



City of Reykjavik

The Role of the Human Rights & Democracy Office and Overview of Projects



September 2019

The Human Rights Policy

The City of Reykjavik's Human Rights Policy was approved in 2006 and revised in 2016. It is based on human rights and the principle of equality, and aims to allow all people to enjoy their human rights regardless of origin, nationality, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, life-stance, body image and type, religious and political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, financial situation, heritage, disability, health or any other status. In 2016 provisions for rights to security and environment were added.

Through working towards a uniform human rights policy, emphasis is placed on a coordinated vision for the benefit of city inhabitants, in so much as many of them belong to more than one of the groups it covers. The common thread or the main emphasis is however put on gender equality.

Municipalities are, according to the equality law in Iceland, required to work on gender mainstreaming in all areas. The Human Rights committee and Human Rights and Democracy Office are responsible for enforcing the policy. A brochure about the human rights policy has been published in which the policy is introduced and several examples of discrimination are listed.

- [The Human Rights Policy is available in English.](#)

The Human Rights, Innovation and Democracy Council

Human Rights, Innovation and Democracy Council operates on behalf of Reykjavik's City Council. The Council is responsible for formulating policies on human rights, making decisions concerning human rights, and making recommendations to the City Council on issues concerning human rights. The council is also responsible for ensuring transparency in city government, and making final decisions regarding data protection, information technology, electronic services and democratic participation of all residents.

Furthermore, the Council oversees the Human Rights and Democracy Office and follows up on the Human Rights Policy and the act on equal status and equal rights for both women and men.

The Council makes recommendations to the City Council on the Human Rights Policy in Reykjavik and is responsible for its enforcement, represents human rights issues, and monitors projects disciplines related to human rights. In addition, it cooperates with the state, other municipalities, organizations and grassroots movements working on human rights.

The Role of the Human Rights and Democracy Office

Equality

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

Reykjavik signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life in 2009. Municipalities that have signed the charter undertake certain obligations to officially respect fundamental principles regarding equality of women and men. By signing they also recognise the importance of the fight against multiple discrimination against women to ensure equality of women and men. Furthermore the signing constitutes recognition that equal participation of women and men in decision-making is a precondition for a democratic society and that elimination of gender stereotypes is the foundation to achieve gender equality.

Action Plan for Human Rights with emphasis on intersectional approach

Municipalities are required by law to submit an action plan for gender equality.

Reykjavik's Action Plan concerning human rights is valid from 2019 to 2023, contains 113 measures directed at countering i.e. stereotypes, violence, discrimination, prejudice, gender mainstreaming, and, culture, sport and gender-based violence. The action plan also aims at ensuring equal opportunities within the workplace

Together Against Violence

In 2015 Reykjavik City began a project titled *Together against Violence* in cooperation with the Metropolitan Area Police Department, the Women's Shelter and the Health Centres in the capital area.

Research and several surveys done in recent years on violence in Iceland against both women and children has increased knowledge of the nature, extent and consequences of gender based violence. The information has provided the Icelandic government and the municipalities with the opportunity to fight violence systematically. A survey on violence showed that around 42% of women in Iceland from the age of 16 have experienced threats, violence, or sexual harassment that caused them distress. Judging from the results of this study, the violence was often serious. The survey revealed that 22% of the women have experienced violence in close relationships; of this group, 26% said that their life had been in danger during the last violent incident, and 41% said that they had suffered physical harm.

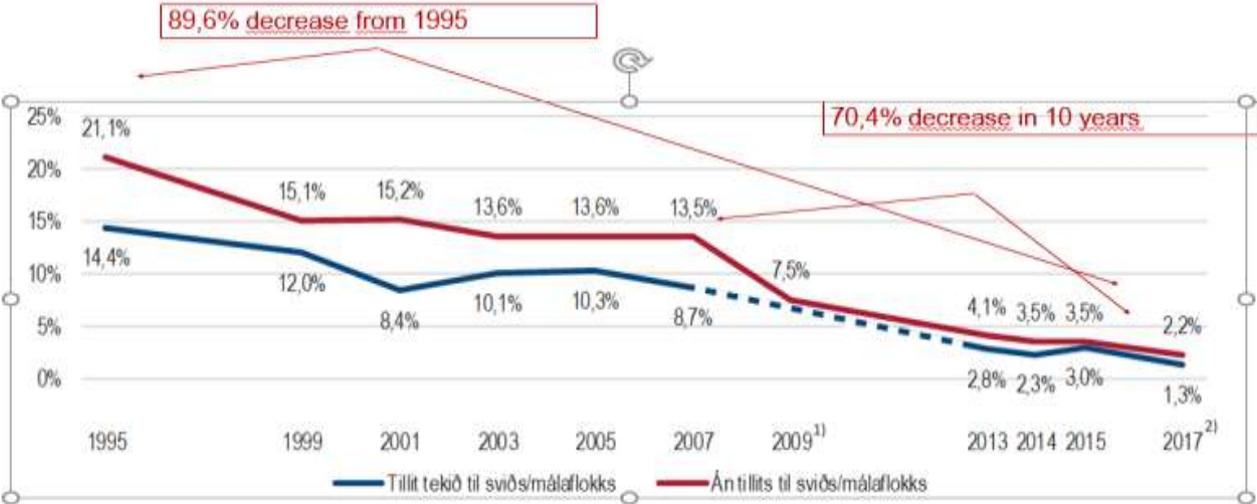
The aim of the project *Together against Violence* is to send a clear message that domestic violence will not be tolerated, to improve the city's services to both the victim and the perpetrator of domestic violence and to strengthen cooperation between the institutions that work on the issue.

Emphasis is placed on responding appropriately as soon as violence in close relationships is detected. As a part of that measure a social worker accompanies police officers to the scene when domestic violence is reported, and if the people living there accept, the police and the Welfare department/social worker follow up the visit with a phone call within three days and by a visit within a week. If there is a child registered at the home where domestic violence is reported, a psychologist or social worker on the behalf of The Child Protection Department visits the home and a social worker/psychologist working for the Welfare department. In this project, a special focus has been placed on people of foreign origin, people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ people. Workgroups, with the relevant people taking part, have been founded in order to analyze the situation and make suggestions concerning how to better the services, in relation to domestic violence, for these groups.

[More info in English.](#)

Gender pay gap – monitoring

The gender pay gap has lessened gradually, as can be seen in figure 1, since the City of Reykjavik began to monitor it in 1995. The figure shows the raw gender wage gap when no adjustments have been done, i.e. for overtime or occupation. The information is based on the wages of fulltime workers in October every other year from 1999. It is based on actual information from the City’s data base (payroll).



Information of gender pay gap taking into account the departments in 2009 are not available
 Worked by the Social Sciences Institute of the University of Iceland

Figure 1. Gender pay gap in Reykjavik 1995 – 2017 based on the latest salary analysis. The blue line shows salaries according to divisions and department, the red line is a flat salary analysis across every area of work in the city.

The main difference lies in actual wages i.e. when payments for overtime and using one's own car for work purposes is included. In relation to this, it is important to note that the city has two ways of paying for overtime.

The analysis of the gender pay gap in Reykjavik in 2017 shows that the adjusted gender pay gap has narrowed since the last analysis was made in 2015. The unadjusted gender pay gap of people working part-time or 70%, shows that men's salaries are 7% higher.

The results showed that women and men are for the most part with an even equal base salary but overtime and other payments are higher for men.

In the 2017 analysis of the gender pay gap in Reykjavik, people's nationality was also analysed as a factor. The results showed that people with foreign background had lower salaries than Icelanders. This was the first time this was analysed and currently the Human Rights and Democracy Office and Human Recourses are looking for ways to eliminate this pay gap.

Equality School for kindergartens, compulsory schools and leisure

The national curriculum says that students at all levels should receive education about equality, as equality is one of the fundamental elements of education. The Equality School of Reykjavik is a part of the Department for Education and Youth, and its goal is to share knowledge on gender equality for kindergartens, compulsory schools and leisure in Reykjavik in accordance with the national curriculum. It provides help and advice for planning gender education. The equality school maintains a webpage that contains educational material. On the one hand, the material is addressed to students and includes ideas for projects that can be used to bring equality teaching into classes. On the other hand, the educational material is tailored for teachers, and offers both general information on gender equality and special textbooks on equality. The webpage is a live database and constantly new material is added on it. Teachers are also encouraged to submit their ideas for projects for gender equality.

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Statistics – women and men

Each year, the Reykjavik's Human Rights and Democracy Office publishes a brochure on some statistics of women and men in Reykjavik. While some information concerning population and professions is quite traditional, other information is presented in order to draw attention to specific issues. For example, the proportion of female and male personalities with radio shows, gender balance on the boards of sport's clubs, and murders in Iceland analysed by gender.

Pictures are from brochure 2019

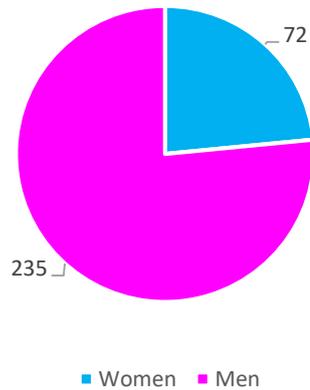


Figure 1: Number of women and men who were working as police officers in Reykjavik in 2018

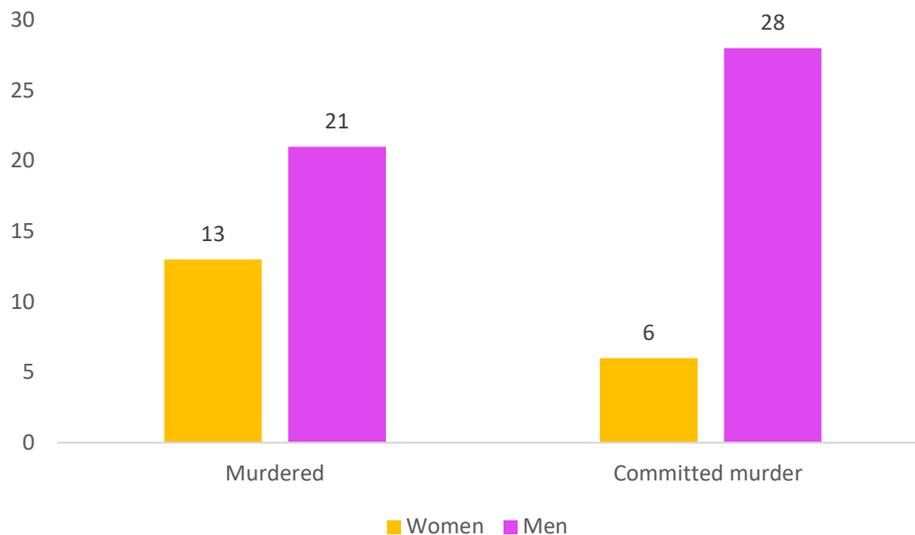


Figure 2: Number of women and men who were victims of murder in Iceland 2000-2017 and number of women and men who committed murders in Iceland 2000-2017

Pornification is sexual harassment

In 2012 The Reykjavik City Human Rights and Democracy Office and MARK - Centre for Research on Gender and Diversity at the University of Iceland published a brochure in Icelandic and English called *Pornification is Sexual Harassment*. The brochure highlights how women experience pornography at work and discussion concerning their looks instead of performance in the workplace. It is argued that pornification, whether it appears in words or images, is sexual harassment.

Information on this topic has not previously been published in Icelandic and the brochure is intended for the staff of Reykjavik and the staff and students of the University of Iceland. It

can be found both on the city's website and the University of Iceland's website and can be used by everyone.

- [The brochure can be found here on the website](#)

Herstory

A brochure on a history walk has been published in cooperation with the Women's History Archives of Iceland.

The brochure draws attention to the participation of women in the reconstruction of the city, as women's participation is often ignored in history. The brochure is available in both Reykjavik City Hall and the Tourist Information Centre Kvósin. The idea is to take a walk around the city with the brochure and learn about women who have left their mark on the city and our lives.

The brochure is published both in Icelandic and English.

- [The brochure can be found on the website](#)

Gender budgeting

In 2011 the city of Reykjavik decided to begin the implementation of gender budgeting. In 2012 the city ran a pilot project with the involvement of every department and office within the city, a total of 17 projects. Gender budgeting is now a part of the general budget process. Gender budgeting objectives are:

- ✓ To advance gender equality and human rights through the budgeting process.
- ✓ Make visible the different impact that budget decisions have on women, men and marginalised groups.
- ✓ Promote accountability and transparency in the budget process.

Using the tools of gender budgeting has proven to be very fruitful in unmasking previously hidden information concerning decision making processes and the municipal services provided. It has served as a tool to promote transparency and efficiency.

- [Information in English can be found on the website](#)

Violence Protection Committee

At a meeting of the City Council in June 2015 it was agreed to establish the Violence Protection Committee in Reykjavik. Its scope is to advise the City Council and other committees in the field of violence protection and to be an active participant in strategy making. The role of the committee is to be a forum for members of the City Council and other experts in the field. The Committee provides advice in the field and contributes recommendations for informed dialogue about violence in all areas of the city.

LGBTQ+ people

Cooperation

Reykjavik has applied to be part of the Rainbow Cities Network, which is a network of cities in Europe that share best practices and support each other in being inclusive and innovative concerning matters of LGBTQ+ people on the local level.

The City of Reykjavik is in good collaboration with the National Queer Organization of Iceland (*Samtökin 78*). The City is currently funding the organization also has a contract with the organization who provide LGBTQ+ education in Reykjavik's schools, counseling services for LGBTQ+ people and their families and run support groups for various groups of LGBTQ+ people. The funding also makes it possible for the organization to run a social centre for LGBTQ+ youth. This cooperation is very important since it benefits both parties and first and foremost LGBTQ+ people. The cooperation is in agreement with The Reykjavik's Human Rights Policy where emphasis is put on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender expression and sex characteristics.

Making Reykjavik LGBTQ+ friendly

The City of Reykjavik Human Rights and Democracy Council has agreed on a proposition regarding gender neutral toilets in the administrative buildings of Reykjavik. This has already been implemented in the City Hall and is being instigated at other administrative buildings run by the City.

Legislation was passed this summer in Parliament that made it possible for people to register themselves as X which stands for neither man nor woman in the National Register of Iceland. Because of this the companies and administrative sectors in Iceland are obliged to add the third option outside the gender binary when people are asked about their gender when filling out forms.

Immigration and Integration

Action Plan

The City of Reykjavik has a policy on immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers (applicants for international protection) for 2018-2022. It was decided by City Council that Reykjavik should develop a comprehensive policy on immigrant affairs and that as Reykjavik is a member of Intercultural Cities the policy should align with those goals. During development various stakeholders were consulted and the various needs of individuals who moved to Iceland for various reasons, and the situation of marginalized groups were examined. Some of the key actions in the policy are to develop a comprehensive interpreting and translation policy, implement a system for guiding immigrants working for the City in having their education and experience evaluated, and to provide opportunities for career development and advancement. [Here is a link to the policy and action plan.](#)

The offices immigrant specialists sit on various interdisciplinary groups both within the City, other municipalities, and the federal government.

Immigrants in Reykjavik

In January 2018, 43.736 immigrants lived in Iceland, approximately 12,6% of the population. In 2014 there were 27.445 or 8,4% of the population.

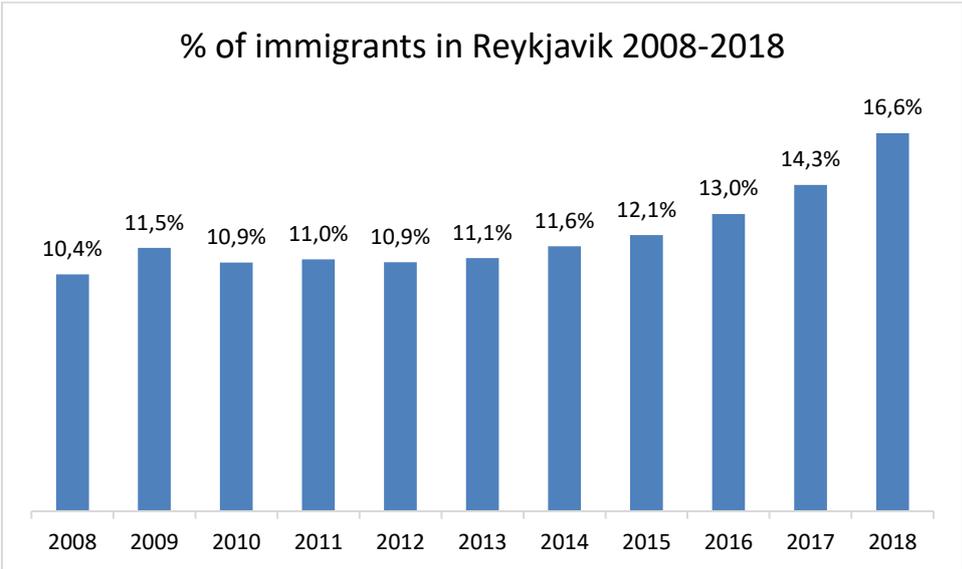


Figure 4: % of immigrants in Reykjavik 2008-2018.

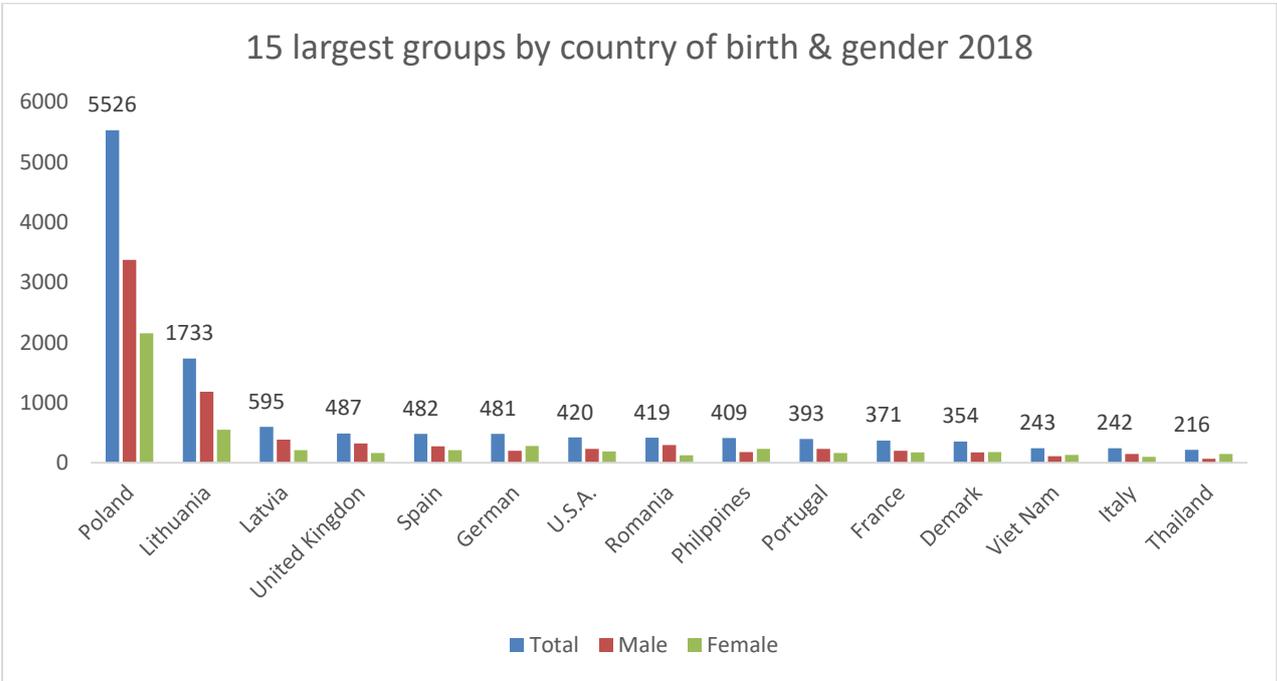


Figure 5: The ten biggest groups/nationalities in Reykjavik 2018 with foreign citizenship.

Immigrants from Poland are by far the largest group of foreign citizens in Reykjavik (see figure 5).

In an effort to info share and encourage participation the offices immigration and integration specialists publish and administer Facebook pages in English and Polish.

- [Living in Reykjavik](#) in English
- [Reykjavik Nasze Miasto](#) in Polish

Our Children and Ourselves

In cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare, the Human Rights and Democracy Office designed the booklet *Our Children and Ourselves* in Icelandic, Polish and English. The booklet is intended as a simple guide for parents and families of children about their responsibilities, children's rights, education and welfare. The booklet is currently only available on-line.

- [English version](#)
- [Polish version](#)

The Intercultural Congress in Reykjavik

The Reykjavik's Human Rights and Democracy Office has held an Intercultural Congress every other year since 2010.

The goal of the Congress is to:

- ✓ Strengthen our diverse society and create a forum for immigrants
- ✓ Promote immigrants to speak for their rights
- ✓ Promote the city's network in the immigration community
- ✓ Promote the city's service for immigrants and make it more efficient

People of foreign origin are especially invited to come and have an impact on how the city's services can be improved. Emphasis is also put in learning about their opinions and experiences such as finding ways to facilitate mutual integration.

A great number of people participate in the congresses. The main goal is to reach as many immigrants as possible and the discussion which takes place is in small groups sitting around round tables. During some congresses participants were divided according to language and in the last congress by topic of conversation.

The Intercultural Council

The current Intercultural Council of Reykjavik is chaired by a group of five representatives and five vice representatives. Two representatives and two vice representatives are appointed by the Reykjavik City Council (one from political majority and one from minority). Three representatives and three vice representatives are appointed by grass-root organisations: Association on Bilingualism, W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland and the labour union Sameyki. There are also 2 observers in the council. The council is a consultation and advisory body for immigrant issues in all areas of the City's operations and policy making.

Intercultural Cities

Reykjavik has been a member of the Council of Europe's project, Intercultural Cities, since 2014, and the Human Rights and Democracy Office is responsible for the project. The project aims to support cities in developing strategies to deal with diversity in a multicultural society, and promote increased participation of immigrants and minorities. The city receives help from international experts to analyse the city's policies and governance from a multicultural perspective. The aim is for cities that participate to get to know methods that have proved successful in other cities, and develop objectives, indicators, and an action plan as well as a comprehensive policy in multicultural issues. Evaluation of the policy takes place one year after the event.

ICORN

Reykjavik City is a member of ICORN (International Cities of Refuge Network), an association of cities around the world dedicated to the value of freedom of expression. Writers have been targets of politically motivated threats and persecution, and by joining the network cities can provide these writers a secure place to stay.

Each ICORN city focuses on one writer at a time. By providing a safe place to stay for a Guest Writer and economic security for a standard term of two years, ICORN cities make an important, practical contribution to the promotion of freedom of expression, which is the cornerstone of human rights. The Human Rights and Democracy Office is responsible for all the practical issues connected to the ICORN project.

People with Disabilities

Disability Access Committee

The administration and leadership for the City's Disability Access Committee is the responsibility of the Human Rights and Democracy Office. According to the mandate of the committee, its role is to encourage that all buildings owned by Reykjavik City, other facilities rented by the city, as well as streets, pavements and other public spaces in the city, are accessible to people with disabilities and suitable to their various access needs.

Age

The Elders Council

The Council provides information and promotes cooperation between the City and interest groups. It formulates policies and makes recommendations to the City Council on issues connected to its role. The Elders Council serves in an advisory role in Reykjavik and works in collaboration with service centres to promote social capital and presentation of service of city institutions to citizens that are 67 years and older.

Security

Safer clubs – Safer nightlife

In 2016 The City of Reykjavík, the Metropolitan Police, The Fire Department and the Iceland Travel Industry Association signed a treaty on safer nightlife. The treaty was signed again in September 2019.

The common goal is to eradicate violence and make nightlife in Reykjavík safer for everyone. A contract was made based on the treaty and clubs participating in the project have to sign the contract. When they do, a team consisting of members from the City of Reykjavík, the Metropolitan Police and the Fire Department follow up on the agreement.

The guiding principle of the project is a zero tolerance policy in all cases of violence, e.g. sexual harassment and sexual violence, human trafficking and prostitution, violence based on prejudice and hate, e.g. against immigrants and LGBTQ+ people.

Participating clubs display a sign, there is information about the project and workers' rights visible to employees and the bouncers wear armbands stating that the club meets the demands of the treaty. Bouncers and employees also receive training from Human Rights and Democracy Office about the project and its goals.

Democracy

Conceptualizing Youth Democracy in Europe (Youth Democracy Festivals)

The Office of Human Rights and Democracy is participating in an international project with Denmark, Sweden and Germany on defining, developing guidelines and implementing a youth democracy festival.

A youth democracy festival (YDF) is a platform where youths can dream, be inspired and share their visions for a future society – not only with each other but with a wide range of stakeholders, policymakers and the rest of the public. A much needed platform, in a Europe where large parts of youth are lacking faith in their abilities to make a difference in society as

well as the self-confidence to engage in democratic processes. The vision is to help foster the most civically engaged generation of young people ever seen.

District Councils

The Office of Human Rights and Democracy has an administrative role in The District Councils and proposes a meeting secretary.

The city of Reykjavik has 9 district councils. The City Council appoints 3 representatives to each council. In addition one member is from the district's parents' association, one is a representative of the local Neighbourhood Association, and one member is randomly selected from the national registry. There are a total of 6 members in each District Council. The District Councils work under the mandate of The City Council and work towards more direct democracy. The District councils promote cooperation within the neighbourhood, formulate policies and make proposals to the city council regarding their functions.

The role of the District Council is to strengthen the connection and shorten the communication paths between the residents and the city administration, promote increased information provision for the population, strengthen their opportunities to make their views known and raise awareness of the challenges within the neighbourhood. The Councils are a living forum for collaboration between residents, community groups, community organizations, businesses and city authorities. The District Council is an active participant in the implementation of all neighbourhood policies, advises on the operation of local service and welfare offices shall promote social capital in the districts of Reykjavik.

My District-Participatory Budgeting

My District is a collaborative project between citizens and the City administration for prioritizing and distributing funds for new, smaller-scale projects and maintenance in the districts of Reykjavik. The project is run annually.

The project is based on ideas on deliberative democracy, participatory democracy, participatory budgeting – in general promoting public participation in democratic discussions and decision-making beyond what is normally seen in a representative democracy. Experience of previous years is used to improve the process, together with expert services and input from other cities all over the world that have practiced participatory budgeting.

A total budget of ISK 450 million (3,3 million euros) is planned for the project.

Education

The Reykjavik's Human Rights and Democracy Office provides education about the Reykjavik's Human Rights Policy and gender equality, and represents diversity education. The office also presents education on various issues in its field. Such education includes information regarding violence, immigration, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking, knowledge relating perspectives and prejudice against people with disabilities, and education about LGBT issues in Reykjavik.

It's possible to make a request to receive this education and have it tailored to the needs of each workplace.

The Office welcomes visitors from abroad who seek to gather information about the human rights policy and the scope of the Office.

Further information about the Human Rights Council and the role of Reykjavik's Human Rights and Democracy Office can be accessed at the Office.

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Further information are available in English on the Reykjavik's website: rvk.is/humanrights