



The SOGICA newsletter: Issue 9 (19 March 2019)

Welcome to the [SOGICA project](#) newsletter.

Below is the regular quarterly update from the SOGICA project team.

### **SOGICA survey – closing soon!**

The SOGICA survey closes on 31 March (and yes, the coincidence with Brexit is completely unintentional!). It would be good to have as many responses as possible in this last fortnight so please complete it if you have not yet done so, and also forward it to anyone you know who might wish to contribute. We hope that the information we receive in this way will complement our qualitative fieldwork and increase our understanding of LGBT asylum issues in Europe.

The survey is divided into two – one part for people claiming or who have claimed asylum, and one for people who work with or support them. We know that a lot of people do both, and that many LGBTQI+ people seeking asylum also work with organisations providing services, advice or campaigning, so please complete whichever one you prefer (or both from different perspectives if you wish).

- [Survey for people who have claimed asylum because of sexual orientation or gender identity, or for LGBTQI+ people claiming asylum in Europe](#)
- [Survey for people who work with or support LGBTQI+ people claiming asylum](#)

### **SOGICA publications**

Three SOGICA members, Carmelo, Moira and Nuno, contributed the chapter [Queering Brexit: What's in Brexit for Sexual and Gender Minorities?](#), in Dustin, M., Ferreira, N. and Millns, S. (eds.), [Gender and Queer Perspectives on Brexit](#) (Palgrave). The chapter considers the possible impact of Brexit for sexual and gender minorities, including those seeking asylum in the UK.

All publications by the SOGICA team and individual members can be found on the [SOGICA website publications page](#).

### **Future events**

On 28 March at 3pm, Carmelo will deliver training on [Migro perché sono - 2019 edition](#), at the School of Law, University of Bologna (via Filopanti 9, Bologna).

SOGICA is contributing to a conference on the [Contemporary challenges facing LGBT+ asylum seekers – UK and global perspectives](#) at the University of Reading on 1st May. The conference is kindly sponsored by the Society of Legal Scholars and by the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, and is held under the auspices of the Global Law at Reading research group (Migration and Asylum section). Spaces are very limited, and pre-registration is required. If you wish to attend, please contact Dr Ziegler [r.ziegler@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.ziegler@reading.ac.uk)

The SOGICA conference 'Under the European Asylum Rainbow: intersectional queer challenges', is on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019, at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. The planning of our conference is now well under way and we are excited to be collaborating with the Cornelia Goethe Centre and several NGOs in Germany to make sure that we address what are currently the most important issues with regard to LGBTQI\* asylum in Europe. The event aims to bring together refugees and people seeking asylum, NGO workers, activists, decision- and policy-makers, lawyers and academics to build a network for discussion and knowledge exchange. Starting with the sharing of findings from the SOGICA project and taking a comparative, queer and intersectional perspective, the conference will explore what current needs and challenges are for LGBTQI\* refugees (and support groups), what we can learn from 'good' and 'bad' practice, and what changes need to be made. The conference language will be English but (dependent on securing funding) we endeavour to provide interpreters. The conference will be free to attend and registration will open soon, however you can already register your interest by emailing us: [n.held@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:n.held@sussex.ac.uk). We hope to see you on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019!

### Recent events

In March, Nina gave a presentation called 'Here, I have no choice': being a lesbian and a refugee – Intersectional experiences of time and space,' at the [Lesbian Lives 2019 conference](#) in Brighton. She also presented at the [Festival des migrations, des cultures et de la Citoyenneté](#) in Luxembourg.

In February, Nuno took part in a workshop on [Intimate \(In\)Justice: Gender and Sexuality in the Politics of Borders](#) at Ca' Foscari University, Venice. Moira and [Out & Proud African LGBTI](#) had a [meeting at the BBC](#) in London with Ben Hunte, the new (and first) BBC LGBT news correspondent. The meeting was an opportunity to highlight some of the experiences and problems of LGBTI people claiming asylum in the UK.

In January, Moira attended the [PROTECT \(preventing sexual and gender-based violence against migrants and strengthening support to victims\)](#) kick-off meeting, organised by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Budapest.

In December, Carmelo gave a presentation [What 'Safe Harbours' are There for People Seeking International Protection on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Grounds in the Context of the Mediterranean Crisis?](#) at Università di Napoli - L'Orientale.

Please visit the [events page](#) of the website to see what else we have been doing.

### New website resources

The SOGICA project tables of [European case law](#) and [Italian case law](#) have both been updated this year. In addition, we have added around 75 new items to the [SOGICA database](#) since the last newsletter.

We continue to highlight individual narratives of LGBTQI+ people claiming asylum on the [Life Stories section](#) of our home page. We hope this helps us remain aware of the human cost of flawed asylum processes for the people involved. And if you are seeking international protection on sexual orientation or gender identity grounds, or have done so, and would like to be involved in SOGICA, feel free to send us a story to be considered for publication on our website.

## Other news, including from our Project Friends

ILGA-Europe has launched [a new mailing list](#) dedicated to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristic (SOGIESC) asylum. Please note that participation in this list is reserved for NGOs, legal specialists, practitioners, academics and scholars. State/government or political institution representatives, students as well as journalists and other media representatives are currently not eligible. This list was developed in cooperation with [TGEU](#), [COC Nederland](#), [Kaleidoscope Trust](#), [LGBT Asylum Denmark](#), [RFSL](#) and [UKLGIG](#).

The first [SOGI Claimants Pride](#) is taking place in Vercelli, Italy on 11 May organised by SOGICA Project Friend Africa Arcigay.

In the UK, on the Micro Rainbow website [Alana](#) shares her experience of leaving her own country, claiming asylum in the UK, finding safety with Micro Rainbow's housing and moving on to a bright future. [Rahim](#) shares his inspiring experience of how, after over a year of destitution and homelessness, Micro Rainbow's moving on programme helped him get his foot in the door of a major UK retail company.

A BBC Newsnight programme in March, [Inside Serco: The company housing England's asylum seekers](#), includes an interview with Sasha and ends with the happy news that she has been given refugee status – congratulations Sasha!

A new Italian NGO project, [IAM - Intersectionalities and More](#) is an evolution of previous projects about intersectional identities and LGBT and is looking at disability, second generations/new generations, aging and SOGI asylum.

A UK resource from the Asylum Research Centre. [A note on the reference to NGOs in the guidance section 'Protection' in UK Home Office Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Country Policy and Information Notes](#) (October 2018), provides helpful clarification on this point.

Sabine Jansen's report on the situation of LGBTI asylum policy and practice in the Netherlands, [Trots of schaamte?](#), has now been translated into English. [Pride or Shame? Assessing LGBTI asylum applications in the Netherlands after the judgments XYZ and ABC](#) was published on 24 January 2019.

In January 2019, [Refworld](#) discontinued country of origin information collection, while [ecoi.net](#) was endorsed by UNHCR as the main global platform for country of origin information. Refworld [announced](#) that 'as of 1 January 2019, ACCORD's ecoi.net will be endorsed by UNHCR as the main global platform for country of origin information'.

A new collection edited by Arzu Güler, Maryna Shevtsova and Denise Venturi was published in 2019: [LGBTI Asylum Seekers and Refugees from a Legal and Political Perspective: Persecution, Asylum and Integration](#) addresses the 'three moments' in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) asylum seekers' and refugees' efforts to secure protection: The reasons for their flight, the Refugee Status Determination process, and their integration into the host community once they are recognized refugee status.

In the UK, Asylum Aid has a number of up-to-date resources for people seeking asylum including: [Going to Appeal](#) – a film made in partnership with the University of Exeter for asylum seekers going to their appeals at the First-tier Tribunal; [information about how to access free childcare during the substantive asylum interview](#); [From us to you](#) – Protection Gap Advocates film 4 mins (in a range of languages); and [What a woman seeking asylum needs to know](#) – Protection Gap Advocates leaflet.

Based on the experiences of LGBTQI+ Muslim asylum seekers in Germany, [Queer Muslim Asylum Spaces](#) is a European Commission funded research project under the H2020 programme. The study examines how access to asylum can be influenced by Westernized ideas about sexual orientation and gender identity as well as anti-Muslim sentiments and politics. The findings will be useful to different groups, including community organisations and policymakers. They will be used to support the development of policies and politics that are based on a better understanding of the many different experiences of Muslim LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. The study will also challenge social attitudes about 'the Muslim' and 'the refugee' through working with artists and photographers and the launch of a podcast series. If you would like to get involved, there is [information on the project website](#) and please contact Dr Mengia Tschalaer at [mengia.tschalaer@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:mengia.tschalaer@bristol.ac.uk).

A City University researcher is calling for study participants: 'Have you applied for asylum in the UK as a gender or sexual minority? I am a PhD candidate at City, University of London, looking for LGBTQI+ refugees to share their stories (anonymously). The interview will focus on your gender/sexual identity, experiences of living in different countries, and interactions with the UK asylum process. This research will be used to assess whether current UK asylum guidance and practice is compatible with people's experiences. To make this study as representative as possible, please share my call for participants with your wider networks. For further information about the study, I can be reached at: [alexander.powell@city.ac.uk](mailto:alexander.powell@city.ac.uk)'

In Italy, the not-for-profit organisation [MIT](#), set up to promote the rights of trans people, is doing important health and welfare work supporting trans people seeking asylum. MIT can be supported by giving donations through this [PayPal link](#).

Finally, in January, Moira visited Brook House Immigration Removal Centre with members of the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG) where she was hugely impressed by the support the group provides to people detained in the immigration removal centres near Gatwick, including asylum seekers and LGBT people fleeing persecution. It offers practical help, including phone credit and clothes, emotional support, by matching someone in detention for an indefinite period with a volunteer visitor, and casework, liaising with solicitors, caseworkers, probation officers, and other people relevant to a detainee's case. Anyone who is interested in learning more, or who would like to support and participate in GDWG work should visit [www.gdwg.org.uk](http://www.gdwg.org.uk) for more information.

### **Getting involved**

Our mailing list continues to grow and if you're reading this then you're probably already a subscriber, but please encourage colleagues and contacts who might be interested to subscribe – it's free and we send updates to subscribers every three months approximately. Information about getting involved, including how to sign up to receive future newsletters if you are not already on our mailing list, can be found on the [Get Involved](#) section of our website.

If you know of any items that should be included on our website or in our mailings, we would be very grateful if you would send them to us, including resources that might be useful for LGBTQI+ refugees and people seeking asylum. We post regularly on Twitter and Facebook, so please let us know if you have items we should be telling people about in-between newsletter issues. And please feel free to [email us](#) with any questions or suggestions.

The next newsletter will be in June 2019.

Best wishes from [Nuno](#), [Carmelo](#), [Moira](#) and [Nina](#) at SOGICA