

Theme tables

1. "Traversing between invisibilities and sensibilities"

(Harpreet Cholia and Sofian)

This table focuses on racism and options for self-organisation and what kind of services are required in counselling and advice services that need to cater for the needs of queer refugees when confronted with (systematic) violence.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What do support organisations need to provide queer and trans-sensitive services?
- Racism and discrimination within the LGBTQI*- community: what forms of solidarity are possible?

2. "Legal representation and appeals in court" (Knud Wechterstein)

The table looks at what can be expected from lawyers helping claimants prepare their court appeals, and what good support from lawyers look like. The table will then also look at court appeals, the role of preparation and the role of the judge and discuss whether single judges decisions, as they are common in German asylum procedure, are the correct legal process.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What can be expected from a lawyer representing the asylum claimant in the asylum procedure?
- What are the factors that are leading to a successful appeal in court?

3. "Support and Preparation before the Asylum Interview" (Marlen Vahle)

At this table we will discuss what a good preparation for the asylum interview looks like and which aspects should be addressed during the interview. We will also look at questions that are asked in the asylum interview, and discuss whether we think that these are sensible questions to ask to find out about the claimant's sexual identity.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What do people need to be prepared for the BAMF interview?
- What are the important aspects to talk about in BAMF interview?

4. “The ‘Special Vulnerability’ of Queer Refugees: Political Challenges” (Mohammad Dalla)

In August 2015, based on the EU Directive 2013/33/EU, the Berlin Senate included SOGI-claimants in the group of the ‘most vulnerable’ in their “Masterplan: Integration and Safety” and created "The Berlin Model for the Support of LGBTI Refugees". At this table, we will discuss what we can we learn from the Berliner experience.

Questions that will be addressed:

- How do we reach a comprehensive system of identification enabling a support that meets the needs of SOGI claimants?
- How do we reach a nationwide recognition of the “special vulnerability” of SOGI-claimants?

5. “The Importance of Empowerment & Self Representations of LGBTIQ* Refugees” (Kadir Özdemir)

At this table, we will talk about the complex array of power and power sharing. We will discuss about our experiences and expectations about empowerment of LGBTIQ* refugees.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What are your experiences & expectations on empowerment & self-representations?
- What can we do to support and provide structures to empower LGBTIQ* refugees and make self-representations possible?

6. “Challenges for intersexual and transgender asylum claimants” (Christel Baltes-Loehr)

Related to age, cultural and ethnic belonging, religion, political standing, socioeconomic and educational status (intersectional perspective) and related to a huge variability in perspective of the interwovenness of the physical, psychological, behavioral and sexual desire dimension (figure of the continuum), each intersexual and transgender asylum claimant has an own “position” – assigned by the asylum claimant and/or assigned by others. Therefore, also the challenges for the asylum claimants can vary in a quite wide range as well as the needed support, arriving in a country as an asylum claimant.

Questions that will be addressed:

- How far can the specific needs, which intersexual and transgender asylum claimants have during their flight and arrival process, be answered by the supporters in NGOs, responsible authorities etc.?
- Which concrete measures are necessary on different levels and fields in policy, in education and training for the supporters and responsible authorities?

7. "Support needs for lesbian and bisexual women" (Julia Serdarov, Sara Schmitter and Elceta Marsha Ennis)

Bisexual and lesbian women claiming asylum are rather invisible, in public debate, as well as in support groups. However, there are many bisexual and lesbian claimants in Germany, as the experience of LeTRa, demonstrates. These women have specific challenges and needs, and the table aims to make these more visible.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What are the specific needs and challenges that lesbian and bisexual women are facing?
- How can these issues be made more visible?

8. "Self-defence as an empowerment tool" (Heghine Babayan)

Empowerment Self-Defence is a comprehensive and holistic method of violence resistance for groups vulnerable to violence. Empowerment Self-Defence uses verbal and mental skills for violence prevention and de-escalation, including assertive body language, boundary setting, and the making of informed choices to assess and possibly avoid violent situations. It also provides physical skills. During our meeting, we will practice the basics of Empowerment Self-Defence and share some of our experiences and knowledge in a safe space.

9. "Accommodation and social isolation" (Danijel Cubelic and Rzouga Selmi)

After being transferred to a refugee accommodation, many LGBTIQ+ refugees experience discrimination or harassment. While refugees in general suffer from a lack of privacy, isolation and stress, LGBTIQ+ refugees are often the first victims of social tensions arising in refugee housing. As many accommodations are located in rural areas, many LGBTIQ+ refugees are disconnected from support organisations and possibilities to connect with their peers. The theme table wants to discuss the importance of LGBTIQ+ refugees housing and safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ migrants.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What is the importance of LGBTQI+ refugee housing and safe spaces for LGBTQI+ refugees?
- How can the social isolation that LGBTQI+ refugees experience be tackled?

10. “*Understandings of sexuality and gender in the Asylum Process*” (Bojana Asanovic and Jana Borusko)

People claiming asylum on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity must prove who they are. The lived experiences of non-dominant gender and sexual identities vary greatly, influenced by factors such as culture, religion, education and individual social background. Decision-makers have the unenviable task to assess claimants’ accounts looking for narratives they can believe. Experience from several countries shows that decision-makers often have fixed expectations as to how people should present and/or understand their experience. This table seeks to explore the challenges presented by differences between lived experience of non-dominant identities and expectations of decision-makers.

Questions that will be addressed:

- What do decision-makers look for and is it realistic?
- Countering stereotypes and introducing a “real life analysis”: What should be the best practice in credibility assessments?