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Report from the Icelandic Human Rights Institute for the 4th Universal Periodic Review of Iceland

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute hereby submits its stakeholder report to the UN Human Rights Council for the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Iceland in January 2027.

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute (IHRI) was established on May 1st, 2025. Preparations for accreditation are underway, and an application will hopefully be submitted later this year. The Institute operates under Act no. 88/2024, see appendix 2. Its main role is to promote and protect human rights in Iceland, as defined by the Constitution, national legislation, international human rights treaties and other international obligations.

In this report, your attention is drawn to various issues which we recommend be addressed in the Council's deliberation with Iceland. We have included brief information on the various issues and, where applicable, we refer to the recommendations given to Iceland in the third UPR cycle in 2022 (A/HRC/50/7/Add.1).

This report has been prepared in consultation with IHRI's Advisory Committee, which consists of representatives from twelve organisations and institutions. IHRI also participated in several consultation meetings, with the Government Steering Committee on Human Rights and different stakeholders, including youth councils.

Please feel free to contact us at mannrettindi@mannrettindi.is if you have any questions.

On behalf of the Icelandic Human Rights Institute,
yours sincerely,



Margrét María Sigurðardóttir,
Director

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1. Ratification of CTs and optional protocols to CRC and ICESCR

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, Recommendations no. 121.2, 121.3, 121.4, 121.17, 121.18-121.20, 121.21, 121.23, Belgium, France, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovakia et al.)

- 1 In the third UPR cycle, the government accepted several recommendations on the ratification of ICCPED, as well as optional protocols to the CRC and CRPD. As of today, only OP CRPD has been ratified.

Recommendations:

- 2 Ratify OP3 CRC and ICCPED. Consider the ratification of ICRMW and OP ICESCR.

2. National Action Plan on Human Rights

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, Recommendations no. 121.53-121.55 and 121.87, Niger, Armenia, Georgia and Portugal)

- 3 The Government has not yet implemented recommendations for a National Action Plan on Human Rights. A Green Book on human rights, issued in 2023, mapped the status of human rights in Iceland and one of the main findings was that a National Action Plan needed to be formed to better ensure the implementation of human rights.
- 4 In all policy and law making, a human rights approach is essential to ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of fundamental rights. In Iceland, a gender impact assessment is mandatory in certain decision making. However, there is no requirement to carry out a human rights impact assessment. The implementation of such an assessment would ensure a structured method for evaluating the potential effect of proposed laws or policies on individuals and groups, particularly those in vulnerable situations. This approach promotes transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making, strengthens the rule of law, enhances public trust and ensures that legal frameworks are aligned with international human rights obligations.
- 5 The Icelandic government, administrative and municipal bodies have a responsibility to respect and secure human rights. Some municipalities are very small, and it can therefore be challenging for them to render services to vulnerable groups. This, and other factors challenge the implementation of rights and may increase the risk of discrimination.

Recommendations:

- 6 Immediately start work on a National Action Plan on Human Rights, which should include actions towards mainstreaming equality and a human rights impact assessment into policy and decision making in all spheres of society. Observe and implement human rights and broaden the gender impact assessment, to include other factors, such as age, disability, LGBTQI+, religion, life stance, race and ethnicity.

- 7 Make sure that the action plan adequately addresses the present backlash to human rights as well as increasing polarization and intolerance.
- 8 Implement more systematic training among government and municipal employees on human rights and how they should be implemented.

3. Discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, Recommendations no. 121.35-121.37, 121.45, 121.46 and 121.92-121.100, China, Peru, Spain, USA, Pakistan et al.)

- 9 Although there have been many positive developments when it comes to actions against discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes, there is need for more action and resources. To name an example, there is no action plan against hate speech and hate crimes. A national action plan against hate speech, for 2023-2026, was presented before Parliament but did not pass.
- 10 There is also a need for better implementation and awareness raising on the discrimination legislation. Most cases before the Equality Complaints Committee regard gender discrimination. Very few cases involve other discrimination grounds, such as race, ethnicity or disability.
- 11 Both OECD and ECRI have encouraged the Icelandic authorities to raise awareness on the legislation on discrimination and to make sure that the education reaches groups most susceptible to discrimination.ⁱ
- 12 ECRI has also pointed out that the collection of statistics on cases regarding hate speech and hate crimes needs to be improved.ⁱⁱ

Recommendations:

- 13 Raise awareness of the legislation on discrimination and the possibility of bringing complaints before the Equality Complaints Committee, among immigrants, persons with disabilities, government bodies and the public.
- 14 Set up a comprehensive and publicly accessible data collection system on cases of hate speech and hate crime.
- 15 Approve a national action plan against hate speech and hate crimes and take actions to counter the growing prejudice in Icelandic society.

4. Information Disorder and the Right to Privacy

(New)

- 16 There is growing concern regarding information disorder and the spread of misinformation online, which has led to increased prejudice and intolerance. Furthermore, AI can threaten personal privacy by collecting and analysing large amounts of personal data without the knowledge and consent of the persons

involved. Weak security can lead to data breaches and enable increased surveillance.

Recommendations:

- 17 Include media literacy in school curricula and raise awareness on media literacy, information disorder and propaganda among the public.
- 18 Introduce clear stipulations regarding the use of AI in national legislation on privacy and the use of personal data.

5. Equal access to justice

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, i.a. Recommendation no. 121.112, Republic of Korea)

- 19 To ensure equal access to justice, procedural accommodation must be guaranteed for everyone in legal proceedings, both before courts and administrative ruling bodies, see. i.a. CRPD, Art. 13. Also, relevant support must be provided, such as interpretation services for immigrants and persons with disabilities as well as child-friendly remedies.

Recommendations:

- 20 Address prejudice in government and municipal administration as well as the legal system, to prevent arbitration and to make sure that work procedures are followed.
- 21 Better ensure procedural accommodation for persons with disabilities, children and other vulnerable groups, including by providing easy to read and child friendly information.

6. The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, Recommendations no. 121.117-119, Haiti, Costa Rica, Fiji)

- 22 In the third UPR cycle, the Icelandic government accepted recommendations on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and actions against climate change. Recommendations on implementing these rights into the Icelandic Constitution and domestic legislation have not yet been implemented.

Recommendations:

- 23 Provide information on actions taken to ensure the rights of individuals to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Guarantee these rights in the Constitution and other legislation.

7. Solitary confinement

(New)

- 24 The Icelandic government has been criticized for excessive use of solitary confinement, and there are examples of children and persons with intellectual disabilities who have been kept in solitary confinement.ⁱⁱⁱ

Recommendations:

- 25 Ensure that solitary confinement is only used as a last resort and never for children, persons with intellectual disabilities or other vulnerable individuals.

8. Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(New)

The Act on Legal Competence

- 26 The Act on Legal Competence is not fully in accordance with the rights guaranteed in the CRPD. To name an example, the legislation allows the courts to put persons under guardianship due to their disability, which is not in accordance with the CRPD.^{iv} There is also a lack of comprehensive supported decision-making mechanisms and safeguards to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their legal capacity on an equal basis with others.
- 27 Although Icelandic law now provides that restrictions on legal capacity should be time-limited and subject to judicial review, concerns remain regarding the continued use of substitute decision-making arrangements and the possibility of repeated or long-term restrictions in practice. Further reforms are needed to strengthen supported decision-making and ensure full compliance with Article 12 of the CRPD.

Electronic ID

- 28 To seek most services, such as asking for a renewal of prescriptions, applying for assistance, services, jobs etc., you need electronic id. For those who are unable to use those means of identification, no alternatives seem to be available.

Equal access to services

- 29 Municipalities are responsible for organizing and delivering many disability-related services. However, concerns remain regarding unequal access to coordinated, individualized and rights-based support across the country, particularly for persons with complex or integrated support needs. Disputes concerning responsibilities, funding and service coordination between the State and municipalities may negatively affect continuity, quality and access to support. In practice, some persons with disabilities and families of disabled children may feel compelled to relocate to access support and services. Concerns also remain regarding fragmented service systems, insufficient cross-sector coordination, limited professional capacity and continued reliance on segregated or institutional forms of service delivery.

- 30 Despite legislative progress, accessibility barriers continue to affect persons with disabilities in areas such as transportation, information, communication, participation and the built environment. Concerns remain regarding inconsistent implementation and enforcement of accessibility obligations across municipalities, public administration and essential private services. There is a need to strengthen both awareness and implementation of reasonable accommodation and procedural accommodation across public administration, including in healthcare, education and access to justice.
- 31 Concerns remain regarding the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, through representative organizations, in legislative processes and policymaking concerning disability rights. Participation is not always systematic, accessible or sufficiently supported, particularly for persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with high support needs and organizations led by persons with disabilities themselves.
- 32 There is a need to strengthen inclusive, accessible and diverse consultation processes in accordance with CRPD.

Recommendations:

- 33 Revise the Act on Legal Competence to ensure that it is in accordance with CRPD and ensure supported decision making to persons with disabilities,
- 34 Develop accessible and rights-based alternatives to electronic identification systems to ensure that persons with disabilities can independently access public and private services on an equal basis with others.
- 35 Ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to coordinated and individualized support within their local communities and avoid increasing reliance on segregated or institutional forms of service delivery.
- 36 Strengthen implementation and enforcement of accessibility obligations across public administration, transportation, digital services and essential private services, in line with the CRPD and evolving European accessibility standards. Ensure effective implementation of reasonable accommodation and procedural accommodation across healthcare, education, public administration and access to justice.
- 37 Strengthen inclusive and accessible consultation processes to ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, through diverse representative organizations, in decisions affecting them, including women with disabilities, children with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with high support needs and persons living outside the capital area.

9. Children's Rights

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, i.a. Recommendation no. 121.211-121.217, Barbados, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Belgium, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uruguay)

- 38 The Children's Prosperity Act and policies have already had a positive effect. However, it has been criticized that not enough focus has been put on children with disabilities and that they do not receive all the services they need in compulsory school and that provisions of services vary based on where in the country the school is located. There is also criticism that parents do not receive adequate information and advice on the possibility of applying for comprehensive services for their children.
- 39 Children with disabilities and other children with special needs still must wait a long time for a correct diagnosis, and while they wait, they get limited services, at least after pre-school age.
- 40 Although children's right to participation has been strengthened, there is still a lack of systematic actions to ensure that children are consulted in all matters that concern them. To name an example, the public Government Consultation Forum, is not very accessible to children.
- 41 There is a need to better ensure that the school system is fully inclusive and meets the needs of all children, by providing adequate funding, expertise and other resources.

Recommendations:

- 42 Shorten waiting lists for necessary diagnoses and services.
- 43 Adequately finance the school system and provide appropriate and adequate resources to meet the individual needs of all children.
- 44 Establish a special child friendly consultation forum allowing children to comment on proposed legislation and government policies affecting children and children's rights.

10. LGBTQI+ Rights

(New)

- 45 The Act on Gender Autonomy was an important step towards protecting the bodily integrity of intersex children. However, the legislation does not explicitly prohibit all medically unnecessary interventions. Furthermore, the legislation appears to not have been fully implemented in practice, for example when it comes to registration and support for intersex children and their families.

Recommendations:

- 46 To ensure that the Act on Gender Autonomy is fully implemented and improve the registration and collection of information on medical interventions on intersex children and strengthen information and support to intersex children and their families.

11. Immigrants and refugees

(New)

Detention Centre

- 47 A much-disputed bill on a Detention Centre was passed in June 2026. The criticism mostly revolved around the placement of children with their families in a detention centre. Although positive amendments were made, requiring separate facilities for families with children, the Act still allows for children being deprived of their liberty if no other measures are applicable. Furthermore, there is no mention of separate facilities for other vulnerable groups, such as persons with intellectual disabilities or older persons.

Legal advice for immigrants and refugees

- 48 Since Icelandic Human Rights Centre ceased its operations, no free legal advice for immigrants, refugees and asylum seeker has been available, except for services provided by Family Justice Centres for victims of violence. This situation can hinder equal access to justice and increase the risk of discrimination and exploitation.

Recommendations:

- 49 Amend the newly adopted Act on a Detention Centre, prohibiting the placement of all children in a detention centre, regardless of whether they are unaccompanied or with their family.
- 50 Ensure that the new Detention Centre will only be used as a last resort and only for the shortest possible period of time. Provide vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and older persons, with appropriate facilities that meet their needs.
- 51 Provide free advice and interpretation for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to ensure interpretation in dealings with official government and municipal bodies.

12. Gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, Recommendations no. 121.149, 121.192-121.196, 121.136, 121.158, 121.161 and more). Nepal, Estonia, Netherlands, Arab Republic of Syria, Denmark et al.)

- 52 The Icelandic government has approved a National Action Plan against Gender-based Violence. Should all actions in the resolution be fully and properly implemented it would significantly change the present situation for the better.

- 53 Many positive actions have been taken against trafficking in human beings (THB). However, there is great need for awareness-raising among the public on the nature of trafficking, exploitation in the labour market, indications and signs to look for etc.
- 54 Iceland is following the so-called Swedish example when it comes to prostitution. However, sanctions are low and buyers are granted anonymity so that the deterrence effect of the legislation is low. There is a need to promote a change in attitude and awareness on the connection between prostitution and THB.
- 55 Another important issue is that the present stipulations on THB in the Foreign Nationals Act are ill suited to the needs of many victims of trafficking, especially those trafficked for labour. Many of them wish to find a new job and carry on working, but as the law is today makes it difficult for them. There is also a need for better protection for those who do not qualify as victims of trafficking but have nonetheless been subject to grave violations on the labour market.
- 56 According to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, each Party shall consider appointing a National Rapporteur or other mechanisms for monitoring the anti-trafficking activities of State institutions and the implementation of national legislation requirements. Up till now, no such mechanism has been appointed.

Recommendations:

- 57 Fully and duly implement the National Action Plan against Gender-based Violence, by i.a. allotting adequate finances and resources to all actions.
- 58 Raise awareness on the nature of trafficking in human beings and prostitution.
- 59 Amend the Foreign Nationals Act so that victims of trafficking are offered real assistance and incentive to testify against their traffickers.
- 60 Appoint a National Rapporteur for monitoring the anti-trafficking activities of State institutions and the implementation of national legislation requirements.

13. Business and human rights

(A/HRC/50/7/Add.1, Recommendations no. 121.125, 121.126, Japan Malaysia)

- 61 The government's UPR draft report states that a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, in accordance with the UNGPs, is about to be finalised. As is, there is no mandatory requirement in place for companies in Iceland to carry out HRIAs to identify, prevent, and address potential negative effects of their activities on human rights, such as labour conditions, privacy and equality.

Recommendations:

- 62 Finalise and implement a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. Special emphasis should be put on awareness raising on corporate responsibility and human rights protection.

Endnotes

ⁱ See OECD (2024): *Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Iceland: Working Together for Integration*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/96adc300-en>, and ECRI (2026): *ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in Respect of Iceland Subject to Interim Follow-Up*. Ref. CRI(2026)2, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/48802ad4c4>.

ⁱⁱ ECRI (2026), same as above.

ⁱⁱⁱ Amnesty International (2023): *“Waking Up to Nothing”: Harmful and Unjustified Use of Pre-Trial Solitary Confinement in Iceland*. Index No. EUR 28/6373/2023, <https://amnesty.is/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/waking-up-to-nothing-harmful-and-unjustified-use-of-pre-trial-solitary-confinement-in-iceland.pdf>.

^{iv} Plenary guardianship is explicitly mentioned in the CRPD’s Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Austria. CRPD/C/AUT/CO/1, para. 27, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/767045?v=pdf>.

Annex I

to the report from the Icelandic Human Rights Institute for the 4th Universal Periodic Review of Iceland

Annex I - Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CPT	Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CT	Core Treaty
ECRI	Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance
HRIA	Human Rights Impact Assessment
ICCPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances
ICESCR	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
MS	Member States
OECD	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Optional Protocol
UNGP	The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Annex II

Act no. 88/2024, on the Icelandic Human Rights Institute¹

Art. 1. *The Icelandic Human Rights Institute*

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute operates under the auspices of the Icelandic Parliament, Althingi. Its main role is to promote and protect human rights in Iceland, as defined by the Constitution, national legislation, international human rights treaties and other international obligations.

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute performs its tasks independently and is not subject to instructions from any other entity, including the Parliament.

Art. 2. *Mandate*

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute shall work to ensure that public authorities and private actors respect human rights across all spheres of society.

The tasks of the Institute include, inter alia:

- a. Providing advice to public authorities, and as appropriate to private actors, on the promotion and protection of human rights.
- b. Monitoring the implementation of national legislation and international human rights obligations and, where relevant, providing recommendations concerning ratification of, or accession to, international instruments aimed at promoting human rights protection.
- c. Examining the human rights situation in the country, drawing the attention of the Parliament and public authorities to potential human rights violations, and making recommendations for improvement.
- d. Cooperating with domestic, foreign, and international Institutes and organizations active in the field of human rights and promoting coordination.
- e. Submitting reports to international human rights monitoring bodies.
- f. Encouraging, supporting, and participating in research, education, and public discourse on human rights.
- g. Offering individuals guidance, information, and assistance in human rights matters, including on domestic and international complaints mechanisms.

¹ An unofficial translation by the Icelandic Human Rights Institute.

The Institute does not make decisions in individual cases.

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute monitors the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in accordance with Article 33, Paragraph 2, of the Convention.

The Institute also carries out rights protection for persons with disabilities, pursuant to Article 9.

Art. 3. *Board*

The Parliament elects five members and five alternates to the Board of the Icelandic Human Rights Institute for terms of four years.

Should a board member pass away, resign, or become otherwise unable to serve, the Parliament shall elect a replacement. The same applies if a board member steps down voluntarily or is removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Parliament.

Board members shall collectively possess expertise across diverse fields relevant to the Institute's work, including at least three lawyers with expertise in human rights. When electing, care shall be taken to ensure that the proportion of women and men is as equal as possible, and not less than 40% when there are more than three representatives. This does not prevent the election of people with a gender-neutral registration in the national registry. Members of Parliament or Government Ministers are ineligible. No person may be appointed to the Board more than three consecutive times. No more than three new members may be elected at any given time.

The Board shall determine its internal division of tasks and elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. The Board's role is to set strategic priorities in consultation with the Director and to monitor the operation and governance of the Institute.

Remuneration for board members shall be determined by the Presidium of Parliament.

Art. 4. *Director*

The Board shall appoint the Director of the Institute for a term of five years. The Director shall hold a university degree and have expertise and experience in the field of human rights. The appointment shall follow the rules of administrative law. The Director may be reappointed once, without public advertisement, for an additional five-year term.

The Director manages the daily operations and administration of the Institute and represents it externally. The Director is authorized to make decisions on behalf of the Institute, except in major substantive or policy-making matters, which must be referred to the Board.

The Board of the Icelandic Human Rights Institute determines the Director's salary and terms of employment. The Director may not hold any other paid position or undertake assignments that are incompatible with their role.

The Director may only be removed from office in cases of serious misconduct, and the approval of four out of five board members is required.

Art. 5. Staff

The Director hires the staff of the Institute. The Director may also engage experts for specific projects and enter into cooperation agreements with Institutes or organizations on specific assignments.

Staff are subject to the provisions of the Act on the Rights and Duties of Civil Servants. Employment contracts are concluded by the Speaker of Parliament in accordance with the Act on Collective Agreements of Public Servants, no. 94/1986, Article 3, Paragraph 3.

Art. 6. Advisory Committee

The Board of the Icelandic Human Rights Institute shall appoint an Advisory Committee of stakeholders for three-year terms. The Committee shall consist of at least twelve individuals who represent as diverse groups of stakeholders as possible. Appropriate support and reasonable accommodation shall be provided to ensure equal participation opportunities.

The Board of the Icelandic Human Rights Institute shall publicly advertise for representatives for the Advisory Committee. The following entities shall always be represented:

- a. The Human Rights Institute of the University of Iceland
- b. The Icelandic Red Cross
- c. Amnesty International Iceland
- d. Barnaheill- Save the Children Iceland
- e. The Icelandic Women's Rights Association
- f. National Association of Persons with Intellectual Disability (Þroskahjálpi)
- g. The National Queer Organization of Iceland (Samtökin '78)
- h. The ÖBÍ Human Rights Association- (Icelandic Disability Alliance)

- i. The Mental Health Alliance (Geðhjálp)
- j. The Parliamentary Ombudsman

The Advisory Committee shall support the Icelandic Human Rights Institute by providing advice, information, and expert opinions as needed.

Art. 7. *Access to Information and monitoring*

Institutes, companies, and civil society organizations are obliged to provide the Icelandic Human Rights Institute with all information and written explanations deemed necessary to carry out its role under Article 2. The Icelandic Human Rights Institute can also demand the submission of reports, documents, minutes, and other material relevant to its monitoring role. This authorization also applies to electronic data. Data shall be submitted to the Institute free of charge. The Institute cannot demand classified information related to state security or foreign affairs, unless authorized by the responsible Minister.

Art. 8. *Report*

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute shall submit an annual report to the Parliament on its activities and on the status of human rights in Iceland during the previous calendar year. This report must be made publicly available by October 1st each year.

Art. 9. *Rights Protection Officers for persons with disabilities*

The Icelandic Human Rights Institute shall employ Rights Protection Officers for persons with disabilities. These are hired by the Director.

Rights Protection Officers must have knowledge and experience of the rights of persons with disabilities. Preference shall be given to those with professional qualifications suited to the role. Rights Protection Officers must not engage in work deemed incompatible with the position of a Rights Protection Officer.

When supporting a child with disabilities, the Rights Protection Officer shall always act in the best interest of the child. They shall listen to the child's views and take them duly into consideration in accordance with the child's age and development.

The role of Rights Protection Officers is governed by the Act on rights protection for persons with disabilities.

Art. 10. *Confidentiality*

Members of the Board and Advisory Committee and the Director of the Icelandic Human Rights Institute are bound by confidentiality concerning information acquired in the course of their duties, where such information must remain confidential to protect legitimate public or private interests. The same applies to Institute staff, including Rights Protection Officers, and any individuals acting on behalf of the Institute.

This obligation remains in force even after the end of employment or engagement.

Art. 11. *Entry into Force*

This Act shall enter into force on 1 May 2025. Subparagraphs i-l of item 1 of Article 12 and interim provision II shall enter into force on January 1st, 2025.