

Afghanistan LGBTIQ+ Organisation (ALO)

Unheard, Unseen, Unsafe

LGBTIQ+ Forcibly Displaced
Persons in the Czech Republic

March 2025

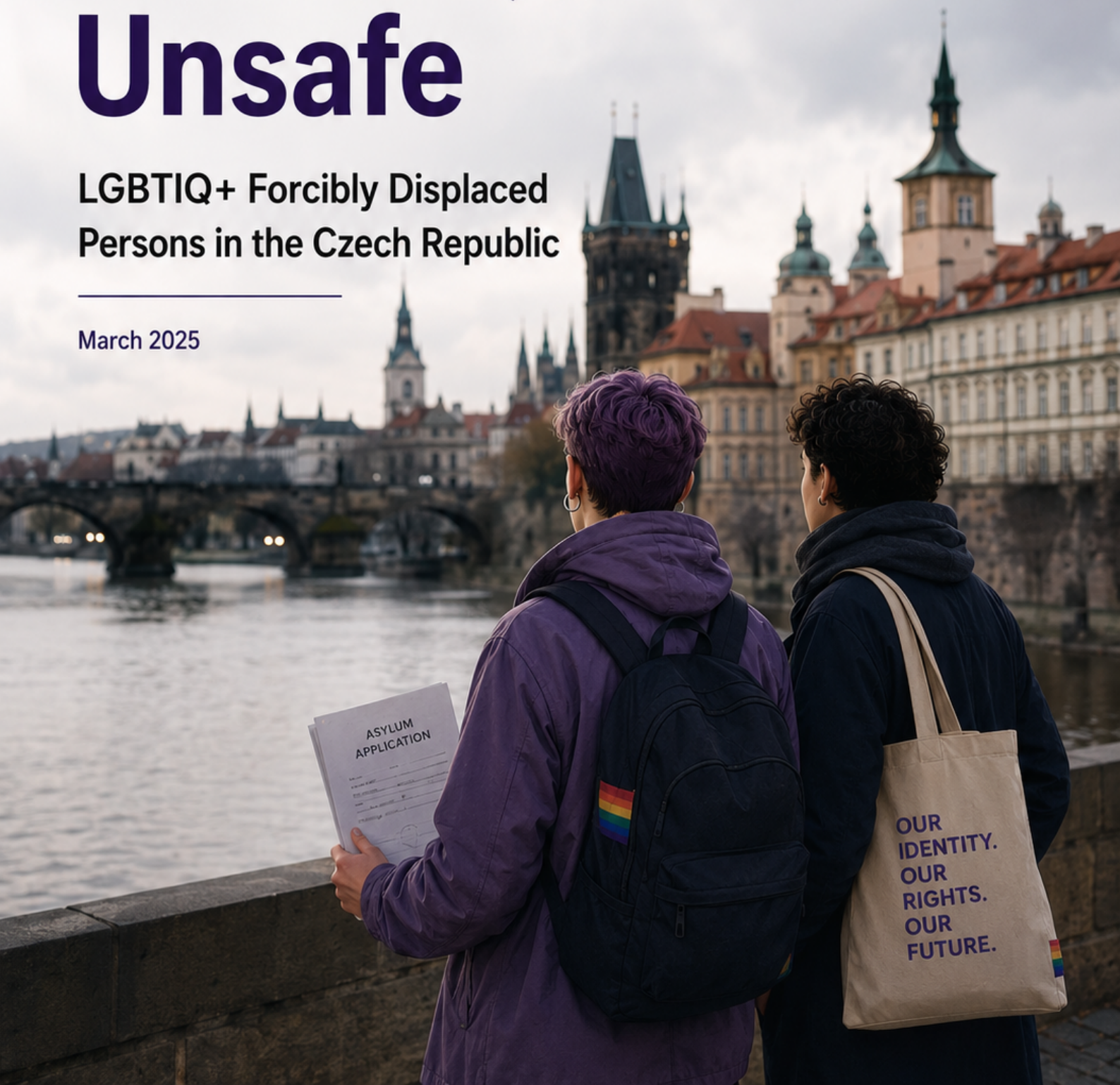


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I. Introduction

The phenomena of refugees and migration in the Czech environment have historically received only marginal attention from both the media and academic research, mainly due to the fact that the Czech Republic is considered a "transit" country in the context of forcibly displaced persons. This situation changed significantly after the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, when the Czech Republic gradually accepted more than half a million war refugees. However, there is still a lack of information about the specifics of various groups of forcibly displaced persons, including particularly vulnerable groups, especially in terms of the specific challenges they face and their individual experiences. For this reason, we have prepared and are presenting a research report focused on LGBTIQ+ displaced persons.

This report presents an evidence-based needs assessment of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons in the Czech Republic, based on interviews with 25 individuals seeking asylum or temporary protection. These individuals come from diverse backgrounds, including countries where persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity is severe, such as Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The report seeks to identify key challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees throughout their journey—from the asylum process to their integration into Czech society.

Through a qualitative analysis of their lived experiences, this assessment highlights systemic gaps in legal protection, asylum procedures, access to housing, employment, healthcare, and social inclusion. It also examines the discrimination and violence many LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers continue to face, both from authorities and within their own communities. By identifying these challenges, this report provides targeted recommendations to improve policies and support mechanisms that can ensure the dignity, safety, and rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals seeking refuge in the Czech Republic.

II. Methodology

This report is based on qualitative research conducted through semi-structured interviews with 25 LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons in the Czech Republic. Participants were selected based on their experiences with the asylum process, integration, and access to essential services.

Data Collection: Interviews were conducted in person or remotely, ensuring confidentiality and informed consent. Participants came from diverse backgrounds, including Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Focus Areas: The study examined key aspects of their experiences, including:

- The asylum process (length, interview experiences, interpreter issues)
- Housing, employment, and education challenges
- Access to healthcare and mental health services
- Social inclusion and discrimination
- Legal awareness and protection

Data Analysis: Responses were thematically analyzed to identify common challenges and structural barriers. Findings were compared with existing legal frameworks and policies to provide an evidence-based needs assessment.

Limitations: While the study provides valuable insights, the sample size is limited, and some participants hesitated to share sensitive details due to security concerns. Despite this, the findings highlight critical gaps in protection and integration for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers.

III. Country Contexts and the Roots of Persecution for LGBTIQ+ people

One of the variables helping us understand the challenges, traumas, difficulties, and—primarily—the motives of individuals seeking asylum in the Czech Republic is their country of origin. Each country has its own unique formations and expressions of discrimination through various political, legal, or socio-cultural channels. It is therefore crucial to understand the geographic aspect of people seeking asylum based on persecution related to their sexual orientation or identity.

The data collected comes from citizens of countries across different regions, such as Eastern Europe (Russia, Ukraine), Western Asia (Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia), Central Asia (Afghanistan, Kazakhstan), and Southwestern Asia (Iran).

Russia

The authoritarian regime in the Russian Federation has for years degraded members of the LGBTI+ community, as well as the community itself. Ranked as the worst place for LGBTI+ people in Europe last year, queerphobia in Russia is driven mainly by the political leadership in the Kremlin. Despite the renaissance of the Russian queer scene following the Soviet collapse in the 1990s, repression has intensified—most notably through the 2013 law banning “gay propaganda” directed at children. A number of LGBTI+ organizations have been labelled as “foreign agents.” The oppression of LGBTI+ people has been weaponized by the Russian regime as part of a broader cultural war, significantly driven by the Russian Orthodox Church and the regime ruling the Republic of Chechnya (Bondarenko, Shubin, Storeyev 2024).

The most recent and formative building block of Russian anti-LGBTI+ persecution was the 2023 Russian Supreme Court ruling, which effectively designated the “international LGBT movement” as an extremist organization—placing all forms of LGBTI+ rights and freedoms of expression at risk. According to Russian criminal law, displaying extremist symbols is punishable by up to 15 days in detention, or, for repeated offenses, up to 4 years in prison. Participation in or financing of such a group can lead to up to 12 years in prison (Human Rights Watch 2024). In early 2024, Russian courts handed down the first convictions connected to the Supreme Court’s designation, including punishments of fines and administrative detention (The Guardian).

Ukraine

Ukraine is undergoing an interesting process of partially catching up to European legal standards on LGBTI+ rights since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Turning back the clock, however, same-sex couples’ rights were long lagging behind those of heterosexual couples. Legislation introduced in 2015 outlawing discrimination in the workplace was perceived negatively by Ukrainian society. In a 2016 study, 60% of those surveyed viewed

the LGBTI+ community negatively (Serhan 2023). In 2011, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe criticized Ukraine and other countries in the region for proposing or even adopting discriminatory laws against the LGBTI+ community (Council of Europe 2011).

The war in Ukraine has, however, changed the overall perception and nature of LGBTI+ issues. As the conflict has been framed as a war between totalitarianism and democracy, the large number of LGBTI+ individuals joining the military, supporting the defense of the country, or contributing in other ways has rapidly shifted public attitudes. The contributions of both Ukrainian LGBTI+ fighters and non-combatants have been highlighted by groups consisting of Ukrainian military personnel, veterans, and volunteers. According to polling, support for civil unions remains low but is increasing. In March 2023, a bill was introduced aiming to legalize same-sex civil unions. However, despite these efforts, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in June 2023 that Ukraine had failed to provide the same protections for same-sex couples as it does for their heterosexual counterparts (Toren 2024). Although widespread attitudes associate homophobia with the hostile Russian regime—leading to antagonism toward that regime and its policies—the ECHR ruling illustrates the rocky road ahead for Ukraine. Even if the trend is currently slightly positive (Serhan 2023), challenges remain both for integration into European structures and for ensuring equal rights and freedoms for the LGBTI+ community.

Turkey

Turkey is one of the few Muslim-majority countries where homosexuality, being transgender, gender non-conformity, or queerness is not illegal. Yet all of the above are heavily constrained and placed under strict control by political bodies, the police, or public prosecutors (Özbay, Öktem 2021, 117). It is not uncommon for members of the LGBTI+ community to experience violence, often coupled with accusations of “inciting hatred” or “offenses against public morality.”

The banning of public LGBTI+ events is one of the restrictions imposed—prime examples include the shutting down of Istanbul Pride in 2015 (followed by widespread arrests) and the 2017 ban on all LGBTI+ public events in Ankara. Constant accusations by the highest political figures directed at the community, widespread digital violence experienced by LGBTI+ people, and even the arrest of tourists based on their “gay appearance” are all features of a regime that—despite lacking explicitly discriminatory laws—makes Turkey a country far from being LGBTI+-friendly (Theil 2024).

Armenia

Despite the legalization of homosexuality in Armenia in 2023 (Equaldex, n.d.), the country remains one of those with the most restrictive laws concerning the LGBTI+ community, according to a 2019 analysis by the campaign group ILGA-Europe (Radio Free Europe 2019). Many rights remain banned, such as same-sex marriage and recognition of non-

binary gender identity. Additionally, there are no protections against discrimination in areas such as housing or employment (Equaldex, n.d.).

Georgia

The most recent and drastic change regarding the rights and freedoms of the LGBTI+ community in Georgia has come in the form of the “Family Values” law, passed by the Georgian parliament. The bill provides a legal basis allowing state institutions to outlaw Pride events, ban the display of the rainbow flag, and impose censorship on books and movies. In addition to censorship, the law—passed in autumn last year—also bans gender transition therapy and child adoption by same-sex or trans couples (Al Jazeera 2024). The law, introduced by the ruling Georgian Dream party, can in retrospect be seen as the beginning of broader and more severe political measures implemented after the party won the (widely contested) parliamentary elections in October 2024. This sparked massive protests, a constitutional crisis, and the halting of Georgia’s efforts to attain EU membership (Waal 2024).

Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, a post-Soviet country, the 1990s are associated with abuse and fear within the LGBTI+ community, which over the years has been forced to hide its identity. Despite the legalization of same-sex conduct in 1998, Kazakhstan remains a place of intense homophobia, where legal recognition of transgender people has become very difficult—not to mention the requirement of forced sterilization. A so-called “propaganda law” was introduced in 2015, heavily limiting positive displays of gender or sexual diversity.

There are only a small number of LGBTI+ rights organizations, mostly operating independently or under the umbrella of HIV protection initiatives—often avoiding publicity for fear of backlash. A survey conducted in 2009 showed that out of 1,000 respondents, 81% believed that homosexuals in the country face disapproval and disrespect (Human Rights Watch 2015). Even though same-sex marriages and civil unions are not constitutionally banned, they are not legal. Kazakhstan offers no protection against discrimination of LGBTI+ persons in the workplace or housing market (Equaldex n.d.A).

Iran and Afghanistan

The most critical cases from our participants included individuals seeking asylum from Iran and Afghanistan. Sharia law, which serves as the guiding legal system in Iran, puts human rights at risk nationwide, without exception. The 2022–23 protests that swept across Iran—sparked by the death of the young Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in custody after her arrest by Iran’s morality police—served as a catalyst for many LGBTI+ individuals to express rebellion, display community symbols, and become more visible (Isfahani 2023). However, the theocratic regime in Iran has imposed some of the harshest measures against LGBTI+ people: the death penalty for homosexuality, a ban on same-

sex marriage, and public displays of affection between men or between women punishable by physical violence, among others (Equaldex n.d.B).

The situation is comparable—if not worse—in Afghanistan, now under Taliban rule since they seized power in 2022. A surge in abuse, rape, threats, and wrongful detentions has spread like wildfire, targeting LGBTI+ individuals who face violence not only from Taliban members but also from family members, neighbors, and even partners. This widespread diffusion of anti-LGBTI+ hatred has led to brutal attacks and sexual assaults. Many Afghans who chose to flee now face isolation, as most of Afghanistan’s neighboring countries also criminalize same-sex relations. This wave of violence was built on the already oppressive system under the previous Afghan government led by then-President Ashraf Ghani. The new regime, established by the radical Islamic Taliban movement, has made the situation even more desperate (Human Rights Watch 2022).

IV. Residence Status of LGBTIQ+ Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Our responses from forcibly displaced individuals also vary in terms of the formal aspects of their stay in the Czech Republic. The duration of their residence spans from one to eight years, with an almost even number of individuals living either alone or with a partner (with a slightly higher number living with a partner). The respondents also showed variation in terms of residence status, with the largest groups consisting of asylum seekers or Ukrainian nationals residing in the Czech Republic under the so-called “Temporary Protection” policy.

The “Temporary Protection” policy is part of a Czech legislative package known as Lex Ukraine. In addition to temporary protection, the policy grants eligible individuals legal refugee status and access to healthcare. Refugees also have access to the job market, and newcomers from Ukraine are provided with a humanitarian allowance (European Commission 2022). A smaller number of respondents reported that their asylum process had been completed and that they had been granted refugee status. In some cases, individuals had obtained residence through other mechanisms such as a student visa or an employee card.

Respondents also shared reasons for choosing the Czech Republic as their destination. Although the answers were diverse, the dominant one was a general—but not very specific—understanding of the rights and freedoms granted to LGBTI+ people in the Czech Republic. Respondents often mentioned that they were motivated to escape significantly worse conditions for LGBTI+ rights in their countries of origin, basing their decision on the broader, more inclusive European standard of human rights protection—without conducting in-depth research into the Czech-specific context.

Rather than detailed knowledge, respondents generally associated the Czech Republic with security, freedom, and democratic values. Other reasons for choosing the country included educational or employment opportunities, reconnecting with a partner already residing there, and the perception of a less religious society. Specific knowledge of the rights and freedoms of LGBTI+ people in the Czech Republic was minimal and mostly based on broader assumptions of a more open and tolerant society, making the decision to move a result of “common knowledge.” However, some respondents mentioned that they had conducted online research about life for the LGBTI+ community and had a general awareness of safe public spaces. In two cases, there was slightly more specific knowledge about the availability of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

V. Asylum and Subsidiary Protection Holders

In the responses from the participants, significant attention was paid to the asylum process—particularly the duration, as well as experiences with interviews and interpreters. In the Czech Republic, these procedures are primarily governed by the Law on Asylum (Zákon o azylu), which outlines the conditions for the entry and residence of foreigners who apply for international protection (Zákony pro lidi 2025).

This report also focuses on experiences with so-called Immigration Camps/Residential Centres, which are state institutions where asylum seekers must stay for a minimum of one week. Regarding the length of the asylum process, answers ranged from two months to over two years, with many processes still ongoing. Attitudes toward the duration of the process varied. Individuals whose asylum procedure was completed or progressed within a few months (no longer than six months) expressed neutral or satisfactory views, describing the process as adequate. However, the majority of respondents—whose processes lasted around a year—considered the duration inadequate, reporting mental health tolls, confusion about the delays despite credible evidence of persecution, or feelings of hopelessness due to prolonged proceedings, multiple rejections, and the inability to work or study during this time.

A crucial part of the asylum process is the interview with an official and an interpreter, conducted at the aforementioned Residential Centre. Following the interview, the asylum seeker may receive an asylum seeker ID, which does not equate to confirmed refugee status. In our respondent group, only a small number expressed satisfaction with the conduct of interviewers or interpreters. While a few gave neutral feedback, most described negative experiences with interpreters—citing irresponsibility (e.g., not attending interviews) and bias, particularly regarding the motivations for fleeing their home countries.

A recurring issue in nearly all responses was the lack of knowledge among both interviewers and interpreters regarding LGBTI+ terminology—especially terms related to

gender transition. This lack of familiarity frequently led to misunderstandings and confusion. Most respondents identified this as a key area in need of improvement. Beyond terminology issues, the most negative interview experiences were marked by impatience, bullying behavior, and what was perceived as intentional efforts to deny asylum claims. In one case, a claim was rejected on the grounds that the applicant's country of origin was considered “safe,” despite being in a state of war and hostile to LGBTI+ individuals.

Respondents also reported negative experiences related to the lack of accessible information about their rights, responsibilities, and available options during the asylum process. Many said asylum officers and state officials failed to provide such information, leaving them unaware of important legal and procedural details. As a result, respondents often relied on online research or legal counsel not provided by the state. A particularly problematic aspect of the asylum process was the stay in the Immigration Camp/Residential Centre. These problems were multifaceted. Respondents often reported fear of other residents—many of whom were perceived as having criminal pasts—and described experiences of disrespect or bullying, particularly from individuals who did not understand or accept the struggles faced by LGBTI+ asylum seekers. Some respondents felt pressured to hide their identity for safety reasons, and one reported harassment by fellow residents.

A serious issue arose from the fact that many fellow residents came from the same countries as the respondents, bringing with them the same homophobic or transphobic attitudes the respondents were fleeing. Perhaps the most critical concern was the assignment of non-single rooms to transgender individuals, who reported the danger of being housed with members of the opposite gender. The need for single-room assignments for transgender individuals—and more broadly for those of diverse sexual orientations and identities—was identified as a pressing issue for improvement. Another concern was the inadequate management of the Residential Centres. The ban on alcohol consumption was frequently violated; according to respondents, it was easy to bring alcohol or other addictive substances into the facility. The Centres were widely described as LGBTI+ non-friendly and lacking any established protocols for supporting members of this community. Only a handful of respondents gave neutral or positive feedback, typically referring to sensitive and understanding staff or, in one case, the successful assignment of a single room. Respondents were also asked about the possibility of enrolling in the State Integration Program. However, the majority did not answer, and only a few reported that they had not joined the program.

VI. Temporary Protection Holders

A specific measure examined in relation to some respondents is the so-called Temporary Protection, which applies to Ukrainian citizens. The Temporary Protection policy is part of the aforementioned Czech legislative package known as Lex Ukraine. Holders of

Temporary Protection are eligible for several benefits, such as health insurance and free access to the labour market (European Commission 2022). They also have the right to be temporarily accommodated (so-called Emergency Accommodation) for up to ninety days. For vulnerable individuals—such as children, the elderly, and people with disabilities—this accommodation is available without a time limit. However, Lex Ukraine is the Czech adaptation of an EU directive that is currently time-limited until 31 March 2026. This set of measures makes the Ukrainian respondents in the participant group a distinct group in terms of their interaction with Czech authorities.

Services for holders of Temporary Protection are delivered by two main institutions: the Regional Centres for Help and Assistance to Ukraine (KACPU) and the Centres for Support of Foreign Nationals' Integration (CPIC). When asked about their experiences with these offices, most respondents gave neutral to positive assessments. Interactions with these offices were generally described as fair and just, though not tailored to the specific needs and challenges that LGBTI+ individuals may face. One respondent noted a certain level of unpreparedness regarding LGBTI+ issues, which raised concerns about openly discussing such matters—particularly due to fear of stigma or bias from compatriots. As such, the availability of psychological counseling was mentioned as a welcome and necessary service.

With regard to Emergency Accommodation, most experiences were described as positive. Respondents valued the availability of this service not only for financial reasons but also for the sense of security it provided. When asked about the adequacy of information received concerning their rights, obligations, and available options under Temporary Protection, responses were largely positive. The sensitive question of respondents' future plans after the end of the war in Ukraine was also discussed. Most answers indicated an intention to stay in the Czech Republic and further integrate into society. Factors influencing this decision included pre-war motivations to emigrate, children's deeper integration into Czech society, employment opportunities, and support for activism. At the same time, many respondents stressed the importance of reconnecting with and supporting their families back in Ukraine.

VII. Act on the Residence of Foreign Nationals

For some individuals in our respondent group, a more relevant legal framework—along with its associated challenges—regarding their residence in the Czech Republic is the Act on the Residence of Foreign Nationals. Although holders of residence permits under this Act are not typically considered forcibly displaced persons (and therefore this group often receives less attention), our findings indicate that many forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ individuals have chosen this path over the uncertainty of applying for international protection.

The core principle of the Act is that any long-term stay in the country must be tied to a specific purpose, such as study, employment, or family reunification. The first necessary step is obtaining a long-term visa for stays longer than 90 days (in practice, most commonly valid for six months or one year). This is followed by an application for long-term residence (valid for one or two years). Required documentation includes proof of the stated purpose of stay, proof of accommodation, and evidence of financial means. Alongside this legal framework are, of course, the special provisions related to seeking international protection, which are addressed more thoroughly in the aforementioned Law on Asylum.

Among the respondents who answered questions related to the Act on the Residence of Foreign Nationals, experiences with obtaining residence permits varied. Some reported receiving the permit independently within two months, while others described a longer process—taking six to eight months—linked to complications with university enrollment and related matters, often in parallel with a student visa. The respondent explained that, since nearly every residence permit application is initially denied, legal assistance in appealing the decision—as well as in the subsequent process of obtaining an employee card—is essential.

Responses also varied concerning how sexual orientation or gender identity affected the residence process. While some individuals reported no issues with the Ministry of the Interior or other legal bodies, others described discriminatory or xenophobic treatment. One respondent highlighted a deadlock situation during the family reunification process, where authorities refused asylum and expected the couple to be married before granting it—posing an insurmountable obstacle. In another case, the respondent described bullying-like treatment concerning their partner’s name change, despite having submitted all necessary documentation.

When it came to feeling informed about rights and obligations concerning residence matters, the spectrum of responses was again broad. Some respondents said they received adequate information or were able to access it easily, while others reported that information was largely unavailable from official sources and that having legal counsel was essential.

Participants also offered several recommendations to improve the residence process, including:

- Introducing an advance appointment system to avoid long waiting hours
- Eliminating discriminatory requirements in family reunification cases
- Training staff to understand and properly assess LGBTIQ+ documentation and identities

VIII. Integration: Navigating Life, Work, and Belonging in Czech Society

Participants were asked to reflect on their broader integration efforts into Czech society, touching on areas such as education, employment, housing, healthcare, social inclusion, and legal awareness regarding LGBTIQ+ rights.

Education and Employment

With regard to experiences in study and work environments—specifically treatment by students/professors or co-workers/employers, and access to education or the labor market—responses ranged from positive to neutral to negative. Positive experiences were characterized by the freedom to express one’s gender identity or sexual orientation, with no reports of negative incidents either at university (attributed to the perceived ambivalence of teachers) or in the workplace (attributed to international standards and inclusive management practices).

Neutral responses described situations where respondents chose not to express their gender identity or sexual orientation—not out of fear or discomfort at university or work, but because they viewed these topics as personal and not necessarily relevant to disclose. Unfortunately, negative experiences outweighed positive or neutral ones in both university and workplace settings. In terms of treatment, both academic staff and coworkers or employers were reported to have exhibited homophobic behavior, including ridicule and discrimination against LGBTI+ individuals. In some cases, workplace management ignored such behavior altogether.

A specific and recurring theme was that bullying or discriminatory behavior in the workplace often did not originate from Czech colleagues or supervisors but from other immigrants—frequently compatriots of the respondents—coming from countries with low standards of protection or tolerance for LGBTI+ people. Disrespectful behavior was reported from immigrants in both employee and employer roles. A recommendation frequently raised was the need to educate both employees and university students on respectful and appropriate treatment of LGBTI+ individuals. Other key difficulties included the lack of financial support for refugees seeking to continue their education, employment opportunities that were unrelated to respondents’ original fields of study, challenges in transitioning from student status to employee status, and the denial of asylum applications—making it impossible to fully pursue education.

Housing

The variety of problems and challenges faced by our respondents in their search for housing is broad. The most common issue identified was the high cost of rent, which does not reflect the average salaries in the country. This financial burden is especially difficult for asylum seekers and foreign nationals, who often have limited means of generating income.

A significant obstacle in securing housing was the reluctance of landlords to rent to non-citizens or foreigners—sometimes attributed to language barriers. However, a frequently mentioned insight was that the difficulties encountered in finding housing were generally not due to the respondents' sexual orientation or gender identity. That said, a smaller number of respondents did report homophobic attitudes and traumatic experiences during communication with landlords or neighbors. Other challenges included total dependence on a partner for housing or the need to live in shared flats—both of which contributed to feelings of discomfort or lack of autonomy. The general perception among respondents was that available housing is often inadequate and does not meet their specific needs. Only a handful of respondents reported positive experiences, noting that they had not encountered difficulties with landlords or other residents.

Healthcare and Psychological Services

Respondents also provided answers to questions regarding the availability, quality, and overall experience with medical and psychological services. The responses were mixed, reflecting a range of services used, variations in treatment quality, and differences in accessibility.

The vast majority of respondents reported using such services, including child psychiatrists, sexologists, psychiatrists, and general medical care. Only a very small number shared positive insights—primarily highlighting encounters with empathetic and sensitive doctors who were respectful of the patient's identity. These positive experiences were often contrasted with the poor availability or quality of care in respondents' countries of origin. However, the availability and quality of psychiatric and medical services in the Czech Republic were mostly described in negative terms. Common issues included an insufficient number of practitioners, a scarcity of psychiatrists (with most concentrated in large cities), long waiting times for appointments, and the unaffordability of psychiatric care. In a few cases, psychiatrists were described as outright rude, unwilling to accept new clients, and poor in communication.

Particularly critical concerns included the availability of HIV/STD services—hampered by language barriers, a lack of information, and stigma within the healthcare system—as well as challenges in accessing vaccinations or mental health-related medication. A

frequently reported issue was the general difficulty that foreigners face in accessing medical or psychological care. Many respondents described situations where doctors dismissed their requests for treatment, or, when care was provided, it was of notably lower quality. Some even reported instances of mockery by medical staff. A broader concern was the lack of preparedness and understanding among healthcare providers regarding the specific needs of LGBTI+ patients. Respondents strongly recommended improving support systems and ensuring more inclusive healthcare services tailored to the needs of both foreigners and LGBTI+ individuals.

Social Inclusion and Belonging

Another area that was studied involved social ties in the Czech Republic, the general attitude of Czech society toward the LGBTI+ community, and connections to local LGBTI+ groups. A number of recurring challenges were identified, with the most prominent being the language barrier. Because respondents often undergo stressful, time-consuming, and costly legal or administrative processes, learning or even speaking Czech has become a challenge—often resulting in social exclusion and an isolated way of living.

When asked about friendships, some respondents mentioned a small number of acquaintances or friends—both foreign and Czech—most of whom were described as members of the LGBTI+ community. A general sentiment shared by several respondents was that Czech society holds a neutral stance, with ambivalence or a lack of overt homophobic attitudes. However, some provocative or homophobic incidents were reported, particularly involving younger people (described as exhibiting a “wanna-be-cool” mentality) and elderly individuals.

Those who viewed Czech society’s attitude as neutral also noted that the younger generation is generally more tolerant toward the LGBTI+ community, especially in contrast to traditional or rural areas. In one instance, however, Czech society was described as naive and inconsiderate, lacking understanding of the experiences and needs of asylum seekers. A previously mentioned issue that also proved to be a barrier to integration was the presence of co-national communities in the Czech Republic. While one respondent described their compatriot community as supportive, others viewed these communities as unwelcoming or even dangerous to approach due to their attitudes toward LGBTI+ individuals.

When asked about experiences with LGBTI+ groups or events, a handful of respondents who had attended such events expressed disappointment. They reported feeling excluded from the groups or gatherings, citing a lack of community spirit and a general sense of not being welcomed by other participants or members. A recommendation was made to create more opportunities for local LGBTI+ groups to engage with newcomers, many of whom experience significant feelings of isolation. Another obstacle to integration

mentioned was the intense workload required to meet basic expenses such as rent. When combined with studies, this pressure makes it difficult for respondents to fully integrate, build friendships, or participate in LGBTI+ events and group activities.

Knowledge of Rights and Services

Lastly, respondents were asked whether they feel well-informed about the rights and obligations of LGBTI+ people in the Czech Republic, as well as about services provided by related organizations, and where they typically search for this information.

The general sentiment among respondents was one of being somewhat informed. Many described themselves as “relatively” informed, often because they knew where to look for information—whether through online communities, state offices, friends, or partners. A particularly valued resource was the Minorities legal group, which was described as a strong supporter and a trusted organization.

However, criticism was also expressed. Many respondents said that overall access to information should be improved. Several reported not knowing where to search for reliable information or noted a heavy dependence on legal counsel, as other sources—such as social workers or doctors—were often considered unhelpful. Some respondents mentioned they had not yet encountered such support organizations but expressed interest in approaching them in the future.

IX. Summary of Findings

The findings of this report provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by LGBTI+ asylum seekers in the Czech Republic, highlighting key areas of concern within the asylum process, residence status, integration efforts, and access to essential services. The data collected from individuals originating from countries with severe anti-LGBTI+ persecution—including Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Afghanistan—demonstrate significant gaps in the protection and support available to asylum seekers in the Czech Republic.

1. Asylum Process and Residence Status

- The asylum process in the Czech Republic is often lengthy, with applicants reporting wait times ranging from several months to over two years. Many asylum seekers expressed frustration over the uncertainty and stress caused by prolonged procedures.
- Interviews with asylum officers and interpreters were frequently described as problematic. Respondents reported a lack of sensitivity and awareness of LGBTI+ issues, leading to misunderstandings and biased assessments of their claims. In some cases, interpreters displayed discriminatory attitudes, while asylum officers lacked proper training on gender and sexual identity-related terminology.
- Many asylum seekers reported receiving insufficient information about their rights and the asylum process, forcing them to rely on online sources, personal networks, or legal aid organizations for guidance.
- The majority of respondents resided in facilities lead by Refugee Facilities Administration of Ministry of Interior upon arrival, where they often faced discrimination, verbal abuse, and threats from other asylum seekers—many of whom came from similarly homophobic or transphobic societies. Some transgender individuals were assigned to inappropriate shared accommodations, increasing their risk of harassment and violence.

2. Integration Challenges

- **Employment and Education:** Many asylum seekers struggled to find employment, with some reporting workplace discrimination, particularly from fellow migrants. Even those who found jobs often had to accept positions unrelated to their previous education or professional background. The process of transitioning from student status to employee status was also cited as a bureaucratic hurdle.
- **Housing:** High rental prices and reluctance among landlords to rent to foreigners posed significant obstacles. While most respondents did not face discrimination directly tied to their sexual orientation or gender identity, they often had difficulty securing stable housing due to their legal status or financial constraints.
- **Healthcare and Psychological Support:** Access to mental health services and general healthcare was widely seen as inadequate. Many respondents faced long waiting times, difficulty finding LGBTI+ inclusive medical professionals, language barriers and a lack of understanding from healthcare providers regarding their

specific needs, particularly regarding hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and HIV/STD services.

- **Social Inclusion:** Language barriers, financial struggles, and social isolation significantly hindered the integration of LGBTI+ asylum seekers. While some respondents had positive experiences with Czech society, others felt unwelcome or unsupported, particularly within LGBTI+ community spaces where they expected solidarity but instead experienced exclusion.

3. Temporary Protection for Ukrainian Nationals

- Ukrainian asylum seekers under the Czech Republic's "Temporary Protection" policy generally reported more structured and efficient support compared to other asylum seekers. However, they still faced challenges in securing stable employment, housing, and psychological support.
- Many Ukrainian LGBTI+ asylum seekers expressed concerns about openly discussing their identity due to fears of judgment from other Ukrainians in exile.
- While temporary accommodation services were appreciated, there was a notable absence of specialized support for LGBTI+ individuals, highlighting the need for more inclusive measures within the temporary protection framework.

X. Key Areas for Improvement

1. **Training and Sensitization for Asylum Officers and Interpreters** – A structured training program focusing on LGBTI+ issues should be implemented to ensure fair and respectful asylum interviews.
2. **Improved Living Conditions in Immigration Centers** – Special provisions should be made to protect LGBTI+ asylum seekers from discrimination and violence within state-run facilities, including proper training of social workers, creating ‘safe-spaces’ and offering single-room accommodations for transgender individuals.
3. **Better Access to Information and Legal Assistance** – Asylum seekers need clearer, more accessible information about their rights and the asylum process, ideally provided in multiple languages.
4. **Enhanced Support for Employment and Housing** – Programs aimed at helping LGBTI+ asylum seekers secure jobs and stable housing would significantly improve their ability to integrate into Czech society.
5. **Inclusive Healthcare and Mental Health Services** – The Czech healthcare system should adopt a more LGBTI+ inclusive approach, ensuring access to gender-affirming care, HIV/STD treatment, and psychological support tailored to the needs of asylum seekers.
6. **Community Engagement and Support Networks** – More opportunities for LGBTI+ asylum seekers to engage with Czech society and local LGBTI+ organizations should be created to combat social isolation and foster a sense of belonging.

Overall, while the Czech Republic provides asylum and temporary protection opportunities, significant barriers remain for LGBTI+ asylum seekers in terms of legal processes, safety, and integration. Addressing these issues through targeted policy changes and support programs will be essential to ensuring a more inclusive and humane asylum system.

XI. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this needs assessment, the following recommendations aim to improve the protection, support, and integration of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons in the Czech Republic. Addressing these gaps requires targeted policy changes, enhanced services, and greater sensitivity among authorities handling asylum claims and refugee support.

1. Improving the Asylum Process

- **LGBTIQ+ Sensitivity Training for Asylum Officers and Interpreters:** Develop mandatory training for asylum officers and interpreters to improve their understanding of LGBTIQ+ identities, terminology, and persecution risks. This will help ensure fairer and more informed decision-making.
- **Standardized Guidelines for Asylum Interviews:** Establish clear guidelines for assessing LGBTIQ+ asylum claims to prevent bias, misunderstandings, or discriminatory practices during interviews.
- **Ensuring LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Interpreters:** Recruit and train interpreters who are knowledgeable about LGBTIQ+ issues to prevent miscommunication and prejudice in asylum hearings.

2. Enhancing Living Conditions and Safety in Immigration Centers

- **LGBTIQ+ Safe Housing Options:** Ensure that transgender individuals and other vulnerable asylum seekers are provided with private or safe accommodation options in immigration centers to prevent harassment and violence.
- **Anti-Discrimination Policies in Residential Centers:** Implement and enforce policies to prevent discrimination and abuse within asylum accommodation facilities. This should include clear complaint mechanisms for reporting mistreatment and obtaining proper support.

3. Strengthening Legal and Administrative Support

- **Accessible Legal Aid for LGBTIQ+ Asylum Seekers:** Expand access to free legal assistance and advocacy services specializing in LGBTIQ+ asylum claims.
- **Clearer Information on Rights and Procedures:** Improve information dissemination regarding asylum rights, residence permits, and available support services, using multilingual resources.

4. Improving Access to Employment and Education

- **Job Placement Programs for LGBTIQ+ Asylum Seekers:** Develop employment initiatives to help LGBTIQ+ refugees find stable jobs and protect them from workplace discrimination, particularly from other migrants.
- **Financial Support for Education:** Provide scholarships or grants to enable LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers to continue their education and improve their long-term integration prospects, including Czech language courses.

5. Expanding Healthcare and Mental Health Services

- **LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Healthcare Training:** Train healthcare professionals to provide non-discriminatory care to LGBTIQ+ refugees, particularly regarding gender-affirming treatments, mental health support, and HIV/STD services.
- **Increased Access to Mental Health Services:** Ensure that affordable and culturally sensitive psychological support is available to LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers, recognizing the trauma many have faced.

6. Strengthening Social Inclusion and Community Support

- **Integration Programs for LGBTIQ+ Refugees:** Create targeted social programs to help LGBTIQ+ displaced persons connect with Czech society, including language courses, and networking opportunities.
- **Stronger Engagement with LGBTIQ+ Organizations:** Encourage local LGBTIQ+ groups to develop more inclusive outreach and support services tailored to asylum seekers, ensuring that newcomers do not feel isolated or excluded.

By implementing these recommendations, the Czech Republic can build a more inclusive and supportive system that respects the rights and dignity of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons while enhancing their ability to integrate and contribute to society.

XII. Conclusion

The findings of this needs assessment reveal that while the Czech Republic offers a legal framework for asylum and temporary protection, LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons continue to face significant barriers in accessing their rights and achieving full integration. Many experience discrimination at multiple levels, from asylum officers and interpreters to healthcare providers, employers, and even fellow asylum seekers. The lack of sensitivity and preparedness among officials dealing with asylum cases contributes to prolonged application processes, retraumatization, and difficulties in navigating bureaucratic procedures.

Beyond the asylum process, challenges persist in securing stable housing, employment, and adequate healthcare, particularly mental health support and gender-affirming care. Social isolation and exclusion, both from Czech society and LGBTIQ+ community spaces, further hinder the ability of LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers to rebuild their lives.

This report underscores the urgent need for reforms to ensure a more inclusive and rights-based approach to asylum and integration in the Czech Republic. Implementing targeted policy changes—such as LGBTIQ+ sensitivity training for asylum officers, improving living conditions in immigration centres, expanding access to legal aid, and fostering inclusive employment and healthcare services—will be crucial to addressing the needs of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons. By taking these steps, the Czech Republic can strengthen its commitment to human rights and provide meaningful protection for those fleeing persecution due to their sexual orientation and gender identity.

XIII. Acknowledgment

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