



Press statement - 16 March 2016

With closed counters: foreigners kept at a distance by prefectures

Foreigners are increasingly finding the doors shut when they try to apply for or renew their residence permits in the prefecture [office of the government envoy in charge of security, among other competences] offices: this is what La Cimade criticises in the report [À guichets fermés](#) [With closed counters], which was published today.

Contravening the principle of equality before public services, access to the prefecture office results from successfully negotiating a course which is laden with obstacles. For foreigners, the difficulties which they encounter to undergo the necessary administrative procedures are as serious as the important restrictions which exist in the criteria for granting residence permits. An important concern involves the cuts in resources which simultaneously deteriorate working conditions for civil service employees and access to rights for its users, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Providing information to users, which is a legal mission for the civil service, is inadequate for foreigners at the same time as their need for information is great. Contacting the prefecture office's services is a challenge: a lack of working landlines to call, blocked Internet platforms, and closed or unreachable reception counters in spite of hours spent waiting for access. The registration of cases also turns out to be problematic due to abusive rejections based on arbitrary demands for certification and discriminatory practices, which vary depending on the kind of application which is lodged. Finally, the prescribed length of administrative procedures is not complied with often enough and may last for years.

All these obstacles inordinately increase the length of procedures whose outcome is vital for the people concerned. Waiting times become a means of domination for the public administration in relation to foreigners.

Arranging an appointment by Internet is increasingly becoming compulsory in order to have access to the prefectures: thus, people who do not have Internet access are excluded, regardless of whether it is their first application for a residence permit or for its renewal. La Cimade is alarmed by the multiplication of delays in people having access to their rights and of breaches against people's right to residence, employment and social rights. To oppose these invisible difficulties which paralyse the most insecure people [La Cimade has published some statistics](#) on its website today, which will be updated on a daily basis, and concern the evanescence of administrative procedures in over 65 prefecture offices.

All users of the public services must be able to access them without any obstruction, regardless of the nature of their request. La Cimade has made some recommendations in order for the commitments made by the public administration under the Marianne Charter or in framework of the Qualipref 2 label to be implemented in reception services for foreigners.

> [Downlod the report 'À guichets fermés. Demandes de titres de séjours : les personnes étrangères mises à distance des préfectures'](#).

> [Check the figures on the evanescence of residence permit applications:](#)
<http://aguichetsfermes.lacimade.org>

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