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| Child-Friendly Iceland  Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| Government of Iceland  Ministry of Education and Children |

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# Preface

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989. The Convention was signed by Iceland on 26 January 1990 and ratified on 28 October 1992. Finally, the Convention was incorporated into law by Althingi on 20 February 2013 with Act No 19/2013.

According to the CRC, state parties are responsible for the implementation of the rights recognised in the Convention. This entails, inter alia, attaining visible and real benefits for children and creating a cultural and social environment where the rights of children are respected, and children can access them.

It is necessary to take a systematic approach to all aspects of the implementation of the CRC, taking into consideration the General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is important for the general principles of the CRC to be the main theme of all public activities and that they be reflected in the attitudes and decisions of those who work with children in one way or another. It must also be ensured that a solid knowledge of the rights of children exists throughout society and that procedures and processes are in place within the administrative system that tie the rights of children to actions and promote the Convention as part of policy development, law-making and all official decisions that affect children in any way. The views and participation of children must be the guiding light in all the government’s efforts to fulfil the objectives of the CRC.

On 7 September 2018, the Ministers of Social Affairs and Equality; Health; Education, Science and Culture; Justice; Transport and Local Government; and the Association of Local Authorities signed a memorandum of understanding on removing barriers between systems, improving services for children and creating a child-friendly society. The aforementioned parties also expressed their will to increase cooperation between the policy areas under their auspices that concern the rights and welfare of children. This was followed up by the establishment of a parliamentary committee on matters concerning children, composed of representatives from every political party in Althingi, and the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs, made up of representatives of the ministries that signed the memorandum of understanding, as well as a representative of the Prime Minister’s Office and an observer from the Association of Local Authorities. In the wake of this, large-scale work began within the Government Offices with the aim to ensure early support, increase integration of services and cooperation in policy development between the State and municipalities on the rights and welfare of children.

On 28 February 2019, the government adopted a proposal by the Minister of Social Affairs and Children to make it an objective to increase the participation of children and young people in public policy development, as well as a proposal that all bigger decisions and parliamentary bills be scrutinised through a Child Rights Impact Assessment. This was a considerable step forward, showing a clear will by the government to systematically implement the rights of children. This plan was made on the basis of the government’s decision in a wide-ranging collaboration between the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and other stakeholders. A draft version was published on the Government Offices consultation portal in the summer of 2020 and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children was entrusted with implementing the consultation with children. Some 785 children from around the country participated in the consultation for the draft of *Child-Friendly Iceland*.

A parliamentary resolution on *Child-Friendly Iceland – Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* was adopted by Althingi in June 2021. This document provides a translation of the policy and action plan annexed to the resolution. Since the resolution was adopted, a realignment of Government Offices has taken place and in February 2022 a new Ministry of Education and Children was established.

The following recommendations are made with consideration to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Icelandic authorities, the Committee’s general comments regarding the implementation of the Convention and the wide-ranging consultations that took place. The recommendations concern all entities that handle policy development, implement services and make decisions that concern children, whether it be within ministries, institutions or municipalities. It is recommended that the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs be established by law, in conformity with the Act on the Integration of Services in the interest of Children’s Prosperity No 86/2021 and given an important role in ensuring the coordinated implementation of this policy and action plan.

# Overview of Proposals

### 1. Child Participation

**Vision:** Children participate actively in decision-making and authorities engage in systematic and regular consultations with children. Consultations should be based on equality and suited to the needs of children, including those who belong to vulnerable groups.

2. Education on the Participation and Rights of the Child

**Vision:** Widespread knowledge throughout society of the rights of children and the obligations of the authorities according to the CRC.

### 3. Child-Friendly Administration

**Vision:** Guaranteed children’s access to authorities and information presented in a child-friendly manner. Children should be able to seek support and counselling from the Ombudsman for Children to uphold their rights.

### 4. Child Rights Impact Assessments

**Vision:** Impact assessment included in standard procedures for preparing parliamentary bills, policy-developing decisions and decisions regarding the rights of individual children.

### 5. An Integral Policy on Matters Concerning Children

**Vision:** Icelandic authorities follow an integral policy on matters concerning children and young people in Iceland that is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international obligations.

### 6. Law Amendments and International Obligations Concerning the Rights of the Child

**Vision:** Icelandic legislation in full compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international obligations regarding the rights of children fulfilled by the Icelandic authorities.

### 7. Coordinated Implementation of Children’s Rights

**Vision:** Coordinated enforcement and implementation of children’s rights across all ministries, institutions and administrative levels.

### 8. Systematic Collection of Data Regarding the Welfare and Rights of Children in Iceland

**Vision:** Accessible dashboard providing a broad overview of the status and wellbeing of children, as well as their rights in Icelandic society. The dashboard should have a systematic effect on policy development and the prioritisation of projects and expenditure.

### 9. Analysis of Public Expenditure to Ensure the Rights and Welfare of Children

**Vision:** Public expenditure analysed in the context of the rights and welfare of children, with a special emphasis on allocating funds to services and projects intended for vulnerable groups of children.

### 10. Emphasis on Children’s Rights in International Cooperation

**Vision:** Authorities prioritise the rights of children systematically in international cooperation projects.

### 11. Follow-up and Reassessment

**Vision:** Regular follow-up and reassessment of the status of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

# Further Information on the Proposals

## Child Participation

Vision: Children participate actively in decision-making and authorities engage in systematic and regular consultations with children. Consultations should be based on equality and suited to the needs of children, including those who belong to vulnerable groups.

Further information: According to the CRC, authorities are obliged to listen to the opinions of children and give them due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Member states shall ensure the rights of children capable of forming their own opinions to express them freely in all matters that concern them.

When decisions are made about matters concerning children, their participation is a key element in fulfilling the conditions of the convention. It is therefore important in all decision-making that concerns children to ensure that they are allowed to express themselves in a meaningful way and on their own terms, both about matters concerning one individual child and those that concern all children.

The participation of children in policy development and decision-making promotes democracy and ensures that more diverse viewpoints are taken into consideration in decision-making. Through participation in public discussion, children learn to show initiative, seek solutions and realise that they can have an impact, which in turn encourages further participation. Children often see opportunities for improvement and progress in their local environment and the participation of children can therefore become a cog in the wheel of development and progress in society.

The opportunities of children to make their voices heard are often limited to different organised councils and groups, such as youth councils and student associations. However, the CRC ensures equal participation rights to all children. From the vantage point of children’s rights, attention must be paid to different age groups and efforts made to listen to the voices of different groups. It must be ensured that the voices of children at risk of discrimination are heard and efforts made to ensure that their views are known when making decisions that concern them.

It is important that children be offered different ways to participate. This can be done through a formal platform, through school and leisure activities or on their own terms. It is important for the authorities to create and support diverse means for children to have an impact. It is in the hands of the authorities to create the conditions for a systematic conversation with children, a conversation that is meaningful, safe, mutual and on the children’s terms.

Children are already actively participating and engaging with the local and national government in a variety of ways in Iceland. Participation is becoming the norm within the education system in many ways and many youth councils are active around the country. Some examples include legally mandated student associations in elementary and secondary schools, municipal youth councils, the Samfés youth council, the UN Sustainable Development Goals youth council, the Ombudsman for Children advisory group, youth councils on specific issues, and those of organisations and student unions. Up until now, the ministries and public entities in Iceland have consulted with most of these youth councils to some degree. However, there have been discrepancies in whether consultation takes place, when and with whom. Clear and systematic working procedures are needed for the authorities’ consultations with children depending on their nature and scope.

It is important to set up a forum for participation where all children can take part in active consultations with the authorities, both on an individual basis and through organised groups. Public entities should seek consultation through the participation forum when drafting bills, developing policies that concern children’s affairs and in the making of child rights impact assessments. Furthermore, public entities should be urged to seek other ways to consult with children, based on each individual situation, e.g. younger children or specific groups of children whom the matter concerns directly.

### Actions

### 1.A: Participation Forum

**Objective:** To promote and boost the conversation between children and the authorities.

Description: A forum for participation will be set up where all children can participate in active consultations with the authorities. All youth councils/advisory groups, youth organisations and children under 18 years of age will be able to register to participate on the participation forum’s website. The forum will, inter alia, offer access to digital education on the rights of children, social matters and issues that concern children, enable participation in questionnaires and offer a link to a child friendly consultation forum, as well as a way for children to make their issues known to the authorities.

Public entities will be obliged to engage in consultations and to ensure the participation of children in drafting bills, developing policies, making impact assessments and other major decisions concerning children. In this way, the participation forum can make it easier for children to participate and for the authorities to seek consultation with children.

The participation forum will be organised in wide-ranging consultation with children, the Ombudsman for Children, youth councils and civil society organisations that engage in matters that concern children. A special emphasis will be placed on reaching vulnerable groups of children and promoting their participation, inter alia by ensuring that information is available in other languages besides Icelandic and in Icelandic sign language, access to a speech synthesiser, and consultation with for example children with disabilities and children of foreign origin.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Children
* *Timing:* To establish the participation forum in 2022

#### 1.B: Survey of Children’s Participation

**Objective:** To acquire oversight of the participation of children at the State and municipal levels.

Description: To evaluate Iceland’s position with regard to children’s participation using the CPAT methodology, a model developed by the Council of Europe. The survey includes examining Icelandic legislation and implementation of children’s participation. The survey will be carried out in cooperation with the Council of Europe through a grant funded by the EU and will include extensive participation by children.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Timing:* To finish the survey before the end of 2021

#### 1.C: A Child Friendly Consultation Forum

**Objective:** To increase children’s access to the Government Offices consultation portal.

Description: The Government Offices consultation portal will be made more accessible to children, thus increasing their possibilities to participate. Children should be able to submit comments just like everyone else and it should be ensured that the material is set out in a way that is simpler and more accessible to them. Criteria should be set out to define which cases are to be published on the child-friendly consultation portal, how children can submit comments, and whether to require electronic identification like on the Government Offices consultation portal. This action is to be carried out in consultation with children, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, civil society organisations, the editorial staff of the consultation portal and Digital Iceland.

* *Responsibility:* The Prime Minister´s Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The child-friendly consultation portal should become accessible in 2022

#### 1.D: Processing of the Findings of the Children’s Parliament

**Objective:** To make systematic use of the findings of the Children’s Parliament.

Description: The findings of the Children’s Parliament will be used in a systematic manner in public policy development. Connecting the planned participation forum and the Children’s Parliament presents an important opportunity, for example by using the participation forum for preparing and organising the Parliament, and also in further processing of the Parliament’s findings. It is also important to ensure follow-up to the findings within the Government Offices.

* *Responsibility:* The Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children
* *Timing:* The working procedure to be ready for the next Children’s Parliament, in 2021

## Education on the Participation and Rights of Children

Vision: Widespread knowledge throughout society of the rights of children and the obligations of the authorities according to the CRC.

Further information: The CRC specifies that authorities shall ensure that children and adults are informed of the contents of the Convention. Particular attention must be paid to those entities and professions involved in matters concerning children. It must also be guaranteed that other entities are familiar with their obligations and are able to analyse their decisions with regard to children’s best interests, as well as for children to know their own rights.

It must be ensured that children are systematically educated on the content of the CRC and are able to connect the rights with situations they experience. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children, schools, youth and sports activities, civil society organisations and others play a key role in this respect. Targeted education must also be ensured in order to increase knowledge of the practical value of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the obligations entailed by the Convention, among the public, civil servants and professions. It is important to use and build on the educational materials that already exist, as well as promoting progressive education through ongoing communication with children. It is also important to publish manuals, educational materials and course materials for different professions that are involved in matters concerning children in one way or another, for example the police, health care workers, court employees, attorneys, social workers, school and leisure activity staff, elected officials and employees of the State and municipalities.

### Actions:

#### 2.A: Education on the Rights of Children

**Objective:** To ensure systematic education on the CRC.

Description: To set out a five-year education plan. The plan should be made in cooperation with children, the Ombudsman for Children, the Directorate of Education, civil society organisations and experts on children’s issues to educate and develop educational material with the aim of ensuring regular education and publication of educational materials that are designed for different age levels and needs of children. Systematic development and updating of the website *barnasattmali.is* should take place. The website is a collaborative project of the Ombudsman for Children, the Directorate of Education, Save the Children and UNICEF Iceland.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs, the Directorate of Education and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children
* *Timing:* The education plan should be ready in 2022

#### 2.B: Educational Material on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Objective: To ensure adequate access to education and information on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Description: Educational materials on the implementation and application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be prepared for children, guardians, professions, public servants and others who work with children. The educational material should be accessible to the public.

* *Responsibility:* The Prime Minister´s Office
* *Implementation:* The Office of the Ombudsman for Children
* *Timing:* Educational materials to be regularly published in 2022–2024

#### 2.C: Analysis of the Education of Professionals

Objective**:** To analyse the education of professionals who work with and for children, make decisions concerning children or are involved in matters concerning children.

Description: A multidisciplinary and wide-ranging analysis will be made of the education of professionals that work with children and/or handle matters concerning children, with the aim to review the training and knowledge they are provided with on the CRC and the obligations of official entities when it comes to children’s rights. The analysis will be made in cooperation with the universities and the academic community, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, professional bodies, civil society organisations and others.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Education and Children and the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The analysis should be ready in 2022

#### 2.D: The Education and Professional Development of Professionals Who Work with and/or for Children

**Objective:** To increase the capabilities and knowledge of professionals who work with and/or for children.

Description: A three-year education plan will be set out for the purpose of increasing the knowledge of staff and professionals of the implementation of the CRC and the rights that children must be ensured in compliance with it. In this manner, the education and occupational development of various professions that work with children in one way or another can be reinforced. The education plan should take into consideration the analysis of education of professionals (2.C) and should be drawn up in collaboration with, inter alia, children, the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, the academic community and professional bodies.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Timing:* Action plan for education and occupational development to be ready by 2022

#### 2.E: Rights Respecting Schools

**Objective:** To promote the systematic implementation of the CRC into school and leisure activities.

Description: All schools, youth and leisure activities are to receive information on the CRC. The implementation of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools project should receive support. The objective of the project is to build a democratic environment by systematically cultivating knowledge, skills and views that help children become critical, active and capable participants in modern society. The Convention´s principles are at the root of all decisions by the entities that take part in the project, and are also reflected in the communications between the children, young people, teachers, leisure activity counsellors, other staff and parents. Methods to utilise this work in a more varied manner, for sports, leisure activities and other activities involving children, will be explored.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Education and Children and UNICEF Iceland
* *Timing:* Plan for the implementation and long-term development of the Rights Respecting Schools project to be ready by 2022

#### 2.F: Children’s Rights Day

**Objective:** To promote awareness of Children’s Human Rights Day.

Description: Althingi has decided that 20 November each year will be dedicated to the human rights of children, since that day is the anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as being World Children’s Day. Efforts should be made to promote this day and increase its use to educate and raise awareness of children’s rights. Cooperation with children, Save the Children, other civil society organisations and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children on the implementation of the day’s activities should be reinforced.

* *Responsibility:* The Prime Minister´s Office, Ministry of Education and Children and Ministry of Justice
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs and Save the Children
* *Timing:* Promotion of Children’s Human Rights Day to begin in 2021

## Child Friendly Administration

Vision: Guaranteed children’s access to authorities and information presented in a child-friendly manner. Children should be able to seek support and counselling from the Ombudsman for Children to uphold their rights.

Further information: It must be ensured that the environment, attitudes, administration and services are child-friendly and take into consideration the needs and interests of children. It is important to ensure that children have access to different institutions and that services and environments that are intended for children are child-friendly. The participation and involvement of children in matters that concern them must be clarified so that they themselves can go directly to the authorities and receive guidance and counselling, without the involvement of their parents if necessary.

The authorities should ensure that there exists an entity that children can go to when they believe their rights are being violated. That entity should operate on behalf of children and offer them support, counselling and assistance. The role of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children in receiving and processing children’s complaints is to be fortified and the roles of other important entities are to be clarified, such as those of schools, education and social affairs authorities, the courts of law, the Althingi Ombudsman and appeal committees.

Children have the right to speak up about their circumstances and to receive support to prevent violations of their rights. Children should be thoroughly informed of these services and it must be ensured that they can easily communicate with these entities on their own terms.

### Actions:

#### 3.A: Child-Friendly Access to Authorities

**Objective:** For the involvement of children and their representation to be clarified and their access to information, rights and resources to be improved.

Description: Authorities, whether they be ministries, institutions, adjudicating entities or municipalities, shall ensure child-friendly access to information about rights and the ways they can be enforced. The involvement of children in cases and their representation should be clarified, criteria should be harmonised and instructions set out regarding the procedure in cases concerning children. Instructions and criteria should be set out in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs and the authorities concerned
* *Timing:* Instructions regarding child-friendly administration will be put forward in 2022

#### 3.B: Advocating for Rights Through the Office of the Ombudsman for Children

**Objective:** For children and/or their parents to be able to seek support and counselling from an entity that will assist them to uphold the child’s rights.

Description: The Office of the Ombudsman for Children should be ensured the finances to hire an employee who will have the specific role of receiving enquiries from children, giving them support, counselling and assistance in having their rights upheld against the authorities. This resource should also be specifically made known to children so they are aware that they have this right. The employee shall have experience and/or education in working with children and talking with children and the project will be started on a two-year trial.

* *Responsibility:* The Prime Minister´s Office
* *Implementation:* The Office of the Ombudsman for Children
* *Timing:* The Office of the Ombudsman for Children should be given an employee who will advocate for children’s rights in 2022 and 2023

## Child Rights Impact Assessments

Vision: Impact assessment included in standard procedures for preparing parliamentary bills, policy-developing decisions and decisions regarding the rights of individual children.

Further information: The implementation of the assessment is part of the requirements placed on the member states by Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That Article requires that public entities shall give priority to the best interest of the child when public or private entities, courts, authorities or the legislator take measures concerning children. The impact assessment thus ensures a systematic assessment of the rights of a child or children in decision-making. It must be ensured that instructions on the implementation of the assessment are available, as well as training and support for the employees.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has defined the criteria for the impact assessment, which, inter alia, states that children shall always be consulted when such an assessment is made. The participation of children in policy development and decision-making in matters concerning them is thus systematically guaranteed. The Convention on the Rights of the Child places the obligation on its member states that the rights guaranteed by the Convention be ensured for all children within their jurisdictions. A special emphasis is placed on vulnerable groups of children when such an assessment is made.

It is necessary to assist public entities and elected officials in the implementation of such an assessment at the initial stages of bill-drafting, prepare instructions and educational materials and hold courses to make public servants and elected officials more proficient in carrying out such assessments. Bills and public policy development concern and affect children to a varying degree and this would have an impact on how detailed the child rights impact assessment would need to be in each case.

### Actions:

### 4.A: Forming a Child Rights Impact Assessment

**Objective:** To systematically introduce Child Rights Impact Assessments and make them a part of the mandatory process in preparing legislative bills, making policy decisions and decision-making in connection with individual children.

Description: A working group on the formation of an impact assessment will be established and will supply impact assessment instructions, criteria, implementation, educational materials etc., based on the nature and volume of each assessment. Children’s participation will be a key factor in creating the impact assessment template and its development will be carried out in wide-ranging consultation.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The impact assessment working group shall submit its recommendations before the end of 2021

## An Integral Policy on Matters Concerning Children

Vision: Icelandic authorities follow an integral policy on matters concerning children and young people in Iceland that is based on the CRC, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international obligations.

Further information: In order to promote and ensure children’s rights, the authorities and administrative levels must operate under a harmonised and wide-reaching policy for the whole country. Such a policy must be based on the CRC, take all children into consideration without discrimination, and be developed in a wide-ranging consultation with children and people whose work concerns children. The CRC places the obligation on its member states that the rights guaranteed by the Convention be ensured for all children within their jurisdictions. Therefore, special consideration must be given to vulnerable groups of children.

Such a policy must be submitted by government ministers and supported by the government. It must be harmonised with other public policy development, such as education policy, sports and leisure activities policy, health policy and fiscal planning in order for it to be part of the comprehensive approach to the government’s policy development decisions.

It is important for such a policy to include awareness-raising about the rights of children across all administrative levels and all public services. The policy must also, in addition to general policy development and principles, entail realistic and measurable objectives based on the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of all children.

It is also important for the review and re-evaluation of the implementation of the policy to take place in an open and democratic forum, using working processes that ensure the consultation and participation of stakeholders, especially children.

### Actions:

#### 5.A: Development of an Integral Country-Wide Policy on Matters Concerning Children and Young People

**Objective:** To set out an integral policy on matters concerning children and young people.

Description: To set out an integral policy on matters concerning children and young people in Iceland, based on the CRC, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international obligations and criteria. The policy should be developed in a multidisciplinary and wide-ranging consultation and the participation of children and young people should be guaranteed. It should be ensured that laws, regulations and policy development better reflect the realities of children and young people, based on their needs and the age of each group.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The policy is to be submitted in 2023

## Law Amendments and International Obligations Concerning the Rights of Children

Vision: Icelandic legislation in full compliance with the CRC and international obligations regarding the rights of children fulfilled by the Icelandic authorities.

Further information: In order to ensure a systematic implementation of the CRC, a comprehensive review of Icelandic legislation should take place to ensure its conformity with the Convention. A special focus will be placed on ensuring that the basic principles of the Convention are reflected in all legislation concerning children, as well as on guaranteeing consultation with children and their participation in the projects of entities and ministries, and that an impact assessment of children’s interests be carried out where relevant.

It is apparent that various laws and regulations must be amended if this plan is to succeed. This includes to require by law the establishment of municipal youth councils through amendments to the Youth Act No 70/2007 and clarification of their roles, responsibilities and mandate. Additionally, it is important to stipulate further in legislation the child rights impact assessments for the preparation of bills and the making of important decisions by public entities in accordance with Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Along with the review, ratification of the Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children of 1996 (usually shortened to The Hague Convention on Child Protection), and the third optional Protocol to the CRC, should be prepared.

### Actions:

#### 6.A: Legislative Review and Harmonisation with the Provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Objective:** To ensure more coordination between the Articles of the CRC and Icelandic legislation, as well as to fulfil other international obligations concerning the rights of children.

Description: In order to ensure a systematic implementation of the CRC, a comprehensive review of Icelandic legislation will be carried out to ensure conformity between the Convention and the legislation. Special care should be taken to ensure that the basic principles of the Convention are reflected in all legislation that concerns children, ensure children’s participation and consultation, harmonise and clarify the involvement and representation of children in matters that concern them, and to introduce a mandatory impact assessment.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Children et al.
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The review is to be finished before the end of 2022

#### 6.B: Ratification of the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Objective:** For children to be able to bring their cases before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Description: The Icelandic authorities should ratify the third optional Protocol and ensure the access of children to the communication procedure of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Protocol provides for an independent process for children and their representatives to submit complaints to the Committee on the Rights of the Child when all available domestic remedies have been exhausted. The objective of the Protocol is to promote the rights of children, especially those of vulnerable children.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Justice
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Justice
* *Timing:* Ratification is to be finished by the end of 2023

#### 6.C: Ratification of the Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children

**Objective:** For the Icelandic authorities to ratify the 1996 Hague Convention on Child Protection.

Description: For the Icelandic authorities to ratify the 1996 Hague Convention on Child Protection in keeping with the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The objective of the Convention is, inter alia, to establish cooperation between States on child protection as regards jurisdiction, applicable legislation and the enforcement of rights.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Justice
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Justice
* *Timing:* Ratification is to be finished by the end of 2023

## Coordinated Implementation of Children’s Rights

Vision: Coordinated enforcement and implementation of children’s rights across all ministries, institutions and administrative levels.

Further information: Incorporation of the CRC into law had the implication that all decisions taken by public entities should be based on the rights of the Convention. Systematic implementation of the CRC however calls for a platform to coordinate and guide its implementation and the participation of children, across ministries and public entities and administrative levels.

The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs should be given the task of coordinating the implementation of the CRC across all ministries, in cooperation with the Government’s Steering Committee on Human Rights, and to follow up on the implementation of the Convention, assist public entities in making child rights impact assessments and work with public entities to ensure active, significant and responsible participation of children. The role of coordinator is recommended to be in line with the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to Iceland in 2011, where the Committee recommended that a permanent "system" be established that would have the role of coordinating the implementation of children's rights across all institutions and administrative levels.

### Actions:

#### 7.A: Coordinator

**Objective:** To ensure a coordinated implementation of children’s rights

Description: The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs should be established by law and given the role of coordinator. Systematic implementation of the CRC within the administration system calls for the existence of a platform to coordinate and guide its implementation and the participation of children in the process across ministries, public entities and administrative levels. The Steering Committee will thus become the entity that will ensure the enforcement of this policy. Staff should be hired for the Steering Committee to ensure it can carry out this task.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Children
* *Timing:* The Steering Committee should be established by law in 2021

#### 7.B: Follow-up to the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

**Objective:** To respond systematically to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Description: The working group that drew up the government’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child is to be entrusted with submitting an action plan on how the authorities intend to respond to the Committee’s concluding observations after its assessment in 2022.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Justice
* *Implementation:* Government Offices Steering Committee on Human Rights
* *Timing:* For the action plan to be ready less than a year after receipt of the final observations

#### 7.C: Child Friendly Municipalities

**Objective:** For all municipalities to systematically implement the CRC.

Description: An effort will be made to get all municipalities in Iceland to embark on a systematic implementation of the CRC as part of the *Child Friendly Cities Initiative*. All municipalities should be offered focused counselling and education by the Icelandic government and UNICEF Iceland for the implementation of the project.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Education and Children and UNICEF Iceland
* *Timing:* For child friendly municipalities to reach at least 80 % of children in Iceland in 2024

## Systematic Acquisition of Data Regarding the Welfare and Rights of Children in Iceland

Vision: Accessible dashboard providing a broad overview of the status and wellbeing of children, as well as their rights in Icelandic society. The dashboard should have a systematic effect on policy development and the prioritisation of projects and expenditure.

Further information: It is necessary to have an extensive database covering the wellbeing and rights of children at any given time in order to ensure increased equality and systematic action for the good of children, especially ones who are at risk of being discriminated against. Authorities should finish the ongoing work on the country-wide dashboard that will ensure access to the principal wellbeing indicators, and this information should be used as a reference in the prioritisation/financing of projects and public policy development.

Efforts should be made to promote research into the health and situation of children and young people so that public prioritisation and policy development is systematically supported by field-tested knowledge.

### Actions:

#### 8.A: Dashboard

**Objective:** To make available a comprehensive statistical overview of the wellbeing, health and rights of children in Iceland. The statistical data should be made available through a dashboard.

Description: Each municipality should have a child=wellbeing dashboard, based on the dashboard that has been under development over the past few years. In smaller municipalities, specific areas will be used for data protection purposes. The dashboard should systematically publish anonymous statistical data on children. At the same time, a dashboard will be developed to gather information on the status of children at the national level, using the same criteria as for the municipal dashboards. The dashboard should show wellbeing indicators on the status and rights of children and be used as a reference in public prioritisation of projects and policy development. The dashboard would thus be used as a roadmap within the public administration.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Education and Children and the Government Steering Group on a Children’s Wellbeing Dashboard
* *Timing:* The dashboard is to be ready before the end of 2022

## Child Rights Budgeting to Ensure the Rights and Welfare of Children

Vision: Public expenditure analysed in the context of the rights and welfare of children, with a special emphasis on allocating funds to services and projects intended for vulnerable groups of children.

Further information: Budget-making entails a decision on government prioritisation and according to Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the CRC member states must ensure prioritisation for the good of children and ensure necessary financing as much as possible. Efforts should be made to understand the effects financing decisions can have by analysing the State budget with regard to children's rights. This should be done by analysing the allocation of funds for services and projects that concern children. Such an analysis would be, inter alia, based on statistical data and information about the status of vulnerable groups of children.

A comparison of this kind is an important policy instrument in the making of decisions that concern children’s rights. This also applies to public transfer systems and to policy areas that specifically concern children’s rights.

### Actions:

#### 9.A: Child Rights Budgeting

**Objective:** To develop a procedure that aims to analyse public expenditure in the context of the rights and welfare of children, placing special emphasis on examining the allocation of funds to services and projects aimed at vulnerable groups of children.

Description: To develop a procedure that aims to analyse the state budget in the context of the rights and wellbeing of children, placing special emphasis on examining the allocation of funds to services and projects aimed at vulnerable groups of children. For the authorities, the procedure could facilitate comparison of the allocation of funds to miscellaneous services for children between years, periods and regions/neighbourhoods. This kind of comparison is an important policy instrument in decision-making that concerns the rights of children and has been in development in many other countries. The procedure also complies with the requirements of the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Children
* *Timing:* To develop a procedure that will be in use until 2024

## Emphasis on Children’s Rights in International Cooperation

Vision: Authorities prioritise the rights of children systematically in international cooperation projects.

Further information: Human rights is one of the cornerstones of Icelandic foreign policy and international cooperation. International cooperation projects that have the aim of furthering the protection and promotion of human rights are carried out across all ministries and in cooperation with, inter alia, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Nordic Council. This work has created a strong position for Iceland in the international arena with regard to human rights, not the least as regards gender equality and matters concerning the LGBTI+ community.

In the worldwide context, Iceland is also commonly looked upon as one of the leaders with regard to the rights and wellbeing of children. This position has been reinforced in Iceland in the last several years, though the increased emphasis on matters concerning children, Iceland’s standing on international indexes such as the KidsRights Index, Iceland’s representation on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and a number of international acknowledgements for the operation of the Children's House.

In light of this strategy, the government’s strong emphasis on the welfare and rights of children, the focus areas of Iceland’s foreign policy and the observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, it is important to take steps towards prioritising child rights and the welfare of children even further in international cooperation. Iceland has, on the basis of the numerous development projects sponsored by the government in this sector, a strong ability to assume an even more powerful role with regard to the human rights and wellbeing of children in the international community, in active communication and collaboration with children.

### Actions:

#### 10.A: Emphasis on Child Rights and Welfare in International Cooperation

**Objective:** For Iceland to take the lead in bringing attention to the wellbeing and rights of children in international cooperation.

Description: The Icelandic government shall devise a plan on how Iceland can become a leader in international cooperation with regard to the wellbeing and rights of children and the international lobbying that goes with it, with an emphasis on innovation and integration in welfare services for children and the importance of children’s participation in public policy development.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The plan should be ready by 2021

#### 10.B: An Emphasis on Children in Iceland’s Development Cooperation

**Objective:** For Iceland to make the rights and wellbeing of children a basic principle of human rights-oriented development cooperation.

Description: The 2019–2023 policy for Iceland’s international development cooperation provides that Iceland should base its policy on human rights and put a special emphasis on vulnerable groups, gender equality and children’s rights. On this basis, systematic support is given to projects that promote the welfare of children and young people in bilateral development cooperation and collaboration with the UN subsidiary organs, including UNICEF. The strategic guidelines for Iceland’s human rights-oriented development cooperation are being formed and one of their main components will be children’s rights.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry for Foreign Affairs
* *Implementation:* The Ministry for Foreign Affairs
* *Timing:* To finalise the strategic guidelines for human rights-oriented development cooperation in 2021

## Follow-up and Reassessment

Vision: Regular follow-up and reassessment of the status of the implementation of the CRC.

Further information: During the implementation of this strategy, new knowledge will be created that must be used in the review of its actions and the implementation as a whole. It is important to utilise the experience in overcoming obstacles that will be accumulated, and to ensure consultation and cooperation on solutions that have been proven effective.

It is important to carry out regular assessments of the results and take action if necessary. The internal and external environment can change in various ways, problems can come up, things can progress differently than expected and budget resources can change. The progress of the implementation must be regularly reported and it must be ensured that the status analysis is accessible, transparent and public.

### Actions:

#### 11.A: The Minister’s Annual Report on the Implementation of the CRC

**Objective:** Ensure follow-up to the implementation of the Convention.

Description: The Government Steering Group on Matters Concerning Children makes an annual call for information from the ministries on the implementation of the CRC. The Minister who is responsible for the Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs at each time then submits an annual report on the status of the implementation of the CRC. The report will also be part of the government’s systematic preparation for regular hearings before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* The first annual report is to be submitted in 2022

#### 11.B: A Regular Survey of the Implementation within Ministries, Institutions and Municipalities

**Objective:** The process of the implementation of the CRC by the authorities and municipalities is to be surveyed regularly.

Description: The Office of the Ombudsman for Children is to carry out regular status assessments of the implementation of the CRC in order to oversee the development and examine the implementation of the Convention. The assessment should reach the ministries, institutions and municipalities.

* *Responsibility:* The Prime Minister´s Office
* *Implementation:* The Office of the Ombudsman for Children
* *Timing:* To be carried out every second year with the next one taking place in 2022

#### 11.C: A Survey Among Children on the Implementation of the CRC

**Objective:** Regular surveying of the knowledge children have of their rights and their experience of the implementation of the Convention.

Description: The participation platform is to be used to survey how well children know their rights, as well as their experience of the implementation of the Convention. Surveying is to be carried out regularly so that the developments can be overseen and measures taken.

* *Responsibility:* The Ministry of Education and Children
* *Implementation:* The Government Offices Steering Committee on Children’s Affairs
* *Timing:* To be carried out every second year with the next one taking place in 2022