

**Country session: Iceland CRC**

**Date of session: 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (90th session)**

**Context**

The review was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which disrupted the normal planning of the CRC Sessions.

**Background information**

OHCHR [press release](#)

Webcast: [first part](#) and [second part](#)

[Audio file](#)

**Reporting**

*Reporting methodology*

**Standard reporting procedure**

Simplified reporting procedure

**Concluding Observations with urgent measures**

*State report*

<a href="#">Common core document</a>	
Updated document	20 April 2021

<a href="#">CRC</a>	
No. of report	5 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup>
Due date	26 May 2018
Submission	7 February 2019
<a href="#">Annex</a>	October 2018

<a href="#">Written replies</a>	
Due date	15 June 2021
Submission, <a href="#">Annex I</a> and <a href="#">Annex II</a>	11 March 2022

Additional comments:

The State report was drafted by a working group appointed in 2018 composed of representatives several ministries and charged, for the first time, to collect and integrate children's inputs in the report.

The [Annex](#) to the State Party report describes in more detail the consultation process with children.

For more information, read also Child Rights Connect's case study on the child participation process in Iceland's State party report [here](#).

*Public reports from children's rights defenders*

[Alternative reports and additional information](#)

<b>NGOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barnaheill - Save the Children Iceland, Home and School – the National Parents Association, Throskahjalp – National Association of Intellectual Disabilities, The Icelandic Human Rights Centre, The Icelandic Red Cross, Youth Work Iceland, The Icelandic Youth Association, UNICEF Iceland and The Icelandic Disability Alliance</li> <li>• StopIGM.org</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice Advocates</li> <li>• UmBi - children report</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ombudsman for children</li> </ul>

### State delegation

The [State delegation](#) was large and high level. It was mainly composed by representatives of the Ministry of Education and Children, including the Minister itself, and by a representative of the Ministry of Health and the senior Legal Advisor of the Prime Minister’s Office. The Permanent Mission to the UN of Iceland was also represented.

The State's opening statement is available [here](#).

### Committee’s Task Force members

Name & Last Name	Country
<b>Luis Pedernera (coordinator)</b>	<b>Uruguay</b>
Benyam Dawit Mezmur	Ethiopia
Sophie Kiladze	Georgia
Benoit Van Keirsblick	Belgium

## Dialogue description

### i. Character of the dialogue

The dialogue was cooperative, fluid and constructive. The answers provided by the State delegation were focused, technical but also reflective on possible improvements. The delegation provided answers to most of the Committee's questions, and a particular attention was given to child participation for most of the issues raised.

### ii. General assessment made by the Committee

The Committee thanked the delegation for the frank and constructive dialogue. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts made by Iceland to make children aware of their rights and to strengthen child participation, through the Child friendly Iceland initiative and other policies and legislations, including the participation of children in the drafting of the State report. The Committee expressed its hope that the concluding observations will support the identification of the remaining challenges, in order to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

### iii. Main issues discussed

- **Data collection:** The Committee noted with appreciation the establishment of a national Dashboard on well-being, health and the rights of children. The Committee asked whether the data collection system will cover both quantitative and qualitative information, disaggregated by gender, age, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin, nationality, and socioeconomic background. The delegation explained that the Dashboard will permit a collection of data on many aspects and provide a comprehensive overview of all statistics in Iceland. It informed that the Dashboard is an online mechanism which can be used as a research tool and does not have any fixed criteria. It indicated that data of children from 10 to 18 years old will be collected, since it would be more complicated to include younger children.
- **Definition of the child:** The Committee noted that marriage under 18 years old is permitted on exceptional circumstances and asked if the government plans to ban child marriage. The delegation answered that since 2016, no requests to marry under those exceptional circumstances have been made. The delegation also informed that the bill to remove this exception and ban child marriage will be discussed at the Parliament.
- **Non-discrimination:** The Committee welcomed the adoption of the Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin in 2018 and asked how the views of the child were incorporated in it. The Committee noted that discrimination and hate speech is still present in practice and asked more clarification on the methodology used within the Act to identify victims. The delegation explained that different legislative efforts have been made, and that a new Act is under discussion at the Parliament to extend the protection against discrimination. The Committee also asked specific information about LGBTQI children. The delegation indicated being very committed on equal rights and non-discrimination on LGBTQI children, and that different improvements in this policy area were made, in particular, through the 2019 Act on Gender Autonomy, allowing children to register their gender at 15 years old.
- **Respect of the views of the child:** The Committee welcomed the efforts made by the State Party to ensure child participation. The Committee asked whether after consultations with children, decisions affecting them are adopted differently, taking their views into account. The Committee also asked information about the functioning of the Children's Parliament and the Child Friendly Iceland initiative and asked about the measures planned to remove the remaining obstacles to the right of the child to be heard. The delegation explained in detail the functioning of the Children's Parliament and Child friendly Iceland initiative and indicated that Iceland aims at making child participation systematic. It informed that measures in this respect

have been taken and others are still ongoing. As an example, the delegation informed that the Children Act was recently amended for the wording to be more in line with the article 12 of the Convention, for a stronger right to child participation in practice. The Committee also asked whether the government is still planning to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years of age. The delegation answered that there is an increased support to amend the voting age, but the Parliament had yet to reach a majority.

- **Violence against children:** The Committee asked about measures to ensure that remedies are available for child victims of violence at the municipal level. The Committee also asked whether corporal punishment is prohibited by law and about the results of the raising awareness campaigns launched on domestic violence and corporal punishment. The delegation indicated that the campaign was focused on children, to raise awareness on the legal interdiction of corporal punishment. During the campaign, a video was shared in different languages, to reach a broader population in the country.
- **Children with disabilities:** The Committee welcomed the progresses made, including the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016. However, the Committee noted that more than 300 children are in the waiting lists for diagnosis and asked about the reasons and measures taken. The delegation answered that the country is facing problems with the recruitment of personnel to implement accessibility and that this is a priority that municipalities are addressing.
- **Mental Health:** The Committee expressed its concern about the long waiting lists for psychosocial and healthcare for children and asked about the measures taken to improve children access to mental health. The Committee also referred to the pandemic of Covid-19, during which the needs of psychological support have increased. The delegation recognised that waiting lists are a standing problem in the country to be addressed as a priority. It informed that the new Action plan on Mental Health is operational, and that it includes actions in recruitment of psychologists and health care personnel. Moreover, it informed that since 2020, more fundings were allocated to the health services. The Committee also raised particular concern to the rate of suicide in the country. The delegation answered that a suicide prevention plan that covers all ages groups, in particular lowest age, has been put in place. The plan includes specific actions directed at young people, including the mental health promotion in schools and in families.
- **Education:** The Committee asked about measures taken to face schools dropout. The delegation informed that in recent years there was a decrease of dropout. It indicated that the Ministry of Education and children considered it urgent to continue working on reducing dropout, and that a specific group was charged for that aim and of assessing the possible changes to implement school education. The Committee also asked information about human rights education in schools. The delegation answered that human rights and education for sustainability is provided. Moreover, it informed that the Child friendly Iceland initiative is working in cooperation with universities, children and civil society to create and action plan on the development of children.

## Recommendations of the Committee

In its [Concluding Observations](#), the Committee drew the State party's attention to the need for urgent measures concerning the following areas:

- **Definition of the child:** The Committee urges the State party to amend its Law in Respect of Marriage to remove all exceptions that allow marriage under the age of 18.
- **Respect of the views of the child:** The Committee recommends the State Party to amend the Youth Act to ensure that all municipalities establish youth councils and to clarify their functions, responsibilities and mandates, in accordance with the Child-Friendly Iceland parliamentary resolution. The Committee also

recommends continuing to strengthen measures to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children, including children in disadvantaged situations, within the family, the community, schools and the realm of policymaking at the municipal and national levels. Finally, it recommends ensuring appropriate trainings on child participation to all relevant professionals working with or for children.

- **Right to privacy and access to appropriate information:** The Committee recommends the State party to further develop regulations and safeguarding policies to protect the rights and safety of children in the digital environment.
- **Violence against children:** The Committee recommends the State Party to ensure the effective investigation of and intervention in all cases of violence against children, including neglect and sexual abuse and that perpetrators are brought to justice. Moreover, the Committee expects the State Party to strengthen measures for ensuring that children who are victims or witnesses of violence, including children with disabilities and asylum-seeking children, have prompt access to child-friendly and multisectoral remedies and comprehensive support. In addition, the Committee invites the State party to ensure the adequate resources to the mechanisms supporting child victims of violence and to strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes.
- **Children with disabilities:** The Committee recommends the State party to strengthen the support to children with disabilities, in particular migrant children with disabilities, for their social integration and individual development. In addition, among other measures, the Committee also stresses to decrease the waiting time for diagnoses by increasing the number of professionals and by ensuring the availability of quality services for children with disabilities.
- **Mental Health:** The Committee recommends the State party to strengthen mental health services and programmes for children, to invest in preventive measures and address underlying causes of suicide and poor mental health. The Committee also expect the State Party to ensure that the prescription of drugs for children, including for anxiety, depression and others, is only used as a measure of last resort. Among other recommendations, the Committee also invites the State to prohibit the placement of children with mental health issues in detention and to provide comprehensive mental health promotion, screening for mental health issues and early intervention services in all upper secondary schools.
- **Education, including vocational training and guidance:** The Committee recommends the State party to continue its efforts to reduce and prevent school dropouts and absenteeism. The Committee also invites the State party to strengthen measures for inclusive education for all children with disabilities and to combat violence in schools, including bullying, cyberbullying and online violence. Finally, among other recommendations, the Committee recommends ensuring the active participation of children and young people in the formulation of educational policies.
- **Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children:** the Committee recommends allocating sufficient resources for the effective implementation of the Act on Foreigners and for all reforms proposed in the report of the Ministry of Justice on children seeking international protection. The Committee also recommends prioritizing the immediate placement of unaccompanied children in foster care and to invest the resources necessary to ensure that all reception facilities are child-friendly. Moreover, the Committee invites the State to provide asylum-seeking children with age-appropriate information about their rights, and to ensure the training of all relevant stakeholders working with children.

The Committee drew the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas:

- General measures of implementation: **Legislation; Comprehensive policy and strategy; Coordination; Allocation of resources ; Data collection; Independent monitoring ; Dissemination, awareness-raising and training ;**



- General principles: **non discrimination; Best interests of the child ;**
- Civil rights and freedoms : **Birth registration and nationality; Right to identity; Freedom of thought, conscience and religion ; Freedom of association and peaceful assembly ; Right to privacy and access to appropriate information**
- Violence against children : **Harmful practices**
- Family environment and alternative care : **Family environment ; Children deprived of a family environment**
- Basic health and welfare : **Adolescent health ; Breastfeeding ; Impact of climate change on the rights of the child ; Standard of living**
- Education, leisure and cultural activities : **Human rights education**
- Special protection measures : **Economic exploitation, including child labour ; Administration of child justice**
- Follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations concerning the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention : **OPSC, OPAC**
- Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure
- Ratification of international human rights instruments
- Cooperation with regional bodies

## Sustainable Development Goals

Throughout its Concluding Observations the Committee referred to the following targets:

- target 10.3 to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices
- targets 5.2, 16.1 and 16.2 to eliminate all forms of violence in public and private spheres, significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates, to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, violence and torture against children
- target 3.4 to reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being
- targets 13.2 and 13.3 to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning; to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters; to improve education, awareness raising and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, impact reduction.
- target 1.2 to reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
- targets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.a to ensure complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education; to eliminate gender disparities in education; ; to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive environment
- target 4.7 to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development



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### Next State report

CRC	
No. of report	7 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup>
Due date	26 November 2027

**Disclaimer:** Child Rights Connect reports are all drafted in English. If the State report and/or the alternative reports were submitted in another UN language (Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian or Chinese) the report will be translated accordingly.