

Aid for asylum seekers INTERVIEW

1. What is an interview?

You applied for asylum on the territory of the Slovak Republic. To decide on your asylum application, Slovak Republic must know **the reasons why you applied for the asylum**.

The interview is a **conversation** between you and an employee of the Migration Office, during which you will have the opportunity and be obligated to provide all the information about the reasons why you left your country and why are you afraid to return back home.

- **Speak the truth and do not withhold anything! Any information**, you provide during the interview **can help** to correctly decide on your application for asylum.
- **Credibility of your person is an important fact** that the Migration Office takes into account in evaluating your case.
- **It is extremely important** that you will provide **all of the reasons why you apply for the asylum and why you do not want or cannot return back to your country**.

Information, you provide during the interview are confidential. An employee of the Migration Office will not disclose any information nor will provide them to the country of your descent or to your family members.

It is possible that your application will be decided on the basis of a single interview and **no more interviews will be conducted**.

The Migration Office will conduct additional interview with you and will ask you for more detailed information relating your application **only if necessary**.

2. When will the interview happen?

The Migration Office will notify you of **the time and place** of your interview. You will receive a written notice in language you understand. **You are obligated to appear to the interview at the time of the interview**. If you have trouble attending the interview in time or date given, notify the Migration Office immediately along with the reasons, why you cannot attend the interview.

If you arranged your legal representation with your lawyer and notified the Migration Office about it, your lawyer will be notified of the time and place of the interview.

3. How to prepare for the interview?

Slovak Republic will decide on your application based on the information, you will provide during the interview. Therefore it is very important that you prepare thoroughly for the interview.

Focus on the reasons why you applied for the asylum. You can write down these reasons and bring them to the interview. You can use your notes during the interview as well as you can write down the course of the interview. You can use drawings, tracks, maps or sketches to perfect your statements.

It is beneficial to **support your claim with evidence**. Evidences are considered all kinds of records, documents, articles from the press, photos, police records, medical reports, summons, witness testimonies even wounds or scars on your body. Documents proving your identity, confirming your story or your family member's story or any other information about the situation in the country of your origin **are considered extremely important**.

Think about any evidences you are carrying or you are able to obtain with the help of your family members or acquaintances as well as any information you can obtain from public sources (the Internet, articles from the press, television etc.) to support your claim. Inform the employee of the Migration Office about this. Bring any evidence you are carrying to the interview.

Not carrying any evidence or not being able to obtain any evidence is **not** considered a reason to decline your application for the asylum. Explain the employee of the Migration Office why you could not provide any evidence.

Read one more time information about your rights and duties during the asylum procedure. If you do not understand something, please inform about it the employee of the Migration Office who will conduct the interview with you, at the beginning of the interview.

Seek a lawyer and discuss with him things you want to say during the interview and show him evidence you will present to the employee of the Migration Office. If you want the lawyer to support you during whole asylum procedure, ask him for legal representation and sign a power of attorney. The lawyer will inform the Migration Office about it.

4. Who will be present at your interview?

The interview will be conducted by an employee of the Migration Office. It will be conducted in **a language you understand**. The communication between you and the employee of the Migration Office will be mediated by an interpreter. **The interpreter's job is to translate everything you or the employee of the Migration Office say.**

- If you do not understand the interpreter,
- If you obtain doubts about impartiality of the interpreter or about his inability to translate during the interview,
- If you sense that the interpreter shortens or by any way changes your testimony, **immediately notify the employee of the Migration Office!!!**

Late investigation of your testimony may not be effective.

The interpreter cannot decide on your things nor comment them. The interpreter cannot give you advice. The interpreter is obligated to disclose everything he finds out during the interview.

Presence of a lawyer

If you have a **lawyer**, you have the right to have your lawyer with you during the interview. If your lawyer is not present at the interview and you do not wish to be interviewed without him, you have the right to request the employee of the Migration Office to postpone your interview to other time.

Presence of parent of legal guardian

If you are younger than 18 years old and you do not have your parents on the territory of the Slovak Republic, your guardian, empowered by the court to represent your parents must attend the interview with you. Your guardian will inform you before the interview about the purpose, process and possible consequences of the interview. If you want a lawyer, the guardian can arrange with him your legal representation.

The interview can be attended by an **UNHCR representative**, if you agree.

5. What happens during the interview?

At the beginning of the interview, the employee of the Migration Office will introduce all present people at your interview (with your agreement, an UNHCR representative may attend your interview).

The employee of the Migration Office will ask you about your health and if you are able to speak about the reasons why you applied for asylum here.

You can request a short break for medical reasons, if you feel tired or if you have any other needs (WC, glass of water etc.) at any time.

The employee of the Migration Office can ask you various questions during the interview. You will have the opportunity to describe the reasons why you applied for the asylum by any way you want. Speak about everything you consider important, even if the employee of the Migration Office did not ask you about it. If you cannot answer a question, tell it to the employee of the Migration Office.

Bear in mind, that the employee of the Migration Office will systematically record your statement. Therefore speak only when he asks you to. Speak in short sentences. It is important that the employee of the Migration Office will not miss any of your words.

If you obtain doubts that there are some misunderstandings or misleading interpretation during the interview, notify the employee of the Migration Office immediately. **Late investigation of your testimony may not be effective.**

At the end of the interview the employee of the Migration Office will ask you if you said everything you wanted to say during the interview. You will be given time and space for closing statement.

6. How long will the interview last?

The interview is not time limited. So you do not have to worry about not having the time to say everything about the reasons of your asylum application.

7. Interview record

The employee of the Migration Office will draw up a written record of the interview in Slovak language. The written record will be systematically written by the employee of the Migration Office during the interview.

!!! Bear in mind that the employee of the Migration Office will systematically record your testimony in the course of the interview. Speak only when he/she asks you to. Speak in short sentences. It is important that the employee of the Migration Office will not miss any of your words.!!!

You can have paper and pen with you and write notes. If you lose track of your thoughts during the interpretation, write down what you wanted to say, so you can say it when the employee of the Migration Office allows you to. If you notice inexactness in the record of the interview, immediately inform the employee of the Migration Office about it. Late proving of inexactnesses may not be effective.

The interpreter will translate it for you after the interview. If you agree with the content of the interview records, the employee of the Migration Office will ask you to sign every page of it. **If the interview records contains incorrect statements or if something you mentioned during the interview is not there, notify the employee of the Migration Office immediately.**

The record of the interview will after your signature become an important part of your case file, that contains all evidences including those you provided during the interview. You have the right to study materials in your case file and can comment them during the asylum procedure and directly after the issue of your decision. Case file materials are in Slovak language, therefore you have the right to ask the Migration Office to provide you with an interpreter. You can also ask your lawyer to study the case file and express his opinion in your name.

8. Intercultural Differences

Handshake of right hands is a common way to greet or send off people in Europe. But it is appropriate for you to greet someone in any other way. Offices are used to work with closed doors. They deal with people individually, not in groups.

The interpreter should not talk with you apart from the interview.

Attend the interview on schedule. Being late is perceived negative.

Common distance between strangers during communication is approximately 1,2 meters. Do not be afraid of eye contact. Looking into eyes supports truthfulness of communication. Avoiding eye contact can be interpreted as sign of withholding information.

Nodding head up and down means "agreement". Shaking head from left to right means "disagreement". Apparent communication and "yes" or "no" answers are appreciated.

Status of men and women in Slovakia is equal. Same rules apply for communication between two men as well as for communication between man and woman.

Trust the employees of the Migration Office.

The employees of the Migration Office are not superstitious and are obligated to disclose any information they learned during the interview. However, withholding any country of origin information due to superstition (refusing to talk about dead people, about unborn or newly born children or any other things) can hurt your credibility.

It may be required from you to explain some facts that relate to your religious beliefs or cultural customs, that are obvious for you, but not known in Slovakia.

Prepare to describe facts that relate to your ethnic origin (or membership to certain group or caste).

Salutations and the way of addressing family members may be different in different countries. Be prepared to explain salutations and the way of addressing family members in your country.

If your country of origin uses different calendar than the one used in Europe, inform about it the employee of the Migration Office.

If you were injured (tortured) in country of your origin, prepare to describe injuries you sustained, time and circumstances that led to your injuries and people who inflicted your injuries.

9. Example of interview questions

1. Name and surname/Nickname/Alias:

2. Date of birth:
3. State citizenship/Statelessness:
4. Nationality/Ethnicity:
5. Education/Employment/Military service:
6. Place of last permanent residence:
7. Father/Mother/Siblings – Date of birth, place of residence, employment:
8. Martial status/Children:
9. Financial circumstances/Tangible assets/Intangible assets
10. Did you apply for asylum of any form of protection from persecution in the past?
(when, where and with what conclusion)
11. Identification cards/Residence permit/Visa
12. Describe your journey from the country you abandoned up to the entry into the
Slovak Republic (countries, time of your stay in these countries and ways of
travel)
13. Destination country
14. Did you left any close people you have commitments to in the country you
abandoned :
15. When, where and by what way did you enter the territory of the Slovak
Republic/territory of a member state of the European Union
16. Residence in other member state of the European Union
17. Residence of family members in other member state of the European Union
18. Did you contact a consular office of your country during your stay abroad (when,
where and for what reason)
19. State if there were or are any criminal proceedings against your person (when,
where and with what conclusion):
20. Are you or were you a member of political party, group or any other organization
(state it's name):
21. The question why you apply for asylum is often asked after replying to other
questions. Focus on your answer and do not skip any details. If there is a need for
more time to find out sufficient amount of information about your case, the
interview may be repeated.