

Palacký University Olomouc  
University of Clermont Auvergne  
University of Pavia

# **Master Thesis**

**An In-depth Exploration of the Roles Played by  
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in shaping Responses to  
the Refugee Situation in France**

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Supervisor: Lucie Macková

GLODEP 2024

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May 2024

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the master's program in Global Development Policy (GLODEP)

## **Declaration**

I declare that this Master Thesis entitled ‘An In-depth Exploration of the Roles Played by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in shaping Responses to the Refugee Situation in France’ is submitted to the Department of Development and Environmental Studies at the Faculty of Science, Palacký University Olomouc, under the supervision of Dr. Lucie Macková – in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master’s Degree in International Development Studies (GLODEP). I declare that this thesis was composed by myself and that the work contained herein is my own, except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. I confirm that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified above.



Monthiporn Punya

28 May 2024

## Declaration of honour on the use of AI

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- 1. 'www.clipto.com' for transcribing audio files and translating French transcriptions into English;*
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*After using these AI tools, I declare that I have reviewed and edited the text and I take full responsibility for the content of the submitted thesis.*



Monthiporn Punya



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### Zásady pro vypracování

France has been one of the primary destination countries for refugees in recent decades, posing considerable challenges to the government at all levels in formulating effective responses to the situation. However, third-party actors such as civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a significant role in contributing to and influencing refugee responses. It is imperative to conduct a comprehensive exploration of the roles these actors have played and how they have impacted the situation. A qualitative approach will be employed to analyze the multifaceted roles of CSOs.

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to explore the roles, circumstances, and characteristics of civil society organizations (CSOs) working for refugees and asylum seekers in France, utilizing Lyon as a case study. The qualitative approach, using 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews, was applied in this study. The four main keys finding include a crucial role in supporting refugees through diverse services and integration efforts of CSOs, the main challenges they experienced, the interactions of CSOs with different stakeholders, and the impacts from changing legal and political landscape in France. It not only reveals the evidence supporting previous studies on how CSOs fill gaps left by public authorities and foster social ties, but also underscores the new significant impact of new immigration laws and rising anti-migrant sentiments on refugee assistance.

## **Keywords**

civil society organizations (CSOs), refugee governance, immigration law, social integration, Lyon

# Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	9
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW .....	11
2.1 FRANCE AND REFUGEES.....	11
2.1.1 <i>Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges</i> .....	11
2.1.2 <i>Dynamic Changes in Politics and Society</i> .....	13
2.2 THE TERMINOLOGY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) .....	14
2.3 CSOs AND REFUGEE GOVERNANCE.....	15
2.4 SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES .....	18
2.5 COLLABORATION BETWEEN CSOs AND AUTHORITIES.....	20
3. CONTEXT .....	22
3.1 MAPPING OF CSOs' OPERATIONAL AREAS IN LYON .....	22
3.2 MAPPING OF CSOs' ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES IN LYON .....	25
4. METHODOLOGY .....	28
4.1 CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	28
4.2 DATA COLLECTION .....	29
4.3 DATA ANALYSIS .....	30
4.4. LIMITATIONS .....	30
5. FINDINGS .....	31
5.1 CSOs SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN LYON.....	31
5.1.1 <i>Beneficiaries</i> .....	31
5.1.2 <i>CSOs and Volunteerism</i> .....	32
5.1.3 <i>Services Provided for Refugees</i> .....	34

5.1.4 CSOs and Integration Promotion .....	38
5.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY CSOs SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN LYON .....	40
5.2.1 Securing Financial Support.....	40
5.2.2 Public Discourse on Refugee Issues: Public Attitude, Threats, and Misused Terminology.....	42
5.2.3 Bureaucratic Hurdles.....	44
5.3 INTERACTION IN LYON.....	46
5.3.1 Interactions Among CSOs in the City of Lyon .....	46
5.3.2 Interactions between CSOs and Local Authorities .....	48
5.3.3 Relation with the State and National level influence .....	50
5.3.4 Multi-level Interaction.....	51
5.4 WAYS FORWARD: CHANGING LEGAL AND POLITICAL SPHERE IN FRANCE .....	52
5.4.1 Consistent Needs Overtime.....	52
5.4.2 Changing Legal and Political Sphere.....	52
5.5 OBSERVATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES.....	54
6. DISCUSSION .....	56
7. CONCLUSION .....	59
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	60
APPENDIX I - INTERVIEWEES' PROFILES.....	65
APPENDIX II - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	67
APPENDIX III - INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM.....	68

## List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Mapping of Operational Areas of CSOs in Lyon .....	24
Figure 2: Mapping of Organizational Types of CSOs in Lyon .....	27
Table 1: Sampling and demography of organizations.....	29

## List of Abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AGD	Age, gender, and diversity
CBO	Community-based organization
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CSO	Civil society organization
EU	European Union
INGO	International non-governmental organizations
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, or Queer
MEAE	Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs)
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFPRA	Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNPP	UN Partner Portal
UO	Umbrella organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

# 1. Introduction

In France, the freedom of association was legally established by the 1901 Act on contracts of association. Since its enactment, the activities of civil society groups have been influenced by changes in social, economic, and political circumstances (Edith & Prouteau, 2020). Until nowadays, civil society organizations (CSOs) have been playing important roles in many levels, both national and international. They are on the front lines, championing universal principles such as human rights, dignity, gender equality, good governance, and freedom of expression (MEAE, 2022).

After the exponential growth of refugees coming to Europe, a surge of CSOs dedicated to supporting refugees has emerged. Given its status as one of the primary destinations for refugees, France presents a compelling case study for examining the operational dynamics of CSOs engaged in refugee assistance. An expanding field of research on multilevel migration governance is enhancing our understanding of the roles played by local actors, encompassing both governmental and non-governmental entities, in shaping policies regarding migrant integration. Nevertheless, there is a need for further exploration and comprehension of the complexity of their roles, given the ever-changing social, economic, and political circumstances.

This research aims to understand the roles, situations, characteristics of civil society organizations in France, examining how they assist refugees, and the challenges they face. Given the timing of this study coinciding with the introduction of new immigration laws and the rise of anti-migration sentiments in France, it also seeks to examine their perspectives on forthcoming situation, France's approach to the refugee crisis, and the implications of evolving circumstances in the country. Exploring CSO's roles should be seen as a tactic for delving deeper into participatory and human rights-oriented methods in migration governance.

As a case study, Lyon has been selected as the focal city for research purposes. Lyon is one of the cities with high number of refugees in France. As of December 31, 2020, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, with Lyon as its capital, had approximately 15,000 pending asylum applications (Secrétariat général pour les affaires régionales Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, 2022). Both as a Metropole and a City, Lyon adheres to the predominant French model, prioritizing equitable access



to services irrespective of ethnic origins. Acknowledging the potential hurdles migrants may face in accessing mainstream services, it actively engages civil society organizations to implement tailored initiatives facilitating migrants' access to these services (Mediterranean City-to-City Migration, 2017).

In this research, the term 'refugees' refers to the definition outlined in international law, the 1951 Refugee Convention, which is someone who, due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside their country of nationality and is unable or unwilling to return due to this fear, thereby seeking protection elsewhere (UNHCR, 2024). This study also encompasses 'asylum seekers' who have not yet attained refugee status. This is done to simplify the analysis, as many CSOs work with displaced individuals irrespective of their legal status.

## **2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

To comprehend the circumstances of CSOs assisting refugees in France, it is crucial to grasp the background and perceptions related to refugees, as well as the role of CSOs in refugee assistance, as established by previous studies. This chapter outlines the background and conceptual frameworks related to refugee issues and the involvement of CSOs, drawing connections to findings from existing research.

### **2.1 France and Refugees**

France's enduring history of immigration and its commitment to international agreements on refugee protection highlight its ongoing efforts to address the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees. However, as political and social dynamics evolve, new challenges emerge, shaping policy discourse and public attitudes towards refugees and integration efforts. This section examines historical context, contemporary challenges, and the changing landscape of politics and society in relation to refugee policies in France.

#### ***2.1.1 Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges***

France has the longest history of immigration among European nations (Chemin, 2023) since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The country has experienced several influxes of immigration involving immigrants from different countries of origin and motivations. France is one of nine states who ratified the 1933 Geneva Convention on Status of Refugees, a milestone in the protection of refugees and a model for the Geneva 1951 Convention (Jaeger, 2001) which is a key international agreement outlining the rights and obligations concerning refugees and the duties of the states in providing asylum and assistance.

It is important to note that asylum seekers and refugees are not new issues in France. For a considerable period, refugee status held enough prestige to provide individuals with various avenues for integration in the country (Barou, 2020); however, the situation changed when the influx of people increased. Obtaining refugee status became a lengthier process, leading

individuals to experience a decline in social status. Moreover, number of refugees<sup>1</sup> in France has been increasing every year since 2006 due to on-going national and international conflicts in many regions of the world. Millions of people have fled their homes to escape civil war and other violence (Lischer, 2017). Following the influx of more than three million asylum seekers between 2015 and 2017 in Europe, France and other European countries encountered several difficulties (Fóti, et al., 2019). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on population movement. In 2023, the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (*Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides: OFPRA*) has reported that nearly 142,500 applications for international protection were submitted which increased by 8.6% compared with 2022 (OFPRA, 2024).

With regard to policy context, Fóti et al (2019) addressed the challenges in refugees' fundamental needs among European asylum countries, such as housing, social support, and funding integration initiatives, which strained the ongoing burdened public finances of the countries. Concurrently, from their report (Fóti, et al., 2019), EU countries endeavored to develop tailored integration programs to meet the specific requirements of certain refugees, such as those dealing with mental health issues resulting from their traumatic experiences. Language barriers and low literacy levels further impeded newcomers' participation in integration efforts. These challenges necessitated capacity-building efforts and the expansion of resources within public services. Another notable obstacle to social integration has been negative public perceptions and, in some cases, employers' hesitancy to hire refugees, particularly in the cases where language and cultural barriers persisted. Moreover, in an increasingly competitive job market that demands workers with high and medium-level skills, many refugees face disadvantages due to their lower skill levels and lack of formal education and certification (Fóti, et al., 2019).

France's extensive history of immigration, coupled with its ratification of key international agreements on refugee protection, underscores its commitment to addressing the issues confronting asylum seekers and refugees. Nevertheless, the country has faced several challenges

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<sup>1</sup> Number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate

in integrating asylum seekers and refugees, exacerbated by the surge in arrivals and strained public resources.

### ***2.1.2 Dynamic Changes in Politics and Society***

Refugees and integration topics have intensified in considerable focus from media, political, and societal spheres in recent years, particularly with the onset of the ‘European refugee crisis’ (Eberl, et al., 2018). There has been an increase in negative attitudes towards refugees in France, stemming from factors such as economic downturns, political discourse, cultural apprehensions, and historical contexts.

The study of Ayoub (2024) confirms that there is the correlation between public attitudes and public policy as it is evident in the policy discourse and subsequent asylum legislation which closely align with societal perceptions. She mentioned that the heightened relevance of the immigrant issue in France started in 2017. It could be attributed to several factors, including the ascent of Marine le Pen, president of the National Front, a far-right party, to the final round of the 2017 presidential election, and the centrality of immigration in her campaign. Additionally, a series of terrorist attacks extensively covered by French and European media may have contributed to this shift in public perception (Ayoub, 2024). However, in her study, Ayoub illustrates the high variance between the actual and perceived numbers of immigrants among French population. Including with media’s externalization of the refugee’ crisis, the perception of immigrants by the French public is increasingly negative (Ayoub, 2024).

Following the explanation of Ayoub, the trend of new registrations in France is also influenced by public opinion. On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024, the French government has launched the law ‘to control immigration while improve integration’ (*Loi pour contrôler l’immigration, améliorer l’intégration*)<sup>2</sup> which aims to enhance the integration of foreign residents through three primary strategies: acquiring proficiency in French, respecting the principles of the Republic, and achieving integration through employment (Welcome Office France, 2024). This new law significantly influences refugees and asylum seekers living and coming to France.

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<sup>2</sup> Loi pour contrôler l’immigration, améliorer l’intégration (n° 2024-42 du 26 janvier 2024)

The new immigration law was heavily criticized by publics about its political purpose behind. Many concerns regarding fundamental rights of foreigners were raised by the human rights defenders. The French Defender of Rights (*Défenseur Des Droits*) criticized that this immigration law threatens the fundamental rights of foreigners by exploitation of the right to stay, diminishes the right to adjudicate in the name of the effectiveness of state action, and reduces protection for the most vulnerable foreigners (Avis du Défenseur des droits n°23-02, 2023). As the political landscape regarding refugee policies in France shifts towards the right, it significantly impacts civil society and all stakeholders involved in refugee support efforts.

## **2.2 The Terminology of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

The United Nations (UN) identifies various categories of civil society organizations (CSOs) participating in providing aid, ranging from faith-based organizations, trade unions, and professional associations to internationally linked entities with branches across multiple nations (UN, 2024). The Agence Française de Développement (AFD) defines the term ‘CSOs’ as encompassing a wide range of entities, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public and private foundations, professional associations, labor unions, cooperatives, and social enterprises, whose primary goals are aligned with social causes. However, it does not extend to employer organizations or for-profit businesses (AFD, n.d.).

Driven by individuals united by shared goals, CSOs are focused on tasks and serve a diverse range of functions, including providing various services and humanitarian aid. They act as intermediaries between citizens and governments, monitoring policies and promoting political engagement at the grassroots level (UN, 2024). The role of CSOs frequently supplement national or local efforts, adapting to financial limitations and crafting influential projects. With regular collaborations with CSOs, the government could form a robust network spanning diverse domains (Mediterranean City-to-City Migration, 2017).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are occasionally used interchangeably with CSOs. In the discussion regarding development and humanitarian areas, aid actors frequently refer to NGOs (UNPP, 2024); however, it is important to recognize that NGOs are a specific subset of CSOs

involved in development cooperation, albeit often with fluid distinctions (UNDP, 2013). NGOs refer to the structured organizations who work in national or international level, and may possess different mandates, organizational structures, and operational systems, influenced by the specific historical background and contextual factors of each country and organization (UN, 2024), while CSOs have been defined as autonomous associations that are independent of the public and for-profit sectors and designed to advance collective interests and ideas including international and national NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and academic/research institutions (UNPP, 2024).

In the scope of this research, the term civil society organizations (CSOs) is utilized, due to its inclusivity of a wider array of entities compared to the more commonly recognized NGOs.

## **2.3 CSOs and Refugee Governance**

Since the 1980s, the concept of governance has been significantly influential in both academic and political discussions regarding the new methods of managing social turmoil (Giacometti, 2021). It entails coordination and cooperation efforts among various levels and actors within both public and private social spheres. With the goal of achieving a shared political, ethical, and governmental objective, the certain states have chosen to step back from their responsibilities, choosing to support CSOs as service providers at a lower cost compared to what the state could offer; similar to the privatization of state-run services, this arrangement creates a separation between responsibility and accountability (Lester, 2005).

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a notable increase in the numbers of CSOs. The governance of refugees is characterized by the involvement of non-state actors such as market forces and civil society, operating not only on national or state scales but also at local or transnational levels, which undertake diverse roles, including advocacy, lobbying, and protest, as well as providing information, direct assistance, solidarity, and serving as gatekeepers (Pécoud & Thiollet, 2023).

Based on the analysis of refugee support organizations by Jong and Ataç (2017), CSOs confronted challenges with shortcomings in service delivery and the tough realities of the asylum system. It fueled a deep sense of indignation and prompted them to develop a political critique, prioritizing their ‘autonomy’, striking a balance between ‘volunteerism’ and ‘professionalism’, and merging a ‘radical critique’ of the system with efforts to reform asylum and refugee services. The four initiatives successfully blend criticism of the system with addressing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, paving the way for a new organizational approach that not only provides services but also advocates for change (Jong & Ataç, 2017). The extent of space available to CSOs is significantly shaped by three main contextual factors including the ‘law on societies’, ‘key provisions in other laws directly impacting civil society activities’, and ‘distinct domestic and regional dynamics’ (USAID, 2016); consequently, the positions of the government greatly influence on the space available for CSOs.

The cornerstone of government initiatives regarding refugee governance lies in the advocacy of integration governance by the French authorities. The study of Xandra, Breugel, & Scholten (2015) illustrates that the integration strategies in France primarily encompass reception measures and anti-discrimination initiatives. In the realm of social cohesion, immigrants and their offspring are not singled out as specific targets. Instead, policies are broad and avoid labeling recipients based on ethnicity, while area-focused initiatives refrain from specifically targeting neighborhoods where ethnic minorities are perceived to be concentrated (Xandra, Breugel, & Scholten, 2015). Furthermore, within the spectrum of governmental programs aimed at supporting refugees, five distinct directions emerge. These encompass the adoption of initiatives for social integration, the formulation of criteria for processing asylum applications, the training of specialists to engage with refugees, the implementation of French language courses for migrants, and the establishment of dedicated government bodies for facilitating cultural assimilation (Kim, 2019).

To this day, together with the increasing roles of CSOs, the ‘multilevel governance’ is a popular model for refugee governance. Multilevel governance refers to collaboration and alignment among different levels of government without any single level having clear supremacy will promote long-lasting alignment among policy perspectives at different levels (Mediterranean City-to-City Migration, 2017). Flamant (2020) highlights in her study about the trend ‘local turn’ that immigrant incorporation policies were shaped by the local level (municipalities). The influences

from local level to national level has been growing in many European cities including France, mainly occurred in center-left cities, and may overcome the national model (Flamant, 2020). Non-governmental actors have an important role in strengthening efficiency of these local levels. CSOs can effectively function as ‘sub-contractors’ for governments or the UN. With their expansion, CSOs have made significant contributions to enhancing standards for refugee protection.

However, the report of the meeting ‘Interinstitutional coordination in migration governance: Towards improved multilevel cooperation’ (Mediterranean City-to-City Migration, 2017) has reveals four challenges of multilevel governance. The first challenge is divergent approaches of handling migration that might clash or lead to inconsistency in policy as the endorsement from certain national or regional governments. They may contradict efforts for social inclusion and integration at the local level. The second challenge is political discrepancies that also contribute to putting pressure on multi-level governance, especially when there’s a disconnect between the rhetoric and objectives across different levels. The third challenge is the absence of efficient mechanisms for collaboration across multiple levels, which was highlighted as a barrier to establish connections that transcend political mandates and political will to allocate resources (such as staff and training) to enhance and sustain these mechanisms effectively. Lastly, the expanding multilevel governance poses risks for local actors, as they may be tasked with significant responsibilities in integration on an informal basis, but without being provided with sufficient resources and decision-making authority to formulate appropriate strategies (Mediterranean City-to-City Migration, 2017). To ensure the effectiveness of multilevel governance, recognizing the roles and challenges of local actors, both governmental and non-governmental, and engaging in open dialogue are important steps toward exploring collaborative possibilities across all levels. Further discussion regarding CSOs and authorities is in the section *2.5 CSOs and Authorities Collaboration*.



## 2.4 Social Integration of Refugees

Dragonas (2021) mentioned in her study ‘Holistic Approach to Refugee Integration’ that there is not a universally single theory or model for migrant integration. The concept of ‘integration’ can differ depending on factors such as the reasons for displacement, various perspectives, values, and interests, as well as the effects of integration on both national and community levels (Dragonas, 2021). The integration of refugees has been a significant public discussion (Ager & Strang, 2008) which presents a notable challenge for both refugees and their host societies (Andrade & Dooli, 2016). It is a complex and evolving interaction that needs active engagement from all stakeholders (UNHCR, 2007).

The process of integration for refugees involves reciprocal engagement between the refugees and the host community, demanding efforts from both sides. It extends beyond mere provision of basic needs and access to services. Integration requires the establishment of a welcoming atmosphere by receiving states and civil society which facilitates refugees in attaining sustainable economic stability and adapting to the unfamiliar society (UNHCR, 2013). Scholars and policymakers have endeavored to identify essential keys and indicators of integration. Numerous scholars have attempted to delineate the conceptual framework and establish indicators aimed at facilitating measurement of integration in society.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2007) assessed the primary challenges to integration as perceived by refugees. They revealed that main difficulties of refugees to integrate in the new society are limited understanding of native languages and cultural backgrounds, discrimination and unwelcoming behaviors, insufficient comprehension among host communities regarding the specific circumstances faced by refugees, psychological impact of idleness experienced during asylum procedures; psychological impact of protracted inactivity during asylum procedures; restricted availability of rights. Essential components of integration include fostering a sense of belonging and promoting active participation within the new community (UNHCR, 2013).

Ager and Strang (2008) identified the core concept of integration as it includes employment, housing, education, health, assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights, processes of

social connection, barriers to such connection, lack of linguistic and cultural competences, and from fear and instability. All the domains are the focal concepts that all actors need to take into consideration. Dobson, Agrusti, and Pinto (2019) conceptualized integration as the navigation of social structures of the host society. Integration primarily revolves around engaging in communication in the new language, seeking employment, participating in education and training, and interacting with the host community. The study also points out the key determinant of effectiveness which is fundamentally related to the intercultural awareness and sensitivity of all parties involved (Dobson, Agrusti, & Pinto, 2019).

From various scholars, it is intriguing to note that majority of studies emphasized the significance of refugee integration which can be grouped in three main domains including 1) access to resources in the host countries; 2) social adaptation; and 3) practice of citizenship and rights. All the domains are correlated with each other. Without strengthening one of these, it could be challenging to ensure effective integration for refugees.

While reception policies fall under the responsibility of the national level, CSOs have demonstrated their crucial role in offering humanitarian aid and shelter to asylum seekers and refugees. Shoshana Fine (2019) mentioned that the successful integration of refugees requires targeted approaches which need more than just following a common law approach. Most CSOs believe that merely incorporating refugees into common law (*droit commun*) is insufficient, considering their unique vulnerabilities and integration challenges. They advocate for specific measures such as professional interpretation, social and cultural mediation, and increased language training to address these concerns (Fine, 2019). Presently, many initiatives in France have enhanced integration prospects by applying a comprehensive approach which involves both government and non-government groups working together.

This research employs these identified key challenges of integration and the conceptual framework outlined in existing literature as a means to investigate the contributions of CSOs towards fostering the social integration of refugees in Lyon.

## 2.5 Collaboration between CSOs and Authorities

According to Harrison (2018), CSOs act as a bridge connecting citizens and authorities. The stronger the collaboration between CSOs and government, the better the outcomes. This symbiotic relationship should be embraced fully, recognized as advantageous for both parties, even when civil society poses challenging inquiries, questions governmental decisions, or advocates for policy reforms (Harrison, 2018). His study also underscored that CSOs and the government rely on each other because it is uncommon for either sector to have a monopoly to various resources. While these interdependencies often lead to tensions between them and the government, they also lay the groundwork for fostering trust, as they require a level of collaboration across sectors (Harrison, 2018). Furthermore, Simsa (2017) mentioned that while public authorities were insufficient in addressing the challenge on their own, civil society activities stepped in to fill the gap. Consequently, CSOs played a pivotal role in managing the situation. Without the multitude of CSOs, the thousands of volunteers, and the public pressure they exerted, the country would have struggled to provide shelter, transportation, and food for the vast number of people in need (Simsa, 2017).

CSOs have put efforts in strengthening collaboration in many levels. At the local level, Waardenburg (2020) illustrated that CSOs actively shape their relationship with local government while upholding a community-oriented approach. CSOs not only respond positively to the government's requests for service provision, but also aligning with their previous desire for professionalization (Waardenburg, 2020). At the policy level, Pollard and Court (2005) explained that CSOs can use their evidence to influence the policy with three objectives including: 'inspiring' by garnering support for specific issues or actions with new ideas and challenges, 'informing' by representing the views of various stakeholders, and 'improving' policy outcomes by contributing to policy refinement. The role of CSOs within a specific political system, along with its interactions with other stakeholders, affects how it can leverage evidence and the probability of influencing policies. However, CSO involvement is heavily contingent upon the political landscape's nature, such as the degree of democracy, as well as the government's specific policy position on a given issue (Pollard & Court, 2005). The challenge of political engagement has become a major issue

for many CSOs as they seek to define and legitimize their role in development (Pollard & Court, 2005).

With regard to political position, the civil society sector has a role as an independent and autonomous entity as highlighted in the study of Edwards (2004). His study argued that the mandate of many CSOs to foster social cohesion at the community level restricts their capacity as political actors. These complexities of party politics and the inherently political aspects of certain NGO activities has become a feature of their efforts to establish a working relationship with the government. However, due to their opposition to power structures, CSOs often find themselves in opposition to politics as well (Edwards, 2004).

### **3. Context**

In the realm of refugee assistance in Lyon, various CSOs have played pivotal roles in supporting refugees. This chapter categorizes these civil actors into distinct groups, facilitating a clearer understanding of their contributions and interactions with other stakeholders. The analysis of this CSO mapping is based on their ‘areas of operation’ and ‘organizational type.’ By categorizing these organizations, we can better comprehend their specific roles and how they collaborate within the broader network of refugee support services.

#### **3.1 Mapping of CSOs’ Operational Areas in Lyon**

Areas of operation of CSOs in Lyon were identified by assistances provided by the refugee support actors in Lyon. This includes legal assistance, employment, French language learning, housing, administrative support, basic need assistance, healthcare, education, women and LGBTIQ+ support, culture and activity, and advocacy. Each operations helped enforce the fundamental rights and social integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

‘Legal assistance’ plays a vital role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring its alignment with international commitments. It identifies legal challenges or deficiencies that can be addressed through strategic legal actions and ensures the protection of legal rights and safeguards for refugees and asylum seekers in various aspects such as asylum procedures, administrative processes, and access to essential rights (UNHCR, n.d.). Together with legal assistance, ‘Administrative support’ facilitates refugees and asylum seekers to navigate the complex bureaucratic systems. It includes documentation support, information guidance, translation services to facilitate communication between refugees and administrative authorities. Administrative support plays an important role in helping refugees which frequently discourages refugees in their resettlement procedure and access the assistance and services for the paperwork.

Furthermore, access to ‘safe accommodation, ‘basic needs’, and ‘healthcare’ are essential for offering refugees a stable foundation and a feeling of physical and mental well-being. Safe housing is crucial during the initial settlement phase for refugees to find a neighborhood and suitable housing for themselves and their families (Murdie, 2008). Basic need ensures the safety, dignity,

and human rights of refugees as well as their successful integration and self-sufficiency in their host communities. It can be defined as basic items to access to basic services and support in areas such as healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), food, housing, energy, education, as well as household items and specialized services tailored to individuals with particular requirements (UNHCR, 2018). Healthcare services need to be comparable to those available to the host population, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Healthcare includes mental health and physical wellbeing services for refugees at affordable costs and sufficient quality (UNHCR, 2024).

‘French language classes’ provides support and resources to help refugees learn and improve their proficiency in French. It helps refugees to effectively communicate, integrate into French-speaking communities, access education and employment opportunities, and navigate various aspects of daily life in France. Alongside French learning, ‘cultural activities’ provided for refugees involve a wide range of initiatives aimed at promoting social integration, well-being, and community cohesion. The cultural activities can be the most effective tool globally for fostering inclusion in society (Björby, 2018). Both language learning and cultural activities play a crucial role in empowering refugees to integrate into their host communities.

For promoting long-term well-being for refugees, ‘education’ and ‘employment’ are critical factors. With education and employment, refugees can contribute positively to their communities and societies. The educational experiences encountered in post-migration settings significantly influence the resettlement journey and the overall well-being of refugee immigrants (Shakya, et al., 2010). Employment offers and access to job opportunities assist refugees in rebuilding an autonomous and fruitful life, ensuring a satisfactory standard of living. It also enables employers and communities to leverage the diverse work experience, professional qualifications, and educational background of refugees (UNHCR, 2024).

In addition, a comprehensive recognition of varied challenges and discrimination faced by ‘women and LGBTIQ+ individuals’ during displacement are essential for both governments and civil society to effectively address their needs upon resettlement. Given that LGBTIQ+ encompasses a wide spectrum of identities, the experiences of subgroups such as lesbian women or trans men are unique. Therefore, integration support and procedures must incorporate an intersectional approach,

considering factors such as age, gender, and diversity (AGD), while prioritizing the perspectives and requirements of refugees themselves (UNHCR, n.d.).

Lastly, ‘advocacy’ is important to advance the concerns of groups or individuals or public matters by impacting decision makers or public sentiment, is seen as a fundamental attribute of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Mosley, 2011). This trait also underscores the role of CSOs as champions of democratic principles and advocates for safeguarding the social and political rights of marginalized populations (Fehsenfeld & Levinsen, 2019).



*Figure 1: Mapping of Operational Areas of CSOs in Lyon*

*Source: author*

## 3.2 Mapping of CSOs' Organizational Types in Lyon

This research classified organizational types of CSOs in Lyon by their structure and scope of work. The mapping of the organizational structures helped categorizing CSOs into six groups including volunteer networks/ associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), umbrella organizations (UOs), informal groups and local initiatives, and social enterprise'. Each organizational type might have different capacity and scope of works.

Firstly, 'volunteer networks or associations' are groups of individuals who come together voluntarily to support refugees within their communities or on a larger scale. They can be in a form of formal or informal, on-site or online, long-term or short-term, self-building aspiration or community-building aspiration (Millora, 2020). Volunteer networks or associations have contributed an array of solidarity activities, such as distributing food, collecting and sorting clothes, offering French course, providing housing, and so on. They often rely on the dedication and commitment of their members who contribute their time, skills, and resources to make a positive impact. In the scope of this research, community-based organizations (CBOs) are also included in this category.

Secondly, 'Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)' are different form volunteer networks or associations as they have formal structure. NGOs have a minimal organizational structure which allows them to provide continuous work. They can also be professionalized, as they might employ paid staff with specialized expertise, but they are nonprofit-oriented (Martens, 2002). NGOs frequently provide specialized and technical services, as opposed to being the charity-oriented often seen in volunteer networks/associations. They commonly pursue objectives that extend beyond mere service delivery (USAID, 2016). Additionally, NGOs can be actors in many levels including national, regional, as well as international.

Thirdly, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) are similar to NGOs but operate across national borders to address global issues and challenges. They work on an international scale, collaborating with governments, other NGOs, international institutions, and local communities. INGOs often provide humanitarian aid, development assistance, advocacy, and



capacity-building support in countries. The actions of INGOs have been shaped by years of activism, organizational efforts, and advocacy campaigns (Saunier, 2009).

The fourth organizational type is ‘umbrella organizations (UOs).’ UOs represent clusters of CSOs active in refugee support. They operate as intermediary bodies between those CSOs and the government aiming to represent the interests of their member organizations, facilitating ideas exchange and coordination among them, enhancing their visibility and influence in the public sphere, and, negotiating on their behalf with authorities (USAID, 2016). They operate under the principle that there is strength in unity, believing that UOs amplify the voices and impact of their constituent entities.

The fifth, ‘informal groups and local initiatives’ are distinguished by their absence of formal organizational frameworks and their status as unregistered entities (USAID, 2016). Characterized by their grassroots nature and lack of formal structure, often arise spontaneously within communities to address the immediate needs of refugees. Despite their informal nature and lack of official recognition, these groups often complement the efforts of larger organizations and government agencies, filling gaps in services and ensuring a more holistic response to the refugee crisis.

Lastly, ‘social enterprise’ is an entity within the social economy that prioritizes social impact over generating profits for owners or shareholders (European Commission, 2024). According to the OECD (n.d.), social enterprises are defined as any private initiative conducted for the public good, structured with an entrepreneurial approach, with the primary objective not being profit maximization, but the achievement of specific economic and social objectives, and possessing the ability to offer innovative solutions to address issues related to social exclusion and unemployment (OECD, n.d.). Social enterprises aim to advance community development through commercial strategies, rather than depending on external donations, which allows them to drive their mission forward without funding restrictions.

A comprehensive understanding of the diverse types of organizations is instrumental in gaining insights into the multifaceted roles of CSOs and their intricate interactions. By examining various

organizational structures of CSOs, we can discern the unique contributions each entity makes to civil society.



*Figure 2: Mapping of Organizational Types of CSOs in Lyon*

*Source: author*

## 4. Methodology

The research has been undertaken from February to May 2024. Qualitative methods were applied including secondary data review and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

### 4.1 Central Research Questions

The research delves into three central questions aimed at comprehending the roles and dynamics of CSOs in Lyon, France. The main research questions encompass:

1. What are the characteristics and general situation of CSOs working with refugees and asylum seekers in Lyon?

The first question endeavors to delve into the operational landscape and current standing of CSOs. This inquiry seeks to unravel the distinctive features defining these organizations, understand their strategies in reaching out to beneficiaries, and explore their roles in supporting refugees in Lyon.

2. What are the challenges of these CSOs?

The second question aims to identify main challenges that CSOs working for refugees in Lyon experienced. By pinpointing these challenges, it helps to gain insight into the specific obstacles hindering the effectiveness of refugee support initiatives of the third actors.

3. How do CSOs and other stakeholders in Lyon interact with each other?

The third question aims to navigate relationship dynamics among CSOs and stakeholders. It is important to understand the relationships of diverse elements and identify the landscape of their opportunities and challenges in coordination and collaboration.

4. How does the changing legal and political sphere impact their work?

According to the changing legal and political sphere in France, especially the new immigration bill introduced in January 2024, the last question endeavors to explore the impacts and ways forward of these CSOs.

By exploring these aspects of the four questions, the goal is to develop an in-depth comprehension of CSOs' characteristics, challenges, initiatives, and perspectives on progression.

## 4.2 Data collection

Primary data collection took place between February 20 and April 19, 2024, utilizing in-depth semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted through a variety of mediums, including in-person sessions, video meetings, and telephone calls. A total of 17 interviews were conducted in English or French language. They encompass individuals from both CSOs and local authorities. The interviews focus on their roles and challenges they experienced. The table below summarizes the number of individuals interviewed in this research.

Main operational area <sup>3</sup>	Civil Society Organization				Local Authorities
	Associations	NGOs	INGOs	Social Enterprise	
Housing		3			
Healthcare		1			1
Administrative support					1
Legal assistance			1		
French language learning	3	1			
Basic needs assistance	1	1			
Women and LGBTIQ+ support	1	1			
Culture and activity			1		
Employment				1	
<b>Total (17)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

*Table 1: Sampling and demography of organizations*

<sup>3</sup> Main operational area refers to the biggest focus of the organization in refugee support.

### **4.3 Data Analysis**

The 17 interviews were transcribed and translated into English. All transcriptions were coded using Atlas.ti software. The codes were grouped into large categories for thematic analysis which is the framework organizing the data into core themes, and then the data are displayed in terms of subthemes within a matrix for each case (Bryman, 2012). Together with the literature reviews, collective responses from all 17 interviews are the means of analysis to understand CSOs working for refugees in the context of Lyon.

### **4.4. Limitations**

The two main limitations of this research are the time constraint and the language barrier. Firstly, the research period was limited to less than four months, compounded by challenges in researcher mobility, which posed difficulties for data collection and time management. Secondly, the language barrier presented another challenge, as many interviews were conducted in French. While the researcher has an intermediate proficiency in French, it may not have been sufficient for nuanced political discussions. However, in most cases, a native French colleague assisted in conducting the interviews, mitigating the impact of the language barrier.

## 5. Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the analysis of 17 interviews are presented. The results highlight the characteristics of CSOs supporting refugees in Lyon, the main challenges they face, their interactions, the influence of the evolving legal and political environment, and observations of public authorities.

### 5.1 CSOs Supporting Refugees in Lyon

In gaining insights into the operational dynamics of CSOs and their interactions with refugees, the findings presented portray several aspects of CSOs' engagement in Lyon. These include beneficiary targeting, volunteerism, services provided, and their roles in promoting integration.

#### 5.1.1 Beneficiaries

From the result, the beneficiary targeting of CSOs can be delineated into two categories: 'specific' and 'general' targets. While the general-target services are extended to all refugees and asylum seekers, the specific-target services are constrained in their delivery.

'General-target services' encompass support provided to all refugees and asylum seekers, regardless of race, gender, or legal status. These services typically span operational domains with flexible resources, such as French language learning, administrative support, and legal assistance. The following excerpt from interviews 16 illustrates the services with broad target scopes.

*We are based on an unconditional welcome. So, the people can come, and we don't ask (for) name, paper, anything. And they come with different needs. (Interview 16)*

For 'specific-target services,' CSOs provide services under particular conditions or to specific targeted groups, often directed by donor requirements, such as designated funding allocations, or by prioritization according to specific needs.

*It (program) is made for people who got the status of refugee. This means in the whole population of migrant people; we only address the needs of people who have the status of*

*refugee, for multiple reasons, because we get fundings for this specific group, also because when people get their status, they get a certain number of rights and possibilities. (Interview 1)*

Moreover, the ‘specific- target’ services population can align with the specialization of the organization, for example, target group who are young population or women and LGBTIQ+.

*We welcome (...) person who is in a very precarious situation, more specifically women, transgender, and non-binary persons; and therefore, indeed, we also welcome refugees, but it is not the totality or the majority of the public we welcome. (Interview 15)*

Through both broad-reaching and specialized services, CSOs strive to address the multifaceted needs of refugees in Lyon, ensuring inclusivity while targeting specific vulnerabilities.

### **5.1.2 CSOs and Volunteerism**

It is evident that all CSO workers are deeply committed to improving the quality of life for refugees and asylum seekers through their specialized services. Nevertheless, there are limitations in organizational capacities, both financial and human capital resources. As a results, volunteers are key actor who help supporting the CSOs.

From the interview, more than half of the interviewees mentioned they have depended on the works of volunteers in fulfilling their works. The following excerpt illustrates the support from refugee to the CSO.

*We are recruiting what we call the benevolent, which are people who are helping us, working for us, but not for money, just because they believe in what we are doing. So, we have multiple people like this trying to help and also spreading our message around them and in companies and in other associations and in the local authority and so on. (Interview 6)*

According to an excerpt from interview 6, they recruited volunteers to support their mission. These volunteers contributed their time and effort to help the organization and spread its message within their networks, including companies, associations, and local authorities.

However, despite their strong motivation to help, many volunteers are unable to consistently support CSOs due to various constraints. The following quotation from interview 9 highlights the challenges organizations face in retaining enough volunteers and the volunteer management.

*(...) main challenges is the mobilization of the volunteers. Because we have awesome volunteers, but the most difficult part is to mobilize the volunteers for organizing events, for organizing courses. And there are volunteers, and they have just a little time (...) they have not much time to (sacrifice) to the association. So, the really big challenge in Lyon is to make volunteers do the work, because we (don't have) enough employees, and that's the big challenge (Interview 9)*

The response from the interview 9 illustrated that one of the main challenges faced by the organization is mobilizing volunteers for various tasks. It is crucial to engage volunteers effectively in CSO's initiatives.

Another challenge of volunteers is their capabilities. Many volunteers do not have skills for the work they do. They acquired skills after trainings or working as volunteers. Therefore, CSOs must offer training and guidance for volunteers. If organizing training sessions is not feasible, they can instead assign tasks that align with volunteers' skills as shown in the response below.

*The volunteer (...) that helps the squat, or that helps the minor to get recognition by a judge. These volunteers don't have special education about mental health or stuff like this. So, we try to help them (...) like to help go to hospital and to help volunteer contacts doctors, or vice versa. (Interview 2)*

The interviewee from interview 2 provided example of lacking specialized skills among volunteers, so the organization helps by coordinating and connecting them with experts to support their efforts.

The overall challenges of volunteers are particularly pronounced in volunteer associations or volunteer groups, as they lack stable paid employees and rely entirely on the contributions of volunteers. The below excerpt displays the organization management challenge for volunteer association.



*It's mostly (volunteers) who run the association and that's sometimes quite complicated because we have our studies, and we must always have (responsibilities) in mind. I think that we are (volunteers) and this is not our job, so we cannot put everything. (Interview 12)*

The response from interview 12 mentioned that association, which is primarily run by volunteers, can be challenging as they cannot commit all their time and effort to the association.

The presented results from the interviews illustrate the limitation of organizational resources in responding to the needs of refugees. As a result, volunteers help them filling this gap of capacity insufficiency. Nevertheless, volunteers have many constraints in providing support including time limit and lack of skills. These constraints are particularly noticeable within volunteer networks or associations.

### ***5.1.3 Services Provided for Refugees***

CSOs in Lyon have provided diverse supports for refugees which are necessary for individuals seeking refuge, yet they are encumbered by complexities and urgency. This section provides findings regarding the diverse services provided from CSOs and their complexities.

For documentation, CSOs aiding refugees and asylum seekers prioritize assistance with paperwork, providing information, and offering legal support. Many respondents highlighted the substantial number of inquiries refugees have about the documentation process. They perceive their initiatives as addressing gaps in city administration services. Additionally, concerns were raised about the prolonged processing times, which further hinder their rights to family reunification. The excerpt from interview 3 highlights the issue of document process and how CSOs complement the work of the Metropole in Lyon by supporting refugees in their documentation process.

*We have a lot more family reunification to deal with and I think it's because refugees that got the status a few years ago now they're trying to bring their families which is logical. What we witness is that the government does nothing, so it's us, an organization, that has to do the job. And other than that, we see a lot of things for people that are not refugees; but for refugees, we don't see much. Apart from the necessity to have to do the family*

*reunification, for example, we witness a lot more difficulties to go to (regional administration) and we see that people who used to have a title, because the (regional administration) is so slow in reviewing the rights, they lose everything. They lose their right of stay. They lose their job. They lose their house. So, this is what we fight for the most. (Interview 3)*

Apart from documents, housing is one of the most complicated issues, as Lyon has been facing the problem with affordable accommodations. The below excerpt from interview 1 illustrates the situation of finding affordable accommodation of refugees in Lyon.

*We can help them with some money. (...) they can get this money, but it's very difficult and very long to get an accommodation. So, people are living in the streets with money. Even if they're working now, they can't have an accommodation. That's a big problem because we can receive some people who's working now since several months, (but) they're sleeping in their car or they're sleeping in their friend's home or family home in very difficult situation. And this's a big problem because people come in the big city like Lyon to find a job. (...) when they get this job, they find an accommodation (but) it's very long and exhaustive to find something because it's very expensive and they ask a lot of documents from these people (refugees). And sometimes, the people that we help they don't have contact with their families, or they don't have the good documents. It takes a long time to do everything. (Interview 1)*

To assist refugees and asylum seekers in housing, several CSOs have established programs aimed at connecting refugees with temporary hosts who can offer short-term accommodations. These initiatives are seen as valuable opportunities for both hosts and refugees to engage in cultural exchange, fostering a path towards successful integration. Nevertheless, these programs encounter numerous challenges, particularly in recruiting hosts and maintaining positive power dynamics within these arrangements. Despite possibly having temporary accommodation, refugees remain in a significantly weaker position. This power asymmetry means that the homeless individual may never truly feel at home, as the disparity in their living situations creates an ongoing sense of insecurity and lack of ownership during cohabitation. The quotation below from interview 8

highlights the main challenge of cohabitation programs which is the inherent power imbalance between the house host and the refugee.

*I can say that the main challenge (in cohabitation program) is the inbuilt asymmetrical power, because if we create some cohabitation between a person who has an extra room and a person who doesn't, who is homeless, maybe this person is not living in the street, but it has a temporary or precarious accommodation. We can still consider the person homeless. So, there is a huge asymmetry of power, a huge imbalance that is a problem that is transposed in during the cohabitation, because the person will never feel at home. (Interview 8)*

When it comes to employment, CSOs play a crucial role in assisting refugees with job searches, offering support through training sessions and language classes. Certain CSOs offer entrepreneurship programs, empowering refugees to establish their own associations or businesses. However, significant hurdles persist, particularly regarding documentation requirements and proficiency in French, both essential for securing employment. The below excerpt from interview 6 illustrates the program assisting refugees in understanding the job market and employment rules in France as well as guide them to find a job comparable to the one they held in their home country.

*(The program) is for people searching for a job and we help them to understand the code and how it works in France to find a job, what are the rules, what things you have to do to be able to find a job and to have a job as much as possible equal to the job you could have got in your own country before living. (Interview 6)*

In relation to French language learning, interviewees noted that while the state has high expectations for refugees arriving in France, it often fails to provide adequate support. This realization serves as their motivation to step in and bridge this gap. The following citation from interview 12 shows that CSOs have taken on the responsibility of teaching French as the government provided limited resources for refugees.

*(...) saw how the French government had huge expectations in matter of learning French but, very small, they didn't give a lot of mean for people to learn French. So, the French government really relies on association to help people to learn how to speak French and in that context, it was created the idea of (our association). It's classes that are completely free,*

*no matter (what is) your juridic situation, if you are in exile, if you don't have papers. We don't care we just like 'yeah, come to our classes and let's learn French'. That's our mission and the goal is to help these people live in France by learning French. (Interview 12)*

Furthermore, given that the government and local authorities may not be equipped to provide specialized assistance to certain vulnerable groups, such as women in need or unaccompanied minors, CSOs focus on delivering their expertise to address the unique needs of these populations. The below excerpt from interview 17 explains the driving force behind the creation of the project stemmed from a sense of unmet need by the association working for women and LGBTIQ+.

*If we created this project, it's because we had the feeling of a lack. (...) And what pushed us to create (association) was the observation that almost all the women we met, whatever their background, their diploma, their training, their experience, when they obtained the right to work by becoming refugees or in another way, they were in jobs as maintenance workers, cleaners, or housework. And we said to ourselves that it was a shame for them. First of all, because there were women who had studied extensively, and it must have been difficult to find themselves in professions which were below that level. (Interview 17)*

With regard to basic need support, numbers of CSOs supplied diverse types of essential items or services that could be beneficial to refugees such as food, money, hygiene kit, shower, medicine, clothes, etc. The following quotation from interview 1 represents the primary need items for mother-to-be women that the CSOs provided to refugees and asylum centers.

*We have a team of volunteers who prepare maternity sets for people who are going to give birth soon. So, we collect clothes between birth size and six or nine months and baby accessories. And whenever someone needs clothing or accessories because the person is going to give birth soon, we provide the full bag of clothing, things and what we've got to nowadays. We've got a lot of asylum centers contacting us for that. (Interview 1)*

To assist in healthcare, CSOs provided services which are sensitive to gender and age. They place significant emphasis on mental health and recognize the need for tailored services for different population groups. The below excerpt from interview 2 displays their support to ensure appropriate services to the youth group in public authorities.

*Most of the challenges are working with public services, because they are usually unaccompanied minor, tend to be older from what they are saying, but we never know. And for example, if we want to (bring) unaccompanied minor to a hospital, they will say, now you have to go to the adult section. (We said) 'no, no, no, they are saying children.' So, we will bring them to the children's section. And (public service providers) are never really making things easy for them. (Interview 2)*

In regard to culture and activity, CSOs organized cultural and entertainment events for refugees and asylum seekers, allowing them to relax and gain a deeper understanding of French culture. These initiatives were not only aimed at refugees but also included community members, fostering opportunities for mutual understanding. The following quotation from interview 9 highlights the growing number of cross-cultural events and workshops organized by CSOs with the intention of enhancing integration.

*There are more and more projects that are financing the cross-cultural events or cross-cultural workshops because they start to understand that it's not only the job of the refugee people to integrate but it's also the job of the society to the society to adapt and to understand more the other cultures but it's a longer a long process. (Interview 9)*

The overarching findings from the interviews underscore the consistent dedication of CSOs to bridging gaps and empowering vulnerable populations. Their commitment to supporting refugees is evidenced through a range of specialized services tailored to address unmet needs.

#### ***5.1.4 CSOs and Integration Promotion***

Through a variety of programs, CSOs not only fulfill their primary service objectives but also contribute to strengthening social integration among refugees and host community members. Additionally, they acknowledge the importance of fostering connections between beneficiaries and service providers. This relationship acts as a crucial catalyst, facilitating refugees' rapid adaptation to their new society. Below is a quotation from the interview discussing the housing program of an NGO that supports refugees with accommodation.

*People really evolve in the way they interact with the refugee person. So, this is clearly an evolution, as we can see for the host and for the refugees. (...) This gives them some rest, some time to think about their projects, some time to just get strength. And then it's a very good way for them to learn French. Because most of the time when refugees come to France, they don't know French people. (...) The good thing with the program is that people meet other people and meet people outside of their own community. (...) I'm not saying staying in the community is a bad thing, but we just opened a new opportunity for people to get to know other people. So, they learn French better because they are not judged on the way they're treated. So, I think this is going to be interesting. they speak like you would speak with a friend not with a teacher who would say 'oh you made a mistake here', so people get more confident in themselves. (Interview 1)*

The interview 1 highlights how interactions between hosts and refugees evolve positively. Refugees gain a chance to rest, reflect, and regain strength while learning French in a supportive environment. The program facilitates connections beyond their communities, promoting language learning in a more relaxed and supportive environment. The following quotation from interview 13 exemplifies the transformation of interpersonal relationship between refugees and volunteer.

*The more time passes, the more we get attached to the learners and vice versa. I know that there is a great complicity that has been created between me and some of my learners, who come from South America in particular. Frankly, it has even become like friends. And suddenly, I think that people gain a little confidence, they are there since they know the teachers who go to the same classes each time. Well, I think that there are links that are created. (Interview 13)*

Analysis of interviews elucidates the pivotal role of CSOs in fostering access to resources in the host countries, social adaptation, and practice of citizenship and rights. Furthermore, their roles help facilitating interpersonal interactions, continuous dialogue, and social unity, aligning with the principle of mutual adaptation. Notably, CSOs recognize the value of facilitating connections between beneficiaries and volunteers.

## 5.2 Challenges Faced by CSOs Supporting Refugees in Lyon

From the interview results, the challenges faced by CSOs can be grouped into three categories. These are securing financial support for their initiatives, public discourse, and bureaucratic difficulties.

### 5.2.1 Securing Financial Support

Securing funding is indeed a common challenge for many organizations, especially those in the non-profit sector. It is crucial for CSOs to carefully plan and manage their finances to ensure they can continue their operations effectively.

Many respondents highlighted receiving support from Lyon Metropolis for their programs, alongside funding from national and regional sources, organizational donors, private contributors, and fundraising efforts. However, nearly all interviewees mentioned the challenge of sustaining adequate funding. Interviewees expressed concern about a dwindling pool of financial resources, even as the demand for their services continues to increase. This dilemma underscores a pressing need for innovative strategies to address the widening gap between funding availability and programmatic requirements. The following excerpt from interview 6 portrays the organizational challenge to sustain funding through various funding sources.

*(...) main issue we have is about funding. We receive a lot of funding from the town and the region. But it's less and less because, as it were, it's difficult to find money. So, we also try to get private funds, asking for companies to support us and to work with us in our different projects. But it is also quite difficult right now because companies also get difficulties on their side. But with that, we manage to be able to go with all those activities. (Interview 6)*

Furthermore, some respondents highlighted the inherent difficulty smaller organizations face in securing adequate funding. The scale of an organization appears to directly influence its ability to attract sufficient financial support. Smaller organizations often encountered greater challenges in competing for funding opportunities, which could limit their capacity to sustain operations and expand their impact. The below quotation from interview 1 underscores the challenge faced by

small organizations in securing sufficient funding, given the minimal support from public sources, which often favor larger organizations.

*It's very hard to get fundings when you're a small organization. The problem in France is that if you're a small organization, you can try to ask for public fundings and you will get sometimes (...) but like a few thousand euros a year, not much at all. (...) They would give money more likely to bigger organizations than to small and average organizations. So, if you're small, basically you remain small. It's very difficult to develop. (Interview 1)*

Findings also suggest that the allocation of funding from the state may not align practically with the needs of CSOs. Respondents have pointed out discrepancies between the allocated funds and the actual requirements for effective operation. This mismatch raises concerns about the efficacy of the current funding distribution mechanisms. The following quotation from interview 11 indicates the state's role in funding allocation which complicated the management of resources and sustainability of their work.

*It's the state that's going to drive the whole machine (funding allocation system). (...) So, (some organizations) have obtained more money, for example, but there are associations, they have not received anything in addition, while they also do the same things. It's a bit complicated afterwards. (...) It's really management, like a company behind, but to obtain funds and to allow us to (work) sustainably on what we do. It's complicated. (Interview 11)*

Another big difficulty regarding financial security of CSOs is the short lifespan of fundings. The short time grant management is challenging for their long-term operations. Interviewees from interview 15 underscored the difficulties associated with handling short-term funding, which introduces complexities into the planning process. The limited duration of grants can hinder long-term strategic initiatives, forcing organizations to constantly seek new sources of funding and adapt their programs to fit within these constraints.

*It's a difficulty to have visibility on our funding because, in general, in the associative community, we are funded on one year. There is no multi-annual funding, which means that we have very little visibility over the next few years, which means that the activity is a bit uncertain. That is to say that, by the end of the year, we have enough money to do everything*



*we want to do, but we have no certainty for the next year. So that's maybe one of the biggest difficulties. (Interview 15)*

The challenges surrounding funding for CSOs are multifaceted and significant. Despite receiving support from various sources including Lyon Metropolis, national and regional funding, organizational donors, and private contributors, CSOs consistently grapple with maintaining adequate financial resources. The collective responses shared by interviewees address the challenges to ensure the long-term financial security and sustainability of CSOs.

### ***5.2.2 Public Discourse on Refugee Issues: Public Attitude, Threats, and Misused Terminology***

The public attitudes directly influence policy discussions, thereby impacting the activities of CSOs working with refugees. Many interviewees showed their concerns regarding the public attitudes as a challenge towards refugees. The responses highlighted a rise in far-right sentiment among citizens in Lyon, mirroring trends seen in other parts of France. Several interviewees noted a growing opposition to programs addressing refugees and migration. The following quotations from interviews 1 and 3 are some parts showing public opinions towards refugee in Lyon.

*I would say citizens in Lyon are like any French citizen. It's really similar to the French public opinion right now. We have far right citizens, which are very opposed to our program, not especially us, but to everything that is linked to migration. And this last year, this part of the opinion is really increasing. (Interview 1)*

*Foreigners are always the perfect people to put the blame on, so it's giving us less and less opportunity. (...) We are advocating much the work we do within our groups welcoming people and trying to help them with the administration, (but) it's not effective anymore. We cannot do anything anymore. We're powerless. We see these places as observatories to witness what's going on, what the government does wrong, and so we can have arguments to advocate and to lobby and try to put pressure on the on our policymakers, but we are fighting a very big beast here. (Interview 3)*

Numerous interviewees reported experiencing threats, verbal and physical, while carrying out their duties. The following excerpt from interview 16 illustrates the experience of encountering hostility and racism, including threats of violence during their work.

*When I go in the public spaces to explain what we are doing to reach to the migrant, sometimes other people who are in public spaces yell at us. They are saying that foreigners have any enough rights, and we shouldn't be doing what we are doing because they are not good for the country. And sometimes people are really racist also, they (said that) '(I) can't wait when (the right side) come into power and they will be gunned and (they should) be careful because (we) are going to shoot you. It's sometimes a discourse that we heard quite a lot, not always, but I think it's still a lot. Sometimes it's scary because they know where we are we. (They) know they where I work and it's not cool. (Interview 16)*

Several interviewees, particularly prominent organizations and those affiliated with academic institutions, acknowledge the risks associated with publicly expressing their opinions, including participating in demonstrations and political events. They are mindful of potential backlash from the public, which could have detrimental consequences for the organization.

Furthermore, there are few responses explaining the misuse of the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' which results in problems for refugee support work. The confusion between the terms often causes from the misuse and conflation in media coverage and public discourse. When these terms are inaccurately used interchangeably or without proper context, it can lead to misunderstandings about the distinct circumstances and rights of each group. Together with the role of media, the interviewees explained that, beyond contributing to negative public perceptions, the conflation of these terms leads to difficulties in prioritizing necessary support and allocating funds appropriately, as explained in the below quotation from interview 1.

*(...) instead of using the term refugees, they were starting using the term migrants. Now, everybody's using this term, which is awful. It's not the right term to talk about refugees because you have to be specific. You have asylum seekers who are asking for asylum. Then you have refugees who are statutory refugees. (...) But most people and most media talk about these people as migrants. It doesn't describe well the situation of the person and the*

*word migrant has been used for years by the extreme right parties in a very negative way. And nowadays, everybody talks about migrants, even organizations, and I always (said that) don't talk about migrants because migrant is someone who is changing country originally. So that means it's someone who chose to change country and start a new life in another country without many major problems. That doesn't show well the situation of an asylum seeker of a refugee because these people haven't chosen to leave their country. They were forced to. They are facing many difficulties. So, it's not the same as a migrant. And this term migrants have been used badly by extreme right parties. So, why using the same term that has this very negative connotation in everybody's mind. (...) They need different supports and it's also the mix of funding. As you mentioned that many refugees that's really in urgent situation to get needs, but they cannot get enough support. I feel it's one of the major challenges that people don't make it clear (for the terms), refugee, migrants, asylum seekers, and it's the small thing, but it become a big problem. (Interview 1)*

The findings clearly illustrate the complex interplay between public attitudes, policy discourse, and the initiatives of CSOs in the sphere of refugee support in Lyon. This dynamic relationship not only shapes the operational environment of CSOs but also impacts the challenges they face and the approaches they adopt in meeting the needs of refugees.

### **5.2.3 Bureaucratic Hurdles**

Several interviewees highlighted the bureaucratic hurdles associated with obtaining refugee documents from the regional administration as a major concern. The process is intricate, particularly for asylum seekers who must await the confirmation of their refugee status before gaining access to essential rights and services within the country. Moreover, this process can be arduous and demanding for refugees, involving extensive documentation and lengthy procedures. The regional administration lacks adequate support mechanisms for refugees in this predicament. This issue can also add on to other challenges already faced by refugees. The following excerpt from interview 15 illustrates the problems of the French administrative procedure for refugees.

*For me, the problem today is not recent. It's been a long time. We already have a real problem at the administrative level. Obtaining documents with the prefecture is a real*

*struggle for refugees, even if they have refugee status and can obtain the right to work in France. Today, the real problem we have is the duration to obtain the documents, because without the papers, we cannot find work, we cannot find housing. And even if they have obtained this right, it can take a long time. (Interview 15)*

In addition to the lengthy and complex process, certain respondents pointed out that the policy of granting rights exclusively to refugees upon receiving their status is also a problem. This approach proves impractical as it prolongs the waiting period and slows down the overall inclusion process, as identified in interview 17.

*The main gap is that the whole integration action only starts when people have obtained refugee status. And the whole period when people are seeking asylum, when they don't have the right to work, and when they have time, nothing happens. And it's a shame because it's time that we could use for people to prepare a professional project, learn French. (...) and when they obtain the status, they would be immediately ready to work. So, this is what we are trying to do here, that is to say that a woman seeking asylum has access to the same possibilities as refugee women, and that therefore allows particularly at the level of the language, of speaking and practicing French long before being a refugee, and I think that is important. (Interview 17)*

Many interviewees share that numerous refugees approach them seeking assistance with document procedures. However, often these requests exceed their capabilities. The responsibility for the documentation process lies with the regional administrative office, which unfortunately lacks adequate support services for refugees and asylum seekers. CSOs frequently encounter demands for document support from refugees, stretching beyond the scope of their intended work and capacity. The following excerpt from interview 16 identifies their difficulty to compensate for the absence of local authorities, particularly in assisting with document procedures for migrants.

*The main difficulty is sometimes there are a lot of people (that) we don't always have the answer (for them) and the (regional administration) does not insert us. Sometimes we have the feeling that we are compensating for the lack of authorities' services especially with the document procedures, because no one is there to help them. The (regional administration)*

*doesn't reply, and we had some issues with the number of persons who needs help, and we don't have enough money to (respond) all their needs because the welcome is made by volunteer. It's a volunteer reception at our place so it's not a professional and sometimes the volunteers are overwhelmed by the number of persons who needs a good documentation and make an appointment with the (regional administration). (Interview 16)*

From the results, the challenges associated with obtaining refugee documents from the regional administration underscore systemic issues within the bureaucratic process. This complexity is particularly burdensome for asylum seekers awaiting confirmation of their refugee status, as it significantly delays their access to essential rights and services. The regional administration's lack of adequate support mechanisms exacerbates these difficulties, compounding the challenges already faced by refugees.

## **5.3 Interaction in Lyon**

To understand the form of interactions of CSOs in Lyon, the analysis was divided into four types of interactions, including CSOs and CSOs, CSOs and local authorities, CSOs and national government, and multi-level interaction.

### ***5.3.1 Interactions Among CSOs in the City of Lyon***

Drawing from the comprehensive mapping detailed in section 3. Context, CSOs are diverse both in their functional roles and organizational structures. This section presents the findings from the interviews with CSOs regarding their interaction among each other in Lyon.

All interviewees highlighted numerous instances of strong collaboration among CSOs, illustrating a widespread practice of mutual support. Many described maintaining both formal and informal relationships with individuals from other organizations, often exchanging updates and insights across various platforms, both formal and informal ways. Such interactions prove pivotal, as they enable CSOs to address the multifaceted needs of refugees more effectively. Given the limitations of individual capacities, establishing partnerships becomes essential for CSOs to seek assistance

or refer cases to other organizations as needed. The following excerpt from interview 3 shows the relationships in organizational and personal level between the interviewee and another organization which becomes informal platform of collaboration.

*Some of our groups were formed (as) we met once and then we (said) we should do it again and then it becomes a thing. (...) Sometimes it's very formal and sometimes it's informal because we work together, and we just go have drinks and have some good times. It's formal because we work together but it's also because we saw that we have something to share together, for example, the next Tuesday the head of (another organization) asked us if we could meet. (...) it's very frequent she will be like 'hey (our organization) wants to do that, do you want to participate' and this is how it goes. For me it's kind of informal (collaboration). (Interview 3)*

Furthermore, most respondents concur that collaborative work with partners strengthens and enhances the efficacy of their programs or services. For this reason, they are committed to actively expanding or sustaining their partnerships. Below is the excerpt from the interviewee 6 explaining the importance of partnership in their works.

*We know all other associations working around refugee problems, and we work together, we collaborate as much as we can just to be able to build some programs with two or three associations at the same time to be stronger and to have more impact. Of course, we are working in this way, and this is exactly the spirit of (our organization). Not to say we want to do everything; we want to use all the skills and all the other associations that we have around us to make the programs better. (Interview 6)*

Moreover, many interviewees revealed that, not only connections in the country, but they also received positive supports from international connections. These collaborations enable CSOs to provide more effective support to refugees by leveraging each other's strengths and resources.

### ***5.3.2 Interactions between CSOs and Local Authorities***

Local authorities comprise diverse actors, each with varying levels of engagement and support toward CSOs. As outlined in the preceding section, some challenges stem from local authorities, impacting their relationship with CSOs and leading to conflicts arising from inadequate support in their collaborative efforts. Several interviewees highlighted discrepancies between their perspectives and those of local authorities, resulting in tensions between them. These divergent viewpoints occasionally lead to conflicts with local authorities, as exemplified in the excerpt from interview 3 below.

*We had a lot of chances to work with them (local authorities), but we don't have the same view on society, so it doesn't work. Not for all of them, but for some of them. For example, not so long ago, we had an interview with the (the regional administration), and it was nonsense because we worked a lot, we witnessed a lot, because we received a thousand people every year who claimed that they have issues with (the regional administration). We are on the field every day. We have volunteers that go to (them), trying to entangle all these things, and we go meet them, and they wouldn't admit any fault on their part. They won't do anything anymore, they don't respect the tribunal decisions, so what do we do? When we cannot discuss with the authorities, we sue. That's one of our ways of action. (Interview 3)*

Another type of relationship between CSOs and local authorities is characterized as a 'donor-recipient' dynamic. Several interviewees mentioned the significant support received from the local authorities in Lyon, who serve as primary funder. This type of relationship is mostly found with the local governmental actors who have responsibilities for social integration and refugee welcome. Their works align closely with the missions of CSOs in supporting refugees. The following excerpt from interview 17 indicates the collaborations in financial support and integration promotion with the authorities.

*(The association) is financed by the territorial reception and integration contract. In this respect, there are working meetings with the state services, the (regional administrative), the metropolis, and the city. Since the contract is signed by the metropolis of Lyon and the state services and the city of Lyon, we have to work together regularly in this way. (...) We*

*work with the city of Lyon, particularly in all aspects of integration. We are lucky to have an elected representative for hospitality who is very accessible and who has already met several times with women groups and, symbolically, it's important to be welcomed at the town hall by an elected official. It's also a way of feeling belonging to a territory and so that's something we also work on regularly. (Interview 17)*

While some governmental actors actively seek strong collaboration with CSOs, the depth of these relationships varies depending on the nature of the organizations' work and their standing within the realm of CSOs in Lyon. While many interviewees acknowledged support from local authorities in Lyon, not all organizations experience this level of collaboration. The following excerpt from interview 6 reflects their perception of support from local authorities at the city level, which is generally positive. Conversely, there is less support observed for CSOs working in Lyon at the regional level.

*They are supporting us. They (asked) 'what you are doing?' '(what are) your activity?' and so on. 'It is very good. We love that. We want to help you. We support you'. So, for the speech, they are 100% with us, but when (it's) for more than just a speech, sometimes it can be difficult to get funding, for sure, and also to get support, for example, to have some room to organize some activity and that kind of thing. It's difficult. And what I need also to say is that there are many other associations in Lyon. So, for sure, they cannot help all the associations all the time. But we are lucky because the local authorities are on the labor side at the moment in Lyon. And, of course, they are happy with our activities. But the region, (which) is the level above, is on the other side. It's more conservative. (Interview 6)*

Most interviewees agreed on the clear disparity in attitudes between authorities at the city and regional levels. They often experienced greater tension with regional authorities but maintained a more positive relationship with city-level authorities, who often served as partners and donors.



### ***5.3.3 Relation with the State and National level influence***

With regard to relationship with national level, many of interviewees expressed that exerting influence at the national level was challenging, as typically only CSOs based in Paris could effectively engage with the government decision making in policy forums or dialogue platforms. In the big size organization, they had the advocacy team who had direct responsibilities on influencing the government following the evidence from the field, experts, and the missions of the organization, as illustrated in the following quotation from interview 9.

*Not much in Lyon, but in Paris, we have an advocacy team that are working with several associations in Paris. And we have like a collective (working group). We participate in the communication and action of advocacy. (...), it's more in Paris that we have a partnership with several associations, which make advocacy for the big debates, for the last immigration politics, for example. We have project documents for the governments and for the politicians. So, it's not a political use to try to make a plan that, (but) It's not very working. (Interview 9)*

However, some noted that, within their capacities, they were able to influence at the regional level. They participated in city-based dialogue platforms where they contributed to decision-making processes and influence policymakers' actions. The below excerpt from interview 1 highlights their participation in local meetings and engaging with politicians visit.

*Sometimes we are invited to take part in roundtables with politicians to talk about the situation. So, I don't have the time to be part of all the meetings; but for example, with Lyon, there are some regular meetings between local organizations and them to think together. So, we are actually part of one of the schemes for refugees we just have meetings and try to help to improve our actions all together. (...) And last year there was a politician, some of a few politicians, who came to Lyon and asked to meet with the local organizations about the change, the new law that they were drafting a bill about immigration. (Interview 1)*

The ability of CSOs to influence national policies depends on their organizational capabilities and relationships with authorities and the government. However, the results indicate that multi-level

interactions play a more significant role in influencing the national agenda than direct relationships between CSOs and the national government.

#### ***5.3.4 Multi-level Interaction***

Several responses underscored the collective advocacy as a key strategy employed by CSOs to amplify their voices to both the public and the government. This approach involves collaboration among various stakeholders at multiple levels to advance shared goals and missions. The below excerpt from interview 17 underscores their strategy to increase their impacts in various levels by joining the national network and collaborating with various stakeholders.

*We are a small structure, and we only exist in Lyon. We do not have a national scope (...) We say to ourselves that we are sometimes too small to make any impact, so we joined a network called the 'Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité' (Federation of Solidarity Actors). It is a national network which will allow us to make our proposals stronger. So, we are a member of the (Federation of Solidarity Actors), and we have set up a working group. (Interview 17)*

The following quotation from interview 6 shows that their global organizational network worked to influence government policies and improved refugee rights by collaborating with other associations and maintaining regular contact with the government.

*Now, with a lot of representation in France, but also in some other countries in Europe and Canada, we have also some activities on the branch of (organization), which is (global), to try to influence at the government level, and just to make the law going in the right direction for refugees and to give them more rights, to give their life easier when they arrive in France. It's a long way to make things change at this level. But yes, (our organization) is trying to do it (by) working with other associations and having regular contact with the Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly) and the government in France. (Interview 6)*

## **5.4 Ways forward: Changing Legal and Political Sphere in France**

Considering the shifting landscape of legitimacy and politics, the interview findings underscore two key aspects for CSOs dedicated to refugee support in Lyon. Firstly, there is the persistent demand for services amidst diminishing resources. Secondly, the evolving legal and political landscape, particularly following the implementation of the new immigration law in January 2024, could impede the support efforts of CSOs.

### ***5.4.1 Consistent Needs Overtime***

In examining shifts within refugee support initiatives, interview responses indicated a perception that the fundamental needs of refugees had remained largely consistent. However, there had been a noticeable decline solely in state funding and support. The following quotation from the interview 1 highlights the ongoing consistent needs of refugees from diverse nationalities upon their arrival in France.

*I would say that nothing really changed about the people who arrive, their problems, their needs. What they need is always the same. There're always people arriving or people who've been here for long and who are denied asylum and still have needs. Even people who are granted asylum and who become statutory refugees, they still have a lot of problems. Even when they get the papers, they still need help as well for a couple of years after. And that's never changed since we started acting. It's always been the same. We just have different nationalities arriving. (Interview 1)*

While the landscape of refugee support may evolve in terms of demographics and external factors, the core needs of refugees remain constant.

### ***5.4.2 Changing Legal and Political Sphere***

Several interviewees expressed significant concerns about the new immigration law released in January 2024 'Controlling immigration while improving integration.' The below excerpt from interview 4 highlights the concern regarding changes in document provided to refugees as their support is contingent on individuals having the necessary documentation to work in France.

*If we agree less rights to people who need asylum, people who are refugees, necessarily it will have an impact because we will be able to accompany fewer people. We will have fewer large profiles and more people that we cannot accompany anymore. For example, all the people who are already (supported) by us and who have a residence permit that expired, if we do not allow these people to renew their residence permit, we cannot do anything with them because we can only accompany people who have papers authorizing to work on French territory. Otherwise, we send them to other structures, but we cannot accompany people who do not have document. So necessarily, if these people are less and less to renew their papers, it will significantly have a negative impact on the accompaniments and on the help that we will be able to offer them. (Interview 4)*

Additionally, the majority of CSOs stressed that the new law would worsen the already difficult conditions faced by refugees. For this reason, they must quickly assess the impact of this new legal and political environment and adapt knowledge and capacity accordingly to ensure effective support for refugees. The following quotation from interview 3 highlights the importance in updating their knowledge due to coming changes.

*We have to update everything we knew because it's going to be a lot of changes, big changes. And we've fought a lot. So that, this law wasn't voted but it was (passed) anyway, so we have to inform all the volunteers and we have to train everyone again. (Interview 3)*

Regarding the strategies to these new challenges, CSOs found themselves significantly constrained. Some of interviewees mentioned that, currently, the greatest influence on their initiatives came from the government's and authorities' stance on reducing the number of refugees. This poses a significant risk to organizations as decreased refugee numbers could lead to funding cuts. The following excerpt displays the possibility of reduced refugee intake in France posing challenges for their organizations.

*Right now, what could influence more activities, we will (see) in the coming months or years government and authority thinking that we need to have less and less refugees in France. So, in this case, probably associations like (us), we have the risk to disappear because we will have no more funding. (...) Every six months, we consider all different programs*

*regarding the feedback we get from the refugees, and we adapt every time we need to adapt. The objective right now is to continue in what we are doing, where we consider we are not so bad, and we continue to help as much as we can. Tomorrow, (if) the political environment change, we (would) have to adapt again and maybe disappear. But what can we do with that? (Interview 6)*

In conclusion, the new immigration law significantly impacts the services offered by CSOs. While the full extent of its effects has not yet been observed, it will become more evident in the near future.

## **5.5 Observation of Local Authorities**

The two interviewees from local authorities providing support for refugees in Lyon highlighted similar experiences and challenges faced by CSOs. They reported encountering comparable situations, sharing the same primary challenges and concerns.

In terms of workload, local authorities also faced challenges related to high workloads and budget constraints. This had compelled them to rely heavily on volunteers to augment their capacities. Moreover, similar to the approach taken by CSOs, local authorities collaborate with partners to ensure effective support for refugees. These partnerships helped fill gaps in their initiatives, enhancing their overall capacity and effectiveness. The following quotation from interview 5 highlights their dependency on volunteers and partnerships.

*(...) in these permanent public writers (volunteer admin), we work in partnership with an association. Since public writers have to be trained, they have to know the administrative procedures very well to accompany at best. And concretely, we have (staff), who are members of this association, and people, who are employees or volunteers of the association, who intervene permanently. (...) Sometimes, we regret not being able to spend enough time with some (beneficiaries) to explain to them. If we maybe had a little more people, it would be more effective. (Interview 5)*

In regard of shifting political landscape, mirroring the findings from CSOs, local authorities expressed significant apprehensions regarding the negative directions observed concerning refugees. The below excerpt from interview 10 illustrates the impacts from the new immigration law that may worsen mental health conditions and increase suffering due to its reaffirmation and heightened restrictions.

*From a mental health point of view, in any case, it's something that will probably create more sufferers, I would say. That will create a worse mental health. The fact that the law reaffirms and makes it harder, there may be mistakes. (Interview 10)*

Nevertheless, from the interviewees, they had fewer concerns regarding the implications for their work. As local authorities, they were able to sustain their duties without concerns about the jeopardy to their services or organization. In the following excerpt from interview 5, a local authority representative outlined their role in aiding displaced individuals arriving in France. However, they clarified that they do not actively facilitate integration which is different from traditional civil society services.

*We are a resource for the exiled people. After they arrive in France, their first concern is often administrative. It is to have an appointment with (regional administration), to submit their file, to be able to work. So, we can help them, but we are not playing a facilitating role in the integration and in the construction of the future life. On the other hand, we are not a social service as such. (Interview 5)*

## 6. Discussion

This research aims to explore the roles, characteristics, and circumstances of CSOs working for refugees and asylum seekers in France, using Lyon as a case study. The central research questions focus on understanding the characteristics and general situation of CSOs, the challenges they face in their work, their interactions with different stakeholders, and the impact of the changing legal and political landscape on their works. Qualitative methodology was applied to the study. The in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 interviewees, including 15 CSO workers and 2 workers from local authorities.

First of all, the findings revealed that CSOs in Lyon played a crucial role in supporting refugees through diverse services and integration efforts, through both general and specific-target services. They fostered social integration by creating connections among refugees, service providers, volunteers, and community members, as well as promoting mutual understanding and adaptation. The results support that CSOs played a pivotal role in to filling the gap when public authorities were insufficient in addressing the challenge on their own (Simsa, 2017). CSOs utilized targeted approaches which need more than just following a common law approach considering unique vulnerabilities and integration challenges (Fine, 2019). Their initiatives promote communication among organizations, citizens, and local communities; as well as enhance social ties between newly arrived refugees and various groups within the community (Dragonas, 2021). Additionally, through their services, CSOs' initiatives are the key determinant of integration' effectiveness which is fundamentally related to the intercultural awareness and sensitivity of all parties involved (Dobson, Agrusti, & Pinto, 2019).

Secondly, the results reveal that the main challenges faced by CSOs supporting refugees in Lyon are resource constraints, negative public perceptions, and bureaucratic hurdles. These three main challenges were also compounded by the shifting social and political landscape. First, CSOs struggle with maintaining adequate funding despite support from various sources. Smaller organizations find it especially difficult to secure funds, and the short-term cycle of grants hinders long-term planning. Second, negative public opinions and rising far-right sentiments in France challenge CSOs. Amidst the growing public sentiments against migration and refugees, CSOs faced continued threats and attacks from various actors targeting organizations, staff, and

volunteers which leads to restricted 'safe space' for their implementation (European Commission, 2022). Furthermore, the misuse of terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' in public discourse leads to confusion and impedes effective support. Third, documentation process for refugees is complex and lengthy, delaying their access to services. CSOs often have to compensate for inadequate support from regional administration, stretching their resources.

Thirdly, the findings showed that CSOs in Lyon have engaged in various forms of interactions. The interviews underscore a strong collaboration among CSOs, illustrating a widespread practice of mutual support. Their collaborative works strengthened the efficacy of their services. For the relationship between CSOs and local authorities, their relationship is complex and varied, resulting in both collaboration and conflict. While city-level authorities often acted as primary funders and partners, regional authorities were less supportive and more conservative. The finding also confirms that CSOs actively cultivate their relationship with local government while maintaining a focus on community-oriented approach (Waardenburg, 2020). Furthermore, interaction with the national government is challenging, making multi-level collaboration essential for effective high-level advocacy (Mediterranean City-to-City Migration, 2017). Multi-level collaboration of CSOs and other stakeholders fostered policy alignment across different levels. This supports that CSOs play a crucial role in connecting citizens and authorities, with stronger collaboration leading to better outcomes (Harrison, 2018), and influence policies by inspiring, informing, and improving them, although their impact depends on the political landscape (Pollard & Court, 2005).

Fourthly, shaped by the changing legal and political landscape in France, the findings highlight two key aspects for CSOs in Lyon. First, while the core needs of refugees remain constant despite evolving demographics, state funding has declined. Second, the new immigration law restricts asylum rights and documentation, potentially hindering CSOs' support efforts. As a result, CSOs must quickly adapt to these changes and update their knowledge and strategies accordingly.

Furthermore, from the interviews with local authorities, the findings suggest that local authorities face similar challenges to CSOs, such as high workloads and budget constraints, leading to a heavy reliance on volunteers. Moreover, they share concerns with CSOs about the negative impacts of the new immigration law, but face fewer existential threats compared to CSOs as they can continue their duties without jeopardy to their services or organization.



Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research, particularly in data collection due to time constraints. The sample size, based on 17 interviews in Lyon, may not fully represent the situation across France. Additionally, the research was conducted shortly after the new immigration law took effect on January 27, 2024, with primary data collection from February 20 to April 19, 2024. Consequently, the findings show many linkages to the influence of this legislative change, though its long-term impacts remain unclear. Future research will be essential to comprehensively identify the ongoing situation and challenges faced by CSOs working with refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, this study analyzed collective responses from various organizational types operating in diverse areas. For a more profound understanding, future research should focus on specific types of organizations or particular scopes of work.

## 7. Conclusion

This research seeks to explore the roles, circumstances, and characteristics of civil society organizations (CSOs) working for refugees and asylum seekers in France, utilizing Lyon as a case study. The 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted as primary data for analysis. The result indicates that CSOs in Lyon play a crucial role in supporting refugees through diverse services and integration efforts, fostering social connections, and bridging gaps left by public authorities. They faced three main challenges, including resource constraints, negative public perceptions, and bureaucratic hurdles. Further finding reveals that CSOs engage in essential collaborations with other CSOs, local authorities, and the national government. These multi-level interactions are vital for effective advocacy and policy alignment, though national-level interactions remain challenging. Furthermore, the finding shows that the new immigration law imposes stricter asylum restrictions, potentially hindering CSOs' efforts. The similar findings also appear in the interviews with local authorities.

The results support several studies that examined how CSOs fill gaps left by public authorities, their targeted approaches to integration challenges, and their efforts to enhance social ties within communities. Additionally, with the research conducted during a period marked by the implementation of new immigration legislation and a surge in anti-migrant sentiments in France, it highlighted the significant impact of the evolving legal and political environment on refugee assistance efforts which is the important for the further policy making and strategic planning of all stakeholders.

The study's limitations due to time constraints in data collection should be recognized as the findings may not provide a comprehensive representation of the situation across France. Future research could delve deeper by examining the roles of CSOs alongside the long-term effects of the new immigration law. Alternatively, focusing on specific organizational types or particular areas of operation could provide more nuanced insights.

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## Appendix I - Interviewees' Profiles

<b>Interview NO.</b>	<b>Operational Area</b>	<b>Organizational Type</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Experience in Organization</b>
Interviewee 1	Housing, Basic needs support	NGO	Founder, President	8 years
Interviewee 2	Healthcare	NGO	Psychologist	More than 2 years
Interviewee 3	Advocacy, Administrative support, French language learning, Legal assistance	INGO	National Delegate in the Region	2 years
Interviewee 4	Employment	Social Enterprise	Support for employment	3 years
Interviewee 5	Administrative support, French language learning	Local Authority	Assistant director	12 years
Interviewee 6	Culture and activity, Employment	INGO	Employability and training coordinator	1 year 4 months
Interviewee 7	Housing, Administrative support	NGO	Program manager	1 year
Interviewee 8	Housing, Administrative support	NGO	Volunteer	6 months
Interviewee 9	French language learning, Culture and activity	NGO	Volunteer, Co-director	5 years 1 month
Interviewee 10	Healthcare	Local Authority	Researcher, Psychologist	7 years
Interviewee 11	Housing, Basic needs support, Administrative support	NGO	Employee	Missing information
Interviewee 12	French language learning, Culture and activity	Association	President, Volunteer	4 years
Interviewee 13	French language learning, Culture and activity	Association	Volunteer	7 months



Interviewee 14	French language learning, Culture and activity	Association	Volunteer	7 months
Interviewee 15	Basic needs, Healthcare, Women and LGBTIQ+	NGO	Coordinators	More than 2 years
Interviewee 16	Basic needs, Administrative support, Culture and activity	Association	Coordinator	1 year 9 months
Interviewee 17	Women and LGBTIQ+	Association	Founder, Director	12 years

## **Appendix II - Interview questions**

### **General information:**

1. Could you help describe your organization? How long has the organization been implemented in Lyon?
2. What are your responsibilities and involvement in the organization? How long have you been working in the organization?

### **Operation/ implementation in Lyon:**

3. Could you describe the work/ implementation from your organization in Lyon? What kind of support/ specialization do you provide for refugees (e.g., legal assistance, social support, needs support, advocating)?
4. Are there any Challenges or gaps in implementation in Lyon (both in the past and nowadays)?
5. Do you see any changes between before and after implementation/ program in Lyon? (It would be any kind of change that you could think about. You can also give example)

### **Networking:**

6. Does your organization work along with local authorities in Lyon? Could you please explain the relationship of your organization with them?
7. Does your organization have any chance to work with or influence the French national government?
8. Do you work with other organizations? Is there any working group/ network that your organization is being part of/ working with in refugee response?
9. Do you get any support from people in Lyon?

### **Funding:**

10. What is the main funding support for your organization?
11. Are there any challenges to get enough funding for operation?

### **Future planning/ strategies:**

12. Do you see any factors, such as changing situations or regulations, that would impact your organization's operations and strategic planning? How might it impact?

## Appendix III - Interview consent form

### **Project name: In-depth Exploration of the Roles Played by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in shaping Responses to the Refugee Situation in France (case study of Lyon)**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Monthiporn Punya, a master's student of Global Development Policy program. You will be asked to complete an interview, which should take approximately 30 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw from the research at any time.

This research aims to explore the significant role of organizations in contributing to and influencing refugee responses in Lyon. Information from the interview will only be used for the purpose of the research. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous and will only be accessed by myself and my research supervisor. They will not be provided to anyone else, except as required by law.

The findings of this research may be published in my Master thesis or any connected publication. In any publication, information will be anonymized so they cannot be linked back to you.

If you would like more information about this project or if you have any issues related to the project, please contact:

Monthiporn Punya, email: [monthiphorn.p@hotmail.com](mailto:monthiphorn.p@hotmail.com)

Mackova Lucie, email: [lucie.mackova@upol.cz](mailto:lucie.mackova@upol.cz)

### **Consent**

I, ....., consent to participate in the above research project. I understand that my involvement is voluntary, and my responses will be confidential.

**Ticking the 'Yes' box below indicates that, having read the information provided, you give your consent.**

Yes

No

Participant signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_