



CITY OF REYKJAVÍK
CULTURE POLICY
2014-2020

Culture is a Human Right





“Since culture is one of the mainsprings of development, the cultural aspects of development are as important as its economic aspects, which individuals and peoples have the fundamental right to participate in and enjoy.”

UNESCO General Conference 33rd Session Paris, October 3 – 21, 2005 (Article 5: Principle of the complementarity of economic and cultural aspects of development)

City of Reykjavík Culture Policy 2014-2020

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CULTURE IS A HUMAN RIGHT

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GUIDELINES

The City of Reykjavík takes the lead in arts and culture.

The City's identity is based on creative innovation, initiative, and cultural heritage, and reflects international trends.

Cultural life is characterised by diversity, collaboration and active participation by both residents and visitors.



“The city’s cultural resources are its residents, especially those who create and increase awareness towards the community’s various cultural dimensions.”

The Reykjavik Academy’s definition of the concepts culture, speciality, resource, space. 2009.

CHAPTER 1

RESOURCES

OBJECTIVES

Iceland's capital, Reykjavík, is to serve as the country's leader in nurturing an image of cultural diversity.

Culture contains value in itself, thus ample space is to be created for unexpected development and robust growth within culture and arts.

Creative arts are to be integral components of the city's social and economic fabric.

A city's culture and arts contain the seeds from which future endeavours will flourish.

Robust cultural diversity is an important precursor for social and economic well-being.

Cultural life in Reykjavík thrives primarily due to the grassroots efforts and creativity of both its residents and visitors. It is propelled by diverse individuals, organisations and institutions. The capital's cultural life is varied and one of the City of Reykjavík's key aims is to nurture this diversity, as it is at the core of the city's cultural image.

As Iceland's capital, Reykjavík leads the country in the arts and other creative areas. It is a community where education, innovation and knowledge are highly valued. It is therefore important for Reykjavík to establish itself as an energetic, creative city and a desirable place to live and work. In doing so, Reykjavík will strengthen its image, both domestically and internationally, while also enhancing social and economic well-being.

It is important to emphasise the ways in which culture, arts and other creative fields contribute to the economy, both directly and indirectly. It is also important to nurture the cultural and artistic relationship between the city, regions, and country and thereby promote a flourishing and diverse culture throughout Iceland.

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

United Nations Human Rights, Rights of the Child: Article 31

CHAPTER 2

CHILDREN AND CULTURAL UPBRINGING

OBJECTIVES

Arts and culture are to be important parts of education for children and youths in the city.

Preschools, elementary schools and leisure activity centres are to maintain good working relationships with artists, museums and other cultural institutions.

Children, youths and their families are to be encouraged to participate in cultural activities and their contributions are to be highly valued.

Modern society calls for flexibility and open mindedness to take on ever-changing circumstances. A strong and focused arts and culture education is an important component in cultivating a society of creative individuals. Reading in a wider context must be encouraged in both children and adolescents. Reading comprehension and environmental and cultural education pave the way for active cultural participation, increase awareness of cultural heritage and encourage creative and critical thinking.

Collaboration between cultural institutions and schools is a valuable way to encourage individuals of all ages to actively participate in cultural matters. The same can be said about general teachings in the field of arts and culture within the educational system, as well as arts education in specialised schools where trained instructors and working artists share their knowledge and experience. Arts education helps children use and develop abilities and talents that are applicable in all areas of life.

In the work of cultural institutions, and the planning of festivals by the Reykjavík Department of Culture and Tourism and its collaborative partners, an emphasis is to be placed on families spending time together, and on participation by children and youths. It is important to remain alert to new ways of reaching children, adolescents and their families to ensure easy access to culture and the arts, regardless of social and financial status.

“Official educational and cultural institutions are the routes to culture in the city. It is their goal, and that of all residents, to ensure the continuous development of cultural heritage and to nurture creativity among future generations.”

The Reykjavik Academy's definition of the concepts culture, speciality, resources, space. 2009.

“The public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.”

From UNESCO Public Library Manifesto

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

From The Statutes of ICOM International Council of Museums, Article 3, Section 1.

CHAPTER 3

THE CITY OF REYKJAVÍK'S CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

OBJECTIVE

The city's cultural institutions are to have several diverse roles and are to become an integral part of daily life for residents and visitors alike.

Institutions that fall under the auspices of the Reykjavík Department of Culture and Tourism are a part of daily life for residents and visitors alike. Cultural experience is not an isolated instance, but is rather a shared awareness, a togetherness, a journey and a learning experience to participate in something that stimulates the imagination and takes people beyond the limits of the everyday.

It is important to work constantly towards expanding the groups that visit cultural institutions and thereby fertilise new cultural initiatives. These institutions have a duty to support initiatives within culture and the arts.

The city's main cultural institutions are Reykjavík City Library (Borgarbókasafn Reykjavíkur), Reykjavík Arts Museum (Listasafn Reykjavíkur), Gerðuberg Cultural Center (Menningarmiðstöðin Gerðuberg), Reykjavík Museum of Photography (Ljósmyndasafn Reykjavíkur), Reykjavík City Museum (Minjasafn Reykjavíkur), and Reykjavík Maritime Museum (Sjóminjasafn Reykjavíkur).¹ These institutions often work in close collaboration yet serve many different roles within their own areas of interest. The city's museums function according to laws and regulations that are informed by guidelines from ICOM (the International Council of Museums) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). The role of Reykjavík UNESCO City of Literature is to promote literature and word arts to residents and visitors and to work closely with both local and international partners. The work of Reykjavík's cultural institutions includes service, communications, exhibitions, research, collection, and guardianship.

¹ Addition: As of 1 June, 2014 the following institutions merged into a new Reykjavík City Museum (Borgarsögusafn Reykjavíkur): Árbær - Open Air Museum (Árbæjarsafn), The Settlement Exhibition - Reykjavík 871 ±2 (Landnámssýningin 871 ±2), Reykjavík Maritime Museum (Sjóminjasafn Reykjavíkur), Reykjavík Museum of Photography (Ljósmyndasafn Reykjavíkur) and the island Viðey.

“In time, only art will be what is left to bear witness of who we were.”

Pétur Gunnarsson – writer b. 1947. From a speech made when The Association of Icelandic Artists celebrated its 80th anniversary.

“A vibrant art and cultural life is necessary in a modern society. [...] Art and culture challenge and develop us as individuals and as a society, and thereby help to promote a sustainable society.”

Nordic Council of Ministers Strategy for Nordic Cultural Co-operation 2013-2020

<http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2013-734>

CHAPTER 4

ARTS

OBJECTIVES

Art in the city is to be characterised by energy, ambition and opportunities to flourish on its own terms.

The city is to create favourable conditions for artistic expression.

In order for art to serve its social purpose as a source of new and original ideas, it needs freedom to grow and develop on its own terms. Art is not only a source of pleasure. Its role is also to disrupt – it surprises and points out things we might not otherwise notice, or perhaps not wish to see.

It is important for the city's granting authorities to take account of the constantly changing boundaries between different art forms and cultural spheres. Besides continuing to support established projects, the city must look towards nurturing grassroots and experimental activities, which may have great potential for the future.

For cultural activities that receive annual grants, a long-term commitment should be a high priority. Detailed annual reviews and continued evaluations of cultural support must also be undertaken by the city.

The city of Reykjavík currently offers grant support and space to various cultural establishments such as the City Theatre (Borgarleikhúsið), Iceland Symphony Orchestra, the Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre, Reykjavík Arts Festival, Korpúlsstaðir Visual Arts Center, the cinema Bíó Paradís and Tjarnabíó, a venue and centre for independent performing arts. The city also allocates multiple grants from its festival fund, in addition to regularly advertised requests for proposals.

One of the fundamental elements for artistic creation and exhibitions is appropriate space, and many different cultural initiatives receive discounted rents for housing their activities. Support the city provides concerning facilities is evolving to keep up with constantly changing cultural needs.

“Equitable access to a rich and diversified range of cultural expressions from all over the world and access of cultures to the means of expressions and dissemination constitute important elements for enhancing cultural diversity and encouraging mutual understanding.”

UNESCO General Conference 33rd Session Paris, October 3 – 21, 2005 (article 7 Principle of equitable access)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001428/142825e.pdf>

“The cultural sector offers common arenas and meeting places for co-operation, dialogue and debate. An active and dynamic cultural life, manifested in a variety of cultural expressions, plays a key role in an inclusive society.”

Nordic Council of Ministers Strategy for Nordic Cultural Co-operation 2013-2020

<http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2013-734>

CHAPTER 5

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

OBJECTIVES

Cultural life in the city is to be accessible to all and characterised by diversity, open mindedness, unity and respect.

The city's cultural life is to enhance public participation and be conducive to positive social development.

In accordance with its human rights policy, the city regards equality and civil rights as guiding principles in all its activities. It is important that cultural diversity is acknowledged and supported by freedom of expression. The city's cultural life should be open to everyone so that each person has a sense of belonging and has equal access and can participate on his or her own terms. It is also important that the city encourages active participation.

Culture, arts and history can inspire a sense of belonging and constructive curiosity about the lives and cultures of others. It is important to be open to opportunities of this kind and to make use of them in the interests of the community, based on mutual understanding, respect and equality. One of the key components in this context is collaboration, i.e. uniting people from different cultures and backgrounds and enabling gatherings where they can share experiences and insights. It is important for proponents of culture in the city to be open to and celebrate diversity.

“The city’s cultural space is the entire community. Therefore great care should be taken in the design of all structures in the area, and architects should strive for harmony between nature and buildings as much as possible.”

The Reykjavik Academy’s definition of the concepts culture, speciality, resources, space, 2009.

“Structural edifices are living legacies that require continuous monitoring and assessment with consideration to the past and the future. The manmade environment frames human life and actions. Buildings and other structures are important symbols of a culture as they are a permanent reflection of life and the technical knowledge of their time.”

Cultural policy for Architecture- Governmental policy

“Environmental planning and design contain an understanding of the connection between the past and the present and where preservation of past construction and planning, and strengthening of present architecture and city planning go hand in hand.”

Reykjavík Municipal Plan (2010 - 2030)

CHAPTER 6

ENVIRONMENT AND HISTORY

OBJECTIVES

Culture, arts and history are to be the cornerstones of city development and creativity is to be reflected in the environment.

The city's history and cultural values are to be cherished by using the human environment as a guiding principle.

In Reykjavík, culture, arts and history are the keys to developing a positive image and enhancing standards of living. Increased awareness of local history can deepen the understanding of where we come from and where we are heading. Such understanding may enhance a sense of togetherness and increase interest in the immediate environment. The city considers it its duty to preserve and protect cultural history and make it accessible to residents and visitors alike.

It is important that that city's image reflects its residents' creativity and that the human environment is a priority. Artists' input in the design of official buildings and public spaces can help ensure they become an integral part of the surroundings. Public art, whether freestanding structures or art in a broader context, such as road planning and the design of public spaces, can enliven one's surroundings, and generally enhance the atmosphere of the city.

Reykjavík must use open areas within the city as well as surrounding nature to support public gatherings and improve societal communications. Public transportation plays a large part in the cultural lives of cities and helps facilitate easier access for people living in different areas. All neighbourhoods have opportunities for establishing cultural activities within their own districts and the city offers continued support to this effect. The public will benefit from learning about cultural activities in other areas and ease of access will certainly help.

“Cultural life in Iceland is nourished by international currents while at the same time contributing to those currents. This kind of interaction is indispensable for the advancement of artistic and cultural activity. [...] Iceland’s cultural life influences many people’s experiences of the country, and its reputation is enhanced by high-quality cultural projects presented in the international arena.”

Excerpt from National Cultural Policy, Iceland

CHAPTER 7

INTERNATIONAL CITY OF CULTURE

OBJECTIVE

Cultural life in Reykjavík is to be defined by its cosmopolitan character, based on a combination of a unique cultural identity and participation in the international community.

Reykjavík has unique opportunities to grow and thrive. The city is young, strong and diverse; it is in a desirable location in close proximity to unique nature and has a rich cultural life worth celebrating, especially since Reykjavík's culture has become irrevocably a part of the international community.

The Reykjavík Department of Culture and Tourism participates in various international cultural activities. The results are visible through professional innovation, international collaborations, exhibitions, conferences and events, both in Iceland and abroad. Festivals within the arts and culture sector continue to offer opportunities for international participation, as well as attracting foreign visitors. Foreign artists who participate in cultural events also provide a boost to arts in the city.

Visit Reykjavík paves the way for international media, promotes Reykjavík abroad and, together with local and international colleagues, implements marketing campaigns. The city's tourism strategy is based on four pillars: Cultural City, Conference City, Health City, and Winter City.

Reykjavík is an interesting cultural city in an international context, and one where cultural diversity thrives.

“Digitalization offers great opportunities [...] in an increasingly globalised world. Digitalization enables common experiences – cultural and linguistic [...]. Digital communication is an important part of the work to democratize access to culture.”

Nordic Council of Ministers Strategy for Nordic Cultural Co-operation 2013-2020

<http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2013-734>

CHAPTER 8

CULTURE AND DIGITAL MEDIA

OBJECTIVES

The City of Reykjavík is to use information technology in digital preservation and cultural communications.

The city is to increase access, improve interactive technology and strengthen communications with the aid of digital media.

Information technology is continuously evolving and Reykjavík is eager to adapt and apply new technology in its cultural work. Digital media is in itself an inspiration for projects and many kinds of art creation.

Easy access to digital media paves the way for active participation in cultural activities and opens the city to the outside.

Among other objectives, the city's cultural institutions use new digital technology to increase service through improved access, interactive communications and information, and to reach groups that have not previously participated in any activities.

By applying digital technology as a service to residents and visitors, the city is mindful of the needs and requirements of different groups and seeks to fulfil those as much as possible, through direct participation and improved information communications.

HUMANITY

We pave the way for culture and arts to thrive and become integral components of life for residents and visitors. We nurture positive communications between staff, and place emphasis on co-operation, respect and honesty.

ENERGY

We show initiative and have the courage to take charge. We are leaders in harnessing the power that lies within vibrant cultural life and lively creativity in the city as well as within the nearby pristine nature.

PROFESSIONALISM

Our work is characterised by professionalism, care and ambition. We work according to set policies and maintain a deep respect for heritage and cultural values in our environment.

Reykjavik Department of Culture and Tourism Values

CHAPTER 9

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE CITY'S GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVES

The city's management of cultural affairs is to be transparent and its governance precise, making the value of culture in Reykjavík indisputable.

Emphasis on cultural collaboration between city departments and individual departmental units, the city and state and other stakeholders in cultural matters is to be increased.

Culture and arts are by definition fluid concepts and it is important that the management and governance of cultural matters take that into consideration. Cultural objectives are guided by strategies at the local, national, and international levels.

The Culture and Tourism Committee operates on behalf of the City Council's Executive Committee and manages strategic objectives and targets in the fields of culture, tourism and marketing. The committee oversees city-run museums and libraries, although institutions are managed by their own directors.

The Reykjavík Department of Culture and Tourism works in close co-operation with other city departments, since culture is an essential part of every facet of the city. The department's main role is to implement the city's culture and tourism policies. It supervises all city-run cultural institutions and Visit Reykjavík, manages the support of arts and culture, and provides expert advice to the committee of culture and tourism and city council within the areas that fall under its remit.

Effective administration and financial management are crucial factors for a successful implementation of cultural strategy. In carrying out cultural projects, consideration must be given to legislation, regulations, policy formation and resolutions. Emphasis is also placed on regional institutions and grant recipients to honour standard practices and offer quality services and activities.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF REYKJAVÍK'S CULTURE POLICY

Reykjavík's first Culture Policy was approved by the City Council's Executive Committee on 11 December, 2001. Many individuals were involved in its creation, including artists, academics, politicians, officials and various other stakeholders. Some changes on the policy were accepted by the City Council's Executive Committee on 11 February, 2003. The first revision to the Culture Policy began in 2007 and again included wide-ranging collaboration and extensive preparation. Following that, the City of Reykjavík's Culture Policy was accepted by the City Council on 16 June 2009. The second revision of the policy began in 2012. The steering group that followed that work consisted of Einar Örn Benediktsson (Chair of the Culture and Tourism Committee), Ósk Vilhjálmsdóttir, Davíð Stefánsson, Svanhildur Konráðsdóttir (Director of Culture and Tourism), and Signý Pálsdóttir (Head of the Cultural Office). Sólrún Sumarliðadóttir, MA in arts administration and cultural policy, and Signý Pálsdóttir were responsible for the project management of the final publication.

The main change from previous culture policies is the connection of aims to action in the cultural field. The project plan is an attachment to the Reykjavík Culture Policy 2014-2020. The objective is to update the action plan annually at the same time as the working plan for the coming year.

The City of Reykjavík's Culture Policy 2014-2020, with the title "Culture is a Human Right," was approved by the city's Culture and Tourism Committee on 28 April, by the City Council's Executive Committee on 8 May, and by the City Council on 20 May, 2014.





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www.reykjavik.is