



The IARS
International Institute

Community-led solutions for a fairer society

LGBT Community,
Discrimination and
Integration: Finding Ways
Forward

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www.iars.org.uk



EPSILON PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Epsilon is a 2 year Erasmus+ (KA2) co-funded programme being delivered in partnership with 5 EU partner countries
 - IARS International Institute – **the UK**;
 - Anziani e non Solo – **Italy**;
 - Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias kai Paidiou (KMOP) – **Greece**;
 - Movisie – Kennis En Advies Voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling – **The Netherlands**;
 - Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology LTD – CARDET – **Cyprus**.

EPSILON PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Motivations for Epsilon:
 - the rise in migrant and refugee numbers
 - the persistent inequality and persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups (LGBT)
- Epsilon's aims:
 1. Increase the knowledge, skills and awareness of all adult professionals who interact with LGBT migrants, refugees, asylum seekers
 2. Share, develop and transfer innovative practices in education targeting professionals and volunteers
 3. Develop innovative, evidence-based, user-led educational tools
 4. Design and pilot evidence-based, user-led effective strategies
 5. Helping target groups challenge their own biases and improve their skills in providing tailored and culturally sensitive services

METHODOLOGY

- 4 PHASES:
 1. Literature review
 - a. Analyse the national context in terms of LGBT migration in the UK
 - b. Capture the experiences of LGBT migrants attempting to navigate the UK asylum process whilst trying to settle and build their lives in a new country
 - c. Consisted of a collection of the current academic research and reports from frontline organisations, including research conducted by Stonewall, UKLGIG and Women For Refugee Women.
 2. Fieldwork
 - a. Understand the challenges both the LGBT migrants and the organisations providing support to LGBT migrants face in the UK
 - b. Identify good practices that can be built upon
 - c. Qualitative in nature, and the sample was acquired by using a nonprobability sampling method.
 - d. In total, 11 semi-structured interviews with both professionals working in the sector and with LGBT migrants themselves

METHODOLOGY

3. LGBT Advisory Board

- a. Bring together LGBT migrants, professionals and academics working in the field to help guide and direct the Epsilon project
- b. Strengthen the user-led and needs based aspects of the project
- c. Set up at the beginning of the project through referrals from the partner organisations,
- d. IARS has been coordinating the Board's quarterly meetings; sharing project updates; and providing the Board an opportunity for input into the project

4. Training tools

- a. Increase the knowledge and the skills of professionals
- b. Build up their capacity to better respond to the needs of LGBT migrants
- c. Research conducted by utilising quantitative data derived from an e-learning online platform and from a face-to-face training
- d. Participants took part in online and face-to-face training: professionals, volunteers, researchers, activists, social workers and senior level management working with asylum seekers and refugees

KEY FINDINGS

1. Literature review:

- a. The treatment of LGBT asylum seekers by UK Visa and Immigration and its predecessor the UK Border Agency.
- a. The impact of conflicts between sexual or gender identity and home culture that persist even when LGBT migrants relocate to countries, such as the UK.
- a. Issues with inclusivity of migrants within the UK ‘gay scene’

KEY FINDINGS

2. Fieldwork:

- a. The findings broadly mirrored the findings of the literature review, i.e. the impact of the UK Visa and Immigration's procedures on the wellbeing of LGBT migrants.
- b. LGBT migrants may feel more comfortable receiving immigration support from LGBT specialist organisations rather than those specifically providing immigration support.

Other key findings from the fieldwork and consultation data included:

- a. Cultural and Integration Issues; Conflict between cultural and sexual identity & The need for ESOL Support.
- b. Service Delivery Concerns; Lack of funding, Demand for services & Complex needs.
- c. Discrimination within asylum specialist services; Volunteers and staff lack awareness.
- d. Skill level of LGBT organisations; Increase in demand & Lack of specialist training or expertise.

KEY FINDINGS

3. The LGBT Advisory Board:

- a. Phase 1: The Board provided feedback on the country chapters, and concluded that the findings demonstrate the needs and issues of each country.
- a. Phase 2: The Board advised on the interview questions and on the terminology.
- b. Phase 4: The Board advised on the topics covered in the training, reviewed the training materials and emphasised the correct use of terminology.
- a. The Board's input and contributions have been one of the key strengths of the project.

KEY FINDINGS

4. Training tools: Face-to-Face training

- a. 7 out of 9 participants agreed that the training has met their expectations.
- a. 8 out of 9 participants considered the quality of the training and the trainers very good.
- a. 7 out of 9 participants agreed that the time dedicated for each topic was appropriate.
- a. 9 out of 9 participants agreed that the training methodologies were appropriate.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Practical suggestions:

- a. **Better equalities awareness within the LGBT scene to improve migrant integration:** discrimination & exclusions
- a. **LGBT groups should receive immigration training:** LGBT migrants feel more comfortable in receiving support from those who understand their sexual/gender identity
- a. **Immigration support organisations and solicitors should receive training to increase their LGBT sensitivity:** lack of awareness & experience may lead to insensitive treatment of LGBT migrants
- a. **The Epsilon programme should be part of the basic training for all service providers working with migrants:** problematic to identify who is an LGBT migrant

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy suggestions:

- a. **Revise the way LGBT asylum claims are processed:** the use of detention & the culture of assuming the claimant is lying
- a. **Quicker decision making:** risk of being abused physically and emotionally
- a. **Review and amend country information:** disparity between the experiences of asylum seekers in their home countries and the country guidelines
- a. **Invest in ESOL courses and Identity Support:** language skills are essential to be able to socialise outside one's home culture & more support on how to embrace both the UK and home culture

**GIVING EVERYONE A CHANCE
TO FORGE A SAFER, FAIRER AND
MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY**



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Thank you!

