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My dissertation project focuses on the ways how aid organizations in France construct women refugees and attach meanings to refugee and asylum seeking women's empowerment in their activities and projects. With the help of the Jean Monnet Research Grant, firstly, I was able to conduct semi-structured interviews with aid workers and advocates that work for French NGOs based in different locations such as Calais, Dunkirk, Paris and Lyon, and secondly, to attend the annual conference of the Council of European Studies for presenting my work.

The interviews helped me to conduct a gendered analysis of the asylum and refugee integration system of the European Union. Accordingly, The EU primarily associate refugee women's empowerment with providing legal protection to the victims of gender based violence in member states. In this vein, the EU prioritizes related actions in order to properly identify such persons, in which the high majority is women. Working both with local and national aid organizations in France, the EU creates a set of guidelines and action plans for the identification of the victims of gender based violence and imposes those into the national asylum system. Moreover, the EU policies target providing adequate training for aid workers and frontline workers in member states including France to identify victims of gender based violence in reception facilities. This is identified to be crucial action for providing tailored and personalized assistance subsequently to the victims. For example, women who are victimized by organized criminal networks are placed in accommodation facilities with security guards. Lastly, the EU effectively uses and supports various civil society networks to enhance the awareness of gendered vulnerabilities of refugees such as the Vulnerability Network, the Statelessness Network and End Female Genital Mutilation Network. All these efforts by the EU aims to

provide legal protection for asylum seeking women, which is considered to be the first step for achieving empowerment. Yet, in the future, the EU should widen its actions and agenda think about other dimensions of women's empowerment for avoiding the dangers of defining women as victims because they are women.