

SOGICA - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Claims of Asylum: A European human rights challenge

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research study that explores asylum claims based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. *Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

SOGICA is a four-year research project (2016-2020) that explores how asylum claims based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) are treated in Europe. The project seeks to determine how European asylum systems can treat these asylum claims more fairly. For this purpose, different groups of people are invited to participate and contribute their experiences of SOGI asylum. At the end of the project, we are hoping to produce detailed policy recommendations for the national and European asylum systems that will help establish a fairer system for SOGI claimants.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

Different individuals have been chosen to participate in the research in order to include a variety of views and experiences and produce in-depth research: SOGI asylum seekers and refugees, policy-makers, decision-makers, members of the judiciary, legal representatives and NGO activists. As a member of one of these groups, your experiences are highly valued. In total, approximately 200 people will be asked to participate.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, until any relevant publication is accepted for publication (which will be at least two months after the interview) without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I TAKE PART?

You will be asked to participate in either an individual interview or a group interview, neither of which should take more than 60-90 minutes. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed location (likely to be at an organisation's office). In the individual interview, you will be asked to answer a series of questions relating to your experiences of the asylum process and your thoughts on how the process impacts upon SOGI asylum seekers. The interview will be audio recorded if this is OK with you. We can also video record the interview if you prefer, or only take hand-written notes and not record it at all. You may also have the opportunity to express your thoughts and feelings through creative means, such as photography, video-making or drawing/painting, if you wish to do so. These can be anonymised if you wish. In the group interview, you will be invited to share your experiences and thoughts. All individual and group interview material will be treated as confidential. While the research team cannot guarantee that group interview participants will respect the privacy of their fellow participants, confidentiality between group interview members will be agreed at the start of the group interview. We will reimburse your travel. We will also provide an interpreter for you, if you need one – just let us know beforehand.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?

We cannot pay you to take part in this study. Participation will involve some of your time (generally not more than 60-90 minutes) and potentially travel. If you have had traumatic experiences, there is the risk that the interview could bring to the surface painful memories. We can assure you that you will not be pressurised to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and that regular breaks can be taken during the interview. If you feel unwell or upset, we will try to direct you to professionals or organisations that can support you.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

Your participation will greatly help to increase understanding of the social and legal experiences of SOGI asylum seekers in Europe. The outcomes of our study will be beneficial for SOGI asylum seekers and others in the asylum system by contributing to proposals for a fairer treatment of SOGI asylum claims. We also hope that you will personally benefit from the opportunity to talk about your experiences in a friendly, non-judgemental environment.

WILL MY INFORMATION IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL ?

All information collected about individuals participating in this research will be kept confidential (subject to legal limitations) to the extent wished by the participants. Should you prefer to remain anonymous, the interviews (also in case of audio/video recordings) and transcripts will be anonymised and given pseudonyms (e.g. by blurring images and distorting voices), so that you (or any other person) cannot be identified. All data will be stored on secured University of Sussex computers, and data will be password protected and encrypted. All project information will be kept in a safe, lockable location to ensure that participants' full confidentiality is achieved. Data will be kept on the University of Sussex's internal drives for a period of 5 years after project publications come out, and will be destroyed afterwards.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?

The results of this research will be widely disseminated to academic and non-academic audiences – including policy and decision makers in Europe. The research findings will be published in a book, academic journals, a project report and a summary of the main findings, which should be beneficial to SOGI claimants and practitioners working in the field.

WHO IS ORGANISING, FUNDING AND APPROVING THE RESEARCH?

The study is carried out by a team of researchers at the School of Law, Politics and Sociology at the University of Sussex – [Nuno Ferreira](#), [Carmelo Danisi](#), [Moira Dustin](#) and [Nina Held](#). It is funded by the European Research Council (ERC). The research has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process at the University of Sussex (Approval No. ER/NH285/1).

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact Nuno Ferreira if you would like more information about the study (see below), or visit our website www.sogica.org. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the C-REC who reviewed the project (c-recss@sussex.ac.uk). The University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I WANT TO TAKE PART?

If you would like to take part, then please contact us by:

Email: info@sogica.org, Telephone: +44 (0)1273 678952 (Nuno),

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SOGICAProject/> or Twitter <https://twitter.com/SOGICA1>

We will give you a consent form to read and sign before arranging an individual or group interview at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Please feel free to pass this information to anyone you know who might also be interested in participating in the project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

27 SEPTEMBER 2017