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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Accompanying the document

2026 Rule of Law Report

The rule of law situation in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

In France, the implementation of the reform of the status of magistrates continued and there were renewed calls to further strengthen the autonomy of prosecutors. The High Council for the Judiciary continued defending judicial independence in response to concerns raised by an increasing number of attacks on magistrates related to judicial decisions. Budgetary efforts have been sustained in 2025 and 2026 to increase further the number of magistrates. Some further steps were taken to implement tools to digitalise court procedures. Small court fees were reintroduced for access to courts and alternative dispute resolutions methods are increasingly encouraged. Reforms are being considered to improve the efficiency of the justice system, in particular through streamlining appeal and criminal procedures.

The 2025-2029 National Plan Against Corruption, setting the priorities for the next five years, was adopted in November 2025. Further efforts are being made in the prosecution of corruption cases. The High Authority for the Transparency in Public Life has been entrusted with new tasks. Some further steps have been taken in strengthening the rules on lobbying with the start of operation of the Registry on Foreign Influence, while other draft laws remain under discussion and the obligation to report lobbying has not been extended to officials at top-executive level. Measures continue to be implemented to reinforce the ethics culture within the Government and the Parliament and their staff. The integrity frameworks for police officers and magistrates are being further reinforced. The framework for the protection of whistleblowers remains robust, while the increase of reports represents a challenge in terms of resources needed to ensure their follow-up. The law on Anti-Narcotics and Organised Crime that introduced several measures aimed at reinforcing the fight against corruption when linked to organised crime is being implemented.

France's media regulator, ARCOM, is continuing to expand its regulatory scope and activities in response to new obligations and mandates. Recourse to media self-regulation has increased in recent years, indicating growing engagement with journalistic ethics. While public service media are restructuring their activities due to budget constraints, pressure on them has intensified in the public debate. Further steps were taken to improve the transparency of media ownership with the development of a preliminary transparency database, while media concentration is an increasing concern. The Committee on access to administrative documents (CADA) received a record number of referrals in recent years, while requests from journalists were in minority. As regards the working conditions for journalists, new positive developments include case law strengthening the protection of sources, alongside continued challenges related to safety and broader working environment.

Stakeholder engagement in law making is stable, while the reduction of legislative and administrative burdens remains an important priority for the Government. Public authorities continue to support civil society organisations, including through substantial public funding, while some organisations continue to face challenges to their operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, based on the recommendations in the 2025 Rule of Law Report and considering other developments that took place in the period of reference, the Commission concludes the following:

- Some further progress has been made on the digitalisation of judicial procedures. As this process has faced some delays, it is recommended to France to *step up efforts to complete ongoing projects aimed at digitalisation of civil and criminal court proceedings*.
- Some further progress has been made regarding the recommendation on lobbying, in particular through the strengthening of the transparency framework on foreign influence activities. As the obligation to disclose lobbying activities only applies to interests' representatives, it is recommended to France to *continue efforts to ensure the transparency of lobbying activities by extending the scope of the disclosure obligation, in particular to officials at top executive level*.

As regards the other 2025 recommendations, the Commission concludes that:

- Some further progress has been made to improve the transparency of media ownership, including through the development of a preliminary transparency database by the media regulator. Its full deployment remains dependent on the adoption of the necessary legislative measures. Given that the topics of this recommendation are covered by the provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), while the Rule of Law Report will continue to monitor significant developments and report on their impact, further follow-up will be ensured as part of the Commission's support to Member States and enforcement of the EMFA

I. JUSTICE SYSTEM¹

Independence

The level of perceived judicial independence in France continues to be average among both the general public and companies. Overall, 56% of the general population and 53% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2026². The perceived judicial independence among the general public has increased in comparison with 2025 (51%) and is at the same level as in 2022 (56%). The perceived judicial independence among companies remains at the same level as in 2025 (53%), and it has significantly decreased in comparison with 2022 (61%).

The implementation of the reform of the status of magistrates continued and there were renewed calls to further strengthen the autonomy of prosecutors. Among the steps taken to implement this reform³, the High Council for the Judiciary (‘HCJ’) adopted in December the Ethics Charter for Magistrates of the Judiciary, which was welcomed by the magistrates⁴. Additionally, a new third grade was created in the magistracy to extend opportunities for magistrates to be promoted, either at management positions in courts, or in relation to their “exceptional professional value”. Assessment criteria still need to be defined by the newly established Promotion Committee⁵, to ensure the transparency of this career advancement⁶. The implementation of the 360° evaluation process for presidents of courts and tribunals, also created by the 2023 law, remains a priority for the HCJ. Furthermore, the 2023 reform of the voting rules for the elections to the HCJ will be implemented in 2026 through new regulations⁷. Until now, the implementation of the reform of the magistrates’ disciplinary regime⁸ has not led to an increase of cases submitted by litigants against magistrates⁹. On 13 January 2026, the President of the National Assembly has called to relaunch the discussions on the reform of the statute of prosecutors, to make the HCJ’s opinion mandatory on the Minister of Justice when nominating prosecutors, as is the case for judges¹⁰. The HCJ supported this initiative and further called for establishing an independent disciplinary authority for prosecutors¹¹.

¹ An overview of the institutional framework for all four pillars can be found [here](#).

² Figures 48 and 50, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 51 and 53, 2024 EU Justice Scoreboard. The level of perceived judicial independence is categorised as follows: very low (below 30% of respondents perceive judicial independence as fairly good and very good); low (between 30-39%), average (between 40-59%), high (between 60-75%), very high (above 75%).

³ Organic Law no. 2023-1058 of 20 November 2023 on the opening, modernisation and accountability of the judiciary, adopted in November 2023. See 2025, 2024, 2023 Rule of Law Reports, chapters on France, resp. pp. 3, 4, 4.

⁴ Country visit France, Magistrates’ Associations.

⁵ Composed of 12 magistrates and 1 representative of the Ministry of Justice.

⁶ The use of the concept “exceptional professional value” was questioned both by the HCJ and MEDEL. Medel (2026) written input, p. 9. HCJ (2026) Annual Report 2025, p. 45.

⁷ French Government (2026), written input, pp. 7-9.

⁸ On this regime and previous elements mentioned, see also 2025 Rule of Law Report, France, p. 3 and 2024 Rule of Law Report, France, p. 4.

⁹ National Bar Association (2026), written input, p. 5. 391 decisions were taken in 2025 and 446 in 2024. HCJ (2026), p. 72.

¹⁰ This reform was adopted by both chambers of Parliament in 2016. However, it needs approval by 2/3 of deputies of both chambers. The HCJ, magistrates’ and the bar association welcomed this reform. Country visit France, Magistrates’ Associations.

¹¹ HCJ (2026). This reform is also supported by Magistrates’ and Bar Associations. Country visit France, Magistrates’ Associations. National Bar Association (2026), written input, p. 4.

The High Council for the Judiciary continued defending judicial independence in response to an increasing number of attacks on magistrates related to judicial decisions.

Several judgments relating to candidates to national elections or previous officials at top-executive level have been faced with strong criticism from the public and some elected officials. In some cases, judges have been facing personal attacks, including serious threats to their safety. They benefit increasingly from police protection while several cases were transmitted to prosecutors. The HCJ, magistrates' associations, the National Consultative Committee on Human Rights (CNCDH) and the President of the Cassation Court have brought these incidents to the attention of public authorities, as these attacks would in their view jeopardise the perception by citizens of the independence of the justice system¹². In this context, lawyers have set up the Rule of Law Observatory, an initiative to support public debates with thorough analyses of potential infringements of the rule of law¹³.

Quality

Budgetary efforts have been sustained in 2025 and 2026 to increase further the number of magistrates, in line with the law on the orientation and programming of justice 2023-2027. Despite budgetary constraints, the objective to recruit 1 500 magistrates and 1 800 clerks by 2027 will be kept¹⁴. Salaries of magistrates have also increased as planned¹⁵. In order to recruit more magistrates, the number of candidates accepted at the National School of Magistracy has increased fourfold since 2010¹⁶. While the number of magistrates has thus slightly increased between 2023 and 2024, it remains comparatively low, in particular in overseas territories¹⁷. The Observatory of the magistrates' workload met in 2025 and twice in 2026 to present the results of a study¹⁸ and discuss the integration of updated benchmarks in the existing case weighting system, which was however criticised by the magistrates' associations as limited in scope¹⁹.

Some further progress has been made on the digitalisation of judicial procedures²⁰. The digitalisation of the criminal procedures continued. For felonies and misdemeanours, the digital procedure was fully implemented. Since 2025, regarding other categories of crimes, criminal courts have opened at least one digital procedure (e.g. for convocation by the police, criminal orders) and court of appeals can create digital documents for all procedures. On the digitalisation of civil proceedings, the deployment of the civil electronic reporting continued

¹² Communications from the CNCDH of 2 April 2026, from the Magistrates' Union (USM) of 26 September and 16 December 2025. Country visit France, Magistrates' Associations, State Council, Constitutional Council. ENCJ (2026), written input, p. 24. Liberties (2026). HCJ (2026), pp. 11-13.

¹³ National Bar Association (2026), written input, pp. 23-24. The response from public authorities would have been particularly weak according to ENNHRI (2026), p. 10 and EAJ (2026), p. 16.

¹⁴ French Government (2026b), p. 2. By 1 December 2025, 489 magistrates and 571 clerks were appointed in court and all of the planned 1 100 judicial assistants were recruited. The 2026 budget of the Ministry of Justice plans the recruitment of 617 magistrates, 576 clerks and 32 judicial assistants.

¹⁵ Regulation n° 2025-659 of 18 July 2025.

¹⁶ While 118 trainees became magistrates in 2010 the number rose to 470 in 2025.

¹⁷ Country visit France, Defender of Rights. Defender of Rights (2026c), p. 57. Figure 36, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

¹⁸ Supported by the EU Technical Support Instrument The study allowed to develop a caseload-driven methodology for allocating resources in the judiciary.

¹⁹ Magistrates' associations criticised the discrepancy between the results of this study and the previous assessment done by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with magistrates (the conclusions of this 10-year project have not yet been made public).

²⁰ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to France to "step up efforts to complete ongoing projects aimed at full digitalisation of civil and criminal court proceedings". Some progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025, 2024 and 2023.

in 2025. The digital management of documents is being tested until the end of 2026, with a view to a possible roll out in 2027. The Portalis tool, which concerns the digitalisation of civil judicial proceedings, was deployed in 2025 in all labour courts. It is now rolled out in proximity courts²¹ (46%) followed by all civil courts. According to the European Association of Judges (EAJ), many technical difficulties remain²². The litigant's portal, which allows citizens to launch certain procedures online, was further developed. By the end of 2026, for example, citizens will be able to file a digital request for almost all civil litigation, with no requirement for a legal representation. A new portal on legal aid is being developed, which will allow attorneys to both view pending legal aid applications for their clients and submit such applications with their clients' consent. In 2025, the website of the ministry was enriched with a portal for victims, to guide them in their judicial steps. The possibility to sign documents electronically was further developed in 2025²³. Decisions of civil and criminal courts were published through open data in September 2025 while this process was postponed for other courts until the end of 2028²⁴. France is supported by the Technical Support Instrument to facilitate and accelerate the processing of mass litigation²⁵. Further efforts are needed to enhance the use of digital technology in courts and to improve electronic communication between the courts, prosecutors and other judicial actors²⁶. Taking into account the positive developments regarding the criminal and civil procedures, some further progress was made on the recommendation.

Small court fees for access to courts were reintroduced and alternative dispute resolutions methods are increasingly encouraged. Court fees of EUR 50 have been introduced for some civil and labour courts through the 2026 Finance Act²⁷. This does not apply to beneficiaries of legal aid. In addition, on a trial basis from 2025 to 2028, another tax is due in proceedings before the economic affairs courts²⁸, which also provides for a contribution of up to 5% of the requested amount, within the limit of EUR 100 000. Both these contributions were declared constitutional by the Constitutional Council, with some interpretation guidelines²⁹. New legislation was adopted to clarify and better structure the rules relating to amicable settlement of disputes, to facilitate their use by practitioners³⁰. The 'amicable settlement hearing', a conciliation procedure by the judge, was extended to all courts, with the exception of the labour courts. The recourse to amicable settlement is now mandatory in certain cases, e.g. for claims brought before a judicial court when the amount of the dispute is less than EUR 5 000 or when the claim is related to a neighbourhood dispute. In general, this reform was welcomed, including by the HCJ, as long as it does not jeopardise the right to effective legal protection nor gives a comparative advantage to big companies to the detriment of SMEs³¹.

²¹ Civil courts for cases valued under EUR 10 000.

²² EAJ (2026), written input, p. 31.

²³ French Government (2026), written input, pp. 2-5.

²⁴ National Bar Association (2026), written input, p. 4.

²⁵ Project on the "Automation of Routine Tasks in Judicial Proceedings (ARTJP)", started in October 2025.

²⁶ Figures 41, 42 and 43, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

²⁷ Article 126.

²⁸ 12 economic affairs courts replaced 12 commercial courts on 1 January 2025. This pilot will last until 31 December 2028.

²⁹ Decision n° 2025-1184 QPC, 6 March 2026. The judge must assess the proportionality of the contribution with regard to the economic situation of the contributor.

³⁰ See also Figure 27, EU Justice Scoreboard. Decree of 18 July 2025 recasting Books I and V of the Code of Civil Procedure.

³¹ Country visit France, Magistrates' associations and business organisations. See also MEDEL (2026), written input, p. 12. Defender of Rights (2026a), p. 25.

Efficiency

Reforms are being considered to improve the efficiency of the justice system, particularly through the streamlining of appeal and criminal procedures. The estimated time needed to resolve litigious civil and commercial cases at first instance increased to 434 days in 2024 (430 days in 2023)³² while the clearance rate remained stable around 95%³³. The draft Decree ‘Rivage’³⁴ is part of a series of reforms aimed at modernising and rationalising the functioning of justice. It proposes that the threshold for last resort claims increases from EUR 5 000 to EUR 10 000 in most courts (e.g. civil, commercial, labour courts). Appeal to a higher court would be limited for certain decisions³⁵. The introduction of a mechanism allowing the President of the Chamber to declare an appeal manifestly inadmissible of his own motion would allow for a better screening. A compulsory prior attempt at mediation would become mandatory in cases valued below EUR 10 000. Magistrates’ associations, bars and the European Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) consider this reform to amount to a restriction to the right to appeal³⁶. The Government is therefore conducting additional consultations with lawyers and magistrates³⁷. With regard to criminal cases, the number of pending cases at first instance courts in serious criminal cases and the regional criminal courts rose by 60% between 2020 and 2024³⁸. The Government adopted a draft law³⁹ with the objective to decrease the duration of criminal procedures. This draft would introduce plea bargaining in criminal matters and propose to reorganise regional criminal courts. Legal professionals and CSOs criticised the lack of publicity of the plea bargaining as criminal convictions would thus result from negotiations between prosecutors and accused, without the public and victims being present⁴⁰. As a result, this part of the proposal was dropped entirely in June 2026 by the Minister of Justice, following a negative vote in the Laws’ Committee of the National Assembly, rejecting the whole draft law. The draft also proposes to modify the composition of the regional criminal courts with the replacement of two of the five magistrates by qualified citizen assessors⁴¹, to restore a form of popular jury in criminal justice.

II. ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

The perception among experts, citizens and business executives is that the level of corruption in the public sector remains relatively low. In the 2026 Corruption Perceptions

³² After the publication of the 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard (based on CEPEJ Study), the figure for 2023 has been revised following a change in national methodology.

³³ Figures 5 and 10, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard. See also pending cases at the European Court of Human Rights for excessive length of civil proceedings (*Group Suty* (34/38) (standard supervision)).

³⁴ « Rationalisation des Instances en Voie d’Appel pour en Garantir l’Efficience ». Streamlining Appeal Bodies to ensure their effectiveness.

³⁵ Particularly those of the family court on maintenance obligations and for commercial leases with an annual rent of less than EUR 15 000.

³⁶ National Bar (2026), written input, pp. 11-12. Country visit France, Magistrates’ Associations and bars. Consultation of the Magistrates’ Union by the Government, website of the Union. ENNHRI (2026), p. 9.

³⁷ Country visit France, Ministry of Justice.

³⁸ From 2 303 in 2020 to 3 892 in 2024. Ministry of Justice (2025). See also MEDEL (2026), written input, p. 12.

³⁹ Draft law on criminal justice and respect for victims, n° 456 (2025-2026).

⁴⁰ Country visit France, CSOs and Magistrates’ associations.

⁴¹ Magistrates’ associations are concerned about the criteria which will be used for the selection of these citizens. Country visit France, Magistrates’ associations.

Index by Transparency International, France scores 66/100⁴² and ranks 11th in the European Union and 27th globally. This perception has deteriorated over the past five years⁴³. The 2026 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 77% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 71%) and 12% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards businesses, 65% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 65%) and 47% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 37%). Furthermore, 28% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 38%), while 34% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 31%)⁴⁴.

The 2025-2029 National Plan Against Corruption, setting the priorities for the next five years, was adopted in November 2025. It is organised around four pillars: fighting corruption and integrity in central government departments, helping local authorities to fight corruption⁴⁵, protecting economic stakeholders against corruption and combating corruption at the international level. The plan lists a total of 36 measures covering prevention and repression as well as all actors involved in anti-corruption activities. A large majority of the measures cover central government departments, while the remaining measures relate to the local level administration and private sector⁴⁶. The National Plan introduces an Interministerial Committee in charge of overseeing its implementation⁴⁷. The French Anti-corruption Agency (AFA) is tasked with the coordination of the work of this committee⁴⁸. The focus is now on the implementation of the National Plan⁴⁹ and the identification of resources (human, financial) available for its implementation⁵⁰.

Further efforts are being made in the prosecution of corruption cases. Investigation services dealing with corruption are being reinforced⁵¹, although resource constraints remain⁵². Paralegal staff members have been recruited at the National Financial Prosecutor Office (PNF)⁵³ and reinforcement as regards prosecutors' positions is being considered⁵⁴. The

⁴² The level of perceived corruption is categorised as follows: low (the perception among experts and business executives of public sector corruption scores above 79); relatively low (scores between 79-60), relatively high (scores between 59- 50), high (scores below 50).

⁴³ In 2021, the score was 71, while, in 2025, the score is 66. The score significantly increases/decreases when it changes more than five points; improves/deteriorates (changes between 4-5 points); is relatively stable (changes from 1-3 points) in the last five years.

⁴⁴ Data from Special Eurobarometer 573 (2026) and Flash Eurobarometer 582 (2026).

⁴⁵ 2025 Rule of Law Report, France, p. 6. CSOs had called on the development of integrity plans for municipalities above 100 000 inhabitants.

⁴⁶ Country visit France, Anticor and Transparency International France. CSOs have been involved in the preparation of the National Plan only to a limited extent. Transparency International France published its "Alternative Plan: 19 measures to sustainably reduce corruption in France" as a reply to the NACP.

⁴⁷ NACP 2025-2029, Measure 1.

⁴⁸ Ibidem and French Government (2026), written input, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Court of Audit (2025), Evaluation of the Anti-Corruption Policy 2013-2024, pp. 10 and 92. The implementation of the NACP must be based on clear governance and strong political ownership.

⁵⁰ Transparency International France (2026), written input, p. 17; Country Visit France, Anticor and Transparency International France. The lack of references to the resources dedicated to the implementation of the Plan has been mentioned by several stakeholders, in particular CSOs.

⁵¹ Recruitments of magistrates are planned until 2027, see pillar 1. Part of these reinforcements will be dedicated to the fight against corruption.

⁵² Court of Audit (2025), Evaluation of the Anti-Corruption Policy 2013-2024, p. 77. Country visit France, Magistrates' Associations, Anticor and Transparency International France.

⁵³ French Government (2026), written input, p. 28. Website of the First Instance Court of Paris: 9 legal assistants (+1) and 19 clerks (+1) are now working at the PNF.

⁵⁴ Country visit France, Government.

number of pending cases at the PNF shows a stabilisation since 2023 after several years of increase⁵⁵. A National Prosecutor Office for Organised Crime was created⁵⁶ and is operational since January 2026. Its competences include complex cases of bribery linked to organised crime. Prosecutors of these National Prosecution Offices are selected based on experience and knowledge of the field. They also benefit from dedicated specialised trainings⁵⁷. Changes within the National Police and the National Gendarmerie have also aimed at reinforcing the fight against corruption⁵⁸.

The High Authority for the Transparency in Public Life has been entrusted with new tasks. The High Authority for the Transparency in Public Life (HATVP) continues to verify assets and interests' declarations, issue opinions on issues related to revolving doors⁵⁹, and manage the Repository of Interest Representatives. Since October 2025, the Authority acquired new competences regarding the new Foreign Influence Repository⁶⁰. Despite past increases in resources⁶¹, the Authority and civil society noted that the current resources of the HATVP constrain its ability to satisfactorily carry out its additional tasks⁶². The HATVP President presented on 28 May 2026, an assessment of the work of the HATVP since it was created in 2014⁶³. Work is ongoing on the framework of assets and interest declarations⁶⁴ to ensure compliance with the GRECO's recommendation on examination of the declaration of the elected presidential candidate⁶⁵, the transparency and scope of interest declarations of officials at top-executive level⁶⁶ and accessibility of assets and interest declarations of members of Parliament⁶⁷.

Some further progress has been made regarding the recommendation on lobbying, in particular through the strengthening of the transparency framework on foreign influence activities, while other draft laws remain under discussion in the Parliament and disclosure requirements do not apply to officials at top-executive level⁶⁸. The decree⁶⁹ related to the implementation of the 2024 law on the prevention of foreign interference⁷⁰ entered into force in October 2025⁷¹. It provides for the creation of a Foreign

⁵⁵ Country visit France, Government; PNF (2025): 771 cases were pending at the end of 2025; 772 in 2023 (highest recorded number); only 211 in 2014.

⁵⁶ Law n° 2025-532 of 13 June 2025 on Anti-Narcotics and Organised Crime.

⁵⁷ Country visit France, French Government.

⁵⁸ French Government (2026), written input, p. 17. The former National Investigation Division has been replaced by the National Delegation Against Corruption which is now in charge of anti-corruption mission.

⁵⁹ French Government (2026), written input, p. 26. The HATVP issued 593 opinions in 2025.

⁶⁰ Decree n° 2025-733 of 31 July 2025 on transparency of lobbyists acting on behalf of foreign entities.

⁶¹ 2025 Rule of Law Report, France, p. 7.

⁶² Country visit France, HATVP: four positions were created in 2025 to cover previous needs, but they are not considered as sufficient by the HATVP and CSOs. Transparency International France (2026), written input, p. 19. Country visit France, HATVP.

⁶³ HATVP (2026).

⁶⁴ Country visit France, French Government.

⁶⁵ GRECO (2025), Recommendation viii.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, Recommendation ix.

⁶⁷ GRECO (2024), Recommendation v.

⁶⁸ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to France to "Continue ongoing efforts to ensure that rules on lobbying activities are consistently applied to all relevant actors, including at top-executive level, and take forward the legislative process on the draft laws on lobbying". Some progress was assessed previously on this recommendation in 2025, 2024, with no progress in 2023.

⁶⁹ Decree n° 2025-733 of 31 July 2025 on transparency of lobbyists acting on behalf of foreign entities.

⁷⁰ Law n°2024-850 from 25 July 2024 on the prevention of foreign interference.

⁶⁸ On 12 December 2023, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on transparency of interest representation on behalf of third countries which aims are similar. This proposal is currently being negotiated.

Influence Repository managed by the HATVP. Since October 2025, persons carrying out lobbying activities on behalf of foreign entities are required to be registered in the Foreign Influence Repository⁷². As of 1 January 2026, those persons must declare their activities every three months. This repository exists besides the Repository of Interests Representatives that has been in place since 2017. Both chambers of Parliament are actively working on training activities to raise awareness among their members on the law on the prevention of foreign interference⁷³. The draft laws on the transparency of interests' representatives⁷⁴ filed in 2023 have not been further discussed, while a new proposal on that topic⁷⁵ has been filed at the National Assembly. The scope of declaration obligation has been extended with the creation of the Foreign Influence Repository but disclosure requirements in both repositories continue to apply to interest representatives only and not to officials at top-executive level or to Members of the Parliament. On this basis, some further progress has been made in relation to the recommendation.

Measures continue to be implemented to reinforce the ethics culture within the Government, Parliament and their staff. An ethics guide for Presidential staff⁷⁶ was published in October 2025. An ethics contact point was appointed, awareness raising activities as well as training sessions were organised. The Senate also adopted and published a new ethics guide in view of its partial renewal, taking place in September 2026⁷⁷. The National Assembly updated its ethics guide to include changes related to the extension of the competence of the ethics contact point in matters related to control of political party financing⁷⁸. The Ethics Offices of both Chambers of the Parliament report an increased awareness of ethic-related matters by their members⁷⁹. Concerning political party financing, TRACFIN, a French Financial Intelligence Service, can now send information to the National Commission on Campaign Accounts and Political Financing (CNCCFP) that allow better information sharing on financial flows⁸⁰.

The integrity frameworks for police officers and magistrates are being further reinforced. The general inspectorate for the national police (IGPN) and the general inspectorate for the national "gendarmerie" (IGGN) are preparing a strategy or action plan for fighting corruption in their respective fields⁸¹. They have introduced ethics contact points who play a preventive role and follow-up on cases of non-compliance with professional ethics rules⁸². The HCJ published the Ethics Charter for Magistrates of the Judiciary reaffirming existing ethical principles and presenting them in a more structured and guiding

⁷² Country visit France, HATVP. Nine entities were registered on 3 June 2026.

⁷³ Country visit France, Deontologist of the National Assembly and Ethics Committee of the Senate.

⁷⁴ Draft law n° 834 presented at the Senate on 5 July 2023 and draft law n° 1577 presented on the same date at the National Assembly. The latter has become obsolete.

⁷⁵ Draft law n° 1516 on reinforcing the transparency of interest representatives presented on 4 June 2025. It mirrors the precedent draft law in proposing to strengthen the transparency of the activities of interests' representatives and addresses some issues faced by the HATVP in implementing the current system.

⁷⁶ Country visit France, Government. The ethics guide is available on the website of the Presidency.

⁷⁷ Country visit France, Ethics Committee of the Senate.

⁷⁸ Country visit France, Deontologist of the National Assembly.

⁷⁹ Country visit France, Deontologist of the National Assembly and Ethics Committee of the Senate.

⁸⁰ Country visit France, CNCCFP.

⁸¹ French Government (2026), written input, p. 20 (IGPN) and p. 21 (IGGN).

⁸² French Government (2026), written input, p. 31.

form⁸³. Requests for ethical counselling addressed by judges to their ethics support service (SAVD) continued to increase⁸⁴.

The framework for the protection of whistleblowers remains robust, while the increase of reports represents a challenge in terms of resources needed to ensure their follow-up.

Measure 14 of the National Anticorruption Plan refers to better familiarising all national administration staff with whistleblowing systems and mentions awareness raising and training as possible implementation tools of the measure. On 8 December 2025, the AFA organised a symposium focussing on how to tackle the steady increase in the number of alerts and on how to ensure the protection of whistleblowers. It was underlined that the legislation provides for a sound legal framework for the collection and handling of alerts while national administrations and their staff must be better trained⁸⁵. The number of whistleblowers reports increased significantly. The number of whistleblowing reports received by the Defender of Rights (Defender) almost doubled⁸⁶. Given the high number of alerts, the Defender and CSOs emphasize that more financial resources are needed to ensure the continuous well-functioning of the whistleblower framework⁸⁷.

As regards high risk areas for corruption, the law on Anti-Narcotics and Organised Crime that introduced several measures aimed at reinforcing the fight against corruption when linked to organised crime, is being implemented. Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU shows that 47% of companies in France (EU average 37%) think that corruption is a problem when doing business and 26% of companies (EU average 30%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender in practice in the last three years⁸⁸. 62% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review bodies (the regular courts) as very or fairly good⁸⁹. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in France reports 19% of single bids for 2023 (EU average 27%). The fight against corruption linked to organised crime figures prominently in the National Anticorruption Plan⁹⁰. Measures related to bolstering the fight against corruption linked to organised crime include a compulsory mapping of the risks for public actors in the fight against narcotraffic and in high risks areas such as ports and airports, as well as targeted anti-corruption training for security officers operating in those areas. Public procurement also remains a sector exposed to high corruption risks and therefore constitutes another focus area of the national plan. Measures primarily target prevention, notably through training of public officials, law enforcement and financial experts, as well as support for the implementation of anti-corruption frameworks for private

⁸³ French Government (2026), written input, pp. 8-9, and Country visit France, HCJ. Ethics principles were until then listed in the Collection of Ethics obligations for Magistrates published in 2010. The Charter remains a non-binding instrument. As prescribed by Law n° 2023-1058 of 20 November 2023, it was drafted after broad consultations.

⁸⁴ HCJ (2026), p. 60: In 2025, the SAVD received 124 requests, compared to 119 in 2024, 112 in 2023 and 74 in 2022.

⁸⁵ AFA website. Possible areas of improvement have been identified such as reinforcing training on ethics or developing a network of professionals, Symposium "Alerts: key tools to fight corruption", summary of the panel "Challenges for the collection and handling of internal alerts by public actors".

⁸⁶ Defender of Rights (2025a), p. 120. The number of reports received by the Defender of Rights went from 519 in 2024 to 900 in 2025, around 20% of them being corruption-related reports.

⁸⁷ Country visit France, Defender of Rights, Transparency International - France and Anticor. The Defender of Rights welcomed the awareness raising activities, which could increase the number of alerts, requiring a possible increase of resources for organisations in charge of whistleblowers.

⁸⁸ Country visit France, Government.

⁸⁹ Figure 59, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

⁹⁰ NACP, objective 2, measures 8 to 13.

companies⁹¹. A decree adopted in December 2025⁹² increased the threshold for exemption from advertising and competitive tendering for supplies and services⁹³ as well as for works⁹⁴, limiting the spendings by public authorities subject to publicity and transparent competition⁹⁵. Those contracts are nonetheless still subject to the fundamental principles of public procurement, in particular, freedom of access to public procurement, equal treatment of candidates and transparency⁹⁶.

III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM

The Regulatory authority for audiovisual and digital communication (ARCOM) is continuing to expand its regulatory scope and activities in response to new obligations and mandates. ARCOM, the media regulator, has seen its role further strengthened in recent years⁹⁷. In the near future, ARCOM is expected to play a key role also in ensuring the application of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) at national level⁹⁸, as well as under a draft law to strengthen the effectiveness of neighbouring rights for the press⁹⁹, which would entrust it with new powers to oversee negotiations between publishers and digital platforms and to impose sanctions in case of non-compliance¹⁰⁰. This expansion of responsibilities takes place in a context where resources remain broadly stable or are slightly declining¹⁰¹. In parallel, ARCOM is reflecting on how to enforce impartiality in public service media and has commissioned a report. Published in May 2026, this report puts forward 17 recommendations, which ARCOM will discuss with public service media providers and the Ministry of Culture over a six-week consultation period before presenting an action plan on the proposals¹⁰². Following the decision of the Council of State of 13 February 2024¹⁰³, ARCOM has initiated a process of adapting its methodology to broaden its assessment of pluralism, notably regarding the plurality of viewpoints and editorial balance, including through a more qualitative approach, while stakeholders remain attentive to its implementation. In this context, a formal complaint submitted by Reporters Without Borders

⁹¹ NACP, measures 4, 6, 26, 27 and 28.

⁹² Decree n° 2025-1386 of 29 December 2025 modifying some thresholds in public procurement.

⁹³ The threshold increased from EUR 40 000 to 60 000.

⁹⁴ The threshold of EUR 100 000 that had been provisionally set in 2020 (until 2022) has been confirmed.

⁹⁵ Transparency International, written input, p. 25. Country visit France, Anticor and Transparency International France. CSOs raised concerns on these measures.

⁹⁶ Country visit France, Government.

⁹⁷ ARCOM also exercises competences under Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 (Digital Services Act) and Regulation (EU) 2024/900 on political advertising.

⁹⁸ Government aims to grant ARCOM new competences to ensure the effective implementation of the Regulation, notably with regard to the oversight of media concentration from a pluralism perspective, the development of a media ownership transparency database, the regulation of user interface personalisation, and the transparency of state advertising. French Government (2026), written input, p. 35.

⁹⁹ Reference to this draft law is made in the last paragraph of this section. It seeks to address persistent difficulties faced by publishers in obtaining fair remuneration from online platforms for the use of their press content.

¹⁰⁰ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024.

¹⁰¹ Country visit France, ARCOM and Ministry of Culture. According to the Ministry of Culture (not responsible for these appropriations, ARCOM being an independent authority funded from the state budget), ARCOM's budget (voted in the initial finance law) remains broadly stable between 2025 and 2026 (with an increase of 0.2%), following a decrease of 2% between 2024 and 2025. Over the period 2024–2026, ARCOM's staffing ceiling has been reduced by 2 full-time equivalent posts (French Government (2026), written input, pp. 28-29).

¹⁰² ARCOM (2026 b and c).

¹⁰³ Council of State (2025).

(RSF) concerning alleged structural imbalances on one TV channel is currently under examination¹⁰⁴.

Recourse to media self-regulation has increased in recent years, indicating growing engagement with journalistic ethics. Based on the most recently available consolidated data (financial year 2024), the Journalistic Ethics and Mediation Council (CDJM), a body for mediation between journalists, the media or news agencies and the public, received over 200 complaints and issued a growing number of opinions, reflecting increased public engagement with journalistic ethics¹⁰⁵. Complaints mainly concern inaccuracies, lack of verification, conflicts of interest and breaches of ethical standards, with all types of media concerned, particularly print/online press and television. The CDJM has also introduced new tools, such as a confidential hotline, to support journalists in addressing ethical issues. More recent signals (internal monitoring in 2025 and 2026) suggest that this trend continues. However, its effectiveness remains constrained by limited participation of major media outlets, as well as restricted resources, and a mandate focused on individual cases rather than systemic media pluralism issues¹⁰⁶.

While public service media are restructuring their activities due to budget constraints, pressure on them has intensified in the public debate. The reform of public broadcasting governance aiming to create a holding with public service media outlets is currently on hold¹⁰⁷. In parallel, a parliamentary inquiry committee has been established in November 2025 to examine the neutrality, functioning and financing of public service media. Its final report¹⁰⁸, published on 5 May 2026, contains around 70 non-binding recommendations, including recommendations for significant funding cuts, the closure or merger of several public media outlets, stricter neutrality obligations, and the reintroduction of presidential appointments for public broadcasting executives. On 12 May 2026, the Committee's rapporteur tabled a bill aimed at preventing conflicts of interest within public audiovisual media. The bill was scheduled for consideration by the National Assembly in plenary on 25 June 2026 but was ultimately not examined. On the funding side, the reform linking public broadcasting financing to a share of VAT revenues, adopted in December 2024, has been welcomed by public service media as improving predictability¹⁰⁹. The Draft Finance Law for 2026 nevertheless includes reductions in the context of broader fiscal consolidation efforts, with a budget cut of around EUR 80,2 million for France Télévisions¹¹⁰ and EUR 4,1 million for Radio France¹¹¹ compared to 2025¹¹². The savings will include workforce reductions¹¹³, a

¹⁰⁴ RSF (2025).

¹⁰⁵ In its 2024 annual report published on 21 May 2025, the CDJM declared it has been seised 216 times (146 times in 2023, 297 in 2020), mostly for printed/online press (45.6%), TV (28.4%), radio (11.2%) and online media (9.3%). To these procedures, the association published 74 responses (50 in 2023, 20 in 2020).

¹⁰⁶ Country visit France, CDJM.

¹⁰⁷ Draft law on the reform of public audiovisual and audiovisual sovereignty, aimed at reforming the governance structure of public audiovisual media. The draft bill was rejected at first reading by the National Assembly in July 2024 and adopted by the Senate on 11 July 2025, pending a second reading in the National Assembly. This draft bill is currently on hold.

¹⁰⁸ Parliament (2026), pp. 67-80.

¹⁰⁹ In December 2024, France enacted an organic law reform that shifts public service medias funding to a tax-based revenue stream (share of VAT), improving stability and predictability; the Constitutional Council (2022-842 DC) requires the legislature to set resources at levels enabling PSM to fulfil their remit.

¹¹⁰ EUR 80,2 million in the adopted budget and an additional EUR 15 million announced in a letter sent by the Prime Minister the France Télévisions CEO, as reported during the country visit France, Ministry of Culture and France Télévisions.

¹¹¹ French Government (2026b), additional written input, p. 27.

strict control of operating and structural costs, the sale of real estate assets, lower programme spending¹¹⁴, and reductions in certain FM broadcasting frequencies. Both operators welcomed the ongoing discussions with the Government on new multiannual contracts of objectives and means (COM), which are expected to restore greater predictability to their financial framework¹¹⁵ identified strengthening news coverage, particularly at national and local level, and accelerating digital transformation as key priorities. Both operators have launched initiatives to strengthen transparency and audience trust, including the introduction of a “pluralism barometer” for Radio France Group and a new section entitled “Transparency” on the France Télévisions’ website aimed at improving public access to information on its costs and use of resources.

Further steps were taken to improve the transparency of media ownership, including through the development of a preliminary transparency database, while media concentration is an increasing concern¹¹⁶. A preliminary media ownership transparency database has been developed, although its full deployment remains contingent on the adoption of the necessary national measures, for which no definitive timeline has yet been confirmed by the Government. The current scope of the database covers audiovisual media (television and radio services authorized for terrestrial broadcasting), but it should be extended to include print media and online news services once the relevant legislation is adopted in France. In this context, the authorities are considering extending the powers and competences of ARCOM so that it can carry out an assessment of certain transactions in the media market from the pluralism standpoint, in collaboration with the Competition Authority. Stakeholders, including journalists’ organisations, report increasing concerns regarding the concentration of media ownership, notably driven by acquisitions by a limited number of large private groups¹¹⁷. They highlight that these developments may affect editorial independence, transparency and the diversity of viewpoints, including through reported changes to internal safeguards within media outlets. In the context of growing economic pressures on the sector, stakeholders underline that these trends may further weaken media pluralism¹¹⁸. The 2025 Media MPM report identified market plurality as the most concerning area for France, highlighting persistent structural issues, and the 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) reports an increased risk of 71% for market plurality¹¹⁹. In light of the development of the media ownership transparency database, there has been some further progress on this recommendation.

The Commission for Access to Administrative Documents received a record number of requests for access to official documents, while requests from journalists were in minority. The Commission for Access to Administrative Documents (CADA) plays a central

¹¹² Decrease of 212 full-time equivalent positions compared with 2024.

¹¹³ Le Conseil d'administration de France Télévisions approuve les comptes 2025, 13 March 2025, France Télévisions website.

¹¹⁴ Without prejudice to the constitutional principle of annual budgeting, the predictability of funding is ensured by the contracts of objectives and means (COM), which originate from Article 15 of Law No. 2000-719 of 1 August 2000 amending the Law of 30 September 1986.

¹¹⁵ Country visit France, Radio France and France Télévisions.

¹¹⁶ The 2025 Rule of Law Report recommended to France to “Complete ongoing reforms to improve the transparency of media ownership, in particular, complex shareholding structures, building on the existing legal safeguards”. Significant progress was previously assessed on this recommendation in 2025, an no progress in 2024 and 2023.

¹¹⁷ E.g. one acquisition has been challenged before both the State Council and the Competition Authority, to assess a potential abuse of dominant position. Country visit France, RSF, Press Council, AFP and SNJ.

¹¹⁸ SNJ (2026).

¹¹⁹ 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for France, p. 18.

role in overseeing the right to access official documents, including through advisory opinions and guidance to administrations. Requests submitted by journalists represent a limited share of its activity, based on the most recently available consolidated data (financial year 2024), accounting for around 2% in 2024 and not exceeding 5% overall, and mainly concern areas such as public procurement, public finances, public security and government policy¹²⁰. At the same time, some stakeholders indicate that access procedures are sometimes complex in practice, particularly given the non-binding nature of CADA's opinions and the potential need to seek judicial review to obtain access to certain documents¹²¹.

Developments affecting the working conditions for journalists included a Court of Cassation judgment strengthening the protection of sources, while challenges persist related to their safety. The draft law to strengthen the effectiveness of neighbouring rights for the press¹²² supported by the Government and adopted at first reading by the National Assembly in March 2026, aims to strengthen the effective enforcement of neighbouring rights for the press by improving access to data from digital platforms, facilitating negotiations, and granting ARCOM new regulatory and sanctioning powers. The bill was adopted by the Senate in June 2026. Meanwhile, the protection of journalistic sources has been identified as an area of ongoing concern from stakeholders notably due to the broad interpretation of “overriding public interest” exceptions. A judgment of 17 March 2026 by the Court of Cassation¹²³ clarified that journalists may invoke source protection regardless of where their material is seized, including outside professional premises such as in public places, which was welcomed as an important clarification by stakeholders¹²⁴. Concerning the safety of journalists, stakeholders pointed to instances of violence and intimidation against journalists and media outlets, including local media. More broadly, concerns persist regarding¹²⁵ violence during demonstrations, while the National policing scheme (SNMO), provides for specific safeguards. The law aiming to transpose the anti-SLAPP Directive has been adopted in May 2026 and covers both cross-border and domestic cases. Stakeholders also highlighted an increase in strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), particularly targeting local and investigative media, contributing to financial strain and risks of self-censorship¹²⁶. Since the 2025 Rule of Law Report, 24 new alerts have been recorded on the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists¹²⁷. The Media Freedom Rapid Response mechanism has identified 92 alerts. These alerts include harassment and threats¹²⁸.

¹²⁰ CADA (2026), written input.

¹²¹ RSF, written input, p.19.

¹²² This law is building on Article 15 of Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market and amending Directives 96/9/EC and 2001/29/EC (Text with EEA relevance). It is intended to address persistent difficulties faced by publishers in obtaining fair remuneration from online platforms for the use of their press content, with potential positive effects on the distribution of revenues and the remuneration of journalists. Neighbouring rights are related rights granted to entities involved in the dissemination of protected content; under Article 15, press publishers are given the right to control certain online uses of their publications, without affecting authors' rights.

¹²³ Court of Cassation, 17 March 2026, No. 25-81.815.

¹²⁴ SNJ website.

¹²⁵ Country visit France and written input, SNJ.

¹²⁶ RSF (2026), p. 19.

¹²⁷ France has so far not replied to any of the alerts. Out of the 24 alerts, replies are expected for seven.

¹²⁸ France has so far not replied to any of the alerts. Out of the 24 alerts, replies are expected for seven.

IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES

Stakeholder engagement in law making is stable, while the reduction of legislative and administrative burdens remains an important priority for the Government. According to the OECD¹²⁹, consultations with selected groups take place frequently and public consultations are accessible online. Stakeholders' engagement is slightly stronger for subordinate regulation than for primary legislation¹³⁰, which is often adopted through accelerated procedures in the Parliament¹³¹. The Government has not used the Agora application, which allows citizens to give their opinion on specific public policies, between July 2024 and July 2025. Since then, citizens were consulted on 7 topics, and 27 000 replies were submitted¹³². The Government organised citizens' conventions on different topics, where around 130 citizens were randomly selected to participate. According to the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH)¹³³, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)¹³⁴ and the European Civic Forum¹³⁵, despite frequent consultations, citizens' recommendations have limited influence. In their view, public consultations are often a formal exercise¹³⁶. SMEs have been increasingly consulted on draft laws and proposals¹³⁷. Businesses still face some challenges related to legislative and administrative burdens, which they see sometimes as an obstacle to investment¹³⁸. However, several steps have been taken to improve the situation. Businesses have actively participated in a consultation on simplifying their administrative obligations¹³⁹, leading to the adoption of new legislation¹⁴⁰, which contains twenty-six simplification measures for businesses. The law has three objectives: reducing the burden of administrative procedures, reviewing the relationship between administration and business and streamlining the procedures.

More than half of companies surveyed in France express confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection. 61% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts, a figure which has slightly decreased in comparison with 2025 (62%)¹⁴¹. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 55% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (French Competition Authority) as very or fairly good, a figure which has significantly decreased in comparison with 2025 (62%)¹⁴².

¹²⁹ OECD (2025), Chapter 6, France, p. 148. Composite indicators: stakeholder engagement in rulemaking, 2018-2024.

¹³⁰ Ibidem.

¹³¹ Out of 71 laws adopted in the parliamentary session 2024-2025, 51 were adopted by accelerated procedure, according to Art.45(2) of the Constitution. Statistics of the National Assembly 2024-2025.

¹³² French Government (2026b), p. 37.

¹³³ CNCDH is the national human rights institution.

¹³⁴ FRA(2026), pp. 21-22.

¹³⁵ European Civic Forum (2026), p. 15.

¹³⁶ CNCDH (2025), p. 14. Country visit France, Business Organisations.

¹³⁷ Country visit France, Business Organisations.

¹³⁸ Ibidem and European Investment Bank, EIB Investment Survey. In the context of the European Semester, the Commission has proposed that the Council recommends that France "further simplif[ies] national regulation, reduce[s] administrative burden, and regulatory restrictions on firms (...)". European Commission (2026) 210 final, CSR 3.

¹³⁹ The consultation had received 700 000 votes and more than 5 000 proposals. French Government (2026b), p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ Law on Simplifying economic life, adopted by the Parliament on 26 May 2026.

¹⁴¹ Figure 52 and 53, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard. 31% and 28% of the surveyed investors respectively perceive the frequent changes in legislation or concerns about the quality of the law-making process and concerns about quality, efficiency or independence of justice as a reason for the lack of confidence in investment protection.

¹⁴² Figure 60, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard.

The Council of State has jurisdiction in several business-related cases, including in cases related to public procurement, public concessions, public contracts and economic regulation. There are no judicial mechanisms to improve efficiency in these cases¹⁴³.

On 1 January 2026, France had 18 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, a decrease of 8 compared to the previous year¹⁴⁴. At that time, France's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 76% (compared to 66% in 2025; 24% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 3 years and 10 months (compared to 3 years in 2025)¹⁴⁵. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for almost 16 years, concerns the inaction of the authorities in the execution of judiciary measures of expulsion regarding illegally occupied lands¹⁴⁶. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2025 there were 6 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 9 in 2024)¹⁴⁷. On 17 June 2026, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had remained at 18¹⁴⁸.

Public authorities continue to support civil society organisations, including through substantial public funding, while some organisations continue to face challenges to their operations. In December 2025, France's civic space rating was downgraded by Civicus from "narrowed" to "obstructed"¹⁴⁹. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) point to an increasing restriction of the freedom of association¹⁵⁰, while cases of excessive use of force by law enforcement during demonstrations have been pointed out by the European Court for Human Rights, the Defender of Rights, the CNCDH and CSOs¹⁵¹. Despite budgetary restrictions leading to some decrease in their funding¹⁵², public authorities continue to support CSOs, including through substantial public funding¹⁵³. No human rights CSO has been dissolved during the reporting period according to the Law of 2021, which establishes the 'Republican Commitment Agreement'¹⁵⁴, while in a few cases part of their public funding was removed. According to the Defender of Rights, the CNCDH and CSOs, criteria to remove funding from CSOs could be more precise¹⁵⁵. Most CSOs indicated they have good relations with public

¹⁴³ Figures 66 and 67, 2026 EU Justice Scoreboard. The data presented reflects exclusively the mechanisms in place at the level of the highest administrative jurisdictions; the same or other mechanisms may be in place at lower instance administrative courts.

¹⁴⁴ For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

¹⁴⁵ All figures calculated by the European Implementation Network (EIN) and based on the number of cases that are considered pending at the annual cut-off date of 1 January 2026. EIN (2026), written input, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ Judgment of the ECtHR, 13829/03, *Barret and Sirjean v. France*, pending implementation since 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Council of Europe (2026), p.162

¹⁴⁸ Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

¹⁴⁹ France's score is 60/100. Ratings by Civicus are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

¹⁵⁰ FIDH (2025), European Civic Space (ECF) (2026), p. 8-17, Liberties (2026), Civil Society Europe (2026).

¹⁵¹ European Court of Human Rights, judgment of 30 June 2025, *Fraisie and others v. France*, 22525/21 et 47626/21. CNCDH (2025), p. 24, Defender of Rights (2026a), p. 108. See also its decisions 2025-129, 2025-066 and 2025-065.

¹⁵² Country visit France, CSOs. There was more than EUR 1 billion decrease in 2025, following EUR 2.4 billion in 2024. In 2025, more associations were dissolved than in 2022 and in 2023 in total. In 2026, a further cut of EUR 1 billion is planned. FIDH (2025), pp. 60–64, ECF (2026), pp. 84–85, FRA (2026), pp. 15-17. The decrease in funding is leading to an increasing number of dissolutions.

¹⁵³ EUR 9.5 billion in 2024. French Government (2026b), p. 35.

¹⁵⁴ See 2025, 2024, 2023, 2022 Rule of Law Reports, chapters on France, resp. pp. 14, 22, 24 and 23-24.

¹⁵⁵ E.g. Calvados family planning association, for example, received no subsidies in 2025 on the grounds that it had failed to respect the principle of neutrality. CNCDH (2025), pp. 15 - 16; Defender of Rights (2025a), pp. 142-145, Decision 2025-199; Observatory of associative freedoms (2026a); FIDH (2025), pp. 60-64 European Civic Space (2025), p. 14, Human Rights Watch (2026), FRA(2026), written input, pp. 139-141.

authorities. However, between 27% and 41% of CSOs, depending on the area of work, stated that they self-censor as a result of fear of losing funds¹⁵⁶. Environmental CSOs have seen the number of legal actions against them increase over recent years¹⁵⁷. The European Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) recommended France to provide the CNCDH, which has an ‘A’ accreditation status, with the required financial resources so that it can effectively carry out its mandate at national and international level; consult or at least inform the CNCDH of the preparation of legislative texts and public policies, particularly those that are related or have impacts on human rights and climate policies; and enable the CNCDH to intervene before national courts by submitting written observations¹⁵⁸.

ECF (2026), p. 8. It is difficult to assess how often the tool has been used since it came into force, as highlighted by an assessment of the tool by the French National Assembly's legal commission in 2025.

¹⁵⁶ University of Lille (2025), results of the first national survey on relations between associations and public authorities. See also Human Rights Watch (2025). ECF (2026), p. 13. See also FRA(2026), pp. 139 - 141. Observatory of Associative Freedoms (2026b).

¹⁵⁷ The Support Movement for Environmentalists recorded 95 legal proceedings in 2025, up from 55 in 2023, FRA(2026), written input, pp. 133-135. See also ECtHR, Case *Ludes and Others v. France*, 3 July 2025.

¹⁵⁸ ENNHRI (2026), p. 1.

Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order*

* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2026 Rule of Law Report can be found at https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2026-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en.

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Annex II: Country visit to France

The Commission services held physical and virtual meetings in November 2025 and March 2026 with:

- Agence France Press
- Associative Movement
- Anticor
- Authority for the regulation of the audiovisual and digital communication (ARCOM)
- Constitutional Council
- Council of State
- Defender of Rights
- Deontologist of the National Assembly
- Ethics Committee of the Senate
- European Civic Forum
- Federation of French Entreprises and Entrepreneurs (FEEF)
- High Council for the Judiciary (physically and virtually)
- Journalistic Ethics and Mediation Council (CDJM)
- League of Human Rights (LDH)
- Magistracy's Union (SM)
- Magistrates' Union (USM)
- National Advisory Committee on Human Rights (CNCDH) (physically and virtually)
- National Bar Council, Delegation of French Bars, Paris Bar and Conference of Batonniers
- National Commission for Campaign Accounts and Political Funding (CNCCFP)
- National Union of Journalists (SNJ)
- Public authorities: Secretariat-General for European Affairs, Ministry of Justice (physically and virtually), Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Culture, Ministry of Sports, Youth and Associative Life, Secretariat-General of the Government for European Affairs (physically and virtually), Interministerial Direction for Public Transformation, French Representation to the EU, French Agency against Corruption.
- Public Service Media (France TV and Radio France)
- Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication (ARCOM)
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
- Superior Council of the Magistracy
- Transparency International France

* The Commission also met the following organisations in a number of horizontal meetings:

- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- End FGM EU
- European Civic Forum
- European Partnership for Democracy
- Human Rights Watch

- ILGA-Europe
- International Federation for Human Rights
- Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association
- Transparency International EU