

**Epsilon Project Advisory Board
2nd Meeting
05/05/17
16:00-18:00 GMT
Via Skype**

Agenda Item	Who
Brief Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Members • Organisation Staff 	All
Epsilon Project Country reports - Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on research and findings for the UK, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, and Cyprus • Comments on comparative analysis of findings • Strengths vs opportunities for improvement 	All
Epsilon training for professionals and volunteers working with LGBTI refugees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions on themes to be covered and structure of the training • Organisations that should be taking the training 	All
AOB	All

1. Attendees and introductions

Armin - Iranian refugee based in the Netherlands for the past 4 years, work for LGBT Asylum Support Foundation in Holland.

Tom – From the UK, based in London. Moving back to Athens next week, helped set up a LGBT support group in Athens (ATLAS), re-joined as a project manager. Group helps refugees get in contact with lawyers, doctors, LGBT friendly counsellors, housing, helpline.

Maria - From Italy, completed a master in human rights in the Netherlands, works for research centre. Has academic knowledge of the field.

Monica – From Norway, very interested in the topic, working on LGBT issues for years, part of Pride organisation.

Angelos – based in Athens, background English language teaching – works as teacher trainer and university teacher.

2. Epsilon Project Country reports – Feedback

Armin considered the reports to be well written, said he could recognise himself on the studies, especially the report from the Netherlands. Felt that some things could be added such as the need for sharing experiences and rights of LGBT refugees with non LGBT

refugees, to avoid discrimination. Armin felt this need from his experience. He also considered necessary to offer training to refugee camp staff and LGBT organisations. Refugee camp staff don't know much about LGBT refugees and LGBT rights. He highlighted the need to use more bi-cultural LGBTI or LGBTI-friendly employees that could understand both realities, but also to train immigration officers and staff, give information about the refugee's background. On the other hand, there was a need to train LGBT organisations and address patronising behaviour in organisation.

Maria also says working with both LGBT organisations and Migrant organisations would be the most interesting aspect of the project. She agreed with Armin, and suggested that trying to find a reference point for key organisations in the country partners could be helpful.

Tom also agreed with Maria and Armin and reported having had an issue with sensitizing translators. Translators sometimes don't want to mention LGBT issues and use different terminology which may influence the decision making. Armin says he also had issues with translators that had problems with LGBT terminology, were homophobic and created an unsafe environment. A translator made it very difficult for him, made it seem as if he was disgusting, did not like translating for him. However, at the time the immigration officer did not notice what was happening because the language codes and body language used by the translator were not recognisable to the Dutch immigration officer given cultural differences. Armin also told us that he once checked documents where translators translated 'transgender' as 'heterosexual', showing a lack of understanding of the terminology.

Monica also agrees with Armin's points and recognised one the main problems in Norway to be dealing with prejudices of non LGBT refugees. She reported having tried to teach them about the issues faced by LGBT refugees but they were often non responsive.

Angelos agreed with what was said. He considered the reports to have showed very clearly the needs of each country and what issues were there in common. He highlighted that not only professionals need to be trained but also non LGBT refugees.

3. Epsilon training for professionals and volunteers working with LGBTI refugees

Maria recommended that we use Yogyakarta principles guidelines for terminology for the online training. It is available in different languages although it is from 2007 so needs to be checked for updates.

Armin suggested that the training should focus on the importance of effective communication, creating a safe and trust environment, emphasizing the importance of not underestimating refugees. He told us that LGBT organisations patronise and infantilise LGBT refugees (e.g. playing children's games). It was said to be humiliating but refugees would not say they did not like because they were used to be submissive and afraid of authorities.

Monica also commented on her experience with this type of training, the need to take into consideration the different groups you want to teach, have the trainer to be a LGBT refugee themselves. Stop talking about them and start talking about us. It should go through the basics of what LGBTIQ stands for and what the main issues are. Talk about cultural sensitive issues. Separate people into group based on their professions; tailor content according to target group. Pedagogy: important to try to make it interactive, not heavy but fun, have short video clips. Cases are also very important: hard to find something common for all the countries.

Maria also highlighted that although there are differences among countries that are also many common points, it should be worth starting from the common issues and then going to specificities.

Rosa told everyone that all comments and suggestions were going to be discussed by the project staff in the following week meeting in Athens. In the next weeks a draft of the training main topics will be finalised and then circulates with the LGBTI Advisory Board for review, comments and suggestions. Following this, Rosa will call out a meeting to discuss any feedback although feedback is also welcome in written.

4. AOB

- Rosa asked those from the LGBTI Advisory Board who are attending the International Conference in Athens to send her a quote about the experience of taking part in it and being part of the board.
- Rosa asked to everyone to feed into our national database of organisations working on migration and LGTB issues. This will help us disseminating our online training.
- Rosa also commented that we will have a project newsletter sent in June and for that we would like to include a case study from someone from the board, with a personal story, the experience of participating in EpsiLon and the importance of the project. Armin has agreed to do that and will be in contact with Rosa.

