

## Asylum seekers and refugees

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Particularly since the so-called 2015 “refugee crisis”, the Finnish asylum law and policies have been in rapid transition. Asylum seekers’ and refugees’ access to various rights and services are increasingly restricted. Asylum seekers, for instance, no longer have the right to a lawyer during the asylum interviews, and the time period to appeal a negative asylum decision has been significantly shortened. Non-refoulement, the basic right of not being deported under certain conditions, has at times been jeopardised. Access to sufficient health care, particularly in reception centres, has been questioned. Asylum seekers’ right to work has also experienced changes over the past years. Family reunification has been made harder for refugees, especially for those with a residence permit based on subsidiary protection. Additionally, refugees often face challenges when aiming to access higher education. Yet, these restrictions have stirred up new forms of participation and activism not only amongst the asylum seekers and refugees, but also amongst native Finns and other residents. Activists supporting asylum seekers and refugees also increasingly face challenges when defending their own and refugees’ rights. Struggles for access to rights and services have become part of many people’s everyday life; new forms of organised civil engagement have been forming.

In this session, we invite presentations exploring asylum seekers’ and refugees’ access to rights and services in Finland. We also welcome different forms of interaction/participation by asylum seekers and refugees. The presentations of this session, which is held in English, may include reflections on:

- What challenges do asylum seekers and/or refugees face when trying to access health care, education and/or employment?
- What issues do asylum seekers face during asylum processes, especially regarding legal aid, interviews, and appealing?
- Knowing one’s rights is crucial to accessing them: whose and what kinds of knowledge are at play in asylum processes; in which ways?
- How can the challenges of restricted access to rights and services be overcome; what is the role of activism in this situation?
- How are rights and responsibilities distributed between asylum seekers, their supporters and the authorities throughout asylum processes?
- How are the recent restrictions in asylum policy and law, and the related modes of activism, in Finland linked to changes in other Nordic countries, within the EU, and globally?
- What are the emerging methodological and theoretical trends to investigate activism in asylum processes, and how are research ethics reflected in these trends?
- What is our position as researchers in relation to the societal debates on asylum policy and law?