

City for Everybody - Building Responsible Action for Inclusive Local Communities (CIFER)

**A state of the art on racism and
discrimination against migrants in
Paris and Ile de France**

National report – France

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1. Introduction

This report is part of the European Commission project entitled City for Everybody – Building Responsible Action for Inclusive Local Communities (CIFER). The CIFER project aims to address and better understand discrimination against people with a migrant background in the cities of Paris, Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia), Budapest (Hungary), and Malmö (Sweden), and to develop initiatives and policy measures to create a more inclusive environment in these cities, transforming them into “cities for everybody”. To do so, the University of Malmö, the Hungarian NGO Menedek, the Center for Peace Studies (Croatia), the Peace Institute (Slovenia), and the France Terre d’Asile NGO (France) are producing national reports analysing these issues.

France is marked by a certain level of multiculturalism, the rich legacy of foreign nationals who have moved to the country in recent decades and political links with countries which were previously colonised. In 2022, around 5.3 million foreign nationals were living in France, amounting to 7.8% of the population. This figure is composed of 4.5 million immigrants who had not acquired French nationality and 0.8 million people born in France of foreign nationality.²³ This population is over-represented in the Île de France region, particularly in Paris. Thirty-nine percent of immigrants (foreign nationals born abroad) in France were living in this region in 2013.²⁴ In addition, in 2022, 114,588 people applied for asylum in France for the first time, an increase of 27.2% compared to 2021.²⁵ Of these applicants, 29.2% were protected at first instance.

Public debate is currently marked by the rise in anti-immigration rhetoric, particularly on the right and far right of the political spectrum. News stories and images of large numbers of migrants arriving on Europe’s coasts are regularly used to justify the concepts of “flooding” or “danger” linked to immigration in general, but also more specifically to asylum seekers. This context, which encourages “narratives scapegoating foreigners, immigrants and their children” highlights the “dangers of simplifying and manipulating hatred of Otherness”.²⁶

The aim of this report is to take stock of measures to combat discrimination against migrants in France, and more specifically in Paris and the Île-de-France region. This also provided an opportunity to explore the specific types of discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ migrants and the measures implemented to better protect them. The report is based on a series of individual interviews and focus groups with migrants as well as professionals. The professionals we met work for public sector bodies involved in the fight against discrimination and the reception and integration of exiles, as well as for NGOs and other stakeholders in the field. Most of the migrants interviewed in the focus groups had recently

²³ INSEE, [L'essentiel sur... les immigrés et les étrangers](#), July 2023 (in French).

²⁴ INSEE, [Une population immigrée aujourd'hui plus répartie sur le territoire régional](#), October 2017 (in French).

²⁵ OFPRA, Activity Report 2022 and Eurostat.

²⁶ CNCDH, [Report on the fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia](#), 2023.

arrived in France and were either in the process of applying for asylum, had been granted international protection, or were in an irregular situation. More than half of them had been or continue to be supported by France terre d’asile. However, some individuals, particularly those in an irregular situation, are supported more broadly by NGOs not specifically involved in the asylum process, who work more closely on issues of access to social rights or health for LGBTQIA+ people or undocumented migrants. Among those involved, there is an almost equal proportion of people identifying as men and women. The migrants interviewed were very active during the discussions and had a high level of knowledge about the general administrative procedures for foreign nationals in France. However, this was countered by a lack of information about access to their rights and to justice. The precarious administrative situation in which many of them find themselves sometimes led to a fear of criticising the French reception system, and because the experience of exile had been extremely traumatic for most of the people interviewed, they often downplayed the reception conditions in France and the discrimination they had encountered. This report highlights the realities of the discrimination they experience, by removing the comparison between living conditions they had previously experienced and those in France. In addition, although we were able to overcome the language barrier by conducting the interviews in English, French, and Spanish, and by mainly asking people who could express themselves in these languages to take part, it is clear that this barrier limits the linguistic and cultural sample of our study and the subtleties that can emerge in discussions. Based on the testimonies, observations and recommendations of all these participants, this report does not claim to be an exhaustive study of discrimination against migrants in Paris. Rather, it seeks to provide an overview of the main problems observed on the ground, the policies, initiatives and tools available to address them, and recommendations to overcome the limitations that have been identified.

2. Institutional framework

France has gradually developed an extensive legal arsenal to combat racism and anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination and hatred. This legal foundation has led to the creation of a wide range of institutional tools enabling France to pursue public policies at national, regional and local level.

The statutory and legislative arsenal

Racial and ethnic discrimination

Although racist insults have been punishable since 1881 with the law on freedom of the press, and the principle of “non-discrimination” was enshrined in the French Constitution in 1946, it was not until 1972, with the passing of the “Pleven” law banning racial discrimination, followed by developments in the 1990s, that discrimination was truly recognised. Developments in the 1990s include, notably, European legislative initiatives such as the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the Racial Equality and Employment Equality Directives of 2000.

These foundations were followed by a series of anti-discrimination laws in France in the 2000s. In 2001, the Anti-Discrimination Act made discriminatory acts and speech an offence, and defined the relevant grounds, which were extended in 2008 by a law adapting it to EU law. Around the same time, the law of 30 December 2004 reinforced measures to combat discriminatory comments of a sexist or homophobic nature and created the High Authority to Combat Discrimination and Promote Equality (*Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité*) in 2004, which became the institution known as the "Human Rights Defender" (see below). Finally, the law of 2008 defined 25 grounds upon which discrimination can be based (including alleged race, origin, religion, and sexual orientation).

The French Criminal Code currently defines discrimination exhaustively as any distinction made between individuals for various reasons, including their “origin, sex, (...) morals, sexual orientation or identity, (...) actual or supposed membership or non-membership of a particular ethnic group, nation, race or religion” and their “ability to express themselves in a language other than French” (Article 222-1 of the French Criminal Code). Discrimination can be direct (aimed directly at a category of people) or indirect (a provision that is intended to be general, but which has the ultimate effect of targeting a very specific category of people).

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Legislation on the rights of LGBTQIA+ people has developed rapidly. In the space of a few decades, France ceased to recognise homosexuality as a mental illness (1981), decriminalised homosexuality (1982), and allowed same-sex couples to enter into a Civil Solidarity Pact (1999), followed by civil marriage (2013). It was made easier for transgender people to change their civil records in 2016: they no longer have to prove that they have undergone an irreversible physical transformation, but must still demonstrate that the sex they are listed as does not correspond to their gender identity.

In addition to European Directive 2000/78/EC prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and its transposition into national law in 2001, France amended several articles of the Criminal Code in 2003, making discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation an aggravating circumstance. Combating hatred against LGBTQIA+ people has subsequently become increasingly important in France.

Public policies

National policies

In 2012, the Interministerial Commission to combat Racism and Anti-Semitism (*Délégation interministérielle à la lutte contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme, DILCRA*) was created. In 2016, its scope was extended to include hatred and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people, becoming DILCRAH. The role of this body is to design, coordinate and lead the French government's anti-discrimination policy under the authority of the Prime Minister, notably through the development of specific national plans. DILCRAH works in a cross-cutting way with the various ministries, including education, justice, culture and urban policy. It acts as an intermediary between public bodies and NGOs involved in defending human rights and combating racism, anti-Semitism and anti-LGBTQIA+ hatred.

In 2023, two national actions plans were published: the first one aims at fighting racism and antisemitism²⁷ and the second one is specifically dedicated to tackling anti LGBTQIA+ discriminations²⁸. The latter focuses on five key areas: identifying the reality of LGBTphobia, measuring these discriminatory acts more accurately, guaranteeing access to and the effectiveness of rights, punishing LGBTphobic perpetrators and acts, and developing a European and international strategy.

While DILCRAH targets all French citizens who are victims of racism or discrimination, other measures and initiatives are aimed specifically at people seeking asylum in France. In May 2021, the Ministry of the Interior published “Ten measures to improve care for vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees” (*“10 actions pour renforcer la prise en charge des vulnérabilités des demandeurs d’asile et des réfugiés”*), commonly known as the

²⁷ GOUVERNEMENT, [Plan national de lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et les discriminations liées à l'origine \(2023-2026\)](#) (in French).

²⁸ MINISTÈRE CHARGE DE L'ÉGALITÉ ENTRE LES FEMMES ET LES HOMMES, DE LA DIVERSITÉ ET DE L'ÉGALITÉ DES CHANCES, [Plan national pour l'égalité, contre la haine et les discriminations anti-LGBT+ \(2023-2026\)](#) (in French)

“vulnerability” plan. This initiative is based on the observation that some asylum seekers are more vulnerable than others because of their gender, sexual orientation or background. The DNA scheme has 300 specialised accommodation places for women who are victims of trafficking or violence. There are also 200 “labelled” places which give priority to LGBTQIA+ people. Other initiatives have also been established in line with the anti-discrimination plans, such as training and awareness-raising for professionals working with asylum seekers at all stages of the application process. OFPRA, which is responsible for assessing asylum applications, has five groups of advisors on different themes related to the main specific protection needs (minors, sexual orientation and gender identity, torture and trauma, human trafficking and violence against women), who can be called upon by protection officers as part of their assessment of an asylum application.

Finally, non-governmental bodies also operate at national level and are an essential pillar in the fight against racism and discrimination. On the one hand, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH), which produces an annual report submitted to the Prime Minister, takes stock of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia in France and the measures taken by institutions and civil society to combat them, and makes recommendations. The CNCDH bases its analyses and recommendations on statistical reports compiled by ministries, researchers, and surveys of the general public, and calls upon various governmental, public and NGO actors to provide their expertise on the subject. On the other hand, the CNCDH also works to combat anti-LGBTQIA+ hatred and discrimination, and will publish an assessment of the national action plan on this issue by the end of 2023. The Defender of Rights, an independent administrative authority responsible for ensuring that citizens' rights and freedoms are respected, includes in its remit the fight against discrimination and the promotion of equality. In terms of protecting rights, individuals can use the Defender of Rights to denounce discrimination. It also undertakes research and formulates recommendations and reforms as part of its actions to promote equality. The role of these bodies is to ensure that the legislative framework is respected and that public policies are implemented and improved.

Local policies

To increase efficiency and decentralisation, work to combat discrimination is increasingly being carried out on the local level. In the French Departments, the Operational Committees for the Fight against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-LGBTQIA+ Hatred (*Comités Opérationnels de Lutte Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme et la Haine anti-LGBTQIA+, CORAH*) act as relays for DILCRAH. They facilitate exchanges between the various government services and the implementation of departmental plans to combat racism and anti-Semitism. Similarly, anti-discrimination measures have been adapted to the specific characteristics of each area in what are known as “city contracts” (*contrats de ville*), instruments that are aimed at economic development, urban renewal, and social cohesion. Local initiatives are also marked by a desire to cooperate with grassroots organisations. For example, DILCRAH can fund specialised NGOs to support LGBTQIA+

foreign nationals, or can delegate certain responsibilities to civil society players with expertise in working with specific groups, in order to develop and implement training courses on discrimination.

Towns and cities are also committed to drawing up local anti-discrimination plans, following the examples of Paris, Suresnes, and the Seine-Saint-Denis department in the Île-de-France region. Local authorities are key players in the fight against racism and discrimination. The Seine-Saint-Denis department has set up a departmental observatory to combat discrimination and promote equality, to improve expertise through a survey of people's perceptions and experiences of discrimination. It also aims to take direct action against this phenomenon by raising awareness among residents via a mobile anti-discrimination caravan.²⁹ Meanwhile, the town of Suresnes has launched a policy to highlight positive action against discrimination, organising exhibitions and debates on equality, as well as creating an "Equality Trophies" ceremony to reward projects promoting inclusion.³⁰ The City of Paris has developed a number of initiatives to combat racism and discrimination. Paris strives to support victims of discrimination through its own action plan entitled the "Paris Equality Plan". This follows a similar approach to the national plan in terms of measuring, training and raising awareness.³¹ The city's authorities have also made a clear effort to forge links with NGOs by setting up working groups on LGBTQIA+ issues, including a group on LGBTQIA+ migrants, which was added in 2022. Lastly, given its highly diverse population, the Île-de-France region remains a testing ground for public policy. Many first-time migrants head for this region. These initiatives therefore respond to real issues among local residents and are supported by an extensive network of NGOs, essential to the fight against racism and discrimination.

3. Field observations

Although the legislative and policy framework provides for a significant number of tools and measures, it is essential to look at their implementation, through what are known as "field observations", gathered from professionals and people directly impacted by these measures.

General perceptions of discrimination in France

During focus groups, migrants tend to first say that there is no racism or discrimination in France, or that they have not experienced it personally. This was especially the case among asylum seekers and refugees, although there were exceptions. It was less so among participants in an irregular situation, who were more likely to say that they felt they had been discriminated against. However, despite these small disparities, in all the focus groups, people mentioned having been victims of racist acts during their migration journey, particularly in Tunisia and Libya, and then in Europe, especially in Italy and Greece. When they mentioned discrimination in France, they tended to do so in comparison with those countries, playing down the discrimination they had suffered, and therefore reporting that they felt much more accepted in France.

However, during the interviews it became clear that many interviewees were confronted with discrimination in France. The example that came up again and again in all the focus groups was racist attitudes on public transport. Almost all Black people who took part in the discussion groups (representing almost all the participants) reported very similar situations. For example, on public transport, white people do not want to sit next to them, in some cases they get up and go to sit somewhere else, in others they try to get someone else to sit next to them. In other, rarer situations, there have been verbal altercations during which they have been asked to "go home". In cases where the racist element was more obvious, participants highlighted the intervention of other people present who defended them and challenged the racist or xenophobic discourse.

"White people prefer that I don't sit next to them"

"People think I'm a thief"

In the case of LGBTQIA+ people, there is a fairly positive feeling about public spaces in general. Indeed, most of the participants seem to have identified the most LGBTQIA+ friendly areas of the city, as well as places where they can find resources, and say they feel safe. Nonetheless, they stress the homophobic stares and attitudes towards them in the public space in certain neighbourhoods where they do not feel as safe.

Participants also pointed to discrimination by other foreign communities who have been in France for longer and who seek to distinguish themselves from these "new" arrivals. In

²⁹ [L'Observatoire départemental des discriminations et de l'égalité](#) (in French).

³⁰ [The Suresnes gender equality and anti-discrimination plan](#) (in French).

³¹ [The 2021–2023 Paris Plan on Gender Equality, Disability and the Fight Against Discrimination](#) (in French).

other cases, ethnic and community tensions between certain communities have existed for a long time. In the case of the LGBTQIA+ group, the relationship with the community is something that came up a lot during the discussions. Almost all of the participants said that they were unable to have much contact with their co-citizens based in France, for fear that they would find out about their sexual orientation or gender identity. As well as risking becoming a victim of racism and xenophobia, homophobic attitudes are their biggest concern. As a result, LGBTQIA+ persons find themselves doubly isolated because of their status as immigrants, newly arrived in the country and often in a vulnerable situation, but also because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. According to the participants, the City of Paris LGBTQIA+ spaces and community activities play a crucial role in enabling them to recreate a community, a social life, and a caring support network.

Finally, as a general rule, the participants affected by discrimination in France largely consider that it should be ignored and often replied that they should make an effort to integrate.

According to professionals, racism, xenophobia and discrimination against foreign nationals is felt most acutely in the camps where newly-arrived migrants who are homeless are forced to live. Cases of physical violence, sometimes accompanied by racist and xenophobic insults were notably reported. The interviewees, most of whom were housed in facilities for asylum seekers and refugees, explained that they had a cordial relationship with the police, although there was a perception that Black people were more likely to be stopped than others. Finally, while discrimination in Paris and the Île-de-France region does not necessarily take the form of public acts of racism or xenophobia, professionals nevertheless point to the existence of discrimination in various aspects of the lives of foreign nationals in France.

The authorities

The participants first shared a number of thoughts on administrative processes. The observation that came up again and again in all the focus groups was the difference they felt in their treatment before and after “getting papers”, or between people who had been regularised and those who have not yet been regularised, or who are applying for asylum. This discrimination is felt in the way they are treated by the authorities, public services and even sometimes, although more rarely, by NGOs, especially when it comes to administrative procedures. Several people also mentioned discrimination within their own community or by other migrants who had already been regularised. Generally speaking, the participants shared the feeling of “not existing”, of not counting, when the person is not regularised.

“One woman told me, when you are undocumented, you don't have a father.”

Participants highlighted problems of access to administrative services, particularly in the context of asylum applications and regularisation. To begin with, migrants do not always understand what they are being asked to do or how to go about it. They are referred from one structure to another and sometimes receive incorrect information or recommendations that go against their rights.

Some professionals in the field speak of a labyrinthine system that sometimes seems designed to make the process as difficult as possible. Some participants explain that they are refused appointments or are addressed in a hostile manner because they cannot speak French. For those who can speak English, officials are either unable to answer them or refuse to talk to them in English. As a result, it is not uncommon for comments to be made about the need to make an effort and speak the language during administrative appointments for people who have only just arrived in the country. In addition, although services such as the French agency in charge of immigration and integration (OFII) and the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) have interpreting facilities, local institutions such as prefectures, which are responsible for issuing residence permits in particular, do not always have them. As a result, access to information becomes more complex and migrants become dependent on their compatriots or NGOs.

Furthermore, the digitalisation of new procedures has also disadvantaged this group, as many do not have access to a computer or cannot read French. The failure to anticipate the obstacles that digitalisation will create for these people has led to two administrative court rulings against prefectures since 2021.³² When it comes to asylum applications, not all asylum seekers benefit from housing accommodations provided under the DNA. Asylum-seekers can receive support in first reception offices (Structures de Premier Accueil des Demandeurs d'Asile, Spada) but these structures in the Ile-de-France region have to cope with a very high number of people. As a result, people who are not accommodated by specialised facilities face additional difficulties in their procedures. The people interviewed highlighted very long delays in accessing their rights, particularly in the context of restoring reception conditions. In addition, some people reported a lack of confidence in the representatives of the authorities they meet when applying for asylum, explaining that they have the impression that if their situation does not correspond exactly to what is expected of a migrant, their application will not be successful, and their rights will not be respected.

“You're never the right type of asylum seeker” (one participant explained in relation to the administrative procedures involved in her asylum application)

“The institutions are fed up, they don't want any asylum seekers, they want to tire you out, they want us to leave. They don't want us”

³² [La Cimade, La dématérialisation dans le viseur : 23 préfectures devant les tribunaux administratifs](#), 20 juin 2021 (in French).

However, these impressions were less prevalent among participants who had been housed from the outset in accommodation facilities run by NGOs. Although they also mention the difficulty of certain procedures and delays, their experience of public authorities seems to be more positive, due to the support of professionals within the NGOs who know how to create a bond of trust with them and guide them through this difficult process.

LGBTQIA+ migrants face their own particular difficulties when it comes to administrative formalities. First of all, while the initial information about the procedures is mainly obtained from the community (of nationality or language),³³ LGBTQIA+ people often find themselves excluded or afraid to reveal their sexual orientation, which has an impact on their access to information. In the case of asylum applications, this may lead to them not lodging an asylum application within the 90-day time limit. After this deadline, they can still submit their application, but it will be processed under the accelerated procedure, and they may be questioned about the “delay”. Furthermore, while the interview with OFPRA or the National Court of Asylum (CNDA) is a trying experience, as it involves revisiting traumatic moments, the professionals working with LGBTQIA+ people mention lines of questioning and discriminatory attitudes on issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation. This is reflected primarily in intimate questions, sometimes based on prejudice, which, according to those working in the field, do not contribute towards examination of the asylum application. Finally, in the case of transgender people, the use of the gender assigned to them at birth and their “deadname”³⁴ greatly hampers their efforts. Faced with these difficulties, the LGBTQIA+ members of the public we interviewed placed great emphasis on the support of professionals within NGOs, who are trained to provide assistance with asylum applications and administrative procedures, and whose expertise contributes greatly to the success of their applications.

In almost all cases, migrants are plunged into long and difficult procedures, particularly when it comes to obtaining legal status. People are aware that there are a series of steps that can be taken to regularise their situation and to obtain certain rights, but in practice the conditions and processes for taking these steps are very often impossible to fulfil without support.

The lack of reliable information, being referred from one institution or service to another, lengthy delays, and the treatment they receive within certain institutions are all factors that contribute to a high level of fatigue among migrants, which can lead to them dropping out of the process.

“We need papers, and we need them faster, so that we can at least feel free and equal to others”

³³ Watizat, Action Contre la Faim and France Terre d'Asile, [L'accès à l'information des personnes exilées à Paris](#), 2022

³⁴ This is the first name given to a person at birth but later abandoned, particularly following a transition.

Access to services

Access to services, particularly health services, was also the subject of much discussion among the professionals and foreign nationals who took part in the focus groups.

Generally speaking, the people who were questioned were fairly positive about their feelings regarding access to health services and the welcome they received as foreigners. Asylum seekers report that they were able to have a medical check-up when they submitted their asylum application to the French agency in charge of immigration and integration (OFII). Those housed through the DNA mechanism are satisfied with the support offered by the professionals on site, who help them to access care, make appointments and generally monitor their needs. For example, they explain that they were able to consult specialists when necessary and were satisfied with the welcome they received from healthcare professionals. During the interviews, some people also explained that they had benefited from arrangements put in place in the accommodation centres for asylum seekers in Paris and the Île-de-France region to offer medical services as part of the accommodation, as provided for in the Ministry of the Interior's vulnerability plan. In some centres, people have access to general medical care as well as more specific services such as psychologists or health workshops. For the time being, these services are provided by specialist NGOs that are able to refer people to professionals in the public health sector if necessary. The vulnerability plan of the General Directorate for Foreigners in France (DGEF) also aims to “guarantee a medical presence in each accommodation centre”. In addition, mobile units run by the French Red Cross, Médecins du Monde, and Samu Social provide assistance to foreign nationals who are homeless, who have no ongoing care and are often at risk of having their treatment interrupted.

However, there are limits to access to healthcare services. According to Médecins du Monde, people are most likely to encounter obstacles due to their lack of knowledge of rights and structures, particularly as a result of a lack of information passed on by the services in charge, as well as administrative difficulties.³⁵ Interviews with medical professionals working to provide support to this population, also emphasised that foreign nationals are more likely to be confronted with a lack of accessibility to services and are particularly affected by the saturation of medical services. Regarding access issues, a decree was adopted in 2019 stipulating that while asylum seekers can still access the PUMA mechanism, they must now comply with a three-month waiting period before they are entitled to it. In addition, some people are refused treatment in certain centres or from certain practitioners because of their administrative status, even though they are fully entitled to these services. As a result, they are forced to go to health centres that are often saturated, underfunded, and unable to provide full and regular medical care. In addition to the discrimination linked to a person's administrative status, there is also the language barrier. Few interpretation services are available to healthcare professionals, which makes

³⁵ Médecins du Monde, [Rapport de l'Observatoire de l'Accès aux droits et aux soins](#), 2023 (in French).

it very difficult to communicate with foreign patients and to empower migrants to take control of their medical needs. In this context, people of certain backgrounds, depending on their origin and religion, will find access more difficult and the reception they receive of lower quality. For example, a professional responsible for supporting migrants pointed out that Muslim Sudanese women were particularly poorly received and that this created many difficulties in ensuring that they continued to have access to the care they needed.

With regard to the LGBTQIA+ community, professionals point to a lack of training for medical staff on the needs and experiences of this population rather than structural discrimination in the healthcare system. Once again, in isolated cases where treatment is refused, it is mainly transgender people who are affected, due to individual discrimination by the practitioner, but also because their documents do not always correspond to their gender identity. Furthermore, professionals are reporting increasing difficulties in gaining access to healthcare regularisation. This form of regularisation allows foreign nationals with medical conditions that cannot be treated in their country of origin to obtain a residence permit in France. Not only are the procedures for obtaining this permit complex, but professionals involved on the ground also testify to a political will to restrict the issue of this type of residence permit. In the face of these difficulties, however, it is clear that there is a real commitment on the part of those working in the field to develop specific projects and schemes for this population and to contribute towards a better understanding of their needs and rights among care facilities and professionals. As part of the fight against discrimination and to provide better care for this population, NGOs organise training within reception facilities and work directly to provide care and follow-up for this population. Paris has a fairly large network of actors specialising in support for LGBTQIA+ migrants, and the participants say they feel confident and are very satisfied with the services offered by them.

Accommodation

Access to accommodation is a crucial issue discussed by professionals and migrants. First of all, there is a real saturation of the DNA facilities, but also of the general emergency accommodation facilities, which are taking in more and more third country nationals. Against this backdrop, first-time immigrants and asylum seekers are increasingly being referred to accommodation facilities outside the Paris region, in a bid to spread the number of people across the country. In reality, many people end up on the streets, either because they are not offered accommodation or because the offer has been withdrawn. The vast majority of undocumented immigrants are unable to find their own accommodation and are dependent on the kindness of acquaintances, or emergency housing, the conditions of which are not always suited to their needs (unsanitary conditions, several people per room, etc.). Access to housing is therefore one of the biggest concerns for migrants when they arrive,³⁶ and it is a need that they often cannot meet, forcing many of them into long periods of homelessness.

³⁶ Watizat, Action Contre la Faim and France Terre d'Asile, [L'accès à l'information des personnes exilées à Paris](#), 2022

In addition to the difficulty of accessing accommodation, some professionals also reported problems of racism and discrimination within the accommodation system, especially in mainstream accommodation. Emergency accommodation facilities take in both foreign and French nationals and are very often saturated. This exacerbates tensions between residents, which can lead to xenophobic and racist attitudes towards the migrants living there. Participants are also aware that there are few places available. Some people reported the impression that Black people were more discriminated against than White people in these accommodation centres. Some attribute the possibility of emergency accommodation to a matter of chance, while others see it as a form of discrimination by suggesting that foreign nationals are not given priority. Generally speaking, as the majority of people interviewed in this study were asylum seekers accommodated in reception centres for asylum seekers (*centres d'accueil des demandeurs d'asile, Cada*), there was a real recognition of this care and a feeling of being “lucky” or even privileged compared to other people whose administrative situation did not offer this possibility.

“We were lucky enough to be housed, but some people are not so lucky. They have to find somewhere to sleep each day.”

In addition to emergency accommodation, undocumented migrants often have to pay much higher prices for private accommodation to people who take advantage of their situation to force them to pay higher prices or live in substandard accommodation. For people who have been regularised, whether because they have been granted protection by France as refugees or because of other residence permits, access to housing remains very difficult because of their origin but also because of greater job insecurity. One of the participants explained, for example, that he had to wait ten years before obtaining social housing.

Whether they are looking for permanent accommodation or emergency solutions, a large number of people interviewed have spent a long time homeless in the Ile-de-France region. While professionals are concerned about this situation and see foreign nationals as a section of the population which is particularly vulnerable to difficulties in accessing housing, the majority of migrants interviewed see this as inevitable and believe that there is more discrimination in Paris because there are more people.

For LGBTQIA+ migrants, the issue of access to accommodation is compounded by the issue of safety. Although there are specific places for asylum seekers in the CADA, where they can be housed with people from the LGBTQIA+ community, some people are not always referred correctly and for those who are not eligible for these solutions, emergency accommodation does not always offer a safe place to stay. Professionals speak of a “double penalty” for these people, who are discriminated against because of their origin but also because of their sexual orientation. Homophobic attitudes come from people staying in the centres, but sometimes also from the professionals themselves, and take the form of comments, verbal or even physical violence within the accommodation. In this context, LGBTQIA+ people seek to make themselves as invisible as possible, which can

prevent them from receiving appropriate follow-up and support from professionals. Transgender people are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. The integrated reception and referral service (*Service Intégré de l'Accueil et de l'Orientation, SIAO*), which is the tool for referring people to accommodation, does not always take their gender into account, and some people find themselves housed in centres with men, even though they are women, or vice versa. Faced with these situations, it is necessary to meet the need for staff expertise in accommodating and supporting this group of people. This can be achieved through training and the development of tools, as part of the DNA provided by the French government and programmes funded by Paris City Council.

4. Best practices, limitations and recommendations

Best practices

Having set out the institutional framework, explored local practices, identified the limits of the fight against discrimination, and listed the recommendations made by stakeholders, it is possible to identify a number of good practices at national and local level.

Networking

There are important interactions between the various players at different levels. Firstly, the institutions involved in combating discrimination as well as organising reception and legal and social support to third country nationals work with NGOs, public services, and other institutions. The national action plans against racism and discrimination led by DILCRAH are implemented in collaboration with the various ministries in order to involve all stakeholders.

Secondly, NGOs are regularly consulted by the public authorities as part of the preparation of action plans at both national and City of Paris level, and also as part of the evaluations carried out by the CNCDH, for example. This collaboration enables the expertise of these players in their field to be integrated into public policies and initiatives implemented at city level. Finally, this collaboration can also be observed at operational level. OFPRA is developing links with NGOs that work with specific groups, such as LGBTQIA+ people, so that it can refer people according to their profiles and needs. Some NGOs work with police stations to provide support for victims, while others are setting up cooperation mechanisms to help migrants deal with medical procedures and consultations. This type of exchange not only helps to improve care for migrants, but also helps to raise awareness of the need to prevent discrimination. Creating links between NGOs and public services is also very important, although not sufficiently developed.

Finally, the particularly rich network of NGOs in Paris and the Île-de-France region enables them to work together to offer a more comprehensive range of services, as well as to share best practice and specific expertise. These networks are proving highly effective in dealing with groups who may be at the intersection of several forms of discrimination. In Paris, for example, a number of reception facilities for asylum seekers have developed mechanisms that enable partner NGOs or facilities to report cases of particularly vulnerable people, such as women who are victims of violence or LGBTQIA+ people, so that they can be referred to suitable accommodation.

Specialised players developing specific expertise

The Île-de-France region and the City of Paris in particular rely on a diverse and specialised network of NGOs. The large number of actors in this area work on different themes and with different target groups, enabling them to develop specific expertise in line with their work in the field. This expertise is an essential tool in the fight against discrimination. Thanks to their expertise and experience in the field, these actors produce studies that can lead to the introduction of public policies at national level, such as the testing carried out by SOS Racisme, which gave rise to the charter on combating discrimination in access to housing.³⁷ Based directly on field data, NGO reports are an effective way of attracting the attention of public authorities. For example, since 2017, SOS Homophobie has published an annual report on LGBTQIA+phobia, covering issues as diverse as physical attacks, discrimination at work or at home, and psychological distress.³⁸ The work of NGOs complements public statistical monitoring, which is still in the process of being developed in terms of taking into account data on ethnicity, race, origin, etc. This dimension is crucial to assessing and combating discrimination.³⁹ On a more operational level, these actors are also developing material for professionals working with certain groups. This is the case, for example, of the “Welcoming and supporting LGBTQIA+ people in accommodation” guide published by the Solidarity Organisations Federation (Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité -FAS), which includes a specific section on LGBTQIA+ migrants. This expertise makes it possible to provide information or to act alongside training and awareness-raising efforts set out in the action plans to combat racism and discrimination.

Finally, the existence of specialist actors means that services can be offered that are better adapted and more relevant to the profiles, experience and needs of the public. In particular, the City of Paris works with a number of NGOs specialising in supporting specific groups or issues within the LGBTQIA+ community, such as ARDHIS (Association for the Rights of Gay and Trans People in Immigration and Residence) and Punto Latino (which works particularly on access to healthcare for transgender people). Some NGOs work exclusively with transgender people or sex workers, while others specialise in access to healthcare or work with people from certain regions of the world. Punto Latino, for example, works mainly with immigrants from Latin America. In addition, the development of specific expertise not only makes resources and tools available to professionals and institutions, but also enables better care to be given to specific groups, often at the intersection of several forms of discrimination.

Taking account of vulnerability in government reception arrangements and support for asylum seekers and refugees

³⁷ [Chartre relative à la lutte contre les discriminations dans l'accès au logement](#) (in French).

³⁸ SOS Homophobie, [Rapport sur les LGBTIphobies](#), 2023 (in French).

³⁹ Patrick Simon and Joan Stavo-Debaugé, “[Les politiques anti-discrimination et les statistiques: paramètres d'une incohérence](#)”, *Sociétés contemporaines*, Vol. No. 53, no. 1, 2004, pp. 57-84 (in French).

As presented in this report, the voluntary sector in the Île-de-France region, and in particular specialised NGOs, play a key role in addressing the vulnerabilities of certain individuals in their care. There is political discourse in favour of including this more widely in the DNA. The “vulnerability plan” drawn up by the Ministry of the Interior’s DGEF (see above) mentions in particular the need to train professionals working on asylum to identify vulnerability, particularly at an early stage. To provide the best possible support for vulnerable people, the plan also aims to develop specialised accommodation.

Other institutions, such as OFPRA and the CNDA, are also working to set up groups of experts on issues of vulnerability and to organise training courses, dealing in particular with the physical expression of “psychological trauma” and the after-effects of violence linked to gender and sexual orientation. In addition to these mechanisms, which make it possible to highlight general trends regarding vulnerability, it is also important to recall that migrants’ specific backgrounds and individual experiences must be taken into account so that they can be better cared for and access to their rights. This more individualised follow-up is difficult to achieve with the current human and material capacity of the reception system. In addition, this progress risks being restricted to institutions in contact with people involved in the asylum process, which means that migrants outside this process, who tend to be the most vulnerable, become more invisible.

Creating resource areas

To compensate for this invisibility and lack of access to rights, the City of Paris also offers “resource spaces” for vulnerable groups, which often include migrants. Inaugurated in May 2023, “La Bulle” [the bubble], for example, is a reception area for the most stigmatised LGBTQIA+ people, particularly migrants. The centre, located in the Marais district of Paris, brings together seven NGOs specialising in the intersectional discrimination suffered by LGBTQIA+ migrants, and provides support through medical, psychological, legal and social services.⁴⁰

These resource centres provide better access to rights through meetings with professionals and also with people in the same situation, who can become a source of support. In the case of LGBTQIA+ people and vulnerable groups, having spaces that are specially dedicated to them and where they feel safe is essential to providing a safe and appropriate environment.

Limitations

Having explored the institutional framework and local practices, which has led to the identification of a number of good practices, the study has also identified a series of limitations in the fight against discrimination in the Île de France and nationally. Despite a large body of legislation and policy enabling the development and implementation of a

⁴⁰ These NGOs include ARDHIS (an NGO working to recognise gay and trans peoples’ immigration and residence rights), OUTrans, ANKH, Wassla, Espace santé Trans, FLIRT (French acronym for the Transfem Liberation Front) and XY Média.

number of initiatives to combat racism and discrimination against migrants, there is nevertheless a gap between this more institutional framework and the implementation of the measures it provides for in practice.

Training and awareness-raising

As far as training for civil servants is concerned, the authorities themselves stress that training time is insufficient, and that participation still depends very much on the willingness of managers. On the other hand, since recruitment does not depend on this training, it is still perceived by many as a formality that does not necessarily lead to a change in working practices. Despite these efforts, professionals in the field, such as police officers, do not systematically identify racist acts and remarks. Anti-racism NGOs associations note that the subject of discrimination is not always taken seriously by participants in their training courses and that some institutions do not seem to be dealing with the subject in a way that is commensurate with the issues at stake. The fight against discrimination is sometimes seen as a fad by certain institutions, rather than as a fight against a crime punishable by law. These limitations also stem from the difficulty that comes with wanting to change attitudes and systems rooted in long-standing cultural habits. Lastly, while there are training courses on discrimination, particularly anti-LGBTQIA+ hatred, few deal specifically with the migrant population as such, which may contribute to the way in which certain experiences which are specific to them are rendered invisible.

Law enforcement and justice

In addition, the mechanisms for filing discrimination complaints with the police are still difficult to activate. In practice, the legislative arsenal remains of little use, especially in the case of migrants. Anti-racism NGOs report that some courts do not have a “racism specialist”, and in those that do, cases are rarely referred to them. They also point out that the judicial authorities apply minimum sentences in cases of discrimination and, above all, encounter difficulties in defining racism.

In addition, those working in the field also indicate that it is difficult to access the complaints process and that it has little effect. Some police stations do not welcome foreign nationals or refuse to deal with them or take their complaints. NGOs continue to report misunderstandings, failings and even physical and verbal abuse by some police officers towards migrants, especially those who are homeless, which can go as far as xenophobic and racist insults. Certain groups are particularly affected by this abuse, such as people who do not speak the language, transgender people, and sex workers. This is sometimes compounded by a failure by the police to respect the rights of foreign nationals.

Access to information and tools

In addition to the mistrust that migrants may have towards the police, the vast majority of them, particularly those who have recently arrived in France, are unaware of their rights when it comes to combating discrimination. Only a minority of the people who took part in the discussion groups were able to identify services or actors who could help them if they experienced a racist or discriminatory act. Among these participants, a small minority identified the police as a resource, but most of them said they would turn to NGOs that they trusted. Generally speaking, participants said they were interested in finding out more about their rights and the services available to them where they live.

We also noted that the tools and services in place to combat racism and discrimination were difficult to access. The biggest barrier is language, because although there are a large number of online resources on combating discrimination and promoting people’s rights, they have not yet been translated or have not been written according to government “easy read” guidelines on clear French writing (*Facile à Lire et A Comprendre- Easy to Read and Understand*).⁴¹ These resources, therefore, remain inaccessible to non-French speakers or people who cannot read French.

Funding and allocation of resources

This discrepancy between the institutional framework and its implementation can also be explained by the lack of resources allocated to those on the ground who contribute to the fight against discrimination. The fact is that not only the NGOs but also the government agencies responsible for the reception and protection of migrants in France, particularly those seeking asylum, lack the human, financial and operational resources to carry out their tasks properly. In the case of places that have been specifically set aside for LGBTQIA+ people, these have not been accompanied by additional funding. Furthermore, project-based funding does not guarantee a continuity of service or the necessary human resources. Some NGOs point out that it is easier to access public funding for projects involving the integration of people who have been granted international protection than for projects aimed at people who are in the process of being regularised, whether by applying for asylum or otherwise. This way of channelling funds does not meet the needs of people who are already in very difficult situations.

Many NGOs receive funding from the Parisian local authority, which shows an undeniable commitment to work on the ground, but cannot meet all the needs. In addition, the City of Paris stresses that certain prerogatives are the responsibility of the State, and cannot be replaced by local initiatives.

Those working on the ground report that funding has been cut or reallocated to different priorities, forcing them to reduce their activities or rely more heavily on volunteers. In addition, much funding is organised through calls for projects, which does not allow NGOs

⁴¹ [European standards for making information easy to read and understand](#)

to be involved in defining priorities, objectives and implementation methods. As a result, NGOs are often unable to strengthen their capacity to innovate, and some struggle to provide a professional service, despite their expertise, due to a lack of resources.

Political discourse

In addition to the reduction in funding, policies are becoming increasingly restrictive with regard to foreign nationals, limiting their rights and rendering the work of those who support them more complicated. This is coupled with growing anti-immigration political discourse in France, which is hostile towards foreigners. These positions reinforce negative images of migrants, undermine the rights of foreign nationals, particularly those seeking protection, and reinforce racist and xenophobic attitudes in host communities. In practical terms, this fuels racism and discrimination against migrants in their dealings with the authorities, access to services, accommodation, and employment.

5. Conclusion

Migrants and foreign nationals in France are, in theory, protected by the existing legal framework. First and foremost, this includes the CESEDA, which sets out the procedures and rights of asylum seekers, followed by the French Criminal Code, which defines 25 grounds upon which discrimination is forbidden. To ensure that rights are effective, public policies aim to tackle discrimination. National government institutions such as DILCRAH, which role is to conceive, coordinate and leading the State's policies on fighting racisms, antisemitism and hatred towards LGBTQIA+ groups, develop actions plans. Independent national bodies such as the CNCDH and the Ombudsman are responsible for ensuring compliance with the legislative framework and for monitoring the implementation and improvement of public policies. On a local level, regions, departments and municipalities can adapt national policies to the specific characteristics of their localities, as in the case of the "Paris Equality Plan", which adopts the same approach as the national level.

However, field observations point to a certain gap between this political and legal development and the discrimination experienced by immigrants. Although they may downplay the discrimination they experience by comparing it to hardships encountered in the past, this is nonetheless discrimination. Discrimination can occur both in public spaces, such as transport, and in access to services, such as healthcare and accommodation. It can also occur as a result of the administration itself, which becomes an administrative labyrinth, to the point that its very willingness to deal with requests can be questioned.

These risks of discrimination are all the more real for people of the LGBTQIA+ community. At the intersection between the rejection of "foreigners" and the rejection of non-heterosexual cisgender people, these individuals experience a double burden that slows down their integration process.

The professionals working in the field and the people interviewed testified to factors that encourage discrimination against foreign nationals, especially those from LGBTQIA+ communities. They identify four different factors. Firstly, the lack of training and awareness among civil servants and public sector staff in identifying racist situations, acts and comments, or questioning their attitude towards vulnerable people. Secondly, justice and law enforcement services are sometimes inaccessible because of misunderstandings, shortcomings and even physical and verbal violence, particularly when people do not speak the language. While law enforcement agencies have been identified as having a role to play in combating discriminatory situations, the inaccessibility of the tools and services put in place to combat racism and discrimination remains a major barrier. Thirdly, it is clear that the gap between the institutional framework and its implementation can also be explained by the lack of resources allocated to the players on the ground who contribute to the fight against discrimination. Fourthly, directing funds towards people who have

already been regularised, to the detriment of people who are in the process of being regularised, makes this latter group more vulnerable. Furthermore, the lack of consultation in the drafting of calls for projects often results in a mismatch between ambitions and realities, and is not conducive to the development of initiatives that meet local needs.

However, some of the best practices of those involved, such as networking and the development of specific expertise, mean that vulnerabilities are better taken into account in public reception and support facilities for foreign nationals. The work of and interaction between the public authorities and the voluntary sector help to bring to light issues that are little or not at all taken into account, so that better support can be provided to the people who face them. This is the case of “La Bulle”, a resource centre that provides better access to rights through meetings with professionals, but also with people in the same situation who can become a source of support.

It is clear that only real political will can be effective in countering the anti-migrant rhetoric that is burgeoning and undermining the anti-discrimination ambitions of the State and local authorities from within. Finally, the participation of those people affected by discrimination must be central to the development of public policies.

Recommendations

Throughout the survey, recommendations were developed to improve and strengthen the fight against racism and discrimination. These recommendations were formulated by professionals from the public sector and those working in the field, as well as by migrants who had taken part in the discussion groups.

- **Better tools for professionals involved in welcoming and supporting migrants, especially those that arrived recently.**

As we have already mentioned, better tools are a key aspect of the national action plans to combat discrimination, and this is reflected in the provision of training in various environments. To compensate for the current limitations of such training, it should be made compulsory and more regular. Greater content on migrants and their rights should be developed. Generally speaking, the people interviewed felt that there was a lack of awareness about migratory routes and the reasons why people leave their country of origin.

- **Guarantee access to rights from the point of arrival in France.**

This recommendation was made by both professionals and foreign nationals who took part in the project. The participants in the focus groups stressed, above all, the need to be able to work or train as soon as the asylum application is lodged, in order to help them with their integration and encourage greater autonomy so that they can access their rights.

- **Make services more accessible to migrants.**

The language barrier remains a major challenge for migrants in France. To combat discrimination more effectively, priority should be given to setting up interpreting services in certain areas such as health, administration and justice. It is also essential to translate resources and information on combating discrimination, particularly those published by the public sector, so that they can be used by foreign nationals.

- **Make more resources available on the reception and support for vulnerable migrants.**

Although efforts have been made in this direction, in particular with the creation of a number of places dedicated to vulnerable people in the DNA system, the most vulnerable groups among foreign nationals are the first to suffer from the lack of resources available and to face multiple types of discrimination. More resources must therefore be allocated to reception facilities and to the people working in them to ensure that the rights of everyone are respected.

- **Inform foreign nationals of their rights and the tools available to them if they encounter discrimination.**

There was a great deal of interest from participants in this subject, and a clear need to ensure that anti-racism NGOs, rarely contacted by newly-arrived immigrants, are able to respond. Foreign nationals, regardless of their administrative status, should be considered as political agents with a number of rights that they should be able to access and defend.