

The City of Reykjavik's Human Rights Policy

May 16th, 2006

Section One

1. Foundation of the City of Reykjavik's Human Rights Policy

Human rights are protected by the Icelandic constitution, as well as numerous human rights conventions and declarations Iceland is a party to. These international conventions and the clauses in the constitution pertaining to human rights are used as the foundation for the City of Reykjavik's human rights policy. This policy is based on the principle of equality and aims to allow all persons to enjoy their human rights regardless of origin, nationality, skin colour, religious and political beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, financial situation, heritage, disability, state of health or any other status. The City of Reykjavik has the equality of its citizens and the protection of human rights as its guide and is resolved to be at the forefront on issues of human rights, with special emphasis on the equal status of women and men. Through working towards a uniform human rights policy, emphasis is placed on a coordinated vision for the benefit of city inhabitants, insomuch as many of them belong to more than one of the groups it covers.

1.1 The City's vision statement on its comprehensive policy map is that "Reykjavik is an international city where the inhabitants' needs, wants and quality of life take top priority". Its human rights policy is based on this vision, along with other municipal strategies.

1.2 This human rights policy is based on, among other things, the Act on the Equal Status of Women and Men (no. 96/2000). Emphasis on the equal rights of women and men shall be visible in all operations of the City, and gender status is to be examined specifically within all those groups covered by the policy.

1.3 City authorities commit themselves to working towards the advancement of human rights in four main areas, each of them reflecting the manifold roles and responsibilities of the municipality: as government authority, as employer, as provider of services and as cooperative partner with those who wish to exert themselves in the interest of human rights.

a) The City of Reykjavik as Government Authority:

The City of Reykjavik will exercise its authority on the basis of equality, human rights and positive cooperation with city inhabitants and is resolved to be at the forefront in this area.

b) The City of Reykjavik as Employer

The City of Reykjavík will work towards gender equality in the workplace and ensure that it reflects the diverse society that makes up the city. The City wants to act as a role model in this area and will, with this goal in mind, take advantage of those instruments existing within the City's human resource policy.

c) The City of Reykjavík as Service Provider

The City of Reykjavík plays a key role in the well-being of its inhabitants. All city institutions will work purposefully and in an organized manner towards developing and improving services and information distribution for the benefit of a diverse society.

d) The City of Reykjavík as Cooperative Partner

The City of Reykjavík emphasizes working together with other public entities and organizations that work towards building up and encouraging initiative, innovation, knowledge acquisition and independent enterprise that looks to furthering equality and human rights.

Section two

2. Equality of the sexes

It is not permissible to discriminate against people on the basis of their sex. The equal participation and input of men and women in the city community is encouraged, and all discrimination and the inhibiting effects of sexual stereotypes are to be actively opposed. Each and everybody's contribution shall be judged on its own merits, without regard for the sex of the person in question.

2.1 The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

When appointing committees, commissions and councils, the aim should be to have the proportion of men to women as even as possible. Sexual equality should also be a guiding principle when representatives are selected for work groups for strategic planning and major decisions.

2.1.1 In the decision-making process and allocation of funds (e.g.: in drawing up budgets and when other decisions are made about the allocation of funds) the needs and opinions of both sexes need to be used as a guide, and the effect of decisions on their position needs to be analysed.

2.1.2 The City of Reykjavík resolves to combat gender-related violence, whether it be mental, physical or sexual. All the City's work is to be guided by this aim.

2.1.3 The City of Reykjavík resolves to combat the normalisation of pornographic ideals and prostitution. For this reason it is important to continue to oppose the running of strip clubs in the city.

2.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

It is to be ensured by means of an organised equal rights program that men and women enjoy equal rights in every respect in the City of Reykjavík's work-places.

2.2.1 Care should be taken in all advertisements under the auspices of City of Reykjavík institutions and companies to ensure the equality of all groups and equal respect for both sexes, in accordance with article 18 of the Law on Equal Rights. Advertisements for employment should generally be non-gender-specific, and where the jobs concerned are ones which favour one of the sexes, attention shall be drawn to the aim of the equal-rights policy of balancing the gender ratio within professions.

2.2.2 Equal rights aspects shall be given the same consideration as other aspects when recruiting for City of Reykjavík posts. An applicant of the sex which is in the minority in the profession in question shall, other things being equal, be given priority of employment if s/he is equally or better qualified than other applicants. It is not permissible when recruiting to treat the sexes differently on the basis of marriage or family situation, pregnancy or possible child-bearing or of other factors where gender-related personal circumstances might be expected to influence matters.

2.2.3 Women and men are to enjoy comparable terms of employment and rights. Women and men are to be paid equally for equal work. Wages based on the individual (i.e. qualification- and performance-related pay) and other decisions which affect terms of employment are to be based on objective grounds, regardless of sex. The City of Reykjavík considers confidentiality about wages to be one of the sources of the gender-related wage-gap, and that it should therefore be eliminated wherever it might occur.

2.2.4 Working conditions are to be guided by the needs of both sexes. Sexual equality is to be a guiding principle in the assignment of tasks, in job-transfers and in possible dismissals. Use is to be made of career development and life-long learning to achieve increased sexual equality and equal respect for both sexes in the work-place.

2.2.5 A positive attitude towards all jobs within the city and a good atmosphere in the work-place is to be worked towards.

2.2.6 The City of Reykjavík wishes to make use of the possibilities of flexibility in the work-place to make it easier for employees to coordinate their job, private life and family responsibilities, and for management to meet varying work requirements. Employees are to be given the opportunity of having flexible working hours, part-time jobs or other optimisation of working hours or working arrangements where these might be relevant, and where they might be suitable either for women or men as well as for the work. Particular emphasis is placed on combating stereotypes regarding the role-division of the sexes as far as family responsibility is concerned, and men are urged to make use of flexibility, part-time jobs or other means to allow them to assume their full family responsibility.

2.2.7 Sexual harassment is absolutely not permissible in City work-places. Reference is made to article 17 of the Law on Equal Rights, concerning the definition of sexual harassment. If a senior employee or union representative is informed of such behaviour, that person must, in consultation with a director or depending on the circumstances other senior members of the administration, put a stop to it without delay. The victim is to suffer no loss from the measures which are implemented to this end. Serious or recurring harassment can lead to the dismissal of the perpetrator without notice. Procedure policy about how such behaviour should be dealt with is to be accessible to employees.

2.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

An equal rights aspect is to be integrated into all the services of the City of Reykjavík and the services are to be characterised by positive relations and mutual respect of both sexes.

2.3.1 Women and men are to have equal access to City services. Decisions about the arrangement of services are to be guided by the needs of both sexes and by the effects the services will have on both women and men.

2.3.2 All child-care and recreation programs, education and training under the jurisdiction of the City of Reykjavík and its institutions is to have the equal status of the sexes as a guiding principle. Children and young people are to be encouraged to develop their potential and go about their personal development without the inhibiting influence of traditional gender-images. Positive relations and mutual respect between the sexes are to be supported in all work with young people. The educational authorities in Reykjavík, along with the directors of social- and recreation programs, are to support a positive gender-image of girls and boys and to combat the harmful effects of the normalisation of pornographic ideals among the young.

Section three

3. Age

It is not permissible to discriminate against people on the basis of age. Each and everybody's contribution shall be judged on its own merits, without regard for age. Care should be taken to view all people as the same, even though they belong to a specific age group, and particular care needs to be taken to examine the status of the sexes in the city in different age groups.

3.1. The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

3.1.1 The views and needs of the inhabitants are to be taken into consideration, regardless of age.

3.1.2 When decisions are being made which could affect people because of their age, the needs and opinions of people of different ages are to be used as a guide.

3.1.3 When decision-making is underway which particularly affects certain age groups, representatives of those groups are consulted.

3.1.4 When arrangements are made which concern children, the children's best interests are at all times to be the top priority.

3.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

3.2.1 Life-long learning and career development are to be on offer to employees of the City of Reykjavík, regardless of age, in accordance with article 2.1 of the human resource policy.

3.2.2 The City of Reykjavík is to take care that it creates a good, positive atmosphere in the work-place, which is free from prejudices and clichés associated with age.

3.2.3 Where appropriate employees should be able to be recruited for appropriate jobs, reduced working hours and/or a flexible retirement date with the onset of age.

3.2.4 In all work with children and young people, qualified employees are to afford the children care and protection and to see that they are as safe as they can be. Care is to be taken that the number of employees is sufficient to ensure this.

3.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

In service provision, the fact that people's service requirements differ according to their age is to be taken into account.

3.3.1 City inhabitants are to have equal access to the city's services, regardless of age, as long as the services aren't geared towards particular groups, such as programs for children and adolescents. When services are being set up, the needs of all age groups are to be used as a guide, and it should be examined whether the effect of the services could be different for women and men.

3.3.2 All services for the elderly and for children and youths which the City of Reykjavík has responsibility for are to have the equal status of the sexes as a guiding principle. Age should not be a matter for embarrassment, and teaching material is always to show the diversity of human life where relevant.

3.3.3 A positive and constructive attitude towards all age groups which benefit from city services (children and the elderly among them) is to be worked towards.

Section four

4. Disability

It is not permissible to discriminate against people on the basis of disability. Action should be taken to make it possible for the disabled to take an active part in the city

community. Each and everybody's contribution shall be judged on its own merits. The right of each and every person to express themselves – or not to express themselves – about their disability is to be respected. Care should be taken to view all people as the same, even though they belong to a certain group, and particular care needs to be taken to analyse on one hand the situation of disabled women in the city, and of disabled men on the other.

4.1 The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

Everybody has the right to active participation in the Reykjavík community and to fair and just treatment, regardless of disability, and particular care should be taken that neither sex is favoured. The points of view and needs of disabled city residents of both sexes are to be taken into consideration and they are to be consulted in strategy- and decision-making which particularly affects the disabled.

4.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

Qualification- and performance-related pay and other decisions which affect employees' terms of employment are to be based on objective grounds, regardless of disability.

4.2.1 A disabled applicant is to enjoy the priority claim to jobs for the City if s/he is equally or more able than other applicants, cf. article 32 of law no. 59/1992 on disability issues. Disabled individuals are to enjoy the same terms of employment as the able-bodied, cf. article 1 of law no. 59/1992 on disability issues.

4.2.2 When a disabled employee is recruited, it should be ensured that s/he receives appropriate working facilities. Care should be taken that a disabled employee benefits from life-long learning and career development to the same degree as other employees.

4.2.3 Employees are to do everything in their power to create an atmosphere free from prejudice towards disabled individuals at work, and an attempt should be made to get to know their circumstances.

4.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

4.3.1 Disabled people should have equal access to services as the able-bodied. When services are organised, care should be taken that they are guided by the needs of different groups of disabled people of both sexes. Public buildings need to be accessible to all, regardless of disability, cf. law no. 59/1992 on disability issues. It needs to be ensured that disabled people have access to information about their rights.

4.3.2 All child-care and recreation programs, education and training under the auspices of the City is to be guided by the needs of disabled people of both sexes. Disability should not be a matter for embarrassment, and teaching material is always to show the diversity of human life where relevant.

Section five

5. Health

It is not permissible to discriminate against people on the basis of poor health. Each and everybody's contribution shall be judged on its own merits.

5.1 The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

Everybody has a right to active participation in the Reykjavík community and to fair and just treatment, regardless of the state of their health, and particular care is to be taken that neither sex is favoured.

5.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

5.2.1 An employee's right to express themselves – or not to express themselves – about their disability is to be respected.

5.2.2 The state of an employee's health or their medical history may not, without objective grounds, influence their recruitment, terms of employment or dismissal. If objective grounds are cited, it must be incontestable that they relate to the nature of the job.

5.2.3 If changes need to be made to an employee's job responsibilities, the employee and the City are to have full consultation.

5.2.4 Illness alone is not sufficient reason to dismiss people from their job unless it has a substantial and protracted effect with the result that it prevents the person in question from being able to perform their job. An employee can be retired from work on the grounds of illness, on the condition that it is done according to the provision of the law and of contracts on the matter.

5.2.5 Care is to be taken that employees benefit from life-long learning and career development, regardless of their state of health.

5.2.6 Employees are to do everything in their power to create an atmosphere that is free of prejudice towards all individuals at work.

5.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

Access to services should be ensured, regardless of people's state of health.

5.3.1 The attitude towards everybody who benefits from the city's services is to be positive and is to be founded on respect for the individual.

Section six

6. Sexual orientation

It is not permissible to discriminate against people on grounds of sexual orientation. Each and everybody's contribution shall be judged on its own merits without regard to the sexual orientation of the person in question. Care needs to be taken not to assume that everybody is heterosexual. In particular, the position of homosexual women in the city needs to be distinguished on one hand, and of homosexual men on the other.

6.1 The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

Everybody has a right to active participation in the Reykjavík community and to fair and just treatment, regardless of their sexual orientation, and particular care is to be taken that neither sex is favoured.

6.1.2 When decisions are being made which particularly concern homosexuals and bisexuals, their organised interest groups should be consulted.

6.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

Care should be taken when hiring staff and deciding terms of employment for City employees that unfair reasons are not used as arguments against the employee (cf. article 1.2 of the City's human resource policy).

6.2.1 People's right to express themselves – or not to express themselves – about their sexual orientation is to be respected.

6.2.2 Employees are to do everything in their power to create an atmosphere that is free from prejudice towards homosexual and bisexual employees.

6.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

Employees should not work on the assumption that everybody who benefits from the city's services is heterosexual or has heterosexual parents. Relations between employees and those who benefit from services should be founded upon mutual respect.

6.3.1 All child-care and recreation programs, education and training is to be guided by the fact that participants might be homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual. People's differing sexualities should be discussed without embarrassment, and teaching material is always to show the diversity of human life where relevant.

Section seven

7. Religion and political views

It is not permissible to discriminate against people on the basis of religious or political views. Each and everybody's contribution shall be judged on its own merits without regard to the religions or political views of those in question. Care needs to be taken not to look upon all of those who hold a particular faith or political view as being the same.

7.1 The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

The City of Reykjavík shall treat people's faith and political views with respect and tolerance. Everybody has a right to active participation in the Reykjavík community and to fair and just treatment, regardless of their faith or views, and particular care is to be taken that neither sex is favoured.

7.1.2 When decisions are being made which particularly concern specific religious groups, they should be consulted.

7.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

The City of Reykjavík should treat its employees with respect and take care to ensure equality, regardless of religious or political views.

7.2.1 The City's human resource policy (article 1.2) states that care should be taken not to favour certain employees over others in regard to terms of employment on unfair grounds.

7.2.2 All employees are to enjoy the same opportunities for career development and further education, regardless of religious or political views.

7.2.3 All employees of the City are responsible for creating an atmosphere which is free from prejudice.

7.2.4 People's right to express themselves – or not to express themselves – about their religious and political views is to be respected. Religious observance or the expression of political views, however, must not disturb activity in the work-place.

7.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

Differing political views or attitudes to religion is at all times to have no influence over how customers are treated.

7.3.1 Everybody should have equal accessibility to the services of the City of Reykjavík, regardless of political or religious views.

7.3.2 In child-care and recreation programs, education and training under the auspices of the City, consideration is to be given to the differing customs associated with different religions. It is important not to make the assumption that everybody subscribes to the same faith, even though traditional religious festivals of the Lutheran church are celebrated. The world's religions are to be taught by means of teaching material, and in it, the diversity of human life is always to be shown where relevant.

7.3.3 City services are to be characterised by positive relations and mutual respect, regardless of people's political or religious views. The environment and services within the City domain should be free from prejudice against the religious or political views of the city's inhabitants. Action should be taken to eliminate prejudices which are based on religious and political views.

Section Eight

8. Origin and nationality

It is not permissible to discriminate against city inhabitants on the basis of their origin, skin colour, cultural background or any kind of classifications based on racial ideology. Each and everyone's contribution shall be evaluated according to its own merits and everyone has the right to a fair reception, regardless of origin or nationality. Care should be taken not to lump all those who fall under a certain category into a single group; it is necessary to distinguish in particular between women of foreign origin on one hand and men of foreign origin on the other and take action should any disparities arise.

8.1 The City of Reykjavík as Government Authority

Everyone has the right to active participation in the Reykjavík community and fair and equitable treatment, regardless of origin, and particular care shall be taken that no gender disparities arise. The viewpoints of interested parties and/or experts shall be sought in policy formation and decision-making on subjects that concern them particularly.

8.2 The City of Reykjavík as Employer

The City of Reykjavík wants to reflect in its workplace the multicultural society that makes up the city and as an employer guarantee its employees of foreign origin equality and equal rights with those enjoyed by other city employees. Care shall be taken that unfair conditions are not in place when hiring staff and deciding terms of employment for City employees (cf. article 1.2 of the City's human resource policy).

- 8.2.1 It will be made clear in the City's job advertisements that persons of foreign origin are encouraged to apply for all positions with the City.
- 8.2.2 Immigrants enjoy complete equality in the hiring process and with all terms of employment and rights. They should be able to make use of their qualifications and receive work in keeping with them. Immigrants who apply for work with the City or are working there already are to receive guidance in having their previous education from abroad evaluated.
- 8.2.3 The City of Reykjavík will work to prevent discrimination regarding working conditions, employee training and continuous education for persons of foreign origin. Immigrants and persons of foreign origin are to enjoy the same opportunities for promotion and development as those of other employees. Immigrants will be given the opportunity to participate in work-based Icelandic language learning depending on their needs and receive education on work schedules, service goals and workplace culture.

- 8.2.4 The City of Reykjavík will work to counter prejudice against city employees due to origin, skin colour, nationality or cultural background within its workplaces. Diversity training will be offered in city workplaces when needed.

8.3 The City of Reykjavík as Service Centre

Immigrants and persons of foreign origin are to be guaranteed ready access to city services. The needs of immigrants will be taken specifically into account when organizing services under city jurisdiction. Interpretation services are to be provided for interviews (e.g., for counselling, parent-teacher meetings, etc.) when there is a need for them.

- 8.3.1 All child-care and recreation programs, education and training under the jurisdiction of the City will have the needs of children of persons of foreign origin in sight and provide them with special support and instruction in the Icelandic language in order to allow them to enjoy these services to the same degree as other children. The diversity and complexity of the community will be introduced in work with children and youth, and they will be given an opportunity to present their own native culture and language.
- 8.3.2 City institutions will prepare accessible, comprehensible information material on city services in the languages spoken by those groups who are the most numerous in Reykjavík. This includes Internet sites, brochures and advertising where applicable.
- 8.3.3 City staff will make an effort to create an atmosphere free from prejudice towards individuals on the basis of their origin, skin colour, nationality or cultural background.

Section nine

9. The City of Reykjavík as Cooperative Partner

The City of Reykjavík cooperates with various parties in its work on human rights.

9.1 The City of Reykjavík cooperates and consults with government, other municipalities, industry, organisations and educational institutions in order build up and encourage initiative, innovation, knowledge acquisition, consultancy, training and independent enterprise that has equality as a guiding principle.

9.2 All City committees and councils which allocate financial support are obliged to be mindful of human rights aspects when allocating it.

9.3 The condition is attached to City of Reykjavík funding that discrimination is to be opposed and equality worked towards. The Human Rights Committee can request an

account of the measures which the recipient of financial support has taken in order to observe that it is utilized within a human rights framework.

9.4 The City of Reykjavík reserves the right to request that those parties working in cooperation with it which receive financial support operate a human rights plan with assessable targets. In this way, an attempt is to be made to ensure that money is distributed equally to both sexes and that the activity which is being supported is shaped by a respect for people.

Section ten

10. Knowledge acquisition and dissemination

The City of Reykjavík is to gather and disseminate knowledge of the status and circumstances of all groups which the policy covers.

10.1 The view people take of City services will be investigated, both through surveys and also by other means, in order to analyse whether inhabitants are discriminated against in service provision.

10.2 The City of Reykjavík is to follow up its policy formation and investigate the situation of City employees and to make a separate analysis of both sexes.

10.3 In all the City's data gathering and analysis, the information is to be broken down according to sex (cf. article 21 of the Law on Equal Rights) and at the same time, according to the groups which the policy covers wherever relevant.

10.4 All knowledge which the City of Reykjavík gathers is to be disseminated in an organised fashion within the City and used to improve services, combat prejudices, support equality in the City's work-places and to inform the inhabitants of Reykjavík.

Section eleven

11. Responsibility and procedure

The leaders and employees of the City are responsible for ensuring that everybody's human rights are respected within City administration, in its places of work and in its services, and they are moreover to be enabled to do this with capital and instruction in the field of human rights matters.

Directors are responsible for:

- a) following the policy in their work,
- b) operating a human rights plan for all sectors of the City, side by side with a work schedule and financial plan,

- c) appointing specific human rights representatives in all institutions with more than 25 employees and stating their area of operation and responsibility,
- d) promoting the policy.

11.2 The directors of education are responsible for ensuring:

- a) that instruction in equal rights forms part of education,
- b) that the syllabus does not discriminate against people on the grounds of sex, opposes prejudice and has the human rights of all groups as a guiding principle,
- c) that teaching methods are guided by the diverse society which we live in,
- d) that in educational and vocational guidance, emphasis is placed on promoting for both sexes jobs which up until now have been viewed as traditionally female or male jobs.

11.3 Directors of sport-, recreation- and youth-programs are in particular responsible for:

- a) organising social and recreational programs with equal rights as a guiding principle,
- b) ensuring that organisations which enjoy facilities, financial support or other amenities which the City of Reykjavík provides, such as sports practice, are mindful of equal rights in every respect.

11.4 Directors of service establishments are in particular responsible for ensuring:

- a) that the most extensive equal rights are safeguarded in the City's services,
- b) that prejudice is actively opposed within service establishments and in relation to service receivers.

11.5 The Human Rights Committee should:

- a) make sure that the policy is followed up,
- b) operate a separate plan of implementation for human rights in cooperation with sectors and offices of the City and of special interest groups, side by side with a work schedule and financial plan,
- c) request work schedules from sectors in human rights issues on a yearly basis,
- d) request a report on the implementation of the City of Reykjavík's human rights policy from all sectors on a yearly basis,
- e) promote the policy and support the gathering of knowledge and the dissemination of information.

11.6 The office for human rights issues should:

- a) operate, together with the Human Rights Committee, a plan of implementation for human rights issues,
- b) follow up the Human Rights Committee's decisions,
- c) support consultation within the City in those matters which the policy covers,
- d) work in conjunction with organisations and other municipalities in matters which the policy covers,
- e) consult with appointed human rights representatives in the different sectors,
- f) support consultation in the field of human rights within the City,
- g) take the initiative for projects,

h) safeguard that city residents are not discriminated against on the grounds of origin, skin colour, religion, age, political views, sex, sexual orientation, economic situation, family extraction, disability, state of health or any other status.