Iceland

Bias-motivated speech

Six members of parliament, including former prime minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson and former minister of foreign affairs, Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, were recorded discussing their political opponents in a sexist, ableist and homophobic manner. The recording was sent to the Icelandic media by someone who had overheard the conversation in a bar, and recorded it on their phone.

In early December, the Ethics Committee of the Icelandic Parliament was convened to investigate the scandal. The Committee did not set a timeframe for the investigation, and there were no outcomes by end of the year.

A demonstration was organised to condemn the remarks. According to a recent poll, 74-91% of the public would want the MPs to resign. Several civil society organisations, including international women’s and disability rights groups have called on the MPs to resign.

Freedom of association

The Ministry of Equality doubled the funding for Samtökin ’78 - The National Queer Organisation of Iceland. Until now, Samtökin received 6 million ISK annually (42,000 euros). The government has promised to be supportive and Samtökin are hopeful that in the year 2019, the funding will increase even more.

Samtökin ’78 turned 40 this year and held an anniversary gala, attended by the First Lady of Iceland and The Minister of Equality, who both gave speeches. The First Lady of Iceland, Eliza Reid, announced that Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, Iceland’s President, had decided to become Samtökin’s “patron”.

Employment

The Equal Treatment in the Labour Market Bill was passed by parliament on 11 June and entered into force on 1 September. The legislation, proposed by social affairs minister Ásmundur Einar Daðason (Progressive Party, FSF; centre-right), outlaws discrimination in employment on multiple grounds, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. The law will apply to a wide range of employment scenarios, such as recruitment processes, decisions related to promotion/pay and access to training. Any employer found to be violating the act will be subject to daily fines.

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