



LGBTI refugees

Situation, protection and support

Factsheet 09e

In over 70 countries around the world, people can be punished, persecuted or killed because they are homosexual or transgender. People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender and intersex (LGBTI) are being denied their human dignity. The criminalisation and denigration of these individuals in their countries of origin has terrible consequences for the overall social climate and for the ability of these individuals to live their lives in dignity. Discrimination, violence and persecution driven by homophobia or transphobia are commonplace in many of these countries.

The situation facing LGBTI refugees

LGBTI refugees are fleeing countries where they have to mask their sexual orientation and gender identity out of fear for their own safety. This risk can be present both while they are in the process of fleeing and once they arrive in their host country. For many, arrival in Germany does not automatically mean the end of persecution and discrimination; they will still face considerable challenges even once they have succeeded in fleeing. Although same-sex relationships are becoming increasingly accepted in our society, homosexual refugees in Berlin still face violence and discrimination in many aspects of daily life, in public and in their accommodation. The same is true for transgender and intersex refugees. They frequently keep their identity

a secret as they may often be sharing space with people from the same country of origin or city; the fear of reprisals and violence or of being outed in their home country remains.



Vulnerability and special need for protection

That is why the situation facing LGBTI refugees when they apply for asylum in Berlin is unique and their needs are particular. Berlin is the first federal state to recognise that LGBTI refugees belong to a **particularly vulnerable group** and have a **special need for protection**. This gives LGBTI refugees the right to access special services.

The **Berlin Model for the Support of LGBTI Refugees** was developed to be able to offer comprehensive support to LGBTI refugees. It forms part of an expansion of the Berlin Action Plan against Homophobia and Transphobia, the so called “Initiative for the Acceptance of Sexual and Gender Diversity” (ISV).

Berlin Model for the Support of LGBTI Refugees

- Low-threshold initial counselling service
- Specific counselling on processes and applying for asylum as well as asylum and migration law
- Specific counselling on anti-violence and anti-discrimination
- Specialised counselling for adult LGBTI refugees as a particularly vulnerable group
- Psychological counselling and healthcare
- Empowerment and setting up of self-help groups
- Coordination of voluntary work set up to assist LGBTI refugees
- A specific shelter for LGBTI refugees
- Specific anti-violence concept for refugee shelters focusing on the protection of LGBTI and women
- Training for managers and staff members of refugee shelters, public administration, refugee advice centres, security personnel and others
- A LGBTI contact person at the social services office of the State Office for Refugee Issues (LAF)

the proportion of LGBTI people in the population as a whole, i.e. roughly 4–8%. Many prefer not to out themselves for the reasons given above and continue to keep their sexual orientation or gender identity private. Whether visible or not, LGBTI refugees require specific support and protection.

Can someone be granted asylum on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity?

A person may be granted asylum if they are persecuted for their sexual orientation or gender identity and this would qualify a person for refugee status. However, during the asylum application process, LGBTI refugees may not immediately name their sexual orientation or gender identity as the reason for their asylum claim out of shame or fear. They are often traumatised, which makes it difficult for them to talk about the persecution they have suffered in detail. They first require psychosocial and legal counselling. Acts of persecution are relevant to the asylum process if they have been committed by the state in the country of origin, by family members or by other actors.

For further information on the issue of LGBTI refugees as well as contact details for organisations and advice centres, please visit the website of the Berlin State Office for Equal Treatment and Against Discrimination at www.berlin.de/lads/lbsbti-gefluechtete [only German]

?! Questions and answers

How high is the percentage of LGBTI refugees in Berlin?

Essentially, there are no reliable figures regarding the number of asylum applications from LGBTI refugees. However, it is estimated that the percentage reflects

Contact

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BERLIN SUPPORTS
SELFDETERMINATION
AND THE
ACCEPTANCE
OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY
INITIATIVE