, callers are not required to give their names. In 2020, the emergency line services were systematically developed and expanded as follows:

1. The website www.112.is was developed and now contains a wide range of material on violence, including information on services and resources provided by public bodies, NGOs and the private sector.
2. Online chat has been developed as a new means of communication with emergency line personnel. Since it was opened in October 2020 its use has shown that many people prefer this method of communication to telephoning.
3. An emergency app is being developed to assist victims, relatives and perpetrators in receiving assistance. Another example of 112 actions is an emergency app for people who are deaf or hearing-impaired.

4. Text messaging services are being developed for 112 to make it possible to seek assistance by SMS.

5. To ensure people of foreign origin can contact the helpline and receive assistance, an interpreter service and/or online chat in additional languages is needed.

According to statistics from August 2021, 82,600 users have visited the site since the portal opened in November, an average of 258 visits per day. Most users (64%) visited the website via mobile phone/smart device. The figures also show that those who visit the web increasingly stop and read the site's content, instead of exiting immediately. Since the chat function opened, there have been 540 online chats, 36 photos sent, 234 users connected to the Red Cross emergency online chat and 47 users connected to the healthcare website Heilsuvera, where nurses provide advice. Consultations with Bjarkarhlíð can also be scheduled on 112.is and 290 bookings have been made.

The Red Cross helpline and online chat are open 24 hours a day, all year round. Every year about 15 thousand cases are received by the [Red Cross helpline] 1717. Confidentiality and anonymity are ensured and the service is free. Trained and experienced volunteers of all ages answer the calls received in 1717. Callers can contact the service about anything they are concerned about and receive psychological support, advice, a hearing and information about the resources available in Icelandic society.

On the website of Barnaheill, Save the Children Iceland, people can report illegal and inappropriate material on the Internet that concerns children or is directed against children and youths under the age of 18.

F. Rights and needs of child witnesses

In 2020, a special children's social worker began work at the Women's Shelter with the task of assisting the children who go there. The aim is, among other things, to link together the Women's Shelter and other bodies that work with children, such as child protection and social services, and to take care of the children's basic needs, e.g. whether they have clothes with them in the shelter, inform the school that they are staying in an emergency shelter, help them keep in touch with friends and attend leisure activities.

The Child Protection Agency handles cases of children who have witnessed/lived with domestic violence. Children are usually offered psychological consultations and conversational interviews with a counsellor

of social services. In some locations, the project Trappan has been introduced⁵. This is a resource designed specifically for children who have experienced domestic violence. Trappan is also a tool for screening for the need for more specialised treatment for children who live/have lived with violence.

Barnahus began operation in Reykjavík in 1998. Barnahus deals with cases where there is suspicion that children have been subjected to sexual harassment or violence. Child protection committees are responsible for handling such cases and can request the services of Barnahus. Children and their parents can, with a referral from a child protection committee, receive all services in one place free of charge. In the case of a police investigation, the location of questioning depends on the judge's decision, but child protection committees can request other services from Barnahus. Child protection committees can contact Barnahus on suspicion of other types of violence against children. Children who have witnessed violence are also questioned in Barnahus. In 2019, a branch of Barnahus was opened in Akureyri to provide services to children outside the capital area which Barnahus in Reykjavík previously provided.

Last year, the City of Reykjavík received a grant from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Justice to set up a family treatment programme for families who abuse their children. The treatment, called Alternatives for Families: a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (AF-CBT), is evidence-based trauma-focused family therapy based on cognitive behavioural therapy. The therapy aims to ensure a connection between children and caregivers, based on a comprehensive approach emphasising preventing violence, conflict and coercion in families.

G. Other measures

Section 4.C discusses where information can be found on how to report violations to the police. Section 3.A discusses the government's awareness raising under the heading "You have HOPE". The purpose of the project is to introduce victims of violence to the resources available to them. The project website encourages victims of violence to report it and seek help by calling the 112 emergency helpline.

⁵ <https://kasvuntuki.fi/en/interventions/trappan/>

One of the actions of the Action Team against Violence also discussed in Section 3.A was awareness raising in the general public under the heading “Tell Someone”, which consisted of an advertising campaign and used the digital portal 112 on the website www.112.is. The campaign encourages people to report violence and seek help from 112.

According to Chapter IV of the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002, everyone is obliged to notify a child protection committee if they have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to violence or other degrading behaviour. The law specifically states that persons involved with children have a duty to notify a child protection committee of any suspicion that a child is being subjected to violence or other degrading behaviour. Failure to notify a child protection committee of such ill-treatment or poor conditions that could threaten a child’s life or health is liable to fines or imprisonment of up to two years under Art. 96 of the Act. Art. 17 of the Healthcare Practitioners Act, No. 34/2012, states that the duty of confidentiality does not apply to incidents that a healthcare employee must report in accordance with other legal provisions and in such cases the healthcare employee must disclose information about the incident to the competent authorities.

Such provisions include the police's protocols for handling and documenting domestic violence cases, and clinical guidelines on assessment and response to violence in close relationships published by LHS.

5. Substantive law

A. Legal framework

Icelandic criminal law is largely gender neutral and has limited provisions with wording referring only to violence against women. Despite this, the penal code covers many categories of crimes that have the greatest impact on women and there are legal provisions and rules focusing solely on violence against women, e.g. Art. 218 a of the GPC, regarding female genital mutilation which was enacted in 2005.

The legislation that is considered to fulfil Iceland's obligations under Chapter V of the Istanbul Convention consists mainly of the General Penal Code, the Act on Criminal Procedure, Act on Civil Procedure, the Tort Act, the Child Protection Act, the Children's Act, the Act in Respect of Marriage, the Act on Restraining Orders and Eviction, the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, the Act on Foreign Nationals and the Regulation on Conditions for Legal Aid and the working methods of the Legal Aid Committee.

Following the signing of the Istanbul Convention, the Icelandic authorities reviewed national law. In 2012, a report was prepared by the Institute of Human Rights at the University of Iceland and with the support of the Ministry of the Interior on the Convention, which among other things analysed possible amendments to Icelandic legislation that would be needed in order to ratify the Convention. Considerable changes have subsequently been made to the General Penal Code, including the adoption of special provisions that provide for punishment for domestic violence, defamation between closely connected parties, a ban on forcing a person to marry or undergo a similar ceremony, on stalking and sexual privacy.

A bill is to be submitted to the next session of the Althingi amending the Act on Criminal Procedure by, among other things, improving the legal position of victims during a police investigation and in the judicial process.

In other respects, gender-based or sexual harassment may be covered by the general prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender in the Act

on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, cf. Chapter III of the Act. In addition, employers and heads of institutions, NGOs and sports and youth organisations are required to take measures to prevent and seek to forestall gender-based violence and gender-based and sexual harassment, cf. Art. 14 of the Act.

B. Guidance on implementation of legal framework

In 2014, the National Commissioner of Police began work on clarifying and improving the police protocols for domestic violence; the individual police districts also took an active part in that work. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development is responsible for educating and training the police in the protocols. The aim of clarifying procedures was to give police officers clear instructions on how to handle these cases and on resources for victims. The new procedures attracted attention and sparked discussion in the community, and sent the message that domestic violence would not be tolerated and the police would deal professionally with these matters. Major emphasis was placed on having these cases properly documented in the police records system in order to enable follow-up, checklists were prepared and risk assessment introduced.

In addition to special courses in this field, cf. the discussion in Chapter 3.C and 3.D, the training centre has created online courses that have been accessible to all police employees since the spring of 2021 on the police's internal website, and will become mandatory in 2022 for all active police officers.

The National Commissioner of Police has also published information and guidelines on procedures for the police when it comes to human trafficking.

Under Art. 21 of the Act on Criminal Procedure, No. 88/2008, the Director of Public Prosecution issues general instructions on the handling of prosecuting authority and monitors its exercise by chiefs of police. The Director of Public Prosecution has, for instance, issued instructions on notifications to victims and legal advisors, on the handling of sexual offences where the accused and/or the victim was disabled (which deal specifically with how to investigate sexual offences when disabled people are involved), on investigation plans and analysis of criminal cases to achieve the best possible results, and on handling of cases against children under 15 years of age.

C. Civil remedies

Icelandic law provides civil law remedies against perpetrators for victims of violence.

Under Art. 37 of the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002, a child protection committee may demand in court that an individual be prohibited from entering a specific location or area, following a child, or visiting or contacting a child or a pregnant woman if the committee considers the health or life of an unborn child to be endangered or a child at risk due to a person's conduct or actions. In addition, under Art. 78 of the Act on Legal Execution, No. 90/1989, a person may have a District Court enforce the detainee's obligation to vacate premises or hand over their control to the petitioner, remove objects from the premises or otherwise relinquish control to the petitioner if the person has been unlawfully prevented from exercising rights which he/she claims to have. This authorisation can, for example, be used to have the perpetrator deliver to the victim property that the former has refused to deliver, such as a passport and other important documents.

According to Point 4 of Art. 28 of the Matrimony Act, No. 31/1993, either spouse can demand the invalidation of their marriage if he/she has been forced to undergo the ceremony.

If, in the victim's opinion, the authorities have failed in their obligation to take the necessary preventive remedies and protective measures in their area of responsibility, the victim can claim compensation from the National Treasury, settlement of which is in the hands of the Attorney General, or may bring an action against the state for compensation. The Attorney General handles the defence of civil cases brought against the state, as provided for in the Act on the Attorney General, No. 51/1985. No statistics are available on claims to the Attorney General.

If the victim considers that he/she has been wronged by the authorities, the victim can lodge a complaint with the Althingi Ombudsman, whose role is to supervise state and local government administration, ensuring that it complies with law. If the Ombudsman's investigation gives cause to suspect that an infringement has taken place, the office may propose the waiver of costs for an action which it deems appropriate be brought before a court for resolution.

D. Compensation from perpetrators and state compensation

Civil claims in criminal cases are discussed in Chapter XXVI of the Act on Criminal Procedure, No. 88/2008. Under Art. 172 of the Act, a victim and any other persons who consider themselves to have acquired a claim under civil law against an accused due to criminal conduct may seek a judgment on the claim in a criminal case, as provided for in more detail in Chapter XXVI. The claim shall be notified to the prosecutor before the indictment is issued, but may also be submitted after the indictment has been issued if certain conditions are satisfied.

The Treasury pays compensation for damage resulting from a violation of the GPC, as provided for in the Act on the Payment of Compensation by the Treasury to Crime Victims, No. 69/1995, which entered into force in February 1996. The purpose of the Act is to improve the situation of victims of violent crimes by having the Treasury pay compensation for bodily harm and non-financial loss resulting from violations of the GPC, as the person who causes the crimes is usually not in a position to pay the compensation. The emphasis in the preparation of the Act was particularly on the payment of compensation ordered by a court for serious violent offences, such as sexual offences.

Statistics are not available on the number of women who have claimed benefits from the perpetrators or the state.

E. Custody and visitation rights of children

According to the second paragraph of Art. 34 of the Children's Act, No. 76/2003, the judge determines how custody of a child or legal domicile will be arranged according to the best interests of the child. The judge considers, among other things, the risk that the child, parent or others in the child's home have been or may be subjected to violence.

If the perpetrator has visitation rights to a child, this right does not take precedence over a judge's ruling on a restraining order and/or eviction, prohibiting the perpetrator from approaching the child. If there is a restraining order in force, which prohibits the perpetrator from approaching the child's mother and not the child, and the perpetrator has visitation rights to the child, a third party has been engaged to handle communication between the victim and perpetrator concerning the child, including concerning access. Under Art 47 of the Children's Act, the District Commissioner rules on access. In determining access, the District

Commissioner is to assess the risk that the child, parent or others in the household have been or may be subjected to violence. The District Commissioner can also change or revoke a ruling or an agreement on access if such a solution is considered in the best interests of the child.

F. Criminalisation of certain forms of violence

Psychological violence

Iceland has fulfilled its obligation under the agreement to criminalise psychological violence, with several statutory provisions.

A new provision in Art. 218 b of the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940, entered into force in February 2016. It was proposed that a special provision be included in the GPC that deals with violence in close relationships, emphasising the frightening situation that this type of violence can create and the long-term psychological suffering that it can cause. The provision is also intended to address psychological violence, which was not previously criminalised, and with the change that violence in close relationships is no longer seen as a collection of individual cases but rather attention is focused on the persistent threat and psychological suffering that it entails. The prosecution has also indicted in a number of cases for psychological violence and the District Court has convicted. The penalty under the provision is imprisonment for up to 6 years. An egregious offence can be liable to imprisonment for up to 16 years, cf. the second paragraph of Art 218 b of the GPC. One of the aims of the provision is to increase the legal protection of children who live with domestic violence. The provision thus protects all children who are in a situation where their life, health or well-being is threatened, whether the actions which create the threat are directed specifically against them or against those closest to them. Art. 99 of the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002, prescribes the penalty for offences against children. The first paragraph lays down the penalty for using psychological or physical punishment, threats or intimidation against a child or for other degrading conduct towards a child. Such conduct has been repeatedly prosecuted and convicted.

Threats in general fall under Art. 233 of the GPC regardless of whether the victim is in a close relationship with the perpetrator. It is also psychological violence to force a person to marry, cf. Art. 225 of the GPC. In 2006, a special provision, Art. 233 b, for defamation involving insults and humiliation against those persons close to the perpetrator, was enshrined in the GPC; such may comprise psychological violence.

If there are close links between the perpetrator and the victim this generally tends to aggravate the penalty, cf. the third paragraph of Art. 70 of the GPC.

Stalking

Section 4.A discussed a new provision of the GPC, Art. 232 a, on stalking. Under this provision, anyone who repeatedly threatens, follows, watches, contacts or in any other similar way follows the movements of another person, in a manner likely to cause fear or anxiety, shall be subject to fines or imprisonment for up to 4 years. The provision is considered to enact the measures necessary in accordance with Art. 34 of the Istanbul Convention.

Physical violence

The GPC contains a large number of provisions dealing with physical violence. Violence in close relationships is punishable by imprisonment for up to 6 years, and up to 16 years if the violation is egregious, cf. Art. 218 b of the GPC.

Anyone who is otherwise guilty of physical assault shall be subject to fines or imprisonment for up to 6 months, and imprisonment for up to 1 year if the conduct is particularly reprehensible, cf. Art. 217 of the GPC.

An egregious offence can be liable to imprisonment for up to 3 years, cf. Art. 218 of the GPC. If the assault results in serious bodily harm or injury to health or the offence is particularly dangerous due to the method used, or if the assault results in the victim's death, the offence is punishable by up to 16 years' imprisonment.

The punishment for homicide ranges from 5 years to life, cf. Art. 211 of the GPC.

Sexual offences, including rape

Provisions of Chapter XXII of the GPC prescribe the penalties for sexual offences. The provision of Art. 194 of the GPC prescribes the punishment for rape, which is defined as intercourse or other sexual relations without consent. For rape, the perpetrator shall be imprisoned for not less than 1 year and up to 16 years. The term "other sexual relations" includes oral intercourse, anal intercourse, including the practice of inserting objects or

fingers into the vagina or rectum, as well as licking and sucking the genitals. It also includes the practice of having the victim masturbate and intercourse-simulation movements between the victim's thighs, rear or stomach. An amendment to the provision in 2018 added that it was punishable to have intercourse or other sexual relations with a person without his/her consent. For consent to be considered obtained, it must have been expressed voluntarily and it is not considered to have been obtained if violence, threats or other forms of unlawful coercion are used to obtain it. Violence includes deprivation of liberty through confinement, drugging/medication or other similar means. It is also considered rape to deceive or take advantage of the person's misjudgement of the situation, or to take advantage of a person's mental illness or other mental disability in order to have intercourse or other sexual intercourse with him/her, or where the person's situation is otherwise such that he/she cannot resist the act or understand its meaning.

The minimum age of sexual consent in Iceland is 15 years according to Art. 202 of the GPC. It is therefore a criminal offence to have sexual relations with a person under the age of 15. The provision is primarily aimed at protecting children and adolescents from the abuse by perpetrators wishing to take advantage of the children's immaturity and inexperience.

Forced marriage

According to the second paragraph of Art. 225 of the GPC, a person who forces another person to marry shall be imprisoned for up to 4 years. The penalty is also imprisonment of up to 4 years for forcing another person to undergo a similar ceremony even if this is not legally valid.

Female genital mutilation

Under Art. 218 a of the GPC, anyone who causes bodily harm to a girl or a woman through a physical attack fully or partially removing her genitals shall be imprisoned for up to 6 years. The same applies if the victim is a person with female genitalia who has changed registered gender. An attack that is particularly reprehensible or results in gross bodily harm or health damage, or resulting in death, is punishable by up to 16 years in prison.

Forced abortion and forced sterilisation (Articles 39 a and b)

Rules on abortion, cf. Act No. 43/2019, and sterilisation, cf. Act No. 35/2019, ensure that women's autonomy in making decisions about sterilisation or abortion is respected. Violations of the provisions of the Acts are punishable under the GPC.

Forced abortion and forced sterilisation, cf. Art. 39 of the Convention, are covered by the provision of the third sentence of the second paragraph of Art. 216 of the GPC. Violations are subject to imprisonment of not less than 2 year and up to 12 years.

G. Legislation against sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can be liable to imprisonment for up to 2 years, cf. Art. 199 of the GPC. The concept covers various types of grasping, feeling and other types of physical contact. Other sexual harassment involves brief contact with the genitals or breasts.

Other obnoxious and obscene behaviour, cf. Art. 209 of the GPC, is liable to imprisonment for up to 4 years, and up to 6 months or fines if the violation is minor.

In 2021, the Althingi approved a bill of the Minister of Justice to amend the GPC with the enactment of new provisions, Art. 199 a, on sexual privacy. The objective of the amendments is to strengthen legal protection for individuals against violations of their sexual privacy and, in doing so, protect fundamental rights, i.e. personal freedom, human dignity and individual sexual autonomy. The statutory amendments are intended to clarify the legal environment and promote better handling of cases by the justice system.

Gender-based violence, gender-based harassment and sexual harassment are also prohibited under Act No. 150/2020, on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender, which obliges employers and managers of institutions, organisations and sports and youth associations to take special measures to prevent employees, trainees and service users from being subjected to gender-based violence, gender-based harassment or sexual harassment in workplaces, institutions, social activities or schools.

H. Aiding or abetting

Aiding or abetting criminal acts, whether in word or deed, is punishable under the GPC, cf. Art. 22 of the GPC.

I. Attempts

An attempt to commit a criminal offence is punishable, cf. Art. 20 of the GPC.

J. Unacceptable justifications for crime

Icelandic legislation does not allow the circumstances mentioned in the first paragraph of Art. 42 to comprise an exemption from punishment or be taken into consideration to reduce punishment.

K. Applicability notwithstanding the relationship between perpetrator and victim

No exception from criminal liability is made in Icelandic law on the basis of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

L. Applicable sanctions and further measures in relation to perpetrators

All manifestations of violence in Section F carry a prison sentence of from 1-16 years; if a death results, the punishment can be life imprisonment. Courts may impose a sentence in the form of a fine for physical assault, cf. Art. 217 of the GPC, if the conduct is not particularly reprehensible. In addition to imprisonment and a fine, a restraining order or eviction may be applied if there is a risk that the person in question will violate the victim. Perpetrators over the age of 18 may be remanded in custody while their case is being processed by the police and/or until they begin serving their sentences, cf. subparagraphs c and d of Art. 95 of the Act on Criminal Procedure. The judge may also order that the perpetrator be placed in an appropriate institution due to mental disorder. The perpetrator may also be subjected to a travel ban while the case is being investigated and dealt with by the prosecuting authority. Foreign persons accused may, subject to certain conditions being met, be extradited for the processing of a case or for the enforcement of a judgment to the country where they are being investigated or have been convicted, cf. Art. 1 of Act No. 13/1986, on Extradition and other Assistance in Criminal Proceedings. Icelandic nationals may be extradited to other Nordic countries and EU Member States on the basis of an arrest warrant, cf. Act No. 51/2016, on the Arrest and Transfer of Persons To and From Iceland in Connection with Criminal Offences based on an Arrest Warrant.

Under the Act on the Execution of Sentences, No. 15/2016, the prison authorities may allow prisoners to serve part of their sentence outside prison, provided that certain conditions are met. A prisoner is then supervised and resides in a special institution or home, in addition to which the condition may be set that the prisoner be outfitted with a monitoring device, cf. Articles 31 and 32 of the Act. Under Art. 37 of the Act, a sentence may be executed through unpaid community service under the supervision of the Prison and Probation Administration or other competent party if this is not contrary to public interest.

With regard to the revocation of parental rights if the interests of the child, including the safety of the victim, cannot be ensured by other means, reference is made to the discussion in Section 5.E. According to Chapter VI of the Child Protection Act, No. 80/2002, a child protection committee may assume custody or guardianship of a child. The child protection committee can also demand in court that one or both parents be deprived of custody, if a child is believed to have been, among other things, abused, sexually abused or been subjected to serious physical or psychological harassment or humiliation in the home.

M. Aggravating circumstances

Chapter VIII of the GPC, Art. 70 in particular, sets out various factors that may affect the severity of punishment. Most of the factors listed in Art. 70 of the GPC relate to those circumstances specified in Art. 46 of the Convention. In addition, the provisions concerning certain offences specify what aspects shall be considered especially when assessing the seriousness of an act and, in turn, the level of punishment. Mention could be made of Art. 218 b, which is a special provision on domestic violence. Provisions on penalties in specific Acts can also affect the severity of punishment, such as the third paragraph of Art. 99 of the Child Protection Act, which is applied in tandem with provisions of the GPC if violence is committed against or in the presence of a child.

N. Prohibition of mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes or sentencing

Mediation may not be used unless both the perpetrator and the victim agree that the case be referred to mediation. If individuals under the age of 18 are involved, their legal guardian must agree that the case be handled in this manner, cf. instructions of the Director of Public Prosecution on mediation. Mediation cannot be applied in cases concerning violations of provisions of the sexual offences chapter of the GPC (Chapter XXII),

other than Art. 209 of the Act, on lewd conduct. If a settlement through mediation appears possible in a sexual offence case, special application must be made to the Director of Public Prosecution to use this option.

O. Administrative and judicial data on cases of violence and murder

The police do not regularly compile a comprehensive assessment of the gender of victims in deaths where the police are involved, as these cases vary greatly, e.g. deaths due to narcotics abuse, suicide, accidents, etc.

There is no comprehensive data, covering all types of deaths where the police are involved, on whether there is any background of violence prior to the death. On the other hand, the police continuously maintain a risk assessment list of parties who are considered dangerous, due to a history of previous violence, and follow their cases specifically.

In 2019, zero cases resulted in the death of a woman, but that year one man was convicted of conduct resulting in the death of a woman. In 2020 there were 3 cases of homicide that resulted with the death of four women, but no convictions were made for such conduct in 2020. In one case from 2020 concerning the death of a woman and is currently under investigation.

Information on victims of attempted homicide is not compiled and/or published in a systematic manner. No one was convicted in 2019 and 2020 for attempted homicide of a female.

There are few homicides in Iceland, from 0-6 per year, and therefore no further information is generally given as to whether the victim was previously subjected to violence, as the police must safeguard the privacy of victims and their families.

The police can obtain details of the number of cases of domestic violence that ended in prosecution. However, this is more complicated when it comes to other offences, such as sexual offences in close relationships, as is more difficult to gather information about victims of other crimes than offences involving physical violence in close relationships. The police have no statistical data on cases resulting in the deaths of children of female victims.

In the years 2019-2020, 28 sentences came to execution at the Prison and Probation Administration concerning criminal sanctions for domestic violence. The average length of the sentences was 1.9 years, the shortest sentence was 30 days and the longest 7 years.

P. Other measures

In January 2021, a report was issued by the Prime Minister's Office assessing Icelandic legislation in the light of the Istanbul Convention and proposing legislative amendments to implement the Convention. The report will be used in preparing a strategic national plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2020-2023 provides for the drafting of a nation-wide plan making it the responsibility of public administration to co-ordinate, implement, follow-up on and assess actions and measures resulting from obligations under the Convention.

6. Investigation, prosecution and procedural law and protective measures

A. Measures to ensure a prompt and appropriate response from law enforcement agencies

Procedures and instructions for the police and prosecutors are in place to ensure the prompt response of the police to domestic and sexual violence.

In 2005, the National Commissioner of Police issued protocols for police officers on domestic violence, which were updated in 2014 and 2018. The protocols define domestic violence and include procedures for documenting cases and for aspects that must be followed and taken into account in the response itself and in assistance to the victims and the accused; reference is made to the Act on Restraining Orders and Eviction. The instructions of the Director of Public Prosecution to prosecutors No. 4/2017 state that cases where the offences include physical and sexual violence shall be expedited. Special priority, however, shall be given to rape cases and cases involving violence against children and violence in close relationships, as well as cases where the perpetrators are under 18 years of age. In 2018, a digital investigation plan was introduced in the police records system. According to the instructions of the Director of Public Prosecution No. 2/2018, an investigation plan must be prepared for the investigation of rape offences, sexual offences against children and offences in close relationships. When recording cases in the police records system concerning rape, sexual harassment, sexual offences against children and violence in close relationships, a list of investigative measures that need to be undertaken is automatically provided. The aim is to increase the quality of investigations and the speed of proceedings so that all information will be available from the early stages of the case and persons directing the investigation will have access to all information about the case at all stages.

Statistics could not be obtained on the number of instances of police interventions in connection with violence against women.

B. Risk assessment

A risk assessment (B-SAFER) is carried out by the police in cases of domestic violence. The risk assessment is made to assess the imminent danger and risk of serious violence and to prepare an action plan to ensure the safety of victims in accordance with the assessment. Cases are reviewed regularly to ensure the action plan is followed up on. This is done to try to ensure perpetrators cannot reach the victims, if reason is seen to do so. There is also close co-operation between the police and social services, child protection and healthcare services. If the conditions of the Act on Restraining Orders and Eviction are satisfied, the police may, on their own initiative, decide to subject the perpetrator to a restraining order.

C. Emergency barring orders

The current Act on Restraining Orders and Eviction dates from 2011; however, rules on restraining orders were first introduced into Icelandic legislation in 2000.

Under Art. 7 of the Act on Restraining Orders and Eviction, No. 85/2011, it is the chief of police or his/her legal officer, in the home legal venue of the victim, who decides on eviction from home. If a decision is made on eviction, the chief of police is obliged, under Art. 12, to refer this decision to a District Court for confirmation as promptly as possible and no later than 72 hours after the request was received.

Upon receiving a request, the chief of police has 24 hours to make a decision on eviction, while a decision on a restraining order is to be made no later than 72 hours after a request has been received or a case has arisen, cf. the second paragraph of Art. 7 of the Act.

A specific period shall be determined for an eviction, which may not exceed four weeks at a time. An eviction can be extended by a new decision, in which case the conditions of the Act must still be satisfied.

There are no exceptions to who can apply for eviction of a person. Under Art 3 of the Act, a victim, his/her family or another person close to the victim may submit a request to the police that the perpetrator be placed under a restraining order and/or evicted. The same applies to the victim's legal guardian or person acting on his/her behalf from the social services and/or child protection committee in the municipality where the person in question resides. The chief of police may, on his own initiative, take the initiative in a case if he/she deems it necessary. A request for eviction is

submitted in the municipality where the victim lives and in the capital area in the district where the victim lives.

In investigating cases of violence, whether domestic violence, sexual violence or other forms of violence, an independent assessment is made of the possible need for a restraining order or eviction. The victim in question is informed of this possibility and can choose whether a request is submitted. In certain instances, the chief of police may make the decision without involving the victim, but the decision is usually made in consultation with the victim. In addition to the above, a request may also come from social services, a child protection committee, the victim's family or others close to him/her.

If a decision is made on eviction, the chief of police is obliged, under Art. 12, to refer this decision to a District Court for confirmation as promptly as possible and no later than 72 hours after the request was received. The same does not apply to a decision on a restraining order, unless the accused demands this be done within two weeks of the decision being made.

Violations of eviction are subject to fines or imprisonment for up to one year, cf. the first paragraph of Art. 232 of the GPC. In the case of a repeated or gross violation, the penalty may be imprisonment of up to two years.

According to the National Commissioner of Police's protocols on domestic violence, the police shall inform the victim of the duration of the eviction. If, in the opinion of the police, the victim is in a very vulnerable position or in danger from the perpetrator (e.g. a restraining order and eviction have been applied, or the offence is repeated or very serious), the victim shall be informed of the possibility of receiving a personal safety alarm to ensure his/her safety. The personal safety alarm shall be connected to an approved security company and the emergency helpline and the National Commissioner of Police's telecommunications centre shall be notified.

In 2019, 23 cases were registered which involved a request or decision to evict. In 2016 there were 16 cases. No information is available on the number of violations of eviction orders.

D. Restraining or protection orders - legal framework

The question has essentially been answered above under Section C. In investigating cases of violence, such as domestic violence and sexual

violence, an independent assessment is made as to whether it is necessary to impose a restraining order or eviction against the perpetrator. A victim of an offence wishing to request a restraining order fills out a form which is sent to a prosecutor for further action. The victim can also go to the appropriate police station and submit a request for a restraining order. The form is then filled in and a statement taken from the victim concerning the reasons for submitting the request and relevant information gathered, such as about the perpetrator's harassment. A decision on a restraining order or eviction may be issued to protect anyone who has been subjected to a criminal offence, cf. the conditions of Chapter II of the Act on Restraining Orders and Eviction. A restraining order may be imposed in connection with any criminal offence or if there is a risk that the person in question could offend against the victim, cf. Art. 4 of the same Act. Eviction may result from a violation of Chapters XXII-XXIV of the GPC, cf. Art. 5 of the Act, which contains provisions concerning violence. The victim does not have to pay to submit a request for a restraining order and/or eviction. The legal effect of a decision on a restraining order or eviction enters into force upon notice being served on the accused, cf. the second paragraph of Art. 9 of the Act. Service is usually effected very soon after a decision has been made. A restraining order shall not last for more than one year. A restraining order or eviction can be extended with a new decision, as long as the required conditions still exist.

A restraining order can be imposed against anyone who has disturbed the peace of the victim and need not necessarily be related to other legal actions. There need only be a reasonable suspicion of an offence and therefore a restraining order or eviction may remain in force despite the fact that the criminal conduct that led to the decision on a restraining order and/or eviction is no longer under investigation by the police. If reasonable suspicion has ever existed that the person in question offended against the victim, this fulfils the conditions of Articles 4 and 5 of the Act.

The penalty for a violation of a restraining order is a fine or imprisonment for up to 1 year or up to 2 years if the violation is repeated or serious, cf. Art. 232 of the GPC.

E. Administrative and judicial data on restraining and protection orders

In 2019, 86 requests or decisions on restraining orders were registered in the police records system. In 2020 there were 100 cases. In 2019, 34 violations of restraining orders were registered and 60 in 2020.

F. Ex officio legal proceedings

According to Icelandic law, the initiation of a criminal case is not dependent upon a claim by the victim, unless this requirement is set in the relevant penal provision. It is primarily criminal cases involving housebreaking and damage to property which require a claim from the victim. The police shall, whenever necessary, commence an investigation based on the knowledge or suspicion that a criminal offence has been committed, whether or not they have received a complaint, as provided for in Art. 52 of the Act on Criminal Procedure. The police may also continue the investigation of a case despite the fact that the victim has withdrawn the complaint. An example of such is the judgement of the Reykjanes District Court of 18 May 2018 in case no. S-214/2018, where the victim withdrew a charge of rape against her boyfriend and did not provide further assistance in the investigation of the case. The police investigation was continued, however, and the perpetrator was sentenced to four years imprisonment for the act.

A chief of police may whenever necessary initiate an investigation on suspicion of criminal conduct, as the chiefs of police are responsible for investigating cases involving all forms of violence and sexual violence. The Office of the District Prosecutor investigates violations by police officers, violations against public authorities, and investigations into tax and economic crime.

G. Ex parte legal proceedings

See reply in Section F. According to the protocols of the National Commissioner of Police on the handling and documentation of domestic violence cases, the police are to continue the investigation of a case if there is clear evidence that a violent crime has been committed, even if the victim does not wish to assist the investigation or has withdrawn his/her complaint.

H. Support for victims in legal proceedings

Reference is made here to the discussion of legal advisors in Section 4.A, and of Bjarkarhlíð in Section 2.C and in the report in its entirety. At Bjarkarhlíð there is a police officer who advises on the course of a case within the justice system. A lawyer also works at the Women's Shelter to advise the shelter's clients and assist in the handling of criminal cases. Under Icelandic law, only interpreters, child protection representatives and the rights protection officers of disabled persons are allowed to be present at police questioning. The role of rights protection officers of disabled

persons is to provide them with support and assist them in seeking redress as appropriate.

I. Measures of protection available during investigation and judicial proceedings

Under the Act on Criminal Procedure, the prosecuting authority must ensure that victims are notified of the status and outcome of cases when a complaint has been dismissed or the investigation of a case has ceased, when a case has been discontinued due to lack of evidence and a decision taken against prosecution in a case. The victim must also be informed of his/her right to request the grounds for such decisions and right to appeal the decision to the Director of Public Prosecution. The victim must also be notified when an indictment has been issued in a case; a legal advisor safeguards the victim's interests in court and can therefore inform him/her of the court's conclusion or the outcome of the case in other respects. According to the instructions of the Director of Public Prosecution to prosecutors, No. 1/2020, prosecutors shall ensure that the victim and legal advisor are informed if the accused is remanded in custody and when he/she is released from custody, in a case concerning a violation of the sexual offences and violent offences chapters of the GPC, or when the circumstances of the case are such that it must be considered important for the victim to be informed of the above. The Director of Public Prosecution also notifies the victim and his/her legal advisor of the appeal of an acquittal and other judgments of which the victim would otherwise be unaware.

Victims with disabilities also have the right to be supported and assisted by a rights protection officer for the disabled in the handling of criminal cases. The police shall also obtain an interpreter if the victim does not understand and speak Icelandic sufficiently well, cf. the discussion of interpreters in Section 4.A.

A judge may also, at the request of the prosecutor or a witness (victim), decide that the accused should be removed from the courtroom while the victim testifies if, in the judge's opinion, the presence of the accused could be particularly intimidating for the witness and affect his/her testimony.

During the investigation of a case, the victim will be questioned in the investigation stage before the court if the investigation concerns the sexual offences chapter of the GPC and the victim has not reached the age of 15 when investigation of the case begins. In Iceland, such interrogations

are taken at the Barnahus, where specialists in such questioning of children work.

J. Free legal aid

Remuneration to the victim's legal advisor is paid from the National Treasury as provided for in the Act on Criminal Procedure. The Act on Civil Procedure provides for a person to bring civil suit to receive legal aid to cover court costs if certain conditions are satisfied. The Women's Shelter and Bjarkarhlíð also offer legal advice for victims of violence without charge.

7. Migration and asylum/immigrants

A. Autonomous residence permits

a) Relationship breakdown as a result of difficult circumstances, cf. the first paragraph of Art. 59.

Under subparagraph a of the ninth paragraph of Art. 70 of the Act on Foreign Nationals, No. 80/2016, a foreign national who has held a residence permit on the basis of marriage or cohabitation may obtain a residence permit on the basis of special connections with Iceland under Art. 78 of the Act, if the conditions of the first and second paragraph of Art. 55 (on support etc.) are satisfied and if the marriage or cohabitation has been terminated because the foreign national or his/her child has been abused or otherwise subjected to violence by a partner and this has been reported to the police or child protection authorities or there is other evidence that this is the case.

Other factors may also be relevant, such as length of the marriage or cohabitation. Although the evidentiary requirements made of the applicant are not too strict regarding the reasons for the termination of the relationship, the person concerned must demonstrate the abuse or violence as much as possible.

The idea behind this authorisation is in particular to avoid situations where the person concerned feels compelled to remain in a marriage or cohabitation in order to retain his/her residence permit if the person in question or his/her children are subjected to abuse or violence by their partner.

b) Expulsion of the reference person, cf. the second paragraph of Art. 59

Under Art. 78 of the Act on Foreign Nationals, a foreign national may be granted a residence permit on the basis of the person's special connections with Iceland, provided that further conditions are met (the first and second paragraphs of Art. 55 of the Act on Foreign Nationals), if he/she is older than 18 years and is not covered by other provisions on residence permits or does not meet their conditions. A comprehensive assessment of the applicant's connections with Iceland must be carried out. Thus, foreign

nationals can apply for an independent permit regardless of the rights linked to the person to be deported.

c) Victim's personal situation, cf. subparagraph a of the third paragraph of Art. 59

Under subparagraph c of the ninth paragraph of Art. 70 of the Act on Foreign Nationals, No. 80/2016, a foreign national who has held a residence permit on the basis of marriage or cohabitation may obtain a residence permit on the basis of special connections with Iceland under Art. 78 of the Act if the conditions of the first and second paragraph of Art. 55 (on support etc.) are satisfied and, for example, the foreign national shows that, due to social or cultural circumstances in his home country, it can be difficult for him/her to return to that country due following a divorce or termination of cohabitation.

d) Co-operation with the police, cf. subparagraph b of the third paragraph of Art. 59

The only authorisation in the Act on Foreign Nationals that explicitly deals with co-operation with the authorities in the investigation and handling of criminal cases is subparagraph b of the first paragraph of Art. 76, concerning residence permits for victims of human trafficking. However, this could be covered by Art. 79 on residence permits granted on the basis of a legitimate and specific purpose. According to the last-mentioned provision, a foreign national may be granted a residence permit on the basis of a lawful and specific purpose, provided that the conditions concerning support etc. in the first and second paragraphs of Art. 55 of the Act on Foreign Nationals are met, if he/she is older than 18 years and is not covered by other provisions on residence permits or does not meet their conditions. Such a residence permit may, however, only be granted for one year at a time. The permit can be renewed if the purpose of the stay remains unchanged.

e) Victims of forced marriages held abroad against their will, cf. the fourth paragraph of Art. 59

A sham marriage or cohabitation, i.e. marriage or cohabitation established for purposes other than to create a real marital relationship, is a criminal offence and does not confer the right to a residence permit in Iceland.

A residence permit is also refused if the establishment of a marriage or cohabitation violates Icelandic law and basic principles or public order, e.g. if the one or both partners were children when married or if one or both of them were not present at the ceremony.

The reasons why the above cases cannot serve as the basis for a residence permit is primarily to protect those who are at risk of coercion or abuse of any kind and to prevent forced marriages.

Victims of such acts may, however, be entitled to a residence permit on the basis of special connections with Iceland under Art. 78 of Act No. 80/2016, especially if the person in question has held a residence permit and there are good reasons to recommend this, cf. the ninth paragraph of Art. 70 of the Act.

If a foreign national residing in Iceland can demonstrate a strong need for protection, he/she may be granted a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, but not unless it has been determined in a substantive process that the person in question does not fulfil the conditions for international protection as provided for in Articles 37 and 39 of the Act, cf. the first paragraph of Art. 74 of the Act.

In 2019-2020, a total of seven residence permits were granted to women for the reasons listed in subparagraphs a-e.

B. Gender based violence as a form of persecution for asylum claims

1) Under the first paragraph of Art. 37 of the Act on Foreign Nationals, which reflects the content of the United Nations Convention on Refugees, a person who is persecuted in his/her home country due to race, religion, ethnicity, membership of a particular social group or political views is entitled to international protection as a refugee in Iceland. Art. 38 of the Act states that persecution can take the form of mental, physical or sexual violence; legislation and actions by the administration, police and the courts that involve essentially discrimination because of how they are implemented; and prosecution or punishment that is excessive or discriminates against individuals on unreasonable grounds. Discrimination does not necessarily amount to persecution, but if it has significant harmful consequences, this can be the case. In addition, treatment that does not in itself amount to persecution (e.g. various forms of discrimination) when combined with other adversity (e.g. poor security in the home country) can create a legitimate claim to international protection as a refugee.

The explanatory notes to the third paragraph of Art. 38 also point out that women who have suffered or fear sexual violence, genital mutilation and the like may fall under a special social group and therefore be entitled to international protection on that basis.

2) In interpreting the provisions of Icelandic law and the Refugee Convention, regard is had for guidelines of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1952 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees". All applications are evaluated on an individual basis and with consideration for the status of the applicant.

3) The Directorate of Immigration's information system does not systematically record the reasons why an individual is granted international protection, only that the protection has been granted. The reasons for the protection granted, and the relevant provisions of the Act on Foreign Nationals and the Refugee Convention, are stated in the agency's written decision. As a result, it is not possible to provide statistical data on the relationship between gender-based violence and applications for international protection.

C. Gender-sensitive procedures

Under Art. 25 of the Act on Foreign Nationals, an analysis shall be made of the special needs and status of applicants for international protection when the procedure begins, to assess whether the person in question is in a particularly vulnerable position, cf. Point 6 of Art. 3. The aim is to ensure assistance accords with an applicant's special needs and status during the procedure. This assessment may also be made later in the procedure if necessary. The police who receive applications for international protection have also emphasised to women who apply for protection that they need not endure violence or abuse and how they can obtain assistance in Iceland, such as by seeking advice or reporting to the police or other authorities.

In addition, all women and girls who come here on the basis of a family reunification of refugees are interviewed, the rights of women in Iceland are explained and they receive instructions on where they can seek help if they are subject to violence.

Women can be considered a social group according to the UN Refugee Convention, and gender can therefore affect the outcome concerning international protection. The protocols provide for an assessment of each individual's situation. Special training is provided in interview techniques and the effects, for instance, of gender-based violence on the handling of cases and outcome. It is largely based on the EASO training module.

D. Non-refoulement

A person who is in danger of capital punishment, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment is considered a refugee according to the second paragraph of Art. 37 of the Act on Foreign Nationals. The person in question would therefore receive a residence permit on that basis. Under Art. 42 of the Act on Foreign Nationals, a foreign national or a stateless person cannot be sent to an area where he/she has reason to fear persecution, cf. Articles 37 and 38, or is, due to circumstances similar to those of the refugee concept, in imminent danger of death or being subjected to inhumane or degrading treatment. Furthermore, a foreign national may not be sent to an area where it is not guaranteed that he/she will not be transferred on to such a dangerous area. The same applies to those individuals who are excluded from the legal status of refugees under Art. 40.

E. Other measures taken in relation to the protection of migrant women victims and women asylum seekers in the area of immigration and refugee law

In general, it can be pointed out that the reception system for applicants for international protection is structured in such a way as to place as many applicants for international protection as possible under the auspices of municipalities in apartments and not in a reception centre. Special emphasis is placed on having families, women and children receive these services; in such cases employees of local authorities, social workers, take care of and assist them. Emphasis is placed on informing applicants for international protection of their rights, not only towards against the authorities but also regarding violence and abuse by others, and how to seek help. This system in fact utilises the services and expertise that is available to other residents for the benefit of those who apply for international protection, e.g. connections with child protection committees or prevention work and responses to domestic violence.

The Parliamentary Resolution on an Action Plan for Immigration for 2016-2019 included a special action dealing with support for women who had experienced domestic violence. In the coming autumn session, a new proposal will be submitted for a Parliamentary Resolution on an Action Plan for Immigration for 2021-2024. This will provide for various projects

aimed at promoting a society in which everyone can be an active participant, regardless of nationality or origin.

The *Plan for 2019-2022 on Measures Against Violence and its Consequences* places special emphasis on vulnerable groups, including immigrants. It is also worth mentioning that the Ministry of Social Affairs has made an agreement with the Women's Shelter and the Icelandic Human Rights Office on the project *Know Your Rights, Knowledge Is Power*, which is intended to increase education on services and legal remedies to benefit women of foreign origin in Iceland who have been victims of domestic violence.

There is also the pamphlet *Your Rights - Important Information for Immigrants*, which is discussed in Section 4.A. To this it should be added that, in order to ensure better services for immigrants in Iceland, New In Iceland, a special advisory centre for immigrants, opened on 11 February 2021. This is a pilot project, providing advice by phone, online chat or e-mail, among other things, in connection with cases concerning domestic violence.

Appendix

Istanbul convention	Relevant legislation in Iceland
Art. 4 - Fundamental rights, equality and non- discrimination	Art. 65 of the Constitution of Iceland no. 33/1944
Art. 29 - Civil lawsuits and remedies	Art. 37 of the Child Protection Act. no. 80/2002, Art. 78 of the Act on Legal Execution no. 90/1989, Point 4 of Art. 28 of the Act in Respect of Marriage, No. 31/1993, Act on the Attorney General, No. 51/1985
Art. 30 - Compensation from perpetrators and state compensation	Chapter XXVI of the Act on Criminal Procedure, No. 88/2008. Act on the Payment of Compensation by the Treasury to Crime Victims, No. 69/1995.
Art. 31 - Custody and visitation rights of children	Art. 34, par. 2 and Art. 47 of the Children's Act, No. 76/2003.
Art. 32 - Civil consequences of forced marriages	Art. 28. par. 1., point 4. of the Act in Respect of Marriage no. 31/1993 and Art. 225, par. 2 of the General Penal Code, no. 19/1940.
Art. 33 - Psychological violence	Art. 218.b. par. 2 and art. 233. b. of the General Penal Code, no. 19/1940.
Art. 34 - Stalking	Art. 232. a. of the General Penal Code, no. 19/1940. Took effect in February 2021.
Art. 35 - Physical violence	Art. 217., 218. and 218. gr. b. of the General Penal Code nr. 19/1940.
Art. 36 -Sexual Violence, including rape	Art. 194 of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940.

Art. 37 - Forced Marriage	Art. 225. par. 2 of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940.
Art. 38 - Female genital mutilation	Art. 218. a. of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940.
Art. 39 - Forced abortion and forced sterilation	Act on termination of pregnancy no. 43/2019 and act on sterilation no. 35/2019
Art. 40 - Sexual harassment	Art. 199 of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940.
Art. 41 - Aiding or abetting	Chapter III., esp. art. 22 of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940.
Art. 42. - Unacceptable justification for crime	No justification for crime in Icelandic legislation.
Art. 44. - Jurisdiction	Art. 5. par. 3 and art. 6 of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940.
Art. 46. - Aggravating circumstances	Chapter VIII. of the General Penal Code no. 19/1940, in particular art. 70, but also art. 195, 205 and 208 of the GPC and art. 98 and 99. of the Child Protection Act no. 80/2002.