



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

Distr.: General  
4 December 2007

Original: English

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**Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under  
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms  
of Discrimination against Women**

**Sixth periodic report of States parties**

**Iceland\***

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\* The sixth periodic report of Iceland was received by the Secretariat on 4 December 2007. The report is being issued without formal editing.

For the combined initial and second periodic report submitted by the Government of Iceland, see CEDAW/C/ICE/1-2, which was considered by the Committee at its fifteenth session. For the combined third and fourth periodic report, see CEDAW/C/ICE/3-4, which was considered by the Committee at its twenty-sixth session. For the fifth periodic report, see CEDAW/C/ICE/5.

## **Part I**

### **Article 1**

Reference is made to the previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

### **Article 2**

#### **Subparagraphs a) and b)**

Legislation on Gender Equality.

The principle of equality is specifically addressed in a provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland (see Article 65 of the Constitution, No. 33/1944, *cf.* the Constitutional Law Act, No. 97/1995), stating that men and women are to have equal rights in every respect. Iceland has also had a special statute intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976. The current Gender Equality Act dates from 2000; reference is made to the discussion of that act in the Government of Iceland's last report.

The Minister of Social Affairs appointed a committee in June 2006 to review the contents of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000. The appointment marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the first Gender Equality Act by the Althingi. The committee's leeway in reviewing the act was broad, and it was emphasised that it should consult the organisations of the social partners, the Icelandic Women's Rights Society and other parties concerned with gender equality. The committee completed its work early in 2007, submitting a proposal for draft legislation on a new act designed to do more towards securing gender equality. The proposal includes certain amendments aimed at greater efficiency and more effective remedies. The proposal was presented on the homepage of the Ministry of Social Affairs for public comment. The Minister of Social Affairs will submit a bill to a new Act on Gender Equality to the Parliament in October 2007.

Further reference should be made to the previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

#### **Subparagraph c)**

Gender Equality Complaints Committee.

The Gender Equality Complaints Committee received seventeen cases in 2003. Three were found to constitute violations of the Gender Equality Act; the committee came to the conclusion that ten did not. Two cases were retracted and two were dismissed. One of the cases involving a violation of the Gender Equality Act related to a job appointment, the second involved advertisements and the third concerned wage discrimination. Fifteen cases were referred to the committee in 2004. In four of them, it was found that violations of the act had taken place; one of these involved wage discrimination, two involved dismissals and the fourth involved a job appointment. Two cases were rejected by the committee and one was referred to

the committee handling complaints regarding maternity, paternity leave and parental leave. In eight cases, no violation of the Gender Equality Act was found to have taken place. The committee received ten cases in 2005. In one, involving a job appointment, it was considered that a violation of the act had taken place. In seven cases no such violation was found to have taken place, though in one case a member of the committee submitted a dissenting opinion stating that the act had been violated. The committee rejected two cases. Eleven cases were referred to the committee in 2006. Violations were found to have taken place in three of them, one involving a job appointment, one the payment of maternity/paternity leave and one gender-related wage discrimination. No violations were found to have taken place in eight cases.

### *National Courts.*

During the period from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2006, the Supreme Court delivered judgement in four cases dealing with gender equality. Two of them involved job appointments, one involved wage discrimination and the fourth involved the contents of an employment contract.

Supreme Court Case No. 330/2003 involved the engagement of a theatre director at L. One woman, H, was among the applicants for the position and considered she had suffered discrimination on the grounds of her gender when the appointment was made. She brought a complaint concerning the appointment to the Gender Equality Complaints Committee, which found that L had violated the first paragraph of Article 24 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000, when it appointed a man to the position. The Centre for Gender Equality brought a case before the courts under the authorisation in the fifth paragraph of Article 3 of the Act No. 96/2000; this is the only occasion on which the centre has exercised this authorisation since the Act was passed in 2000. The Supreme Court ruled that it was a general principle in labour law that the employer was free in appointing employees; nevertheless, when a man and a woman applied for the same position, there were curbs on this freedom resulting from the provisions of the Gender Equality Act. Although H had completed longer courses of university study than had the man who was appointed to the position, the Court did not consider it had been demonstrated that this was likely to be of direct value to the applicant in a way that made her equally competent, or more competent, to direct a theatre. On the basis of the application materials and interviews, L's theatre council had concluded that the educational qualifications and experience of the man who was appointed were almost entirely related to dramatic art, in addition to which, considerations of the theatre's artistic policy, finances and administration placed him in a better position than H when it came to a decision on the appointment. The Court did not consider that H had demonstrated that this assessment had been based on non-relevant considerations, and therefore did not accept that discrimination had been practised against her on the grounds of her gender.

Supreme Court Case No. 39/2004 involved a job appointment. The Court found that the principal appellant, N, had violated the first paragraph of Article 24 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000, when the defendant, E, had been passed over when an appointment was made to a certain position. E had worked as a shift manager on one of N's four shifts. Three years after

E's engagement, N changed managing director, and the new managing director decided to advertise four duty-officers' positions and to abolish the positions of shift managers. E applied for one of these positions. At a meeting with the managing director, E was informed that she was to leave the position of shift manager and work in future as an ordinary security guard. Other shift managers received the positions as duty officers in which they had, in fact, served; all of them were men. E was summoned to another meeting with N's managing director and was informed that her former subordinate, a man, was to be a duty officer. E did not accept this arrangement, and the meeting ended with E's resigning from N. The Court found, in terms of the facts of the case, that E had, in fact, suffered financial loss, and with reference to Article 24 (*cf.* Article 28) of the Gender Equality Act, it considered it sufficiently demonstrated that this had resulted from the way in which the appointment in question had been made. Thus, N was sentenced to pay compensation as assessed by the Court.

In Supreme Court Case No. 258/2004, which involved a case of alleged wage discrimination, the Court came to the conclusion that the jobs done by B and the man with whom she compared herself were so closely comparable in terms of content and outward appearance that she had been the victim of discrimination, in the sense of the Gender Equality Act, practised by A. The Court ruled that A would have to demonstrate that the difference in their wages was not due to their gender. The Court did not consider that A had presented sufficiently cogent arguments in support of the view that, when their positions were examined in the context of A's administrative system, market considerations could explain such a difference in their wage terms. A did not succeed in demonstrating the existence of objective and relevant reasons for the difference in wage terms, and reference to different collective agreements could not justify discrimination in the terms of employment of women and men in the sense of the Gender Equality Act. Thus, B's claim was accepted.

In Supreme Court Case No. 350/2004, A demanded compensation for not having been engaged in a position that had been advertised by G. She considered that the engagement of a man, rather than her, to the position constituted a violation of her rights under the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000. The Court upheld the district court's judgement, which was that A had not presented convincing arguments for the assertion that she had been the victim of discrimination in the appointment to this position.

#### **Subparagraphs d)–g)**

The Icelandic Government has taken systematic steps to introduce and promote gender equality in all areas of society (*cf.* Article 1 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000.) All individuals are to have equal possibilities to benefit from their own efforts and develop their abilities, independent of their gender.

Parliament has passed three four-year action plans on measures to implement gender equality since 1992. During the winter 2003-2004, the Minister of Social Affairs submitted a proposal to Parliament on a new action plan which was accepted in spring 2004. This plan will expire in

May 2008. Further reference should be made to the discussion of Article 3 of the Convention below.

### Article 3

Article 65 of the Constitution and the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000, prohibit all discrimination on the basis of gender (*cf.* also the Regulation No. 47/2003). Furthermore, gender equality is further emphasised in the Executive Procedure Act, No. 37/1993, which states the basic principle that when handling a case, government authorities are to ensure consistency and equality in the legal context. It is specifically stated that when resolving cases, it is prohibited to discriminate between parties on the basis of a position based on their gender. The executive includes the social services, the health system, the social security system and the educational system, amongst others.

Action programme on gender equality.

As stated in earlier reports from the Icelandic Government, Parliament has passed three four-year action plans on measures to implement gender equality since 1992. During the winter 2003-2004, the Minister of Social Affairs submitted a proposal to Parliament on a new action plan which was accepted in spring 2004, this will run until May 2008. As before, gender mainstreaming in the administrative structure is the guiding principle. Furthermore, the current plan addresses the problem of gender-based wage discrimination as one of its main issues. While progress has undeniably been made in this area, it is clear that there is still a way to go. Emphasis will be put on the importance of awareness-raising regarding equality issues; the prerequisite for results in this area is that those involved in planning and policymaking have a knowledge of the issues involved. Emphasis is also placed on having data analysed by gender: this is the prerequisite for being able to monitor progress in this area.

The action plan includes the following tasks.

I. Tasks to be tackled by the Government.

Areas of strategic importance in gender-equality issues in the years ahead will be as follows:

1. Education and awareness-raising on equality issues.
2. Gender equality on the labour market.
3. Equality schedules at the ministries.
4. Definition of the role of the equality coordinators at the ministries.
5. Follow-up and monitoring of the plan of action.

## II. Tasks to be tackled by the ministries.

### *A. Tasks for all ministries.*

1. Equal gender representation in committees, councils and boards.
2. Awareness-raising programmes for the directors and staff of the ministries.
3. Gender equality schedules and gender equality committees in the ministries.
4. Appointment of gender equality officers in all the bodies administered by the ministries.
5. A guarantee that gender equality will be observed in job appointments.
6. The position of women in the ministries and the bodies they administer.

In addition, individual ministries are responsible for the following tasks and areas of concern:

### *B. The Prime Minister's Office.*

7. Issue of a checklist for use in policy-making projects.

### *C. Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.*

8. Trafficking in human beings.
9. Protection of witnesses and victims in criminal cases.
10. The conditions for women in the police force.

### *D. Ministry of Social Affairs.*

11. Overall direction of gender mainstreaming.
12. Commenting on the gender-equality aspects of government legislative bills.
13. Committees and counsels at the local government level.
14. The effect of the Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave on gender equality.
15. Maternity/paternity leave and the business sector.
16. Equality in labour-exchange activities.
17. Implementation schedules regarding wage equality.
18. The project '*Karlar til ábyrgðar*' ("Male Responsibility"), designed to raise men's awareness of their responsibilities in domestic violence.
19. Vocational training and retraining.
20. Gender-based wage discrimination.
21. Wage structure and gender-based wage discrimination.

### *E. Ministry of Finance.*

22. Survey of the effects of the state wage system on the wage differential between women and men.
23. Survey of the social security system.

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*F. Statistics Iceland.*

24. Women and men as participants in the business sector.

*G. Ministry of Health and Social Security.*

25. Project management on women's health.

26. The effects of increasing access to pornography on young people.

27. Health surveys.

28. Women and men as clients of the health care services.

29. Assessment of the quality of the health services and the results achieved.

30. Education and awareness-raising for prospective fathers.

31. Risk-prone conduct by men.

32. A special campaign against drug abuse and smoking.

33. Gender equality and public health.

*H. Ministry of Industry and Commerce.*

34. Women and business management.

35. Support for women running their own businesses.

36. Women in their own businesses.

*I. Ministry of Agriculture.*

37. Living agriculture – 'Gullið heima,' a campaign to stimulate the use of regional resources.

*J. Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.*

38. Women in the sciences.

39. Equality and the arts.

40. Education on equality issues in teacher training courses.

41. Education on equality issues in the schools.

42. Grants from the kindergarten, junior school and senior school development funds for gender-equality awareness raising.

43. Gender equality in the sports movement.

44. Women and the media.

*K. Ministry of Transport and Communications.*

45. Women's jobs on ships.

*L. Ministry of Fisheries.*

46. Survey of women's jobs in the largest fisheries enterprises in Iceland.

47. Survey of women's jobs in smaller fisheries enterprises (family concerns) in Iceland.

*M. Ministry for the Environment.*

48. Women and the 'Local Agenda 21' environmental campaign.

*N. Ministry for Foreign Affairs.*

49. Production of proposals to the minister on a special programme of action and measures on compliance with gender-equality considerations in international functions.

50. Gender-equality work by representatives of UNIFEM in countries where internationally-backed reconstruction work is in progress.

Many of these projects have been put into practice according to the report on gender equality issues and trends presented by the Minister of Social Affairs to the Althingi at the beginning of 2007. That report gave an account of the position of the projects in the government's action plan on measures to implement gender equality. For example, the Prime Minister's Office has issued a checklist for use in assessing whether draft legislation and public policymaking are compatible with gender equality considerations (see project No. 7). A checklist of this type is a useful tool for ensuring compliance with the considerations, and was one of the methods proposed by a committee of women in public policymaking to be available to those involved in this area. The aim of the project is to find a way of answering questions regarding gender equality before work on policymaking begins. The checklist consists of four components, with questions and explanations. When those involved in policymaking of any type have gone over the list, it is assumed that a reasonably clear picture of gender equality situation in the relevant area will have emerged. In addition to the checklist, a self-assessment system has been established as a further aid to those involved in policymaking; this conforms with gender equality considerations. The gender equality checklist is available both in the form of a booklet and in a computerised version at the Prime Minister's Office's website.

One of the government's aims is to achieve as even a balance as possible between the sexes in public committees, councils and governing bodies. In 2005, the proportion of women in public committees and councils was 32%, against 68% for men; nevertheless, some ministries had managed to reduce the gap appreciably: the Ministry of Social Affairs had gone furthest in this direction, with 43% women and 57% men in its committees and councils in 2005. If attention is focussed solely on appointments to committees and councils made in 2005, it appears that the proportions were 37% women and 63% men. Further discussion of the ratios between the sexes in public committees, councils and governing bodies is to be found in the section dealing with Article 7, subparagraphs b) and c) in this report; this also contains material on the outcomes of other government projects in the field of gender equality, as appropriate.



*Collaboration with other countries to promote gender equality.*

Iceland took the initiative on a joint Nordic project entitled 'Yardsticks for Measuring Wage Equality,' (*Mælistikur á launajafnrétti*) which was launched in 2004. The main aim of the project is to make Nordic statistics more transparent so that they will give a clearer picture of the causes of gender-based wage differentials and will be comparable from one country to another. It is also envisaged that data will be collected on the best practices in reducing gender-based wage differentials. More detailed information on this is presented in the discussion of item *d* of paragraph 1 of Article 11 in this report.

Iceland participates in a number of Nordic gender equality projects. Most of these are carried out in connection with the Nordic Council of Ministers, under which a special ministerial committee, MR-JÄM, and a special officials' committee, ÄK-JÄM, deal with gender equality issues.

Iceland has participated in the gender equality programmes of the European Union on grounds of the Agreement on the European Economic Area. The Centre for Gender Equality (*Jafnréttisstofa*) has both participated in and directed projects under the EU's gender equality programme. These include the projects *Culture, Custom and Caring; Sports, Media and Stereotypes; Modern men in an Enlarged Europe; Modern men in an Enlarged Europe II: Family-friendly Policies* and *Focus: Fostering, caring, masculinities*. Most of these are cooperative projects involving several European countries, in which the Government of Iceland has been one of the participants; further descriptions of the projects will be given in the appropriate contexts in this report. Furthermore, under the Agreement on the European Economic Area, the Icelandic Government has had representatives on committees active in gender equality matters.

The Government of Iceland has expanded its support of UNIFEM by a factor of ten during the past two years, and intends to increase it still further. Iceland also intends to increase its contributions to UNICEF during the coming years. For some time now, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has provided funding for one representative from UNIFEM to attend to gender equality work in Kosovo, where an international restructuring programme is in progress. Iceland's contribution has consisted of giving legal assistance with the introduction of gender equality considerations into legislation. Attempts have also been made to assist with the formation of non-governmental organisations that aim at the professional assessment of legislation and its application. Furthermore, much emphasis has been placed on training and awareness-raising in gender equality issues in Kosovo, e.g. for the municipal authorities. The aim of all this was to establish gender equality awareness in the government structure of the states involved. The project ended at the beginning of 2006. An Icelandic peacekeeping officer had been working for UNIFEM in Kosovo since 2000. As there had been great satisfaction concerning the project, both in Kosovo and at UNIFEM and among those who worked under Icelandic guidance for UNIFEM in Kosovo, it was decided to continue to support the work of UNIFEM in the Balkans. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs will give support for three representatives (instead of only one, as was the case) to work with UNIFEM

until spring 2008. In spring 2006 an Icelandic peacekeeping officer went to work for UNIFEM in Belgrade in Serbia, where the organisation runs programmes dealing with women, democracy and human rights. This programme involves reconstruction and assistance on the formulation of legislation to take account of gender equality, in addition to training and awareness-raising on gender equality issues, e.g. among the municipal authorities. The aim of the project is the same as that of the Kosovo project: to introduce gender equality considerations into the governmental structure of the state involved.

Iceland was elected to the UN Commission on the Status of Women in spring 2004, formally taking a seat on the commission in 2005.

#### **Article 4**

The Gender Equality Act prohibits all types of discrimination on the basis of gender, either direct or indirect. However, special temporary measures taken to improve the status of women or men, for the purpose of ensuring equality and the equal status of women and men, are not to be considered violations of the Act. Furthermore, the Act prohibits employers to advertise, or publish an advertisement for, a vacant position indicating that a woman or a man is preferred over the other as an employee. This provision does not apply if the aim of the advertiser is to promote a more equal distribution of women and men within an occupational sector, in which case this is to be stated in the advertisement. The same rule applies if there are legitimate reasons for advertising either for a woman or a man.

Special measures aimed at accelerating gender equality.

Among special measures aimed at accelerating gender equality, the following can be mentioned:

The Gender Equality Centre has offered courses for companies and institutions in which gender equality issues are discussed in a broad context. Attention is given to the current Gender Equality Act, the making of action plans on measures to implement gender equality and to methodology for introducing gender equality considerations. These courses take the form of lectures and practical assignments.

In an effort to reduce the influence of gender on choice of career so as to avoid gender divisions on the labour market in the future, the Ministry of Social Affairs opened a special homepage in autumn 2006 under the title “Equal Futures for Boys and Girls” (<http://jafnretti.felagsmalaraduneyti.is>). The aim is to make it easier for young people to choose courses of study and careers that are in line with their actual fields of interest rather than traditional gender roles. See further discussion under article 11, para. 1, subpara. a, b and c).

In autumn 2004, the Minister of Commerce and Industry appointed a committee intended to make proposals on introducing greater opportunities for women to play a part in the management of companies. This committee included representatives of the governing parties,

the Businesswomen's Association and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, and the chairman was the manager of the Iceland Chamber of Commerce. The committee's task was to make proposals on ways of increasing the number of women in the senior management of Icelandic companies, and to state whether government intervention was necessary for this purpose. The committee was expected to examine whether other states had taken measures for this purpose, and to compare the position of women in the business sector in Iceland and in its neighbouring countries, the aim being to increase the number of women in the management of companies in Iceland. The committee completed its work in autumn 2005 and submitted a report to the minister. Its proposals included the arousal of discussion and awareness in this area, including bringing to the attention of men in influential positions the importance of having both sexes represented in company boards and the regular publication of data on the number of women in company boards. Last but not least, the committee pointed out that it was vital for women to increase their contacts.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the University of Bifröst, the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, the Gender Equality Centre, the Gender Equality Council and the Businesswomen's Association collaborated on the development of a project on the evaluation of the standing of gender equality in the 100 largest companies in Iceland and the annual publication of "gender equality marks". These marks were published for the first time in 2006, covering the year 2005. This is a three-year project, and marks will be published again in 2007 and 2008. Further reference should be made to the discussion on Article 11, para. 1, subparagraphs a), b) and c).

Further reference should be made to the previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

## Article 5

### *Maternity/paternity leave.*

A large step in the direction of equality was taken when fathers' right to paternity leave was expanded to the same level as mothers' under the current Maternity/ Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act No. 95/2000. About 90% of fathers now avail themselves of their entitlement to 97 days of paternity leave. In this way, fathers of newborn children become acquainted with, and involved in, the care of their infant children, which used to be mainly a women's domain. Participation by both sexes in the labour market in Iceland is at a very high level, and it is therefore important that parents should be able to divide responsibility for their children between themselves and in that way promote true equality, not only in the workplace but also on the home front and in society in general. Further discussion of the arrangements regarding maternity/ paternity leave follows under the section of this report dealing with Article 11 of the Convention. Reference should also be made to the Fifth Report submitted by the Government of Iceland.

*Education programme.*

The Government of Iceland will continue to emphasise the importance of having schools take measures to ensure equality between boys and girls, inform pupils about the standing of the sexes and avoid them from becoming ensnared in the traditional division of labour between the sexes. It is important that the educational system should not maintain the gender divisions on the labour market and, consequently, gender-based wage differentials. When the general curricula of the junior and senior schools have been revised, gender equality considerations have been born in mind, and this policy will be continued.

Further reference should be made to the previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

**Article 6**

Trafficking in human beings.

The Icelandic Government has continued its emphasis on taking preventive measures against trafficking and prostitution.

In November 2004, the Minister of Justice appointed a working group to examine the experience gained of the various types of legislation in force in Europe against prostitution, the pornography industry and trafficking in human beings. In particular, the group was commissioned to examine the effects of this legislation in Sweden, where purchasing the service of prostitutes is a criminal offence, and to evaluate the pros and cons of this legislation. The group submitted its findings to the minister, and its report was published in February 2006.

The Minister of Justice presented a bill to the Althingi in February 2006, proposing amendments to the Police Act, which were aimed in part at fighting organized crime, including trafficking in human beings (an issue explicitly mentioned by the Minister when presenting the Bill in the Althingi). The bill was passed as law on 2 June 2006.

As was stated in the last report, a special punitive provision had earlier been introduced into the General Penal Code, as Article 227 *a*, by the Act No. 40/2003. The explanatory notes accompanying the bill that became the Act No. 40/2003 stated that in the light of international agreements, it was proposed to enact a special provision in the penal code criminalising trafficking in human beings. Although the actions described in the bill were already criminal, the notes stated that the bill was intended to highlight these offences and to increase the punitive provisions to deal with them, as the offences were directed against the most sacrosanct of personal rights, including freedom.

It should be mentioned in this connection that the provision of the second paragraph of Article 226 of the General Penal Code can apply to trafficking in human beings when its conditions are met regarding deprivation of freedom for a long period of time, or of deprivation of freedom for motives of profit. The punitive provisions of this provision are much broader than those of Article 227 *a*, under the former, imprisonment of not less than 1 year, and up to 16 years, is prescribed.

During the period 1 April 2003 to 30 March 2006, 260 work permits were issued to strip-tease dancers, the number rising across the period. The women involved came from 17 countries. Most were from Romania (84), the Czech Republic (33), Russia (30) and Estonia (24). Other countries of origin included Slovakia (24), Latvia (14), Ukraine (13) and Hungary (10). It should be mentioned that the Government has no information about the numbers of those who may have come from countries within the European Economic Area, since they are not required to apply for special work permits in order to work in Iceland.

Representatives of the Government of Iceland have continued to participate in Nordic cooperative efforts directed at preventing trafficking in human beings. Amongst other things, representatives of the Ministry of Justice have worked in the Nordic-Baltic Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Nordic countries as well as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had representatives in the group which was designed to promote close collaboration between these countries on matters concerning trafficking in human beings. The group is no longer active but a new group, Council of the Baltic Sea States, has been established and it continues the work. Russia, Poland and Germany also have representatives in that group.

#### Prostitution.

In April 2006, the Minister of Justice submitted a bill to the Parliament proposing amendments to several provisions on Sexual Offences in the General Penal Code, including the provisions on prostitution. The bill had previously been publicised on the Ministry's web-site in February 2006. The bill was not discussed, but the minister resubmitted it to the Althingi in its 2006-2007 sitting. It became law on 27 March 2007 as the Act No. 61/2007 amending the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940 (sexual offences).

With the passing of this act, engaging in prostitution as a means of supporting oneself is no longer a criminal offence. The decriminalisation of prostitution is based on the view that prostitution is always resorted to as a result of dire need and that it is consequently more sensible to offer those who sell themselves as prostitutes social, medical and financial assistance instead of punishing them. The aim is to help individuals who are the victims of difficult circumstances instead of punishing them. Thus, they no longer need to fear prosecution if they decide to bring charges for violent treatment or coercion that they have suffered, and will be more likely to give evidence against procurers and more willing to seek assistance for themselves, both from the social services and the health services.

The Act No. 61/2007 enshrined in law new provisions making it punishable to offer, arrange or request sexual relations with another person in return for payment if this is done by means of a public advertisement. The aim of this is to prevent prostitution from becoming more visible following the abolition of provisions making it a criminal offence to support oneself by prostitution. The provisions of the General Penal Code regarding offences against people's sense of decency could serve the same purpose in the case of prostitution practised in the street.

The General Penal Code contains provisions on the criminal liability of those who exploit prostitution practised by others in various ways. Firstly, the act states that it is a criminal offence to base one's economic activity or means of subsistence on prostitution practised by others. Secondly, it is a criminal act to entice, encourage or assist a child under the age of 18 years to engage in prostitution. Thirdly, it is a criminal offence to encourage any person from moving from Iceland or to Iceland in order to engage in prostitution as a means of support. Fourthly, it is a criminal offence to encourage other persons, by enticements, exhortations or acting as an agent, to have sexual intercourse or other sexual relations in return for payment or to derive income from prostitution practised by others, e.g. by renting them premises or in other ways.

The explanatory notes to the bill which became the Act No. 61/2007 present various arguments for and against criminalising the purchase of the services of prostitutes. It is stated that it is necessary to take account of social attitudes and circumstances at any given time. Further studies of prostitution in Iceland and its extent and nature are needed, and also of the best methods of addressing it, before proposing legislative amendments of the type that have been adopted in Sweden, where it has been made a criminal offence to purchase sexual services. The notes state that it would also be a good idea to examine why prostitution features so rarely in cases in the criminal justice system, not least in view of the fact that it is known to be practised in Iceland to some degree. Furthermore, other remedies exist which are probably far more effective in reducing the incidence than making it an offence to purchase the service of prostitutes. In itself, punishment has never proved to be a good method of solving social problems, and if other courses of action are available, then they should rather be followed. The root causes of the problem should be found and measures should be taken to prevent people from indulging in prostitution. Children and young people who are the victims of sexual abuse, neglect or other maltreatment constitute a risk group which experience shows may become involved in prostitution, both as sellers and purchasers. The commercialisation of sex increases the likelihood that persons in such risk groups will start practising prostitution. Thus, it is necessary to make a priority of preventive measures, to try to protect these children and young people, to address the functions of strip-tease clubs and other night spots and to work against the attitudes towards sex which they embody. As stated in the notes it is not unlikely that, with positive and healthy education and information about sex, attitudes in society could be changed, so reducing the demand for prostitution. With reference to the foregoing, it was not proposed in the bill that the purchase of the service of prostitutes should be criminalised. Further discussion of other amendments introduced by the act follow later in this section of the report.

Committee on violence against women.

The Committee on measures to combat violence against women is still working, having been reappointed in 2007 for a period of four years. By a resolution adopted by the Government on 18 October 2005, it was entrusted with the task of discussing measures against violence against children and also to prepare an action plan in connection with domestic violence and sexual violence. This

was done at the instigation of the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs.

The committee worked on an action plan which was approved by the Government at its meeting of 26 September 2006. This plan is intended to run until 2011, and the main task of the committee will be to monitor the plan dealing with domestic violence and sexual violence. In drawing up the plan, attention was given to, amongst other things, a draft action plan on gender-related violence that had been drawn up by a non-governmental organisation and sent to some of the government ministers in April 2005.

The main aim of the action plan is to work against domestic violence and sexual violence which is directed against women and children, and also to improve the care facilities available for those who have suffered such violence or are at risk of doing so. It is divided into two parts. One covers measures against violence in the homes and sexual violence against children; the other covers domestic violence and sexual violence against women. In each part, there are four main guiding principles. The first of these is to increase preventive measures aimed at stimulating public discussion of violence against children and gender-related violence and to encourage a change of public attitudes. Secondly, the aim is to give support to staff of institutions so as to enable them to identify the signs and consequences of violence against children and gender-based violence, and to assist the victims. Thirdly, the aim is to ensure suitable assistance for the victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, and the fourth aim is to strengthen methods designed to provide treatment for the perpetrators in order to break the vicious circle which is often a feature of this violence.

The action plan is wide-ranging, comprising 37 separate measures covering all aspects of the problem that are considered likely to have an affect in reducing violence in the homes of children and sexual violence, including preventive measures, support to employees in public institutions so as to enable them to identify indications of violence, measures to ensure appropriate assistance and, last but not least, to break the vicious circle in which violence often thrives. Each measure, together with the aims involved, is described in detail. The project is administered by the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Social Security and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the Union of Local Authorities in Iceland participates in some of the individual parts.

*Furthermore, the committee has published a small card (of the same size as a credit card) with the telephone numbers of the principal institutions and organisations that offer assistance to victims of sexual abuse. It is intended to be carried in a wallet or pocket, the aim being to give simply accessible and useful information for those in need of it. This was done because victims often take time before making up their minds to seek assistance and frequently are not in a position to find out for themselves where it can be found.*

*The committee has also made a priority of consulting non-governmental organisations and others concerned with these issues; one or two consultative meetings have been held each year, in addition to informal consultations.*

Protection of victims.

Reference should be made to the previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

Training of the police.

Reference should be made to the previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

Domestic violence.

*A bill to amend the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940, was presented to the Althingi at the 132nd legislative session in 2005-2006; this was designed to amend the provisions of the code dealing with domestic violence. The bill was part of the campaign by the Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs against domestic violence, and it was passed on 11 April 2006 as the Act No. 27/2006, amending the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940 (domestic violence). The Minister of Justice decided to concentrate more effort on measures to combat domestic violence in reaction to information he had received on the matter and public discussion that had taken place. In addition, appeals had been received from non-governmental organisations calling for a comprehensive action plan against sexual abuse.*

*The aim of the amendments was to make the legal remedies available in cases of domestic violence more effective. It was considered necessary to have Icelandic legislation reflect more clearly the view of the legislature, which was that offences committed between persons in an intimate relationship are of a special nature. The bill called for the introduction of authorisation in law for heavier punishments in cases where it is considered that the close relationship between perpetrator and victim has led to grosser violations. Furthermore, it was proposed to introduce a new provision in the General Penal Code, Article 233 b, replacing Article 191 of the code and providing for up to two years' imprisonment in cases where a person insults or vilifies his or her spouse or former spouse, child or another person closely related to the perpetrator and the action is seen as constituting gross defamation. The intention behind the enactment of this new provision was to give a clearer embodiment to the provision for punishment that had already existed in the first paragraph of Article 191 of the code. The aim was also to give individuals better protection against offences committed by close related in a marriage or within the family and to give better protection against gross defamation so as to make it more realistic to achieve the procedural and political legal aims that it is normal to apply in this context. Finally, it was proposed that violations of Article 233 b should be liable to public indictment.*

With the passing of the Act No. 61/2007, amending the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments (sexual offences), the provision of Article 205 of the code was abolished; this had provided for the waiving of punishment for certain sexual offences if the persons between whom the intercourse took place continue to live together, enter into a cohabitation or marry. There is no record of this provision ever having been applied in practice in Iceland; it was seen as embodying an outdated attitude towards women. Furthermore, there was thought to be no reason for the legislature to support the maintenance of marriages in



which one party committed acts of violence or abuse towards the other. The repeal of this provision is also seen as being in better conformity with the amendments, described above, that were made to the General Penal Code by the Act No. 27/2006, in which the message is clearly that offences committed between people in a close relationship, e.g. in a marriage or within the family, are viewed more seriously than might otherwise be the case. The procedural rules issued to the police by the National Police Commissioner for the registration of cases of domestic violence, which took effect on 20 October 2005, include definitions of categories of offence; one of these covers sexual offences. Thus, it is clear that a lapse of punishment applying to sexual offences committed towards a person's spouse or partner would be opposed to the views that are now receiving general acceptance both in legislation and in the application of criminal law.

The second part of the Government's action plan of 26 September 2006 to tackle domestic violence and sexual violence addresses measures that the Government intends to take over the period in order to prevent offences against women.

The action plan prioritises public awareness raising about gender-based violence, including domestic violence. Provision has been made for regular publicity campaigns in collaboration with local authorities, the media and NGOs aimed at putting across the message that gender-based violence is not to be tolerated. The aim is to rouse people to awareness of the existence of domestic and sexual violence, what it involves and where victims can seek help and support. Furthermore, it is important to examine how traditional gender roles and stereotypes may contribute to violence towards women.

Domestic violence is one type of gender-based violence which it is often difficult to observe and identify. It takes many forms which it is important to be aware of and to recognise. The aim of one of the projects in the action plan is to produce and distribute posters, both in Icelandic and in a number of foreign languages, in order to raise public awareness regarding domestic violence. These are to contain information as to what constitutes domestic violence, whether what is involved is physical violence, mental cruelty or sexual abuse. Also, it is intended to put across information on where victims can seek assistance and counselling.

The action plan also covers methods aimed at raising the knowledge and skills of workers who in the course of their jobs deal with the victims of gender-based violence, and to increase collaboration among them. For example, the production of a manual on domestic violence for professionals involved in these cases, with material on the victims and perpetrators; also the making of a study of gender-based violence, and the making of surveys of the extent of gender-based violence among certain groups of women and of the extent of domestic violence against men. It is also intended to make a further examination of ways of supporting the Emergency Reception Centre for victims of rape and the Post-Trauma Assistance Centre in the National and University Hospital, how to increase collaboration between these two bodies and how to expand their scope so as to have them address both domestic and sexual violence. This includes plans to examine ways of working for more efficient collaboration with the social

services, the child welfare agencies, the health services, NGOs and others involved in treating the victims of gender-based violence.

The action plan also provides for measures aimed at providing the victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse with individually-tailored treatment, and also for treatment for the perpetrators of gender-based offences. The aim is that perpetrators who have abused women should have an opportunity to undergo treatment aimed at breaking the repetitive pattern of violence. The project *Karlar til ábyrgðar* (Male Responsibility) is to be expanded and given further support, and attention is to be given to whether the same methods applied and support given to the perpetrators of domestic violence would be of benefit to the perpetrators of sexual offences.

#### *The Women's Refuge (Kvennaathvarfið.)*

The aim of the organization running the Women's Refuge (*Kvennaathvarfið*) is to provide refuge facilities both for women and their children when the situation in the home makes it impossible for them to go on living there because of domestic violence, whether in the form of physical assaults or mental cruelty, practised by the husband or cohabiting partner or other persons in the home, and also for women victims of rape. It is also the organization's aim to provide counselling and information and to stimulate publicity and discussion of the problem of domestic violence. Table 1 shows a survey of admissions to the refuge for the period 2000-2005.

Table 1. Admissions to the Women's Refuge 2000–2005.

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total admissions	347	503	435	388	531	557
Interviews	252	406	380	315	443	465
Stay periods	95	97	55	73	88	92
Number of children	61	74	41	59	55	76
Phone calls to emergency line	1635	1880	1614	1402	1612	1855

The number of admissions in 2005 was a record (557). Many women are admitted more than once, either for interviews or periods spent in the refuge; this figure represents 283 women who sought admission to stay there during the year, including 143 (51%) who had not previously applied to the refuge. The number of women who stayed there rose by 5% from 88 to 92, and the number of children by 38%, from 55 to 76, compared with the previous year. The number of days spent in the refuge in each period considerably, the average rising from 12 to 14 days for women and from 10 to 16 for children; this goes a long way to explaining the increase in the number of days spent there, both in terms of the larger number of children and the longer periods they spent in the refuge. On average, there were four women and three children in the refuge every day during 2005. The number of interviews taken during the year, 465, was also a

record; on average, each woman registered at the centre came for two interviews during the year.

The number of women applying to the Women's Refuge indicates not so much the extent of gender-based violence in Iceland but rather whether or not the victims know of the services provided by the refuge and whether they are prepared to use them. Studies indicate that the actual extent of violence is far greater than the statistics from the Women's Refuge suggest, and it is therefore seen as a positive thing that the number seeking assistance there should be large rather than small. The increase in the number of supportive interviews (counselling sessions) held there in recent years also suggests that women are making more use of the services of the refuge than they used to, i.e. that they are turning to the refuge for advice and support before actually being compelled to go for protection from violent situations. It is to be hoped that the increase in the number of admissions is also an indication that women no longer hesitate so long before applying to the refuge for help when they need it. In addition to offering supportive interviews, a telephone service and facilities for temporary stays, the Women's Refuge has offered self-help therapy groups for more than a year. The first of these was launched in autumn 2004, consisting of eight women with a leader and deputy leader from among the staff of the refuge. Two groups were operated in 2005, each consisting of seven women in addition to the group leaders. Record applications to the Women's Refuge two years in a row can probably be attributed to the high level of public discussion of gender-based violence that has taken place. The interviews (counselling sessions) offered by the Women's Refuge have clearly become established; they are sought after by women who are in violent situations and by those who are getting over the consequences of earlier experiences of violence. The rise in the number of children attending the centre is more difficult to explain; it should be pointed out, however, that the number of children accompanying their mothers in the refuge in 2004 was unusually low, so that an increase the following year was natural. The average length of stay periods was considerably longer, this being explained by the fact that more women needed longer time than before in safety and security.

On arrival at the Women's Refuge, either to stay or to attend a counselling session, the women are asked the reason for their visit. Most give more than one reason; for example, mental cruelty is generally found together with physical violence. In most cases, they are also seeking support to get through a difficult phase in their lives. It is much more commonly the case that women apply to the Women's Refuge because of mental cruelty than because of physical violence; mental cruelty can be no less serious a situation. It can take the form of threatening behaviour, financial dominance, isolation and degradation. More women give mental cruelty, physical violence and sexual abuse as the reasons for their visits to the refuge than used to be the case; in the same way, more now come to the centre because of threats and persecution than before. This is worrying, as it seems that violence is assuming a harsher form, but the reason may also be increased awareness of gender-based violence and the forms that it can take. Little discussion has taken place about sexual abuse within marriages or partnerships; however, it is frequently encountered as an accompaniment to other forms of violence.

More women have been applying to the Women's Refuge because of incest; this is attributed to an enormous amount of public discussion of incest that took place in 2005 following the publication of a book in Iceland in which a woman described her experience of sexual abuse and ill-treatment as a child. As *Stígamót* (the Counselling and Information Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence) had difficulty in providing sufficient counselling services in the latter part of the year, many women applied to the Women's Refuge in connection with incest.

The project *Karlar til ábyrgðar* ("Male Responsibility").

*The "Male Responsibility" project was re-launched in May 2006. This involves the offer of specialised treatment for men who indulge in violence in the home in Iceland. Treatment of this type has proved effective both in Iceland and abroad. It is estimated that about 1,100 women suffer domestic violence at the hands of their husbands/partners or ex-husbands/partners each year in Iceland.*

Treatment is provided by psychologists; the aim of the project is to provide male perpetrators of domestic violence with assistance and treatment if they are prepared to seek it. It is regarded as a priority that perpetrators should seek treatment voluntarily and accept their responsibility for committing violence. Treatment is based on individual counselling, and may last between six months and two years.

Parallel with this treatment project, a special project management team is at work, consisting of representatives of the Gender Equality Centre, the Ministry of Health and Social Security and the Women's Refuge; it is directed by the representative of the Gender Equality Centre. Its role includes the definition of how the project is to be developed in the future in consultation with those who provide the treatment and the monitoring of the day-to-day functions and an assessment of the effectiveness of the project.

Sexual offences.

As has been stated above, the Act No. 61/2007 introduced amendments to the section of the General Penal Code (No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments) dealing with sexual offences. Amendments were made to Articles 194-199 of the code, covering rape and other offences against the sexual freedom of the individual (*cf.* Article 205) and also Articles 200-202, dealing with sexual offences against children (*cf.* Article 204).

One of the reasons for the review of these provisions was the public discussion that has taken place concerning sexual abuse of children and gender-based violence. Increasing criticism of some of the provisions had been expressed, as it was felt that they did not give the victims sufficient legal protection, and some people took the view that they embodied outdated attitudes towards women. In addition, it was felt that the sentences handed down by the courts for offences of this type were too lenient.

When the legislation was drafted, attention was given to studies made by the author of the draft which dealt both with the legislation itself and its application. Secondly, attention was given to

surveys of legislation covering sexual offences in other countries, and thirdly, data from various social and criminological studies was taken into consideration. Finally, the author of the draft took steps to find out about the experience of various parties who had worked with victims of offences of this type.

Furthermore, attempts were made to have the amendments proposed to these provisions in line with the framework already existing in the General Penal Code. It was regarded as a priority to have the proposed amendments based on a sound legal basis, taking account both of international trends in this area and also of Icelandic legal tradition. Another guiding principle was to increase the legal protection given to women and children, to make the provisions more modern and to strive to ensure respect for privacy, self-determination, sexual freedom and freedom of action for all individuals.

One of the innovations introduced into the code was a broadening of the definition of rape, with the result that “rape” in Article 194 of the code now includes other forms of sexual coercion and the exploitation of the victim’s poor mental condition or inability to resist the action or to realise its significance. As a result of the amendment, offences in this category now carry far heavier punishments than before: imprisonment of 1-16 years, instead of a maximum of six years previously. Furthermore, circumstances leading to the imposition of heavier punishments for rape are defined in the law. Allowance is made for heavier punishments, firstly, if the victim is a child under the age of 18, secondly if the violence committed by the perpetrator is of major proportions and thirdly if the offence is committed in a way that inflicts particularly serious pain or injury.

Authorisation was introduced by the amendment providing for consideration to be given to repeated offences within the broad category of sexual offences; thus, a previous conviction for an offence of this type may lead to a heavier punishment being imposed for a subsequent offence. Allowance is made for an increase of up to one half in the punishment imposed.

The minimum age of consent for sexual acts was raised from 14 to 15, and the provision for punishment for having sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with a child under the age of consent was expanded so that these offences qualify for the same punishment as rape, i.e. 1-16 years’ imprisonment. This emphasises the gravity of such offences when the victims are children; rape, sexual intercourse or other sexual relations involving children under the age of 15 now constitute the most serious types of offence within the category of sexual offences, a position that used to be reserved for rape only. Nevertheless, provision is made for a reduction or waiver of punishment in cases where the perpetrator of acts involving sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with a child under the age of 15 is him- or herself of the same age or level of mental maturity as the child. It was also stated in the amendment that liability for offences under Article 194 (rape), the first paragraph of Article 200 (sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with one’s own child or other descendant) and the first paragraph of Article 201 (sexual intercourse or other sexual relations with a child under the age of 18, to whom the offender is related or connected in a particular way) does not lapse over time (i.e. is not subject to any statute of limitations) in cases where the child is under the age of 18. Regarding other

sexual offences, an amendment was introduced stating that the period over which liability expires is to begin running from the time when the victim reaches the age of 18 and not 14 as used to be the case.

*The Centre for Sexual Abuse Victims (Stígamót).*

About 1468 individuals came to the Centre for Sexual Abuse Victims, (*Stígamót*), in the period 2003–2005; 496 did so in 2003, of which 251 were making their first visit to the centre. In 2004, 429 individuals came to the centre, including 228 who were seeking help for the first time. In 2005 the total number was 543, of which 249 were seeking assistance for the first time. The breakdown by sex for the years 2003-2005 is presented in Table 2 (referring to those applying to the centre for the first time).

Table 2. Persons received by Stígamót for the first time: breakdown by sex.

	2003		2004		2005	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Women	224	89,2%	209	91.7%	223	89.6%
Men	27	10.8%	19	8.3%	26	10.4%

There are many reasons why individuals turn to the Centre for Sexual Abuse Victims: rape, prostitution, incest and their consequences and also sexual harassment. One hundred and fifty individuals contacted the centre in 2005 in connection with incest and its consequences and ninety-eight in connection with incest and its consequences. Nine contacted the organization in connection with prostitution and sixteen in connection with sexual harassment.

*The Emergency Reception Centre.*

In the period 2003-2005, 17 of the women who contacted the Stígamót Centre in connection with rape also went to the Emergency Reception Centre for rape victims: seven in 2003, seven in 2004 and three in 2005. About 353 individuals, of which 98% were women, came to the Emergency Reception Centre in the period 2003–2005: 119 did so in 2003, 104 in 2004 and 130 in 2005.

Altogether, 1,284 individuals applied to the Emergency Reception Centre for rape victims from the time when it opened in 1993 up to the end of 2005. As can be seen from the following Figure, the largest group, 395, consists of persons in the 19-25 age group.

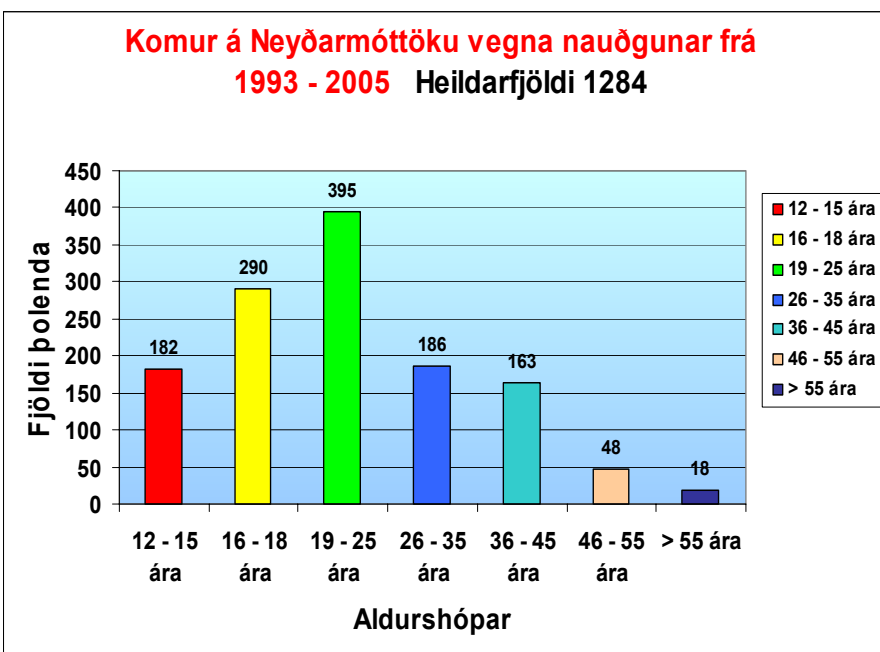


Fig. 1. Persons applying to the Emergency Reception Centre for the victims of rape and sexual abuse, 1993-2005.

Translation from the figure: “Komur á Neyðarmóttöku vegna nauðgunar frá 1993-2005” = Persons applying to the Emergency Centre following rape, 1993-2005; “Fjöldi þolenda”= Number of victims; “Aldurshópar”= Age groups; “Ára”= years.

Figure 2 presents a further breakdown of the cases attended to by the Emergency Reception Centre. This shows that the victims report the incidents to the police in fewer than half of the cases. It also seems to have become more common for more than one perpetrator to be involved in cases of rape.

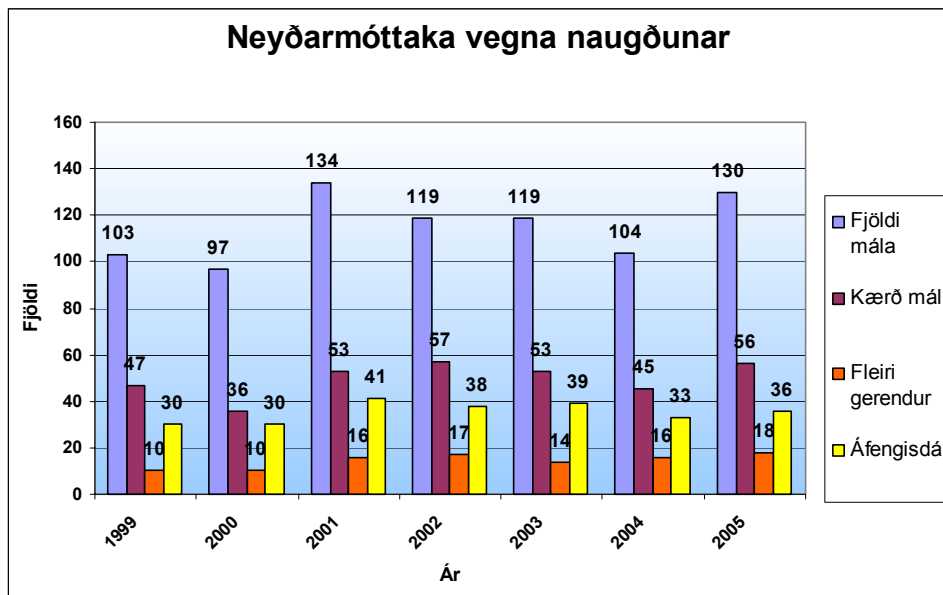


Figure 2. Further breakdown of the cases attended to by the Emergency Reception Centre for the victims of rape and sexual abuse.

Translation from the figure: “Neyðarmóttaka vegna nauðgunar”= Emergency Reception Centre for rape victims; “Fjöldi mála”= Number of cases; “Kærð mál”= Cases reported to the police; “Fleiri gerendur”= More than one perpetrator; “Fjöldi”=Number; “Ár”=Year.

#### *The police and the Director of Public Prosecutions.*

During the period 1 April 2003-30 April 2006, 292 cases were registered with the police as violations of Articles 194-199 of the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments. During the same period, 169 cases were received by the Director of Public Prosecutions; 41 of these resulted in indictments. Two cases were still under investigation by the Director of Public Prosecutions in spring 2006. Of the 41 cases in which indictments were issued and court proceedings instituted, 24 led to convictions and 15 to acquittals. One indictment was considered to constitute a violence against Article 209 of the General Penal Code. Judgement had yet to be delivered in two cases in spring 2006. It should be stated that the police case register contains data on all offences reported and cases in which there is a suspicion that an offence has been committed. Cases in which charges are pressed are not recorded separately. The register also contains statistics on cases that remain unconcluded, e.g. because the perpetrator has not been found.

It was stated in the Government of Iceland’s Fifth Report that punishments for rape had become more severe in the preceding years, the average length of sentences then being 18-24



months' imprisonment. The average length of sentences is still 18-24 months. If the offence is considered particularly serious or brutal, the courts have, however, imposed heavier sentences. In this connection, mention may be made of a sentence of three and a half years' imprisonment imposed by the Reykjavík District Court on 26 October 2006 for a violent rape, and a recent sentence of five years' imprisonment imposed by the same court for a violent rape involving physical assault and deprivation of freedom.

By way of information, it should be stated that the Director of Public Prosecutions has always called for heavier penalties in rape cases than have actually been imposed by the Court. The Director of Public Prosecutions can appeal to the Supreme Court if he does not agree with the sentence imposed by the district courts.

### *Violence against children.*

The first part of the plan of action on violence in homes and sexual abuse, which was approved by the government on 26 September 2006, covered measures that the government intended to take in order to prevent violence against children, and also to assist those who have suffered violence and abuse. The fundamental assumption is that it is always the adult who is responsible if a child suffers violent treatment, and that the perpetrator should suffer the consequences, since this type of conduct cannot be tolerated. The projects in the plan of action are based on this, and are therefore primarily concerned with adults.

Measures are set forth in the plan and designed to prevent children from being exposed to violence in their homes or sexual abuse. Part of these focus on sleep disturbance and restlessness among young children and infants; sleeping problems may have a negative effect on relations between parents and their children. It is also proposed to hold meetings describing methods of working with children of kindergarten and junior school age who have behavioural problems. The publication of a publicity booklet in Icelandic and foreign languages on the consequences of violence against children is also planned.

In order to help child victims of violence, it is important that professionals employed by institutions such as the kindergartens and junior schools, the health services and the child welfare committees, should have a knowledge of how to recognise the signs of violence and be aware of its consequences.

This involves, amongst other things, extending the educational training of these professions; the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science intends to issue instructions to those educational institutions which, in the course of their work, are involved with children and their families, to include teaching and awareness-raising on violence against children as part of the syllabus in both the basic training and retraining and extension courses attended by their professional staff. Furthermore, it is planned to prepare a manual for workers in the health services with a checklist and procedural guidelines on carrying out medical examinations of children who may have suffered violence. It is also planned to hold annual educational meetings with persons who, in the course of their work, are involved in the care and education

of children. Preventive measures and the causes and consequences of violence against children will be examined, the aim being to increase these persons' awareness and skills.

The action plan also embraces measures aimed at providing individually-tailored treatment for children who have suffered violence in the home or sexual abuse. These include an emphasis on supporting and developing the work of the Children's House (*Barnahús*), publicising its service and seeking ways to do more to meet the needs of children who have suffered violence or abuse of any type.

Last but not least, emphasis is placed on enabling the perpetrators of violence against children to undergo treatment in order to break the pattern of repeated violence. Amongst other things, it is planned to establish a professional team of experts specialising in the treatment of young offenders who have committed acts of mental cruelty, physical violence or sexual abused against other children.

## **Part II**

### **Article 7**

#### **Subparagraph a)**

Women's representation in Parliament and local government.

#### *Local authorities.*

The Minister of Social Affairs and the Centre for Gender Equality sent all the political parties a letter in October 2005 drawing their attention to their role in actively encouraging women to stand for election, so working for equality between the sexes when presenting their candidates for the local government elections in 2006.

Women have been standing for election to local government more frequently, and now constitute about 40% of candidates. For the 2006 local government elections, the proportions of candidates were: men 56% and women 44%. One of the likely explanations for the fact that women have not made more rapid progress towards gaining equality in local government is that they generally do not occupy the first places on the candidate lists. Thus, the total number of candidates may constitute an obstacle to their success in small local government areas, in which the local governments generally consist of only 3-5 elected members. In the 2006 local government elections, men were in the first places on the lists in 78% of cases and women in only 22%. Those in second place on the lists were men in 49.4% of cases and women in 50.6% of cases.

After the local government elections in 2006, women constituted 35.9% of the members of local governments; this was an increase of 4.8%. The ratio of women on local governments was highest in the metropolitan area, where they constitute 40% of elected representatives; in

terms of the 40%-60% goal, it can be said that equality has been achieved there. The balance between the sexes in local government over the country as a whole was more even following the elections of 2006, though this can not be said of all parts of the country.

On the basis of data on the division between the sexes in local governments, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Social Affairs have prepared a “gender equality map” in which each local government area is coloured according to the proportions of the sexes on its local government. Those with even balances (40%-60%) are coloured green; those with highly lopsided balances (in which either sex constitutes 0-29%) are coloured red. Yellow is the colour given to those where the proportion of either sex lies between 30 and 39%. The map may be viewed on the homepage of the Ministry of Social Affairs ([www.felagsmalaraduneyti.is](http://www.felagsmalaraduneyti.is)).

The size of local authorities still seems to influence the proportion of women on local governments. After the 2006 elections, women constituted 38.8% of the members of local governments in areas with more than 1,000 inhabitants, but only 33% in areas with fewer than 500 inhabitants. In June 2006, the Minister of Social Affairs and the Centre for Gender Equality sent all the newly-elected local governments in the country an informative booklet on gender equality issues entitled *Við viljum gera enn betur – jafnrétti varðar okkur öll* (“We want to do better still – equality is of concern to us all”). This included statistics on equality issues in the country’s local government areas and urged the newly-elected local governments to give attention to gender equality issues in their work, both in policymaking and the taking of decisions on local affairs and also in their capacity as employers. In particular, attention was drawn to the fact that it was hoped that equality would be seen in the appointment of committees, councils and boards operating under the control of the local governments. In order to follow up this booklet, representatives in the local authorities’ newly-appointed gender equality committees were invited to a meeting in September 2006 at which work on gender equality issues under the auspices of the local authorities during the electoral term was discussed. Twenty-two local authorities were represented at this meeting, which was regarded as a success.

After this meeting, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Centre for Gender Equality made a survey of whether gender equality committees and gender equality action plans were in place in the local authorities. This was done under Article 10 of the Gender Equality Act. The survey revealed that 75% of local governments had appointed gender equality committees or entrusted gender equality issues to another committee. This is seen as a substantial advance; a similar survey in 2001 found that only 30% of local authorities had appointed gender equality committees. In 2006, 26 local authorities had set themselves gender equality action plans for the electoral period, and a further 14 were working on such plans. It should be stated that they have one year following elections to draw up action plans.

Before the 2006 elections a survey was made of the proportions of the sexes in committees, councils and boards under the local authorities. The response rate in the survey was about 58%, representing local government areas in which 91.5% of the population of Iceland live. There were 4,048

representatives on committees, councils and boards in these areas; the division was 1,549 women (38.3%) and 2,499 men (61.7%). Women constituted a majority of the representatives in four local government areas; in three, the division was exactly even and in eighteen the division lay between the 40–60% boundaries. Where the division was most unequal, women accounted for 16.7% of representatives; the lowest proportion of men was 29.2%.

### *The Parliament.*

Since 1915, when women received the right to vote and to stand for election, 58 women (9% of all members) have been elected to parliament. Over the past three decades the number of women elected has been rising steadily: after the general election of 1979 they accounted for only 5% of parliamentary members; this number rose to 25% after the 1995 election and to 35% following the election of 1999. A slight reversal in this positive trend took place in the election of 2003, resulting in a figure of 30%, but some changes occurred in parliamentary representatives during the electoral period, with the result that when the Althingi (parliament) met for its session beginning in autumn 2006 there were 23 women representatives (37%).

Clearly, gender equality has not been achieved in the distribution of seats in the Althingi, particularly when the lists of the principal members elected are examined. In order to promote continued progress in this area, the Minister of Social Affairs appointed a committee in June 2006 including representatives of all political parties represented in parliament during the 2003-2007 electoral period; its brief was to organise cross-political measures to promote a more even balance in the parliamentary elections of 2007. Amongst other things, a letter was sent to all political parties in the country drawing their attention to the responsibility they themselves bore to expand the role played by women in politics. Furthermore, the committee organised a meeting on 9 October 2006 under the title *Öldin okkar? Konur tökum þátt.* (“Our century? Women, let’s play our part”), the aim of which was to stimulate discussion of the importance of women’s participation in politics. Current and former women members of the Althingi spoke at the meeting about their experience of participation in parliament.

Twenty-one women were elected to the Althingi in the election of spring 2007; this is 33.3% of the total.

### **Subparagraph b) and c)**

Women’s participation in public decision-making.

There has been a woman member in the Icelandic Government since 1983; 1999 was the first year in which more than one minister serving at the same time was a woman; there were three women ministers. When the Government was appointed after the general election of 2003, there were still three women; after a reshuffle of the government in summer 2006 the number rose to four, and there were four following the general election of 2007.

The proportion of women as permanent secretaries in the ministries was 17% in 2006. The proportion of women among directors of government bodies that year was 25%, having risen from 18.7% in 2002 and 14.4% in 2001. Over the same period, on the other hand, there was a reduction in the number women heads of division in the ministries, from 37% in 2002 to only 26.3% in 2006.

The proportion of women on public committees, councils and boards has risen steadily in the last decade. In 2004, the percentage of women in national public committees, councils and boards was 32%, ranging from 40% in the Ministry of Health and Social Security and 39% in the Ministry of Social Affairs to 5% in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If attention is focussed solely on the committees, councils and boards appointed in 2004, it appears that 38% of appointees to these bodies under the ministries were women and 62% were men. When the whole picture is taken into consideration, the figure in 2005 remained the same. The Ministry of Social Affairs fulfilled the 40:60 ratio in 2005, with 43% women and 57% men. Previously, the Ministry of Health and Social Security had been the only ministry to do this. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science came close to the target, with 39% of representatives to its committees, councils and boards being women in 2005.

Table 3. Proportions of women and men on committees, boards and councils in 2005:

	Men	women
Prime Minister's Office	70%	30%
Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs	68%	32%
Ministry of Social Affairs	57%	43%
Ministry of Finance	76%	24%
Statistics Iceland	0%	100%
Ministry of Health and Social Security	59%	41%
Ministry of Industry and Commerce	77%	23%
Ministry of Agriculture	85%	15%
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	61%	39%
Ministry of Transport and Communications	86%	14%
Ministry of Fisheries	80%	20%
Ministry for the Environment	69%	31%
Ministry for Foreign Affairs	95%	5%
Total:	68%	32%

Work is in progress in all the ministries on achieving a more even balance between the sexes in committees, councils and boards. The more even the balance when it comes to formulating new policies, the greater the likelihood that the decisions taken will reflect the interests of both. Thus, it is important to establish whether the talents and qualifications of both sexes are drawn on when policies are formulated and decisions taken. This also applies when political goals are being set. Since the balance varies greatly from one ministry to another, attention is called for in order not only to monitor the overall numbers but also when it comes to making appointments to committees, councils and boards; this is seen as the best means of achieving balance in practice. For this purpose, some of the ministries have compiled standardised letters or set themselves procedural rules of other types to be applied when nominations to committees, councils and boards are invited. Attention is drawn to Article 20 of the Gender Equality Act and two nominations are invited, one of a man and one of a woman.

After the local government elections of May 2006, 26.6% of local authorities' executive directors were women, compared to 19% after the elections in 2002.

#### *Judges.*

During the period 2003–2006 there was an increase in the number of women serving as judges in the district courts. There are 38 judges in the country's district courts. In 2003, 29 were men and nine were women; by 2006, the numbers were 25 men and 13 women. There was also a large increase in the number of women assistants to the district court judges. In 2003 there were twelve assistants (five women and seven men); in 2006 there were ten assistants (eight women and two men). No changes have occurred in the balance in the Supreme Court, where there are nine judges, two women and seven men. The number of assistants to the Supreme Court judges remained the same: two women and two men.

#### *District commissioners and police officers.*

There were 26 district commissioners in Iceland in 2006, including five women (19%). Following the changes made in the structure of policing at the beginning of 2007, two women are currently police commissioners (13%). According to the annual report of the National Police Commissioner for 2005, there were 71 women serving in the force that year; this represented 10% of the force, a considerable increase from 1996, when women accounted for 4%.

### **Article 8**

*Women and men working in the ministries and government bodies have equal opportunities as regards representing the government in the international arena and participating in the work of international organizations. No data is available on the proportions between the sexes in Icelandic Government delegations, but due to the smallness of the executive in Iceland these delegations are generally small and frequently consist of only one or two members. Whether a particular member of*

*the staff is involved in any particular co-operative functions abroad on behalf of the Icelandic Government depends on the area of specialization of the individual concerned.*

Women in the diplomatic service and peacekeeping operations.

Since 1998, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has given special attention to engaging women staff in order to achieve more even balance between the sexes in the diplomatic service. Women have been engaged to 50% of all vacancies for which university qualifications are required. At the same time, the ministry aims to observe gender-equality considerations when making promotions within the service.

Five women ambassadors have been recruited by the foreign service since 2002, bringing the number to six in 2006. This represents over 15% of the total number; the previous ratio was 3%. At the end of 2006 the minister unveiled a new organisational chart for the service in which it was divided into two parts: an International and Security Division and a Commercial Division, in addition to its administrative and service office. The heads of both the divisions are women. In the same way, more women were involved in the senior levels of the ministry at the beginning of 2007; the deputy permanent secretary and the director of protocol are both women. In addition, a woman was Minister for Foreign Affairs for the first time; a woman was still in this position following the elections of 2007.

Three women minister counsellors were appointed ambassadors during the period 2002-2006. This brought the number of women minister counsellors down from four to one, and 95.6% minister counsellors in 2006 were men. The number of minister counsellors was cut by three during the period. On the other hand, the number of women counsellors in the service rose from eight to eleven; the number of these positions was also increased by three. Thus, women accounted for 44% of counsellors in 2006 (against 36.4% in 2002). There were eleven women serving as first secretaries in 2006 (57%), against eight in 2002 (54%).

Table 4. Women and Men in the Icelandic diplomatic service 2006.

Position	women	men	total	% women	% men
Ambassadors	6	33	39	15.38	84.62
Minister Counsellors	1	22	23	4.35	95.65
Counsellors	11	14	25	44	56
First Secretaries	8	6	14	57.14	42.85
Attachés	14	0	14	100	0

In recent years the Ministry for Foreign affairs has given prominence to projects in which young people who are embarking on their careers are given an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the work of the Icelandic Foreign Service and work at international organisations at first hand. Women have been in the majority of those who have been engaged

under this scheme. Since 2002 the ministry has taken on student trainees; their training takes place entirely in Iceland's ministries and standing committees overseas, and lasts six months. In 2004 three men and five women were engaged to these trainee positions; in 2005 the numbers were five of each sex and in 2006 four men and five women were taken on. Thus, during the period 2004-2006, twelve men and fifteen women have been accepted to trainee positions with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Iceland finances six Junior Professional Officer positions with the United Nations; these officers are engaged in positions in UN projects in various parts of the world. At the beginning of 2007 there were five women and one man in these positions. When the scheme began in 2005, three women were engaged. In 2006 a further three positions were advertised; two women and one man were engaged. These engagements are for terms of up to three years.

Since 1999 the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has contracted 217 individuals (172 men and 35 women) on various missions such as peacekeeping, election observations etc. through the Iceland Crisis Response Unit (ICRU). At first, its activities were focused on the Balkans but more recently the bulk of operation have moved towards Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Initially, the majority of the individuals concerned were police officers and health workers but more recently the emphasis has moved towards airport management (Kosovo, Kabul) with a corresponding increase in aviation sector specialists and technicians. Both the police and the aviation sector are predominantly male but an effort was made to hire women for police work in the Balkans. The ICRU and UNIFEM established contact in 2001 when the ICRU seconded a programme specialist for UNIFEM's programme for Advancing Women's Human Rights for Democratic Governance and Peace in Kosovo. This programme ended by the end of 2005 but the cooperation has continued with UNIFEM's new regional programme for Southeastern Europe, based in Belgrade. Iceland has recently launched a Junior Professional Officer Programmes (JPO Programme) in cooperation with UNDP and UNICEF. Gender equality is an essential element in the JPO Programme. Currently, Iceland has three JPOs posted in UNDP field offices, all of whom are women. Reference should also be made to the discussion of Article 3 of the Convention in this report.

### **Article 9**

Reference is made to the previous reports.

### **Part III**

### **Article 10**

#### **Subparagraphs a), b) and c)**

Education.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science regards it as a priority that the schools should work deliberately to ensure equal rights for boys and girls, inform pupils of the position of the sexes and take measures to avoid pupils becoming ensnared in traditional gender roles in the division of labour. It is essential that the educational system should not maintain gender



divisions on the labour market, which again is believed to maintain gender-based wage discrimination, by promoting gender-related choices in courses of study pursued by pupils and students. Gender equality considerations have been applied in the review of the general curricula of the junior and senior schools, and this policy will be followed in further curriculum design. Amongst other things, the ministry makes a priority of having pupils of both sexes learn about computers and information technology, and steps are taken in the design of all studies at all levels of the educational system to ensure that the material will appeal equally to boys and girls. There is a committee working within the ministry which has made proposals on methods of upgrading the teaching of the sciences in junior and senior schools, and a project is currently in preparation to make science subjects appeal to both sexes. In particular, ways are being sought to increase interest in science among girls in the first years of junior school, to ensure that pupils do not become excessively restricted by traditional patterns in the division of labour and to give individuals of both sexes equally valid and comparable opportunities.

In 2005 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science advertised for applications for grants for developmental projects in the senior schools and for adult education programmes in which the emphasis was on measures in accordance with gender-equality plans in teaching. In advertisements regarding the development funds for kindergartens and junior schools in 2006, the emphasis was on inviting applications for programmes for gender equality education and democracy in the schools, with a particular focus on equal rights for women and men. Advertisements for grants from the senior schools' development fund for 2004-2005 also placed special emphasis on applications for work involving gender equality in studies. The aim of all this was to enable the kindergartens and the schools to promote experimentation and innovation in the structure of their teaching, teaching methods, syllabus materials and educational assessment and also the evaluation of the work of the schools, including their work to promote gender equality. The response from applicants was not as expected, as only one of the 70 applications received had a special focus on gender-equality education.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has requested information from the University of Iceland, the Iceland University of Education and the University of Akureyri on how the training of those preparing for a career in teaching is tailored to comply with the gender equality considerations laid down in Article 19 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000. The replies from these bodies has not yet been processed to form a single conclusion, but the ministry's evaluation on the basis of these replies is that gender equality issues in teacher training are addressed in a satisfactory manner. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will continue to make a priority of having schools take deliberate measures to inform pupils of the equal status and rights of the sexes. The general curriculum for senior schools of January 2004 places great emphasis on gender equality. Amongst other things, it states: "Schools shall be obliged to ensure equality between the sexes regarding access to education, and to offer them suitable instruction. It is important that both boys and girls should be introduced to jobs that have hitherto been regarded as traditionally male or female occupations. The schools should also give their pupils the opportunity to engage in studies of their own choice. These must appeal equally to girls and boys irrespective of their origins, in rural and urban areas and without regard to whether they are disabled or not." The aim of this was to

ensure that boys and girls have equal rights when it comes to choosing subjects of study and to strive to avoid pupils becoming ensnared in traditional gender-based divisions of labour (*cf.* Article 19 of the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000).

In 2004, 51.4% of upper senior school pupils were girls and 48.6% were boys (see Table 5). Girls are in the majority in all courses of study in the upper secondary schools with the exception of two: in Crafts and Technical Trades they are very much in the minority (12%) and in Natural Science programmes the division is finely balanced, with 47% girls and 53% boys.

*Table 5. Proportional division of students according to study categories.*

	Women	Men
Upper secondary level (2004)	51.4%	48.6%
General programmes	52%	48%
Languages	80%	20%
Fine and applied arts	68%	32%
Pedagogical and physical programmes	69%	31%
Social science programmes	61%	39%
Commerce, economics	62%	38%
Natural science programmes	47%	53%
Crafts and technical trades	12%	88%
Agriculture, food and service trades	61%	39%
Health-related programmes	96%	4%
Tertiary level (2004)	63%	37%
Languages, humanities	67%	33%
Fine and applied arts	65%	35%
Teacher-training, education science	83%	17%
Social science, jurisprudence	64%	36%
Economics, business administration	55%	45%
Natural sciences, mathematics	45%	55%
Engineering	24%	76%
Agriculture, food sciences, services	58%	42%
Medicine, nursing, etc.	85%	15%

Women continue to form the majority (63%) of students at university level. They account for the vast majority (83%) of those who pursue teacher-training and pedagogical courses. The proportion is reversed, however, in the case of Engineering, where men are in the majority (76%).

More than half of university graduates since 1980 have been women. They accounted for 80–90% of graduates for the teaching profession in the years 1995-1998. This has not yet been reflected in the proportion of women in leading positions in the school system. Nevertheless, it can be said that there has been some increase in the number of women as principals and/or vice-principals in compulsory and upper secondary schools.

*Table 6. Gender division among teachers.*

	Women	Men
Compulsory schools (2004)	77	23
Principals	44	56
Assistant principals	60	40
Teachers	83	17
Special education teachers	89	11
Upper secondary level (2004)	55	45
Principals	19	81
Assistant principals	23	77
Managers	45	55
Teachers	50	50
Tertiary level (2004)	50	50
Presidents	18	82
Professors	15	85
Assistant professors	30	70
Lecturers	53	47
Other teachers at tertiary level	47	53

### *Science.*

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science sought the involvement of other parties in appointing a working group dealing with statistics and their interpretation on the part played by women in research. The ministry published a report in March 2002, *Konur í vísindum á Íslandi* (“Women in Science in Iceland”) presenting statistics on the position of women in the sciences in Iceland, with a particular focus on women working for public bodies. It is intended to follow this report up and to bring in data on the position of women in research in the private sector, after which it is planned that it will be possible to discuss methods of stimulating further

discussion and ensuring that women play an active part in scientific research in accordance with the policy of the Science and Technology Council adopted in December 2003. The aim of the project is to ensure the active involvement of women in the sciences.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science has appointed a committee with the role of following up the work and conclusions reached by the so-called Helsinki Committee on the position of women in science in the EU countries. The European committee is intended to work for greater involvement by women in the sciences in the EU countries and to act in an advisory capacity on the position of women in science and research. This project involves, amongst other things, the gathering of new statistical information comparable with that which was used in the “Women in Science in Iceland” report and the EU’s report *Women in industrial research*, and also evaluating developments in this area over the period. The ministry’s committee is now gathering this statistical information regarding Iceland. It will then analyse the conclusions derived from this material, identify the hindrances that prevent equality between the sexes, whether these concern the choice of subjects to study or career prospects, and present proposals based on these findings. An interim report was released by the committee in November 2006, following which it was decided to organise a seminar, at which various parties who have carried out studies in this area, or are involved with gender equality issues in third-level education, met to discuss certain themes which the committee considered needed to be examined further. The committee is due to deliver its proposals in 2008.

Research on women’s issues.

At its meeting of 21 October 2005, the Government approved a proposal by the prime minister that a special research fund, the Gender Equality Fund (*Jafnréttissjóður*), be established on the occasion of the Women’s day on 24 October 2005. The aim of the fund is to stimulate research on gender issues and ensure that quality studies will be carried out in this area in Iceland. Studies of this type are likely to promote an improvement in the position of men and women and equality between the sexes. Grants made by the fund are defined in its rules on distribution and in the board’s rules on its working procedure as being primarily for studies of the position of the sexes on the labour market, but also in other spheres of society. The Treasury provides ISK 10 million for the fund during each operational year; this is done under a special provision in the state budget. On 30 June 2006, the prime minister appointed the board of the Gender Equality Fund for a period of four years in accordance with nominations by the ministers of Social Affairs and Education, Culture and Science. The first awards were made from the fund on 24 October 2006, with priority given to studies dealing with the position of the sexes on the labour market and the influence of the Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act. Five studies received support from the fund in 2006.

Further reference should be made to the last report.

**Subparagraph d)**

Reference is made to Iceland’s previous reports.

**Subparagraph e)**

Education, continuing education and retraining programmes of various types are on offer for people on the labour market, and the range and quality of these courses has increased greatly in recent years.

**Lifelong Learning Centres.**

Nine Lifelong Learning Centres have been established in various parts of the country. These are private institutions supported by the educational institutions, individual companies, trade unions and local authorities. Their role includes supporting and stimulating the local economy by increasing collaboration between the business sector and the schools, with the emphasis on effective adult education in the locality. At the same time, they encourage people to pursue education more as more alternatives become available.

All the Lifelong Learning Centres offer continuing vocational education that serves individuals and the enterprises, e.g. courses that are tailor-made according to the need of each enterprise. They offer courses, which are either run independently or in collaboration with other educational institutions, and also make available courses offered on the senior secondary and tertiary level, and provide educational and vocational counselling. This counselling takes two main forms: individual counselling for those who would like to find ways to obtain additional education in order to increase their possibilities on the labour market and vocational counselling for groups in collaboration with schools and the regional labour exchanges in the local government areas.

Approximately 7.8% of the population in the rural areas took part in the various courses offered by the Lifelong Learning Centres in 2001-2002. About 610 courses were held in the centres in 2003, these including general educational courses, part-time courses and vocational courses run as part of business operations. The number of participants in 2003 was 7,610. In the age-spread of applicants for admission to courses offered by the centres in autumn 2004, most (74%) were in the 25-54 age group, 24% were aged 25-34, 24% were aged 35-44 and 26% were aged 45-54.

**The Business Sector's Educational Centre.**

The social partners have attached great priority to continuing education for people on the labour market. The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA) set up the Business Sector's Educational Centre (*Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins*) in December 2002. It began operations in the middle of 2003 and was formally opened in November that year. Its role is to function as a collaborative forum for its founder members in the field of adult education and vocational training, in collaboration with other educational institutions run by the constituent unions of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, including the Lifelong Learning Centres. The aim is to provide workers who have not completed secondary school final examinations with an

opportunity to pursue education in order to improve their standing on the labour market, expanding the range of courses for people with little formal education so that they can have their skills and knowledge recognised, this covering both what they learn on the courses and also from their working experience and private study. It is also aimed to raise the quality of adult education and vocational training courses by developing a centre of pedagogical skills in this field.

The Ministry of Education and the Business Sector's Educational Centre entered into a service agreement in January 2006, which is to run until the end of 2009; prior to that, a similar agreement had been in force from 2003 to 2006. The main aim of work done under this agreement is to give workers on the labour market who have little formal education or who left school without taking final examinations, immigrants and other comparable groups the opportunity to pursue education and/or improve their position on the labour market. Under the period covered by the agreement, the ministry is to pay ISK 166 million each year for the services provided by the centre.

In June 2006, the Government agreed to increase funding allocations to adult and continuing education programmes; this increase takes effect in 2007. The funding will be used for purposes including courses and re-education programmes for persons on the labour market who are pursuing education based on syllabuses that have been approved by the Business Sector's Educational Centre and the ministry. It will also be used to build up educational and vocational counselling and the assessment of workers' actual skills in collaboration with the Industrial Training Centre, this covering employees who have completed parts of structured vocational courses, and to support the functions of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour's Lifelong Learning Centre in the metropolitan area. It is planned to devote ISK 120 million each year, in addition to allocations already made, for this purpose.

*Evening schools; distance learning.*

Evening schools are run in many of Iceland's secondary schools, with courses tailored to the needs of those who are not able to pursue traditional secondary education during the day. This group consists mainly of workers on the labour market who wish to add to their education. The programmes cover most of the schools' ordinary course subjects, though details of the structure differ from school to school. The same standard is required as in the daytime programmes, but the number of teaching hours is rather smaller in many cases.

Greater emphasis has also been put on distance learning in recent years. Six secondary schools and five universities offered distance learning programmes in 2005. In the autumn of 2003 there were 2,258 students enrolled on distance learning programmes at the secondary level and 2,036 at the tertiary level.

The Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland.

The Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Iceland organises a variety of daytime, evening and weekend courses, among them vocational refresher and update courses. The planning is based on active participation of organisations outside the University, e.g. associations of various professions and trade unions. Also there is close cooperation with a variety of organisations of employers, enterprises and other institutions. Thus the institute works actively in bringing together the academic and the professional fields with the aim of improving the educational level for adults. As an example, one of the programs defines the needs of participating enterprises, makes a plan on how the level of professionalism can be raised and organises courses for the employees. The Institute of Continuing Education does not make a distinction between academic and vocational courses and therefore no exact number of participants in vocational courses can be given.

**Subparagraph f)**

Reference is made to the previous reports.

**Subparagraph g)**

In 2005 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science gave support to the Centre for Gender Equality for a study of stereotypes in sports and the media (Sports, Media and Stereotypes). This study was part of an European project and was directed by the Centre. Other countries involved were Austria, Italy, Lithuania and Norway. The bodies involved in the study in Iceland were the University of Akureyri's Research Institute, the Media Studies department of the Faculty of Law and Social Science of the University of Akureyri, the University of Iceland's Research Institute on Feminist and Gender Studies, the Association of Sports Journalists and the Icelandic Sports and Olympics Committee. The aim was to study stereotypes and how they are reflected in sport and in sport reports in the media. This was done by examining sports reporting in the five countries involved. The main finding in Iceland was that 66% of sports reporting focussed exclusively, or almost exclusively, on men, 16% focussed on both sexes and 18% focussed exclusively, or almost exclusively, on women. It was also revealed that very few women work as sports journalists. These findings were used in the design of educational material for sports reporters, sports teachers and trainers. This was published both as a multi-media CD and on a special homepage. The published material is intended to urge a change in the way in which the sexes are presented in sport and in sports reporting by raising awareness of the effects of one-sided presentations of participants in sport, both men and women.

**Subparagraph h)**

Reference is made to the previous reports.

## Article 11

### Para. 1, subparagraphs a), b) and c)

#### Women's labour participation.

*Participation in the labour market by both men and women has always been at a high level in Iceland, and there are many indications that any gap between the sexes in access to employment that once existed has now been substantially reduced. On average, the rate of participation among women has been just under 80%, while that among men is about 86%. According to information by the Institute of Regional Development, the number of jobs held by women rose more than that held by men in the period 1999-2004, by 2,400 in the case of women against about 300 in the case of men. Nevertheless, the Institute of Regional Development, still sees it as necessary to increase the number of jobs for women by about 4,500 in order to achieve balance (this figure being based on the situation in 2004). According to information from Statistics Iceland about the total numbers of persons in employment in 2005 there were slightly more men than women on the labour market, men accounting for 52.6% of the market. Since 2004, the number of men had increased by 5.4%; the number of women in employment had risen by 4%. Table 7 shows the figures for various age groups, there is a proportional reduction in participation by women in the 25-54 age group, this trend appears to have begun in 2004. The rate of participation in employment by women in this age group fell by 3% from the level of 2004. Over the same period, the rate of participation in the labour market by women aged 16-24 rose by nearly 7%, and it seems like proportional labour participation was at a higher level among women than men in this age group in 2004 and 2005.*

Table 7. Participation in employment, by gender and age (%).

	2003	2004	2005
Men, total	85.9	85.0	86.0
16-24 years	75.6	71.2	75.2
25-54 years	94.8	94.2	94.3
55-74 years	70.2	71.1	72.9
Women, total	78.2	76.3	77.8
16-24 years	73.8	72.5	79.2
25-54 years	88.1	85.3	85.1
55-74 years	56.8	55.5	57.7

Source: Statistics Iceland

During the period from 2002 to September 2006 there was a reduction in the unemployment rate among both women and men on the Icelandic labour market. The average rate for women was 3.9% in 2003 and 2.8% in 2005, according to data from the Directorate of Labour. In September 2006 the women's unemployment rate was 1.4%. About 3.0% of men, on average, were unemployed in 2003; in 2005 the rate fell to 1.5% and in September 2006 it was 0.7%.



Differences between the sexes in the number of hours worked are becoming smaller, according to data from Statistics Iceland. The average working week for persons aged 16-74 on the domestic labour market in Iceland in 2005 was 42.2 hours. Men worked an average of 47.8 hours per week and women 35.6 hours per week. Men worked 3.5 hours less each week than they did in 1991, while women's average working time per week lengthened by 1.1 hours during the same period. If only those who are in full employment are considered, the overall average was 47.3 hours per week in 2005, 50.0 hours for men and 42.5 hours for women. Women in full employment worked about three hours less per week, compared with 1991, when their average working week was 45.4 hours. A similar development has been observed among men in full employment, who worked about four hours less each week in 2005 than they did in 1991.

There are more women than men in part-time employment in Iceland. A recent survey of gender-based wage differentials and the composition of wages by Capacent Gallup, dating from October 2006 and carried out for the Ministry of Social Affairs indicates that the number of women in full employment has risen, and that their attitudes towards their jobs have undergone a change since 1994. This is in accordance with the findings presented in a report from October 2006 by Ingólfur V. Gíslason, which was written in connection with the project *FOCUS Fostering Caring Masculinities* and based in part on the report on the employment situation by Statistics Iceland, dating from 2002. It has long been maintained that the reason why women tend, rather than men, to be in part-time employment is that they take more responsibility for the care of their families and households. This was expressed in the interviews taken in the course of the survey by Capacent Gallup, in which it was frequently mentioned that women's greater responsibilities at home had an effect on the demands they made regarding career advancement and higher wages. Nevertheless, there was a distinct difference in the way the participants spoke about the role of women in the labour market, compared with a survey taken in 1994; in the earlier survey, it was stated that many women worked outside the home because they were driven by financial need and not because they wished to do so; this opinion was not stated in the latter survey.

The report by Ingólfur V. Gíslason states that although childbearing has an evident effect on women's participation in the labour market, the number of women in full-time employment nevertheless rose during the period 1991-2001. The largest increase was among women with two or more children. The main explanation for this lies in greater availability of day-care for children.

A new Part-Time Workers Act, No. 10/2004, was passed in 2004. The aim of the act is to prevent part-time workers from suffering discrimination and to promote greater quality in part-time jobs. The purpose is also to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and to contribute to the flexible organization of working time in a manner which takes into account the needs of employers and workers. Under the act, part-time workers are not to have poorer wages and terms, proportionally, than comparable workers who work full time merely because they are not in full-time jobs, except where this is justified by objective considerations.

*Gender-based career choice.*

There still seems to be considerable gender division on the Icelandic labour market, both as regards the ratios of workers of either sex in various occupations and the ratios in managerial positions. The main development that has taken place in the past few decades, on the other hand, is that women have begun moving into traditionally male occupations in greater numbers, particularly specialist jobs. According to a labour market study made by Statistics Iceland in 1999, women accounted for 43% of university graduates in the workforce and men for 57%. In 2002, the proportion of university graduate women on the Icelandic labour market had risen to 47.1%. Furthermore, participation in the labour market is greatest among university graduates of both sexes, according to data from Statistics Iceland: 96% among women graduates and 99% among male graduates in 2002. The proportion of women among industrial workers fell from 27% in 1991 to 12.6% in 2004.

A report by the Institute of Regional Development from 2005 on women and the support systems of the business sector in Iceland revealed that most women (87%) worked in services, compared with 57% of men. Men are in the vast majority, on the other hand, in construction work, fishing and water and power utilities. Furthermore, the proportion of women among unskilled workers fell from 57.6% in 1991 to 47.3% in 2004. It may also be mentioned that the rate of participation in employment is lowest among those with only basic school education: 81% among women and 93% among men in 2002, according to Statistics Iceland.

Table 8 shows the ratios of each sex in various occupations during the period 2003-2005.

Table 8. Occupations by gender 2003-2005 (%).

	2003	2004	2005
Senior officials and managers	6.7	7.6	7.5
Men	8.5	10	10.3
Women	4.7	4.9	4.3
Professionals	17.2	15.8	17.4
Men	15.3	14.1	15.4
Women	16.2	19.4	19.6
Associate professionals	13.7	16.1	15.9
Men	11.5	13.2	12.9
Women	16.2	19.4	19.3
Clerks	8.6	7.4	7.7
Men	2.2	1.7	2.2
Women	15.7	13.7	13.9
Commercial workers, service providers	20.2	19.2	20.0
Men	13.5	12.0	12.8

Women	27.5	27.2	28.1
Farmers and fishermen	5.1	4.7	5.0
Men	7.7	6.9	7.3
Women	2.2	2.2	2.4
Skilled artisans	14.1	13.7	13.0
Men	23.3	22.7	21.6
Women	4.0	3.6	3.2
Machine minders	5.2	6.3	5.9
Men	9.5	10.7	10.2
Women	0.6	1.3	1.0
Unskilled workers	9.1	9.2	7.7
Men	8.5	8.6	7.3
Women	9.8	9.9	8.1

Source: Statistic Iceland.

As can be seen from Table 8, women do not feature largely in the ranks of farmers, fishermen, artisans and machine minders. On the other hand, they are present in larger numbers in office work and services. The balance is more even among specially qualified workers and specialists, but women still form a small group among managers and government officials in Iceland.

In order to reduce the influence of gender on career choice so as to avoid gender divisions on the labour market in the future, the Ministry of Social Affairs established a special homepage in autumn 2006 under the title “Equal Future for Boys and Girls” (<http://jafnretti.felagsmalaraduneyti.is>). The aim is to make it easier for young people to choose courses of study and careers that are in line with their actual fields of interest rather than traditional gender roles. It is intended for use by young people, their parents, teachers and directors of studies in schools when they face choices regarding their future careers; surveys show that these are the persons that young people consult regarding these choices. Various studies indicate that a gender-divided labour market constitutes a certain obstacle to gender equality, since it is thought to prevent young people from considering all the opportunities available because they are influenced by existing notions as to what sort of work is appropriate for each sex.

#### *Women in business management.*

Women account for about 47% of the Icelandic labour market, but the proportion of women on boards of enterprises, and among chairmen, is about 22%, according to data from Statistics Iceland. The ratio of women as principal board members remained virtually unchanged during the period 1999-2005.

According to a report by the Institute of Regional Development on women and the support systems of the business sector, the number of women registered as board’s chairmen in Icelandic companies with 20-49 employees fell by 15.5% from 1999, and the number in companies with 50-99 employees fell by 40% over the same period. During the years 1999-2004, women played a greater role as board’s

chairmen in agriculture and industry. The proportion of women in these positions is greatest in education, health and social services and cultural activities. Most women company board's chairmen are registered in retailing enterprises and real-estate agencies.

There has been a proportional increase in the number of women sitting on company boards, but most of them are only alternate members. The number of women elected as principal members of boards rose from 32.9% in 1999 to 35.9% in 2004. The number of women elected as alternate members rose by 78% during the same period, while the number of men rose by 39.8%. Furthermore, men are more likely than women to be involved in the boards of more than one company. The number of women on boards of the largest companies in Iceland, with more than 100 employees, appears to have risen, while the number of men dropped.

Data on gender equality in the 100 largest companies in Iceland was published for the first time in 2005 under a project called "Gender Equality Marks" (*Jafnréttiskennitala*). The project is run by the Labour Law and Gender Equality Research Centre at the University of Bifröst, together with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Gender Equality Centre, the Gender Equality Council, the Businesswomen's Association and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers. The data was gathered by a private company, *Lánstraust*, and was based on turnover for the year 2004. Original data was then gathered by a telephone survey, after which the companies were invited to correct errors by e-mail.

An examination of the boards of the 100 largest companies in Iceland for the year 2005 showed that women constituted about 12% of board members. When only those companies amongst the 100 largest that were listed on the Iceland Stock Exchange were examined, the proportion was found to be only half this figure, and only 5% of the board's chairmen of these companies were women.

During the period 1999–2005 the proportion of companies in which the general managers are women rose from 15.4% to 18.2%. Most of these companies have fewer than ten employees and are in commerce and services. Women expanded their presence among managing directors of companies of all sizes during the period 1999-2004. The number of women registered as managing directors of companies in the smallest size range rose by 76% (compared with a 58.8% increase among men); however, it should be noted that these are proportional figures. Thus, the number of women registered as managing directors rose by 68.7%, from 1,027 to 1,733, while the corresponding increase among men was 42%, from 5,641 to 8,045. When the number of women among the senior managers of the 100 largest companies in Iceland in 2005 is examined, it is found that the proportion of women was 10.5%.

The Government intends to continue to make it priority that women receive additional opportunities to enter business leadership. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce intends to organise a seminar for women managers and board members offering them instruction on what is involved in membership of company boards. The underlying philosophy, which has been demonstrated by studies in Britain, the USA and Canada, is that a larger proportion of women

on company boards results in better performance; a correlation between the number of women on boards and better management has also been demonstrated.

In June 2006, the Althingi passed a law amending the Limited Companies Act, No. 2/1995, with subsequent amendments, introducing a provision stating that when members are elected to the boards of state-owned limited companies, steps shall be taken to ensure that the boards consist of as nearly as possible equal numbers of men and women. This amendment is intended to increase the numbers of women serving on the boards of state-owned limited companies.

#### Survey of public support for women in business management.

The Government has made a priority of supporting women in business, and programmes of this type have formed part of its gender equality action plans in recent years. There is a general consensus that it is important for the business sector to increase the participation of women in the creation of jobs. However, the number of women running businesses in Iceland rose by only seven per cent in the period 1997–2004, which is far less than in Iceland's neighbouring countries.

It has been argued that one reason for this is that public support for business ventures, and the services offered by the banks, are of less benefit to women than to men. This has been expressed in surveys; the Minister of Industry and Commerce commissioned the Institute of Regional Development to make a survey of, amongst other things, how various supportive programmes in which the state had played a part in recent years had been of benefit to women. The Institute's report appeared in 2005.

IMG Gallup carried out the survey, which the Institute of Regional Development published under the title *Konur og stoðkerfi atvinnulífsins* ("Women and the Support Systems of the Business Sector") in 2005. This revealed, amongst other things, that 80% of the respondents had not taken part in the state-run supportive projects such as courses, or received any counselling on the foundation and operation of companies. Of this number, 40% thought they had no need for such things, or that the projects would not be of any relevance to running a business. More than a third reported that they had not had the opportunity, or not been in a position, to take part in the projects. The great majority of those who had made use of the state-run supportive projects considered that they had been of benefit to them.

Furthermore, the findings of the survey indicate that proportionally more women than men had applied for grants; nevertheless, men were far more likely to have received them (81% of men against 58% of women). Also, men received higher grants than women. On the other hand, more of the applicants for assistance from the Agricultural Production Fund, the New Business Venture Fund and the Institute of Regional Development were men. It was revealed that women were more likely to have applied to private bodies for funding for business ventures, while men were more likely to have applied to state bodies.

The findings also indicate a need to re-evaluate the system of public support for the business sector with attention to ways of changing the priorities applied to grants for women running businesses so as to make it of greater value to them. For example, it is a question why the support programmes do not appeal to more women. The majority of the participants in the survey thought it would be best to give support to women in business in the form of foundation grants and advice.

The survey by the Institute of Regional Development indicates that much has been achieved in recent years, even though there are also indications that women do not enjoy equality with men as regards access to capital for business projects. Grants given by the Minister of Social Affairs to women's business ventures and the Women's Loan Guarantee Fund have been of vital importance for entrepreneurial work and new ventures headed by women. It is safe to say that many projects would never have been put into practice without support from these quarters. Furthermore, grants for women's business ventures have been of great value to women running small start-up companies.

Much has been achieved through the work of the Labour and Gender Equality Officer of the Regional Development Agency and the Ministry of Social Affairs, and projects by the Impra New Venture Centre and the University of Bifröst.

The results of the work done by the Labour and Gender Equality Officer show that there is a great need for an employment counsellor with a special knowledge of the circumstances of women in the business world; over a thousand women sought help from the officer during the five years when the position was staffed. The majority of the women who used this counselling service operated service or production companies and most were in search of information relating to the support systems in the business sector and to capital financing. The result could be seen, for example, in a greater degree of collaboration between women in connection with the utilisation of natural products, better access for women in the rural areas to courses on the establishment and running of businesses and a tightening of women's business contact networks.

There was general satisfaction among participants in the courses *Brautargengi* ("Advancement"), *Máttur kvenna* ("Women's Strength") and *Auður í krafti kvenna*, ("Resources in Women's Power"). Experts who have been involved in projects aimed at encouraging women to take the initiative in business ventures consider there is an urgent need for special courses or special assistance for women involved in business ventures, and for these projects to be integrated more closely.

In the light of the findings of this survey, the Institute of Regional Development proposed that the support systems in the business sector should work deliberately to increase the number of women in business, and also to expand the work of the Labour and Gender Equality Counsellor and relate it more closely with the work of business development companies. It was also proposed that balance be established between the sexes in the boards of funds and institutions in the support system of the business sector, and that a forum be established to bring investors

and women with business ideas together. Last but not least, it was proposed that work be continued against stereotypes and outdated ideas relating to women and the role of women.

A committee on the review of the Women's Loan Guarantee Fund and related matters presented its report to the Minister of Social Affairs in July 2006. The examination by the committee indicated that women did not have the same access to capital as men have when it comes to founding and running businesses. It found that the projects which tend to receive support from the public support systems are male-oriented and do not give consideration to the needs of women who are planning to start, or are involved in, business operations. The committee therefore proposed that loan guarantees for women, and also establishment grants, be secured in the public support system, and at the same time that the position, and later the policies, of the public funds in operation be reviewed.

**Para. 1, subpara. d)**

Gender-based wage differentials appear to be a persistent feature of the Icelandic labour market, to women's disadvantage. Measures are needed to prevent gender-based wage differentials; experience has shown that provisions in law concerning equality of pay and a prohibition against discrimination when wages are determined are not sufficiently effective. It appears that gender-based wage differentials remained virtually unchanged during the period 2003-2006. When all the factors influencing wages are taken into account (e.g. education, occupation, length of working experience, age and working hours) the differential was, according to statistics from the VR trade union (Commercial Workers' Union), 14% in 2003, 15% in 2004, 14% in 2005 and 15% in 2006. A survey by Capacent Gallup of wage formation and gender-based wage differentials, which will be described in further detail below, demonstrated that gender-based wage differentials were 16% in 1994 and 15.7% in 2006; the change is not regarded as statistically significant.

Many people consider the root of the problem to lie with those who determine the wages of employees on the labour market. When wages are determined in companies and institutions, care must be taken to ensure that the same considerations are in force when the contribution made by workers is evaluated, irrespective of their gender. In an attempt to urge company managements to work against gender-based wage differentials, the Minister of Social Affairs and the manager of the Centre for Gender Equality sent out a circular on the issue in June 2005 to all companies and institutions operating in Iceland with 25 employees or more. It was accompanied by a poster with the title: *Skiptir skeggrótin máli?* ("Does Beard Stubble Make a Difference?").

Another reason for gender-based wage differentials which is often mentioned is that men make higher demands than women for their work when it comes to negotiating wages and are more prepared to change jobs in order to secure higher wages. Also, it has long been maintained that women are far more likely than men to let their commitments regarding the care of their families and homes influence their conduct on the labour market.

In the light of this, the Gender Equality Council felt there was reason to make a special survey of the frequency for changes of job by men and women on the Icelandic labour market and the reasons involved. It engaged Capacent Gallup to handle the survey, which was taken in April and May 2006. The principal findings of the survey were that rather more men than women were seeking jobs (12% of men and 8% of women). There proved not to be a statistically significant difference between the sexes among those who had changed job during the previous two years. There was found to be a significant difference in the reasons given for changing employers during the previous two years. Just under twice as many men had lost their previous jobs, and about twice as many men (compared with the number of women) gave “to make a change” as the reason for their change of job. More than three times more women than men named their family responsibilities as the reason for their change of job, and nearly twice as many men than women named “higher wages or wage-related benefits” as the reason for their changes.

Thus, the survey appears to confirm the fact that family responsibilities have more influence on women’s position on the labour market than on men’s, and that men tend more than women to change jobs in order to secure better wages. This is in accordance with the part of the survey in which participants were asked what proportions of their time they devoted to housework and to paid employment; this revealed a substantial difference between the sexes, with women spending far more time than men on housework and men spending far more time than women in paid employment.

The project *Mælistikur á launajafnrétti á Norðurlöndunum* (“Yardsticks of Wage Equality in the Nordic Countries”) was launched in 2004 when Iceland chaired the Nordic Council, and the final report was published in February 2006. The main aim of the project was to expand knowledge and understanding of wage differentials between the sexes in the Nordic countries. A comparison was made of the statistical yardsticks that are used to measure wages, together with an analysis of the methods that have been used to “correct” gender-based wage differentials and an assessment of the success of methods used to combat wage discrimination between men and women in the Nordic countries.

In this project, statistical data on gender-based wage differentials in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland were compared and an account was given of the trends and differences in gender-based wage differentials in the various countries. Attention was also given to studies of gender-based wage differentials and their correction in each of the Nordic countries, in which the methods used were examined in a critical manner. An attempt was made to analyse the methods that have been used to remedy gender-based wage differentials. Methods which Nordic specialists consider have had a positive effect include various legal provisions, gender equality action plans, provisions in collective agreements and attempts to raise public awareness.

The final report on the project contains many proposals on methods of improving the assessment of gender-based wage differentials and emphases and improvements in studies of the matter. There are also proposals on frames of reference which are seen as potentially useful



for identifying and assessing remedial measures aimed at redressing gender-based wage differentials. Thus, it seems likely that the project will be of value in developing methods of assessing gender-based wage differentials and ways of reducing the difference between men's and women's wages on the Nordic labour market. The final report on the project can be found on the homepage of the Centre for Gender Equality ([www.jafnretti.is](http://www.jafnretti.is)).

The survey *Launamyndun og kynbundinn launamunur* ("Wage Formation and Gender-Based Wage Differentials") is part of the current gender equality action plan; it involved a repetition of the 1994 survey of the factors influencing the wages and career prospects of women and men. The results of that survey were published in 1995. Capacent Gallup carried out the survey for the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the findings were presented in autumn 2006. The survey was made in January-May 2006 and involved presenting a questionnaire covering wages, job content, motivation, responsibility, changes of position and attitudes towards gender equality to 2,200 employees of eight companies and institutions (four public institutions and four private companies). The response rate was 50.5%. Eighty in-dept interviews were also taken with managers and ordinary employees on the situation regarding gender equality.

A statistical analysis was also made of data from the payroll of the companies in the survey, and the conclusions were compared with the replies given to the questionnaires. Finally, some questions on attitudes towards gender equality issues were presented to a broad general sample of 1,800 in the "Gallup Wagon" in the period between 26 April and 17 May 2006; the response rate was 61%.

Very considerable changes had taken place in the working environment and working methods in the eight companies and institutions which took part in the survey on wage formation and gender-based wage differentials in 1994 and again at the beginning of 2006. The main changes were that the working week of both men and women in full-time employment had become shorter, the number of women in full-time employment had risen and their attitudes towards their jobs had undergone certain changes. These changes should, in all likelihood, have resulted in a reduction in gender-based wage differentials; however, the difference in wages was almost the same as it had been in 1994. When all the factors influencing wages were taken into account (e.g. education, occupation, length of working experience, age and working hours) the unexplained differential between the wages of men and women was found to be 15.7%, to women's disadvantage; in 1994 it was found to be 16%. The differential among managers was found to have grown smaller; it was in this category that gender-based wage differentials were found to be smallest, with women drawing about 7.5% lower wages than men.

The findings of the wage survey also indicated that the difference between the highest and lowest wages had grown larger, being fourteenfold in the case of men and elevenfold in the case of women in the latter survey against eightfold among men and fivefold among women in 1994. In 1994, managerial wages had been, on average, 64% higher than those of machine minders and unskilled labourers; in the 2006 survey the difference was 98%.

Even greater wage differentials come to light when data from the payrolls is examined; there, the highest rates of daytime pay, with supplements, per hour in private companies are nearly 26 times higher than the lowest. The difference between the highest and lowest wages paid to men is far greater than that between women in private companies. The difference between the highest and lowest wages paid for daytime work, with supplements, in public institutions, was nearly tenfold, with a slightly greater gap between the highest and lowest wages paid to women than in those paid to men.

Great changes had taken place, compared with 1994, in how wages and terms of service were determined. In 1994, about 60% of men received pay according to the pay-scales of their trade unions; this applied to about 85% of women. In the latter survey (2006), it was found to be very common for people, and particularly men, to work according to special agreements with their employers and to receive fixed wages irrespective of the hours they actually worked. More than 48% of the men who participated in the survey received fixed wages; this applied to just under 18% of the women. In addition, supplementary payments of various types were found to be far less common, and women received higher supplementary payments than men (unlike the situation in the earlier survey). About 25% of both women and men received some sort of supplementary payments in the form of “unworked overtime” and/or automobile grants. In 1994, 13% of women and 37% of men received such payments.

Interviewees who worked in public institutions considered that relatively little change had taken place over the previous ten years, though they thought many more managerial positions had been occupied by men ten years previously and people were now probably more aware of gender equality issues and wage equality.

Managers were found to be far more likely than before to encourage women to show initiative in their work, to represent the company, to ask for promotion, etc., than they had been in 1994, though they were still rather more likely to encourage men to do these things. Women also appeared to be more likely than before to seek promotion and to attend courses and conferences. It was particularly striking how much interest there was in career advancement (promotion) among younger workers; this applied both to women and men. Managers also mentioned fairly frequently in the course of the in-dept interviews that young women were unlike their seniors; to a large extent, they had acquired a “male” sense of values, demonstrating more initiative, seeking more demanding tasks and striving after career advancement. All this indicates that further progress in the direction of gender equality can be expected. Nevertheless, women were still found to have less confidence than men about their possibilities regarding promotion in their current places of work.

The VR trade union has also made regular surveys of gender-based wage differentials among its members. According to a survey made in autumn 2006, education was seen as an important element in achieving wage equality: gender-based wage differentials become considerably smaller as workers’ educational qualifications increase. Differentials were found to be 20% among those with only basic compulsory schooling, while they were under 10% in the case of university graduates. The main explanation of this is that university education resulted in

greater benefits, in terms of wages, for women than for men: masters' degrees and doctorates brought men a 7% increase in wages and a 13% increase for women. Even though gender-based wage differentials were found to be largely unchanged compared with the previous year for the union's members as a whole, they were smaller among the younger age-groups. Among workers aged 18-34, gender-based wage differentials were 14%, while they were 16% among older workers. In this, however, there is a discrepancy between the findings of the VR survey and the survey by Capacent Gallup, in the latter the difference between the sexes regarding wages was found to be 14.3% amongst workers with only compulsory schooling, 12.3% among those who had completed senior school and 17.1% among university graduates: the gap was found to widen as educational qualifications increased. The explanation for this discrepancy probably lies in the different occupations of the workers in the two surveys.

Job-evaluation schemes were described in the Government's previous reports; one such was introduced in the City of Reykjavík in November 2004. In a collective agreement between the city of Reykjavík and Reykjavík's Employees' Union, the Efling Trade Union and the Icelandic Society of Engineers it was decided to adopt a new job-assessment system and to correct wages in steps over the contractual period, making use of special funding for this purpose. At the same time as these changes were made in the wage system, it was decided to adopt a single qualifications-evaluation system and a new competence-based wage system.

Equal wages, i.e. equal wages for workers who discharge comparable jobs that are of equal value, are one of the cornerstones of the City of Reykjavík's wage policy. With this in mind, a job-evaluation system was selected that has the capacity to systematically evaluate the jobs discharged by the city's employees. Furthermore, the City of Reykjavík has made it a priority to make collective agreements with its negotiating partners concerning job evaluation. The system used by the city is based on a British system (Single Status Job Evaluation) which dates from 1997. The British system is computerised, with closed questions, and is thus designed to reduce as far as possible any subjective slanting in evaluation.

This job evaluation scheme covers employees of the local authorities. It is intended to ensure that employees receive wages that are determined on the same basis, independent of their gender and union membership. The system is far more comprehensive than most, taking various job types into account. Notwithstanding its broad range, it is both open and easy to use. The rules on job evaluation are official, and are explained to the employees, and the same may be said about their importance. Employees engaged on making the evaluations comply with rules on equality and work according to certain procedural rules and rules on the handling of disputes and appeals concerning evaluations.

**Para. 1, subpara. e)**

Reference is made to Iceland's fifth report.

**Para. 1, subpara. f)**

Regulation No. 1000/2004, on measures against victimisation and ostracism in places of work, was issued in 2004 under the Health and Safety at Work Act, No. 46/1980, with subsequent amendments. Following this, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration issued a booklet entitled *Einelti og kynferðisleg áreitni á vinnustöðum: Forvarnir og viðbrögð*. ("Ostracism, Victimisation and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Preventive Measures and Responses"). This states that ostracism, victimisation and sexual harassment may occur in all workplaces and in all occupational sectors; thus, managers have a duty to present a clear message that they will not be tolerated. Companies and institutions are for example able to adopt a clear policy on preventive measures against conduct of this type and make gender-equality plans of action covering these matters, amongst others (*cf.* the Gender Equality Act, No 96/2000).

Employers have a special responsibility to ensure that the working environment is good, both in terms of social and psychological well-being. Employers are obliged to ensure that victimisation, ostracism and sexual harassment do not occur in the workplace and to seek, in consultation with the safety representatives of the employees in the workplace, where one exists, to prevent the occurrence of improper behaviour of which they become aware. In addition, open discussion in the workplace of possible factors in the working environment that could encourage victimisation, ostracism and sexual harassment should be encouraged. Remedies available in the workplace must be clear and it must be apparent to all what measures will be taken if cases of victimisation, ostracism or sexual harassment arise. Policies or ethical rules should be formulated at all workplaces setting forth a position against ostracism, victimisation and sexual harassment.

The Act No. 61/2007 amending the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940 (sexual offences) introduced a general provision on criminal liability in cases of sexual harassment. The term "sexual harassment" has been defined in the Gender Equality Act, No. 96/2000; there, the definition is broader than the interpretation that has been given to the term in criminal law. The provision in Article 199 of the General Penal Code (*cf.* Article 8 of the Act No. 61/2007) reads as follows:

"Any person found guilty of sexual harassment shall be punished by up to 2 years' imprisonment. Sexual harassment involves, amongst other things, stroking, fingering or probing the genitals or breasts of another person, beneath or through clothing, and also symbolic behaviour or statements that are highly offensive, repeated or designed to cause fear."

**Para. 2, subpara. a) and b)**

Many people have expressed the view that gender equality in the labour market begins with an equal division of labour between men and women regarding housework and the raising of children. An equal division of labour in the home has long been regarded as a prerequisite for women being able to make advances on the labour market, and it is also desirable that children should not grow up seeing only one parent (generally the mother) shouldering most of the responsibility for the care of the home and family. The welfare of the family itself rests no less on equality between men and women and a fair division of labour within the home. It is therefore important that women, no less than men, should be given the opportunity to strike a balance between the responsibility of the family and work on the labour market.

The aim of the Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act, No. 95/2000, with subsequent amendments, is to promote equal responsibility for the family so that children can enjoy the company of both parents and to equalise the position of the sexes on the labour market.

The Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act was amended by the Act No. 90/2004. The aim of the amendments was, in particular, to reinforce the leave system introduced in 2000. When the act was reviewed, it was decided not to embark on a major revision of the system, but rather to maintain it in such a way that it would continue to encourage equal participation by women and men on the labour market and to make for an equal sharing of parental responsibilities. Not least, it was regarded as important to ensure that children should have the maximum opportunity to receive care from both parents during the first months of their lives.

The finances of the Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund were secured more reliably than before, and changes were also made to the calculation of payments made to parents during the maternity/paternity leave. These included the introduction of a ceiling on payments; the maximum is based on average monthly wages of ISK 648,000; thus, the maximum monthly payment by the fund to a parent is ISK 518,000. This means that payments to parents whose monthly wages are under ISK 648,000, on average, will be 80% of their total wages during the reference period, as has been the case up to now. On the other hand, it follows that having a ceiling on payments from the fund may militate against the aims of the act if the maximum sum is very low in comparison to parents' income on the labour market. In determining the maximum sum, the view was taken that the resulting disruption to the income of the vast majority of households resulting from the birth of a child should continue to be as small as possible. It was considered likely that a lower reference sum would reduce men's interest in availing themselves of their right to paternity leave, since men generally have higher wages than women. Consequently, this could militate against equality on the labour market, and could also prevent children from receiving care from both mother and father during the first months of their lives. Thus, it was not considered justifiable to adopt a lower reference sum.

Most fathers have availed themselves of their separate paternal leave entitlement: 88% did so, entirely or in part, in 2004. The average length of time they took as paternal/parental leave was 97 days; the average taken by mothers was 183 days, this being accounted for because mothers tended to use a greater share (90%) of the entitlement which is shared by both parents. In

2004, only 17.9% of fathers did not use their entire separate entitlements, while 17.1% also used the shared entitlement. Information from the Maternity/Paternity Leave Fund indicates that more and more parents are making use of flexible working hours when taking leave.

A survey by Capacent Gallup of wage formation and gender-based wage differentials, made in October 2006, revealed that about 85% of participants did not see childbearing and/or the number of children in a family as a hindrance to career advancement in the workplace. There were far more women among those who did see these factors as influencing career opportunities; they saw it as more likely that women's career opportunities would be restricted by having children or by larger numbers of children. Over 40% of the men saw this as applying to both sexes; only 8% of the women shared this view. It can therefore be concluded that women, rather than men, experience these things as obstacles in their career advancement.

An article by Ingólfur V. Gíslason, *Feður sem taka lengra fæðingarorlof* ("Fathers who take Longer Paternity Leave"), which was published in *Rannsóknir í félagsvísindum VI* ("Social Science Studies VI" in 2005), revealed that the mother's position on the labour market was frequently a decisive factor as to whether or not the father would take a share of their joint entitlement to parental leave. In cases where mothers ran their own businesses or were in managerial positions, they felt they were less able to be away from work for a long period; in such cases it was felt to be more natural that the father should take more than his basic entitlement to paternity leave.

The effects of the Maternity/Paternity Leave and Paternal Leave Act were also analysed in the aforementioned Capacent Gallup survey of wage formation and gender-based wage differentials, in which the participants were asked what effect they thought the act had had on the positions of men and women on the labour market. Most (73%) saw the amendments as having improved the position of women on the labour market; there was no difference by gender among the respondents stating this view. Nearly a quarter saw the amendment as also having improved men's position on the labour market; a similar proportion was of the opinion that they had weakened men's position. This view was also reflected in the interviews which were taken as part of the survey. The vast majority of interviewees thought that paternal leave had had a good effect on the position of women on the labour market, as they were no longer the only ones to be absent from work in connection with the birth of a child. Furthermore, men's taking paternal leave was seen as having a beneficial effect on their participation in caring for their children later on in life, so that it would be seen as more natural that they should take time off work in connection with children's illnesses. One interviewee revealed that after young men had begun being absent from work due to their children's illnesses, it was no longer regarded as such a serious matter when workers applied for time off to look after sick children as it had been when only the women in the workplace did this.

It may therefore be concluded that the Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act has had the effect it was intended to have on the position of women on the labour market. It may be assumed that the changes in attitude which are aimed at by the act will take a longer time to become fully established, both as regards managers and employees; this applies equally to women and men. In this connection it is important to bear in mind that under the Gender Equality Act, employers are obliged

to take the measures necessary to enable both women and men to integrate their professional obligations with their obligations towards their families. These measures are to be directed, amongst other things, at increasing flexibility in the structure of work and working hours so as to take the needs of both business and of employees' family circumstances into account.

**Para. 2, subpara. c)**

Child-care services are still for the most part the responsibility of the local authorities.

A new Regulation, No. 907/2005, on the day care of children in private homes, was issued in 2005. Under this regulation, each day-parent is permitted to look after up to four children at the same time, including those already in the home under the age of six years, but with the proviso that there are not normally to be two children under the age of one year. After a minimum of one year's continuous working time, the social affairs committee may grant a licence for an additional child, providing that the day-parent has demonstrated competence in his or her work and provided the children with good care in every respect. The time spent by children in day care may be up to nine hours each day every working day of the week.

Further reference should be made to previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

**Para. 2, subpara. d)**

Reference is made to previous reports.

**Article 12**

**Paragraph 1**

Access to health care services.

Reference is made to Iceland's fifth report.

Women's health.

People's lifestyle, including factors such as diet, exercise, smoking and drinking, have an effect on their health. The diet patterns of the sexes are different, and are reflected, for example, in the statistics on the numbers of people who are in excess of their recommended body weight. Human nutrition surveys taken in 1990 and 2002 reveal that the proportion of women with excess weight rose from 34% to 39%, while the figure for men rose from 39% to 57%. Data from Statistics Iceland show that smoking has been reduced in recent years, with the gap between the sexes in smoking statistics narrowing. In 1987, 31% of women and 36% of men smoked; in 2004 the figures were 19% and 22% respectively. Thus, smoking appears to be on the decline in Iceland as a whole.

Mortality rates among young and middle-aged people in Iceland are extremely low. By far the most people die in old age, which means that there is a very high proportion of deaths result from long-term diseases. Cardiovascular diseases are the most common causes of death in

Iceland, affecting men more than women, as may be seen from Table 9. Circulatory diseases accounted for 41% of all deaths in 2002.

Table 9. Deaths from cardiovascular diseases, by gender, in the period 1999-2001.

	Total
1999	
Total	
Diseases of the circulatory system	792
Ischemic heart diseases	439
Other cardiac diseases	84
Cerebrovascular diseases	185
Men	
Diseases of the circulatory system	406
Ischemic heart diseases	252
Other cardiac diseases	42
Cerebrovascular diseases	77
Women	
Diseases of the circulatory system	386
Ischemic heart diseases	187
Other cardiac diseases	42
Cerebrovascular diseases	108
2000	
Total	
Diseases of the circulatory system	717
Ischemic heart diseases	385
Other cardiac diseases	69
Cerebrovascular diseases	177
Men	
Diseases of the circulatory system	363
Ischemic heart diseases	217
Other cardiac diseases	30
Cerebrovascular diseases	72
Women	
Diseases of the circulatory system	354
Ischemic heart diseases	168
Other cardiac diseases	39
Cerebrovascular diseases	105



2001

## Total

Diseases of the circulatory system	682
Ischemic heart diseases	352
Other cardiac diseases	80
Cerebrovascular diseases	180

## Men

Diseases of the circulatory system	376
Ischemic heart diseases	217
Other cardiac diseases	37
Cerebrovascular diseases	87

## Women

Diseases of the circulatory system	306
Ischemic heart diseases	135
Other cardiac diseases	43
Cerebrovascular diseases	93

## Note:

Classification is based on the European short list and the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9) of 1981-1995 and the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of 1996 (ICD-10). The following discrepancies occur between the total death figures and previously published figures: the 1981 figure is 3 higher, the 1982 figure is 1 higher, the 1984 figure is three higher, the 1987 figure is two higher and the 1989 figure is 2 lower.

Source: Statistics Iceland

Cancer is also a common cause of death in Iceland; tumours are the most common cause of death among women aged 30-44, rather more common than among men of the same age. This also applies to women aged 45-65. There was a reduction in deaths from tumours among women from 180 to 110 per 100,000 during the 1990s. Tumours accounted for 28% of all deaths in 2002, followed by respiratory diseases (8%) and accidents and suicide (6%).

Table 10. Deaths from malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs, by gender, in the period 1999-2001.

	Total
1999	
Total	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	117
Men	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	66
Women	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	51
2000	
Total	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	109
Men	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	54
Women	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	55
2001	
Total	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	108
Men	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	59
Women	
Malignant tumours in the larynx, trachea, bronchial tube and lungs	49

Note:

Classification is based on the European short list and the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9) of 1981-1995 and the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of 1996 (ICD-10). The following discrepancies occur between the total death figures and previously published figures: the 1981 figure is 3 higher, the 1982 figure is 1 higher, the 1984 figure is three higher, the 1987 figure is two higher and the 1989 figure is 2 lower.

Source: Statistics Iceland

The frequency of mortality is higher among men than among women in all age groups, from infants to the aged. This is particularly because accidents are more common among males than females. The external causes of injuries and poisonings are the most common causes of death among both sexes in the 15-29 year age group; the same applies to the causes of death among men in the 30-44 year age group. The difference between the sexes regarding mortality frequencies is by far the greatest in the 15-29 year age group, though death rates among men have declined more than among women in recent years, mainly due to a reduction in deaths

from external causes. In the 30-44 year age group, deaths due to diseases of the circulatory system become more common among men; few young women die of these diseases. Above the age of 65, the pattern of causes of death becomes much more similar between the sexes than it is in younger age groups. Cardiovascular diseases, tumours and diseases of the respiratory tract are the most common causes of death in the oldest age groups.

Since 1964 there has been a programme of screening for cervical cancer and since 1973 a programme of screening for breast cancer. Women aged 20-69 are advised to have a check for cervical cancer every other year; women aged 40-69 are advised to have breast screening/mammography every other year.

In 2000, 33,650 screening examinations for cervical cancer were carried out on 32,418 women; 20,801 women (64%) were examined in the Cancer Society's Detection Centre and primary health clinics and 11,617 (36%) in hospitals and specialists' surgeries. At the end of 2005 there were 91,415 women aged 20-69 in Iceland, of whom 31,262 (34.2%) went for cervical examinations. At the end of 2005, 4,757 women aged 25-69 (5.9%) had never presented themselves for cervical cancer checks. For Iceland as a whole, the rate of attending checks over a three-year period in the 25-69 age group is 74%; the highest rate (82%) was in 1992. This indicates that efforts should be done to raise awareness among women regarding the importance of attending checks regularly through increased publicity. Attendance numbers and rates for women were: 3,271 (10.09%) in the 20-24 age group, 10,578 (32.63%) in the 25-39 age group and 17,413 (53.72%) in the 40-69 age group. It should also be mentioned that 118 women aged 19 or younger (0.6%) were examined and 1,038 over the age of 70 (3.2%).

In 2005, 19,438 examinations for breast cancer were carried out on 19,079 women. That year there were 49,444 women in Iceland aged 40-69, of which 16,214 (32.8%) had breast X-rays (mammography), 107 were examined exclusively by manual probing and 41 underwent ultrasound scans, with or without manual probes. That year there were 41,971 women in Iceland aged 20-39, of which 1,460 (3.5%) were examined: 411 exclusively by manual probing, 803 by breast X-rays (mammography) and 246 with ultrasound scans and manual probes. At the end of 2005, 7,083 women (14.3%) in the 40-69 age group had never presented themselves for breast cancer checks involving mammography. For the whole country, the two-year attendance rate for the 40-69 age group was 61%, and had declined steadily since 1990, when it was 68%. of women. From the outset, the Detection Centre set itself the goal of having the two-year attendance rate for breast-cancer screening at a minimum of 75%. Thus, the figures show that women are not sufficiently aware of the need to undergo regular mammography checks for breast cancer.

The birth rate, or fertility rate, is based on the average number of children born to each woman. According to data from Statistics Iceland, the birth rate of Icelandic women in 1960 was just over four children per woman; by the middle of the 1980s it had fallen to just under two. The birth rate has risen again in recent years. In 2003 the rate was two children per woman; this remained unchanged until 2005, but in 2006 the rate had risen to 2.1 children per woman.

Birth rates have fallen in all age-groups of women of childbearing years, but most, proportionally, among the youngest and oldest. The average age of mothers rose from 27 during the period 1961-65 to 29.3 in 2001-2005; also, the average age of women at the time of the birth of their first child rose from 21.7 years to 26.0 years in 2003. The average age of fathers was first calculated for the period 1981-1985, and proved to be 28.8 years; this has since risen to 32 years. Fathers' average age at the time of the birth of their first children rose over the period from 25.1 years to 29 years.

Abortion was made accessible on demand in Iceland in 1975; prior to then it had been practised, for example, in cases when the mother's life was at risk. According to data from Statistics Iceland, 613 abortions were performed in 1982, 987 in 2000, 900 in 2002 and 889 in 2004. The majority of the women (725, 82%) undergoing abortion in 2004 were in the 15-34 age group. The number of abortions performed on girls aged 15 or younger has been under ten per year since 1999.

Further reference should be made to previous reports by the Government of Iceland.

## **Paragraph 2**

Reference is made to previous reports.

### **Article 13**

#### **Subparagraphs a), b) and c)**

Reference is made to the previous reports.

### **Article 14**

The population of Iceland in 2006 was 304,334, consisting of 150,047 women and 154,287 men; 114,067 people (37.5%) live outside the capital region; of this number 52.4% are male and 47.6% female. The area outside the capital region can be described as a rural area.

*Rural business women* is a project forming part of the Northern Periphery Programme, Interreg IIIB, with participants from Finland, Sweden, Scotland and Iceland. It is intended to stimulate employment among women in rural areas, focussing on the utilisation of natural resources in the broad sense of the word. This embraces the properties of the sea and the land, both as regards production and services based on natural resources. It consists of studies, education and support for small business ventures run by women, and also market analysis and marketing of natural products. The Icelandic participants have concentrated on Icelandic plants and their uses. The project has included education, advice, fund-raising for developmental projects and educational visits to the countries taking part.

The Icelandic name given to the project, *Fósturlandsins Freyjur*, has connotations with the properties of the land and also with the Germanic fertility goddess Freyja and femininity in general. Seventy women took part in the courses, in addition to which three Icelandic entrepreneurs went to Finland as part of the project to examine methods used in the gathering, drying and processing of plants. Seventeen Icelandic women, and also participants in the project from Scotland, Sweden and Finland, took part in an exhibition, *Gull í mó*, which was held in the Reykjavík City Hall in autumn 2005.

The Government of Iceland also participated in a comparative study in five countries on the position of women in business and agriculture, entitled *Women towards ownership in business and agriculture*; the other countries involved are Norway, Sweden, Latvia and Greece. The study compared the position of women in the five countries as regards participation in employment, education, business operations and the support available from state sources. It was financed by the EU's gender equality programme and the Norwegian government.

The Institute of Regional Development made a special examination of how grants from public funds which are supposed to stimulate business development in the rural areas have been divided between men and women. It covered the years 1997-2003. The Institute's report states that grants from public funds have been of less benefit to women than to men, and that the balance between the sexes in the allocation committees, and the funds' rules on allocation, have played a major role in this.

It was revealed that the balance in the funds' allocation committees was approximately 80% men to 20% women in 2002. Also men appeared to be 80% of recipients of grants from the funds covered by the survey and women 20%. The report contained various proposals on measures which were seen as likely to equalise the ratios in the recipients of grants. For example, it was proposed that public funds make use of the services of specialists from the Centre for Gender Equality, labour and gender equality counsellors and feminists with educational qualifications and skills in gender equality issues in order to introduce integrative methodology into the policies embodied in the allocation rules and the processing of applications.

It is also proposed that when allocation rules are reviewed, integrative methodology should be used as a guiding principle, and that public funds set themselves the target of having 50% of the funds for individuals in business ventures allocated to women or to enterprises owned and directed by women. It is also suggested that rules be set on the equal gender composition of the boards responsible for making allocations from public funds.

Women farmers have founded a grassroots movement under the name *Lifandi landbúnaður* ("Living Agriculture"). In collaboration with the Agricultural College at Hvanneyri and the Ministry of Agriculture, they have established an extensive contact network which facilitates communication between them and makes it possible for them to pursue distance-learning courses which the college has organised and tailored to their needs in response to their suggestions. This initiative was part of a programme organised by the Ministry of Agriculture aimed at improving the position of women farmers and encouraging them to put forward ideas

to stimulate employment in the rural areas. In particular, the aim was to encourage them to engage in private business ventures.

The Ministry for the Environment has also run a programme aimed at increasing the involvement of women, and their influence, in decision-making in connection with sustainable development at the local level in Iceland under the *Staðardagskrá 21* project (“Local Agenda 21”), in which the state and local authorities work together. The aim of the project is to integrate gender equality considerations with the work of the Local Agenda 21 scheme in Iceland.

In collaboration with Local Agenda 21 and the Centre for Gender Equality, it was decided to publish a publicity booklet about gender equality and sustainable development. This was done under the title *Sterkari saman* (“Stronger Together”). It draws attention to having women, no less than men, play an active role in moulding society and making their contribution towards tackling the many challenges that face us, both in Iceland and world-wide, if we are to succeed in putting economic development on a more sustainable course that has been followed in the past few decades.

The aim of publishing the booklet is to make people aware of the importance of having both sexes use their influence when decisions are taken about the exploitation of commonly-owned resources. It was published partly in connection with the imminent local government elections, though its substance is in fact not restricted to any particular occasion. The publication was financed by the Ministry for the Environment, and it was supervised by the Icelandic national office of the Local Agenda 21 scheme.

This part of the programme has now been completed, but it has been decided to go on with a new project examining the degree to which women have directed, and been involved in, projects under the Local Agenda 21 scheme.

#### **Article 15**

Reference is made to the previous reports.

#### **Article 16**

Reference is made to the previous reports.

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