

# **Parliamentary Resolution**

## **on a four-year action plan to improve the situation of children and young persons.**

The Alþingi resolves to approve the following four-year action plan, covering the years 2007-2011, to improve the situation of children and young persons and their families in Iceland. The measures to be taken are based in part on their rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **I. General measures and consultation.**

In order to promote the coordination and following-up of measures in the interests of children and families with children, which are taken under the auspices of the government offices, a consultative group shall be appointed, consisting of representatives of the Ministers of Social Affairs, Health and Social Security, Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Finance and Education, Culture and Science. The chairman of the group shall be appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs.

The consultative group shall examine the recommendations made by the UN Committee on Children's Rights of January 2003 regarding the application of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Iceland, the Recommendation (2006) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on policy to support positive parenting and the Council of Europe's Draft Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. The consultative group shall make proposals on how to respond to these international conventions in order to improve the situation of children and support parents in their child-raising role.

Furthermore, it is resolved that proposals should be formulated in joint consultation involving the state, the social partners and the municipalities, on measures to integrate the demands of employment with those of family responsibilities, and on services to families with children. In particular, attention should be given to methods of ensuring that enterprises set themselves policies regarding family responsibilities, shortening working time and making working hours more flexible, and to methods of ensuring that parents are better able to take care of their children, e.g. in cases where children are ill or disabled.

In order best to guarantee the welfare of children and young persons, work is to proceed on the execution of individual projects under the relevant ministries, being based on the following measures in particular.

### **II. Measures to improve the financial position of families with children.**

1. The financial position of families with children is to be improved by, among other things, raising the rate of child benefit for low-income families.
2. Children's dental protection is to be improved through free check-ups, preventive measures and additional subsidies of dental repair for children. The results of the MUNNÍS study and the aims of the current health programme should be used as guidelines.
3. Pupils in secondary school are to receive support towards the purchase of books and other educational materials.
4. A committee is to be appointed to examine the situation of single and non-custodial parents and the legal position of their children.

### **III. Measures for the benefit of children, young persons and parents and support for those involved in raising children.**

1. Maternity and paternity leave should be lengthened in stages over the current electoral period.
2. Steps are to be taken towards making available to parents counselling services on parenting and training in parental skills in the form of special courses designed to cover the various stages in the

child's live. Particular emphasis is to be placed on education and advice for first-time parents, parents of teenagers and parents of children with special needs. The aim shall be that this counselling and these services should be available to parents independent of where they live, and that they should be organised in conjunction with the operations of the primary health-care centres, schools and/or the municipalities' social services.

3. Measures shall be directed towards making training available for the staff of the infant health services, kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools, to enable them to give information to parents on the care of children, including advice in connection with children's behavioural problems.

#### **IV. General preventive measures.**

1. Emphasis should be placed on improving the health of children and young persons in the community, this including increasing the amount of exercise they take and improving their nutrition and diet. Special attention should be placed on raising awareness of the risk of obesity, the prevention of weight problems and improved methods of treating such problems. Children's and young person's access to healthy food at all times should be increased.
2. Steps should be taken towards ensuring a smoke-free environment for children and young persons, with continuing preventive measures against smoking. Young persons shall be given appropriate information about the effects and consequences of alcohol consumption, as well as of illegal drugs and intoxicants, similar to the legally-prescribed information campaigns in the primary schools against smoking; in addition, attention should be given to preventing access to alcohol by young persons under the legal age.
3. Increased preventive measures should be taken to improve the health and well-being of children and young persons. Particular emphasis should be placed on general preventive measures and awareness-raising in the community concerning mental and social well-being. This should be done by placing greater emphasis on mental health, including healthy leisure activities and the constructive use of free time and participation by the whole family in recreation and domestic tasks. The aim is to achieve improved access for children and young persons to sports and social activities in collaboration with non-governmental organisations and the municipalities, this applying not least to individuals with poor financial resources.

#### **V. Measures to benefit children and young persons with mental disturbances and developmental disorders, and chronically ill children.**

1. The structure of services for children suffering from mental disturbances and developmental disorders should be examined with special attention to the arrangements for diagnosis and remedial treatment. Ways should be sought to build up specialist collaboration between various service-providers and administrative levels and to increase collaboration between all those involved in providing and making use of these services.
2. The examination of the arrangements for primary health services in the various regions of the country for children and young persons with mental and behavioural problems should be completed. On this basis of this examination, decisions should be taken on the structure of collaboration in which the responsibilities of the service providers towards the recipients of the services should be clearly stated.
3. Special measures should be taken immediately in order to shorten the waiting lists for services in the Children's and Young Person's Psychiatric Department (BUGL) of Landspítalinn (the National and University Hospital). The management of Landspítalinn should be commissioned to work at this project so that a better balance between supply and demand for these services can be achieved.
4. Emphasis should be placed on upgrading follow-up monitoring of children and young persons with mental disturbances by the health clinics, the schools and the municipalities following their