



OFPRA BUILDING

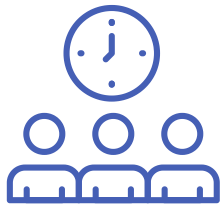
"HOW WILL IT BE LIKE WHEN I ARRIVE ?"

The OFPRA building might seem quite impressive to the people called in, as it stands tall and there are a lot of people queuing up/standing outside. Indeed, people from all parts of/all around the country come in for an interview or some other type of appointment.

When you arrive, you have to wait in line to show your letter of notification ("convocation"). That is why it is better to come a bit early.



Once inside, you will be asked to sit in the waiting room along with everyone notified at the same time. The OFPRA officer in charge of your interview will then come and find you and lead you to a small office.



"HOW SHOULD I PREPARE ?"

The memory of people who experience traumatic events is often altered, however this is not recognized by OFPRA.

This is why it is important to work on getting a consistent timeline and narration of your life events before your interview.

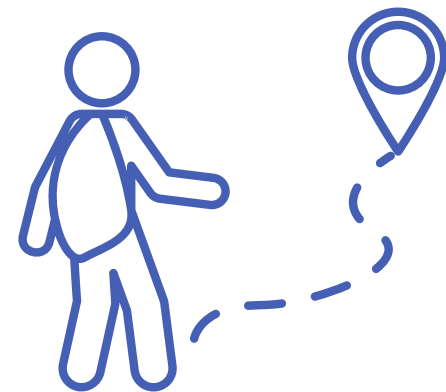
You should also be prepared to feel destabilized during the interview, and feel less empathy than from the associations and refugees networks you might go to.

"WHO CAN I ASK FOR HELP TO GET PREPARED AND NOT STAY ALONE ?"

- **Paris** : L'ARDHIS, Le Baam, Acceptess-T (for transgender people), Les lesbiennes dépassent les frontières (for lesbians)
- **Lyon** : 2MSG
- **Toulouse** : Le Jeko
- **The LGBTI centers of** Rennes, Tours, Grenoble, Orléans, Angers, La Rochelle, Marseille, Rouen, Grenoble, Nantes, Nancy, Paris, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Le Mans...



"MY OFPRA INTERVIEW FOR ASYLUM IS COMING SOON, WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT ?"



"WHAT WILL THE INTERVIEW BE LIKE ?"

The interview takes place in an office. There will only be you, the OFPRA officer, the translator (if you asked for translation) and one association representative if you asked them to come with you... **and that's all.**



If you were told otherwise, it might be because of a confusion with CNDA, which works differently. During OFPRA interviews you are not allowed to invite anyone else than one representative from certain associations.

The interview will not be filmed but the **sound is recorded**, so there is a little microphone on the table. You can ask to access the recording if you get a negative answer from OFPRA, in order to prepare your CNDA plea. It is strictly confidential and only you and your lawyer can listen to it, in the OFPRA building.

By the way, the officer will remind you **that nothing you say will get out of OFPRA**, and that you can speak without fear about the country you left. The officer will ask you questions and type down your answers on a computer to keep minutes of the meeting that they will present to the commission. It is the commission that will give a positive or negative answer to your asylum application.

The duration of the interview varies, but as it takes time to tell everything we lived through, **you should prepare for a quite long interview** (up to 3 hours). If the interview lasts for a long time, it means the officer is taking the time to understand your story and it is usually a good sign.

Pay in mind that when you meet, **the officer will have already read the written story** you sent with your asylum application and the documents you attached to it.

"WHAT IS THE INTERVIEW FOR ?"

Asylum status is a protection given by the French government because of persecution and danger experienced in the country of origin.

For this reason, **this danger must be clearly identified.**

The aim of the interview is to understand your life trajectory and to **explore parts of your story or interrogations** the officer may have.

The final purpose is to identify your fears in case of return to the country you left (going over these fears precisely is actually the last question always asked at the end the interview)

The interview has **two parts**: the first one collects general information about your life and the second one, usually longer, is about the reasons of your exile. It is during this second part that you will have to talk about the discrimination and violence you endured because of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

If you need **a break** and the officer doesn't offer it, don't hesitate to ask for one.

The officer, in spite of the name, does not belong to the police or the army. **OFPRA officers are public servants** like schoolteachers, or city hall employees. Ideally, they should have emotional intelligence, know how to address heavy trauma survivors and master intercultural communication – but **reality shows that it is not always the case.** Unfortunately, the way you will be interviewed has to do with chance.

"WHAT ARE THE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ?"

It is important to know that some questions can feel very private, violent, absurd, obvious or suspicious. They are asked systematically to almost everyone, and are seen by OFPRA as a way to check the credibility of your story. Such questions can include:



- How old were you when you realized that you were gay/lesbian/bi/trans and how did it happen ?
 - How old were you when you had your first homosexual kiss and then your first homosexual relationship ?
 - Who initiated it ?
 - How long did each of your relationships last?
 - can you tell me one striking memory from that relationship and when it occurred?
 - What did you like/love in this person ?
 - When and how did you meet ?
 - How come you entered this homosexual relationship while you say it was so dangerous in your country ?
 - Which strategies did you put in place to hide this relationship and to avoid being assaulted?
 - where, when and how did you manage to spend time together without people finding out?
 - What did you tell your parents and neighbors to prevent suspicion ?

