



Explanatory Report with the City of Reykjavík's Language Policy

The following explanatory report is a supplement to the City of Reykjavík's language policy, where the goal was to create a simple and accessible language policy that staff would be likely to adopt. This explanatory report contains a supplement and further explanations.

1. Icelandic is at the forefront in the City of Reykjavík

In all services and administration of the City of Reykjavík, Icelandic is always used and is a model in accordance with the [Parliamentary Resolution on Icelandic Language Policy from 2009](#) and [Act on the Status of the Icelandic language and Icelandic sign language no. 61/2011](#). The same Act stipulates that the state and municipalities are responsible for preserving and promoting the Icelandic language and shall ensure that it is used (Articles 2 and 5). The language policy of the City of Reykjavík also takes into account [the Icelandic Language Policy 2021-2030](#), which is the first language of those who need to rely on it for expression and communication, as well as their children, as stipulated in Article 3 of Act No. 61/2011 on the Status of the Icelandic Language and Icelandic Sign Language.

2. All communication involves friendliness and respect

The voice of the City of Reykjavík is trustworthy, friendly, and easy to understand. Staff use high-quality, plain, simple, and inclusive language in all communications.

Content provided by the City of Reykjavík is based on the [Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights irrespective of Gender, multiculturalism policy](#) og [and the City's human rights policy](#). Staff never speak down to people or discriminate in any other way based on age, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, political views, origin, religion, social status, or other factors.

This is discussed in more detail in [Reykjavík City's Style Guide](#).



3. Icelandic is the main language of communication in the City of Reykjavík. Staff use Icelandic in their work and administration, except when circumstances require them to use other languages. Staff who are in direct contact with the City's residents have basic skills in Icelandic

Icelandic is the main language of communication in the services and environment of the City of Reykjavík, and this also applies to computer interfaces, electronic services, and the main user software at the City's workplaces.

Staff who are in direct contact with the citizens have basic skills in Icelandic, in accordance with the requirements of the job. Reference is made to the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) in job advertisements to inform applicants of these requirements.

Staff strive to use Icelandic professional terms and concepts in their work to the extent possible. Icelandic job titles as well as the names of institutions, schools and municipalities are always in the foreground. However, it is good to have official foreign names available and accessible to staff. Icelandic place names are always used, but foreign names are placed in brackets if there is reason to do so.

4. All information is accessible and easy to understand. High-quality and plain language, whether written or spoken, is a key element in all services and administration of the City. Staff write simple, plain, and objective text.

High-quality language applies to all languages, including sign language.

Those who write and respond to messages on behalf of the City of Reykjavík write simple, plain, and objective text. They avoid value-charged words, strong adjectives, complex nomenclatures, and abbreviations. [Reykjavík City's Style Guide](#) contains guidelines for text writing and presentation of content on behalf of the City.

In all City services, including electronic services, all language is plain and easy to understand so that citizens can easily use the service and complete their business effectively.

Staff are offered courses, language advice and proofreading, access to necessary dictionaries, reference material and websites about the Icelandic language and language use. City service staff have easy access to the main Icelandic language manuals, such as the Icelandic dictionary, spelling dictionary, and thesaurus. They can also use all necessary language technology equipment for Icelandic and other languages, such as correction programs, speech synthesizers, speech analyzers, and translation programs, in consultation with their immediate superior.

Language is in accordance with language conventions and appropriate language format, and written language follows Icelandic writing rules.

If technical solutions, such as artificial intelligence, are used in text creation, a human must always review the material before it is published. The City of Reykjavík has issued [recommendations on the use of artificial intelligence](#).

5. All content of the City of Reykjavík is in Icelandic. In addition, people are guaranteed access to information, for example through interpretation, translations, or text in an easy-to-read language. When a translation is available, Icelandic, and foreign text are always published in parallel.

It is important that key information about City services is accessible to citizens regardless of language, for example so that residents can actively participate in citizen democracy and social debate.

The Reykjavík City website is in high-quality and simple Icelandic, among other things to increase the quality of translations of the website into other languages. The website is accessible in English, which is easier to machine-translate into languages other than Icelandic. The website and other web content are configured so that Icelandic is always the default, but access to it in other languages is nevertheless clear and easy to find.

The right to interpretation and translation services must be guaranteed in accordance with [the policy on interpretation and translation services](#) and the action plan that accompanies it. A revised policy was submitted to the Human Rights and Violence Prevention Council on December 12, 2024, and it was then agreed to entrust the

Human Rights and Democracy Office with costing and prioritizing the report's recommendations.

Easy-to-read language is Icelandic that has been simplified in a systematic way, with regard to vocabulary, syntax and grammar, background knowledge, and presentation. Easy-to-read language is not only a simplification but also an important accessibility tool that ensures that individuals with reading or reading comprehension difficulties have the same access to information as others. Easy-to-read language promotes equal opportunities and independence for all. For further detail go to the webpage of the [Center for Easy-to-read Language. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) emphasizes ensuring the right of people with disabilities to receive information in a language they understand. Easy-to-read language promotes equal opportunities and independence for all. For further information go to the webpage of the Center for easy-to-read Language.

Efforts are made to display Icelandic text and foreign text side by side. For example, Icelandic can be displayed above or to the left of other languages on information signs,

When there is a discrepancy between text in Icelandic and foreign languages, the Icelandic text prevails. Therefore, it is important that the Icelandic version of the text is included.

Prior to material being translated into other languages, an attempt is made to communicate it in Icelandic in an understandable way, to help people enter the Icelandic language environment.

6. The City of Reykjavík creates conditions for staff and encourages them to improve their Icelandic language skills through continuous education and support. The City of Reykjavík considers language skills and the diversity of human life as a resource.

The City of Reykjavík offers Icelandic courses during working hours to staff of foreign origin to improve their Icelandic language skills.

The City of Reykjavík ensures that all staff have access to an Icelandic language environment in their daily work. Management ensures that staff are given the opportunity

to use Icelandic so that they are truly welcomed into the Icelandic language environment. It is common to quickly resort to English in communication, but the goal is for everyone to have the opportunity to use Icelandic and improve their skills.

7. Information dissemination to people with special needs and disabilities is in accordance with international standards. The City of Reykjavík ensures that information is provided using speech synthesizers, in Braille and Icelandic sign language where appropriate.

The interface and accessibility are in accordance with international standards. For example, the City's web content is accessible and easy to read for everyone in accordance with [WCAG-Standards](#).

All content on the City's website is accessible with basic assistive devices, such as speech synthesizers. Information about accessibility within City-run buildings is clear for those who visit, including signage. The City of Reykjavík ensures that information is provided in Icelandic Sign Language, so that those who need it can obtain all basic information about services and other activities, as stipulated in Article 13 of the Act on the Status of the Icelandic Language and Icelandic Sign Language. Accessibility is discussed in more detail in [the City of Reykjavík's Accessibility Policy](#).

8. The language policy takes into account other policies and applies to all workplaces of the City of Reykjavík and to companies and institutions that provide services on behalf of the City.

Staff take the language policy of the City of Reykjavík into account in their work and communication and uses high-quality language in service and information dissemination. The language policy takes into account other policies and commitments on the part of the City of Reykjavík, such as the human rights policy, multicultural policy, information policy, document policy, and service policy. The language policy is based on their fundamental principles of equality, respect, trust, transparency, good access to information and active communication.

The Mayor is responsible for the language policy of the City of Reykjavík, while the departments are responsible for its implementation. The policy is valid for 2026–2030. The Office of the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer

appoints a working group that evaluates the effectiveness of actions and reviews the language policy every five years in consultation with the Icelandic Language Committee and other experts.

Staff can seek advice from the Communication Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Icelandic Sign Language Committee if issues arise in services for users of Icelandic Sign Language.

It is important that all institutions in the City, such as schools, leisure centers, centers and cultural institutions, adopt this language policy or establish their own in accordance therewith.