



Reykjavíkurborg
Mannréttindaskrifstofa

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Reykjavik City Services from Immigrant Point of View

**REPORT ABOUT APPLICATION PROCESS AND NEED FOR
NOT OFFERED SERVICES**

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Description

The following survey was done by Marcin Pawelec, intern in Human Rights and Democracy Office of Reykjavik. His internship took place from June to August 2019. This report is a result of Marcin's work on actions III.2 and III.3 in action plan for [Policy on immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees](#).

Action III.2:

Review whether the process of applications for various licenses that are most commonly applied for, e.g. day-parent or for business purposes, imposes barriers specific to immigrants.

Action III.3:

Analyse what services are not offered for immigrants by the City of Reykjavik that they need and make suggestions for improvements

The work on action was divided into 2 parts: researching access convenience to Reykjavik city services through e-Reykjavik (III.2) and conducting the online survey to get information about needs for specific and not yet offered services (III.3).

1. Access to city services on e-Reykjavik

The research on potential language barriers has been done by scrutinising application processes for municipal services at Reykjavik electronic system, farther in this document called e-Reykjavik (rafraen.reykjavik.is).

To log in to e-Reykjavik one has to open the official webpage of Reykjavik city www.reykjavik.is and click on 'Mínar síður'. There is no link to e-Reykjavik on the English version of the website. It is just possible to access it from the Icelandic version of the website.

After clicking on "Mínar síður" one is redirected the login page of e-Reykjavik itself (in Icelandic) <https://rafraen.reykjavik.is/pages/#logged-out>.

The login screen can be set up to be displayed in English. However after typing in login and password, system asks the user again in Icelandic what it wishes to access. A foreign user needs to switch to English once again at this point.

Two options appear then: 'My Page' or 'Umsjón' (not translated). Both choices can eventually lead to the webpage, where all the possible applications are listed. However it is far from clear to a beginner user how he/she is supposed to access an application in the system.

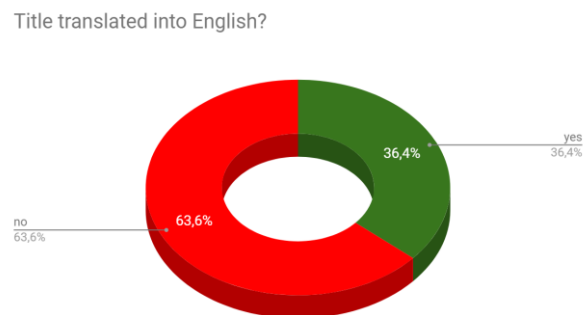
As presented, the sole login process to e-Reykjavik is already imposing barriers to foreigners.

All the applications which are accessible via e-Reykjavik have been looked into. It is important to mention at this point that there are two official foreign versions of e-Reykjavik available: English and Polish. Four questions have been stated in order to evaluate whether the process of applying for municipal services is hindering the access to them in regard to people not able to speak Icelandic. Here are the questions:

1. is the title of the application translated into English?
2. is the title of the application translated into Polish?
3. is the application itself translated into English?
4. is the application itself translated into Polish?

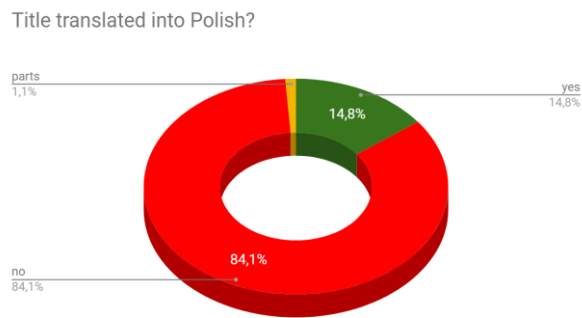
Results

Graphic presentation of the results.



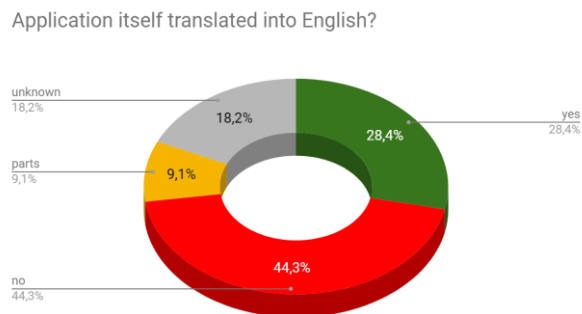
Picture 1. % Of titles translated into English in e-Reykjavik

Picture 1 presents the % of applications in e-Reykjavik application system with translated title while browsing the English version of e-Reykjavik. Just 36,4% of application titles are translated. It can be a big obstacle while applying for services because foreign users simply don't know where the right application is.



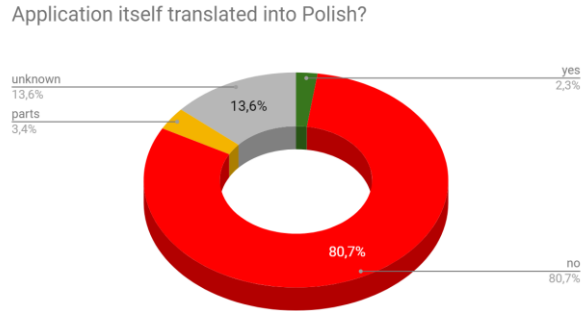
Picture 2. % of titles translated into Polish in e-Reykjavik

The amount of titles translated into Polish is even smaller, only about 15% of all the application titles. A crushing majority of the titles are not translated even though an official Polish language version of e-Reykjavik exists. The answer 'parts' means that some fragments are translated and some are not. Sometimes it also refers to a translation being not accurate and so making it quite difficult to understand.



Picture 3. % of application bodies translated into English in e-Reykjavik

Picture 3 shows the % of application bodies available in the English version of e-Reykjavik translated from Icelandic. It is a little less than a third of all the applications, which are user-friendly for immigrants. Almost 10% is translated incompletely, which is a lack of consequence and makes an unprofessional image of the city. Almost half of them are original applications in Icelandic simply put in the official English version of e-Reykjavik. Category called 'unknown' means that the access to the application is denied to everyone, for example because the deadline for applying has passed and the applications have been disabled. It is not possible to examine those applications in detail.



Picture 4. % of applications translated into Polish in e-Reykjavik

Picture 4 shows how many of application bodies are translated in the Polish version of e-Reykjavik. Just 2,3% of all the forms are in “proper” Polish. Another 3,4% are translated badly or incompletely. Over 80% of the forms in the Polish version of e-Reykjavik are the original Icelandic forms. Those remain untouched after being imported from Icelandic version of e-Reykjavik to the Polish one.

Conclusions

In general the research shows that the electronic applications system hinders the access to Reykjavik City services to non-Icelandic speakers. The barriers are bigger for Polish-speakers than English-speakers. Below you can find some more detailed conclusions about the on-line application process.

1. PDF applications (in blue on e-Reykjavik) are always only in Icelandic. The webpage application, PDF cannot be translated by Google translates in two clicks. (In Google Chrome for desktop users you can translate a webpage in Icelandic by right-clicking the mouse and choosing from options ‘translate to English’, this trick doesn’t work for mobile app). Instead, to be able to find out the meaning of the document, single elements from the PDF document have to be put one by one to Google Translate in a different tab.
2. In many cases foreign language versions of applications are not consistent and some parts of it are translated and others are not. Sometimes the application is translated but the title is still in Icelandic. Other times the questions in the application are translated, however the answers at the drop-down lists are still in Icelandic. It creates a disorder, making it even more complicated for foreigners to get a grasp of the system itself.
3. Not all of the applications are accessible after logging in to e-Reykjavik. Some of the applications require separate logging in to other E-Systems like VALA or vinnuskoli.is. This requirement applies to native speakers just as much as to local expats. However taking into consideration the incomplete and fragmentary foreign language versions of these E-Systems, dealing with 3 separate application systems might further deepen the feeling of being confused.
4. There are many applications, which title is only in Icelandic (for example: ‘Umsókn til skipulagsfulltrúa’). However after clicking on it, it turns out that the application itself is translated very well. This means that an immigrant could make great use of it, but he might never discover this opportunity.

5. The expat is not able to deal with the Reykjavik E-Systems by her/himself (due to language barriers), she or he has to ask for language assistance at the relevant city office. Therefore while natives can send an application straight from their PC at home, an expat would need to go out and visit one of city offices to apply for the same service. It costs her/him time and might cost also money (bus ticket / fuel).

Improvement ideas

1. My suggestion is to translate everything in e-Reykjavik with the help of Google Translate. From Icelandic to English and from English to Polish (but not from Icelandic to Polish, because Google engine is not working well while translating from one niche language to another niche one!). This way the access gap can be temporary quickly fixed. The disadvantage is that the information will not be 100% precise. Later on, the translation quality can be improved by professional human translators part after part.
2. Another improvement idea in regard to e-Reykjavik system is to get rid of all PDF applications, because those are extremely unfriendly towards immigrants. Alternatively, at least provide those applications in English and Polish again translating with the help of Google Translate. Even though those applications are perhaps quite specific and not used by many immigrants, they might be an important and valuable source of information for immigrant residents of Reykjavik.

2. Immigrant needs for city services

The survey was conducted in order to get to know the opinions of immigrants living in Reykjavik. The answers were collected from 17 May until 28 May 2019. The survey was created in 2 languages: English and Polish. It was carried out mostly online. We also conducted around 30 direct on-the-spot interviews at Polish School in Breidholt on 18th of May. Documentation of those “offline” interviews was subsequently digitalized in order to have the results harmonized. The audience was reached mostly through Facebook. We encouraged followers of official Reykjavik Facebook pages (‘Living in Reykjavik’ + ‘Reykjavik - Nasze Miasto’) to take part in the survey. We also invested around 6400 ISK in advertising on Facebook. Apart from that, partnership with numerous immigrant organisations enabled us to reach further participants. Finally, thanks to cooperation with Polish School, we managed to gain insight into opinions of several Polish parents.

A potential participant had to fulfil precise conditions to be eligible to share his opinion with us. First condition was to live in Reykjavik city and the second one not to hold Icelandic citizenship. This way we were able to gather opinions of immigrants living only in the capital city. The full survey in English can be found in attachment I.

Comments regarding the survey:

All the questions were obligatory to answer except Question 3 and 8, which could be left empty.

Question 1 - any answer different than ‘Reykjavik’ resulted in displaying a message that this particular person is not eligible to fill out the survey

Question 2 - answer ‘Icelandic’ resulted in displaying the same message

Question 4 - Answer ‘No’ results resulted in skipping the next questions and jumping directly to Question 9

Question 6, 8 and 9 were designed to be open questions, which means that the interviewee could fill it out however it wished

Intentions attributed to particular questions:

Questions 1 - 2 were asked to filter out interviewees who are out of the research scope.

Questions 3 was asked to get a better image of various city services recognition among immigrants.

Question 4 was included to distinguish interviewees that have any experience applying for any city services. These were afterwards asked further questions (Questions 5 - 8) that were supposed to examine in detail their experiences regarding the application process.

Questions 9 was designed to collect the ideas for improvement came up with by interviewees.

Questions 10 - 11 were asked for purely statistical reasons.

Survey results

We've got in total 953 surveys filled out. Out of the total number 444 surveys were filled out in English and the other 509 in Polish. You can see all the answers in excel files attached to this report.

15% of the surveys were not analysed because they were filled out by residents of different cities in Iceland or by Icelandic nationals.

Results to Question 3

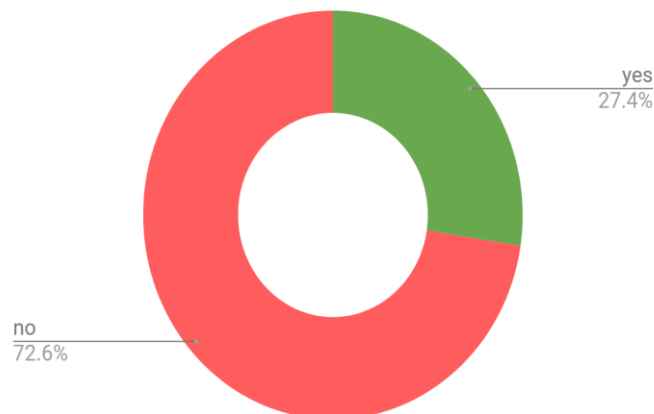
'Which of the following services that the city provides have you heard of?'

- city events - 69,6%
- school services - 65,7%
- social welfare services - 56,5%
- services for disabled residents - 31,7%
- Citizen's Ombudsman services - 11,4%
- city grants - 15,3%
- other - 1,9%

Number of answers analysed: 744

Results to Question 4

'Have you ever applied for anything from the city (e. g. using Mínar síður - Rafræn Reykjavík website)?'



Picture 5. % of survey participants who applied for Reykjavik city services

Number of answers analysed: 795

Results to Question 5

'How did you apply for it?'

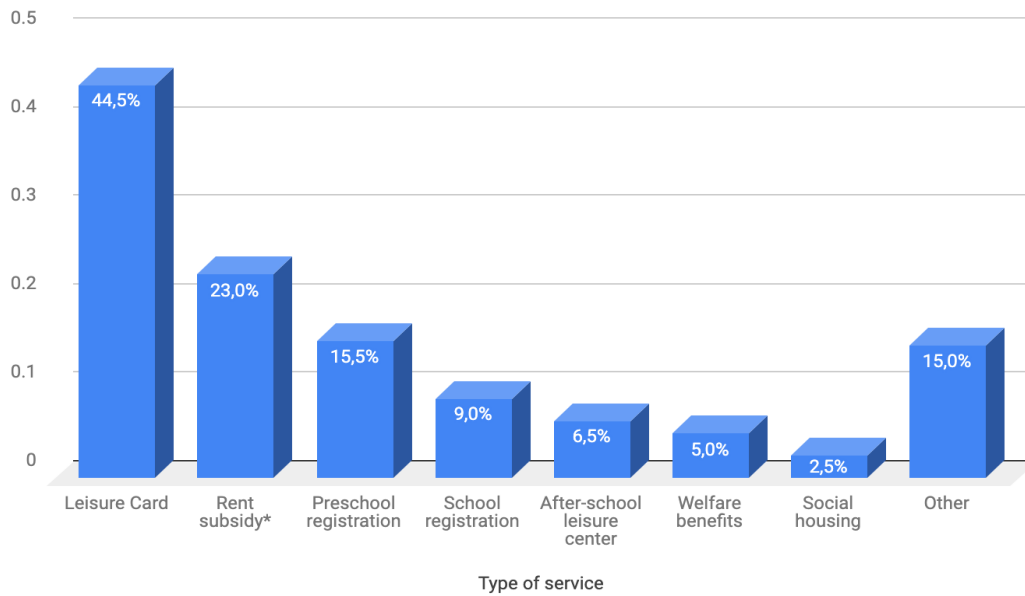
- online, at e-Reykjavik (Mínar síður - Rafræn Reykjavík) - 79,3%

- in person, by visiting Reykjavik offices - 26%
- online, via e-mail - 11%
- other - 5,3%

Number of answers analysed: 227

Results to Question 6

'What have you applied for specifically?'

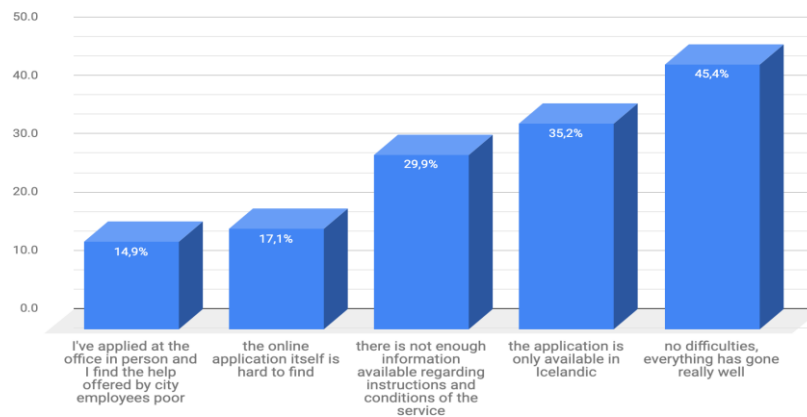


Picture 6. Type of Reykjavik city services participants applied for.

Number of answers analysed: 227

Results to Question 7

'Have you experienced the following difficulties during the process of applying?'



Picture 7. Difficulties that participants experienced while applying for Reykjavik City services

Number of answers analysed: 227

Results to Question 8

'Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experience with the application process?'

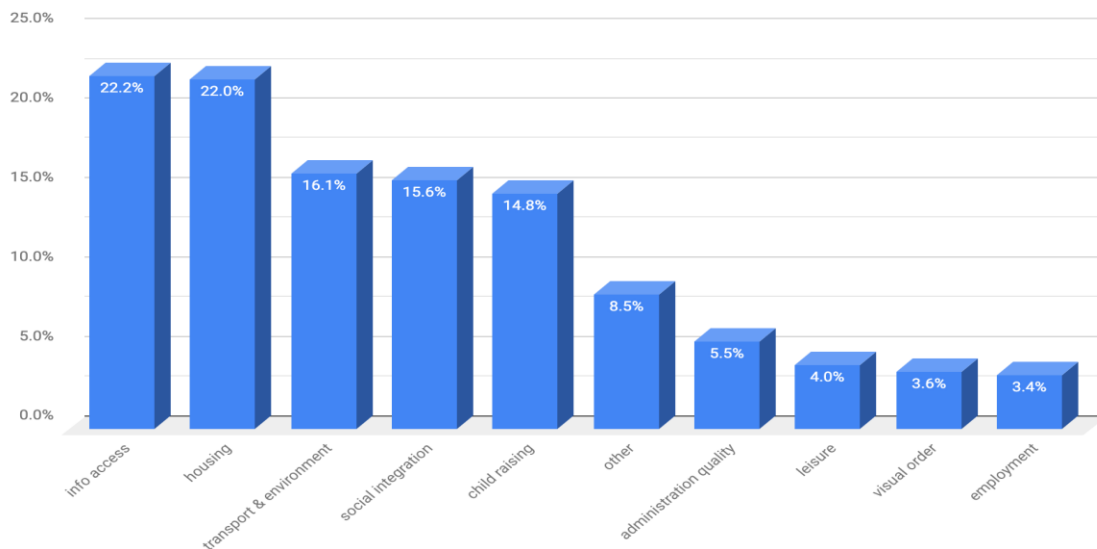
Since the answer to that question was optional, we only received 50 opinion statements. More than half of these answers (54%) were practically blank. The rest of them are explaining more thoroughly the problems interviewee encountered during the application process (30%), proposing an improvement (14%, those were counted within Question 9) or expressing satisfaction from using one of the city service (8%).

Number of answers analysed: 50

Results to Question 9

'Can you think of anything else that Reykjavik authorities could do for you or your family (e. g. introducing a whole new service or improving an existing one)?'

We received 809 answers in this category. However since this was also an open question, many opinion pieces were practically blank. A bit more than half of respondents (58,5%) actually proposed an improvement, whereas 41,5% of them refused to share an idea. Common topics found in improvement ideas are shown on a chart below:



Picture 8. Services that immigrants think city should offer.

Number of answers (improvement ideas) analysed: 473

Categories explanation:

- Info access (22,2%) - this category consists of ideas, which intend to solve the problem of lack of knowledge about the city services among immigrant residents. Respondents mentioned various ideas like:
 - establishing a permanent information spot dedicated to immigrants

- organizing welcome meetings around the town, where newcomers from different countries could learn about the possibilities that the city has to offer
- translating more content from Icelandic to other languages
- creating a city newsletter dedicated to immigrants
- Housing (22%) - this category encompasses all the voices, which are concerned about too high prices of housing commodities. Respondents mentioned ideas like:
 - establishing a maximum rent rate per square meter and zip code
 - having Reykjavíkurborg as an intermediary actor between prospective tenants and private landlords, which could possibly minimize cases of abusing tenants' rights
 - broader offer of city-owned housing (social housing)
- Transport & environment (16,1%) - this category groups all the improvement ideas focused on making Reykjavík more environmentally-friendly and better organized in terms of traffic. Examples of ideas are as follows:
 - expanding bike lanes network, bike parking spots and bike fixing stations, organizing city bicycle rental system
 - putting more organic waste bins (compost), introducing recycling bins in every residential building, minimizing food waste in supermarkets
 - improving snow clearing system so that bike lanes and sidewalks are ready to use
 - more frequent public buses and expanded Straeto network, introducing alternative type of tickets (valid for 20 - 30 minutes)
- Social integration (15,6%) - suggestions which focus on making life of underprivileged groups easier in Reykjavík as well as on helping immigrants to integrate with society
- Child raising (14,8%) - everything that can help raise a child (usually bilingual) in a foreign environment
- Administration quality (5,5%) - ideas which can lead to raising the quality of Reykjavík administration
- Leisure (4%) - improvement concepts that focus on spending free time in new ways
- Visual order (3,6%) - ideas that introduce new ways of taking care of what the city looks like
- Employment (3,4%) - proposals which would make the employment market more friendly towards immigrants

Results to Question 10

'How long have you been living in Reykjavík?'

- more than 5 years - 38,3%
- 2 - 5 years - 31,6%
- 1 - 2 years - 15,3%

- less than 1 year - 14,9%

Number of answers analysed: 732

Results to Question 11

‘What is your sex?’

- Female - 57,1%
- Male - 42%
- Other - 0,9%

Number of answers analysed: 539

Conclusions

1. Looking at the results it seems clear that both original tasks, to analyse how accessible the city's applications for services are, and what services are lacking, were strongly connected. Researching possible obstacles in application processes revealed important failures of the system. On the other hand, many respondents confirmed the outcomes of the first part of the research claiming that they were not aware of any city services or that they were having troubles while trying to benefit from them.
2. According to the survey almost half of the participants are satisfied with the application process for city services. However, it turns out that immigrants, which are based in Iceland for more than 5 years, are a vast majority of them. The shorter an immigrant has lived in Reykjavik, the less is the chance that he/she applied for a city service or is satisfied with the service provided.
3. Therefore it is extremely important to take into consideration primarily the newcomers while trying to improve the system of city services applications. It is those people, who do not speak Icelandic yet and have a weak social network in Iceland, who need an accessible system.
4. The results showed that there were two major problems. Immigrants find that in general there is a lack of information about the rights and obligations of immigrants in Reykjavik, for instance especially about housing. Also mentioned often was the lack of service centre where immigrants can get information and advice. Participants also showed dissatisfaction with the pupil transport system.
5. The majority of participants were not interested in buying a flat in Reykjavik. Out of all respondents, who mentioned housing as an issue to resolve, over 90% were focused on renting housing. Only 10% of them would also consider buying an apartment. It is vital that the authorities take it into account while trying to improve the affordability of housing in the city. Many city programs encourage and make it easier to buy a flat. Those programs will not be appreciated by a vast majority of immigrants. They need a solution in regard to renting a room or an apartment.

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Attachment I

8/14/2019

Let Reykjavik authorities know what you think!

Let Reykjavik authorities know what you think!

This survey has been created by Reykjavik City in order to learn what immigrants living in Reykjavik have to say about the services offered by the city. Our goal is to draw conclusions from your experiences and improve our service for immigrant residents. Please help us by filling out this short questionnaire!

Please note that if you do not live in Reykjavik you are not eligible to fill out this survey.

*Required

1. Where do you live in Iceland? *

Mark only one oval.

- Reykjavik
- Garðabær *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- Hafnarfjörður *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- Kópavogur *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- Mosfellsbær *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- Seltjarnarnes *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- Other place in Iceland *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- I do not live in Iceland *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*

2. What is your nationality? *

Mark only one oval.

- Icelandic *Skip to "Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.."*
- Other

The City of Reykjavik is responsible for primary schools, pre-schools, libraries, social services and services for disabled people. The City is also responsible for swimming pools, buses, trash collection, snow ploughing and street lights, just to name a few.

3. Which of the following services that the city provides have you heard of?

Tick all that apply.

- preschool, school, after-school services (e. g. Leisure Card, libraries)
- social welfare services (e. g. benefit for low-income residents, social housing)
- services for disabled residents
- city events (e. g. Culture Night, street sales)
- Citizen's Ombudsman services (defends citizens struggling with municipal administration)
- city grants
- Other: _____

4. Have you ever applied for anything from the city (e. g. using Minar síður - Rafræn Reykjavík website)? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No *Skip to question 9.*

5. How did you apply for it? *

Tick all that apply.

- online, at e-Reykjavik (Mínar síður - Rafræn Reykjavík)
- in person, by visiting Reykjavik offices
- online, via e-mail
- Other: _____

6. What have you applied for specifically? *

7. Have you experienced the following difficulties during the process of applying? *

Tick all that apply.

- the application is only available in Icelandic
- the online application itself is hard to find
- there is not enough information available regarding instructions and conditions of the service
- I've applied at the office in person and I find the help offered by city employees poor
- no difficulties, everything has gone really well
- Other: _____

8. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experience with the application process?

Skip to question 9.

9. Can you think of anything else that Reykjavik authorities could do for you or your family (e. g. introducing a whole new service or improving an existing one)? *

10. How long have you been living in Reykjavik? **Mark only one oval.*

- less than 3 months
- 3 - 12 months
- 1 - 2 year
- 2 - 5 years
- more than 5 years

11. What is your sex? **Mark only one oval.*

- Female
- Male
- Other

*Stop filling out this form.***Sorry, you're not eligible to fill out this questionnaire.**

We are looking for expats living in Reykjavik, Iceland. You seem to live outside of Reykjavik or be an Icelandic national.

However if you happen to have any foreign friends living in Reykjavik, we would really appreciate if you could share the link to this survey with them. Thanks!

Marcin Pawelec
Intern at Human Rights Office in Reykjavik City Hall

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