



# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ACTION PLAN**

**Bylaws of the  
Synod Office, its departments and offices  
Reformed Church in Hungary**

**2019**

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Acknowledging every person's right to live as a person of equal dignity, with special regard to disadvantaged people, people facing multiple disadvantages, people of Roma origin and people living with disabilities, the Synod Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary hereby enacts the following Equal Opportunities Plan:

## I. Preamble

Mission of the Reformed Church in Hungary:

*“Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) as a sign and agent of God's Kingdom will be a church of personal and social transformation, a community where irrespectively of origin or race, people can experience the welcoming, reconciling and healing power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”*

The present Equal Opportunities Plan has been drafted on the basis of Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities.

The Equal Opportunities Plan contains the employer's goals to ensure equal opportunities and the tools required to achieve said goals, with special regard to any programmes organised by the employer concerning the provisions of employment.

### *1. Synod Office*

The administration of duties within the competence of the Synod, the Synod Council and the Synod Presidium of the Reformed Church in Hungary are performed by the Synod Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

The Office is an organisational unit of the Reformed Church in Hungary without legal entity, performing its duties on behalf of RCH, using the Church's tax number. The Office's budget and its Bylaws are determined by the Synod Council, pursuant to Paragraphs a) – j) of Section 154 of Act II of 1994 on the Constitution and Governance of the Reformed Church in Hungary. Registered seat of the Office: 1146 Budapest, Abonyi u. 21.

The Office is in charge of performing administrative tasks regarding duties within the competence of the Synod, the Synod Council, the Presidium Council, the Synod Presidium, the permanent committees and the Synod Court. The Office undertakes the preparation and administration of the duties of the Church's elected bodies, as well as the administrative execution of decisions.

The Office operates on the basis of the principles of a cabinet system. Accordingly, work duties are performed in a team-like fashion, and the division of labour is not strictly based on areas of duties, but rather on individual tasks. For optimal efficiency and speed during the performance of duties, formalised solutions can be de-emphasised, and the organisation is dominated by joint activities based on mutual communication, as opposed to a strict hierarchy.

The organisational units within the Office are independent in terms of the performance of duties; however, they are not financially or legally independent. Within the approved budget of the Synod Office, they have their own allocated funds. (The Hungarian Reformed Church Aid

has a different legal status, which has its own legal entity due to its institution maintenance rights performed under transferred authority.)

The organisational units are as follows:

- Presidium of the Synod
- General Secretary
- Secretariat of the Presidium/Secretariat of the General Secretary
- Communications Service
- Financial Department
- Legal Department
- Mission Office
- Youth Office
- Ecumenical Office
- Educational Office
- Diaconal Office
- Grant Management Office

## ***2. General Objectives, Ethical Principles***

The Equal Opportunities Plan aims to ensure the implementation of the principle of equal treatment to the greatest possible extent, to provide equal opportunities to all employees prior to and during employment, to assess, through the analysis of the situation of affected groups, the actual situation of those affected, to monitor and promote the realisation of equal opportunities objectives, and to provide institutional remedies to any related breaches.

On the basis of the Plan, the Office shall strive to avoid any direct and indirect negative discrimination, which results in a person or group being treated less favourably than another person or group because of their real or perceived

- sex,
- racial origin,
- skin colour,
- nationality, national or ethnic origin,
- mother tongue,
- disability,
- state of health,
- political or other opinion,
- family status,
- motherhood (pregnancy) or fatherhood,
- age,
- social origin,
- financial status,
- the part-time nature or definite term of the employment relationship or other relationship related to employment,
- the membership of an organisation representing employees' interests,
- other status, attribute or characteristic.

A further aim is to define the ways of communication with regard to the measures.

Major objectives:

- ensuring the constant realisation of equal opportunities in decision-making and the adoption of measures,
- reducing, eliminating negative discrimination,
- strengthening discrimination-free attitudes,
- guaranteeing equal opportunities and equal access to the following disadvantaged groups:
  - elderly people,
  - people living with disabilities,
  - unemployed people,
  - people returning to work,
  - fresh graduates,
  - women in general and working parents raising young children,
  - people living in extreme poverty and people of Roma origin,
  - people with little education.

## **II. Situation Analysis**

The situation analysis based on employment data, i.e., the analysis of employees on the basis of specific general data (sex, age, etc.), has been extended with so-called sensitive data, which every employee could self-report on a voluntary basis. The request for sensitive information – in a targeted way in accordance with the provisions of relevant legislation – referred to ethnic background and disability.

The data provided in the situation analysis reflect the year 2019, and are presented with the following details.

The employer has a total of 99 employees. Of them, 82 employees are employed for an indefinite period, and 17 employees are employed on a fixed-term basis. 15 people will reach retirement age within five years.

The statistical data regarding disadvantaged employee groups are as follows:

<b>Total:</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>persons</b>		
Female employees:	63	persons	63	%
Employees over the age of 40:	47	persons	47	%
Employees with a Roma identity:	1	person	1	%
Employees living with disabilities or with a reduced capacity to work:	0	persons	0	%
Employees raising children under the age of 10:	20		20	%
Of those:	13 women and 7 men			

### **III. Measures**

The Synod Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary, in order to promote the equal opportunities of disadvantaged employee groups in its employ, with special regard to:

- women,
- employees over the age of forty,
- Roma people,
- disabled people,
- employees raising two or more children under the age of ten,
- single employees raising at least one child under the age of ten

introduces the following measures:

#### ***1. Non-discrimination, equal treatment***

Throughout employment, the Synod Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary shall prevent and stop any negative discrimination against its employees.

This measure shall extend to cases with regard to recruitment, employment, salary, earnings, benefits, initial and further trainings, and other, employment-related issues.

The principle of non-discrimination shall apply to any discrimination against employees – especially in connection with their age, sex, marital status, nationality, race, ethnic origin and political convictions.

#### ***2. Respect for human dignity***

Throughout employment, the Office shall respect its employees' human values, human dignity and individuality.

The Office deems it important to create a suitable working environment, as well as to contribute to the preservation and strengthening of fundamental values.

There are approximately 600,000 disabled people living in Hungary, and yet, the proportion of disabled people who are active congregation members is very low. As it is the firm conviction of the Church that each and every person is God's creation, they deem it important to ensure that truly everybody can find their place in a congregation, becoming active, serving members. This, however, can only happen if congregations become more open and they extend their knowledge on the characteristics of each disability, on the best ways to approach their disabled brothers and sisters, and on the opportunities for integration. In this work, congregations are aided by expert mentors through sensitisation programmes, presentations, discussions and the development of action plans.

#### ***3. Partnership, cooperation***

Within the scope of employment, the Office shall strive to promote the principle of partnership by creating transparent contractual relationships, while at the same time guaranteeing mutual benefits.

#### ***4. Social solidarity***

Throughout employment, no employee shall be deemed to be more valuable than others in society simply on the basis of their age, sex, nationality, marital or health status. It is in the best interest of every member of society to strengthen solidarity.

#### ***5. Fair and flexible treatment***

The principle of non-discrimination is not able to eliminate all inequalities, therefore various fair and flexible measures shall be developed in order to promote the preservation and advancement of the position of employees.

#### ***6. Establishment and strengthening of a family-friendly work environment***

In the narrowest sense, family-friendly measures are primarily aimed at supporting employees raising young children in a way that enables them to perform both their work-related and domestic duties. In a wider sense, a family-friendly workplace is aware of a variety of family structures, and takes into consideration not only child-rearing duties, but also duties such as caring for elderly, ill or disabled family members, without the assumption that such duties are exclusively the responsibility of women. Therefore such a family-friendly workplace provides the option to adjust working hours in a way that reflect family needs, the option of flexible working hours, working from home, and employing individuals returning from maternity/paternity leave. A further measure that contributes to a family-friendly working environment is maintaining a relationship with employees currently on maternity/paternity leave.

#### ***7. Reducing inequality between the sexes (men and women)***

Women form the majority of the population, and the specific issues they face revolve around fundamental societal questions. The general place of women in the workplace hierarchy is characterised by the fact that the lower we are in the hierarchy of professions, the more women can be found among those working in lower-paid and less prestigious positions; a clear sign of the strengthening of vertical segregation is the extremely low number of female leaders and managers.

Although over the past few decades there has been a significant improvement in the makeup of women based on the highest level of education, and in general the Hungarian higher education system provides more equal opportunities for women, the pay gap between men and women has not decreased, and this gap is most significant in the case of white-collar workers. The aim is to achieve parity in this area of equal opportunities as well.

For this reason, the Synod Office of the Reformed Church in Hungary aims to achieve a balance between the number of men and women in senior and middle management, and to provide equal pay for employees who have a similar level of education and experience or who work in similar positions.

In terms of employment and remuneration, the principle of equal treatment must prevail. Regarding women, the relevant protected characteristics must also be considered: sex, marital status, motherhood and pregnancy.

A further consideration is the potential limits of services that support the coordination of labour market and family duties (such as the availability or capacity of nursery, day care or kindergarten services), in which case flexible working hours or other family-friendly work environment solutions can be applied.

### ***8. Improving the standard of living and labour market prospects of Roma people***

Declaring affiliation with a national minority shall be the individual's exclusive and inalienable right. No one shall be obliged to make a declaration on their affiliation with a national minority; however, an Act or the law for the implementation of that Act may make the exercise of certain national minority rights conditional on the individual's declaration (see paragraphs (1)-(2) of Section 11 of Act CLXXIX of 2011 on the Rights of National Minorities). According to the latest census data, there are significant differences between Roma and non-Roma national minorities in terms of the makeup of social stratification.

Apart from adverse sociocultural factors and low levels of education, discrimination also contributes to the continued low level of participation and progression of Roma people in the labour market, therefore the Office is contributing to the eradication or reduction of disparity by employing a person who identifies as a person of Roma origin.

### ***9. Ensuring equal treatment during recruitment and employment***

The following are basic conditions of realising the principle of equal treatment during the recruitment process:

- No age-related conditions are to be stipulated in job advertisements.
- During the recruitment process, it is the skills and experience required for the given position that are considered.
- Applicants over the age of 40 are not automatically rejected for positions that require further training.

### ***10. Improving the working conditions of over-40 or disadvantaged employees***

In order to ensure that employees are able to make annual preventive screening appointments, the Office offers some flexible options (for example, a flexible starting time).

In terms of the working environment, the Office provides suitable occupational safety circumstances in order to counterbalance the changes related to ageing.

### ***11. Provision of employee benefits***

The provision of financial support for parents of schoolchildren, the provision of the legally mandated extra vacation days for parents.

The provision of legally mandated vacation days for certain family events /birth, wedding, family death, etc./



Chronically ill employees who require regular treatment may partially undertake treatment during working hours – in case it is justified by a statement written by a medical specialist – as long as it does not affect the employee’s performance of their work-related duties.

In the year 2019, employees of the Synod Office of RCH received, among other benefits, the following fringe benefits, pursuant to the Office’s 2019 Fringe Benefit Bylaw:

- Mix-and-match benefits in a cafeteria system worth up to 420,000 HUF annually.
- School-starting benefit for all employees eligible on the basis of relevant legislation.
- Discount mobile phone plan that suits individual employees’ needs.

## ***12. Support in case of layoffs and retirement***

When layoffs occur, the scope of employees affected must be linked to the criteria for performing the work in question.

If requested, the working hours of an employee approaching retirement age may be increased or decreased by mutual agreement.

The possibilities of early retirement must be considered in terms of its effect on both the individual and the employer.

### **The Support Services of RCH**

The Reformed Church in Hungary, therefore also the Synod Office, engages in charity activities, which are aimed at supporting those, among others, living in extreme poverty, which is a group of great significance in terms of equal opportunities.

Extreme poverty is a relatively new term that is mentioned nowadays more and more frequently. The phenomenon of extreme poverty refers to those permanently living below the minimum subsistence level, who have very little chance of escaping this situation on their own.

The lack of work positions and the drastic reduction of employment opportunities leads to the dramatic reduction in the standard of living of poor people and families. They mostly use up their previous savings and have no means of starting to save up again.

Through the Church Aid Office, RCH organises regular charity programmes throughout the year, especially around Christmas time. Donations and other forms of support are delivered in an organised fashion to the families most in need.

## **IV. Equal Opportunities Officer**

In order to supervise the realisation of the Equal Opportunities Plan, to monitor and document the performance of obligations, and to regularly inform the Office, an Equal Opportunities Officer is appointed.

Duties of the Equal Opportunities Officer:

- monitor compliance with the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities,
- manage and supervise the realisation of the Equal Opportunities Plan,
- conducts the procedure required in case a breach of the principle of equal treatment occurs, furthermore, arranges arbitration between the employer and the offended

- employee, investigates the cause and circumstances of the breach, determines individual responsibility, and suggests ways to prevent further breaches,
- cooperates with the authority investigating the breach.

### **Informing Employees about the Equal Opportunities Plan**

All employees should be familiar with the Equal Opportunities Plan, therefore it must be made available to everyone.

The Office undertakes the dissemination of the plan through the following communication channels:

- discussing the Plan in person with incoming employees,
- displaying the Equal Opportunities Plan in a clearly visible place,
- storing the Plan in the internal mailing programme where it is accessible and visible to all employees.

## **V. Handling Complaints**

In case of a breach of the principle of equal treatment, harassment, unlawful segregation, or retribution, before initiating the procedures set forth in Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, the employee may turn to appointed Representative Dr. Zsolt Keszthelyi with their complaint.

The appointed Representative shall bring the case to the attention of the employer within 5 working days from the lodging of the complaint, together with the opinion of the Equal Opportunities Officer, without naming the complainant, if the nature of the case allows for it.

In order to resolve the case, the Office shall make arrangements for an investigation. The investigation shall be conducted by the organisational unit appointed by the employer. The appointed organisational unit shall inform the employer about the result of the investigation. In case the employer still insists on executing the measure that constituted the basis of the complaint, even in light of the result of the investigation, and the employee objects to the execution of said measure, the employer shall not execute said measure until the resolution of the issue, but only until 7 days after the lodging of the complaint at the latest. In case the complaint is not related to a measure initiated by the employer, and the investigation confirms the presence of the phenomenon that the employee objected to (harassment, violation against human dignity, etc.), the employer shall make arrangements to eliminate the phenomenon without delay.

## **VI. Closing Provisions**

The Plan is enacted for an indefinite period of time.

The Synod Office of RCH mandates and shall monitor that the persons appointed (Equal Opportunities Officer) implement and support the Equal Opportunities Plan, and asks its affiliated institutions/departments, on the basis of partnership, to do the same.

Furthermore, the Office initiates and considers it to be binding that the obligations regarding the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities that are set forth in the present Plan shall be integrated into and enforced in the strategic documents and guidelines that concern the Office's operations and that define further services significant from the perspective of equal opportunities.

In case there are sufficient funds available, and the number of beneficiaries grows (in case further employees with protected characteristics are employed), the Equal Opportunities Official may initiate a consultation to discuss the potential expansion of the scope of benefits described in the Equal Opportunities Plan.

The leadership of the Office has read and arrived at a common understanding of the present Plan that has been drafted to ensure equal workplace opportunities, and has signed it as fully conformant with their intentions.

Budapest, 29 April 2019

*[approved and signed by the General Secretary]*