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# Summary of Government Actions against Gender- based and Sexual Violence and Harassment

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# Summary

- Legislation on sexual privacy was adopted in February 2021 to address decisively the threat posed by digital sexual violence.
- Legislation on stalking was adopted in February 2021, making such behaviour a criminal offence and better ensuring the protection offered to persons subjected to it.
- A bill has been submitted expanding hate speech provisions and the maximum penalty for child abuse.
- A bill has been submitted to provide legal redress for survivors of violence.
- A bill has been submitted to abolish exemptions allowing marriages of persons under 18 years of age.
- A bill has been submitted that addresses human trafficking.
- The first comprehensive plan for preventive action against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment for the period 2021-2025 was adopted and has received full budget appropriations.
- A special action team on violence was set up by the Minister of Social Affairs and Children and the Minister of Justice for the purpose of directing and co-ordinating work on the implementation of measures against violence. The action team has submitted proposals concerning, for instance, perpetrators, housing solutions for survivors of violence, prevention and education program for parents, children and youths, and measures for violence against people with disabilities. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasis is placed on the development of technological solutions to combat violence with the intent to continue after the pandemic.
- The emergency number service 112 is being reinforced and developed to handle calls concerning domestic violence and violence against children. Information on services and resources provided by public bodies, NGOs and the private sector is available on the 112 website.
- Funding of ISK 100 million was provided to the Women's Shelter to improve access to the service, support construction of a new house, and design of a new emergency shelter.
- The education and counselling centre for survivors of sexual abuse and violence; Stígamót received ISK 20 million to respond to increased demand for its services and reduce waiting time.
- Funding contributions to service centres for survivors of violence: Bjarkarhlíð in Reykjavík and Bjarmahlíð in Akureyri.
- Grants to organisations that work against sexual and domestic violence; Aflið in Akureyri, Drekaflóð in Reykjavík and Sigurhæðir in Selfoss.

- An agreement with Heimilisfriður on treatment for perpetrators of violence.
- Funding of ISK 85 million provided to the City of Reykjavík to finance temporary housing for people without housing with complex needs, including housing for women who are survivors of abuse.
- Awareness raising against domestic violence, by making resources more visible on social media, increasing education and disseminating information in many areas of society.
- Opening of a Women's Shelter in North Iceland as a pilot project.
- Grant to the Children's Home, to expand its activities and shorten the waiting list.
- A communications consultant in sports and youth affairs began work in 2020.
- Working group appointed to strengthen sex education in schools.
- Handbook on the welfare and security of children in preschools.
- Educational material against violence for children and youths.
- Development of teaching materials promoting prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment for upper secondary schools.
- Career development for compulsory school teachers – gender and equality education.
- Awakening campaign for safe and positive use of electronic and new media.
- Law enforcement strengthened and fully funded action plan introduced on how sexual offences are handled in the justice system. The measures include various aspects of the justice system, as well as actions concerning survivors, accused violators, prevention and education. On the basis of this plan, action has already been taken to improve police handling of sexual offence cases.
- Supplementary funding over ISK 200 million provided to add fifteen new full-time equivalent police positions throughout the country, with the aim of equipping all offices to investigate and deal with sexual offences. An additional ISK 40 million allocated to update procedures and investigative equipment of the police.
- The District Prosecutor's Office received funding for two new full-time positions to improve its handling of sexual offences.
- Funding provided for the Centre for Police Training and Professional Development and the State Prosecutor to increase continuing education for police and prosecutors in this field.
- A strategy and programme against bullying, sexual harassment, violence and other inappropriate behaviour approved for Government Offices at the end of 2017.

- One of the largest international conferences on #MeToo was held in Reykjavík in the autumn of 2019.
- A report investigating the prevalence and nature of harassment in the Icelandic labour market, *Violence in the Workplace*, was discussed at the #MeToo conference in Reykjavík in the autumn of 2019.
- The government provided support for a meeting of international women's organisations combating sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, which will be held in Reykjavík 16-18 August 2021.
- Iceland is one of the Global Leaders of the Generation Equality Action Coalitions under the auspices of UN Women. Iceland is a coleader in the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence along with Kenya, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

# 1. Acts, Parliamentary Resolutions and Action Plans

The platform of the coalition of the Progressive Party, the Independence Party and the Left-Green Movement, for their co-operation in government and reinforcing of role of the Icelandic parliament *Althingi*, states that one of the tasks facing the new government is to work on reforms in the handling of sexual offences. The government intends to do this through a new action plan, review and reform of legislation and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which aims to protect women and children from violence.

## 1.1 Acts under the Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice

### Act amending the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940 (sexual privacy)

The Minister of Justice's bill amending the General Penal Code concerning sexual privacy was adopted by *Althingi* in 2021. The legislation was prompted by increased digital sexual violence in Icelandic society. No definitive definition of the term was available, but it refers to conduct involving the use of digital communication to create, distribute or publish sexual images of others without permission. However, such violations can also occur without the use of digital technology.

The Act includes amendments to provisions of the General Penal Code concerning sexual offences, on the one hand, and violation of personal privacy on the other. It also provides for changes to the Act on Criminal Procedure to ensure the efficacy of the amendments to the Penal Code adopted. The Act aims to strengthen the legal protection of individuals in view of the societal changes that have taken place with increased use of technology and changes in attitudes towards sexual offences in Iceland.

### Act amending the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940 (stalking)

The Minister of Justice's bill amending the General Penal Code concerning stalking was adopted by *Althingi* in 2021. It added the following Article: "Any person who repeatedly threatens, pursues, monitors, contacts or by other comparable means stalks another person through conduct liable to cause fear or anxiety shall be subject to fines or imprisonment for up to 4 years."

### Bill to amend the Act on Marriage, No. 31/1993 (age of spouses-to-be, examiners, etc.)

The Minister of Justice submitted a bill on amendments to the Marriage Act to *Althingi*. The bill includes a proposal to abolish the exemption allowing a person under the age of 18 years to marry. It also codifies the principles for recognition of marriages performed abroad. The bill would mean that marriages of individuals under the age of 18 who take place

abroad would not be recognised in Iceland, with a few strict exceptions. The aim of the changes is to harmonise the Marriage Act with international recommendations and views regarding the minimum age for marriage. Furthermore, the bill also aims to improve the quality of examinations made of the conditions for marriages, to harmonise practices and respond to criticisms of existing legislation on divorce proceedings, and to make the Act consistent with the rules that apply elsewhere in Nordic countries.

**Bill of legislation amending the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940 (child sexual abuse material, hate speech, discrimination etc.)**

A bill of the Minister of Justice amending the General Penal Code concerning child sexual abuse material (CSAM), hate speech, discrimination etc. has been submitted to *Althingi*. The Bill proposes amendments to several provisions of the General Penal Code.

**Firstly**, it proposes that when deciding on punishment, cf. Art. 70 of the Act, consideration shall be given to whether the offence can be attributed to specified aspects concerning the survivors personally, therefore making the offence a type of hate crime, in addition to which it proposes. As a rule, it should contribute to increasing the punishment if an offence is committed in the presence of a child under 15 years of age.

**Secondly**, and closely related to the first point, it proposes that the hate speech provisions of Art. 233 of the General Penal Code be expanded to include ethnic origin unequivocally and to provide protection for people with disabilities and people with atypical sexual characteristics comparable to that of other groups considered to need special protection.

**Thirdly**, a similar amendment is proposed to the first paragraph of Art. 180 of the General Penal Code so that the same groups enjoys protection under that provision as under Art. 233 a. This would, among other things, make it a criminal offence to deny persons with disabilities a product or service on the same terms as others.

**Fourthly**, the bill proposes to divide the CSAM provision of Art. 210 of the Act into four paragraphs. The substantial description includes a definition of CSAM and increases the maximum punishment, while at the same time it is stipulated that the provision does not apply to personal contact between young people if further conditions are met.

**Fifthly**, it proposes to add a new provision, Art. 210 c, on aggravated punishment for repetitive violations, to the CSAM provisions, i.e. Articles 210 a and 210 b.

**Bill of legislation amending the Act on Criminal Procedure, No. 88/2008 (legal status of victims, people with disabilities and family members)**



A bill of the Minister of Justice concerning amendments to the Act on Criminal Procedure has been submitted to *Althingi*. Three types of changes are proposed:

**Firstly**, the bill seeks to improve the legal situation of victims in the handling of certain criminal cases by the police and the courts.

**Secondly**, amendments are proposed aimed at improving the legal situation of persons with disabilities in the handling of cases by the police and the courts.

**Thirdly**, it proposes to improve the legal situation of family members of deceased survivors in cases where the police investigation focuses on the victim's cause of death.

The aim of the changes is to improve the legal situation of victims and people with disabilities, as well as that of family members of deceased persons, both during investigation by the police and court procedure.

#### **Bill of legislation amending the General Penal Code, Act No. 19/1940 (human trafficking)**

A bill of the Minister of Justice to amend the human trafficking provisions of the General Penal Code has been submitted to *Althingi*. The bill proposes to expand the scope of human trafficking provisions of the General Penal Code with the aim of increasing protection for victims of human trafficking and facilitating the prosecution of offenders. The bill addresses the description of human trafficking to ensure better protection for victims of various forms of coercion.

## **1.2 Parliamentary Resolution on preventive actions among children and young people against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, together with a plan of action for the years 2021–2025**

In March 2018, the Prime Minister appointed a steering group to examine overall reform of the system with regard to sexual violence. The first comprehensive plan for preventive action against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment was subsequently approved by *Althingi* in the summer of 2020 and is fully financed. The plan is based on Iceland's international commitments, including the eradication of violence against women and children. Its implementation is monitored by the Prime Minister's Office.

For the first time, comprehensive improvements are proposed, based on preventive actions that are integrated with teaching and work at all school levels, in leisure centres, community centres and other youth and leisure

activities. The Prime Minister's Office has appointed a group whose role is to co-ordinate working methods, clarify responsibilities, analyse overlaps and establish good co-operation between the responsible parties in the implementation of the plan. There are eighteen responsible parties, including the following key parties: the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, the Directorate of Education, the Government Agency for Child Protection, the Directorate of Health and school offices.

A special prevention officer has been hired by the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, whose role includes following up on the plan's actions. An editor has also been hired by the Directorate of Education, whose task is to build up knowledge in preparing instruction material to support prevention measures against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, including the preparation of instruction material in gender equality and gender studies.

A dashboard is being prepared for follow-up of the plan and the first status assessment of projects is scheduled to take place in the fall of 2021. After that, the situation will be assessed twice a year with the dashboard being updated accordingly.

### **1.3 Parliamentary Resolution for 2019-2022 on measures against violence and its consequences**

A plan of action against violence and its consequences for the years 2019-2022, presented by the Minister of Social Affairs and Children, was approved by *Althingi* in the summer of 2019. The main objectives of this government action plan are to promote awareness of the issue through prevention measures and education, to improve procedures and handling of cases within the justice system and to strengthen support for victims.

Concerted efforts have been made to implement the plan, including the appointment of a special action team on violence, which is discussed in more detail later in the report.

## 2. Actions against Violence

### 2.1 Action team on violence

An action team on violence was set up by the Minister of Social Affairs and Children and the Minister of Justice in 2020 for the purpose of directing and co-ordinating work on the implementation of measures against violence in times of economic hardship and trauma.

When commencing its work, the action team puts forward seven main proposals, all of which have been set in motion:

- The Children's Home will expand and strengthen so it will be able to meet the increased need for services and eliminate the waiting list that has developed.
- The emergency number service 112 will be reinforced and developed to handle calls concerning domestic violence and violence against children. Among other things, a special website will be developed containing comprehensive information on violence, including information on services and resources available from public bodies, NGOs and the private sector.
- The access by residents in rural areas to services in connection with domestic violence will be strengthened and a women's shelter in the town of *Akureyri* has been opened as a pilot project.
- Increased support will be provided to children in vulnerable situations, with greater emphasis on their protection. One aspect of this will be to increase the support for children who are perpetrators of violent crimes.
- A pilot project will be established, focusing on reinforcing and developing co-operation between District Commissioners, the police, social services and child protection authorities in matters concerning the welfare and well-being of children, with special emphasis on protecting children who live with or have experienced domestic violence.
- The National Commissioner of Police is conducting an assessment and analysis of violence against the elderly and people with disabilities in order to provide them with better protection against violent crime. To this end, emphasis will be placed on raising awareness within the police and the general public about violence directed against these groups.
- Special grants will be provided for projects; including actions against violence, emphasising co-operation between non-governmental organisations and public bodies.

## 2.2 Support for survivors' centres and services in connection with domestic violence

- A new service centre (Bjarmahlíð) for survivors of violence in *Akureyri* was opened in a collaboration between the Minister of Social Affairs and Children and the Minister of Justice. A comparable service centre, *Bjarkarhlíð*, is already operating in the capital area. While the chief of police in *Akureyri* oversees the project, other partners include the Town of *Akureyri*, *Aflið* - an organisation against sexual and domestic violence, the University of *Akureyri*, *Akureyri* Hospital, the *Akureyri* Health Clinic, the Women's Shelter, Women's Counselling and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre. The service centre offers integrated services and counselling for adults who have been subjected to violence of any kind. Survivors are given the opportunity to receive support and counselling free of charge. The service centre is a forum for co-operation between public bodies and non-governmental organisations that assist survivors of violence. It is operated as a pilot project for two years.
- *Aflið*, an organisation for survivors of sexual violence in *Akureyri*, has received support amounting to ISK 64 million since 2018.
- The agreement for 2019-2022 between the Ministry of Social Affairs and *Bjarkarhlíð* in Reykjavík amounts to around ISK 60 million for the contract period. Annual support from the authorities since 2019 is ISK 20 million. In addition, an agreement has been reached with *Bjarkarhlíð* for a pilot project in human trafficking matters totalling ISK 3 million.
- Support is provided for the Women's Shelter with regular annual contributions. In addition, special funding was provided during the COVID-19 pandemic for a halfway house and a new building for the Shelter (ISK 100 million).
- *Sigurhæðir*, a service for survivors of gender-based violence in South Iceland, was provided with support in 2021. The Soroptimist Club of South Iceland is the initiator of the project.

## 2.3 Grants to NGOs and projects involving actions against violence

- The Children's Home, which handles cases of children who have been sexually or physically abused, has received a grant in the amount of ISK 35 million, which is being used to shorten the waiting list, as well as significantly strengthen operations. The grant is part of a government action package to respond to consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic and one of the action team's recommendations.
- At the end of 2020, the Minister of Social Affairs and Children, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice authorised grants of ISK 62.2 million for various projects under the auspices of the Directorate of Health, Primary Healthcare of the Capital Area and the National University Hospital, intended to provide survivors, their relatives and

perpetrators of violence with a variety of routes to seek help and ensure that they subsequently receive appropriate services and support. These projects are the following:

- Web version of cognitive treatment for trauma, a collaboration of the psychological services of the psychiatric ward of the National University Hospital, the National Centre for E-Health at the Directorate of Health and the Icelandic Healthcare Development Centre.
- Parenting skills education, which is available to all parents before the birth of a child and during the first thousand days with the child, will be further strengthened through the website *Heilsuvera*. Emphasis is placed on strengthening parenting skills and by so doing, reducing the likelihood of neglect, abuse and violence against children. Particular attention is paid to parents and children in vulnerable situations.
- Procedures and responses of healthcare professionals to signs of domestic violence will be improved by preparing electronic procedures for domestic violence in *Heilsuvera*, at the Icelandic Healthcare Development Centre and the medical records system.
- An agreement has been concluded on services for survivors of human trafficking.
- An agreement on co-operation has been reached with *Heimilisfriður*, a treatment and help for individuals who use violence in close relationships.
- *Drekaslóð*, an education and service centre for survivors of violence and their families, has been funded through general budget appropriations.
- In July 2020, applications were invited for grants to societies and organisations and public bodies for projects related to measures against violence. A total of 17 projects were funded to promote general awareness of violence against children and domestic violence, strengthen services and support measures in connection with violence, and support the development and implementation of other projects in this field during COVID-19.
- A grant was awarded to educate trade union workplace representatives on domestic violence and human trafficking.

## 2.4 Awareness raising on violence and the 112 electronic emergency portal on violence

- The project: *þú átt VON* (There is HOPE) was especially funded in 2020. The main focus of the project is to share experience of methods that have proven successful in combating violence in close relationships, to form connections between parties, offer education and raise awareness among Icelanders. The awareness raising emphasises showing survivors

of violence that there is hope of a better life. The experience of survivors and perpetrators in remedying and putting such situations behind them with the support of professionals is highlighted and a diverse variety of services offered.

- The emergency number service 112 has been reinforced and developed to handle calls concerning domestic violence and violence against children.
  - The first phase consists of linking *Heilsuvera* and 112.is.
  - An emergency button made available in *Heilsuvera* in collaboration with 112.
  - Survivors are helped to access healthcare professionals safely.
  - Standard procedures applied for domestic violence in *Saga*, the medical records system.
  - Co-ordinated recording of domestic violence = statistics on violence.
  - Notifications to child protection electronically in *Saga*, the medical records system.

## 2.5 Other actions and pilot projects

- The District Commissioner in the Westman Islands manages a pilot project focusing on reinforcing and developing co-operation between District Commissioners, the police, social services and child protection authorities in matters concerning the welfare of children, with emphasis on protecting children who have experienced domestic violence. The project is part of the recommendations of the action team against violence.
- The action team's proposals regarding permanent support for children in vulnerable situations have been approved to reduce the risk of their violent crimes. The National Commissioner of Police will work on these projects in collaboration with the respective police departments, District Commissioners and relevant institutions and NGOs. The proposals are based on a pilot project of the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police which received a grant last summer, to devote special care to children and young people in a vulnerable position, the experience of which was very positive.
- There are three proposals:
  - **Firstly**, rules will be formulated for police throughout Iceland on procedures for investigating violent crimes involving children and youths, and on collaboration with other institutions on crime prevention among children and youths. Collaborating institutions include District Commissioners, social services, child protection authorities, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, primary healthcare, leisure and sports activities of municipalities and other key institutions in children's lives. The collaboration is to ensure the

integration of services for the benefit of children and youths. Special emphasis will be placed on procedures and criteria for the exchange of communications and notifications between police, child protection and schools, concerning violence against children. Proposals also concern developing methods, in consultation with children and youths, to raise awareness of violence among children and youths.

- **Secondly**, information on new procedures and legislative amendments will be disseminated within the law enforcement system. Educational materials will be prepared, and work directed at introducing and implementing new work processes so that employees will have the knowledge to apply them correctly.
- **Thirdly**, training and education will be strengthened with law enforcement officers in procedures that investigate violent crimes against children and youths.
- Proposals for actions on violence against people with disabilities include the following:
  - an analysis of the extent of violence against people with disabilities. An examination will be made of how cases of violence against people with disabilities should be registered in the police system (LÖKE) without violating the person's personal data privacy to enable analysis of reports of violence;
  - professional advice to service providers. Professional advice should be provided to NGOs, both to interest groups of people with disabilities and those who provide services in connection with violence, in the form of data review, consultation with professionals and advice on policymaking in connection with violence against people with disabilities. This advice is intended to ensure that people with disabilities are informed about current services available and make the services in connection with violence more accessible;
  - peer-directed courses for people with disabilities conducted by *Tabú*. The aim of the courses will be to increase awareness of people's rights, self-comprehension and respect for their bodies. Emphasis is placed on inequality and different manifestations of violence and how to seek help for those that feel that they have experienced violence.
  - courses for law enforcement professionals and the judiciary. The Centre for Police Training and Professional Development will hold courses for police officers on how violence is manifested in the lives of people with disabilities. The aim of the courses is to give professionals in the field of law enforcement a deeper understanding of the history of people with disabilities and how violence in the lives of people with disabilities is sometimes manifested in ways different from non-disabled people;

- the course *All About Love*. The course *All About Love* is offered to young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, aged 15-20 years. This is a prevention course against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment;
- the treatment programme *Keep Safe*. A grant to prepare courses and present to child protection committees the *Keep Safe* programme, developed for boys aged 12-17 who have developmental disorders.



### 3. The Labour Market

A committee was appointed in 2018 to assess the extent of sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence and mobbing in the Icelandic labour market. The committee was also tasked with evaluating the actions of employers in connection with such issues in the workplace. The committee's task was threefold:

- to examine employees' experiences of sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence and mobbing in the workplace as victims, witnesses or perpetrators;
- to examine how employers have responded to sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence and mobbing in the workplace, including what action has been taken;
- to check whether employers have drafted written plans for safety and health in their workplaces. This includes a plan for prevention measures that sets out, among other things, what actions should be taken to prevent sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence and mobbing in the workplace. Also stating what action should be taken if such behaviour occurs or has occurred in their workplace or if they become aware of it in their workplace.

The committee decided to entrust the Social Science Research for a study of the above, and the results are presented in a detailed report, *Violence in the Workplace - a study of the prevalence and nature of mobbing and harassment in the Icelandic labour market* (in Icelandic). An action group was subsequently appointed to combat sexual harassment, gender-based harassment or violence and mobbing in the workplace.

A grant was provided to the labour market research institute *Varða* and the trade unions' educational department *Félagsmálaskóli alþýðu* to produce videos in a close collaboration between *Félagsmálaskóli*, the Directorate of Equality, the Women's Shelter, the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health, and 112. The videos will be part of the efforts against domestic violence, human trafficking and harassment and will be used in *Félagsmálaskóli's* instruction for trade union workplace representatives. Firstly, a video will be made concerning the nature and consequences of domestic violence, with an emphasis on the role of workplaces and colleagues in understanding and responding to signs of domestic violence. A second video will deal with human trafficking, to be used both in instruction for trade union workplace representatives and to boost the ability of occupational safety and health surveillance workers to detect possible human trafficking and other abuses. The government's statement of support for the collective bargaining agreements *Lífskjarasamningar* includes ensuring appropriate assistance and protection for victims of labour trafficking and forced labour.

## 4. Miscellaneous

### 4.1 The Istanbul Convention

*The Istanbul Convention* was adopted by the Council of Europe on 11 May 2011 and signed by the Icelandic government on the same day. The Convention is the first binding agreement to take a comprehensive approach to the fight against violence against women and domestic violence. It provides for the rights of survivors and the obligations of public authorities to protect and assist women who are subject to violence; educate the public, the government and professionals; take preventive actions against violence; and offer remedies and treatment to perpetrators.

The Prime Minister's Office has assessed the situation of Icelandic legislation with regard to the Convention, what can be improved and what has been done to ensure the implementation of the Convention. A national plan has been drafted for the implementation of actions, which will be a joint project of the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice.

### 4.2 Iceland leads UN Women's Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence

Iceland is one of the leaders in the Generation Equality Forum, a campaign operated under the auspices of UN Women, the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and empowering women. Iceland's role as a leading country in the project is in line with the government's goal of having Iceland at the forefront of the struggle against gender-based violence of all kinds.

### 4.3 Strategic actions

#### 4.3.1 Projects related to schools and youth work

- A communications consultant in sports and youth affairs began work in 2020.
- Task force appointed to strengthen sex education in schools.
- Handbook on the welfare and security of children in preschools.
- Educational material against violence for children and youths.
- Development of teaching materials promoting prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment for upper secondary schools.
- Career development for compulsory school teachers - gender and equality instruction.
- Awakening campaign for safe and positive use of electronic and new media.

#### Communication consultant

The role of the communication consultant in sports and youth affairs is, among other things, to guide individuals who turn to him/her in connection with

incidents or misdeeds that have occurred in organised sports and youth activities concerning, for example, bullying, violence, gender-based or sexual harassment. The consultant also provides sports and youth clubs with prevention education in this field.

### **Task force to strengthen sex education in schools**

Task force to strengthen sex education in schools was appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. Following discussion in society at large and suggestions from students, the Minister convened a meeting of parties who had actively addressed the issue. The conclusion of the meeting was to have a task force present proposals for actions as soon as possible. The group is expected to submit proposals in the summer of 2021. It is entrusted, among other things, with:

- presenting a proposal for the implementation of teaching in sex education and violence prevention at the compulsory and upper secondary school levels;
- examining how sex education in primary and secondary schools is conducted, including reporting on the attitudes of school administrators, students and teachers;
- expressing a view as to whether, and if so what, changes need to be made to the compulsory and secondary school National Curriculum Guides, the content of teacher education, the role of school nurses, study counsellors and leisure activity workers for sex education at these school levels to be satisfactory;
- making suggestions on how best to present sex and sexual health education.

### **Handbook on the Welfare and Security of Children in Preschools**

The Directorate of Education is working on updating the Handbook on the **Welfare and Security of Children in Preschools**, to include consideration of preventive measures against sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. The update looks at precautionary measures that reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment taking place within preschools or in connection with preschool activities, including trips organised by preschools. Particular attention will be paid to the needs and circumstances of marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities and children with a first language other than Icelandic.

### **Educational material against violence for children and youths**

The emergency number service 112 will open the educational portal [www.112.is/kennsla](http://www.112.is/kennsla). The objective is to make better use of available material and further develop access to educational material on violence for children and youths through the creation of new media material such as live slide shows, interactive videos and games.

### **Development of teaching materials promoting prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment for upper secondary schools.**

Work is underway to ensure that upper secondary schools have access to high-quality study material that promotes prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment and is suitable for upper secondary school students of all ages. Special consideration is given to the different needs and circumstances of different sexes, individuals and groups, such as people with disabilities, LGBT persons and those with a mother tongue other than Icelandic. Emphasis is placed on study material that deals directly and openly with the nature and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. In addition, high-quality study material on sexual health and sexual behaviour will be prepared. The study material will be accessible on the website of the Directorate of Education, open to everyone and free to use. Preparations have begun and the study material is expected to be ready by the end of 2022. After that, work will begin on preparing similar study material for vocational programmes in upper secondary school.

### **Career development for compulsory school teachers - gender and equality instruction**

The Icelandic Teachers' Union offers a course for primary school teachers on practical equality instruction and gender studies teaching in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and with a grant from the Gender Equality Implementation Fund 2020. Among other things, the course discusses gender roles and stereotypes and career choices, manifestations of gender-based violence and gender-based harassment, power discrimination that breeds prejudice against women, harmful images of masculinity and pornography used among young people.

### **Awakening campaign for safe and positive use of electronic and new media**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has concluded an agreement with SAFT, Society, Family and Technology, which is an awareness campaign for the safe and positive use of electronics and new media by children and adolescents in Iceland. The project is part of the security aspect of European Union's Connecting Europe facility. The party contracting with the EU is *Heimili og skóli* (Home and School), the national association of parents, which is responsible for the implementation and execution of the project in formal collaboration with the Red Cross, the National Commissioner of Police and Save the Children Iceland. SAFT has done extensive awareness work on digital citizenship and has recently focused on digital violence especially.

## **4.4 International conferences on sexual and gender-based violence**

An international conference on the effects of the #metoo wave was held in the concert hall and convention centre Harpa in Reykjavík in the autumn of 2019.

Some eighty lecturers took part and almost 800 people attended, making it one of the most extensive conferences ever held on the impact of #metoo. The conference was part of the Icelandic Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers and was organised in collaboration with RIKK, the Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference at the University of Iceland. The conference examined #metoo in an international perspective and sought to analyse why the wave reached the heights it did in 2017 and why the impact varied in different social groups, communities and countries. The lessons to be learned from #metoo were also examined with respect to multiple discrimination, such as in connection with gender, ethnicity, class, religion, origin, age, disability and sexual orientation.

International women's organisations combating sexual and gender-based violence and harassment will hold a global conference in Harpa in Reykjavík on 16-18 August 2021 under the heading *Reykjavík Dialogue, renewing activism to end violence against women*. On International Women's Day, 8 March 2020, the Icelandic government agreed to provide funding for the meeting.

