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## COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

### **2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in France**

#### *Accompanying the document*

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the  
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

### **2025 Rule of Law Report The rule of law situation in the European Union**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In France, the law of 20 November 2023 reforming the status of magistrates is being implemented. The Superior Council of Magistracy defended judicial independence in response to concerns raised by attacks on magistrates related to judicial decisions. Budgetary efforts are being made to allow for an increase the number of magistrates. The digitalisation projects of judicial procedures were further rolled out. Online access to court decisions improved further. A reflection is ongoing about possible solutions to address some challenges with regard to the efficiency of the justice system.

The 2024-2029 national anti-corruption plan is expected to be adopted by summer 2025. Efforts to prosecute corruption increased, including as regards high-level cases, with additional human resources allocated to investigation authorities, and new legislative tools in place. The Anti-Corruption Agency (AFA) was reorganised to improve its effectiveness while the High Authority for the Transparency in Public Life (HATVP) increased its human resources to address an increased workload. The 2023 guidelines on the lobby register are being implemented, but disclosure requirements continue to apply to lobbyists only and not to officials at top-executive level. Integrity measures for police officers are applied, and new ethics measures for Members of Parliament, officials at top-executive level and magistrates were adopted. The number of whistleblower reports received by the various authorities continued to increase. Initiatives are in preparation to combat corruption linked to organised drug trafficking and affecting ports.

France's media regulator, ARCOM, has undergone significant developments, expanding its regulatory scope and activities in anticipation of new obligations and mandates. The proposed reform of public broadcasting governance and the creation of a holding company is the subject of debate and practical avenues to strengthen coordination among public broadcasters are being sought. Steps have been taken to improve media ownership transparency, with the preparation of a national ownership database. Despite strong legal guarantees on the right to access documents, journalists report challenges about its practical implementation. A legislative proposal, based on the outcome of a broad national consultation, is being prepared to better safeguard the right to information.

Legislative simplification efforts are welcomed by businesses while stakeholders raise concerns regarding the consultation of citizens. Discussions are ongoing on the safeguards to be put in place when using artificial intelligence in the justice system. The financial environment of civil society organisations remains favourable despite budgetary restrictions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, concerning the recommendations in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, France has made:

- Some further progress on completing ongoing projects aimed at full digitalisation of civil and criminal court proceedings.
- Some further progress on ensuring that rules on lobbying activities are consistently applied to all relevant actors, including at top executive level.
- Significant progress on improving the transparency of media ownership, in particular, complex shareholding structures, building on the existing legal safeguards.

On this basis, and considering other developments that took place in the period of reference, it is recommended to France to:

- Step up efforts to complete ongoing projects aimed at full digitalisation of civil and criminal court proceedings.
- 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.
- Complete ongoing reforms to improve the transparency of media ownership, in particular, complex shareholding structures, building on the existing legal safeguards.

## I. JUSTICE SYSTEM<sup>1</sup>

### Independence

**The level of perceived judicial independence in France continues to be average among both the general public and companies.** Overall, 51% of the general population and 53% of companies perceive the level of independence of courts and judges to be ‘fairly or very good’ in 2025<sup>2</sup>. The perceived judicial independence among the general public has slightly decreased in comparison with 2024 (54%), as well as in comparison with 2021 (57%). The perceived judicial independence among companies has increased in comparison with 2024 (48%), although it remains lower in comparison with 2021 (58%).

**The law of 20 November 2023 reforming the status of magistrates is being implemented.** With regard to admissions in the magistracy, the age limit has been repealed and competitions opened, including to recruit a wider variety of profiles. A 360° evaluation process is being created for presidents of courts and tribunals. The transfer of a magistrate to the private sector is now controlled by the Superior Council of the Magistracy, with the Justice Minister kept informed. It is too early to evaluate the implementation of the reform of the magistrates’ disciplinary regime<sup>3</sup>. The constitutional reforms relating to the status of prosecutors, both in terms of their disciplinary regime and their appointment rules, have not advanced, despite a broad consensus<sup>4</sup>. A draft law has been submitted by the Parliament to create a prosecutor general against organised crime<sup>5</sup>.

**The Superior Council of Magistracy defended judicial independence in response to concerns raised by attacks on magistrates related to judicial decisions.** Judicial decisions relating to candidates to national elections have in particular 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. On 31 March 2025, the Superior Council of the Magistracy, supported by magistrates’ associations<sup>6</sup>, reiterated its concerns with regard to these attacks, which seriously undermine the independence of the judicial authority and the rule of law<sup>7</sup>. Concerns have also been raised publicly by individual magistrates, including from the highest courts. Magistrates were supported by the President of the Republic, who recalled that the “justice system is independent and must be respected as a pillar of the democracy”<sup>8</sup>.

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

<sup>2</sup> Figures 50 and 52, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard and Figures 49 and 51, 2023 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%).

<sup>3</sup> Country visit France, Magistrates’ and Magistracy’s Unions.

<sup>4</sup> French Government (2025), second written input, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Organic law adopted by the National Assembly, establishing the status of the prosecutor of the Republic against organised crime, on April 29, 2025, T.A. No. 103.

<sup>6</sup> Country visit France, Magistrates’ and Magistracy’s Unions (Union Syndicale des Magistrats et Syndicat de la Magistrature).

<sup>7</sup> CSM Press release, *Defence of the independence of the judicial authority following the reactions to the decision issued by the Tribunal of Paris on 31 March 2025*. Lawyers also faced attacks. CCBE (2025), written input, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Declaration of the President of the Republic, Elysee.fr.

## Quality

**Budgetary efforts are being made to maintain the objective to increase the number of magistrates.** A record number of 1000 magistrates are currently being trained at the National Magistracy School. After 1 246 recruitments in 2023, 1 302 in 2024 including 391 magistrates, more than 900 jobs will be created in 2025, including 338 magistrates and 433 clerks. Significant wage enhancement measures are also planned. In order to contribute to the effort to reduce government expenditure, special attention is paid to controlling expenditure on non-permanent staff and infrastructure projects related to the courthouses<sup>9</sup>. The number of magistrates per 100 000 inhabitants (11,1) is still low compared to the EU average (22,17)<sup>10</sup>, in particular in overseas territories<sup>11</sup>. Several workload measuring tools have been developed these last years by the Government, with the support of magistrates' unions<sup>12</sup>. A new observatory of the workload of magistrates<sup>13</sup> was however criticised by the magistrates' unions as limited in scope<sup>14</sup>.

**Some further progress was made on the digitalisation of judicial procedures<sup>15</sup>.** The *Portalis* tool, launched in 2015, is now being deployed in all labour courts and will further be extended to local courts in 2025<sup>16</sup>. *Portalis* should be deployed in all civil jurisdictions between 2026 and 2028. The digitalised penal procedure<sup>17</sup> continues to be deployed as well, but has not yet reached the highest criminal courts<sup>18</sup>. In general, the digitalisation is welcomed by the magistrates, but they consider that the implementation process is slow, and they would still face daily technical issues<sup>19</sup>. The system allowing to request legal aid online (SIAJ) has been developed further. In 2024, 18% of legal aid applications were handled online. In view of these continued efforts, there has been some further progress on the digitalisation of civil and criminal court proceedings.

**Online access to court decisions improved further.** More than one million decisions were accessible through open data at the end of 2024. All decisions by administrative courts can be consulted online, except those of specialised administrative jurisdictions. Decisions of judicial courts of first instance are put online progressively. Decisions of the Court of Cassation, the courts of appeal in civil and commercial matters are accessible online.

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<sup>9</sup> French Government (2025), second written input, p. 47. Country visit France, Magistrates' Union (SM).

<sup>10</sup> Figure 37, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>11</sup> Country visit France, Defender of Rights and CNCDH.

<sup>12</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, France, p. 6. The conclusions of this 10-year-project have not been made public yet.

<sup>13</sup> Country visit France, Ministry of Justice.

<sup>14</sup> Country visit France, Magistrates' and Magistracy's Unions. In their view, the work done before the creation of this observatory showed that the number of magistrates should be doubled, in line with figures presented by CEPEJ (2024) and in the 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard, Figure 37. Only 20 courts participate in the new study launched by the observatory, and it would concern only 36% of magistrates' activities.

<sup>15</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended France to 'Further continue efforts to complete ongoing projects aimed at full digitalisation of civil and criminal court proceedings'.

<sup>16</sup> 'Tribunaux de proximité'.

<sup>17</sup> Procédure Pénale Numérique.

<sup>18</sup> Regional criminal courts (for crimes punished by less than 20 years imprisonment) and highest criminal court ('cour d'assises': for crimes punished by at least 20 years imprisonment). French Government (2025), second written input, p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Country visit France, Magistrates' and Magistracy's Unions.

Decisions of criminal courts are being uploaded progressively, with a deadline on 31 December 2025<sup>20</sup>.

## Efficiency

**A reflection is ongoing about possible solutions to address challenges with regard to the efficiency of the justice system.** The average time to resolve litigious civil and commercial cases remains quite high (354 days in 2023), after a significant decrease in 2022 (333 days, compared to 595 in 2021). It is higher at second (507 days) as well as third instance (510 days). With regard to cases related to bribery at the first instance courts, the average time to resolve litigious cases is the highest in the EU (1 335 days (3.8 years))<sup>21</sup>. The clearance rate continued to decrease and is at 93% in 2023 in civil, commercial and administrative cases<sup>22</sup>. Business organisations consider that their access to the judge is limited as long judicial procedures would discourage them to go to court<sup>23</sup>. Average time to resolve cases is particularly high in certain areas of law, like family law, but also in criminal matters, where regional criminal courts, extended to the whole territory in 2023, face an important backlog<sup>24</sup>. In reaction to popular complaints about the fact that the French justice system is slow, in autumn 2024 the Ministry of Justice put in place three ‘flash missions’ about solutions to settle disputes outside court<sup>25</sup>, the scheduling of cases in criminal matters and the execution of sentences<sup>26</sup>. The reports of the ‘flash missions’ have been published on 13 May 2025 and include several recommendations with the objective to refocus the judiciary on its role, adjudicate within more reasonable time frames and execute sentences more expeditiously.

## 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 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International, France scores 67/100<sup>27</sup> and ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the European Union and 25<sup>th</sup> globally. This perception has been relatively stable over the past five years<sup>28</sup>. The 2025 Special Eurobarometer on Corruption shows that 68% of respondents consider corruption widespread in their country (EU average 69%) and 8% of respondents feel personally affected by corruption in their daily lives (EU average 30%). As regards

<sup>20</sup> With an exception for crimes of lower quality (‘délits’ and ‘contraventions’) where the deadlines are resp. on 31 December 2026 and 31 December 2027. Regulation of 28 April 2021, modified by Regulation of 6 December 2024. French Government (2025), second written input, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Figures 6 and 22, 2025 Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>22</sup> Figures 10, 11 and 12, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>23</sup> Country visit France, business organisations (CPME – Confederation of SMEs; FEEF – Federation of Entreprises and Entrepreneurs in France; FCD – Federation of Commerce and Industry).

<sup>24</sup> Country visit France, Magistracy’s Union. Ministry of Justice, General Judicial Inspection (2025). Bar associations (2025), written input, p. 4. CCBE (2025), written input, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Déjudiciarisation’. This idea is criticised by some stakeholders and independent authorities as it would decrease the access to the judge and shift the focus from increasing staff in the judiciary (Country visit France, Defender of Rights and CSOs).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Missions d’urgence relatives à la déjudiciarisation, à l’exécution des peines et à l’audience criminel et correctionnel’.

<sup>27</sup> 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).

<sup>28</sup> In 2020, the score was 69, while, in 2024, the score is 67. 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.



businesses, 63% of companies consider that corruption is widespread (EU average 63%) and 42% consider that corruption is a problem when doing business (EU average 35%). Furthermore, 24% of respondents find that there are enough successful prosecutions to deter people from corrupt practices (EU average 36%), while 44% of companies believe that people and businesses caught for bribing a senior official are appropriately punished (EU average 33%)<sup>29</sup>.

**The 2024-2029 national anti-corruption plan is expected to be adopted by summer 2025.**

The new national anti-corruption plan is soon to be adopted<sup>30</sup> and NGOs have called for specific points to be taken into account<sup>31</sup>. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the national anticorruption policies in place from 2013 to 2024, performed by a group of authorities and experts coordinated by the Court of Audit remains pending, with no exact deadline foreseen.

**Efforts to prosecute corruption increased, including as regards high-level cases, with additional human resources and new legislative tools in place.** The Central Office for Combating Corruption and Tax Offences (OCLCIFF) increased its staff, assessed the national integrity risk, and continued to carry out investigations, including with its international counterparts<sup>32</sup>. The Chief of the National Financial Prosecutor (PNF) also indicated the need to acquire advanced digital tools and highly specialised officers, in order to strengthen its investigations<sup>33</sup>. A new law was passed to improve the prosecution of corruption and the recovery of assets<sup>34</sup>. The investigation, prosecution and adjudication of corruption cases, including for officials at top-executive level progressed<sup>35</sup>. The EPPO investigated four corruption cases in 2024, which accounts for around 2% of the total number of EPPO cases in France<sup>36</sup>. The Government plans to address existing shortcomings on the investigation and prosecution of foreign bribery<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Data from Special Eurobarometer 561 (2025) and Flash Eurobarometer 557 (2025).

<sup>30</sup> The new national anti-corruption plan will focus on corruption in organised drugs crime; interinstitutional coordination; municipal authorities; business protection; and international action. The final report on the implementation of the previous national anti-corruption plan (for 2020-2022) will be annexed to the new anti-corruption plan. Country visit France, AFA.

<sup>31</sup> Country visit France, Anticor and TI-France. Stakeholders advocate for the development of integrity plans for municipalities above 100 000 inhabitants. TI-France (2025), written input, pp. 2-19. Civil Liberties Union for Europe (2025).

<sup>32</sup> The OCLCIFF has 80 officers, and 6 more will be hired in 2025, to fight corruption linked to drug trafficking. In 2024, OCLCIFF participated in 6 joint investigations with its European partners. French Government (2025), written input, p. 20. NGOs raised concern on the law passed to reform the judicial police, which could affect the effectiveness of investigation against financial crimes and corruption. Law No. 22 (2023). Anticor and TI (2025), written contributions, pp. 11 and 5, respectively.

<sup>33</sup> Chief National Financial Prosecutor (2025). In 2024, the PNF counted 20 magistrates, 9 specialist assistants, 2 legal officers, 1 legal assistant and 18 members of the registry (i.e. 50 people in total). French Government (2025), written input, p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Law Warsmann No. 582 (2024). The law aims to increase the deterrence of measures and strengthen the effectiveness of seizure and confiscation procedures. French Government (2025), written input, p. 25. These new measures were in principle welcome by some NGO. TI-France (2025), written input, pp. 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> There were investigations against 595 suspects of corruption, 170 police custodies, 4 public interest judicial agreements (CJIPs (alternative procedures), for a total of about EUR 28 900 000). NGOs raised concerns on the design of those alternative measures. TI-France (2025), written input, p. 10. In September 2024, the Prime Minister office issued the renewed agreement with Anticor allowing them to be a plaintiff. Prime Minister (2024).

<sup>36</sup> EPPO (2025), p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> The eight recommendations issued by the OECD will have to be addressed by 2026. OECD Phase 4 Evaluation of France, March 2024. French Government (2025), written input, p. 21.

**The Anti-Corruption Agency (AFA) was reorganised to improve its effectiveness, while the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP) increased its human resources to address its growing workload.** AFA underwent a reorganisation aimed at improving its effectiveness, thus creating two separate departments: one for the public sector, and the other one for private actors<sup>38</sup>. For 2024, AFA continued to issue a series of studies, podcasts and guidelines on prevention of corruption in specific sectors, and supported public-awareness events, with a particular focus on local administrations and small enterprises<sup>39</sup>. The new President and two members of the board of the HATVP were appointed in early 2025. The number of asset and interests' declarations received and examined by the HATVP significantly increased (+48% compared to 2023)<sup>40</sup>, and its staff reached 75 officials in total<sup>41</sup>. The Authority transmitted several cases of non-disclosure for further examination to the Public Prosecutor office. The asset and interest declarations submitted to the HATVP by the members of the past Government, were examined and published<sup>42</sup>. The HATVP also organised training, awareness-raising events, and issued a higher number of opinions<sup>43</sup>.

**Some further progress was achieved regarding the implementation of rules on lobbying, but disclosure requirements continue to apply to lobbyists only and not to officials at top-executive level<sup>44</sup>.** The 2023 guidelines on the lobby register are being implemented. In 2024, more lobbyists and lobbying activities were registered with the HATVP<sup>45</sup>, and a new law passed in October 2024 demands to record the declarations of lobbyists acting on behalf of foreign entities in a new specific online register, which is expected to be developed by the HATVP in July 2025<sup>46</sup>. Concerns remain, including from stakeholders, given the lack of disclosure requirements for officials at top-executive level themselves<sup>47</sup>. The two draft laws

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<sup>38</sup> Within its competence, each department is responsible for both advisory and control activities. The reorganization focused both on core competencies (of monitoring and advice), and administrative functions. AFA (2024h).

<sup>39</sup> AFA (2024a-f). AFA delivered 27 awareness-raising events and 12 training sessions for public administrations, and 35 meetings with corporations. French Government (2025), written input, p. 4 and 21.

<sup>40</sup> In 2024, HATVP received 13 103 declarations of assets and interests, and examined 5 122 of them (compared to 8 816 and 3 536 respectively in 2023). In 2024, 27 cases for non-declarations were transmitted to the public prosecutor office (compared to 17 cases in 2023). HATVP (2025), written input, pp. 4-5.

<sup>41</sup> Compared to 71 in 2023, while the financial constraints required HATVP to close or delay some operations. HATVP (2025), written input, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> HATVP webpage. Stakeholders raised concern on the filing of asset declaration by members of the Government. TI-France (2025), written input, p. 14. Civil Liberties Union for Europe (2025).

<sup>43</sup> Last year, HATVP issued 293 opinions on newly hired executive officers; 336 opinions on public-to-private mobility, and 639 opinions for public-to-public mobility, for which the rate of rejection remains extremely low. HATVP (2025), written input, p. 5. HATVP organised 22 awareness-raising events in 2024 and met with 13 foreign counterparts. French Government (2025), written input, p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report recommended to France to 'Step up efforts to ensure that rules on lobbying activities are consistently applied to all relevant actors, including at top executive level'.

<sup>45</sup> In 2024, 3 215 lobbyists and 15 633 lobbying activities were registered with the HATVP, which launched 112 controls. In accordance with the 2023 HATVP guidelines asking national lobbyists to declare their foreign clients, 8 declarations of this type were received in 2024. HATVP (2023). HATVP (2025), written input, pp. 1-5.

<sup>46</sup> The HATVP is developing the specific online registry for foreign lobbyists, and each Chamber of the Parliament will have to adopt its own bylaw. HATVP (2025), written input, p.2. Law No. 850 (2024). French Government (2025), written input, p. 25.

<sup>47</sup> TI-France (2024). In March 2024, GRECO recommended to increase the transparency of lobbying with top executive officers. GRECO (2024b).



on lobbying presented in the second half of 2023 remained pending in Parliament<sup>48</sup>. Even though rules on lobbying activities still do not apply to officials at top-executive level, 2023 guidelines are being implemented. Therefore, there has been some further progress on the recommendation on rules of lobbying.

**New ethics measures were adopted for Members of Parliament, Ministers and the Presidency of the Republic office, and increased resources are used to check political party financing.** An ethics committee was created to advise the Presidency of the Republic office and its staff, a specific code of ethics is expected to be approved shortly<sup>49</sup>, and new measures on integrity and conflicts of interest for members of the Government and elected officials were passed by Parliament, while the implementing regulations are expected to be approved in 2025<sup>50</sup>. The number of requests from members of Parliament for ethical counselling continued to increase<sup>51</sup>. Following the checks on the use of funding allocated to members of Parliament, a total of EUR 6 million was recovered<sup>52</sup>. The National Commission on Campaign Accounts and Political Financing (CNCCFP) increased its staff and reorganised its secretariat, allowing the Commission to better perform its duties, and check an increased number of political candidates<sup>53</sup>. An awareness-raising event on political party financing was organised in January 2025<sup>54</sup>.

**Integrity measures for police officers are applied, and new ethics measures for magistrates were adopted.** Integrity measures are implemented: in 2024, the general inspectorate for the national “gendarmerie” (IGGN) launched nine judicial investigations into corrupt practices concerning gendarmes, while the general inspectorate for the national police (IGPN) launched 24 judicial investigations into active corruption and 42 into passive corruption concerning police officers<sup>55</sup>. Both the High Council for the Judiciary (CSM) and the Constitutional Council adopted their respective ethics code<sup>56</sup>. The requests for ethical counselling addressed by judges to their ethics support service (SAVD) continued to increase<sup>57</sup>.

**The number of whistleblower reports continued to increase.** While the whistleblowing reports received by the Anti-Corruption Agency remained stable, the number of whistleblowing reports received by the Defender of Rights (Defender) doubled. There are plans to adopt organisational changes in order to better cope with the overall increased

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<sup>48</sup> The draft laws on the Transparency of interest representation (text n. 834), and on Digital directory of interest representatives (text n. 1577) were presented in July 2023 at the Senate and the National Assembly, respectively. HATVP (2025), written input, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> The deontology committee (which includes 3 members from the Council of State) will give its opinion on the draft code of deontology. Country visit France, General Secretariat of the Government.

<sup>50</sup> Law No. 850 (2024). French Government (2025), written input, p. 23. Country visit France, Ethics Offices of the National Assembly and the Senate.

<sup>51</sup> Ethics office of the National Assembly (2024), and Ethics office of the Senate (2024).

<sup>52</sup> Country visit France, Ethics Offices of the National Assembly.

<sup>53</sup> CNCCFP hired 10 officers, and 4 administrative assistants. Country visit France, CNCCFP.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> French Government (2025), written input, p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Country visit France, CSM. The Constitutional council appointed an ethics officer. Constitutional Council (2025b), written input, p.11.

<sup>57</sup> In 2024, the SAVD received 121 requests, compared to 74 in 2022 and 112 in 2023. CSM (2025), written input, p. 2.

workload<sup>58</sup>. In 2024, the staff of the Defender continued to increase, and relies on a network of about 670 regional volunteers<sup>59</sup>. The whistleblowing support consortium of NGOs received 39 reports of corruption in 2024<sup>60</sup>, and the Court of Audit receives whistleblowing reports through its online platform<sup>61</sup>. To further support reporting, a ministerial directive was issued to clarify how public officials should report suspicions of crimes, including corruption<sup>62</sup>. An analytical report issued a series of regulatory and operational recommendations to the Government<sup>63</sup>. The Defender organised two meetings with the 40 competent authorities to support whistleblowers and is developing a common form for their annual reporting<sup>64</sup>. According to the Defender, there continues to be insufficient public funding to provide the appropriate protection to whistleblowers, and the 40 competent authorities demand qualified training to treat whistleblowers' protection requests<sup>65</sup>.

**Initiatives are in preparation to combat corruption linked to organised drug trafficking and affecting ports.** Businesses' attitudes towards corruption in the EU shows that 42% of companies in France (EU average 35%) think that corruption is a problem when doing business and 19% of companies (EU average 25%) think that corruption has prevented them from winning a public tender or a public procurement contract in practice in the last three years<sup>66</sup>. 58% of companies perceive the level of independence of the public procurement review body (the regular courts) as very or fairly good<sup>67</sup>. The Single Market and Competitiveness Scoreboard on access to public procurement in France reports 23% of single bids for 2023 (EU average 29%). The draft law on the use of consulting companies for public policies, introduced to address concerns related to large public contracts, remains pending at the Parliament<sup>68</sup>. The public consultation for the preparation of the next national anticorruption plan (2024-2027), indicated that public procurement, urban planning, construction, health, sport, waste treatment and defence are considered by respondents as sectors at high risk of corruption<sup>69</sup>. A law to combat the use of corruption by criminal organisations<sup>70</sup> has been reviewed by the Constitutional Council<sup>71</sup>, and the AFA was tasked

<sup>58</sup> In 2024, AFA received 802 reports (compared to 435 for 2023), with whistleblower status assigned in 60 cases (stable compared to 2023), and 52 reports dealing with corruption were forwarded to the competent investigative authorities. Country visit France, AFA. French Government (2025), written input, pp. 26-27.

<sup>59</sup> 10 new posts were created last year, reaching a staff of 260 agents in total. French Government (2025), written input, p. 28. The Defender is developing guidelines for the volunteers. Country visit France, Defender. The network of volunteers continues to grow of about +20 individuals per year. Defender of Rights (2025), p. 111.

<sup>60</sup> The whistleblowers' home (*La maison des lanceurs d'alerte*), in combination with the Centre for judicial support (in French CAJAC) offer support to potential whistleblowers. Country visit France, Anticor and TI-France.

<sup>61</sup> Court of Audit (2024), p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Ministry of Transformation and public service (2024).

<sup>63</sup> The 11 recommendations focused on: allocating the appropriate resources, as to guarantee the legal, financial and psychological support to whistleblowers; harmonise and streamline existing rules, sanctions and procedures, in both the public and private sectors, for either internal and external entities; and raise awareness. Defender of Rights (2024).

<sup>64</sup> Country visit France, Defender of Rights.

<sup>65</sup> Country visit France, Defender of Rights., TI-France and Anticor. Defender of Rights (2025), p. 111.

<sup>66</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 557 (2025). This is 6 percentage points below the EU average.

<sup>67</sup> Figure 59, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>68</sup> Law (draft) No. 2688 (2024). NGOs remain attentive to the amendments introduced to this bill. TI-France (2025), written input, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> AFA (2024g).

<sup>70</sup> Law (draft) No. 907 (2024). While the action against corruption and drug trafficking was welcome, stakeholders also advocated for the adoption of a specific roadmap, supported by appropriate resources, and

by the Government to develop a specific interministerial anticorruption strategy in ports<sup>72</sup>. After a first analysis of convictions for corruption taken in 2021-2022, AFA is carrying out a second analysis for the period 2023-2024, which is expected to be published in 2025<sup>73</sup>.

### **III. MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM**

**France's media regulator, l'Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique (ARCOM), has undergone significant developments, expanding its regulatory scope and activities in anticipation of new obligations and mandates.** The authority is currently preparing for the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) implementation and is working on a national media ownership database, although its formal mandate for this remains to be confirmed<sup>74</sup>. Its responsibilities have expanded significantly under the Digital Services Act (DSA), including oversight of online platforms<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, the Government is considering the designation of an authority, which could be ARCOM, to facilitate negotiations related to neighbouring rights between online platforms and publishers<sup>76</sup>. ARCOM has also begun revising its methodology to broaden its assessment of pluralism following decisions of the French Council of State<sup>77</sup> and NGOs remain vigilant<sup>78</sup> on how editorial independence is being implemented in line with the ruling. In December 2024, ARCOM's decision to allocate new DTT frequencies - excluding two outlets - was upheld by the Council of State as lawful, but the regulator was instructed to launch a new impact assessment and consultation due to the late withdrawal of another outlet, which left four frequencies vacant<sup>79</sup>. While ARCOM's staff increased over 2022–2024 and the employment ceiling has slightly decreased in the forecasts for 2025, the authority is assessing the extra needs to be submitted to the Government<sup>80</sup>. The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) reports a medium-high risk of 65% for market plurality<sup>81</sup>, equivalent to the 65% recorded in 2024.

**The proposed reform of public broadcasting governance and the creation of a holding company is the subject of debate and practical avenues for strengthening coordination among public broadcasters are being sought.** Already approved in a first reading by the

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use of proper tools (such as the register of beneficial ownership; inter-agency cooperation; and whistleblowing). TI-France (2025), written input, pp. 8-9.

<sup>71</sup> Constitutional Council (2025c).

<sup>72</sup> The strategy should involve both relevant national authorities and international counterparts. French Government (2025), written input, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> AFA (2024e). AFA considers that risk of corruption is particularly strong in public administration at municipal level, health sector, large ports and penitentiary administrations. Country visit France, AFA.

<sup>74</sup> ARCOM (2025), written input, p.11 and second batch of written contribution from the French authorities, p. 59.

<sup>75</sup> The Law No. 2024-449 of 21 May 2024 on securing and regulating the digital space has granted new powers to ARCOM.

<sup>76</sup> The French Government is approaching this development with caution, given the legal framework set by the EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market and ongoing preliminary questions before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), as expressed in the second input of the Government, p. 59.

<sup>77</sup> French Council of State, Decisions Nos. 474473 and 472883, 31 May 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Country visit France, Conseil de déontologie journalistique et de médiation (CDJM) and Syndicat national des journalistes (SNJ).

<sup>79</sup> Conseil d'Etat (2025) public statement following the Decision n° 499823.

<sup>80</sup> Country visit France, ARCOM.

<sup>81</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for France, p. 21.

Senate in 2023<sup>82</sup>, the draft law proposes the creation of a holding company, France Médias, which would oversee France Télévisions, Radio France, and the National Audiovisual Institute (INA). The Government considers the reform as necessary to enable better pooling of resources and shared investments through the future holding structure, with a common CEO for the various subsidiaries<sup>83</sup>. The reform has triggered calls to strike in protest of the perceived threat to editorial autonomy and job security. In an attempt to ease tensions and build consensus, the Minister of Culture launched an initiative in March 2025 to explore practical avenues for strengthening coordination among public broadcasters within the new governance framework. On the financial side, the French Parliament approved the reform of the public broadcasting funding, confirming the permanent shift to a mechanism based on a share of VAT revenue set by the Parliament, replacing the licence fee<sup>84</sup>. Besides this, the 2025 public service media budget still includes cuts<sup>85</sup>. Some NGOs consider the current funding model - based on a share of VAT - only as a temporary solution and call for a more stable, sufficient, and predictable system<sup>86</sup>. The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) reports a medium-low risk (36%) for the independence of public service media<sup>87</sup>, slightly lower than the 40% recorded in 2024.

**Significant progress was made to improve media ownership transparency, with the preparation of a single national database<sup>88</sup>.** The Government aims to have a publicly accessible database listing information on media ownership structures - specifically the names of direct or indirect owners with influence over strategic or operational decisions, as well as the ultimate beneficial owners. These measures aim to improve transparency in complex ownership structures, with media service providers also required to make such information easily and directly accessible, for example on their websites<sup>89</sup>. Discussions are already ongoing both within ARCOM and at the Governmental level, and a transitional database, bringing together information on services currently under ARCOM's jurisdiction, will be made available to the public shortly<sup>90</sup>. Considering the ongoing development of the media ownership database, significant progress has been made in addressing the recommendation of the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

**Despite strong legal guarantees on the right to access official documents, journalists report challenges in practice.** While the legal framework<sup>91</sup> provides a right to access administrative documents, journalists and press ethics bodies report that the process is often

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<sup>82</sup> The reform will be submitted to the Assembly for debate on 30 June 2025. This is the third attempt to pass the reform, it was first abandoned due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a second time following the dissolution of the National Assembly in June 2024.

<sup>83</sup> Country visit France, Government and Public service medias (Radio France and France Télévisions).

<sup>84</sup> Country visit France, the Government.

<sup>85</sup> Country visit France, Public service medias (Radio France and France Télévisions)

<sup>86</sup> As expressed during the country visit, RSF advocates a dual funding mechanism with a new tax on digital platforms based on their traffic in France, and a universal, progressive household contribution tailored to media usage (not tied to TV ownership).

<sup>87</sup> 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor, country report for France, p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> The 2024 Rule of Law Report had recommended France to ‘Step up efforts to improve the transparency of media ownership, in particular, complex shareholding structures, building on the existing legal safeguards’, Rule of Law report 2024, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> French Government (2025), written input, p. 40.

<sup>90</sup> ARCOM (2025), written input, p.11.

<sup>91</sup> Law n°78-753 of 17 July 1978, Law No. 2015-1779 of 28 December 2015 and Law No. 2016-1321 of 7 October 2016 (second batch, written contribution from the French authorities, p. 63).

cumbersome in practice<sup>92</sup>. In two recent decisions<sup>93</sup>, the French Council of State clarified that the concept of ‘disproportionate burden’ can be used as a justification for refusal<sup>94</sup>. Journalists’ organisations have expressed concerns that these recent developments may introduce an additional barrier. French authorities insist that this exception is narrowly applied, and efforts have been made to strengthen the Commission d’Accès aux Documents Administratifs (CADA)<sup>95</sup>.

**A legislative proposal, based on the outcome of a broad national consultation, is being prepared, to better safeguard the right to information.** The *États généraux de l’information (EGI)*, a broad national consultation concluded in late 2024, led to 15 recommendations - including on governance of news media, media pluralism in the context of concentrations and media literacy<sup>96</sup>. A legislative proposal based on these outcomes is expected in summer 2025<sup>97</sup>. NGOs and journalists’ associations insist on the legal recognition of editorial teams, tailored governance structures, and stronger safeguards against editorial interference<sup>98</sup>, particularly considering recent cases of political or economic interference<sup>99</sup>. Journalists’ unions welcome attempts to raise awareness of journalistic roles among police forces, notably through the implementation of the *Schéma national du maintien de l’ordre* (SNMO), however, they have also pointed the persistent occurrence of police violence during protests and criticized the incorrect functioning of the contact group on journalist safety<sup>100</sup>. Stakeholders also called for a strengthening of the protection of sources<sup>101</sup>. Meanwhile, journalists’ associations continue to raise alarms about growing precariousness in the profession - particularly for freelance journalists. In this context, the draft law aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of ‘neighbouring rights’ [related to intellectual property] for the press<sup>102</sup> is seen as a positive step, as it ensures that digital platforms fairly compensate media outlets for the use of their content<sup>103</sup>. An amendment to the bill sets a minimum of 25% of revenues from these rights to be allocated to journalists. Although the bill was adopted by the Cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly in February 2025, it has not yet been put on the agenda of the plenary session. However, negotiations between platforms, publishers, and journalists remain complex and sensitive, particularly regarding how revenues are calculated and redistributed. Since the 2024 Rule of

<sup>92</sup> Country visit France, Conseil de déontologie journalistique et de médiation (CDJM) and Syndicat national des journalistes (SNJ).

<sup>93</sup> French Council of State, Decisions Nos. 474473 and 472883, 31 May 2024.

<sup>94</sup> According to Article L.311-2 of the Code on Relations between the Public and the Administration, a request is deemed abusive if it disrupts the administration's functioning or imposes a disproportionate burden relative to its resources (second batch, written contribution from the French authorities, p. 63).

<sup>95</sup> Country visit, French Government and French Government (2025), second written input, p.63.

<sup>96</sup> Restitution des EGI : <https://etats-generaux-information.fr/la-restitution>.

<sup>97</sup> Country visit France, the Government.

<sup>98</sup> Country visit France, CDJM and SNJ.

<sup>99</sup> During the country visit, NGOs and journalists’ organisations expressed that journalists in France continue to face mounting political and economic pressures, with cases such as 6 weeks-long strike at *Le Journal du Dimanche*, attempted dismissal of editors at *La Provence*, mass resignations at *Marianne* due to ownership shifts, or historical, prompting NGOs to call for stronger safeguards to protect newsroom independence.

<sup>100</sup> During the country visit, RSF, SNJ and CDJM expressed regrets that the Contact group - which is supposed to meet monthly - did not meet for nine months. Authorities cited the election period as the reason for the suspension of its activity, but RSF considers this justification not acceptable, as sensitive public demonstrations took place during that time. The last meeting took place in February 2025.

<sup>101</sup> RSF and 110 organisations urged the Government to strengthen source protection through an open letter outlining five concrete proposals. RSF, 17 January 2025, <https://rsf.org/fr/>.

<sup>102</sup> Proposition de loi visant à renforcer l’effectivité des droits voisins de la presse, Assemblée Nationale.

<sup>103</sup> Country visit France, CDJM and SNJ.



Law Report, six new alerts have been recorded on the Council of Europe's Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists<sup>104</sup>. The Media Freedom Rapid Response mechanism has identified fifty alerts. These alerts include online harassment, physical attacks, legal pressures.

#### **IV. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATED TO CHECKS AND BALANCES**

**Legislative simplification efforts are welcomed by businesses while stakeholders raise concerns regarding the consultation of citizens.** Businesses<sup>105</sup> have welcomed the draft law to “simplify the economic life”<sup>106</sup>. This draft law intervened in a context where the perception, in particular by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), is that there is a high and increasing number of rules applying to them, sometimes at short notice, which would in their view lead to legal uncertainties, and in some cases to sanctions, if the law is not respected. They also refer to a lack of consultation of SMEs by public authorities<sup>107</sup>. In 2024, an accelerated legislative procedure was used for 27 draft bills out of 39<sup>108</sup>. Business and bar associations criticise the use this procedure, as it contributes to legislative instability<sup>109</sup>. However, stakeholders<sup>110</sup> have raised concerns with regard to the proposed removal or reduction in scope of several instances to consult the public. The application Agora put in place in 2023 by the Government allows to consult citizens and for them to raise questions to the Council of Ministers, but despite a promising start<sup>111</sup>, this process has been interrupted since June 2024, while it has been further developed to also allow consulting citizens at regional and local levels<sup>112</sup>.

**Over half of the companies surveyed in France express confidence in the effectiveness of investment protection.** 62% of companies are very or fairly confident that investments are protected by law and courts<sup>113</sup>. As regards authorities relevant for economic operators, 62% perceive the level of independence of the national competition authority (French Competition Authority) as very or fairly good<sup>114</sup>. A number of judicial mechanisms are in place at the level of the Council of State to ensure the implementation of administrative court judgments, including issuing injunctions and penalty payments, the possibility to substitute the annulled administrative act and to award direct and consequential damages and compensation<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> Out of six alerts, France has so far replied to five.

<sup>105</sup> Country visit France, business associations: Confederation of SMEs (CPME); Commerce and Distribution Federation (FCD) and Federation of French Enterprises and Entrepreneurs (FEEF).

<sup>106</sup> Draft Law n°550 on the simplification of economic life, adopted by the National Assembly on 17 June 2025.

<sup>107</sup> Country visit France, business associations.

<sup>108</sup> In addition, the Article 49-3 of the Constitution was used once, which led the Parliament to censor the Government. French Government (2025), written input, p. 46. On Article 49-3, see also the recommendations of the Venice Commission opinion (CDL(2025)025), adopted on 14 June 2025.

<sup>109</sup> Country visit France, business and bar associations. Bar associations (2025), written input, p. 16.

<sup>110</sup> Trade unions (CGT, FO, CFE-CGC, CFTC, UNSA, Solidaires), CNCDH, Defender of Rights, CSOs (including the Network for Climate Action, Foundation for Nature and Humans), Localitis.

<sup>111</sup> 2024 Rule of Law Report, France.

<sup>112</sup> French Government (2025), additional written input, p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Figure 54, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard. As main reason for lack of confidence, businesses mention difficulties in enforcing rights in court due to concerns about quality, efficiency or independence of justice.

<sup>114</sup> Figure 60, 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

<sup>115</sup> Figure 49, 2025 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.



**On 1 January 2025, France had 26 leading judgments of the European Court of Human Rights pending implementation, an increase of 6 compared to the previous year<sup>116</sup>.** At that time, France's rate of leading judgments from the past 10 years that had been implemented was at 66% (compared to 71% in 2024; 34% remained pending), and the average time that the judgments had been pending implementation was 3 years (compared to 3 years and 10 months in 2024)<sup>117</sup>. The oldest leading judgment, pending implementation for 15 years, concerns the inaction of the authorities in the execution of judiciary measures of expulsion regarding illegally occupied lands<sup>118</sup>. As regards the respect of payment deadlines, on 31 December 2024 there were 9 cases in total awaiting confirmation of payments (compared to 8 in 2023)<sup>119</sup>. On 16 June 2025, the number of leading judgments pending implementation had decreased to 22<sup>120</sup>. In an opinion of 26 September 2024<sup>121</sup>, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) recalled the obligation of public authorities to implement all decisions of the ECtHR.

**Discussions are ongoing on the safeguards to be put in place when using artificial intelligence in the justice system.** Studies have been launched by the Government in 2024 and 2025, to determine where its use by the justice system would be most relevant and offering best guarantees in terms of cybersecurity and citizens' rights<sup>122</sup>. The Court of Cassation submitted a report to the Government on 28 April 2025 on the possible use by this Court of artificial intelligence, for example for tasks of little value added<sup>123</sup>. The Defender of Rights has made recommendations on the use of artificial intelligence in drafting individual administrative decisions<sup>124</sup>.

**The financial environment of civil society organisations remains favourable despite budgetary restrictions.** The civic space is considered as narrowed<sup>125</sup>. A report from the Government analysing the impact of the reduction in funding to associations is due in 2025<sup>126</sup>. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) still lacks the means to effectively carry out the full extent of its mandate<sup>127</sup>. There were less administrative dissolutions or funds withdrawals of CSOs on the basis of a violation of the Republican Engagement Contract in 2024<sup>128</sup>. A Decree of 5 July 2024<sup>129</sup> digitalises and simplifies procedures for CSOs and citizens while allowing for a reinforced control of applicable legislation, in particular with regard to financial transparency and respect of the general

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<sup>116</sup> For an explanation of the supervision process, see the [website](#) of the Council of Europe.

<sup>117</sup> 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 2025. EIN (2025), written input, p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> Judgment of the ECtHR, 13829/03, *Barret and Sirjean v. France*, pending implementation since 2007.

<sup>119</sup> Council of Europe (2025), p. 156.

<sup>120</sup> Data according to the online database of the Council of Europe (HUDOC).

<sup>121</sup> CNCDH (2025).

<sup>122</sup> French Government (2025), written input, p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> Court of Cassation (2025), 'Cour de cassation et intelligence artificielle : préparer la Cour de Cassation de demain'.

<sup>124</sup> Defender of Rights, Report of November 2024.

<sup>125</sup> Rating by CIVICUS; ratings are on a five-category scale defined as: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed.

<sup>126</sup> As provided for in Law No. 2024-344 supporting voluntary work and simplifying associative life.

<sup>127</sup> ENNHRI (2025), Final report, p. 145.

<sup>128</sup> French Government (2025), second written input, p. 8. European Civic Forum (2025), written input, pp. 14-16. Country visit to France, Government and CSOs. In comparison with 2024 Rule of Law Report, pp. 21-22.

<sup>129</sup> Decree 2024-720. French Government (2025), written input, p. 54.

interest. CSOs, the ENNHRI and the CNCDH continue to report about practices that could negatively impact on civil society space and/or reduce human rights defenders' activities, like intimidations, attacks, including online, negative attitudes campaigns towards/perception of civil society and/or human rights defenders, their work and environment<sup>130</sup>. The CNCDH recommended the adoption of legislative measures to protect human rights defenders. However, it reported to the ENNHRI that no legislation, state measures or practices have been put in place since 2022 to ensure timely and reasoned response to its recommendations<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> European Civic Forum (2025), written input, p. 6. Country visit France, CNCDH, Defender of Rights, CSOs. ENNHRI (2025), Final report, p. 149.

<sup>131</sup> ENNHRI (2025), Final report, p. 145.

## Annex I: List of sources in alphabetical order\*

\* The list of contributions received in the context of the consultation for the 2024 Rule of Law report can be found [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2025-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en).

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## **Annex II: Country visit to France**

The Commission services held virtual meetings in March 2025 with:

- Agence France Press
- Associative Movement
- Anticor
- Authority for the regulation of the audiovisual and digital communication (ARCOM)
- Commerce and Distribution Federation (FCD)
- Confederation of SMEs (CPME)
- Constitutional Council
- Council of State
- Defender of Rights
- Deontologist of the National Assembly
- Ethics Committee of the Senate
- European Civic Forum
- Federation of French Enterprises and Entrepreneurs (FEEF)
- 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)
- 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, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Culture, Ministry of Sports, Youth and Associative Life, Secretariat-General of the Government, Interministerial Direction for Public Transformation, French Representation to the EU, French Agency against Corruption.
- Public Service Media (TV and Radio)
- 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:

- Amnesty International
- Araminta
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe
- Civil Society Europe
- European Civic Forum

- European Partnership for Democracy
- European Youth Forum,
- International Commission of Jurists
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- JEF Europe
- Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association.
- Transparency International