

The Icelandic Human Rights Centre (ICEHR) would like to add the following information to our previous report, based on the list of issues, in connection to the consideration of the fourth periodic report of Iceland concerning articles 1 through 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

1. (Regarding Part I, question 2.) Examples of measures, programmes that have been taken to combat and prevent discrimination.

In the Spring of 2010, TV series called “Með okkar augum” (e. With our eyes) was launched in the National TV. This started with a few Individuals with intellectual disabilities who participated in a course in film making. The course was such a success that the facilitators, The National Association People with Intellectual Disabilities (Þroskahjálp) and Fjölmennt (adult education for people with disabilities) saw an opportunity to take this one step further. Individuals with intellectual disabilities oversee the programming as well as the filming and technical work. The program depicts current affairs of society with their eyes. The programs are aimed at opening the eyes of the general public for the complexity of society and the importance of all voices to be heard. This is the first TV series of its kind in Iceland where people with intellectual disabilities work on both sides of the camera. Six episodes were made to start with, and due to the immense popularity of the show six more were made.

ICEHR launches an annual radio advertisement campaign aimed at awareness raising on discrimination against i.a. disabled people. The advertisements have been a huge success and attracted a lot of attention and debate.

ICEHR welcomes a new kind of service for disabled people which is provided for by the temporary provision (IV) of the Act for Disabled People no. 59/1992. The provision provides for the introduction of user managed personal assistance (NPA). According to the provision NPA shall in the future become the main form of services rendered to disabled people.

According to NPA disabled people can hire assistants of their own choosing. The disabled person makes the work plan for the assistant as best fits their own lifestyle. The goal is for people with disabilities to live their lives according to their wishes and needs and have the same opportunities as non-disabled people and full control over how the service is planned and designed to their individual needs.

ICEHR however regrets that even though the Act on Disabled People intends NPA to become the main service form for disabled people it is not obligated by law for the municipalities to offer such service. The municipalities can therefore choose whether or not they participate in this project during the induction period which is until the end of 2014.

2. **Regarding articles. 6-8** ICEHR points out that the employee alone may not appeal decisions, by the Directorate of Labour, on applications for temporary work permits or revocations of such permits. Article 34 of the Foreign Nationals Right to Work Act, no. 97/2002, stipulates that the employer and the employee have a joint right to appeal a decision on a temporary

work permit but the employee (a foreign national) can only lodge an appeal against decisions regarding unlimited work permits.

According to the Act on Working Terms and Pension Rights Insurance, no. 55/1980, the minimum wage of Iceland is that stated in the collective agreements. The minimum wages apply to every worker in Iceland irrespective of whether they are a member of a trade union or not.

3. Regarding article 10 – Protection of the family, mothers and children.

The action plan on Gender Based Violence 2006-2011 has run its course. A new one has been made and awaits approval from the Government. ICEHR encourages the Icelandic Government to approve, as soon as possible, this new action plan on Gender Based Violence.

In 2011 the Minister of Welfare issued a report with an overview of the 2006-2011 action plan and the progress of the actions therein. Regarding the question in paragraph 8 of the list of issues, most of the actions in the Action plan have been carried out to some extent at least.

- a) Victims of domestic violence can be accorded a representative to guard their interests during an investigation by the police and also before the courts. This is however only true for cases where the police or judges believe it to be necessary.
- b) Handbooks on domestic violence were drafted for 5 different areas, the police, health care, social services, midwives and for teaching at the Universities. ICEHR welcomes this and believes it to strengthen the situation of victims.
- c) Some research was made, as prescribed by the action plan, and all showed that since 1996 little has changed regarding the prevailing problem of domestic violence in Iceland. The research shed a light on different measures, services and assistance offered to victims of domestic violence. They show that something has to be done to reach out to immigrant women, disabled women and older women as they are not likely to seek assistance as victims of domestic violence.

Although the social services offer some assistance to victims, such as meetings with social workers and psychologists, women have to obtain legal separation to be able to apply for social benefits and housing. For women in abusive relationships, getting legal separation is often difficult since the couple has to agree on the custody and legal residence of their children and sign an agreement on the division of property. In those instances, when the woman is the one seeking divorce, the man delays the process as much as he can by using threats, such as that he will get custody of the children and that the woman will be left destitute etc. as a tool to carry on the psychological abuse. Also it is a problem for immigrant women that it depends on the District magistrate before which they must file for divorce, whether or not they are provided with necessary interpretation, often they have to provide their own interpreter if they don't fully understand Icelandic.

Individuals with low income can apply to the Ministry of Interior for the State to pay the court fees in custody cases but the fees are decided upon by the judge and are often

lower than the attorney's fee so the women/men often have to pay the difference themselves.

ICEHR encourages the Icelandic Government to re-evaluate the procedure in these cases and allocate adequate resources to District Magistrates so that they can provide better counselling, conciliation services and interpretation.

In April 2012, the Icelandic Government signed in an agreement for an awareness raising campaign against sexual abuse against children, the campaign is to take three years and was allotted quite substantial funding. This agreement is in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse.

Regarding paragraph 10 – An action plan on trafficking in human beings was drafted and implemented by the Icelandic Parliament 17 March 2009. The Action plan is valid until the end of 2012. There is work under way in the Ministry of the Interior for a new revised action plan. There have not been any public awareness-raising campaigns about trafficking in human beings and the only information the public has about human trafficking in Iceland is through the media when cases of trafficking come up. ICEHR knows of procedural rules made by the Commissioner of the Icelandic National Police on indications of human trafficking and how to interview possible victims. On the other hand, ICEHR is not aware of any specific training and sensitization programmes in general for law enforcement personnel and border guards. However, the Police Commissioner of Reykjanes has put special emphasis on human trafficking and sent several of their staff, especially policemen, to various training courses and learning programmes on human trafficking, i.a. with Europol, CEPO and OECD. Not only do they emphasize the investigation mechanism, but also the protection and well-being of victims.

Stígamót, a Ngo for victims of sexual violence, opened a shelter for victims of prostitution and trafficking in September 2011. So far 20 women and some of them with children have come to stay at the shelter. These women are both Icelandic and of various foreign origin, and most, if not all, have been victims of trafficking for sexual purposes.