



The SOGICA newsletter: Issue 15 (18 September 2020)

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

This is the last quarterly SOGICA project newsletter as the project formally ends in October. However, we will continue to use our mailing list to update you on important items from time to time, including publication of the SOGICA project monograph later this year. In addition, we will be maintaining our website and our Twitter and Facebook accounts, and hope you will continue to use these to keep in touch with us.

SOGICA publications

In July, the SOGICA project policy recommendations were published in three different versions addressing the specific SOGI asylum experiences and concerns in the three countries studied by the project:

- [Germany](#)
- [Italy](#)
- [UK](#)

SOGICA also produced recommendations to the EU, in the form of a [submission](#) to the consultation by the European Commission on the new EU LGBTI+ Equality Strategy.

Also in July, the project's [survey report](#) was published. The report, by Vítor Lopes Andrade and the SOGICA team, presents and discusses the data gathered through two Europe-wide surveys carried out in the context of the SOGICA project.

On 22 July a [blog post](#) by Carmelo and Nuno was published in *articolo29* on 22 July titled 'Anche i rifugiati transgender hanno diritto al cambio del nome: un passo avanti nel riconoscimento dei bisogni dei richiedenti e rifugiati SOGI in ambito CEDU'.

An updated list of [Home Office country policy and information notes](#) on sexual orientation and gender identity was added to our website in July as a resource for practitioners.

Finally, as an update, the SOGICA project monograph will be published by Springer on an open access basis, meaning that it will be freely available to anyone to read online. We do not yet have a publication date but, as soon as the book is out, we will post it on our website and email all our mailing list subscribers to alert them.

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

SOGICA media coverage

SOGICA has received significant media coverage in the last months.

In June, popular German media outlets [queer.de](#) and [Bild](#) reported on SOGICA's German case study video and Anbid Zaman's story.

The SOGICA project recommendations, and the project findings more generally, were widely reported by the [media in Europe and beyond](#) including in [The Guardian](#) (with contributions by Moira and Nuno), in [Sabado.pt](#), in an item on [The World's daily podcast](#), and [in Vanity Fair Italy](#).

In August, the German public broadcast service DW reported on the cases of two SOGICA participants from our German case study – both are from Jamaica and were refused by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). They appealed against the decision and were heard on the same day, by the same judge, but had two different outcomes. In one case, it was decided that Jamaica was not a 'safe' country for the appellant to go back to, in the other case the judge decided that it was 'safe'. DW also drew on our survey report that indicates a 'culture of disbelief' when decision-makers assess SOGI. The full story includes an interview with Nina Held from the SOGICA project and can be seen on [Youtube](#).

Also in August, Snapshots from the Borders published [A European Human Rights Challenge](#) – an interview with SOGICA's Carmelo Danisi.

All media items are now listed on our new [Media](#) page on the SOGICA website. Feel free to check back there regularly to find all media items referring to SOGICA, included any published after the formal end of the project.

Events

The [SOGICA final conference](#) took place over three days – 7-9 July 2020 – online and the SOGICA team would like to thank everyone who was involved in making it such a success. The conference consisted of 26 sessions (including 2 workshops, a performance and a screening) and 3 keynote addresses, more than 80 speakers and panellists, and just over 600 attendees. Speakers and participants were from many different countries and included researchers, activists, practitioners and policy makers. Recordings of the keynote addresses and panel presentations are available on the SOGICA website, along with many of the speakers' presentation slides and papers.

After a break for the summer, in September we held a policy-focused roundtable to consider our recommendations and consult experts working on SOGI asylum across Europe and internationally about possible next steps and improvements. A short summary of the roundtable discussion will be published on our [events page](#) in due course.

On 16 December 2020, Nuno will be presenting on 'Seeking asylum in Europe: "European values" and queer claims', in the lecture series 'European values, citizenship and belonging', organised by the University of Antwerp. Professor Alexander Dhoest will act as respondent, and you can find more details about joining this session (no. 6) and others by following [this link](#).

Please visit the [events page](#) of the website to see what else we have been doing, including events planned for after the end of the project.

New website resources

Since the last newsletter, we have added a further 20 items to the [SOGICA database](#) which contains more than 1,100 items, including academic and NGO articles, official reports, case law, statistics and other items.

The [Life Stories](#) section of our website contains some individual accounts of LGBTQI+ people claiming asylum. In this way, we hope to keep sight of the human cost of flawed asylum processes and provide a space for some of the people involved to share their experiences. If you are seeking international protection on sexual orientation or gender identity grounds, or have done so, feel free to send us contributions (by email to info@sogica.org) to be considered for publication on our website.

Other news, including from our Project Friends

In July, the European Commission launched an [EU-wide public consultation](#) to gather views on new actions that could be taken at EU level to promote the integration and social inclusion of migrants and people with a migrant background. The results of the consultation will contribute to the development of the renewed Action Plan on integration and inclusion. The SOGICA project team contributed to the public consultation which will be available in all EU official languages until 21 October 2020.

The Commission also launched a [call for applications](#) to set up an expert group composed of persons with a migrant background to participate in the development and implementation of migration, asylum and integration policies. Involving migrants, asylum applicants and refugees is essential to make the policies more effective and better tailored to needs on the ground. Applications are accepted until 21 September 2020.

ILPA, in collaboration with UKLGIG, are delivering a free webinar on [LGBTQI+ Asylum Claims in Litigation](#) on Tuesday 22 September from 10am-1pm (UK time). This is a practical course in preparing and conducting appeals, identifying errors of law in determinations, preparing fresh claims and getting ready to challenge refusals. It will also touch upon certifications. The course will address common errors by the Home Office, practitioners and judges.

Save the date for an Online Symposium titled 'Queering the New European Common Asylum System: A Human Rights Perspective' on 13 November 2020. This symposium, organised by the Queer European Asylum Network (QUEAN), addresses queer migration in Europe through the interwoven lens of human rights, gender and solidarity and against the background of the New Common European Asylum System. While LGBTQI+ asylum practice and law has found increasing attention amongst practitioners, academics, policy makers and activists, we still know very little about how queer asylum is experienced differently by different LGBTQI+ groups in Europe. This symposium foregrounds trans, intersex, lesbian and non-binary migrants and refugees' experiences of asylum, challenging the often cis-homocentric and Eurocentric perspectives and views that continue to dominate queer asylum policies. In so doing, it asks what we can learn from these experiences and practices and how they contribute to a more inclusive asylum policy in the context of the New Common European Asylum System. This symposium is structured in two parts: The first part features two panels that are geared toward influencing policy on the local and EU level and the second part features two workshops that allow for a participatory and creative engagement with the topics arounds queer asylum and human rights. More information and link to registration will soon be published on the [Queer European Asylum Network website](#).

SOGICA is pleased to promote this call for support: *'PRIDE WITHOUT BORDERS and Bristol Refugee Rights is providing an advice service hotline three days a week for asylum seekers and refugees during Covid-19 Lockdown. We meet vital needs of individuals and families including shelter, food, safety, medication, devices and data. In addition, PRIDE WITHOUT BORDERS team reach up to 30 individuals each week to provide wellbeing services and combat isolation and respond to mental health emergencies. Our PRIDE group has multiple online platforms for daily communication as well as weekly support meetings. Most importantly, our small team assists asylum seekers prove their asylum claim (based on gender and sexual orientation) is legitimate and have helped 23 long standing members secure their refugee status. Today, we need donations to continue this vital project. Please donate and share through our link: ['](https://www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/brrpride)*

[Mapping Sexual Orientation Asylum Claims – 2015-2018](#), by University of Sussex Master student and SOGICA placement Isabel Soloaga, was published on the SOGICA website in July 2020. Using Google Maps and the 'experimental' statistical data provided by the UK Home Office, the project records information on asylum applications where sexual orientation formed part of the basis of the applicant's claim. The map shows the number of asylum applications submitted on the basis of sexual orientation between 2015 and 2018, by country. It also shows initial decisions in relation to each country of origin in 2018.

[The Effects of COVID-19 on Queer Asylum Claimants in Germany](#) by Mengia Tschalaer was published by PolicyBristol in June 2020. The policy brief – along with an [advocacy video](#) – summarises the findings of a virtual [symposium on COVID-19 & Queer Asylum](#) that took place in April, and outlines key policy implications for the German government and EU stakeholders.

[Asylum, sexuality and concealment: where are we a decade on from HJ \(Iran\)?](#) By Marios Kontos from UKLGIG was published in Free Movement in July 2020 and looks at the impact of HJ (Iran)

In July 2020, Leni Candan, Senior Communications and Fundraising Officer at UKLGIG, wrote [an article](#) on The Detention Forum explaining why Immigration detention is an LGBTQI+ issue.

The BRING-In project is looking for interview participants. The project is a European Commission funded international initiative implemented in the UK, Bulgaria, Hungary and Greece, which aims to enhance intersex equality by educating health and social care professionals on how to recognise, prevent and combat discrimination against intersex people, while raising public awareness and advocating for the need to act upon human rights violations that intersex people face. The Restorative Justice for All International Institute (RJ4All) is responsible for conducting the research activities in the UK and needs to interview intersex people to identify challenges that intersex people in the UK face, available support services, and recommendations for our advocacy work. For more info visit <https://www.rj4all.info/bring-in>. If you are an intersex person or an expert stakeholder experienced in intersex issues, and are interested in supporting the project to combat intersex discrimination by participating in a brief online interview, please contact Joshua Eden via email at contact@rj4all.info.

Adieu but not goodbye!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our newsletter readers for your support and enthusiasm for our work and – more importantly – for the commitment many of you have shown to changing SOGI asylum for the better. We have been amazed and impressed by the work that so many of you do.

We are maintaining the SOGICA project website, including our database of resources that so many of you have contributed to. Please do continue to send us new items and also feel free to [email us](#) with any questions or suggestions about any aspect of the SOGICA project, or about any training or other initiatives you are planning and to which we might contribute.

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