



# Iceland



**In 2015, several municipalities took steps to ensure teenagers and teachers receive education and training on LGBTQIAP+ matters, despite some isolated opposition from parents groups. Iceland welcomed the first LGBTI refugees to the country. Intersex activists received an apology from a publisher after a derogatory definition was discovered in a textbook and the equality ombudsman made important statements on the rights of intersex children.**

## Asylum

- Five LGBT refugees were among a group of 18 asylum seekers accepted by the Icelandic government, the first group of LGBTI refugees to arrive in the country

## Bias-motivated speech

- On 27 April, LGBTQIAP NGO Samtökin 78 reported 10 incidents of hate speech to the capital area police. The NGO filed charges against 10 individuals under article 233(a) of the Penal Code which protects people against hate speech. The bias-motivated remarks were made on social media after the Hafnarfjörður town council's decision (see **Education**). In September, the metropolitan police declined to investigate the allegations. On 7 October, Samtökin 78 announced they intended to sue the Chief of the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police. The State Prosecutor's Office responded on 10 November and instructed the police to launch an investigation.
- In protest against the anti-LGBTI comments often made on the Útvarp Saga radio station, the youth branch of the Social Democratic Alliance (centre-left) organised the #OccupySaga campaign. Pro-equality activists were encouraged to call in to the live Línan laus show on 24 April and the Young Social Democrat's chairperson offered to talk about minority rights on the programme.

## Bodily integrity

- The Ombudsman of Children released a written opinion regarding surgical interventions performed on intersex babies in May. The Ombudsman stated that a child should be allowed to make informed decisions about surgical or hormonal treatment when they have developed an awareness of their own gender identity. Subjecting intersex children to irreversible and unnecessary operations violates their rights, according to the opinion.

## Education

- A new queer student group Catamitus organised a series of queer days in March at Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík, an upper secondary school in Reykjavík. It was the first

time that such an event had taken place in the school. Several other upper secondary schools organised similar initiatives.

- The municipality of Hafnarfjörður proposed updates to their education system in April, suggesting that NGO Samtökin 78 would give classes on LGBTQIA issues to both teenagers and teachers at the town's seven compulsory schools. It was also proposed that Samtökin 78 would help the town to develop a LGBTQIA curriculum. The town council's decision generated several public campaigns, both for and against the introduction of the diversity curriculum (See **Bias-motivated speech**). In October, the Hafnarfjörður education board approved the proposals and collaborated with NGO Samtökin 78 to develop the new lessons. The updated curriculum, along with a training programme for teachers, was due to be introduced in 2016.
- In June, Reykjavík City Council agreed to provide ISK 15 million (EUR 102,000) of funding over three years to help the NGO Samtökin 78 to train staff and students on LGBTI issues, as well as to run counselling and support groups for LGBTI people.
- Kári Örlygsson, the publisher of a biology textbook used in three colleges, apologised in October for translating the word 'intersex' as 'freak'. He promised to revise the translations. The textbook dated from 2010 and the accompanying glossary, where the translation was included, had last been revised in 2006.

## Equality and non-discrimination

- In January, Gústaf Níelsson (Independence Party, centre-right) was put forward as the Progressive Party's (FSF, centre-right) deputy representative on Reykjavík's Human Rights Council. This attracted considerable media attention as Níelsson was not a member of the nominating party and had expressed opinions contrary to FSF policy, such as an opposition to marriage equality and adoption by same-sex couples. His nomination was later withdrawn by his original supporters on the council, Sveinbjörg Birna Sveinbjörnsdóttir and Guðfinna J. Guðmundsdóttir. The deputy representative position was filled by Greta Björg Egilsdóttir (FSF).

- Children’s TV programme *Stundin Okkar*, Iceland’s longest running children’s TV series starring singer Páll Óskar, broadcast a scene in October where two characters discuss different sexual orientations.

trained on dealing with violence among LGBTI couples but that the force was open to improving its education programmes.

## Family

- In September, it was reported that the Office of the Bishop of Iceland replied to a parliamentary question from Andrés Ingi Jónsson (reserve MP from Left Green Party) by saying that ministers can refuse to marry same-sex couples under a “freedom of conscience” exemption. No use of the exemption had been reported but Samtökin 78 stated their opposition to the discriminatory practice. In November, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland voted to remove the ‘freedom of conscience’ option; ministers can no longer refuse to marry same-sex couples.

- Also in September, the discrimination of lesbian couples (either married or in registered partnerships) by the National Registry was discussed. When a child is conceived through artificial insemination, the non-birth mother is only recognised as a parent if they fill out a form stating they were both in favour of the treatment and submit it to the National Registry. Different-sex couples who use sperm donors do not need to do this; the father was automatically recognised as a parent under the *pater est* rule. In November, the National Registry announced that they would gather the necessary information directly from the country’s only artificial insemination clinic rather than ask the new mothers to complete the paperwork. They also proposed that the Ministry of Interior enact an equivalent *mater est* clause for lesbian couples that would be added to the Act in Respect of Children. This had not been enacted by the end of 2015.

## Police and law enforcement

- In November, a gay man gave an interview to local newspaper *Fréttablaðið* discussing the frequent domestic violence he suffered and the inactivity of the police force. On 15 November, District Commissioner Sigríður Björk Guðjónsdóttir said that LGBTI people were not excluded from police protocols. In an interview with the Gay Iceland website, she also said that officers were currently not