



LGBT asylum process

Need of support

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<p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Ett betydligt antal asylsökande i EU länder, inklusive Finland, tillhör gruppen HBTQ, dvs. homo- och bisexuella eller transpersoner. Det finns emellertid flera problem, som HBTQ asylsökande får möta under asylprocessen. Dessa inkluderar otillräckligt skydd av HBTQ asylsökande, avsaknad av rutiner vid integritet och mänskliga rättigheter, bristande hänsyn till stigmatiseringsrisk och otillräckliga kunskaper om SOGI-relaterad förföljelse i asylsökandens hemland. Dessutom saknar myndigheterna lyhörddhet och utbildning vid handläggningen av asylärenden, och kunskap om nivån av diskriminering och våld på mottagningsenheterna. Även ett bra samarbete mellan mentalvården och asylhandläggningen uppfordrades för att snabbare kunna identifiera mentala problem och att lättare förstå asylprocessens verkan på sökandens mentala hälsa. Stödet för asylsökandes mentala hälsa verkade bristande under hela asylprocessen. Flera organisationer har uttryckt ett behov av en lämplig utbildning för HBTQ relaterad asylärendehandläggning och även ett behov av HBTQ-vänliga mottagningsenheter i alla EU-länder.</p> <p>Syftet med denna undersökning var att hitta information om problem som kan uppstå i samband med HBTQ-asylprocesser och om stödet som efterfrågas av både asylsökande och handläggare. Uppsatsen gjordes som en 'scoping review' (n=14.) En HBTQ asylprocess har sina utmaningar och flera organisationer har publicerat rekommendationer åt myndigheter och handläggare, som kan göra processen ändamålsenlig, säker och human. Rekommendationerna som är ägnade åt asylsökanden innehåller information om alla faser av sökningsprocessen, inklusive information om boende, juridisk hjälp, mat, medicin, mental hälsa, socialt stöd, sysselsättning och utbildning.</p>	
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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>A significant number of asylum seekers in EU member states, including Finland, are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). However, there are several difficulties that LGBT asylum seekers face in the asylum process. The topics that rise are insufficient protection of LGBT asylum seekers, lack of privacy and the right to human dignity in asylum process, lack of consideration of stigmatization and of information on persecution on the bases of SOGI in country of origin, lack of sensitivity and training of the authorities dealing with refugee applications and level of discrimination and violence in reception centers. Also, cooperation between mental health professionals and asylum process professionals was called upon, to ensure early recognition of mental problems and to support understanding the challenges to mental health in the asylum process. Mental support for the asylum seekers during all phases of the asylum process was also found lacking. A need for adequate training for asylum professionals, regarding the needs of LGBT people, as well as a need for LGBT-sensitive reception facilities in EU member states has been acknowledged by several organizations.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to find information on the problems of LGBT-based asylum process and on the support needed by asylum seekers and authorities in the process. The thesis was done as a scoping review (n=14). The LGBT asylum process has its own challenges, which is why several organizations have published recommendations for the authorities and professionals working in the asylum process, to make the process more functional, ensuring the safety and realization of human rights. The recommendation published for the asylum seekers cover information on the asylum seeking process and during and after asylum process, including housing, legal help, food, medical, mental health, social support, employment, and education.</p>	
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<p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>Merkittävä osa EU jäsenmaiden, Suomi mukaanlukien, turvapaikanhakijoista on seksuaalisten vähemmistöryhmien edustajia. Turvapaikanhakuprosessissa on useita erityispiirteitä jotka tulee huomioida LGBT turvapaikanhakijan ollessa kyseessä. Tutkimuksissa on ongelmista nousseet esille LGBT turvapaikanhakijoiden puuttellinen suojele, yksityisyyden puute ja ihmisarvon loukkaukset, tiedonpuute stigmatisoinnista ja LGBT ryhmien kohtelusta lähtömaassa, sensitiivisyyden puute turvapaikkaprosessissa ja turvattomuus vastaanottokeskuksissa. Henkisen tuen saatavuus turvapaikkaprosessin eri vaiheissa on myöskin puuttellista, ja psyykkisten ongelmien aikaiseen tunnistamiseen tarvittaisiinkin ohjausta ja tukea. Turvapaikkaprosessissa työskentelevien kouluttaminen, erityisesti LGBT turvapaikanhakijoiden tuen tarpeesta ja LGBT-sensitiivisten vastaanottotilojen tarve on huomioitu useiden organisaatioiden toimesta.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus, oli kartoittaa tietoa ongelmista, joita LGBT-turvapaikahakuprosessissa ilmenee. Lisäksi haluttiin tietoa niin turvapaikahakijoiden kun prosessissa työskentelevienkin tuen tarpeesta. Tutkimus toteutettiin scoping review-tekniikalla (n=14). LGBT turvapaikkaprosessissa on monia erityispiirteitä ja haasteita, ja useat organisaatiot ovatkin julkaisseet ohjeita turvapaikanhakuprosessissa työskenteleville. Näillä pyritään toimivampaan prosessiin, jossa turvallisuus ja ihmisoikeudet ovat taatut. Turvapaikanhakijoille julkaistuisa ohjeistuksissa keskitytään puolestaan konkreettisempaan tietoon turvapaikkaprosessista, asunnon etsintään, lakiapuun, ruokaan, lääkkeisiin, heniseen ja sosiaaliseen tukeen, työllistymiseen ja koulutukseen liittyen.</p>	
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FOREWORD

While searching for a thesis topic I came across a group of LGBT asylum seekers through work. The topic interested me enormously, being a very complicated issue that had not been studied a lot. At the same time, the topic had been on the national and local news a lot, and the importance of the issues started to dawn on me. This study was the door opening to the topic that I want to research further in the future. Hoping that this door opening, will raise discussion on the topic and help people working with LGBT asylum seekers see the full picture.

This thesis has been in cooperation with Hivpoint Helsinki. Hivpoint offers walk-in HIV-testing for asylum seekers and immigrants

"Getting asylum is not the end of a journey, it is the beginning of an adaptation process to a new life—just without the fear of being legally rejected,"

-Gabriel Rivas, Stronger Together-

1 INTRODUCTION

Sexual orientation is still criminalized in nearly 73 countries worldwide, out of which in 13 countries with death penalty (Kahn, Alessi, Woolner, Kim & Olivieri. 2016). A significant number of asylum seekers in EU member states, including Finland, are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). In the recent years LGBT people have been especially targeted in ongoing conflicts, and The European Parliament has recognized the risk of abuse of LGBT people in the countries that are otherwise considered safe countries of origin. According to Refugee Convention and EU asylum law, sexual orientation can be a ground for protection, depending on the situation in the home country of the asylum seeker, whether the asylum is requested because of the risk of persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) or unrelated to this topic. In any case, LGBT asylum seekers are at risk of additional danger, in form of harassment, sexual or other violence and exclusion, both on their journey and in the reception facilities of the receiving country. (The European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights. 2016; ILGA Europe.2016.)

The European Parliament acknowledges that there is need for adequate training for asylum professionals, regarding the needs of LGBT people, as well as a need for LGBT-sensitive reception facilities in EU member states. (The European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights. 2016; ILGA Europe.2016.) In the report of gender equality (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. 2017) the European Parliament calls for actions to strengthen the rights of LGBT people. The report especially addresses the LGBT asylum seekers should receive support at all stages of migration process, such as immediate gender identity recognition, immediate relocation when safety cannot be guaranteed and mental health support.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has also stated concern about the safety of LGBT refugees, since the homophobic and transphobic attitudes among refugees make LGBT asylum seekers susceptible to abuse and isolation (Butterworth. 2017). Verbal, physical and sexual abuse in refugee shelters, mostly by fellow refugees but also by security staff and translators, have sometimes forced the LGBT asylum seekers to move out. In Finland SETA (Sexual Equality) has acknowledged harassment and abuse of LGBT people in refugee centers, and as a result some of the centers have separated a

secure section for those afraid of sexual harassment. European courts have sentenced refugee abusers to prison sentences, but LGBT refugees do not feel safe in refugee centers. (CBS News. 2016; Faiola. 2015.)

The number of LGBT asylum seekers is expected to rise from the present situation (Figure 1). EU offers sanctuary to LGBT people, but in many member states the adequate support for LGBT asylum seekers is lacking. According to European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) report (2017), only a few EU member states have national guidelines or training for asylum professionals, which leads to inadequate interviewing, stereotypical views on sexual orientation and anti-LGBT bias. There are also no special accommodation facilities for LGBT applicants, and continuing health care, such as hormonal treatments, is often unavailable. However, the report points that civil society support has significantly improved regarding handling of asylum cases and openness between applicants and asylum authorities.

EU Member State	Estimated number of asylum seekers with claims linked to sexual orientation or gender identity	Source
Austria	n.a.	
Bulgaria	50-100*	Clients of LGBT Youth Organisation "Deystvie"
Denmark	70 new asylum seekers	Clients of LGBT Asylum NGO
Finland	500**	Clients of NGO HeSeta (operating in the capital area)
France	n.a.	
Germany	56	Clients of NGO Fliederlich (covers only Nürnberg, Bavaria)
Greece	32 (of whom 7 transgender and 23 homosexual)	Clients of Transgender Support Association
Hungary	n.a.	
Italy	80***	Clients of MigraBo LGBTI project
The Netherlands	Some 100-1000 LGBT applicants	Clients of COC Netherlands
Poland	2-3	Clients of The Campaign against Homophobia (<i>Kampania przeciwko Homofobii</i>)
Slovakia	0	NGOs Marginal, Human Rights League, Inicijativa Inakost'
Spain	n.a.	
Sweden	n.a.	

Notes: Estimates are not representative of the situation in the whole Member State, as they often cover only the geographical area in which the organisation is working.

* Figure covers period from January to June 2016

** Figure covers period from autumn 2015 to February 2017

*** Figure covers period from 2012 to February 2017

n.a. = not available

Source: FRA, 2017 (based on data provided by civil society organisations)

Figure 1 Number of asylum seekers with claims linked to sexual orientation or gender identity in 2016 – estimates by civil society organisations, 14 EU member states (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2017.)

1.1 Difficulties of the asylum-on-LGBT-basis process in Europe

According to ILGA-Europe (2017) there are several difficulties that LGBT asylum seekers face in different phases of the asylum process, including asylum legislation and policies of some European countries, but also the lack of experience and professionalism of the authorities dealing with refugee applications. The topics that ILGA-Europe raises are:

1. Insufficient protection or insufficient specific measures to protect LGBT asylum seekers.
2. Lack of respect for the right of privacy and the right to human dignity in asylum process.
3. Lack of consideration of stigmatization of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the country of origin.
4. Lack of information on persecution on the bases of SOGI in country of origin.
5. Lack of sensitivity and training of the authorities dealing with refugee applications.
6. Level of discrimination and violence in reception centers.

The lack of training and knowledge of the authorities dealing with refugee applications was noted also in the report of LGBT Asylum Denmark (2015). The report by LGBT Asylum Denmark states, that the authorities lack knowledge of LGBT as such, but also lack culture-sensitive understanding, which leads to intrusive and difficult-to-answer questions. Also interpretation was found problematic, due to quality of interpretation and homophobic attitudes of some interpreters. Asylum center staff was found to meet the LGBT asylum applicants with support and understanding, but the safety and privacy of LGBT asylum seekers in the asylum centers was lacking.

ILGA-Europe (2017) recognizes similar problems. Authorities' lack of experience and professionalism brings problems in to LGBT asylum cases, as does the insufficient respect for privacy and human dignity. The assessment of the credibility of the statements by the asylum seeker often violate applicants right to human dignity and private- and family life. The knowledge on the country-of-origin and the stigmatization of sexual orientation is often lacking, and the sensitivity and training of the asylum personnel is poor.

Inappropriate questions about sexual practices and tests to confirm sexual orientation should no longer be a problem, since they have been explicitly forbidden by the Court of Justice of the EU in 2014.

The lack of information on the particular needs of LGBT persons as asylum seekers was found a problem also in UNHCR research paper (Hojem. 2009). The paper found UNHCR personnel lacking knowledge and sensitivity of LGBT asylum seekers and training for national immigration officers, authorities, judges, border guards, RSD staff and interpreters was recommended. Competence and knowledge needed to give adequate help and guidance to asylum seekers, and to ensure them accommodation in proximity of social networks was also called for.

1.2 Applying for asylum in Finland

The asylum process is similar to all applicants, regardless of the grounds on what the asylum is applied. Person can apply for asylum if they have a well-founded fear of being persecuted in their home country and if they have physically arrived in Finland directly from their home country. The applicant must inform the border control authorities of the asylum request the moment of their arrival so the authority receiving the application can register the applicant's details and fingerprints, and check all the necessary registers. The application will then be placed in queue at the Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI) and the applicant will be placed in a reception center to live and wait for asylum interview. (MIGRI. 2017; Refugee Advice Center. 2017.)

If the applicant already has the right of residence in another safe country or another safe country is responsible for examining the application under the EU Dublin regulation, the application will not be processed. The Dublin Regulation criteria for the responsible country are, for example, family considerations, recent possessions of visa or residence permit and entrance regularity to EU. (European Commission. 2017; MIGRI. 2017)

Once MIGRI has established the identity and travel route of the applicant, and decided whether the applicant has grounds to apply for asylum in Finland, the applicant will be interviewed to establish the reason for applying for asylum. MIGRI then examines

whether international protection or a residence permit can be granted and once the decision is made the applicant will be informed of the outcome. If asylum is granted, the applicant will receive a residence permit card, and can then apply for a refugee travel document or an alien's passport. If asylum is not granted, applicant can appeal against the decision to an administrative court. (MIGRI. 2017.)

An applicant who is not allowed to stay in the country, can apply for assisted voluntary return. Assistance is provided only if the applicant withdraws all pending applications for asylum, a residence permit or an alien's passport, and all appeals against decisions concerning these matters, and if the applicant can't pay for the return themselves. (MIGRI. 2017.)

The application process is similar in most of the European countries. Figure 2 describes the common European asylum system (CEAS).

COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM (CEAS)

ASYLUM is granted to people fleeing persecution or serious harm.

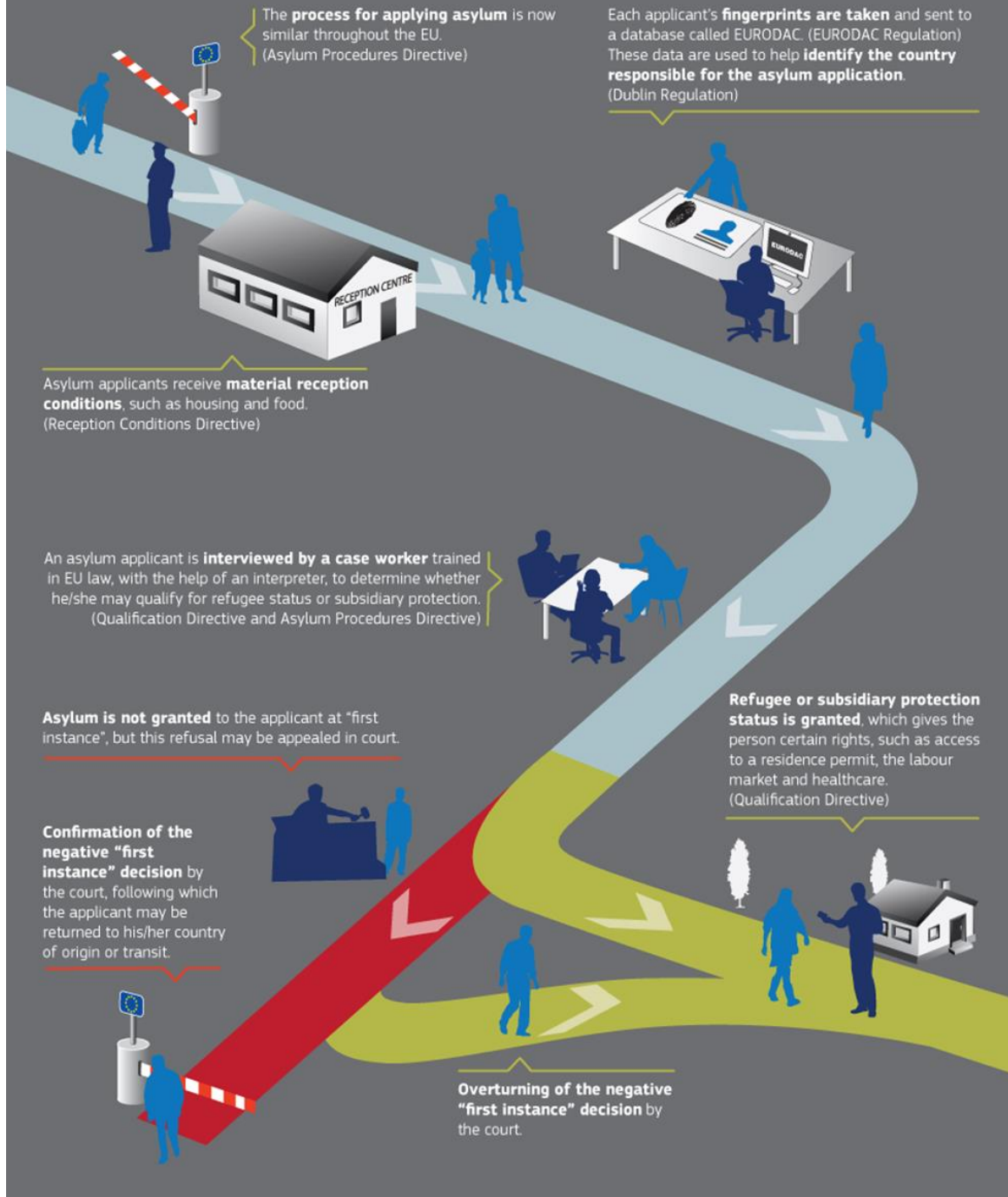


Figure 2. The common European asylum system (European Commission 2018.)

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROCESS

This thesis was done as a scoping review. Scoping reviews are used to clarify working definitions and conceptual boundaries of the field. Scoping review is particularly useful study method, when the literature related to the study has not yet been comprehensively reviewed and when the literature available is too complex for systematic review. Scoping review aims to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity, summarize research findings, identify research gaps and make recommendations for future research. ((Daudt, Van Mossel & Scott. 2013; Levac, Colquhoun and O'Brien. 2010; Peters, Godfrey, Khalil, McInerney, Parker & Soares. 2015.)

With a pre-exploration of the subject it became clear that scientific studies on the subject are limited in the amount and broad in scope of the study. This supported the choice of scoping review as study method for this thesis. The thesis follows Arksey and O'Malley framework (2005) for scoping review. Arksey and O'Malley framework maps rapidly the key concepts, main sources of information and types of evidence available on the research area, and is very usable in areas that have not been reviewed comprehensively before. (Daudt et al. 2013.) Arksey and O'Malley framework includes six stages. This are identifying the reseach question, identifying relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, collating, summarizing and reporting the results and an optional consultation exercise. Arksey and O'Malley's framework is considered to offer the best framework for a scoping study to date. (Daudt et al. 2013.)

2.1 Identifying the research question

This research aimed to investigate the amount and scope of the information produced to understand the specific difficulties and challenges of LGBT asylum seeking process. The research questions are

- (1) what are the problems of LGBT-based asylum process according to asylum seekers and authorities working on the process
- (2) what kind of support the LGBT asylum seekers needed during the process
- (3) what kind of training the authorities felt they needed as a tool when working with LGBT asylum cases
- (4) what kind of support is available for the LGBT asylum seekers during and after the asylum process.

The research questions are limited to LGBT asylum seekers instead of a wider scope of SOGI asylum seekers, since previous studies mainly have been done on LGBT or LGBTI groups.

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Though LGBT asylum seekers have been a topic of increasing interest in the last few years, not many scientific studies have been made regarding the support needed in the immigration process. The data gathering for background was done as a systematic literature review in May 2017. Five databases were used and the search words and hits are described in the chart below. Search words were pretested in the databases, and the words used in the search were LGBT AND asylum, LGBT AND asylum AND support and LGBT asylum seekers. Advanced search was used to choose full text articles, peer review articles and not over five years old researches.

The search term “LGBT” was thought to cover different versions of the acronym (LGBTI, LGBTQ), yet covering all the terms of the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) asylum seekers. Term “asylum” or “asylum seeker” were chosen, because they best describe a person whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed, but the process has already started. Term “refugee” was chosen, since it is also often used in the articles, and it points to a person fleeing conflict or persecution, defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk (UNHCR). Term “forced migrant” came up in the articles found, but it was not used in the searches.

Cinahl search produced 38 hits, out of which 36 were irrelevant, one was previously found and one was relevant. PubMed search produced 11 hits, out of which five were left out as irrelevant, and two had been previously found. Cochrane did not produce any hits on the topic and Medline OVID produced two irrelevant articles. EBSCOhost produced two relevant and 18 irrelevant articles. Google Scholar produced most hits, and the search words were amplified to find most relevant hits. Out of twenty two hits, two were previously found, one was too old, and twelve were irrelevant for this thesis. Five relevant hits were chosen. Search process is pictured in Chart 1.

Database/limitations	Search terms	Hits	Chosen
Cinahl	LGBT AND asylum	14	13 irrelevant 1 relevant
	LGBT ABD refugee	23	1 previously found 22 irrelevant
	SOGI AND asylum	0	
	SOGI AND refugee	1	1 irrelevant
Cochrane	LGBT AND asylum	0	
	LGBT ABD refugee	0	
	SOGI AND asylum	0	
	SOGI AND refugee	0	
EBSCOhost Apply related words Full text Peer review 2012-2017 Academic journals	LGBT AND asylum	1	1 relevant
	LGBT AND refugee	19	18 irrelevant 1 relevant
	SOGI AND asylum	0	
	SOGI AND refugee	0	
Google Scholar Search words in the title of the article 2012 – 2017	LGBT AND asylum	6	1 previously found 4 irrelevant 1 relevant
	LGBT ABD refugee	3	1 irrelevant 2 relevant
	SOGI AND asylum	2	2 relevant
	SOGI AND refugee	1	1 previously found
Medline OVID	LGBT AND asylum	0	
	LGBT AND refugee	2	2 irrelevant
	SOGI AND asylum	0	
	SOGI AND refugee	0	
PubMed Full text 5 years	LGBT AND asylum	4	1 irrelevant 3 relevant
	LGBT AND refugee	7	2 previously found 4 irrelevant 1 relevant
	SOGI AND asylum	0	
	SOGI AND refugee	0	

Figure 2 Search process

3.1 Study selection

Out of the seventeen relevant articles, 5 were later rejected due to the emphasis being on HIV- positive asylum seekers, pediatric asylum seekers or faith related support in asylum seeking process. One article was later rejected, due to unavailable information on the original study.

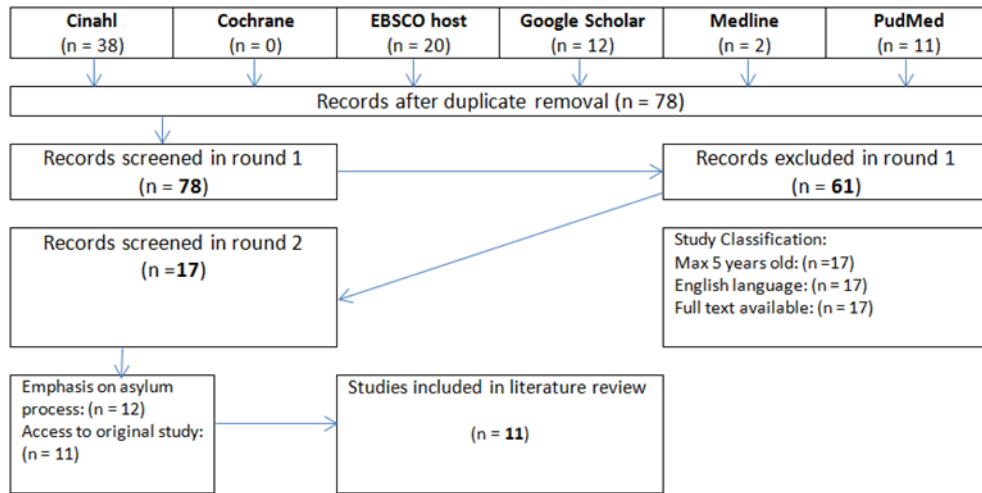


Figure 3 Study selection

3.2 Charting the data

Studies on the LGBT asylum process are fairly recent, since refugee protection was extended to people facing persecution on SOGI in the beginning of 1990's. The studies extend to a wide geographical area, including Arabian Peninsula, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean, Ecuador, Ghana, Iran, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Scotland, South Africa, UK and US. Though Australia and Canada were among the first countries to accept LGBT asylum seekers, most guidance publications for LGBT asylum seekers and service providers have been made in Europe. Guidance publications, however, were not included in the data search.

Studies handled several topics in LGBT asylum seeking process, but the most frequently handled topics were mental health and issues affecting mental health, like social support, social contacts, discretion during the process and protection from violence. The eleven studies chosen have been shortly introduced in Chart 2.

Study	Published	Method	Results
<p>Cowen T., Stella F., Magahy K., Strauss K. & Morton J.</p> <p>2011</p> <p>Sanctuary, Safety and Solidarity Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Scotland.</p>	<p>A report by Equality Network, BEMIS and GRAMNet</p>	<p>A review of both inter- national and UK litera- ture, stakeholder inter- views with 17 organi- zations (11 in Scotland and 6 in London) and a community consulta- tion event attended by 25 people</p>	<p>Need for a system that actively provides sanc- tuary to those fleeing persecution and has a support system in place.</p> <p>Need for the LGBT and human rights organiza- tions within Scotland and the UK to be out- ward thinking, and to focus more on how they can act in solidar- ity.</p>
<p>Kahn S., Alessi E., Woolner L., Kim H. & Olivieri C.</p> <p>2016</p> <p>Promoting the wellbe- ing of lesbian, gay, bi- sexual and transgender forced mi-grants in Canada: providers' per- spectives</p>	<p>Culture, Health & Sex- uality</p> <p>An International Jour- nal for research, Inter- vention and Care</p> <p>21 March 2017</p>	<p>Interviews of 22 Cana- dian service providers (legal providers, men- tal health providers, advocates, resettle- ment workers and pri- vate sponsors) and 7 forced migrants from Bahamas, Bangladesh, Iran, Lebanon, Ghana and the Arabian Penin- sula.</p>	<p>Training to understand mental health impacts of the resettlement process and to learn cultural humility when working with SOGI mi- norities, was found necessary.</p>

Study	Published	Method	Results
<p>Karban K. & Sirriyeh A.</p> <p>2015</p> <p>LGBT asylum seekers and health inequalities in the UK.</p>	<p>The University of Bradford Institutional Repository</p>	<p>Post-peer-review</p>	<p>There is a need to recognize the issues affecting LGBT asylum seekers. Sensitivity in assessment and provision of support (social contacts and networks).</p> <p>Developing knowledge of local LGBT services and partnership work with social work, health and social care services and other statutory and non-statutory agencies is important.</p>
<p>Kolinsky H.</p> <p>2016</p> <p>The Shibboleth of Discretion: The Discretion, Identity, and Persecution Paradigm in American and Australian LGBT Asylum Claims</p>	<p>31 Berkeley Journal. Gender L. & Just. 206 (2016).</p>	<p>Comparison of asylum processes in the United States and Australia.</p>	<p>Recognizing the different ways in which one can embody their sexual orientation, in a persecutive environment, is critical to meaningful determination of LGBT asylum claims.</p>

Study	Published	Method	Results
<p>Kremin M.</p> <p>2017</p> <p>To Be Out and In: Influencing factors in the recognition of SOGI-based asylum claims in South Africa and Kenya</p>	<p>Columbia University Institute for the Study of Human Rights</p>	<p>Literature review</p>	<p>Case studies of Kenya and South Africa indicate that in regards to the recognition of LGBTI refugees, offering economic incentive and programming assistance, proves to be an effective method of driving change.</p>
<p>Liberado P.</p> <p>2014</p> <p>Long Road to Freedom: An Investigation Into the Sexual and Gender Discrimination of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Minority Asylum Seekers in Seeking Refugee Status in Canada</p>	<p>Revue your review. Vol 1 (2014)</p>	<p>Literature review and review of reports of service providers serving SOGI asylum seekers in Canada</p>	<p>Fear of claiming asylum on the grounds of SOGI still exists. SOGI asylum seekers face violence, homophobia and transphobia and racism during the asylum process.</p>
<p>Logie C., Lacombe-Duncan A., Lee-Foon N., Ryan S. & Ramsay H.</p> <p>2015</p> <p>“It’s for us – newcomers, LGBTQ persons, and HIV-positive persons. You feel to be free”</p>	<p>BMC International Health and Human Rights 2016; 16: 18</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews in 3 focus groups of LGBT African and Caribbean refugees (n=29) in social support groups.</p>	<p>Urgent need for interventions to provide social support and health service access. Need for emotional and informational support, and more humane practices. Providing access to mental health services</p>

Study	Published	Method	Results
<p>Messih M. 2017</p> <p>Mental health in LGBT refugee population</p>	<p>The American Journal of Psychiatry Residents' journal Volume 11, Issue 7, July 01, 2016, pp. 5-7</p>	<p>Literature review</p>	<p>Need to establish a sense of safety and tolerance of multiple self-identities, prepare clients for trauma and mitigate the risk of re-traumatization in the asylum-seeking process and address cultural challenges to the utilization of psychotherapy.</p>
<p>Millo Y. 2013</p> <p>INVISIBLE IN THE CITY: Protection Gaps Facing Sexual Minority Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Ecuador, Ghana, Israel, and Kenya</p>	<p>University of Oxford Refugee Study Center Forced Migration Review April 2013</p>	<p>Interviews of 66 sexual minority refugees, 92 representatives of stakeholders involved in refugee protection or sexual minority advocacy in Ecuador, Ghana, Israel, and Kenya.</p>	<p>Train local LGBTI advocates on the legitimacy of SOGI-based persecution was found necessary. Outreach systems and social support groups for sexual minority refugees were needed. Improving access to psychosocial assistance by training professionals in Kenya and provide safe shelters for sexual minority refugees in Kenya, were also found important.</p>

Study	Published	Method	Results
<p>New J. 2015 Seeking support in Liverpool: issues and barriers for asylum seekers and refugees who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex</p>	<p>Public Health Institute Liverpool John Moores University Sexual Health Quarterly Bulletin issue 54</p>	<p>Participant observation and semi-structured interviews in Sahir House, HIV support, training and information center in Liverpool, UK.</p>	<p>The research called for support services for LGBT asylum seekers, visibility of available services, safe spaces to disclose in, training to all the staff supporting LGBT groups, access to good quality legal support, provision of interpreters and further cooperation with service providers and organizations.</p>
<p>Shidlo A. & Ahola J. 2013 Mental health challenges of LGBT forced migrants</p>	<p>University of Oxford Refugee Study Center Forced Migration Review April 2013</p>	<p>Interviews with persons from 26 countries</p>	<p>Mental health providers could help adjudicators understand the specifics of asylum seeking processes of SOGI-persecuted people, and help minimize traumatization.</p>

Figure 4 Previous studies

Three additional articles were accepted for their relevancy:

Article	Published	Method	Results
<p>Grungras N., Levitan R. & Slotek A.</p> <p>2009</p> <p>Unsafe haven: security challenges facing LGBT asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey</p>	<p>The Fletcher Journal of Human Security</p> <p>Volume XXIV - 2009</p>	<p>The article suggests that the information is based on interviews, but the research setting and method remain unclear.</p>	<p>Reported harassment and violence in local communities. Lack of police protection. Difficulties to access housing, work, education and health care.</p>
<p>Jordan S.</p> <p>2009</p> <p>Un/Convention(al) refugees: Contextualizing the accounts of refugees facing homophobic or transphobic persecution</p>	<p>Canada's Journal of Refugees</p> <p>Vol 26, no 2. 2009</p>	<p>Participant observation and in-depth narrative interviews of Rainbow Refuges support group participants in Canada and critical analysis of the information.</p>	<p>Interviewees expressed fear of violence, stigma and lack of connection and belonging in their home countries and difficulties in the asylum process..</p>
<p>UNHCR</p> <p>2010</p> <p>The protection of lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex asylum-seekers and refugees</p>	<p>As a Un Refugee Agency discussion paper</p>	<p>Based on several studies and articles</p>	<p>Clears the identification of terms, states the risks of LGBTI asylum seekers and suggests durable solutions.</p>

Figure 5 *Additionally accepted articles*

4 RESULTS

LGBTQ asylum seekers are a particularly vulnerable group. They face threats in their countries of origin and face barriers when trying to enter the country of asylum. Some of the barriers come via the authorities responsible for the different parts of the asylum process, some come via their families, communities, LGBT groups and organizations. First challenge is to demonstrate a fear of persecution in the country of origin and to prove that the asylum seeker is actually LGBT by SOGI. (Langson. 2017; Liberado. 2014.)

LGBT identity influences the asylum seeking experience of the individual. Understanding this is crucial to ensuring adequate and culturally competent services and helping the asylum seekers access the benefits and protection they have a right to. Lack of support may, for example, delay individuals “coming-out” and making a valid asylum claim due to SOGI, while sense of support may help the individual overcome the fear of “coming-out” and starting the asylum process correctly. (Martinez. 2015; Liberado. 2014.)

The particularity of LGBT asylum seekers has been noted by the authorities working in the asylum process, and the need of training has been recognized. Though the training request may at times been specified in a certain competencies required, often the type of professional development required is unclear. Recognizing the professional development interventions required to improve the asylum process is needed, before effective training can be implemented. (La Violette. 2013.)

The results of the data-analysis have been presented under the main problems identified in several sources. These are insufficient protection and support of LGBT asylum seekers, lack of sensitivity and respect for the right of privacy and the right to human dignity in asylum process, lack of information of stigmatization and on persecution on the bases of SOGI in country of origin and understanding the mental health challenges of LGBT asylum seekers.

4.1 Insufficient protection and support of LGBT asylum seekers

LGBT refugees often resettle alone and without support, many of them having fled violence from relatives or community. Lack of support in original country and during the asylum process, leads to social isolation of asylum seekers and impacts their mental well-being. Refugees that are computer literate and speak English are less likely to remain isolated, since they are more aware of the attitudes and beliefs regarding SOGI and they know how to seek support and other services. However, problems around housing, poverty and destitution are common, and the risk of sexual exploitation exists. (Cowen, Stella, Magahy, Strauss & Morton. 2011.)

Though there has been controversy on whether LGBT refugees would benefit from being resettled to “preferred sites”, the resettlement practitioners feel that developing the social networks with LGBT organizations, LGBT friendly employers, housing providers and other community resources, is more justified were LGBT populations are more concentrated. (Cowen et al. 2011.)

For refugee service providers, it is important to create safe and supportive environment within wider communities. Displaying tolerance and openness, fostering respectful communication and consciousness on the adverse effects of jokes and stereotyping, are important features of resettlement staff members. Recruiting “ally ambassadors” within the refugee community, to raise supportive and sympathetic conversation, has been noticed to effect positive change. Refugee resettlement agencies should also develop participant-led social groups of LGBT asylum seekers. Though domestic LGBT community support groups can offer emotional and social support too, the LGBT refugees can offer each other better support, regarding the traumatic experiences many members have been through. (Kahn, Alessi, Woolner, Kim & Olivieri. 2016.)

Helsinki Citizens Assembly – Turkey (HCA) has been providing legal assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey, and they have identified human rights violations in the process. HCA has reported harassment, physical violence, insufficient police protection, employment and housing discrimination, workplace violence and limited access to health care. (Grungras, Levitan & Slotek. 2009.)

United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) issued guidance on the handling of refugee claims on the basis of SOGI, already in 2008. The guidance calls for training of police, social services providers, community leaders and UNHCR staff, in order to create safe and secure circumstances during the resettlement process. In addition of protection of physical safety and security, the training should focus on enabling normal life, without having to hide once SOGI and providing models of community-based policing for cooperation of LGBT refugee communities and police force. The health-, public assistance- and education sectors should also be trained, to increase receptivity toward LGBT asylum seekers and to create environments where discrimination is not tolerated. In addition, interpreters should be trained on confidentiality and discreteness and correct terminology to use in communication with LGBT asylum seekers. (Grungras et al. 2009.)

The situation of LGBT asylum seekers in Turkey in 2009, was not much better than in the country of origin. Determined education and training was to set a new path for Turkish Government and UNHCR to ensure safety and dignity of LGBT asylum seekers, and to put in use the laws and treaties created for protection and human rights of LGBT asylum seekers. (Grungras et al. 2009.)

Liberado (2014) suggests, that many SOGI refugees do not initially apply asylum on SOGI bases, due to fear of repercussions in the country of origin if rejected. Fear of deportation, lack of trust in authorities, experience of abuse by authorities and fear of legal consequences increase the feeling of insufficient protection during the asylum process.

4.2 Lack of sensitivity and respect for the right of privacy and the right to human dignity in asylum process

The asylum process can become a humiliating process, where the applicant must prove to be “gay enough” to qualify as an LGBT asylum seeker. Kolinsky (2016) found that questions asked in the asylum interviews were often xenophobic and homophobic questions of sexual practices of the applicant. Some receiving countries also practiced phalometry until fairly recently, and even when the country has ceased to use phalometry in asylum process, the stigma is still remaining strong. (Kolinsky. 2016.) New (2015) reported issues of dispersal, detention and destitution and experiences of discrimination during the asylum process in United Kingdom. The whole decision-making process in the UK was considered complex and unpredictable by previous relevant literature, decreasing the right to human dignity. (New. 2015.)

Canada was one of the first countries to extend refugee protection people facing SOGI based persecution, yet the screening measures of asylum seekers have become increasingly stringent. The interviews and hearings are considered dehumanizing, and asylum seekers must override stigma, fear and shame in exchange for protection. Adequate protection of LGBT asylum seekers remains insecure. Demands of proof on sexual orientation and gender identity of an asylum seeker may include letters from sexual partners or old hospital records. In addition, asylum seekers face cultural and language differences as well as different cultural understanding of “diagnosis” on sexual orientation. (Jordan. 2009.)

The training of decision-makers on SOGI claims, has improved the adjudication practices, and new UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) guidelines are hoped to enhance the quality of decision making. Previously informal networks have provided information on SOGI claims in absence of official sources, but recently government official have taken more responsibility on the matter. (Jordan.2009.)

Human rights violations do not end in the asylum process. Kahn et all (2016) found that the learned survival strategies prevented LGBT asylum seekers connecting with others and the sources of wellbeing. LGBT asylum seekers avoided heterosexual communities and faith based communities, or they continued to hide their sexual orientation or gender

identity. Also, though LGBT forced migrants sought asylum and refugee status in Canada due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, they did not always feel comfortable expressing these facts to immigration officials. This complicated the evaluation of the refugee claims. To avoid interpersonal rejection of LGBT asylum seekers, the providers need to acknowledge and learn to track these avoidance patterns.

In some cases the human rights violation lie deeper in the countries general policies, laws and regulations. Kremin (2017) compared the rights and access to public services of LGBT asylum seekers and refugees in South-Africa and Kenya. Though Kenya has had a successful working relationship with UNHCR the rights of the LGBT asylum seekers were inadequate compared to South-Africa. In Kenya asylum seekers did not have a right to work, right for education, right to health care, freedom of movement or access to welfare benefits and social services, which all were available to asylum seekers in South-Africa. South-Africa has been considered Africa's gay safe haven, but increased LGBT activism has increases also the attacks on human rights activists and "corrective rapes" of lesbians. (Liberado. 2014).

4.3 Lack of information of stigmatization and of persecution on the bases of SOGI in country of origin

The stigma attached to same-sex relations leads the asylum-seekers to be secretive about their same-sex relationships, before leaving their country of origin and during and after the asylum process in the receiving country. Many of the asylum seekers live a double-life, meeting the expectations of heterosexuality (getting married, having children) and many of them arrive from countries where oppressive patriarchal structures severely limit their ability to choose a partner. This leads to credibility issues in the asylum process and sometimes to routinely dismissed applications. (Cowen et al. 2011.)

According to Millo (2013), in Israel LGBT asylum seekers could be more open about their sexual orientation or gender identity, but this required language skills and encounters with gay-friendly employers. Meanwhile in Kenya, the general homophobic climate pushed many of the LGBT asylum seekers to find refuge with Kenyan, foreign and other refugee men, exchanging sex for food and shelter. Fear of exposure forced the LGBT asylum seekers to move constantly from one lodging to another.

In both countries LGBT and refugee assistance agencies should train the local advocates and post information on SOGI-based persecution, extend outreach, identification and referral systems, facilitate social support groups, improve access to psychosocial assistance and provide shelters for LGBT asylum seekers to decrease relations with abusive hosts. (Millo. 2013.)

Service providers working with asylum cases lack sensitivity and information on the difficulties the people fleeing persecution may be facing and on the barriers of the asylum seekers for being open about their SOGI in asylum interviews. Also the preconception on “typical” and “normal” gay behavior, that affects the asylum decisions, could be corrected with proper training. (Cowen et al. 2011.) After all, identifying as LGBT person, does not mean the person has had sexual or romantic relationships with same sex in the country of origin. For this, adjudicators need to be educated on these characteristics so that claimants do not need to produce evidence of sexual behavior in the host country. (Shidlo & Ahola. 2013.)

4.4 Understanding the mental health challenges of LGBT asylum seekers

The journey from persecution to freedom is mentally challenging. It has several identified stages, with different mental challenges: pre-flight, journey into exile, post-flight and the claims process. The persecution in the home country can manifest as rapes, honor killings, beatings and imprisonment. After that, the transit from the country of origin to the receiving country is often a stressful one, during which abuse, imprisonment and torture has been reported. The loss of familiar structures, values and language can result to a post-flight trauma, with symptoms of hypervigilance, anxiety and depression. (Messih. 2017.)

The prolonged exposure to violence and abuse, increases the risk of mental health problems among LGBT asylum seekers. Most common diagnoses among LGBT asylum seekers are depression, dissociative disorders, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, traumatic brain injury, PTSD and substance abuse. The resettlement process and adjusting to the host country increases additional stressors to all asylum seekers,

but LGBT asylum seekers are in a higher risk due to lack of protective factors that promote mental health and wellbeing, since they are often distinct from other persecuted groups, since their communities and families often contribute to the abuse they have experienced. (Kahn et al. 2017; Karban & Shirriyeh. 2015; Messih. 2017; Millo. 2013; Shidlo & Ahola. 2013.)

In order to gain asylum in the receiving country, LGBT migrants need to be able to prove coherent, consistent and sequential persecution to the adjudicators, but the survival of persecution sometimes necessitates amnesia and denial of the traumatic events. In the absence of safe environment, working through the internal processes to integrate ones sexuality, is impossible for many migrants and this could be facilitated by documenting developmental experiences LGBT migrant may feel before and after migration. (Shidlo & Ahola. 2013.)

Mental health providers can help adjudicators understand the psychological impact of SOGI persecution and characteristics, so that adjudicators can perform accurate judgments on asylum claims based on SOGI persecution. This will also help minimize traumatization of forced migrants, caused by having to repeat their history as part of the asylum claim. (Karbon & Shirriyeh. 2015; Shidlo & Ahola. 2013.)

Service providers have expressed difficulty in understanding the mental health challenges of the LGBT asylum seekers. Establishing safety, facilitating social support and navigating the intricacies of the claims process were also found challenging. Both providers and clients would benefit from training in mental health challenges as well as cumulative stressors of the asylum seeking process. (Kahn et al. 2017.)

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The LGBT asylum seeking process is a complicated matter that confuses as much the professionals working in the process as it does the asylum seekers. The sensitive nature of the matter opens possibilities to misunderstandings and exploitation. Several incidents have occurred in the national news during this thesis process, proving that the LGBT asylum seeking process is not functional as it is and it needs development.

Helsingin Sanomat (27.5.2017) wrote about Lisa, a Nigerian LGBT asylum seeker, who found the asylum-seeking process hard and humiliating. She described being young and raped and now having to answer a male interviewer's questions she didn't completely understand and noticing that the interviewer didn't understand her answers, despite the interpreter present. Lisa received a negative asylum decision, from a person who was not present in the interview. This describes the dysfunctionality of the process.

Later same year local newspapers (Iltalehti 25.9.2017) wrote about two Russian men Aleksandr and Nikita, who stabbed themselves in front of the parliament house after receiving a negative asylum decision on LGBT basis. Later suspicion arise that the men where brothers seeking asylum on false basis. This describes the vulnerability of the process.

MTV news (2017) told about Samir, a young Iraqi gay man, who fled his country under the risk of honor killing by his family. He received a negative asylum decision. Samir did not tell about his sexual orientation in the first interview, because he had heard that the interpreters had previously leaked information to Iraqi communities. Samir felt that though many asylum seekers lie about their sexual orientation (claiming to be LGBT asylum seekers when they are not), it is unfair to punish everyone for that. MTV news also states that there are around 100 – 150 LGBT asylum seekers in Helsinki area, living in shared asylum centers with other asylum seekers. They have reported violence, abuse and rapes in asylum centers. This describes the safety issues that asylum seekers face.

5.1 The problems of LGBT-based asylum process according to asylum seekers and authorities

Since the asylum applicants are in an underprivileged position during the asylum process, the development to increase safety, realization of human rights and equitable outcome of the asylum process lies on the receiving part. The studies suggested training of professionals, to ensure equity in the process, but the problems may lie deeper than that. Personal beliefs and attitudes of the professionals play an important role in how they perceive the information they receive and how they act in different situations. Beliefs and attitudes are hard, though not impossible, to change. Would it be easier to incorporate the requirements of neutrality and impartiality as personal qualifications in the admission requirements of the studies in this field or in the hiring process of the professionals?

The problem may also be in the process itself. It is unclear to the researcher if the decision on the asylum is made by one person, several persons or for example a committee. According to Pakolaisneuvonta Ry (2017) the decision is made by MIGRI according to the records of the asylum interview, which is why it is important that the applicant's account of events is written down correctly and completely. According to the studies interviews in the LGBT asylum cases were considered humiliating, discriminating, complex and difficult due to cultural and language differences. This raises a question on how to gather accurate information and to process it through the phases of the asylum system in a form understandable to all parties.

According to the studies, the inadequate protection and lack of social support was one of the main problems in LGBT asylum process. The studies did not clearly explain the role of different actors and organizations offering support in different phases of asylum process. In Finland SeTa is working on asylum centers for LGBT asylum seekers only, to offer safer surroundings. This seems like a functional solution regarding easier access to social support and health care. On the other hand, does this solution impose a risk to fluent integration into a new country and culture? Does it point out the SOGI of the asylum seeker to those who it had been hidden from?

5.2 The need of support and training

According to the studies, support is needed in all phases of asylum process, starting from the country of origin to the post application outcome phase. Support is needed by both, asylum seekers and professionals in the application process. Though the needs of the asylum seekers remain similar throughout the process, the needs of the professionals vary, since different working environments create diverse situations and problems.

While professionals in the process need support and training in matters such as interview techniques, identifying own prejudices against LGBT communities and understanding the complex identity situations of LGBT asylum seekers, the asylum seekers need support in mental health, protection from physical and mental abuse and guidance in further arrangements despite of the outcome of the asylum application process.

In the process of this thesis it became clear that the concept of sexual orientation and gender identity is wide, and can be unclear to asylum professionals. Feedback was expressed about the thesis in following issues: “LGBT” as a term leaves out important groups of sexual minorities, while the term “LGBTQQIA” (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and allies) covers most of them. As explained before, most of the studies covered only LGBT or LGBTI groups, and hence the thesis could cover only that area. Regarding the need of support of asylum professionals however, it would be important to understand the complexity of SOGI. Including the allies in the term also brings up the previous question about the protection of family members or other allies.

The protection and privacy of LGBT asylum seekers also raised questions. Attempts to meet and interview LGBT asylum seekers were greeted with caution. This is understandable but also brings out the fear and insecurity the asylum seekers feel even against people “on their side” let alone people “against” them in the asylum process. The importance of this observation is actually significant when considering training of asylum professionals.

None of the studies reviewed here discussed the LGBT asylum cases in a wider perspective. In the countries where being sexual minority is a risk for your life, it is also a risk

for your family and relatives. Will we face asylum cases in the future where a family member of sexual minority will need protection and an asylum in LGBT friendly country? And if we will, how does that affect the asylum process? Also, as mentioned before, many LGBT asylum seekers have started a family in the country of origin from necessity to disguise their sexual orientation. How are these family members treated in the process if the individual seeks asylum on LGBT basis?

As the stories in the beginning of the chapter describe, there are many dysfunctionalities in the asylum process that are not easy to solve. As all asylum seekers, LGBT asylum seekers come from different backgrounds with different experiences and life stories. Can any training prepare a professional to understand the variability of these cases, and give confidence on the asylum decision? Are there resources to respond to different needs of support and protection of LGBT asylum seekers? How is it possible to learn to see the truth behind the cases without insulting anyone's human rights?

5.3 Ethical and critical aspects

In a literature review the biggest ethical issues have been faced in the original studies. The studies chosen for this thesis were considered ethically acceptable. However, when studying people's experiences and feelings about a matter, the researcher relies on mutual understanding of the narration of the reviewed person. When talking about LGBT asylum seekers, there are many factors that can affect this process.

Lack of mutual language or use of a translator creates a risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding, as well as does the different cultural and ethical backgrounds. In the case of LGBT asylum seekers there may be lack of expressions in certain languages that would facilitate explaining ones experiences. Cultural differences may also restrict expressing and understanding behaviors and practices, as may previous experiences. (UNHCR. 2015.)

The composition of the groups interviewed raises a question too. Does the amount of people getting as far as to asylum process present the LGBT community of a certain

country, since not everyone has a chance to flee their country, or get as far as to apply asylum. Also, it didn't become clear how interviewing certain people affected their situation in the asylum seeker community. Was their anonymity protected, and was there a risk to be revealed to other community members as an LGBT community member. (Humphries. 2006; UNHCR. 2015.)

Asylum seekers on the whole are a very vulnerable group of people, which needs to be taken into consideration when interviewing them. Anonymity and respect are critical especially when studying a vulnerable group of people, whose participation in a study may risk their asylum process. Interviewers' neutrality or lack of it, is also a fact that can affect the outcome of a study significantly. (Humphries. 2006; UNHCR.2015.)

In a literature review the main ethical questions are whether the information produced is reliable and whether the human rights of the examinees are respected. In this thesis the studies selected for the review were carefully chosen to express a wide field of experiences. The studies chosen were recent, oldest 6 years old, and profiled the current situation of LGBT asylum process. The amount of studies found was limited, but considered large enough for a reliable outcome. The studies were gathered in reasonably short time period, but the schedule of the thesis allowed rechecking for recent studies later on in the thesis process. None were found. The thesis does not express any prejudices or personal attitudes one way or the other, and is strictly limited to expressing the facts in the studies reviewed. The human rights of LGBT asylum seekers as well as asylum professionals have been respected.

When studying a vulnerable group of people, and their experiences, the researcher must now more about the group in order to implement interviews or surveys or questionnaires in a proper and respectful way. For this, literature review was the best way to start what is meant to be a continuing thesis. Literature review allows identification of current info and literature on the subject and reveals the limitations on quality of data and potential as a study subject. It also offers guidance to plan a study on a larger scale.

6 EXCISTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Several organizations have published recommendations for the authorities and professionals working in the asylum process. Yet even more recommendation or instructions can be found for the LGBT asylum seekers. The captions below mention a few examples of both.

6.1 Recommendations for authorities

Organization for refuge, asylum and migration (ORAM) has published guidance books for authorities involved in asylum process. In their *Guidance for NGOs, Governments, UNHCR & Program Funders (2013)*, they identify several key recommendations to ensure the protection of LGBT asylum seekers. These recommendations include training the authorities in asylum process on particularities of SOGI claims and sensitive interview techniques, encouraging domestic protection authorities to recognize SGN claims and to provide protection, expediting consideration of vulnerable SGN claims and increasing the numbers of SGN refugees accepted for resettlement, forming information networks and partnerships with organizations focused on sexual and gender minorities and conducting service nets of organizations working on legal aid, sex and gender based violence, human rights issues and refugee support.

ILGA Europe has published a report (ILGA Europe. 2016), which lists the problem points and uses existing good practices as examples for further development. The report handles similar subjects than he ORAM guidance, from discretion to conditions in reception facilities and the training of service providers. The report points out, however, that Belgium is the only European country that issues reliable, publicly available statistics on LGBT asylum seekers.

UNHCR (2012 and 2015) has published detailed guidelines regarding claims to refugee status based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. These guidelines cover a wide field from terminology, to establishing credibility, from alternative relocation systems to procedural issues.

6.2 Instructions for LGBT asylum seekers

Most of the instructions published for LGBT asylum seekers are regarding the asylum process in the U.S. LGBT freedom and asylum network (2017) as well as Immigration Equality (2015), offer instructions for LGBT asylum seekers in the U.S., covering the whole asylum process from determining eligibility to application details and interview tips. Asylum Connect (2017) has an online resource catalog to offer information on the asylum seeking process and in the key areas during and after asylum process, including housing, legal help, food, medical, mental health, social support, employment, and education.

There are several unofficial websites by churches, communities, and support groups that reach out to LGBT asylum seekers and offer concrete instructions on the asylum process and life in the new country. To name a few: LGBT asylum taskforce, National LGBTQ taskforce, Stonewall Acceptance without Exception, ReachOUT LGBTI refugee and asylum UK and Belong to Supporting LGBT young people in Ireland, offer wide range of support from support groups to helping find jobs and health care.

Question remains how reachable these websites and support groups are to a person in the middle of asylum process. Do these groups reach out to asylum seekers in asylum centers, or is information about these communities offered to the asylum seeker during the process. They are the group that mostly remains without the support of other asylum seekers and hence need extra attention to promote mental health and wellbeing.

7 FURTHER STUDIES

Since the amount of LGBT asylum seekers is increasing, the topic of support and training becomes more and more important. There is definitely a need to hear out the LGBT asylum seekers themselves and professionals working in the asylum process. These studies have not been made in Finland, and since Finland could otherwise be considered fairly LGBT-friendly country and the closest safe haven to LGBT asylum seekers from Russia, the need for studying the situation in Finland would be very interesting.

Though no country is the same, there are countries that are further in understanding the complexities of LGBT asylum process, and there is a lot to learn from them. A comparison study between countries could help find the weak links in the systems and support building a more functional asylum process for LGBT asylum cases.

However it is safe to assume that the process will be changing in the future years, and it would be interesting to see how it changes, and do the changing asylum systems reflect to each countries' attitudes on LGBT asylum seekers.

Ally	Person who supports and respects members of the LGBT community, typically straight
Asylum-seeker	Someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed
Coming out	The process by which one accepts or identifies own sexuality or gender identity, or when one shares this information with others
FRA	European Agency for Fundamental Rights
Forced Migration	A general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts within their country of origin)
Gender Identity	an individual's internal understanding of themselves as female, male or transgender
HCA	Helsinki Citizens Assembly, a non-governmental organization based in Istanbul, Turkey, promoting fundamental rights and liberties, democracy and pluralism.
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILGA	The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, is the world federation of national and local organizations dedicated to achieving equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people.
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual
MIGRI	the Finnish Immigration Service
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
Phallometry	A procedure where a pressure-sensitive device is placed around a man's penis while presenting him with sexually stimulating images, and determining his sexual attraction by measuring changes in his erectile responses
PIBA	Population, Immigration and Border Authority
PTSD	Post Trauma Stress Disorder
SETA	Sexual Equality, the main LGBT rights organization in Finland.
Sexual Orientation	the attraction we feel towards people of a particular gender
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Refugee	A person fleeing conflict or persecution. Defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk.
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
Xenophobia	A strong antipathy against to strangers or foreigners

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