

Monitoring Action for Civic Space



Country report

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About this report

Authors: Le Mouvement associatif: Jessica Leborgne, Théo Berger, David Ratinaud.

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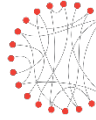
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Key developments

Associations under pressure: financial and political constrains

Several surveys conducted by the associative sector show a significant erosion of its economic model. The structural decline in public subsidies at national and local levels, the rise of calls for projects and public contracts, combined with inflation and budgetary instability, are threatening the sustainability of many organisations. The available data show increased fragility in association cash flow, with thousands of jobs threatened and a 'record' year for judicial liquidations of associations.

Beyond budgetary constraints, funding is increasingly used as a tool of political regulation. Subsidies are refused or withdrawn when associations adopt critical positions or take legal action against public authorities. In addition, there have been legislative attempts to restrict the tax benefits of specific so-called 'activist' associations (gag amendments), as well as new forms of financial pressure (asset freezes, bank account closures, or digital restrictions on fundraising (Meta rules)).

Uneven protection: Selective restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly

Demonstrations considered sensitive (solidarity with Palestine, feminist marches, Pride) have faced partial or total bans on grounds of public order, sometimes suspended by judges, reflecting the prevalence of security imperatives over democratic pluralism. This prevalence may also reflect a political desire to limit the exercise of minority rights by restricting their ability to mobilise collectively, make their demands visible in the public sphere, and influence democratic debate. Added to this are controversial police practices, disproportionate use of force, and restrictions on access to public spaces, which limit the visibility of these causes and contribute to a climate of deterrence or even self-censorship, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the right to protest.

A weakened democratic debate and participation

Cases of self-censorship are increasing among associations, undermining the plurality of debate and the democratic role these structures play. Citizen participation remains formal and their influence on public policy remains very limited (citizen conventions have little or no legislative impact, and petitions have no binding effect). The rise of hate speech (racist, anti-Semitic, anti-LGBTQIA+), the persistence of gagging orders and increased pressure on defenders of migrants' rights and environmental activists also point to a shrinking civic space.



Dimensions

1. Freedom of Association

With nearly 1,4 million active associations of the 3.8 million registered in the European Union, France displays a unique dynamic in regards to the right to association.¹ Between July 2024 and 2025, 74,000 associations were created, facilitated by a legal framework that has historically been favourable to freedom of association.² This right is enshrined in Article 1 of the Law of 1 July 1901, liberal in its conception and based on contractual freedom and the common will of at least two natural persons to associate for the purpose of a non-profit project of general interest.³ In addition, the creation of an association is not subject to any prior authorisation.

As a fundamental principle recognised by the laws of the Republic of France, freedom of association is one of the rights and freedoms protected by the French Constitutional Council.⁴ However, freedom of association is not absolute: an association may be subject to dissolution by a decree by the Council of Ministers as outlined in the Internal Security Code.⁵ In recent years, freedom of association has been subject to new regulations following the adoption of the Law of 24 August 2021, which introduced *Contrat d'engagement républicain* (Republican Commitment Contract) or CER.⁶ The CER imposes seven commitments on associations seeking to benefit from public funds or material subsidies. The commitments relate to respect for the law, freedom of conscience, equality, the prevention of violence and respect for dignity.

The stated objective of these commitments is to ensure that the activities of associations comply with “republican principles”. However, the vagueness of certain provisions and the risk of a unilateral decision to withdraw subsidies, give the state more power to restrict the activities of associations.⁷ Furthermore, the same law broadens the scope to dissolve associations based on the actions of some of their members.⁸ This broadening of the criteria for dissolution could also have detrimental consequences for freedom of association should public authorities misuse this provision to target certain associations.

Despite a strong legal framework, 2025 saw a deterioration in relations between public authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs).

CER at the centre of controversies and concerns

¹https://lemouvementassociatif.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/LMA_dossier_pointpresse_30012025_web.pdf

²https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr/ip_23_4242

³<https://recherches-solidarites.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/La-France-associative-16-10-2025.pdf>

⁴https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006294210

⁵<https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/1971/7144DC.htm>

⁶https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000043982161

⁷<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000043964778>

⁸<https://lemouvementassociatif.org/contrat-dengagement-republicain/>

⁹<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000043964778>



Although there is little data on the misuse of the CER, an evaluation report by the National Assembly's law commission emphasised that the first disputes related to compliance with the CER did not concern associations linked to religious movements.⁹ This observation illustrates a contradiction with the spirit of the law (which was to combat religious separatism) and confirms the fears expressed by the civil society sector at the time of its adoption, namely that it would create a means to coerce or sanction associations that might have political disagreements with their public funders. For example, theatre company Arlette Moreau had its grant application rejected by the regional prefecture on the grounds that their activities did not comply with the CER.¹⁰ The Bordeaux administrative court's decision of 14 October 2025 did not rule on the legality of this refusal due to political disagreement rather it accepted alternative grounds for rejecting the theatre company's application.¹¹ The justification given was simply the administration of public funds, transforming the refusal of the subsidy into a simple budgetary arbitrage, given the high amount of the requested subsidy and budget limitations.¹² A second ruling on the misuse of the CER relates to the case of Alternatiba Rhône, where the association's subsidies were withdrawn by the Rhône prefecture on allegations of violating the CER through acts of civil disobedience.¹³ Several associations filed a voluntary intervention brief on 3 November 2025. They hope to obtain protective case law which would rule out the possibility of disqualifying an association from eligibility for public funds on the grounds that it had engaged in or promoted civil disobedience in the past.¹⁴

Increased use of administrative dissolutions

Apart from the CER, 2025 was marked by new administrative dissolutions made in connection with combating radical Islam and far-right movements, such as the dissolution of Lyon Populaire¹⁵ – a far-right organisation promoting hate speech and discrimination against religious and sexual minorities. In a report by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), and Human Rights League (LDH), the watchdog groups noted a significant increase in the number of dissolutions targeting associations.¹⁶ Specifically, 27 dissolution decrees have been published since 2017, a record number compared to its more limited use between 1936 and 2017, during which time only around 100 such decrees were issued. The increased use of this power, described as “intrusive” by LDH and Amnesty International during a focus group interview, illustrates a shift in the use of dissolution as a method of administrative repression against associations, particularly those that intervene in the public sphere and mobilise citizens through demonstrations.¹⁷ Such was the case for the Palestine solidarity group *Urgence Palestine*, whose dissolution procedure was reportedly because of its stance in relation to the movement of solidarity with Gaza, but whose dissolution decree has not yet been published.¹⁸

The question of political neutrality applied to associations

⁹ https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/documents/cion_lois/l17n870210094_document.pdf

¹⁰ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/a-poitiers-la-prefecture-de-region-mobilise-le-contrat-dengagement-republicain-contre-la-compagnie-de-theatre-arlette-moreau/>

¹¹ https://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur_ta-bordeaux_2025-10-14.pdf

¹² https://www.itineraires-avocats.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/jur_ta-bordeaux_2025-10-14.pdf

¹³ <https://lemouvementassociatif-aura.org/2024/01/10/refus-subvention-alternatiba-rhone-controverses-recours-tribunal-administratif/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article7610>

¹⁵ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000051724936>

¹⁶ https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/20250916_fidh_rapport-obs-france_fr_v7.pdf (p.24).

¹⁷ Joint videoconference interview with the Human Rights League and Amnesty International, 20 October 2025

¹⁸ <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/actualites/communiqués-de-presse/dissolution-de-trois-groupements-de-faits/>
<https://www.amnesty.fr/liberte-d-expression/actualites/dissolution-urgence-palestine-une-menace-contre-les-defenseurs-des-droits-palestiniens>



In 2025, tensions arose over the desire to extend the principle of political neutrality in public services to associations. Family allowance funds – *Caisses des Allocations familiales* (CAF) – withdrew or considered withdrawing funding from associations that had taken a stand against far-right ideas during the early parliamentary elections of 2024.¹⁹ The Calvados family planning association, for example, received no subsidies in 2025 on the grounds that it had failed to respect the principle of neutrality yet only applicable to civil servants according to the law.²⁰ Similarly, Léo-Lagrange Club in Vienne had its municipal subsidy frozen on the basis of having breached its republican commitment contract when calling for people not to vote in favour of far-right ideas.²¹ The subsidy was finally awarded after the Club committed to ceasing such actions. This is at odds with established case law, as recalled in a ruling by Lyons administrative court of appeal on 13 February 2025, which stated that an association cannot be considered a user of a public service solely on the grounds that it receives a subsidy. As a result, an association cannot be subject to the general requirement of political neutrality.²² This injunction of neutrality for associations may undermine the freedom of association, as it prevents associations from engaging in a political role. And it could favour associations that align their political action with the position of the current public authorities.

Proposed legislative changes cause concern

Several legislative proposals in 2025 raised concerns over their potential impact on the right to association. This includes the proposed Bill of 10 June 2025 aimed at prohibiting and punishing so-called anti-republican content and discourse. It was drafted following the Interior Ministry's report on the Muslim Brotherhood and political Islam in France. The law could pave the way for the criminalisation of any criticism perceived as “anti-secular” or “communitarian”, thereby targeting religious or civic associations in particular.²³ Specifically, Article 4 of the proposed bill could lead to dissolution procedures for such associations. Similarly, the Law of 13 June 2025 ‘aimed at freeing France from the trap of drug trafficking’ authorises the temporary closure of premises suspected of being linked to illegal activities, which could include associations’ premises, and which can be done via a decision by the prefecture.²⁴ The Constitutional Council issued an interpretative reservation on this provision, recalling the obligation to resort to measures that are “strictly necessary, appropriate and proportionate”.²⁵

Another legislative proposal aims to transfer the responsibility for providing legal assistance to foreigners held in administrative detention centres, currently provided by associations, to the French Office for Immigration and Integration.²⁶ Under the pretext of political neutrality, budgetary constraints, and the effectiveness of removal policy (deportation), this proposal has potential negative consequences. It could sideline independent actors, such as associations, that can safeguard legal protection for persons deprived of their liberty.

¹⁹<https://france3-regions.franceinfo.fr/normandie/calvados/caen/la-caf-supprime-ses-subventions-au-planning-familial-du-calvados-on-a-l-impression-qu-il-y-a-une-certaine-hostilite-3249349.html>.

²⁰https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000044427911

²¹<https://www.ledauphine.com/politique/2025/06/23/apres-la-polemique-le-club-leo-lagrange-retrouve-finalement-sa-subvention-municipale>.

²²<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000051212348>.

²³https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/textes/17b1535_proposition_loi#:~:text=Proposition%20de%20loi%20visant%20%C3%A0,le%20mardi%2010%20juin%202025.

²⁴<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000051734851>.

²⁵<https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/2025/2025885DC.htm>.

²⁶<https://www.senat.fr/leg/exposes-des-motifs/pp124-472-expose.html>



While freedom of association remains protected under French law, 2025 has seen a gradual erosion of its effectiveness. The widespread use of administrative dissolutions, the controversial application of the CER, debates on political neutrality, and the evolution of specific laws point to an increasingly restrictive environment. These developments call into question the legal framework's ability to balance the protection of public order and democratic pluralism with the vitality of community life as expressed through civic associations.

2. Access to Funding

In France, the funding of CSOs is predicated on legal and regulatory rules that aim to guarantee transparency, accountability, and independence of associations. The Law of 1 July 1901 relating to the association agreement does not require associations to have their own resources or specific funding but allows them to receive public subsidies, private donations as well as inheritances, and to develop secondary profit-making activities.²⁷

The allocation of subsidies to associations by public authorities is discretionary.²⁸ The refusal to award a subsidy does not require a justification.²⁹ However, the authorities must respect the principle of equal treatment, particularly when deciding to modify or withdraw a subsidy.³⁰

Funding is a key issue and a major vulnerability for many French CSOs. According to the opinion of the French *Conseil économique, sociale et environnementale* (Economic, Social and Environmental Council), adopted unanimously on 28 May 2024, the percentage of public subsidies in the overall budgets of associations fell by 41% between 2005 and 2020. This decline reflects a gradual disengagement by the state in favour of competition through calls for projects or provision of services, which reinforces the commodification of services and introduces a more authoritative relationship between public authorities and associations.³¹

The sector weakened by reduced funding and budgetary instability

In 2025, the financial situation for associations continued to deteriorate in the face of mounting budgetary constraints, with lower public funding and inflation. The draft finance bill for 2026 foresees another year of budgetary austerity for associations, marked by a general reduction of 26% in the funds allocated to community life and nearly €1 billion in proposed sectoral cuts for the civil society sector.³² This trend is also reflected in the regions. For example, for the 2025 budget allocated to associations, the President of the Pays de la Loire region announced a reduction of €100 million, representing a 64% cut in subsidies dedicated to culture, sport, and associations.³³ These cuts weaken the region's civil society which is essential to local community life.

Furthermore, a recent survey conducted by the Hauts-de-France Regional Observatory for Associative Life (ORVA) on the financial health of associations highlights the overall

²⁷ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGISCTA000006084157>.

²⁸ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/article_lc/LEGIARTI000029318586.

²⁹ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000007900859>.

³⁰ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000008256955/>.

³¹ https://www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/Avis/2024/2024_09_Financement_associations.pdf.

³² <https://lemouvementassociatif.org/plf-2026-1-milliard-de-en-moins-pour-les-assos-65-millions-de-francais-es-impactes/>.

³³ <https://lemouvementassociatif.org/casse-associative-coup-porte-aux-territoires/>.



fragility of the association economic model.³⁴ According to the ORVA study, 70% of associations that employ staff report that their capital funds remain fragile or non-existent; 30% report having less than three months' cash flow; and 5% do not even have one month's operating costs in reserve. In short, 90,000 association-related jobs are directly threatened due to a lack of cash flow. These difficulties are the result of absent or unreliable funding, a decline in direct public subsidies, and increased competition and administrative burdens, exacerbated by the proliferation of public procurement contracts.

Funding as a lever for regulation and pressure: A growing political issue

Beyond budgetary constraints, funding has become a major political issue. The “guillotine” effect of the CER allows public authorities to withdraw or refuse subsidies based on criteria that are vague or subjective, which could lead to using funding as a tool to constrain or repress associations. The example of the association France Nature Environnement Jura illustrates the growing importance of the political positioning of associations.³⁵ The association had its grant application rejected. According to the regional president, the reason behind the rejection was because the association “takes legal action against projects supported by the department and therefore cannot receive public subsidies.”³⁶

Furthermore, as is the case every year, the examination of the draft finance bill led to the tabling of amendments aimed at limiting certain types of funding for associations. Several proposals directly target environmental protection associations and migrant aid associations.³⁷ These amendments aim to exclude these associations from tax exemptions for donations they receive, thereby hindering their ability to receive donations in a cost-effective manner.

New forms of pressure: freezing of assets, account closures, and digital restrictions

According to *Ligue des droits de l'Homme* and Amnesty International, several forms of financial pressure affect civil society organisations.³⁸ The freezing of assets, decided arbitrarily by decree, temporarily deprives associations of their ability to make payments. Challenging this measure in court is complex, as the administration can unilaterally decide to partially release the funds, which excludes the possibility of initiating emergency proceedings, as the condition of urgency is no longer fulfilled. The other instrument presented by these organisations, amounting to “banking repression”, simply consists of banks closing the accounts of CSOs, thus complicating their day-to-day management.

Finally, the European Union regulation of 13 March 2024 on transparency and targeting of political advertising has had detrimental effects on associations using social media to promote their fundraising campaigns.³⁹ Meta has banned all social and political advertising on its channels. These restrictions limit the visibility of CSOs' publications, awareness-raising campaigns, and fundraising efforts.⁴⁰

In 2025, access to funding remained a major concern for CSOs whose economic model is becoming increasingly unsustainable due to the decline in public subsidies, inflation, and increased competition. Cash-flow difficulties, precarious funds, and jobs under threat are

³⁴ <https://lemouvementassociatif.org/la-sante-financiere-des-associations-un-constat-alarmant/>.

³⁵ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/france-nature-environnement-jura-se-voit-refuser-11-000-euros-de-subvention-par-le-departement-qui-laccuse-dutiliser-cet-argent-contre-lui/>.

³⁶ <https://www.fne-jura.fr/vie-associative/2025/07/23/lettre-ouverte-departement-jura/>.

³⁷ <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/amendements/1906A/AN/581/https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/amendements/1906A/AN/280>.

³⁸ Joint interview with the Human Rights League and Amnesty International, 20 October 2025.

³⁹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202400900.

⁴⁰ <https://www.coordinationsud.org/actualite/meta-impose-de-nouvelles-restrictions-les-impacts-pour-les-associations/>.



of serious concern to the sector. At the same time, the increasing use of funding as a means of control, whether in the form of the CER, pressure from banks or other restrictions, is undermining the ability of associations to operate unhindered.

3. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Under Article 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the Constitutional Council's decisions of 18 January 1995 and 4 April 2019, "the right to collective expression of ideas and opinions" and freedom of peaceful assembly⁴¹ are guaranteed as constitutional rights and freedoms. Also recognised by the Council of State as a fundamental freedom,⁴² freedom of assembly may be subject to emergency legal proceedings on the basis of Article L.521-2 of the Code of Administrative Justice when there is a serious and manifestly illegal infringement on this freedom and to obtain protection from the judge.

For CSOs, these fundamental freedoms are particularly important because they are an essential extension of the right to freedom of association. However, this freedom is not absolute and is governed by Articles L211-1 to L211-4 of the Internal Security Code, which stipulates that all demonstrations and related details must be conveyed in advance to the prefecture from three to 15 days before the event. This procedure allows the authorities to assess the potential risks to public order and, in the event of a serious risk, to ban the demonstration. The authority to do so is strictly regulated and must comply with the principle of proportionality.⁴³

Recent legislative developments in France have contributed to stricter control over the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly in order to maintain public order, ensure public safety, and curtail urban violence. The Law of 10 April 2019, known as the "anti-rioter" law, introduced additional restrictions, including administrative police measures that allow police officers, acting under the supervision of a magistrate, to check the personal belongings of passers-by and vehicles travelling or parked at the entrance to a defined zone in the six hours before the start of a demonstration and until it disperses.⁴⁴ This systematic control of access to a demonstration may have a deterring effect or even lead to a restriction on the right to demonstrate.

A recent bill aims to rectify the shortcomings associated with the excessive use of identity checks, which are more frequent during demonstrations, often ineffective, and harmful to civil liberties.⁴⁵ By imposing stricter legal safeguards and increasing transparency, it aims to restore a balance between law enforcement practices and the protection of fundamental rights. It also comes at a time when discriminatory identity checks have been highlighted by *Defender des droits*.⁴⁶

⁴¹<https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/1995/94352DC.htm>/<https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/2019/2019780DC.htm> : freedom of assembly is also covered by a specific law, unlike freedom of demonstration: Law of 30 June 1881 on freedom of assembly.

⁴² <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/ceta/id/CETATEXT000018259403>.

⁴³ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000025503132/LEGISCTA000025505131/

⁴⁴ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000038358582>

⁴⁵ https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/textes/117b1841_proposition-loi.

⁴⁶ <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/enquete-sur-lacces-aux-droits-sur-les-relations-entre-police-et-population-que-retenir-896>.



Unequal treatment of politically sensitive demonstrations

While freedom of peaceful assembly remains a fundamental and protected right, there have been gradual restrictions in favour of a preventative and security-based approach.

A report published in September 2025 by FIDH, LDH, and OMCT highlights a trend of restricting demonstrations perceived as politically sensitive or critical of the public authorities.⁴⁷ This raises questions about the equal treatment of demonstrations and the guarantees regarding the political expression of minority groups.

Firstly, the treatment of solidarity with Palestine demonstrations reflects, in some cases, a form of political targeting that illustrates the tension between public safety and protection of the right to peaceful assembly. Reconciling these two considerations can hinder freedom of demonstration, at least in part, as in Strasbourg, where a local gathering was restricted on the grounds of risks to public order.⁴⁸ This also occurred on 11 November 2025, when there was a partial ban on the Dijon Pride parade passing through the city centre in order to “preserve public order” and “prevent” possible “disturbances”.⁴⁹ This restriction was upheld by the administrative judge who rejected the emergency fundamental freedom protection petition which sought permission for the Pride march to pass through the city centre.

Excessive use of preventive public order restrictions with judicial safeguards remains

This so-called balance between security and freedom led to prioritising public security over ensuring the full effectiveness of the right to demonstrate. For example, a feminist night march was banned in Paris by the prefecture in March 2025 due to the risk of public disorder, particularly because of calls to join the march from groups involved in Palestine solidarity demonstrations.⁵⁰ However, this ban was suspended by the administrative court, which deemed it disproportionate, as the march had been organised without violence or messages inciting hatred or discrimination since 2020.

While certain control or prevention measures may be justified in the context of a threat, several human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and LDH, have raised concerns about the excessive use of force during demonstrations.⁵¹ The persistent use of so-called less-lethal weapons (grenades, multi-shot launchers) fosters a climate of fear and self-censorship, undermining the effectiveness of the right to demonstrate.⁵² In addition, other organisations such as Reporters Without Borders have denounced an increase in police violence against demonstrators and journalists.⁵³ In its statement of 17 June 2025 on ‘restriction of civic space: a major challenge for democracy and human rights’, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights expressed serious

⁴⁷ https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/20250916_fidh_rapport_obs-france_fr_v7.pdf.

⁴⁸ <https://france3-regions.franceinfo.fr/grand-est/bas-rhin/strasbourg-0/la-prefecture-interdit-un-perimetre-de-la-ville-a-la-manifestation-pour-la-palestine-prevue-samedi-2-aout-a-strasbourg-3196515.html>.

⁴⁹ https://www.franceinfo.fr/societe/lgbt/la-prefecture-interdit-la-pride-2025-dans-le-centre-ville-de-dijon_7307532.html.

⁵⁰ https://www.liberation.fr/societe/police-justice/a-paris-une-marche-nocturne-feministe-radicale-interdite-par-la-prefecture-de-police-20250306_X635GMD55FHE5H6665MZQ53XYQ/.

⁵¹ Joint interview with the Human Rights League and Amnesty International, 20 October 2025

⁵² Joint interview with the Human Rights League and Amnesty International, 20 October 2025.

⁵³ <https://rsf.org/fr/france-la-libert%C3%A9-de-la-presse-entrav%C3%A9e-par-des-violences-polici%C3%A8res-au-cours-des-manifestations#:~:text=C>.



concerns about cases of excessive use of force and arrests followed by preventive detention.⁵⁴

Restrictions on access to public spaces: A new obstacle for freedom of assembly and association

New forms of infringement on the right to peaceful assembly have emerged, particularly affecting associations. These include cases of prohibiting access to municipal premises and, above all, in 2025, to their exclusion from public events and limiting of visibility in public spaces. In Chalon-sur-Saône, for example, the mayor excluded the local branch of LDH from the associations' forum, citing the absence of a registered office in the municipality and the political nature of its activities.⁵⁵ This decision came after several legal actions by the LDH against municipal decrees. Despite a court decision to allow LDH to participate, the mayor publicly condemned LDH as “politicisation” of the forum.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the mayor excluded the local branch of the association *France Palestine Solidarité* (France Palestine Solidarity - AFPS) from the forum on the grounds that it was “political or activist”.⁵⁷ In summary proceedings, the Dijon administrative court once again overrode the mayor and suspended this decision on 5 September 2025.⁵⁸ The local branch of AFPS in Salon-de-Provence was also banned from the associations' forum, as the municipality considered it to be engaged in political activities contrary to the principle of neutrality.⁵⁹ The ban on AFPS was not suspended by the administrative court.

The emergence of these new infringements on the freedom of peaceful assembly of civil society organisations should be highlighted, as they further reduce their capacity for action and political advocacy. Similarly, the right to protest in France, although fundamental and protected by the Constitution, has seen its guarantees considerably weakened. Trends in 2025 show that the growing tension between public security requirements and the exercise of collective freedoms is systematically invoked to restrict freedom of demonstration and peaceful assembly.

4. Freedom of Expression

In France, freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 11 of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and has had constitutional status since 11 October 1984 per a decision by the Constitutional Council.⁶⁰ The legal framework is based mainly on the Law of 29 July 1881 regarding freedom of the press⁶¹ and supplemented by several provisions of

⁵⁴ https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/2025-06/A%20-%202025%20-%207%20-%20CNCNDH%20-%20Avis%20R%C3%A9duction%20de%20l%27espace%20civique_0.pdf.

⁵⁵ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/154-le-maire-de-chalon-sur-saone-exclut-la-section-locale-de-la-ligue-des-droits-de-lhomme-du-forum-des-associations/>.

⁵⁶ <https://justice.pappers.fr/decision/dcd85f67ebc53a0bc3924437d0ff010450d07128>.

⁵⁷ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/156-la-section-chalonnaise-de-lassociation-france-palestine-solidarite-exclu-du-forum-des-associations-par-le-maire/>.

⁵⁸ https://justice.pappers.fr/decision/5d21c2d2b92960eec3240d1cec0cafc76a67b0f6?q=Palestine&date_decision_min=2025-09-05&date_decision_max=2025-09-05&jurisdiction%5B%5D=tribunaux+administratifs

⁵⁹ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/155-la-mairie-de-salon-de-provence-refuse-la-participation-au-forum-des-associations-de-la-section-locale-de-lassociation-france-palestine-solidarite/>.

⁶⁰ <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/1984/84181DC.htm>.

⁶¹ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LIGITEXT000006070722>.



the Criminal Code that define limitations, namely by prohibiting the glorification of terrorism,⁶² defamation and insults,⁶³ and discrimination.⁶⁴

Growing self-censorship within CSOs

With regard to freedom of association, the 2025 survey conducted by *Observatoire des libertés associatives* (Observatory of Associative Freedoms) on the state of relations between associations and public authorities revealed that 27% of the associations surveyed report that they self-censor their activities or positions on certain policies for fear of reprisals, and 41% of citizen groups involved in political mobilisation, advocacy or civil disobedience report the same.⁶⁵ This self-censorship is particularly marked in the humanitarian, environmental, and human rights sectors, as well as in certain regions such as Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, where tensions between public authorities and civil society are higher.

Restricted right to criticise political action

Several recent cases demonstrate the increasing difficulties associations face in exercising their right to criticise public policy. For example, in the summer of 2025, association *Vélo Cité* implemented a barometer rating on the political will to develop cycling in each municipality of the Bordeaux metropolitan area. Subsequently, its operating subsidy was deferred, though it was later restored in a revote.⁶⁶ Similarly, the risk to freedom of expression is reflected in the withdrawal of administrative approvals or subsidies from student and activist associations, such as the collective *Le Poing Levé Brest*, due to its political stance, specifically on Palestine.⁶⁷

A tougher stance on acts of civil disobedience

Similarly, acts of civil disobedience, although an aspect of freedom of expression, have also faced repressions. For example an environmental activist who threw paint at the Hôtel Matignon was sentenced to six months in prison by the Paris criminal court.⁶⁸ This decision goes against case law recognising freedom of expression as a justification for such acts of civil disobedience, and it contravenes the decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) of 3 November 2025, which only allows for minimal punitive measures in cases of permanent damage to property.⁶⁹

SLAPPs still insufficiently regulated

Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) have also remained a major issue in terms of the right to free expression. Although the European Anti-SLAPP Directive was adopted in 2024, it has not been fully integrated into French law. As a result, journalists, whistle-blowers, and NGOs continue to face lawsuits from companies or politicians with the aim of deflecting public criticism. In an opinion dated 13 February 2025 and on the occasion of the transposition of EU Directive 2024/1069 of 11 April 2024, the National

⁶²https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000029755573#:~:text=Modifi%C3%A9%20par%20D%C3%A9cision%20n%C2%B0.init.&text=Le%20fait%20de%20provoquer%20directement.75%20000%20%E2%82%AC%20d'amende

⁶³ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006070719/LEGISCTA000006165410/

⁶⁴ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006070719/LEGISCTA000006165298/

⁶⁵ <https://libertesassociatives.org/ressource/presentation-des-resultats-de-la-premiere-enquete-nationale-sur-les-relations-entre-associations-et-pouvoirs-publics/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.sudouest.fr/gironde/bordeaux/bordeaux-metropole-subvention-ajournee-pour-velo-cite-qui-va-devoir-s-expliquer-25201507.php>

⁶⁷ <https://www.ouest-france.fr/education/etudiant/universites/le-poinc-leve-sanctionne-par-lubo-entrave-a-la-liberte-d-expression-selon-huit-organisations-3929e13a-a076-11f0-a698-dbf3ac8f3cb6>

⁶⁸ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/157-apres-une-action-symbolique-de-jet-de-peinture-devant-matignon-une-militante-de-derniere-renovation-est-condamnee-a-6-mois-de-prison-ferme/>

⁶⁹ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-243886%22%5D%7D/>
https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=55550



Consultative Commission on Human Rights made several recommendations for countering SLAPP lawsuits. It noted that they impose a significant financial, psychological, and reputational cost, which is further aggravated by the length of such legal proceedings.⁷⁰ The Commission called for national legislation to mitigate these costs which undermine free speech.

While France retains a solid legal framework for the protection of freedom of expression, 2025 was marked by an erosion of its guarantees in practice, due to administrative pressure, harmful litigation, and new forms of digital control under Meta regulations and bans.

5. Right to Participation in Decision-Making

The legal framework for citizens' participation in France is based on constitutional and legislative mechanisms that guarantee the involvement of citizens in the development of public policy. The 1958 Constitution provides for several forms of direct consultation: nationwide through legislative referendums, constitutional referendums, and shared initiative referendums.⁷¹ Referendums are guaranteed for all levels of local government and are enshrined in Article 72-1 of the Constitution.⁷² These legal instruments are complemented by consultative mechanisms that provide for the possibility of organising local consultations,⁷³ neighbourhood councils, which are mandatory for cities with more than 80,000 inhabitants,⁷⁴ and citizens' councils in priority neighbourhoods of the city.⁷⁵ These mechanisms provide a pluralistic framework for French participatory democracy.

2025 saw a widening gap between the dense, multi-layered legal framework and the level of effectiveness of participatory mechanisms in practice.

Significant development of citizens' participation

With regard to citizens' councils, the best-known form of citizens' participation in decision-making, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) organised its third citizens' convention on children's time-use planning, the report of which was voted on and published on 23 November.⁷⁶ In addition, the deliberations of the CESE second citizens' convention on end-of-life care, which paved the way for active assistance in dying, were voted on by the National Assembly at first reading.⁷⁷ At the local level, the city of Paris also organised its first citizens' convention on the future of the river Seine,⁷⁸ where fifty citizens formulated nine proposals to preserve the rights of the river. Other local initiatives and experiments exist throughout France.⁷⁹ For example, the citizens' and

⁷⁰<https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/2025-02/A%20-%202025%20-%202%20-%20CNCDH%20-%20Avis%20Proc%C3%A9dures-b%C3%A2illons%20f%C3%A9vrier%202025.pdf>

⁷¹ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000428976>

⁷² <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000428976>

⁷³ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006389072

⁷⁴ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000028640661

⁷⁵ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000028640661

⁷⁶ <https://conventioncitoyennetempsenfant.lecese.fr/>

⁷⁷ https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/textes/115b3755_proposition-loi

⁷⁸ <https://www.paris.fr/pages/convention-citoyenne-seine-30402>

⁷⁹ Interview on 20 October 2025 with Sylvie Barnézet, General Delegate of the Institut de la Concertation et de la Participation Citoyenne.



popular assembly in the city of Poitiers aims to develop proposals in cooperation with elected officials and local government authorities.⁸⁰

Limited influence on decision-making

While the number of citizen-led initiatives is growing, their influence on the development of public policy remains insufficient. Public consultations are not binding on the authorities. Although the deliberations of the citizens' convention on end-of-life care resulted in two bills adopted at first reading by members of Parliament on 27 May 2025, two years after the CESE submitted its report on the issue. Furthermore, this is only the first stage in the parliamentary process: the next step being a review by the Senate. This lengthy legislative process can create mistrust and scepticism in the ability of citizens to influence public policy.

Following the controversial adoption of the Duplomb Law, which reintroduced certain neonicotinoids that had previously been banned, a historic citizens' petition gathered more than two million signatures to express opposition to this law.⁸¹ Under the National Assembly's rules of procedure, a petition obtaining more than 100,000 signatures can be examined by a committee.⁸² On 17 September 2025, the economic affairs committee voted unanimously to review the petition and to publish a report. However, the procedure lacks a mandatory vote at the end of the debate, thus diminishing the decision-making power of this tool.

Attempts to reduce the role of organised civil society in consultative democracy

Finally, 2025 brought numerous proposals aimed at reducing the role of consultative bodies representing organised civil society in public debate. Several legislative initiatives reflect this decline in consultative democracy. The bill to simplify economic life, tabled in the National Assembly, produced a list of consultative bodies deemed "unnecessary" or too costly⁸³ and included amendments targeting regional economic, social and environmental councils (CESER)⁸⁴ which represent civil society active in the regions. Although two amendments leading to the abolition of the CESERs were passed in committee, cross-party mobilisation in the National Assembly led to their reinstatement.⁸⁵ Several other bills attempted to reduce the influence of these alternative political spaces. One aims to abolish certain committees, structures, councils and commissions which have not proven useful, and was adopted in the first reading by the Senate without subsequently being scheduled for consideration by the National Assembly.⁸⁶ Two other bills, tabled on 18 November 2025, aim to combat the proliferation of state agencies and reduce the number of state advisory bodies.⁸⁷

If passed and implemented, these laws could diminish the consultative democracy processes. It would also weaken joint decision-making and control of public policies, and reduce the role of intermediary bodies. Thus, although France has a comprehensive and pluralistic participatory framework, in 2025 there were consultative mechanisms that had

⁸⁰ <https://www.poitiers.fr/assemblee-citoyenne-et-populaire-quest-ce-que-cest>.

⁸¹ <https://petitions.assemblee-nationale.fr/initiatives/i-3014?locale=fr>

⁸² https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/divers/texte_reference/02_reglement_assemblee_nationale

⁸³ <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/dossiers/DLR5L16N49868>

⁸⁴ <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/amendements/0481/CSVIEECO/1024>

⁸⁵ <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/amendements/1191/AN/1>

⁸⁶ https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/textes/117b0872_proposition-loi

⁸⁷ https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/textes/117b2084_proposition-loi / https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/textes/117b2084_proposition-loi



no concrete effects and a lack of political will from the authorities to engage in citizen-led dialogue.

6. Safe Space

Following a decision by the Constitutional Council on 27 December 1973, French law has upheld the concept of equality before the law as a constitutional principle.⁸⁸ This implies two obligations: the prohibition of certain forms of discrimination and the uniform application of the rule of law, namely the prohibition of any distinction based on origin, race, religion, beliefs, opinions or gender. However, this principle is not absolute and traditional case law allows for different situations to be dealt with differently.⁸⁹

2025 was marked by a contrast between legal standards and discriminatory practices. The general climate in terms of combating discrimination and protecting civic space remained marred by tension between security policies, identity politics, and guarantees of fundamental rights. This tension particularly affects minority rights protection such as the rights of migrants, women, and LGBTQI+ persons and can lead to an increase in hate speech against minorities, including religious minorities.

Intensification of debate on religious minority groups and increased risks related to hatred

At the institutional level, France was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in 2025 for identity checks deemed discriminatory.⁹⁰ The Court found that the systematic practice of checks based on appearance or ethnic origin constituted a violation of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) and Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights.⁹¹ This decision is in line with the position of the *Défenseur des droits*, an independent administrative authority that called for a change in practices based on the results of the investigation into access to rights in relations between the police and the population on 24 June 2025.⁹² For example, it found that people perceived as non-white are 30% more likely to be subject to identity checks.

At the same time, public and political debates on the issue of Islam and secularism continue to intensify. The Ministry of the Interior's report on the Muslim Brotherhood and political Islamism in France, published in April 2025,⁹³ has contributed to fuelling forms of generalised suspicion towards Muslim populations (and those perceived as such) in France and towards Muslim and anti-racist associations. During a monitoring session of the National Assembly's law commission on anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia, statistics from the Interior Ministry's national intelligence department, *Direction nationale du renseignement territorial* (DNRT), reported 173 anti-Muslim incidents recorded in 2024, a 29% decrease compared with 2023 (242 incidents). However, the report points out that

⁸⁸ <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/1973/7351DC.htm>

⁸⁹ <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/1996/96380DC.htm>

⁹⁰ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-243820%22%5D%7D>

⁹¹ <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/contrôles-d'identité-discriminatoires-la-france-condamnée-par-la-cedh-904>

⁹² <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/enquete-sur-l'accès-aux-droits-sur-les-relations-entre-police-et-population-que-retenir-896>

⁹³ <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/actualites/dossiers-de-presse/publication-du-rapport-freres-musulmans-et-islamisme-politique-en-france/https://www.ldh-france.org/halte-a-la-paranoia-contre-les-musulmans/#:~:text=Communiqu%C3%A9%20LDH&text=Un%20rapport%20officiel%20intitul%C3%A9%20C%AB%20Fr%C3%A8res,gouvernement%20le%2021%20mai%202025>



these figures do not fully reflect the prevailing Islamophobia in society, which manifests itself on a daily basis in political discourse and the media.⁹⁴

This observation is shared by the 2024 report on the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia by *Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme* (CNCDH), a national consultative committee on human rights, which reported an 11% rise in racist crimes and offences.⁹⁵ Furthermore, anti-Semitic acts continue to rise at an alarming rate following the Hamas terror attacks of 7 October 2023, with more than 1,570 anti-Semitic acts recorded. This increase led to the relaunch of the *Assises de la lutte contre l'antisémitisme* (conference against anti-Semitism) by the interministerial delegation for the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-LGBTI+ hatred, which issued a report on 28 April 2025.⁹⁶ The report recommended 15 measures to combat anti-Semitism and structure public action in response to this threat.

Increased pressure on LGBTQI+ rights and gender equality frameworks

2025 was also marked by a deterioration in the political climate regarding LGBTQI+ rights. In June, Valérie Pécresse, President of the Île-de-France region, cancelled two subsidies of 25,000 EUR awarded to the Inter-LGBT Association, the organiser of the Paris Pride march. This followed a controversy over the publication of a poster to highlight the fight “against international reactionism” for the Paris Pride march.⁹⁷ More precisely, the poster depicts seven figures, including a trans person, an Act Up activist, a woman wearing a headscarf, and another woman with a Palestinian flag pin. This episode illustrated the financial vulnerability of LGBTQI+ organisations that are dependent on public funding and the growing use of budgetary leverage in political conflicts.

A report published in 2025 by the European Parliamentary Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF) also warns of an explosion in “anti-gender” funding, which could threaten women's, LGBTQI+, and children's rights, as well as gender equality.⁹⁸ The introduction of education on emotional, relational, and sexual life is also facing difficulties in the face of attacks from identity movements. For example, an address by the association C3S *Corse Stratégie Santé Sexuelle* (Corsica sexual health strategy), during a day devoted to raising awareness of sexual risks, was cancelled due to the risk of disturbing public order following attacks by the party *Mossa Palatina*.⁹⁹

There is, however, institutional support from *Défenseur des droits* and from the interministerial delegation for the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-LGBTQI+ hatred.¹⁰⁰ For example, *Défenseur des droits* defended the rights to gender identity of transgender people through a decision on 16 June 2025.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, there were several attacks against LGBTQI+ people, including the ban on the Dijon Pride parade in the city centre in order to “preserve public order” and “prevent” possible “disturbances”.¹⁰² Similarly, the statistics department of the Ministry of the Interior published a report on

⁹⁴[https://www.assembleenationale.fr/dyn/17/documents/cion_lois/l17n792620793_document.pdf#:~:text=Les%20statistiques%20de%20la%20Direction.%C3%A0%202023%20\(242%20faits\)](https://www.assembleenationale.fr/dyn/17/documents/cion_lois/l17n792620793_document.pdf#:~:text=Les%20statistiques%20de%20la%20Direction.%C3%A0%202023%20(242%20faits))

⁹⁵ <https://www.cncdh.fr/publications/rapport-2024-sur-la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-lantisemitisme-et-la-xenophobie>

⁹⁶ <https://www.dilcrah.gouv.fr/ressources/rapport-des-groupes-de-travail-issus-des-assises-de-lutte-contre-lantisemitisme>

⁹⁷ <https://libertesassociatives.org/entrave/l49-la-region-ile-de-france-retire-50-000-euros-de-subvention-a-linter-lgbt-apres-la-publication-dune-affiche-contre-linternationale-reactionnaire-pour-la-marche/>

⁹⁸ https://www.liberation.fr/societe/sexualite-et-genres/la-france-championne-des-financements-anti-genre-derriere-la-hongrie-selon-un-rapport-20250626_XJALSJCAHBALPH3JBHZ6ZBR2RQ/?redirected=1

⁹⁹ <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/lune-association-ecartee-d-une-action-de-prevention-apres-des-critiques-d-un-parti-identitaire-4020391>

¹⁰⁰ Interview with SOS Homophobie on 11 November 2025.

¹⁰¹ https://juridique.defenseurdesdroits.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=55224#:~:text=En%20mati%C3%A8re%20de%20d%C3%A9ontologie%20des,g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ralement%20sur%20la%20th%C3%A9matique%20LGBTI.

¹⁰² https://www.franceinfo.fr/societe/lgbt/la-prefecture-interdit-la-pride-2025-dans-le-centre-ville-de-dijon_7307532.html



anti-LGBTQI+ offences recorded in 2024 which reveals a 14% increase in offences targeting LGBTQI+ people since 2016.¹⁰³

With regard to the defence of women's rights, although a bill has been passed to amend the criminal definition of rape and sexual assault to include the concept of consent,¹⁰⁴ access to and enforcement of their rights are undermined by budgetary restrictions. A survey conducted by the Women's Foundation in the summer of 2025 reveals that budget cuts have prevented 6,250 women victims of violence from receiving support.¹⁰⁵

Increasing criminalization and intimidation of human rights defenders

Associations committed to defending rights face criminalising rhetoric. This is particularly evident in the 2026 finance bill, where environmental and migrant rights associations are targeted by amendments aimed at removing their tax exemptions for donations if they are found guilty of "illegal intrusion". This measure has been denounced by Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and France Nature Environnement as a financial deterrent.¹⁰⁶

At the European level, several associations are concerned about the European Commission's intention to amend the 2002 directive on assistance with entry, transit and residence.¹⁰⁷ While the Commission's stated objective is to dismantle immigration smuggling networks,¹⁰⁸ the terms of the proposal remain vague and the creation of new offences could further undermine humanitarian aid by criminalising acts of solidarity.

Finally, environmental rights defenders are increasingly subjected to pressure, threats, and violence. In addition to stigmatising rhetoric, which refers to them as "eco-terrorists" or "khmers verts", denounced in an Amnesty International report on 3 April 2025,¹⁰⁹ there have been acts of intimidation reported, such as the vandalism at the home of Claire Nouvian, an environmental activist and founder of the NGO Bloom.¹¹⁰ An investigation was ultimately opened by the Paris prosecutor's office.

¹⁰³<https://www.dijcraih.gouv.fr/ressources/une-hausse-preoccupante-des-infractions-anti-lgbt-enregistrees-en-2023/https://www.la-croix.com/societe/les-atteintes-envers-les-personnes-lgbt-en-hausse-de-5-en-2024-20250515>.

¹⁰⁴ https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/17/dossiers/definition_penale_viol_agressions_sexuelles_17e#PROM

¹⁰⁵ <https://fondationdesfemmes.org/dfd-content/uploads/2025/08/FDF-Rapport-Enquete-12pages-WEB3.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.carenews.com/carenews-info/news/budget-2026-des-associations-denoncent-des-amendements-baillons-menacant-leur>

¹⁰⁷ <https://utopia56.org/criminaliser-les-personnes-exilees-et-les-actes-solidaires-un-projet-europeen/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023PC0755>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.amnesty.fr/actualites/la-strategie-de-la-france-pour-empêcher-l'action-climatique>

¹¹⁰ https://www.liberation.fr/environnement/domicile-vandalise-de-la-militante-ecologiste-claire-nouvian-le-parquet-de-paris-annonce-louverture-dune-enquete-20250605_5R2I37YJENEJ5FVFFBHVJL34BM/?redirected=1



Recommendations

- 1.** Revoke the Contrat d'engagement républicain (CER) to restore trust between associations and public authorities; lighten the administrative burden; and put an end to a mechanism that does not meet the initial objectives of its establishment (combatting separatism).
- 2.** Introduce the right for associations to use municipal premises, while maintaining the right of local authorities to refuse certain requests based on objective criteria clearly defined by law.
- 3.** Create an advisory committee for the allocation of public subsidies at municipal and inter-municipal level, including local elected representatives, association officials, and citizens.
- 4.** Secure the scope of activities in the public interest by clarifying which activities are eligible for sponsorship, explicitly including those that appear most at risk of exclusion from the scheme in the event of an unfavourable political change or shift.
- 5.** Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning abuses related to the application of secularism and guarantee the effectiveness of freedom of conscience and the neutrality of public institutions, thereby ensuring equal and protective treatment of all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs or lack of religious beliefs.
- 6.** Promote an enabling environment for civil society by ending all attacks against CSOs and ensuring effective protection for CSO representatives in cases of harassment, SLAPPs, and physical attacks
- 7.** Transposing the European anti-SLAPP directive to protect civil society organisations from such proceedings.



Methodology

The Monitoring Action for Civic Space (MACS) methodology is designed to assess the state of civic space in EU countries with a focus on identifying both progress and deterioration in selected countries. The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, European Civic Forum, Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Nyt Europa, Le Mouvement associatif, Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Netherlands Helsinki Committee, National Federation of Polish NGOs and the Civil Society Development Foundation joined forces to create MACS, using our collective expertise in the monitoring field. MACS consists of two complementary tools: the country reports and the Early Warning and Alert System.

The methodology monitors the following dimensions:

- Freedom of Association;
- Access to Funding;
- Freedom to Peaceful Assembly;
- Freedom of Expression;
- Participation in Decision-Making;
- Safe Space.

Each dimension is evaluated against a set of standards that capture the state's commitment under international and European human rights law. Each standard is assessed using qualitative indicators. For further details, download the [full methodology](#).

Throughout the reports, the red highlighted sections mark any developments that are directly falling or could potentially fall under the [sphere of competence of the European Union](#). This is to better understand where the EU has the legal authority to act, as opposed to developments that remain under Member State control.

2025 was the testing phase of the methodology by national partners. While some partners monitored all six dimensions, others focused on the three core civic space dimensions (association, peaceful assembly and expression) and selected one additional dimension aligned with national priorities.



Monitoring Action
for Civic Space