



Country profile

FRANCE

Last profile update: August 2026.

This profile was prepared and updated by by **Ms Camille MASSON in collaboration with Mr Thomas PERRIN and Mr Jean-Cédric DELVAINQUIÈRE.**

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1. Cultural policy system

1.1 Objectives, main features and background

The French cultural policy system is deeply rooted in a long tradition of state intervention in cultural affairs that predates the establishment of the Republic. From the sixteenth century onwards, public authorities progressively shaped the organisation of cultural and intellectual life through the promotion of the French language (Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539), the creation of major institutions devoted to knowledge, research and heritage, such as the Bibliothèque nationale de France (XVe/XVIe centuries), the Collège de France (1530), the Académie française (1635) or Comédie-Française (1680), as well as through support for artistic creation and the performing arts.

Over time, this involvement was reinforced through the development of dedicated administrative structures and public funding mechanisms. During the nineteenth century, responsibility for the arts and heritage was gradually institutionalised within the state administration, paving the way for the establishment of a ministry specifically dedicated to cultural affairs.

A key step in this process was the creation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1959, under André Malraux. The founding decree defined the Ministry's mission as making the major works of humanity accessible to the widest possible audience, fostering artistic creation, and safeguarding cultural heritage. These principles continue to constitute the foundations of French cultural policy today.

The Ministry of Culture remains the central actor in the definition, regulation and co-financing of cultural policies. However, since the decentralisation reforms initiated in the early 1980s, territorial authorities — municipalities, départements and regions — have become essential partners in cultural governance and now account for a substantial share of public cultural expenditure. French cultural policy is therefore characterised by a multi-level governance system based on cooperation and contractual partnerships between state and local authorities (see Chapter 1.2).

André Malraux and the Foundations of Modern Cultural Policy

"The ministry in charge of cultural affairs has the role of making available capital works from humanity, and initially from France, to the greatest possible number of French people, of ensuring the largest audience for our cultural heritage, and of supporting the creation of the spirit and works of art which enrich it." (Decree n° 59-889, known as the "founding decree", of 24 July 1959).

As the first Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1959 to 1969, André Malraux (1901-1976) played a decisive role in shaping the institutions and priorities that continue to underpin French cultural policy. Celebrated novelist, intellectual and close associate of General de Gaulle, he sought to place culture at the heart of the modernisation of post-war France.

Under his leadership, the Ministry developed policies aimed at both supporting artistic creation and widening public access to culture. Emphasis was placed on the performing arts, museums, historic monuments and cultural heritage. The Ministry also strengthened public support for contemporary artistic production across a range of disciplines.

One of Malraux's most emblematic initiatives was the creation of the *Maisons de la Culture*. Conceived as multidisciplinary cultural centres, they were intended to bring high-quality artistic and cultural programmes to audiences throughout the country, reflecting his ambition to democratise access to culture beyond traditional social and geographical boundaries.

Malraux also initiated the territorial deployment of the Ministry's activities. This process was further consolidated at the end of the 1960s with the creation of the first Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (*Directions régionales des affaires culturelles* – DRAC), which became key instruments for implementing national cultural policies across the country.

Although many aspects of French cultural policy have evolved since the 1960s, the principles promoted by Malraux — public responsibility for culture, support for artistic creation, protection of heritage and broad public access to cultural life — remain central to the French model.

Jacques Duhamel: Cultural Development and Partnerships

As Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1971 to 1973, Jacques Duhamel (1924-1977) broadened the scope of French cultural policy by promoting the concept of *cultural development*. While the Ministry had initially focused on democratising access to established cultural works, Duhamel emphasised the integration of culture into broader social and economic life.

His approach encouraged cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and other public authorities, as well as partnerships with major cultural institutions and organisations in sectors such as broadcasting, cinema and the performing arts. To support these initiatives, he created the *Fonds d'intervention culturelle* (FIC), a dedicated funding mechanism for innovative cross-sectoral projects involving culture and other areas of public policy.

Duhamel also reinforced public support for contemporary artistic creation, notably by extending the *1% artistique* scheme, which requires 1% of the cost of public buildings to be devoted to commissioning artworks. The scheme was expanded to cover both new and

existing public buildings, strengthening the presence of contemporary art in public spaces and its integration into everyday environments.

Although his tenure was relatively brief, Jacques Duhamel helped broaden the objectives of French cultural policy by promoting cooperation, innovation and the recognition of culture as a cross-cutting dimension of public action.

Cultural Policy Between 1973 and 1981: Continuity and Gradual Renewal

Between 1973 and 1981, six ministers—Maurice Druon (1973–1974), Alain Peyrefitte (1974), Michel Guy (1974–1976) and Françoise Giroud (1974–1976), Michel d'Ornano (1977–1978) and Jean-Philippe Lecat (1978–1981)—successively headed the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. While continuing the policy directions initiated by André Malraux and Jacques Duhamel, they also introduced a series of incremental developments in cultural policy.

In 1974, Michel Guy marked a significant step forward for contemporary creation and young artists by signing the first in a series of cultural development agreements with local authorities. These agreements strengthened cooperation between the State and municipalities and regions in support of cultural projects.

This period also saw several major institutional and legislative milestones. The Georges Pompidou National Centre for Art and Culture opened in 1977, becoming a landmark institution for modern and contemporary art. In 1978, the Museums Finance Act was adopted, strengthening the financial framework for museum policy. In 1980, the year was designated the Year of National Heritage, reflecting growing attention to heritage preservation and public awareness.

The 1981 election of François Mitterrand to the presidency marked a turning point in French cultural policy, opening a new phase led by Minister Jack Lang.

The Two Terms of Jack Lang : 1981–1986 and 1988–1993

Jack Lang's two terms as Minister of Culture marked a significant expansion in both the scope and resources of French cultural policy. In 1982, the Ministry's budget was substantially increased and progressively rose to approach 1% of the State budget, rising from 2.6 billion francs in 1981 to 13.8 billion in 1993. This period was characterised by a major quantitative and qualitative transformation of cultural policy, with a significant broadening of the Ministry's fields of intervention.

From the early 1980s onwards, cultural policy also increasingly addressed economic dimensions, particularly in relation to the audiovisual and broadcasting sectors. At the same time, within the framework of the decentralisation reforms of 1982–83, processes of *déconcentration* were strengthened through the consolidation of the network of Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (*Directions régionales des affaires culturelles* – DRAC), which

worked in close partnership with newly empowered territorial authorities, including regional and departmental councils.

This period was also marked by the reinforcement and creation of key cultural and training institutions, including the École nationale supérieure de création industrielle (ENSCI), the Institut national du patrimoine, the Conservatoires nationaux supérieurs de musique et de danse in Paris and Lyon, and the École du Louvre. Major institutions such as the Institut du monde arabe and the National Centre for Circus Arts were also established, alongside a range of specialised resource centres in fields such as music, theatre and street arts.

In parallel, arts education in schools was modernised, with the introduction of disciplines such as theatre, cinema and art history, as well as a range of initiatives aimed at fostering cultural awareness among young people, including arts projects, school cinema schemes and heritage education programmes.

Overall, this phase is often characterised as a period of quantitative and structural expansion in French cultural policy, marked by unprecedented growth in funding, institutional development and the widening of the Ministry's remit. Cultural policy also gained significant public visibility, symbolised in particular by the creation of the *Fête de la Musique* in 1981 (officially established in 1983).

President François Mitterrand supported an ambitious programme of major cultural construction projects from 1981 to 1985, known as the *Grands Travaux*, including the Grande Arche de la Défense, the Opéra Bastille, the Grand Louvre and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Note: The period 1986–1988, corresponding to the first cohabitation in the Fifth Republic, led to a change in ministerial leadership under François Léotard, without fundamentally altering the institutional framework established in the previous decade.

Ministers and the Regulation of Cultural Industries (1986–2002)

Following the long ministerial tenure of Jack Lang, the Ministry of Culture was successively led by several ministers with comparatively short mandates: François Léotard (1986–1988), Jacques Toubon (1993–1995), Philippe Douste-Blazy (1995–1997), Catherine Trautmann (1997–2000) and Catherine Tasca (2000–2002). This period was marked by political alternation, including phases of cohabitation, yet it ensured institutional continuity in cultural policy, with successive governments maintaining the main structures and regulatory frameworks of the Ministry while gradually adapting its priorities to economic, technological and societal change. While continuing policies aimed at democratising access to culture, this period was also characterised by a growing focus on cultural industries, regulatory frameworks and adaptation to technological change.

In response to the expansion of audiovisual media and home-based cultural consumption, cultural policy increasingly addressed the regulation and support of key sectors such as publishing, music, film and broadcasting. Policy instruments included financial support schemes for the film industry, fixed book pricing regulations, quotas for French-language music on radio, and measures aimed at addressing emerging issues linked to digital technologies and piracy.

A major legislative milestone of this period was the adoption of the [*loi Toubon*](#) (1994), which strengthened the legal status of the French language. The law established French as the language of the Republic in key domains, including education, employment, public services and commercial communication. It also reinforced obligations regarding the use of French in advertising, labelling and public information, thereby consolidating linguistic policy as a central component of cultural regulation.

During the 1990s, the concept of *cultural exception* emerged in international debates, asserting the specificity of cultural goods and services in relation to international trade rules. This discussion contributed to the broader recognition of cultural diversity, which was later formalised at the international level through UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

Alongside these regulatory developments, the Ministry maintained its commitment to the democratisation of culture, with continued emphasis on heritage, the performing arts and the expansion of cultural access in disadvantaged urban areas. Under Philippe Douste-Blazy, a reflection on the future of cultural policy was launched through the Rigaud Commission, and the National Centre for Dance was established, strengthening institutional support for choreography and contemporary dance.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, cultural policy was structured around four main priorities: cultural diversity; equal access through cultural and artistic education; State reform and further decentralisation; and the protection of intellectual property in the context of digital globalisation. In the audiovisual sector, policy sought to reinforce regulatory capacity while maintaining support for domestic production and preserving market dynamism. Between 2000 and 2002, Michel Duffour (1940–) served as Secretary of State for Heritage and Cultural Decentralisation alongside Minister of Culture Catherine Tasca. During this period, new protocols for cultural decentralisation were introduced, anticipating the broader reforms implemented in 2003–2004.

Jean-Jacques Aillagon and Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres (2002–2007): Cultural Patronage and New Regulatory Challenges

In May 2002, at the beginning of President Jacques Chirac's second term, Jean-Jacques Aillagon (1946–) was appointed Minister of Culture and Communication. His mandate was

characterised by a reaffirmation of the role of public and private cultural patronage. In 2003, a major law was adopted to modernise and strengthen the legal framework governing sponsorship, foundations and charitable giving. Commonly known as the *Aillagon Law*, it introduced significantly more favourable tax incentives for both companies and individuals, thereby encouraging greater private sector involvement in cultural funding. Aillagon also emphasised the idea that cultural policy should remain a central and dynamic component of public action, including under governments of different political orientations.

In March 2004, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres (1954–) succeeded him as Minister of Culture and Communication. His term was notably marked by efforts to address the crisis affecting *intermittents du spectacle*, which had emerged in 2003 within the performing arts sector and had significant repercussions during events such as the Avignon Theatre Festival. This period highlighted the structural vulnerabilities of employment in the cultural activities and the need for reform of social protection schemes for cultural workers.

Donnedieu de Vabres also focused on adapting cultural policy to the challenges of digital technologies, particularly in relation to access to cultural content and the regulation of online distribution. In parallel, support for emerging artistic forms was strengthened, notably through the creation in 2005 of nine National Centres for Street Arts, aimed at recognising and structuring these new practices within the broader cultural landscape.

Christine Albanel and Frédéric Mitterrand (2007–2012): Cultural Modernisation and Digital Transition

Following the election of President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, Christine Albanel was appointed Minister of Culture. Her mandate took place within the broader framework of the *Révision générale des politiques publiques*, which aimed at modernising and streamlining public administration. In this context, the Ministry of Culture was reorganised into a new administrative structure comprising a General Secretariat and three main directorates: the General Directorate for Heritage (*direction générale des patrimoines*), the General Directorate for Artistic Creation (*direction générale de la création artistique*), and the General Directorate for Media and Cultural Industries (*direction générale des médias et des industries culturelles*).

Key policy priorities during this period included the strengthening of copyright protection in the digital environment, notably through the *loi Création et Internet*, as well as the reform of public broadcasting. Dialogue with stakeholders in the performing arts sector was also pursued through the *Entretiens de Valois*, a consultation process aimed at discussing the future development of the sector. In 2008, during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the European Cultural Season was launched, bringing together all EU Member States to showcase their cultural heritage and creative industries. In 2009, the Ministry also marked the 50th anniversary of its creation.

In 2009, Frédéric Mitterrand (1947–2024) succeeded Christine Albanel as Minister of Culture and Communication. His mandate continued many of the policy orientations of his predecessor, with a particular focus on cultural participation and the adaptation of cultural policy to digital transformation. The programme *Culture pour chacun* ("Culture for Everyone") was launched with the aim of promoting broader access to culture and strengthening cultural inclusion. However, the initiative was widely debated within the cultural sector and remained largely conceptual, giving rise to relatively few concrete operational measures.

During this period, the regulation of digital cultural content was reinforced through the establishment of the *Haute Autorité pour la diffusion des œuvres et la protection des droits sur Internet* (HADOPI), responsible for combating online copyright infringement. Additional measures included legislation on fixed book pricing in the digital environment, the commissioning of the prospective report *Culture and Media 2030*, and support for legal action initiated by the French Publishers Association (*Syndicat national de l'édition*) against major digital platforms concerning the digitisation of books.

Overall, this period was characterised by a combination of administrative modernisation, increased focus on digital regulation, and continued efforts to broaden cultural participation, alongside sustained attention to the challenges posed by the transformation of cultural industries.

Freedom of Creation and the Modernisation of Heritage Policy (2014–2017)

Following the election of President François Hollande (2012–2017), Fleur Pellerin was appointed Minister of Culture and Communication in August 2014 in the government led by Prime Minister Manuel Valls, following her previous responsibilities in the field of the digital economy and innovation. Her mandate continued many of the policy orientations of her predecessor, with a particular emphasis on adapting cultural policy to digital transformation.

In 2016, Audrey Azoulay succeeded her as Minister of Culture, after having served as Cultural Adviser to the President of the Republic since 2014. The period from 2012 onwards had been characterised by the preparation of a major legislative reform, culminating in the adoption of the *Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage* (Loi n° 2016-925 of 7 July 2016).

This ambitious framework law aimed to safeguard and guarantee artistic freedom of creation while modernising heritage policy and strengthening its governance instruments. Its adoption took place in a sensitive political and social context, notably in the aftermath of the January 2015 terrorist attacks against the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, which intensified debates on freedom of expression and led to attempts by some local authorities and associations to restrict the dissemination of certain artistic works. Further tensions followed the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, including the attack on the [Bataclan](#) concert hall, which profoundly affected the performing arts sector by reducing audience

attendance and prompting the introduction of emergency support measures for cultural organisations.

Alongside these developments, social partners reached a new agreement in 2016 on the specific unemployment insurance regime for intermittent workers in the performing arts and audiovisual sectors (*intermittents du spectacle*). In the same year, the government created the *Fonds pour l'emploi pérenne dans le spectacle* (Fonpeps), aimed at supporting sustainable employment in the cultural and creative industries.

Within this framework, Audrey Azoulay's mandate (2016–2017) was primarily devoted to the implementation and consolidation of the 2016 law. Priority was given to ensuring its effective application across the cultural sector, particularly in relation to artistic freedom, heritage protection and the governance of cultural institutions. Her tenure also reinforced public support mechanisms for cultural creation and the promotion of cultural diversity, while continuing efforts to stabilise the performing arts sector in the post-2015 context. This period also marked a strengthening of France's cultural diplomacy, culminating in her appointment as Director-General of UNESCO in 2017.

Françoise Nyssen (2017–2018) and Franck Riester (2018–2020): Reform and Sector Transformation

Françoise Nyssen was appointed Minister of Culture in 2017 following the election of President Emmanuel Macron. Her mandate focused on strengthening cultural education, improving access to culture for young people, and consolidating cultural institutions within a broader context of administrative reform and modernisation of public action.

In 2018, Franck Riester succeeded her as Minister of Culture. His tenure was marked by structural reforms of public broadcasting and continued adaptation of cultural policy to digital transformation. Specific attention was given to the economic sustainability of the cultural and creative industries, as well as to the regulation of digital platforms, content distribution, and copyright frameworks, including at European level.

More broadly, under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron, several strategic priorities were progressively reinforced or introduced across this period. These included the expansion of arts and cultural education, intending to achieve “100% Éducation artistique et culturelle (EAC)”, and the generalisation of the *Pass Culture* scheme in 2021, aimed at improving young people's access to cultural goods and services.

Cultural policy also increasingly addressed the challenges and opportunities of the digital transition, including the regulation of online platforms and the adaptation of intellectual property regimes to the digital environment. In parallel, post-crisis recovery measures were implemented following the COVID-19 pandemic to support cultural actors, institutions and workers across the sector.

Finally, cultural policy under this period placed greater emphasis on territorial equity through strengthened partnerships with local authorities, as well as on environmental sustainability, which gradually emerged as a cross-cutting dimension of cultural governance.

Crisis, Recovery and Cultural Resilience (2020–2024)

Roselyne Bachelot, appointed Minister of Culture in 2020, took office in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a major impact on the cultural and creative sectors, particularly live performance, cinema and cultural venues. Her mandate was primarily focused on crisis management, with large-scale emergency support measures introduced to sustain cultural institutions, artists and cultural workers during successive closures and periods of reduced activity. These measures played a central role in stabilising the sector and preserving its operational structures.

Rima Abdul Malak, who succeeded her in 2022, oversaw the transition from emergency support to recovery policies. Her mandate emphasised the rebuilding of cultural participation, the strengthening of cultural diversity, and the consolidation of employment conditions in the cultural and creative industries. Close attention was given to the sustainability of the performing arts sector, the protection of artistic freedom, and the continued transformation of cultural production and distribution in a digital environment. Territorial equity and support for local cultural ecosystems remained key policy objectives throughout this phase.

Continuity, Structuring and Ongoing Transformations (2024–2026)

Rachida Dati, appointed Minister of Culture in 2024, led a phase characterised by continuity in relation to the main orientations defined in previous mandates. Her policy priorities included access to culture, support for cultural institutions, and the adaptation of cultural governance to ongoing social, economic and technological transformations.

During her mandate, cultural policy continued to develop along several structural lines established under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron. These included the generalisation of arts and cultural education under the objective of “100% Éducation artistique et culturelle (EAC)”, the consolidation of the *Pass Culture* scheme (generalised in 2021), and the reinforcement of digital regulation, including copyright frameworks at European level and the governance of online platforms.

Environmental sustainability also became increasingly integrated as a cross-cutting dimension of cultural policy, alongside strengthened cooperation with local authorities and renewed attention to territorial equity. This latter objective was reflected in the launch of the *Culture and Rurality Plan* (*Plan Culture et Ruralité*), aimed at improving access to culture in rural areas through support for local cultural facilities, artistic initiatives and partnerships. Continued attention was also paid to the budgetary constraints affecting cultural institutions.

Overall, this phase is characterised by the consolidation and operationalisation of existing policy frameworks rather than major structural reform.

In 2026, Rachida Dati left government to pursue a candidacy for the Paris municipal elections. She was succeeded as Minister of Culture by Catherine Pégard, marking a new phase in the organisation of cultural policy under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron.

Key features & main objectives of the French cultural policy model (2026)
The French cultural policy model is characterised by: • A strong role of the state in cultural regulation, funding, and strategic orientation, ensuring national cohesion and cultural sovereignty; • A multi-level governance system involving the state, decentralised services (DRACs), and local and regional authorities in shared cultural competences; • A partnership-based territorial model, in which cultural policy is implemented through cooperation between State services, local authorities, the extensive not-for-profit cultural sector, and other cultural actors; • A decentralised cultural administration, with DRACs ensuring implementation of national priorities at regional level; • A cross-sectoral approach, linking cultural policy with education, territorial development, social cohesion and economic development, and relying on the involvement of ministries beyond the Ministry of Culture through interministerial coordination and partnerships; • A balanced model between democratisation and cultural participation, aiming both at access to culture and active engagement in cultural practices.
The main objectives of French cultural policy include: • Expanding access to culture and reducing inequalities in cultural participation across territories; • Supporting artistic creation across all disciplines (performing arts, visual arts, cinema, digital creation); • Preserving, protecting and promoting cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible • Strengthening Arts and Cultural Education (EAC) through a national goal of “100% EAC” for young people; • Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, including the protection of regional languages and the promotion of cultural diversity at international level, in line with UNESCO conventions; • Regulating cultural and digital industries to ensure pluralism, fair remuneration of creators, and cultural sovereignty in the digital age.

1.2 Domestic governance system

France has a highly structured and multi-level system of cultural governance, combining strong state involvement with increasing responsibilities for local and regional authorities. The Ministry of Culture plays a central role in defining national cultural priorities, regulating the sector and coordinating public funding.

Its organisational structure consists of a central administration supported by decentralised and specialised bodies, including the Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs – Directions régionales des affaires culturelles), public institutions (EPs – établissements publics), and national public services (SCNs – services à compétence nationale). The DRACs represent the Ministry throughout the country and ensure the implementation of national cultural policies at regional level, in cooperation with local authorities and cultural stakeholders.

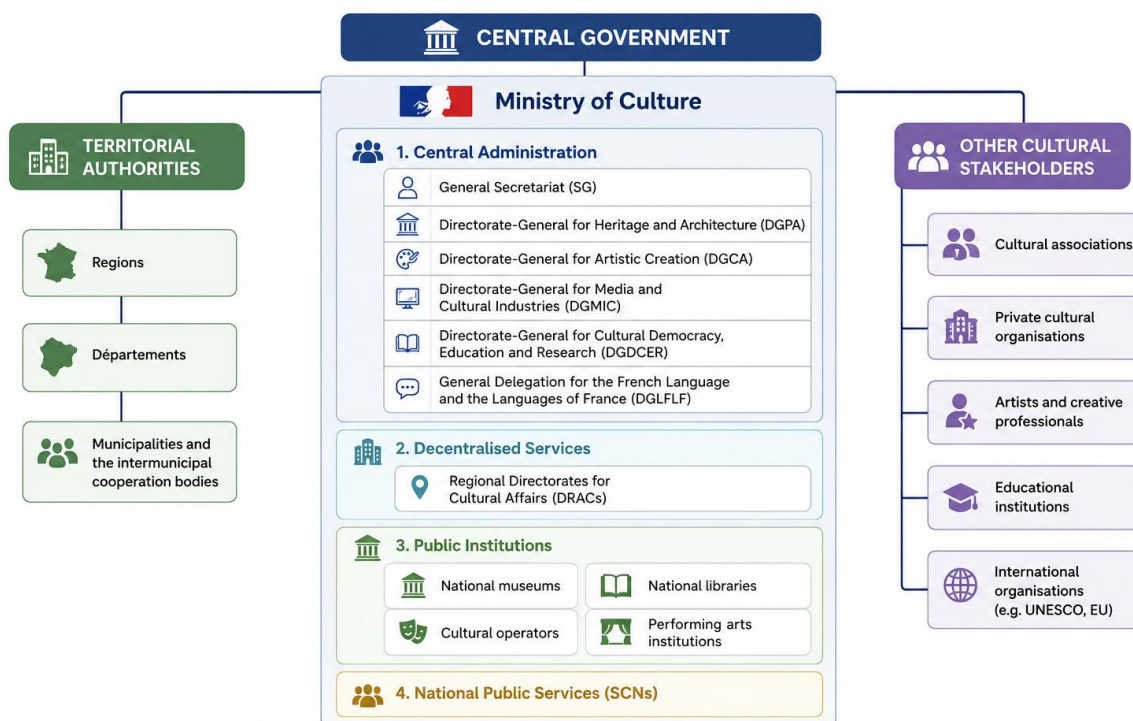
Since the decentralisation reforms introduced in the 1980s, municipalities, départements and regions have become major actors in the cultural field. They are responsible for a substantial share of public cultural expenditure and play an essential role in supporting cultural facilities, heritage, artistic creation and cultural education.

French cultural governance is therefore based on cooperation between central government and territorial authorities, often through contractual agreements and co-financing arrangements. This multi-level approach seeks to balance national cultural objectives with local cultural development and territorial diversity. The involvement of multiple public funders, frequently alongside private partners, not only spreads the financial burden of cultural provision but is also widely regarded as helping to safeguard the autonomy of cultural organisations by preventing excessive dependence on any single public authority.

1.2.1 Organisational organigram

The organisational structure of the Ministry of Culture comprises a central administration and relies on three types of decentralised bodies and services to carry out its activities: the Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs), public institutions (EPs), and national public services (SCNs). It can be found updated on the [French Ministry of Culture – Organisation du ministère](#) webpage.

French Cultural Governance System



This governance system is based on cooperation between central government and territorial authorities. While the Ministry of Culture defines the priorities and regulatory framework for State cultural policy, regional and local authorities develop and implement their own cultural policies at the territorial level. The DRACs act as the main intermediary between the Ministry of Culture and local cultural stakeholders.

1.2.2 National authorities

The first article of the French Constitution states that “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic (...) It shall be organised on a decentralised basis.” (Article 1 of the French Constitution of 4 October 1958 as amended by Constitutional Law no. 2008-724 of 23 July 2008). Within this framework, the state retains a major role in the definition, regulation and funding of cultural policies.

The President of the Republic is the head of state and is elected for a five-year term by direct universal suffrage. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who is responsible for forming the government and for defining and implementing national policies. These policies are submitted to Parliament, which represents the people and is composed of two houses: the National Assembly and the Senate.

At national level, cultural governance is primarily coordinated by the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for preparing and implementing government policy in the fields of heritage, artistic creation, media, cultural industries and cultural transmission.

The Minister of Culture defines the main strategic priorities of national cultural policy and supervises the allocation of State funding through the Ministry's budget, which is voted annually by Parliament. The Ministry operates through a central administration composed of several directorates-general dedicated to heritage and architecture, artistic creation, media and cultural industries, as well as cultural democracy and arts education.

Other ministries also contribute to cultural policy within their respective fields of competence. The Ministry of National Education plays a key role in arts and cultural education; the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs supports the international promotion of French culture and cultural diplomacy; while other ministries contribute to heritage conservation, scientific culture and creative industries.

National cultural policies are implemented through a network of decentralised services and public institutions. The Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs) represent the Ministry of Culture throughout the country and ensure coordination between the State and territorial authorities. Public cultural institutions — including national museums, libraries, theatres and opera houses — also play a major role in the implementation of national cultural strategies.

1.2.3 Regional authorities

Since the decentralisation reforms initiated in the early 1980s by the French government under President François Mitterrand (1916–1996) and Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy (1928–2013), notably through the Defferre Acts of 1982–1983 led by Interior Minister Gaston Defferre (1910–1986), regional authorities have become major actors in the governance of culture in France. This so-called “Act I” of decentralisation was implemented primarily through Law no. 82-213 of 2 March 1982 on the rights and freedoms of communes, departments and regions, complemented by Law no. 83-8 of 7 January 1983 on the distribution of competences between the State and local authorities. It marked a major turning point in the organisation of the French state by abolishing prefectural tutelage over local authorities, establishing the region as a full territorial collectivity, and transferring significant competences—particularly in education, transport, and social action—to communes, departments and regions. These reforms strengthened the autonomy of elected local and regional councils and redefined the balance of power between the State and subnational levels of government.

The country is now divided into regions governed by directly elected regional councils, which exercise autonomous powers within the framework established by national law. While the state retains responsibility for defining overall cultural policy and ensuring national cohesion, regional authorities have progressively gained greater capacity to design and implement their own cultural strategies.

Regional authorities are responsible for defining and implementing their own cultural policies, often in partnership with the state and local authorities. Their interventions generally focus on regional cultural development, support for artistic creation, cultural infrastructure, vocational training in the cultural sector, and territorial accessibility to culture. Regions also play an increasing role in supporting the creative and cultural industries and in coordinating large-scale cultural projects at territorial level.

Cooperation between the state and regional authorities is largely organised through contractual agreements and co-financing arrangements. The Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs) act as the main interlocutors of regional councils in the implementation of shared cultural priorities.

Regional authorities have also established specialised cultural agencies and networks in areas such as performing arts, cinema, heritage and cultural observation. These bodies contribute to the coordination of cultural actors and the development of regional cultural strategies.

1.2.4 Local authorities

Local authorities — including départements and municipalities — occupy a central place in the French cultural governance system and account for a substantial share of public cultural expenditure. ([Vie publique – Local authorities in France](#)) Municipalities have historically played a leading role in the management of cultural facilities and in the organisation of local cultural life.

Municipal councils, led by mayors, are responsible for a wide range of cultural services, including public libraries, museums, conservatoires, theatres, festivals, and local heritage sites. They also provide direct support to cultural associations and community-based cultural initiatives. Large cities frequently operate extensive cultural networks and institutions, making them key actors in cultural accessibility and participation.

Départements, governed by elected departmental councils, mainly intervene in the fields of social welfare, territorial solidarity, and cultural services such as heritage preservation, public reading networks, and archives. They also support cultural education and local artistic initiatives, particularly in rural and less densely populated areas.

Local and regional authorities cooperate closely with the State through decentralised cultural governance mechanisms, based on partnership agreements, joint funding schemes, and shared cultural programmes implemented with the support of the Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs). ([Ministry of Culture – Organisation of cultural administration](#))

Territorial authorities are also represented through national associations, such as the Fédération nationale des collectivités territoriales pour la culture (FNCC), which promotes dialogue and cooperation between local authorities involved in cultural policy.

1.2.5 Main non-governmental actors

Alongside public authorities, French cultural governance relies on a wide ecosystem of non-governmental actors, often grouped under the broader notion of civil society, which plays a growing role in cultural production, mediation and territorial development.

A first major component is the associative and non-profit sector, which is particularly strong in France due to a long tradition of civic engagement in cultural life. Cultural associations operate across a wide range of fields, including performing arts, heritage, local cultural initiatives and cultural education. They often act as key intermediaries between public policy and citizens and receive significant public funding from the State and local authorities through subsidies and co-financing mechanisms.

A second important group consists of private cultural and creative industries, including publishing, audiovisual production, music, digital platforms and gaming. While operating within market logics, these actors are highly regulated by public policy instruments designed to preserve cultural diversity and ensure fair access to cultural distribution. They also benefit from targeted public support schemes and fiscal incentives.

A third category includes artists and cultural professionals, who are central to the cultural ecosystem. In France, many of them benefit from the specific status of [intermittents du spectacle](#), a distinctive employment and social security regime designed for professionals in the performing arts, audiovisual and film industries whose work is characterised by short, discontinuous contracts. This system, governed by unemployment insurance rules (notably Annexes VIII and X to the unemployment insurance regulations), allows eligible workers who complete the required number of qualifying hours over a twelve-month reference period to receive income support between contracts, thereby ensuring a degree of financial continuity despite the inherently intermittent nature of their employment. It plays a key role in sustaining artistic production and creative activity, while recognising the structural instability of cultural labour markets. This social protection framework is complemented by the system of collective rights management, through which collective management organisations collect

and distribute royalties arising from the exploitation of copyright and related rights (see Section 7.2.4).

Professional organisations and trade unions are also essential in structuring dialogue with public authorities and in negotiating the conditions of this regime, particularly in relation to unemployment insurance reforms and sectoral regulations.

In recent years, the role of civil society initiatives and hybrid cultural spaces has expanded significantly. Among these, third places (tiers-lieux) have emerged as important cultural and social infrastructures. Often located in former industrial or underused spaces, they combine artistic creation, cultural mediation, digital innovation and community activities. They reflect a broader shift towards participatory and locally rooted cultural practices and are supported by public policies at territorial levels.

Finally, foundations, private sponsors and philanthropic actors contribute to cultural funding, particularly in heritage preservation and major cultural projects. Although their financial weight remains secondary compared to public funding, their role has grown in specific sectors, especially contemporary creation and heritage conservation.

Overall, non-governmental actors form a dynamic and diversified ecosystem, where civil society plays an increasingly structuring role alongside market actors and public institutions, contributing to the pluralism and territorial anchoring of French cultural life.

1.2.6 Transversal co-operation

French cultural governance is characterised by a high degree of transversal co-operation between ministries, levels of government and public agencies. This inter-institutional approach is rooted in the principle that cultural policy is not the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, but a shared field of action involving multiple public actors and policy sectors.

At national level, several ministries contribute directly to cultural development. The Ministry of National Education plays a central role in arts and cultural education, jointly defining curricula and funding school-based cultural activities with the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is responsible for cultural diplomacy and the international promotion of French culture, working closely with the Institut français, the main operator of France's external cultural policy. The Institut français operates as a key implementing agency for both the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture in the conduct of France's international cultural policy. Its missions include supporting and coordinating the French cultural network abroad; assisting French artists and cultural and creative industries in their international development; fostering dialogue between cultures and societies; and promoting the French language and multilingualism.

Other ministries also intervene in specific cultural domains, including the Ministry of Health through hospital-based cultural initiatives, the Ministry of Justice through cultural programmes in prisons, the Ministry of Agriculture through socio-cultural education in agricultural schools, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research through scientific culture and research partnerships. These collaborations are formalised through interministerial agreements that are regularly updated and implemented at territorial level through decentralised services, notably the Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs) and educational rectorates.

A particularly structured area of transversal co-operation concerns arts and cultural education (Éducation artistique et culturelle – EAC), jointly coordinated by the Ministries of Culture and National Education. This long-standing partnership has led to the development of shared programmes, co-funding mechanisms and national strategies aimed at widening access to culture for children and young people throughout the country.

Institutional cooperation in this field was strengthened with the creation of the Haut Conseil de l'éducation artistique et culturelle (HCEAC) in 2005, jointly chaired by the Ministers of Culture and Education. The Council contributed to defining national orientations in the field of cultural education and promotes cooperation between the state, territorial authorities and cultural actors. The council has now been transformed in a Interministériel delegation for artistic and cultural education, since 2025.

In recent years, this cooperation has been reinforced through the national objective of “[100% EAC](#)”, which aims to ensure that every young person benefits from a coherent artistic and cultural pathway throughout their education. This policy combines school-based activities, encounters with artists and cultural institutions, and opportunities for individual artistic practice. It is implemented through close collaboration between schools, DRACs, local authorities, associations and cultural institutions.

The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of National Education also jointly support schemes such as [Pass Culture](#), generalised in 2021, which seeks to encourage young people's participation in cultural life by facilitating access to cultural activities and institutions (see chapter 5.1). More broadly, arts and cultural education has become a key instrument for promoting cultural democratisation, social inclusion and territorial equality.

Transversal co-operation also extends to territorial authorities through a dense network of contractual arrangements between the state and regions, départements and municipalities. These include cultural development agreements, joint funding schemes and long-term planning instruments such as State-region project contracts. Dedicated co-financing mechanisms complete this shared governance model, like the Regional Funds for Museum Acquisitions (Fonds régionaux d'acquisition des musées – FRAM) and the Regional Funds for

Library Acquisitions (Fonds régionaux d'acquisition pour les bibliothèques – FRAB), as well as Regional Contemporary Art Funds (FRAC). In most regions [FRAC are linked to specific venues](#) where the collections are exhibited an open to the public.

Since the 1990s, this cooperative approach has been reinforced through institutional coordination bodies such as the Council for Territorial Cultural Development (CCTDC), as well as through more flexible instruments including “cultural pacts” and integrated territorial contracts. More recently, the development of intermunicipal structures (EPCI) and cooperative cultural public institutions (EPCC) has further strengthened multi-level governance by enabling the joint management of major cultural institutions and facilities.

Overall, transversal co-operation in France reflects a multi-level and partnership-based model of cultural governance, combining strong national leadership with increasingly structured collaboration between ministries, territorial authorities and cultural actors, as well as shared responsibility for funding, implementation and cultural development.

1.3 Cultural institutions

1.3.1 Overview of cultural institutions

The French cultural policy model is characterised by a dense network of public cultural institutions supported by a strong tradition of state intervention and multi-level governance. Cultural infrastructure in France is based on a partnership system involving the state, territorial authorities and, increasingly, autonomous public institutions operating under contractual arrangements and co-financing mechanisms.

The Ministry of Culture remains the principal authority responsible for defining national cultural priorities and supervising major cultural institutions. However, since the decentralisation reforms initiated in the 1980s, (see chapter 1.2) local and regional authorities have assumed an increasingly important role in the funding, management and development of cultural infrastructure throughout the country. Municipalities, départements and regions now contribute significantly to the operation of museums, libraries, theatres, conservatoires, festivals and heritage institutions.

French cultural institutions cover a wide range of sectors, including museums, libraries, archives, theatres, opera houses, concert halls, cinemas, cultural centres, heritage sites and arts education institutions. Many of the largest national institutions are concentrated in the Paris region for historical reasons, including the [Musée du Louvre](#), the [Centre Pompidou](#), the [Musée d'Orsay](#) and the [Château de Versailles](#), as well as the [Palais de la découverte](#) et la [Cité des sciences et de l'industrie](#).

Since the 2000s, public authorities have sought to rebalance cultural provision territorially through the decentralisation of major institutions and the development of regional cultural hubs. Examples include the [Louvre-Lens](#), the [Centre Pompidou-Metz](#) and the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations ([Mucem](#)), which aim both to strengthen territorial attractiveness and widen public access to culture. Some institutions have also developed an international presence, notably through projects such as the [Louvre Abu Dhabi](#), Inaugurated on 8 November 2017.

Another important feature of the French system is the extensive use of [cultural labels awarded by the Ministry of Culture and territorial authorities](#). These labels structure the cultural landscape and recognise institutions or territories meeting specific artistic, heritage or cultural criteria. They include labels such as “Musées de France”, “Villes et Pays d’art et d’histoire”, “Maisons des Illustres”, “Scènes nationales”, “Centres dramatiques nationaux”, “Jardins remarquables”, “Centre nationaux d’art contemporain”. Beyond their symbolic value, these labels often facilitate public visibility, professional recognition, and access to funding schemes.

In recent years, cultural institutions have also been increasingly encouraged to diversify their funding sources, strengthen audience development policies and address contemporary challenges such as digital transformation, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Public funding remains central, but institutions operate with growing managerial autonomy through multiannual objectives and performance agreements concluded with public authorities.

The French cultural infrastructure system therefore reflects a hybrid model combining strong public responsibility, territorial cooperation and increasing institutional autonomy within a highly structured national framework.

1.3.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

In recent years, the Ministry of Culture has considerably strengthened its territorial observation tools relating to cultural infrastructure. The former Communal Statistical Database on Cultural Facilities has progressively evolved into the “[Base des lieux et équipements culturels](#)” (BASILIC), a geocoded national database managed by the Department for Studies, Foresight, Statistics and Documentation (DEPS). Updated regularly and available in open data format, the database now references more than 73,500 cultural sites, facilities and institutions across France. It covers a wide range of cultural domains, including heritage sites, museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas, conservatoires, contemporary art centres, bookshops, cultural labels and UNESCO sites.

BASILIC also feeds the “[Atlas Culture des territoires](#)”, a digital mapping and data visualisation platform launched by the Ministry of Culture in 2022. The Atlas combines cultural, socio-economic and demographic indicators in order to analyse territorial disparities in access to

culture, cultural employment, public expenditure, and cultural infrastructure. It has become an important policy instrument for territorial cultural planning and evidence-based cultural governance.

The database and the Atlas illustrate the growing importance of data-driven cultural governance in France, particularly in relation to territorial equality, cultural accessibility and the evaluation of public cultural policies.

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Public sector		Private sector	
		Number (year)	Trend last 5 years (In %)	Number (year)	Trend last 5 years (In %)
Cultural heritage	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)	c. 45,000 protected historic monuments (2025)	+3%	c. 1,500 privately managed heritage sites open to the public (2025)	+8%
	Archaeological sites	c. 7,000 protected archaeological sites (2025)	Stable	Limited number of private archaeological parks (<50)	Stable
Museums	Museum institutions	1,220 Musées de France (2025)	Stable	c. 350 private museums and foundations (2025)	+15%
Archives	Archive institutions	104 departmental archives, 18 regional archives, 3 National Archives network (2025)	Stable	c. 150 private archival and heritage foundations	+10%
Visual arts	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	c. 90 public contemporary art institutions (FRAC, art centres, CNAP network) (2025)	+5%	c. 2,200 commercial art galleries (2025)	+12%
Performing arts	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre	c. 250 publicly funded theatres (national, regional and municipal) (2025)	Stable	c. 1,800 private theatres and venues	+5%

	Concert houses	c. 120 publicly funded concert halls and auditoriums (2025)	+8%	c. 500 private music venues	+10%
	Theatre companies	c. 1,500 publicly subsidised companies (2025)	Stable	c. 4,000 independent companies	+8%
	Dance and ballet companies	c. 300 publicly funded companies and centres (2025)	Stable	c. 1,000 independent companies	+10%
	Symphonic orchestras	32 publicly funded orchestras (2025)	Stable	c. 25 private/professional orchestras	+5%
Libraries	Libraries	c. 15,500 public libraries and media libraries (2025)	+3%	c. 500 private and specialised libraries	Stable
Audiovisual	Cinemas	c. 2,100 cinema establishments (publicly owned or municipally supported) (2025)	+2%	c. 4,000 privately operated cinema screens (2025)	+5%
	Broadcasting organisations	7 major public broadcasting entities (France Télévisions, Radio France, Arte France, France Médias Monde, INA, TV5 Monde participation, etc.)	Stable	c. 1,000 licensed private broadcasters and audiovisual media companies	+15%
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres	c. 2,000 socio-cultural centres and MJC (2025)	+5%	c. 1,500 independent cultural centres and associations	+10%
Other		c. 120 public higher education institutions in arts, heritage and culture (2025)	Stable	c. 250 private arts and cultural schools	+15%

Source(s): [French Ministry of Culture; Department for Studies, Foresight, Statistics and Documentation \(DEPS\); ABES – French Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education; UNESCO World Heritage Centre; UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Section; ONISEP – National Office for Information on Education and Professions; Art + University + Culture Association \(A+U+C\).](#)

Notes: Private-sector figures are often estimates based on professional directories and sectoral databases (e.g. galleries, foundations, theatres, schools, and other cultural organisations). Trends are expressed as approximate changes over the 2020–2025 period and are intended to reflect overall sector dynamics rather than precise statistical variations.

1.3.3 Public cultural institutions: trends and strategies

Public cultural institutions in France operate within a highly diversified cultural ecosystem and legal framework, reflecting the hybrid nature of the French cultural model, which combines strong public intervention with a dynamic non-profit sector and an increasingly diversified private cultural economy. Cultural organisations may adopt different legal forms depending on their missions, governance structures and funding models.

A significant part of the French cultural ecosystem is organised through the non-profit associative model (*association loi 1901*), a legal framework established by the [Law of 1 July 1901 on freedom of association](#). This status allows individuals to create non-profit organisations dedicated to activities of general interest and has become a cornerstone of French cultural life. Tens of thousands of cultural associations operate across the country, contributing to artistic creation, cultural participation, social cohesion and local development.

Cultural associations are active in a wide range of fields, including performing arts, music, dance, visual arts, cultural heritage, amateur artistic practices, cultural education, festivals, community arts and intercultural dialogue. They play a key role in ensuring access to culture throughout the territory, particularly in rural and underserved areas, often working in partnership with local authorities and public cultural institutions.

The associative sector also constitutes an important source of employment and volunteering within the cultural and creative sectors. Many cultural events, festivals and local cultural venues rely on the involvement of associations and volunteers for their organisation and operation.

Alongside associations, foundations and philanthropic organisations have expanded significantly in recent years, encouraged by favourable legislation on patronage and charitable giving. These entities play an increasingly important role in supporting cultural heritage preservation, museum projects, artistic creation, cultural innovation and the development of contemporary arts. Corporate foundations and private donors have become important partners for public cultural institutions, contributing to the diversification of funding sources and the implementation of large-scale cultural projects.

In the commercial sector, cultural institutions and creative enterprises may operate under a variety of legal forms, including limited liability companies (*SARL*), public limited companies (*SA*), cooperative enterprises (*SCOP* and *SCIC*) and mixed-economy companies. These structures are particularly present in the audiovisual, publishing, live entertainment and broader cultural and creative industries sectors.

Public cultural institutions themselves may operate under several governance models, ranging from direct municipal management to autonomous public bodies (*établissements publics*). Since the 2000s, there has been a broader trend towards increasing institutional autonomy through contractual governance mechanisms linking public funding to strategic objectives and performance indicators. Major national institutions such as Musée du Louvre, Centre Pompidou and Palace of Versailles operate under multiannual objectives and performance agreements negotiated with the Ministry of Culture.

Another major trend concerns the territorialisation of cultural governance. Since the decentralisation reforms initiated in the 1980s, regions, departments, municipalities and intermunicipal bodies have played an increasingly important role in funding and managing cultural institutions (see chapter 1.2). Partnerships and co-financing arrangements between the State and territorial authorities have become the dominant governance model for many theatres, museums, orchestras, libraries and cultural centres.

The creation of Cooperative Public Cultural Institutions (*Établissements publics de coopération culturelle* – EPCC) in 2002 further reinforced this partnership-based approach. EPCCs enable different public authorities — including the State, regions, departments and municipalities — to jointly finance and manage cultural institutions. This model reflects the broader evolution towards multi-level governance and shared cultural responsibility.

In recent years, public cultural institutions have also adapted to new strategic priorities, including digital transformation, audience diversification, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Many institutions have strengthened digital access to collections and programmes, developed participatory cultural initiatives and implemented ecological transition strategies in response to evolving public policies and societal expectations.

At the same time, hybrid and interdisciplinary cultural spaces — including *third places* (*tiers-lieux*) — have expanded considerably, often supported through partnerships between public authorities, associations and private actors. These spaces combine cultural, educational, social and digital functions and illustrate the growing importance of participatory and territorially rooted approaches in contemporary French cultural policy.

Overall, recent developments highlight a gradual transformation of French cultural governance from highly centralised administrative structures towards more autonomous, network-based and partnership-oriented models. While public authorities continue to play a central role in financing, regulating and supporting cultural activities, the growing involvement of associations, foundations, territorial authorities and private actors reflects an increasingly collaborative and diversified cultural ecosystem.

1.4 International cooperation

International cultural cooperation constitutes a major dimension of French cultural policy and external action. In a context marked by globalisation, digital transformation and growing geopolitical competition in the cultural field, France continues to rely on culture as a strategic instrument of international influence, dialogue and cooperation. French international cultural policy combines the promotion of French language and culture abroad with broader objectives related to intercultural dialogue, artistic mobility, cultural diversity, support for cultural and creative industries, and multilateral cooperation.

This policy is based on a long-standing partnership between the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs oversees France's cultural and educational network abroad, while the Ministry of Culture contributes expertise in artistic creation, heritage, cultural industries and professional cooperation. Coordination is ensured through dedicated departments for European and international affairs, as well as through joint programmes and bilateral agreements.

France maintains one of the largest cultural networks in the world. This network relies principally on the Institut français, (see chapter 1.4) created in 2011 to reinforce the coherence and visibility of French cultural diplomacy, and on the Alliance Française network, dedicated to the promotion of French language and Francophone cultures. Together with French embassies, cultural institutes, research centres and educational institutions abroad, these organisations support artistic exchanges, cultural programming, language teaching, professional mobility and intellectual debate across all regions of the world.

International cultural cooperation is also closely linked to educational, scientific and academic diplomacy. France supports a large network of French schools abroad coordinated by the Agency for French Education Abroad (AEFE), as well as higher education partnerships and international research cooperation. Institutions such as Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi illustrate the role played by French higher education in the country's cultural influence strategy.

At multilateral level, France remains strongly engaged within major international organisations concerned with culture and heritage. As host country of UNESCO, France plays an active role in debates relating to cultural diversity, heritage protection, artistic freedom and cultural rights. France was among the principal advocates of the [2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#), which continues to constitute a central reference for French cultural diplomacy and for the defense of public cultural policies internationally.

European cooperation also occupies a central place in French international cultural policy. France actively participates in the cultural programmes and initiatives of the European Union and supports the development of European cultural cooperation, mobility schemes and audiovisual regulation. French authorities have consistently defended the principle of “cultural exception” within European and international trade negotiations in order to preserve public support mechanisms for culture and media. France also contributes actively to the European Union National Institutes for Culture network, which strengthens cooperation between European cultural institutes worldwide.

The Francophone dimension remains another key pillar of French international cultural action. France plays a leading role within the [Organisation internationale de la Francophonie \(OIF\)](#), which promotes the French language, cultural diversity, educational cooperation and cultural industries among Francophone countries. In recent years, French authorities have increasingly emphasised the demographic, geopolitical and economic importance of Francophonie, particularly in Africa, where the number of French speakers is expected to continue growing significantly in the coming decades. This renewed emphasis has also been reflected in national initiatives such as the opening of the International City of the French Language ([Cité internationale de la langue française](#)) at Villers-Cotterêts in 2023, a flagship project intended to promote the French language and its contemporary role worldwide.

French cultural institutions themselves contribute actively to international cooperation through touring exhibitions, co-productions, artist residencies, festival partnerships and professional exchanges. Major institutions such as Musée du Louvre, Centre Pompidou and the Festival de Cannes play an important role in France’s international cultural visibility and attractiveness. France also continues to organise large-scale bilateral “cultural seasons”, which promote artistic exchange and cultural dialogue with partner countries through multidisciplinary programming across both territories.

Territorial authorities increasingly contribute to international cultural cooperation through decentralised cooperation agreements, city-twinning initiatives, cross-border projects and European cooperation programmes. Regions and municipalities support international artistic mobility and cultural partnerships as part of their own territorial development and attractiveness strategies.

In recent years, French international cultural policy has also integrated new priorities linked to ecological transition, digital technologies and post-pandemic transformations. Greater attention has been devoted to sustainable mobility for artists and cultural professionals, digital dissemination of cultural content, online cooperation formats, the protection of copyright in the digital environment, and support for the international circulation of French cultural and creative industries, notably in cinema, audiovisual production, publishing, music, video games and digital creation.

Overall, French international cultural cooperation is based on a broad ecosystem combining diplomatic action, cultural institutions, educational cooperation, multilateral engagement and territorial partnerships. Its implementation relies on a diversified network of public operators and specialised agencies, which together support the international circulation of culture, knowledge and creative industries.

Main features of French international cultural cooperation
• Culture remains a strategic component of France's external action, serving objectives of international influence, intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and support for creative industries. • French international cultural cooperation relies on a strong institutional framework, notably the partnership between the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. • France benefits from one of the world's largest cultural networks abroad, through the Institut français, the Alliance Française network, embassies, cultural institutes, schools and research centres. • Multilateral engagement remains a cornerstone of French cultural diplomacy, particularly through UNESCO, the promotion of cultural diversity and the defence of public cultural policies. • European cooperation plays a central role, with active participation in EU cultural programmes, support for cultural mobility and continued advocacy for the principle of cultural exception. • The Francophone dimension constitutes a major priority, with growing attention to the cultural, demographic and economic potential of Francophone countries, especially in Africa. • Cultural institutions themselves are major actors of international cooperation, through exhibitions, co-productions, residencies, festivals, professional exchanges and bilateral cultural seasons. • Territorial authorities increasingly contribute to cultural diplomacy, notably through decentralised cooperation, city partnerships, European projects and support for artistic mobility. • New priorities are reshaping international cultural cooperation, including digital transformation, ecological transition, sustainable mobility and the international development of cultural and creative industries. • Overall, the French model combines strong state leadership with multilevel and multi-actor cooperation, bringing together public institutions, cultural organisations, educational actors, local authorities and international partners.

1.4.1 Public actors and cultural diplomacy

French international cultural cooperation is implemented through a dense and diversified institutional framework bringing together diplomatic services, specialised public operators, cultural institutions, educational agencies and territorial authorities. The system is coordinated primarily by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, and reflects the long-standing integration of culture into France's external action and international influence strategy.

At governmental level, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is responsible for the overall coordination of cultural diplomacy through its Directorate-General for Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development. The Ministry of Culture contributes expertise and policy guidance in areas such as artistic creation, cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, professional cooperation and cultural rights. Together, the two ministries define strategic priorities and oversee the implementation of international cultural programmes.

The principal operator of French cultural diplomacy is the [Institut français](#), which coordinates the network of around 100 French institutes worldwide. This public institution was established in its current form in 2011, but the development of the French international cultural network dates back from the beginning of the XXe century when the first institute abroad was settled in Florence in 1907. Operating in close cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture and with the French Embassies, the Institut français supports artistic mobility, cultural programming, intellectual debate, language promotion, professional exchanges and international cooperation projects. It also coordinates major bilateral cultural seasons and thematic programmes implemented in partnership with foreign cultural institutions and local authorities.

The Institut français and institutes abroad work in close cooperation with the [Alliance Française](#) network, which constitutes one of the world's largest linguistic and cultural networks. Coordinated by the Alliance Française Foundation, created in 1883, it brings together more than 800 locally governed bodies in over 130 countries. While legally autonomous, Alliance françaises contribute significantly to the teaching of French and the promotion of Francophone cultures through language courses, cultural events and local partnerships.

Educational and academic cooperation is supported by several specialised agencies. The Agency for French Education Abroad ([AEFE](#)) manages a global network of French schools educating more than 390,000 students worldwide and plays a key role in promoting French language and educational standards abroad. Campus France is responsible for promoting French higher education internationally and facilitating the mobility of students, researchers and academics. Together, these institutions contribute to France's educational diplomacy and international attractiveness.

Research and scientific cooperation are supported through a network of around 30 French Research Institutes Abroad ([IFRE](#)), more than 160 French archaeological missions operating worldwide, and specialised institutions operating in various regions of the world. Historic institutions such as the [Académie de France à Rome – Villa Médicis](#), the [Casa de Velázquez](#) in Madrid and the [École française d'Athènes](#) combine artistic, academic and cultural cooperation through residency programmes, research projects and professional exchanges ([Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, French archaeological missions abroad: supporting research and heritage protection, updated 2026](#)).

Several specialised organisations support the international development of French cultural and creative industries. Unifrance promotes French cinema and audiovisual production abroad, working closely with the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée ([CNC](#)). The Bureau international de l'édition française (BIEF) supports the international circulation of French books and publishing professionals, while the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#)) contributes to the export and international development of the French music sector.

French cultural institutions themselves are important actors of international cooperation. Major institutions such as the [Louvre Museum](#), the [Centre Pompidou](#), the [Château de Versailles](#), the National Library of France ([BNF](#))NF and leading festivals regularly develop international partnerships through touring exhibitions, co-productions, artist residencies, training programmes and professional exchanges. Their international activities are complemented by organisations such as [France Muséums](#), which specialises in museum cooperation and cultural engineering for major international projects.

Territorial authorities also play an increasingly important role in international cultural cooperation. Regions, departments, municipalities and intermunicipal structures support cultural partnerships through decentralised cooperation agreements, city-twinning initiatives, cross-border projects and European cooperation programmes. These initiatives contribute to cultural exchange, artistic mobility and local attractiveness strategies.

Finally, several institutions located in France contribute to intercultural dialogue and the reception of foreign artists and cultural professionals. Organisations such as the Institut du monde arabe, the Cité internationale des arts and other residency structures facilitate international artistic exchange and reinforce France's role as a platform for cultural cooperation.

Overall, French international cultural cooperation relies on a multi-level and highly institutionalised ecosystem combining diplomatic action, cultural operators, educational and research institutions, territorial authorities and professional networks. This framework supports both the international dissemination of French culture and the development of long-term cultural partnerships based on reciprocity, mobility and dialogue.

Key features of the institutional framework

- Strong coordination between the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture.
- A global cultural network centred on the Institut français and the Alliance Française.
- Integrated educational and academic diplomacy through AEFÉ, Campus France and research institutes abroad.
- Dedicated operators supporting the international development of cultural and creative industries (Unifrance, BIEF, CNM, CNC).
- Growing involvement of cultural institutions and territorial authorities in international cooperation.
- A multi-level ecosystem combining diplomacy, culture, education, research and professional networks.

1.4.2 European / international actors and programmes

French international cultural cooperation is implemented through a broad range of European, multilateral and bilateral programmes supporting artistic mobility, heritage preservation, cultural diversity, professional exchanges and the international circulation of cultural and creative industries. Over the past decade, these programmes have increasingly integrated digital innovation, sustainability objectives and international co-production mechanisms.

European cultural programmes and cooperation frameworks

France actively participates in the cultural programmes and policy frameworks of the European Union and the Council of Europe. French cultural actors are among the main beneficiaries of the European Union's Creative Europe programme, which supports cooperation projects, audiovisual production, cultural networks, mobility schemes, literary translation and innovation in the cultural and creative sectors. French institutions also participate extensively in Horizon Europe research programmes relating to cultural heritage, digital transformation and creative industries.

France supports the development of European cultural mobility and co-production through a variety of cooperation frameworks, including the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), European museum and heritage networks, and partnerships involving theatres, festivals and cultural institutions. France also remains strongly engaged in European audiovisual cooperation through the MEDIA strand of Creative Europe and through Eurimages, the Council of Europe fund supporting cinema co-production and distribution.

In addition, France actively participates in initiatives promoting shared European heritage and intercultural dialogue, including the European Heritage Label, the European Heritage Days and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe as well as [Herein](#).

UNESCO and multilateral cooperation programmes

As host country of UNESCO, France maintains a strong commitment to international cultural governance and heritage cooperation. The France-UNESCO Cooperation Agreement supports projects relating to heritage preservation, museum development, safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and professional training in numerous partner countries, particularly in Africa and the Mediterranean region.

French expertise is regularly mobilised through international heritage cooperation programmes, archaeological missions, museum partnerships and training initiatives. France also contributes to emergency interventions for endangered heritage and actively supports the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which remains a key reference for French cultural diplomacy.

Programmes supporting cultural and creative industries

The international development of cultural and creative industries has become an increasingly important component of French cultural cooperation. A wide range of programmes support the international circulation of cinema, audiovisual production, music, publishing, video games, digital creation and immersive arts.

These initiatives facilitate translation, co-production, professional networking, participation in international markets and festivals, export development and access to foreign audiences. In recent years, greater attention has been devoted to digital dissemination and the international competitiveness of French cultural and creative industries.

Artistic mobility and residency programmes

Artist mobility remains a central instrument of French international cultural cooperation. France supports numerous residency schemes, exchange programmes and professional mobility initiatives for artists, researchers and cultural professionals.

Major residency programmes are implemented through institutions such as the Villa Medici in Rome, Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto and the Cité internationale des arts in Paris. Increasingly, residency schemes incorporate interdisciplinary approaches, digital creation, environmental sustainability and collaborative international projects.

Cultural seasons and bilateral programmes

Large-scale bilateral cultural seasons remain among the most visible instruments of French cultural diplomacy. Coordinated primarily by the Institut français in partnership with foreign governments and cultural institutions, these programmes combine artistic, educational, scientific and societal cooperation through multidisciplinary programming.

Since the late 1980s, France has organised more than fifty bilateral and “crossed” cultural seasons with partner countries across all continents. Recent examples include the France–Korea Year (2015–2016), the France–Colombia Year (2017), the France–Romania Season (2018–2019), Africa2020 (2020–2021), the France–Portugal Season (2022) and the France–Brazil Season (2025).

Recent cultural seasons increasingly extend beyond traditional artistic programming to include youth engagement, higher education, scientific cooperation, ecological transition, digital innovation, entrepreneurship and creative industries. They also favour reciprocal and co-constructed approaches aimed at fostering long-term partnerships and mutual visibility.

Decentralised and territorial cooperation programmes

French territorial authorities play an increasingly important role in international cultural cooperation through decentralised cooperation agreements, European cooperation projects and city-to-city partnerships. Regions, departments and municipalities support artistic exchanges, mobility programmes, heritage projects and cultural development initiatives with partner territories abroad.

Cross-border cooperation programmes financed by the European Union have further strengthened cultural collaboration between French border regions and neighbouring countries. International cultural cooperation is also increasingly integrated into local development, attractiveness and territorial diplomacy strategies.

Key trends in French international cultural cooperation
Recent developments in French international cultural cooperation highlight several major trends: • increasing support for artistic and professional mobility; • growing integration of digital technologies and online dissemination; • stronger emphasis on ecological transition and sustainable cultural cooperation; • expansion of international support for cultural and creative industries; • development of reciprocal and co-produced cooperation models; • greater involvement of territorial authorities and local cultural ecosystems.

Beyond these institutional programmes, a significant part of French international cultural cooperation is also driven by professional networks, foundations, universities, cultural associations and non-governmental organisations, which contribute directly to artistic exchange, professional mobility and long-term international partnerships.

1.4.3 NGO's and direct professional cooperation

Professional training and exchange programmes

Alongside institutional cooperation programmes, a significant share of French international cultural cooperation is driven by professional networks, non-governmental organisations, foundations, universities, cultural associations and direct partnerships between cultural practitioners. These forms of cooperation contribute to knowledge exchange, capacity building, artistic mobility and the development of long-term professional relationships beyond formal diplomatic frameworks.

France has developed a wide range of professional training, mobility and expertise-sharing schemes reflecting the continued international demand for French experience in cultural policy, heritage management, arts administration and cultural project development.

Among the most established programmes, [Courants du monde](#) remains a flagship initiative for hosting foreign cultural professionals in France. The programme combines training sessions, study visits, professional immersion and exchanges with French cultural institutions across a broad range of cultural sectors. Complementary schemes support expert missions, thematic workshops and short-term professional exchanges involving museums, libraries, archives, performing arts organisations and cultural administrations.

Longer-term immersion programmes, such as [Profession Culture](#), enable foreign professionals to spend several months within French cultural institutions, strengthening professional skills and fostering sustainable institutional partnerships. Digital technologies have further expanded access to training opportunities through online resources, hybrid learning formats, and virtual professional exchanges.

Mobility, residencies and professional networking

Artistic and professional mobility remains a central feature of French international cultural cooperation. Numerous residency programmes, mobility grants and exchange schemes support artists, curators, researchers and cultural managers working across borders.

Major residency frameworks include the [Cité internationale des arts in Paris](#), [Villa Medici](#) in Rome and [Villa Kujoyama](#) in Kyoto. More recently, [Villa Albertine](#) in the United States has developed an innovative residency model based on mobility across multiple cities and local cultural ecosystems. These programmes increasingly promote interdisciplinary approaches, collaborative practices, and long-term international partnerships.

Professional networking initiatives also facilitate exchanges between cultural practitioners through international showcases, conferences, festivals, curatorial exchanges and co-

production platforms. Such mechanisms play a crucial role in supporting the circulation of ideas, artistic innovation and professional cooperation.

Expertise sharing and capacity building

The international dissemination of French cultural expertise constitutes another important dimension of direct professional cooperation. French experts regularly participate in advisory missions, training programmes and institutional partnerships focusing on cultural governance, heritage conservation, museum management, archives, performing arts and cultural industries.

Programmes such as the *Rencontres Malraux* facilitate dialogue between cultural policymakers, heritage specialists and cultural institutions from different countries. Created by the French Ministry of Culture in 1994, the programme has organised more than 100 seminars in 58 countries, bringing together decision-makers, experts and cultural professionals to exchange experiences on cultural governance, heritage management, cultural industries and artistic creation.

Recent editions illustrate the programme's adaptation to contemporary cultural challenges. In May 2026, the [*Rencontres Malraux*](#) held in Mexico City brought together French and Mexican experts to discuss creative economy, living heritage, sustainability and cultural financing, with particular attention to the relationship between cultural diversity, economic development and intangible cultural heritage. The discussions explored issues such as support for crafts and traditional knowledge, cultural and creative industries, biocultural heritage and sustainable public policies, resulting in a roadmap for strengthening bilateral cultural cooperation.

Capacity-building initiatives are also frequently developed in partnership with UNESCO and other international organisations, particularly in Africa, the Mediterranean region and the wider Francophone space. These programmes support heritage preservation, museum development, professional training, cultural governance and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, while increasingly addressing emerging issues such as digital heritage, climate adaptation and post-crisis cultural recovery.

Professional networks and NGO cooperation

Non-governmental organisations and professional networks play an essential role in structuring international cultural cooperation and facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges. French cultural actors actively participate in numerous European and international platforms dedicated to artistic mobility, cultural policy dialogue, advocacy and professional development.

These include networks such as [IETM \(International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts\)](#), [Trans Europe Halles](#), [Culture Action Europe](#) and [ENCATC \(European Network on Cultural Management and Policy\)](#). Heritage professionals are also actively involved in international organisations such as [ICOM](#), [ICOMOS](#) and the [International Council on Archives \(ICA\)](#).

These networks contribute to knowledge sharing, professional training, project development and the promotion of cultural diversity and international cooperation. They also provide important opportunities for collaborative research, policy dialogue and the development of transnational cultural projects.

Foundations, civil society and hybrid partnerships

Foundations and civil society organisations have become increasingly important actors in international cultural cooperation. Through grants, mobility schemes, prizes, residencies and project funding, they complement public support mechanisms and facilitate experimentation, innovation and international collaboration. Recent examples include the activities of the [Fondation de France](#), which supports numerous international cultural and heritage projects, and the [Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso](#), which finances artistic cooperation, cultural participation and social innovation initiatives in France and abroad.

Public-private partnerships are particularly visible in the fields of heritage preservation, contemporary art and museum cooperation. The partnership between France and the Louvre Abu Dhabi remains one of the most significant examples of long-term international cultural cooperation involving public institutions, private expertise and intergovernmental agreements. Private foundations such as the [Fondation Bettencourt Schueller](#) and corporate philanthropy programmes also contribute to the international circulation of artists, restoration projects and cultural innovation. Collaborative initiatives involving cultural institutions, universities, foundations and civil society organisations have expanded considerably over the past decade, contributing to more diversified and flexible forms of international cooperation.

Territorial authorities also play an active role in direct professional cooperation through decentralised cooperation programmes and city-to-city partnerships. According to the French National Commission for Decentralised Cooperation (CNCD), more than 4,700 French local authorities are involved in international action, participating in approximately 12,000 decentralised cooperation projects and partnerships with local authorities in more than 130 countries. These initiatives support cultural exchanges, heritage projects, artist mobility and capacity-building activities, particularly in Europe, Africa and the Mediterranean region. Major cities have developed extensive international cultural cooperation programmes linked to urban development, festivals, museums and creative industries. Territorial authorities

also support direct professional cooperation through European cooperation projects and city-to-city partnerships. The City of Marseille, as a major Mediterranean cultural hub and former European Capital of Culture, has developed numerous partnerships with cities and cultural organisations across the Mediterranean region, supporting artist mobility, heritage projects and intercultural dialogue. More recently, Bourges was designated European Capital of Culture 2028, becoming the fifth French city to receive the title. Its project, *Territoire d'avenir* ("Territory of the Future"), places particular emphasis on European cooperation, cultural participation, ecological transition and partnerships between urban and rural territories, illustrating the growing role of medium-sized cities in international cultural cooperation.

Key features of NGO and professional cooperation
• Strong tradition of peer-to-peer professional exchanges and capacity building. • Extensive use of mobility, residency and expertise-sharing programmes. • Active participation in European and international cultural networks. • Growing role of foundations, NGOs and civil society organisations. • Increasing emphasis on co-creation, reciprocity and long-term partnerships. • Integration of digital tools, sustainability objectives and Global South cooperation.

Overall, France's system of direct professional cooperation is characterised by a dense ecosystem of cultural associations, professional networks, foundations, universities and cultural practitioners. Complementing institutional cultural diplomacy, these actors contribute significantly to international cultural exchange, professional development and the creation of sustainable international partnerships.

2. Current cultural affairs

Since the adoption of the Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage (2016), French cultural policy has continued to evolve through a combination of targeted legislative measures, public policy adjustments and strategic priorities rather than through a single comprehensive reform. This reflects a model of incremental adaptation to evolving cultural, technological, social and geopolitical challenges.

Recent developments have been shaped by several interconnected dynamics. The recovery of the cultural sector following the COVID-19 crisis has reinforced public support for cultural employment, institutions and cultural and creative industries. At the same time, digital transformation has become a major policy concern, raising questions relating to platform regulation, copyright, artificial intelligence, access to culture and the long-term sustainability of cultural ecosystems.

Issues of cultural participation, cultural rights and social inclusion have also gained prominence. Public policies increasingly seek to address territorial, social and generational inequalities in access to culture through cultural education programmes, youth-oriented measures such as the *Pass Culture*, and strengthened support for cultural development in rural, peri-urban and disadvantaged areas.

Environmental sustainability has emerged as a transversal policy priority, progressively influencing funding mechanisms, cultural production models and the management of cultural institutions. The ecological transition of the cultural sector is now widely recognised as a strategic challenge for public authorities and cultural stakeholders alike.

At the same time, France continues to promote cultural diversity, artistic freedom and multilateral cultural governance through its engagement within European institutions, UNESCO and the Francophone space. These commitments increasingly intersect with debates on digital regulation, cultural sovereignty, and the international circulation of cultural and creative works.

Another significant development concerns the growing importance of ethical issues in cultural policy, particularly in relation to cultural rights, representation, diversity, and the restitution of cultural property originating from colonial contexts. The progressive development of legal and diplomatic mechanisms for restitution has become an important component of contemporary cultural diplomacy and international cultural cooperation.

Overall, current cultural affairs in France are characterised by the interaction between long-standing principles—such as cultural democratisation, decentralisation and support for artistic creation—and emerging priorities linked to digital transformation, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and the changing international context.

2.1 Key developments

French cultural policy has undergone a process of gradual adaptation rather than major institutional reform in recent years. While the core principles of cultural democratisation, support for artistic creation and decentralisation remain unchanged, public policies increasingly address new technological, social, environmental and geopolitical challenges.

One of the most significant developments concerns the growing emphasis on cultural participation and cultural rights. While traditional cultural policy focused primarily on broadening access to recognised cultural institutions and artistic works, recent approaches increasingly seek to recognise diverse cultural practices and encourage public participation in cultural life. Issues of social inclusion, representation and cultural diversity have consequently gained prominence in policy debates.

Territorial equity has also become a major priority. Public authorities increasingly seek to reduce geographical inequalities in access to culture, particularly in rural, peri-urban and disadvantaged areas. Since its launch in 2017, the [Micro-Folies](#) programme has expanded across France and internationally, providing digital access to national cultural collections in smaller towns and underserved areas. Similarly, the [Été culturel](#) initiative, introduced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis, has become a permanent programme supporting artistic and cultural activities in rural territories and priority urban neighbourhoods. Culture is also increasingly integrated into broader territorial development and urban regeneration policies, notably through programmes such as [Action Cœur de Ville](#).

The recovery of the cultural sector following the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced attention to artists' working conditions and cultural employment. The crisis highlighted the strategic importance of public intervention in preserving cultural activities and employment, particularly through exceptional support measures and the extension of social protection schemes. The sustainability of the *intermittents du spectacle* regime remains a central issue in discussions concerning the status of artists and cultural professionals. (see chapter 2.3)

Youth participation and cultural education have likewise become key policy priorities. The nationwide deployment of the [Pass Culture](#) in 2021 marked a significant development in efforts to improve young people's access to cultural activities and institutions. Following reforms introduced in 2025, the scheme has been refocused to strengthen social equity while maintaining its collective educational dimension through partnerships between schools and cultural organisations.

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the most important challenges facing contemporary cultural policy. The expansion of streaming platforms, social media and artificial intelligence has profoundly transformed the production, circulation and consumption of cultural content. Recent policy debates increasingly focus on copyright protection, platform regulation, the remuneration of creators, algorithmic visibility and the implications of generative AI for cultural diversity and artistic creation. These issues are addressed both at national level and through European regulatory frameworks, including the [Digital Services Act](#) (DSA), fully applicable to all digital actors since 17 February 2024, and the [Artificial Intelligence Act](#) (AI Act), which entered into force on 1 August 2024.

Environmental sustainability has also become a cross-cutting policy objective. Since the adoption of the Ministry of Culture's [Roadmap for the Ecological Transition of Culture \(2023–2027\)](#), ecological considerations have progressively been integrated into funding mechanisms, cultural production models and the management of cultural institutions. The ecological transition is now widely recognised as a strategic challenge affecting all cultural sectors.

Another significant development concerns the growing importance of ethical issues in cultural policy, particularly in relation to cultural rights, representation, diversity and the restitution of cultural property originating from colonial contexts. Since the publication of the [Sarr-Savoy Report](#) in 2018, France has progressively developed legal mechanisms enabling the restitution of cultural artefacts and human remains through dedicated legislation and bilateral agreements. A major milestone was reached with the adoption of the 2023 law facilitating the restitution of human remains from public collections, followed in 2025 by the restitution of three Sakalava human remains to Madagascar, the first implementation of this new legal framework. In 2026, Parliament also adopted a framework law designed to simplify future restitutions of cultural property acquired in colonial contexts. Alongside these developments, France has strengthened its policy on the identification and restitution of cultural property looted between 1933 and 1945. Since 2019, the Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property Looted between 1933 and 1945 (Mission de recherche et de restitution des biens culturels spoliés entre 1933 et 1945) has coordinated provenance research and supported restitution procedures for works held in public collections. These developments have made restitution policies an increasingly important component of contemporary cultural diplomacy and international cultural cooperation. At the same time, France continues to promote cultural diversity and multilateral cultural governance through its engagement within the European Union, UNESCO and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

Overall, recent developments illustrate the coexistence of long-standing policy principles and emerging strategic priorities. While cultural democratisation, decentralisation and public support for artistic creation remain fundamental features of the French model, contemporary cultural policy increasingly focuses on participation, digital transformation, ecological sustainability, diversity and international cooperation.

Selected milestones highlighting key developments in French cultural policy over the last ten years

Year	Key development	Policy area
2017	Launch of the Micro-Folies programme to improve access to culture in underserved territories	Territorial equity
2018	Publication of the Sarr-Savoy Report on the restitution of African cultural heritage	Heritage / Cultural diplomacy
2020	Launch of the Été culturel programme in response to the COVID-19 crisis	Cultural participation / Territorial inclusion
2021	Nationwide deployment of the Pass Culture for young people	Cultural education and participation

2023	Adoption of the Ministry of Culture's Roadmap for the Ecological Transition of Culture (2023–2027)	Cultural sustainability
	Adoption of the Law No. 2023-167 of 13 March 2023 on the restitution of human remains belonging to public collections	Heritage ethics
2024	Full application of the Digital Services Act (DSA) (17 February)	Digital policy – EU level
	Entry into force of the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) (1 August)	Digital policy, AI – EU level
2025	Reform of the Pass Culture to strengthen social equity and educational components	Youth participation
	Restitution of three Sakalava human remains to Madagascar under the 2023 law	Heritage ethics
2026	Adoption of a framework law facilitating future restitutions of cultural property acquired in colonial contexts	Heritage / Cultural diplomacy

2.2 Cultural rights and ethics

Cultural rights have become an increasingly important dimension of French cultural policy, both in domestic governance and in international cultural cooperation. They are grounded in the principle that access to culture, participation in cultural life and freedom of artistic expression are fundamental human rights, as recognised by international instruments such as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#), the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(1966\)](#), and the [UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(2005\)](#).

In France, cultural rights are closely linked to the complementary objectives of cultural democratisation and cultural democracy. They encompass not only access to cultural goods and services, but also the right of individuals and communities to participate in cultural life, express their cultural identities and contribute to artistic creation. The growing recognition of cultural rights was reinforced by the territorial reforms of the 2010s, notably the Law on the New Territorial Organisation of the Republic ([NOTRe Law](#), 2015) and the Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage ([LCAP](#), 2016), which explicitly incorporated cultural rights into French cultural policy frameworks.

Public policies increasingly seek to give practical effect to cultural rights by ensuring that all individuals can access, participate in and contribute to cultural life. This objective informs a wide range of cultural policies, including cultural education programmes, territorial cultural development strategies and measures aimed at reducing social, territorial and digital inequalities (see chapter 2.1 Key developments). The growing recognition of cultural rights has also encouraged more participatory approaches to cultural governance, giving greater importance to dialogue with audiences, local communities and civil society organisations.

Ethical considerations have also gained prominence in cultural policy. They concern freedom of expression, artistic freedom, cultural diversity, equitable access to cultural resources and the protection of artists and cultural professionals. France actively supports international standards safeguarding artistic freedom, particularly within UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union. As a long-standing advocate of cultural diversity, France continues to promote the principles of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2025. Since 2020, several measures have been adopted to prevent sexist and sexual violence in the cultural sector and to strengthen equality and diversity policies within publicly funded cultural institutions. In 2024, women represented approximately 43% of directors of institutions labelled by the Ministry of Culture, compared with less than 30% a decade earlier. Accessibility has also become a policy priority, with more than 7,000 cultural venues and events participating annually in the [European Disability Employment Week](#) and related accessibility initiatives.

In parallel, debates on provenance research, restitution and the representation of colonial history have gained increasing visibility within museums and heritage institutions, as well as the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods and the responsible management of public collections. France is an active participant in the implementation of the UNESCO 1970 Convention against the illicit trafficking of cultural property and cooperates extensively with international partners on provenance research, heritage preservation and restitution procedures.

One of the most significant recent developments has been the evolution of restitution policies concerning cultural property acquired in colonial contexts. Since the publication of the Sarr-Savoy Report in 2018, France has progressively established legal and institutional mechanisms enabling the restitution of cultural artefacts and human remains through dedicated legislation and bilateral agreements. High-profile restitutions have included the return in 2021 of 26 royal treasures from the former Kingdom of Dahomey to Benin and the restitution of a historic sword attributed to El Hadj Omar Tall to Senegal.

The legal framework for restitution has subsequently expanded. The Law of 13 March 2023 on the restitution of human remains belonging to public collections established a permanent mechanism for such restitutions. In 2025, this framework was applied for the first time

through the restitution of three Sakalava human remains to Madagascar. In 2026, Parliament adopted a [framework law facilitating the restitution of cultural property acquired in colonial contexts](#), providing a structured procedure for examining and implementing future restitution requests. These developments reflect broader concerns with historical justice, transparency, provenance research and international cultural cooperation.

Digital transformation has also generated new ethical challenges related to access to culture, copyright protection, data governance, algorithmic visibility of cultural content, artificial intelligence and the preservation of digital heritage. Public authorities and cultural institutions are increasingly engaged in developing regulatory and ethical frameworks capable of addressing these issues while safeguarding cultural diversity and creators' rights.

Overall, cultural rights and ethics have become a transversal dimension of French cultural policy, shaping both domestic cultural governance and France's international cultural action. They increasingly influence policy design across fields such as participation, diversity, heritage, digital regulation and international cooperation.

Key milestones in the evolution of French restitution policies and heritage ethics	
2007	Ratification by France of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), reinforcing its commitment to cultural diversity and international cultural cooperation.
2010	Adoption of the law authorising the restitution of Māori heads (<i>toi moko</i>) to New Zealand, establishing an important precedent for future restitution policies.
2017	In a speech at the University of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), President Emmanuel Macron declared that conditions should be created for the temporary or permanent restitution of African cultural heritage to African countries.
2018	Publication of the Sarr-Savoy Report on the restitution of African cultural heritage.
2020–2021	Restitution of 26 royal treasures to Benin and a historic sword to Senegal.
2023	Adoption of the Law on the Restitution of Human Remains from Public Collections.
2025	First implementation of the 2023 law through the restitution of three Sakalava human remains to Madagascar.
2026	Parliamentary adoption of a legislative framework facilitating future restitutions of cultural property acquired in colonial contexts.

2.3 Role of artists and cultural professionals

Artists and cultural professionals occupy a central position in French cultural policy, both as creators and as key contributors to cultural life, economic activity and international cultural influence. Public policies recognise their dual role: as independent creators whose freedom must be protected and as professionals operating within structured cultural and creative sectors.

The principle of freedom of artistic creation is a cornerstone of French cultural policy and was explicitly reaffirmed by the [Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage \(LCAP\) of 2016](#). It guarantees the freedom to create, produce and disseminate artistic works while benefiting from legal, social and professional protections.

A distinctive feature of the French system is the recognition of cultural professions through dedicated employment and social protection mechanisms. The *intermittents du spectacle* regime, established within the unemployment insurance system and regularly adapted through collective bargaining agreements, provides tailored social protection for performing artists and audiovisual technicians whose professional activity is characterised by short-term contracts and discontinuous employment patterns. To qualify for the scheme, beneficiaries must complete a minimum number of working hours over a reference period, allowing them to receive unemployment benefits during periods between contracts. In 2023, approximately 130,000 artists and technicians benefited from the regime, making it one of the most comprehensive support systems for cultural employment in Europe. The scheme is widely regarded as a key instrument for sustaining artistic creation, supporting professional careers and preserving the diversity of cultural production, particularly in the performing arts, cinema and audiovisual sectors. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted both the vulnerability and the strategic importance of cultural professions. In response to the prolonged closure of cultural venues and the interruption of artistic activities, the French government introduced exceptional support measures, including the so-called *année blanche* ("blank year") for beneficiaries of the *intermittents du spectacle* regime. Introduced in 2020 and extended until the end of 2021, this measure automatically prolonged unemployment insurance rights regardless of the number of working hours completed during the pandemic. It prevented approximately 120,000 artists and technicians from losing access to unemployment benefits at a time when performances, festivals and audiovisual productions had largely ceased. Widely regarded as one of the most significant support measures for the cultural sector during the pandemic, the *année blanche* contributed to preserving cultural employment and facilitating the recovery of artistic activities. The sustainability and adaptation of the regime remain recurrent topics of discussion between public authorities and social partners, particularly in relation to evolving employment patterns, digital production models, working conditions and the long-term resilience of cultural professions.

Professional training and skills development constitute another important pillar of cultural policy. France maintains an extensive network of specialised higher education institutions in fields such as heritage, architecture, visual arts, performing arts, cinema and audiovisual production. These include the École du Louvre, the Institut national du patrimoine (INP), the twenty Higher Schools of Architecture, the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique (CNSAD), La Fémis, the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts (ENSBA), and a network of around fifty higher schools of arts and design. Together, the nearly 100 higher education institutions supervised by the Ministry of Culture train future professionals across the cultural and creative sectors (see chapter 5.3).

Artists and cultural professionals benefit from a dense ecosystem of cultural institutions and organisations. National museums, theatres, opera houses, cultural centres and local cultural venues play a major role in supporting artistic creation through commissions, residencies, co-productions and touring programmes. Public funding remains a key driver of artistic production and cultural dissemination throughout the country.

Artists also play an important role in France's international cultural action. Through programmes implemented by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Institut français and numerous cultural networks, artists participate in international residencies, cultural seasons, festivals and European cooperation projects. These initiatives contribute to artistic mobility, professional exchanges and the international circulation of French and foreign cultural works.

Recent developments linked to digital technologies, new media and artificial intelligence are transforming artistic practices and professional conditions. Artists increasingly operate across disciplines and digital platforms, creating new opportunities but also raising questions regarding remuneration, intellectual property rights, platform regulation and professional recognition.

Overall, artists and cultural professionals are not only beneficiaries of cultural policy but also essential actors in the design, vitality and renewal of France's cultural ecosystem.

2.4 Digital policy and developments

Digital transformation has become one of the most significant drivers of change in French cultural policy. Digital technologies increasingly influence the creation, production, distribution, preservation and consumption of cultural content across all sectors, including heritage, performing arts, audiovisual media, publishing, museums, libraries and cultural and creative industries.

Since the early 2000s, public authorities have progressively developed policies aimed at supporting digital innovation while protecting cultural diversity and creators' rights. Initially focused on the digitisation of collections and online access to cultural resources, digital policy has expanded to address broader issues such as platform regulation, copyright protection, data governance, digital sovereignty and artificial intelligence.

France has played a pioneering role in the regulation of digital cultural markets. A major milestone was the creation in 2009 of the *Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Œuvres et la Protection des droits sur Internet* (HADOPI), tasked with combating online copyright infringement through a graduated response mechanism. In 2022, HADOPI merged with the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel* (CSA) to form the *Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique* ([ARCOM](#)). The new authority is responsible for regulating audiovisual and digital communication services, safeguarding media pluralism, combating online piracy, and ensuring compliance with regulations applicable to online platforms.

Digital transformation has profoundly altered cultural consumption patterns. Streaming services have become the dominant mode of access to recorded music, while digital distribution plays an increasingly important role in the audiovisual, publishing and video game sectors. These developments have generated new policy concerns regarding the visibility of European and French cultural content, the remuneration of creators and the concentration of digital markets.

Many of these challenges are now addressed through European regulatory frameworks. The [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#) became fully applicable to all online platforms and digital service providers in the European Union on 17 February 2024, while the [Artificial Intelligence Act \(AI Act\)](#) entered into force on 1 August 2024. These regulations have significant implications for cultural content distribution, platform accountability, algorithmic transparency and the use of generative artificial intelligence.

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a major topic in cultural policy debates. Public authorities and professional organisations increasingly focus on issues such as copyright protection, the use of cultural content for AI training, the remuneration of creators, transparency obligations and the preservation of human creativity in artistic production. These discussions are particularly important for the publishing, music, audiovisual and visual arts sectors.

The digitisation and online dissemination of cultural heritage remain important priorities. [The Bibliothèque nationale de France \(BnF\)](#) operates [Gallica](#), one of Europe's largest digital libraries, providing access to more than 10 million digitised documents. The Ministry of Culture also manages the [Plateforme Ouverte du Patrimoine \(POP\)](#), which provides online access to millions of records relating to museums, archives, architecture, archaeology and

protected heritage. Museums, libraries and archives continue to expand digital collections, virtual exhibitions and online educational resources.

Digital technologies are also increasingly used to broaden access to culture and reduce territorial inequalities. The [Micro-Folies](#) programme, launched in 2017, provides digital access to national museum collections and cultural resources in smaller towns and underserved areas in France and abroad. Similarly, the [Pass Culture](#), deployed nationwide in 2021, relies on a digital platform that has enabled more than 4 million young people to access cultural activities and services.

Digital innovation has also fostered the development of new artistic practices. Public support mechanisms encourage experimentation in digital arts, immersive experiences, virtual and augmented reality, video games and hybrid forms of creation. The [Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée \(CNC\)](#) and the Ministry of Culture support these developments through dedicated funding schemes and innovation programmes. France is internationally recognised as a leading hub for digital creation, particularly in the fields of video games, animation and immersive experiences. The country hosts globally successful companies such as [Ubisoft](#) and benefits from a dense ecosystem of studios, research centres and specialised higher education institutions. Public policies seek to strengthen this ecosystem while encouraging innovation, artistic experimentation and the international competitiveness of French cultural and creative industries.

At the same time, digitalisation raises broader questions relating to digital inclusion, cybersecurity, data governance and environmental sustainability. While digital technologies have expanded access to cultural resources, significant disparities in digital access and skills remain. According to the [French digital inclusion barometer](#) from ARCOM, approximately 15% of the population experiences difficulties with digital technologies, affecting access to online public and cultural services. Public authorities also face growing challenges related to cybersecurity and the long-term preservation of digital cultural heritage. In parallel, the environmental impact of digital technologies has become an increasing concern: digital activities are estimated to account for around 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions (according to [the French Agency for Ecological Transition \(ADEME\)](#)) prompting cultural institutions and creative industries to integrate digital sustainability considerations into their strategies. Public authorities increasingly seek to balance technological innovation with the protection of cultural diversity, creators' rights and public access to culture.

Overall, French digital cultural policy has evolved from a focus on digitisation and online access towards a broader strategy addressing platform governance, artificial intelligence, digital participation and the protection of cultural diversity in the digital age.

Key milestones in French digital regulation and cultural policy	
2009	Creation of HADOPI (<i>Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Œuvres et la Protection des droits sur Internet</i>) to fight online copyright infringement and protect intellectual property rights on the internet.
2017	Launch of the Micro-Folies programme, providing digital access to national cultural collections and resources in underserved territories.
2021	Nationwide deployment of the Pass Culture digital platform, facilitating young people's access to cultural activities and services.
2022	Merger of HADOPI and the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) into ARCOM, the new regulator for audiovisual and digital communications.
2024	Full application of the Digital Services Act (DSA) across the European Union (17 February).
2024	Entry into force of the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) (1 August).
2025	Growing policy focus on generative artificial intelligence, particularly regarding copyright protection, transparency and the remuneration of creators.

2.5 Cultural and social diversity

Cultural and social diversity is a key objective of French cultural policy and an essential component of the broader principles of equality, cultural rights and democratic participation in cultural life. Public authorities seek to ensure that cultural policies reflect the diversity of French society and provide equitable access to cultural resources, opportunities and representation.

France's approach combines support for cultural diversity with measures promoting social cohesion, inclusion and equal opportunities. Particular attention is given to the visibility of diverse cultural expressions, the representation of underrepresented groups, and the reduction of barriers related to social background, gender, disability, language or geographical location. These objectives are implemented through a wide range of policies affecting cultural institutions, education, media, heritage, artistic creation and cultural participation.

At the international level, French policy is strongly influenced by the [UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(2005\)](#), which France actively supports as a key framework for safeguarding cultural diversity in an increasingly

globalised and digital environment. Diversity is also promoted through European cooperation programmes, intercultural dialogue initiatives and mobility schemes for artists and cultural professionals.

In recent years, public debates have increasingly focused on questions of representation, inclusion and equal access within cultural institutions and cultural professions. Policies addressing gender equality, disability inclusion, media pluralism, linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue have consequently gained greater visibility and importance within the cultural policy agenda.

The following sections examine the main dimensions of cultural and social diversity policies in France, including intercultural dialogue, diversity education, media pluralism and content diversity, language policy, gender equality and disability inclusion.

2.5.1 National / international intercultural dialogue

Intercultural dialogue constitutes a transversal principle of French cultural policy, situated at the intersection of social cohesion, cultural diversity, and citizenship. It is implemented within a legal and institutional framework shaped by the principles of [*laïcité* \(secularism\)](#), the universalist tradition of the Republic, and the gradual recognition of cultural pluralism in public policy.

Demographic and Social Context

France is characterised by significant cultural and demographic diversity, which directly influences the orientation of cultural policies. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), approximately 10.7% of the population was born abroad in 2023, while nearly 20% of individuals under the age of 18 have at least one parent born outside France. These figures illustrate the increasing diversification of cultural backgrounds within French society.

This diversity is particularly visible in urban areas. Within the framework of the *politique de la ville* (urban policy), approximately 1,500 priority urban districts (*quartiers prioritaires*) receive targeted public support, encompassing around 5.4 million residents (ANCT, 2024). In these territories, cultural policies are closely linked to objectives of social inclusion, educational development, and access to cultural rights.

Institutional Frameworks and Policy Instruments

The implementation of intercultural dialogue in France relies on a multi-level governance system involving the State, local authorities, public cultural institutions, and civil society organisations. Responsibilities are shared across different administrative levels, reflecting the broader decentralisation of cultural policy since the 1980s (see Chapter 1.2).

At national level, the Ministry of Culture promotes cultural diversity, equal access to cultural participation, and the recognition of plural cultural expressions. Intercultural objectives are integrated into several policy areas, including heritage, performing arts, museums, education, and community-based cultural programmes. These priorities are implemented through public funding schemes, contractual arrangements with local authorities, and partnerships with cultural institutions.

Local and regional authorities play a significant role in designing and implementing initiatives adapted to specific territorial contexts. Through cultural centres, libraries, festivals, neighbourhood-based projects, and educational programmes, they contribute to fostering social cohesion and encouraging encounters between different cultural groups, particularly in priority urban districts.

Memory and heritage institutions also constitute important instruments of intercultural policy. [The Palais de la Porte Dorée – Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration](#) contributes to the recognition and transmission of migration histories as an integral part of the national narrative. More broadly, museums, archives, and heritage institutions increasingly address questions of diversity, colonial history, and shared memory through exhibitions, educational programmes, and public debates.

Internationally, the [Institut français](#) is the principal operator of France's cultural diplomacy. Through its worldwide network of cultural institutes and alliances, it supports artistic mobility, professional exchanges, translation programmes, cultural seasons, and collaborative projects involving artists and cultural professionals from different countries. These initiatives contribute to intercultural dialogue by encouraging long-term cooperation and mutual understanding between societies.

Intercultural projects are also increasingly developed through partnerships between public authorities, cultural organisations, universities and civil society actors. Programmes such as [Cités éducatives](#), currently implemented in around 200 municipalities, combine educational, cultural and social interventions in disadvantaged urban areas, while European cooperation programmes support transnational artistic exchanges and collaborative cultural initiatives

European and International Frameworks

French intercultural policy is embedded within broader European and multilateral frameworks that promote cultural diversity, mobility, and inclusion.

Among the principal reference frameworks are the Council of Europe programme [Intercultural Cities](#), which brings together more than 140 cities worldwide including Besançon, Lyon, Paris and the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis among its French members, and promotes intercultural governance at the local level. And the European Union's [Creative](#)

[Europe programme](#) supporting cultural cooperation projects across Europe, and [UNESCO's 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#).

These frameworks provide common normative principles and encourage transnational cooperation in the cultural sector. They have also contributed to the diffusion of concepts such as cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, audience development, and cultural participation within French cultural policy debates.

Policy Challenges and Structural Tensions

French approaches to intercultural dialogue continue to be shaped by a fundamental tension between two complementary but sometimes competing principles: the universalist republican model, which emphasises equality before the law and the indivisibility of the public sphere, and the increasing recognition of cultural, linguistic, and social diversity within society.

This tension is particularly visible in debates concerning representation within cultural institutions, the interpretation of colonial and postcolonial histories, and territorial inequalities in access to cultural infrastructure and resources. It also influences discussions surrounding cultural participation, the visibility of minority narratives, and the role of public institutions in reflecting the diversity of contemporary French society.

Academic research in sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies has contributed to documenting these developments and analysing evolving patterns of cultural participation, audience diversification, and heritage production. Such research increasingly informs policy evaluation and cultural mediation practices.

Intercultural dialogue in France is not implemented through a single dedicated policy framework but through a range of cultural, educational, heritage, territorial, and international cooperation policies. Its development reflects broader debates on cultural diversity, social cohesion, and the place of plural identities within the republican model. While shaped by enduring tensions between universalism and diversity, intercultural dialogue has become an increasingly important dimension of cultural governance at local, national, European, and international levels.

2.5.2 Education

The French education system plays an important role in promoting cultural diversity, social inclusion and openness to other cultures. Although there is no specific policy formally designated as “intercultural education”, these objectives are integrated into educational policies through arts and cultural education, multilingual and international programmes, and partnerships between schools and cultural institutions.

Arts and Cultural Education

Arts and Cultural Education (*Éducation Artistique et Culturelle* – EAC) is a central component of French educational and cultural policy. Based on the principle of equal access to culture, it seeks to ensure that all pupils encounter artistic works, cultural heritage and creative practices throughout their schooling.

The programme combines three complementary dimensions: the acquisition of knowledge about the arts and culture, direct encounters with artists and cultural institutions, and personal artistic practice. It is implemented jointly by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with local authorities and cultural organisations.

Recent indicators demonstrate the extensive reach of Arts and Cultural Education (EAC). According to the *Haut Conseil de l'éducation artistique et culturelle* (HCEAC) and the Ministry of Culture, approximately 75% of pupils participate annually in at least one artistic or cultural activity, while more than 90% of secondary schools maintain partnerships with cultural institutions. Data published by the *pass Culture* programme indicate that the collective component of the scheme was implemented in 98% of lower secondary schools and 95% of upper secondary schools during the 2023–2024 school year. In addition, according to the Ministry of Culture, the “100% EAC” label, introduced to support comprehensive territorial strategies for arts and cultural education, covered 157 territories in 2023.

International and Multilingual Education

The international dimension of French education is supported through a range of programmes designed to foster linguistic diversity, intercultural understanding and educational mobility.

International sections provide bilingual and bicultural education from primary to upper secondary level. Covering 18 languages, they combine the French curriculum with enhanced teaching of language, literature, history and geography in the partner language, often delivered by native-speaking teachers.

Binational programmes such as AbiBac (France–Germany), Bachibac (France–Spain) and Esabac (France–Italy) allow pupils to obtain both the French baccalaureate and a partner-country secondary school diploma. These pathways encourage academic mobility and strengthen educational cooperation within Europe.

European and oriental language sections further promote multilingual competence by combining advanced language instruction with the teaching of selected subjects in a foreign language.

Language education policies have evolved significantly over recent decades. The former *Enseignements de langue et culture d'origine* (ELCO), established through bilateral agreements

with countries of origin to provide heritage language instruction to children of immigrant families, have gradually been transformed into *Enseignements internationaux de langues étrangères* (EILE). Introduced from 2016 onwards, this reform aimed to integrate these languages more fully into the French education system and to open access to all pupils, regardless of their linguistic or cultural background. The transition reflects a broader shift from policies primarily oriented towards migrant populations to an approach that values multilingualism as a resource for all learners and as a component of linguistic and cultural diversity within French society.

Governance and Policy Challenges

Educational initiatives promoting cultural diversity operate within the broader framework of the French republican model, which emphasises equality, [secularism \(*laïcité*\)](#) and a common national curriculum. As a result, diversity education is generally conceived not as the recognition of specific cultural communities, but as a means of fostering mutual understanding, critical thinking and participation in a shared civic culture.

This approach has generated ongoing debates regarding the place of linguistic diversity, the representation of migration and colonial histories in school curricula, and the capacity of educational institutions to reflect the growing social and cultural diversity of French society. These discussions illustrate the broader tension between universalist principles and the recognition of plural identities that characterises many areas of French cultural policy.

Although France does not have a dedicated intercultural education policy, objectives related to cultural diversity are embedded in a wide range of educational programmes and cultural initiatives. Through arts and cultural education, multilingual pathways and international cooperation schemes, the education system contributes to promoting cultural participation, openness to diversity and social cohesion within the framework of the republican model.

2.5.3 Media pluralism and content diversity

Media pluralism and content diversity constitute longstanding objectives of French cultural and communication policy. They are grounded in constitutional principles relating to freedom of expression and freedom of communication and are implemented through a combination of public service media, sectoral regulation, competition law, and support mechanisms for cultural production.

Regulatory Framework and Public Service Media

The French media landscape combines public service broadcasting with a competitive private sector operating across television, radio, print, and digital media. Since 2022, audiovisual and

digital communications have been regulated by ARCOM (*Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique*), which resulted from the merger of the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel* (CSA), responsible for broadcasting regulation, and the *Haute Autorité pour la diffusion des œuvres et la protection des droits sur Internet* (HADOPI), responsible for online copyright protection. ARCOM oversees media pluralism, diversity representation, audiovisual obligations, copyright protection in the digital sphere, and the regulation of online platforms.

Public service media remain a central component of the French model. The sector includes [France Télévisions](#), [Radio France](#), [France Médias Monde](#), [ARTE France](#) and [INA](#) (*Institut national de l'audiovisuel*). Together, these organisations fulfil missions relating to information, culture, education, territorial cohesion, and support for creation. Following the abolition of the audiovisual licence fee in 2022, public broadcasting is financed through State budget allocations, amounting to around €4 billion per year (Ministry of Culture, 2024).

Cultural Diversity and Support for National Production

The promotion of cultural diversity is a defining feature of French media policy. Through the [Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée \(CNC\)](#), France maintains one of the most extensive systems of public support for cinema and audiovisual production in Europe. Annual support exceeds €800 million and is financed largely through levies imposed on broadcasters, cinema operators and digital platforms (CNC, 2024).

This support system contributes to maintaining one of the highest levels of film production in Europe. France produces between 250 and 300 feature films annually (CNC, 2024). French films also maintain a significant presence in the domestic market, accounting for approximately one third of cinema admissions in recent years. Cultural diversity objectives are also reflected in broadcasting obligations. Radio is also subject to cultural diversity obligations. Under Article 28 of the [Law of 30 September 1986 on Freedom of Communication](#), private radio stations must devote at least 40% of their music programming to French-language songs or songs performed in a regional language used in France, with at least half of this quota reserved for new talent and new productions. ARCOM is responsible for monitoring compliance with these obligations.

At European level, France strongly supports measures promoting the circulation of European works. Following the implementation of the revised [Audiovisual Media Services Directive \(AVMSD\)](#), on-demand audiovisual platforms operating in France must ensure that at least 30% of their catalogues consist of European works and must contribute financially to European and French audiovisual production.

Media Concentration, Digital Platforms and Representation

Despite this regulatory framework, concerns regarding media pluralism have intensified in recent years. Ownership of major television channels, newspapers and radio stations is

concentrated among a relatively small number of industrial and financial groups, including Vivendi, Bouygues, CMA CGM, LVMH and Dassault. The French Competition Authority (*Autorité de la concurrence*), the independent body responsible for enforcing competition law and reviewing mergers, has on several occasions examined the impact of media concentration on pluralism. Together with assessments produced by the [European Media Pluralism Monitor](#), its findings have highlighted potential risks associated with cross-media ownership, vertical integration and the concentration of economic power within the media sector.

These concerns have gained additional visibility through recent parliamentary debates on the future of the media sector. In 2025, the National Assembly established a parliamentary commission of inquiry on the neutrality, functioning and financing of public service media. Its work, conducted throughout 2025 and 2026 under the rapporteurship of Deputy Charles Alloncle, examined issues relating to governance, funding, editorial independence, political pluralism and the role of public service broadcasting in an increasingly digital media environment. Beyond its specific recommendations, the commission reflected broader concerns regarding audience fragmentation, the growing influence of global digital platforms, media concentration, and the capacity of public service media to continue supporting democratic debate, cultural diversity and national audiovisual production. The debates surrounding the commission also highlighted differing views on the future organisation and missions of French public broadcasting.

Also, the expansion of streaming services has transformed patterns of cultural consumption. Platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ now occupy a central position in audiovisual distribution. While they have expanded access to content, they have also reinforced concerns regarding the visibility of national and European productions and the concentration of cultural markets at global level.

Questions of representation have likewise become more prominent. ARCOM publishes annual monitoring reports on diversity in audiovisual media, examining gender equality, social background and the visibility of minority groups. Civil society organisations such as the [Club Averroès](#) continue to draw attention to persistent inequalities in representation both on screen and within media organisations.

French media policy seeks to reconcile two objectives: ensuring pluralism of information and promoting cultural diversity. While the regulatory framework remains among the most developed in Europe, the rise of global digital platforms, increasing ownership concentration and evolving patterns of media consumption have created new challenges. As a result, current debates increasingly focus on the capacity of public institutions and regulatory authorities to preserve diversity of content, plurality of viewpoints and cultural sovereignty within a rapidly changing digital environment.

2.5.4 Language

Language policy in France is structured around two complementary objectives: safeguarding French as the language of the Republic and promoting linguistic diversity as part of the country's cultural heritage and social cohesion. Article 2 of the Constitution states that “the language of the Republic is French”, while Article 75-1, introduced in 2008, recognises that “regional languages belong to the heritage of France”. Public policy therefore combines the protection of French in public life with support for regional, minority and multilingual practices.

The legal framework remains centred on the Law of 4 August 1994 on the use of the French language (the [Toubon Law](#)), which guarantees the use of French in public administration, employment, consumer information, advertising and publicly funded cultural activities. The law also aims to strengthen the status of French in economic, scientific and technological fields. Responsibility for implementing language policy lies primarily with the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* (DGLFLF), a department of the Ministry of Culture responsible for terminology development, linguistic innovation, multilingualism and the promotion of the languages of France.

French Language and Francophonie

The promotion of French forms an important component of France's international cultural policy. According to the latest report of the [Organisation internationale de la Francophonie \(OIF\)](#) of March 2026, French is spoken by approximately 396 million people worldwide and is now considered the fourth most spoken language in the world, compared with 321 million speakers and fifth place in the previous 2022 edition. Around 65% of French speakers live in Africa, reflecting the growing demographic importance of the continent within the Francophone world. French remains one of the few languages spoken on all continents and is also the fourth most used language on the Internet.

Through the Francophonie framework, cultural diplomacy networks, educational cooperation and international broadcasters such as [TV5MONDE](#) and [Radio France Internationale](#), France promotes both the French language and multilingualism as elements of cultural diversity. According to OIF projections, the number of French speakers could continue to increase significantly by 2050, largely due to demographic growth and educational expansion in sub-Saharan Africa.

Regional and Minority Languages

Alongside the promotion of French, public authorities increasingly recognise linguistic diversity as a component of cultural rights and intangible cultural heritage. France identifies approximately 75 regional and non-territorial languages as part of the “languages of France”,

including Breton, Basque, Corsican, Occitan, Alsatian, Catalan, Tahitian and various Creole languages, as well as languages historically associated with migrant and minority communities, such as Arabic dialects, Berber, Armenian, Romani and Yiddish. French Sign Language (*Langue des signes française* – LSF) also enjoys official recognition and forms part of broader policies promoting accessibility and inclusion.

The transmission and teaching of regional languages have expanded over the past decade through bilingual programmes, dedicated language courses and associative immersion schools. According to the Ministry of National Education, more than 180,000 pupils received instruction in a regional language during the 2022–2023 school year. Networks such as Diwan (Breton), Calandreta (Occitan), Ikastola (Basque) and La Bressola (Catalan) continue to play an important role alongside public education systems.

The adoption of the [Law of 21 May 2021 on the protection and promotion of regional languages \(the Molac Law\)](#) represented a significant development in this field, strengthening the visibility of regional languages in education and public life. However, subsequent decisions of the Constitutional Council limited some provisions concerning immersive education, illustrating the continuing tensions between the constitutional status of French and the promotion of linguistic diversity.

Contemporary Challenges

Language policy increasingly addresses the challenges posed by digitalisation, platform economies and artificial intelligence. The Ministry of Culture and the DGLFLF support initiatives aimed at strengthening the presence of French and regional languages in digital environments through terminology databases, open linguistic resources, digitisation programmes and AI-compatible corpora.

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More broadly, contemporary language policy seeks to reconcile several objectives: maintaining French as a common language of citizenship and public life, supporting regional and minority languages as elements of cultural heritage, promoting multilingualism in education and international cooperation, and ensuring the visibility of linguistic diversity in digital environments. These debates reflect broader questions concerning cultural diversity, inclusion and cultural sovereignty in an increasingly globalised world ([Ministry of Culture / DGLFLF, Annual Report to Parliament on the French Language 2025](#); [Ministry of Culture / DGLFLF, Language Policy](#)).

2.5.5 Gender

Gender equality has become a central objective of French cultural policy over the past decade. Public authorities increasingly consider equal access to cultural professions, visibility, funding and decision-making positions as essential components of cultural democracy and cultural diversity. While women are strongly represented among cultural audiences and graduates of cultural and artistic education programmes, significant inequalities continue to affect access to leadership positions, artistic recognition, remuneration and programming.

Policy Framework and Governance

Since 2013, the Ministry of Culture has operated the [*Observatory for Equality between Women and Men in Culture and Communication \(Observatoire de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans la culture et la communication\)*](#), which publishes annual statistical reports monitoring gender disparities across the cultural sectors. These reports have contributed to increased transparency regarding inequalities in recruitment, governance, remuneration, artistic programming and access to public support.

Gender equality has progressively become integrated into the governance of publicly funded cultural institutions. The Ministry of Culture includes equality objectives in strategic planning and funding agreements, while many national cultural institutions have adopted dedicated action plans. These measures form part of a broader interministerial framework coordinated by the *Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes* (HCE), which advises the government and monitors gender equality policies across all sectors.

Representation and Access to Cultural Professions

Despite significant progress in governance and awareness, substantial disparities remain in access to leadership positions and artistic recognition. According to the Ministry of Culture's *Observatory for Equality between Women and Men in Culture and Communication* (2026), women account for 43% of the heads of publicly funded cultural institutions, but only 17% of the leaders of the 100 largest cultural companies. Women also remain significantly underrepresented among film directors, composers and other creative professions. These figures suggest that, beyond issues of discrimination and violence, gender equality remains closely linked to questions of access to economic and symbolic power within the cultural sector.

In response, public funding bodies have increasingly incorporated gender equality objectives into grant allocation mechanisms and institutional contracts. [*The Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée \(CNC\)*](#), for example, has introduced measures to improve equality in film

production and to encourage more balanced representation in creative and decision-making roles.

Questions of representation also extend to the media sector. The French media regulator [*ARCOM \(Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique\)*](#) publishes annual assessments of the representation of women in audiovisual media. Although progress has been observed in recent years, women remain less visible as experts and commentators in television and radio programmes and continue to be underrepresented in senior editorial positions.

Prevention of Gender-Based Violence

The prevention of gender-based and sexual violence has become a major dimension of cultural policy since the late 2010s. Following the wider impact of the #MeToo movement, public authorities strengthened prevention, reporting and accountability mechanisms across the cultural sector.

The issue gained renewed prominence between 2023 and 2025 following several high-profile cases in the film and audiovisual sectors. Public debates surrounding the conviction of film director Nicolas Bedos in 2024, the trial of actor Gérard Depardieu in 2025, and the testimonies of actress and filmmaker Judith Godrèche before parliamentary bodies in 2024 contributed to placing questions of power relations, consent, workplace culture and the protection of minors at the centre of cultural policy discussions.

These developments led to increased institutional scrutiny. In 2024, the National Assembly established a parliamentary commission of inquiry into violence in the cinema, audiovisual, performing arts, fashion and advertising sectors. Its findings highlighted the systemic nature of sexist and sexual violence, shortcomings in reporting and support mechanisms, and the particular vulnerability of young artists and freelance cultural workers. The commission recommended strengthening prevention measures, improving accountability within cultural institutions and reinforcing the link between public funding and compliance with obligations relating to the prevention of harassment and gender-based violence.

In parallel, since 2021, several public funding bodies have introduced conditionality mechanisms linking access to public support with the implementation of measures to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence. In the film and audiovisual sectors, for example, beneficiaries of CNC funding must comply with mandatory prevention and training requirements. Similar measures have gradually been extended to other cultural sectors, reflecting a broader effort to improve professional practices and working conditions within cultural and creative industries.

Current Challenges

Recent policy developments increasingly recognise that gender inequalities intersect with other forms of discrimination and exclusion. Cultural institutions are therefore encouraged to adopt broader diversity and inclusion strategies addressing the combined effects of gender, social background, disability, territorial inequalities and, where relevant, ethnic and cultural diversity.

Despite significant progress in governance and awareness, achieving equality in artistic recognition, access to leadership positions and representation within cultural content remains an ongoing challenge. Current debates increasingly focus on moving beyond statistical parity towards more structural transformations in professional practices, institutional cultures and decision-making processes.

Overall, French cultural policy has evolved from a primary focus on measuring inequalities towards a more comprehensive approach combining governance reform, funding conditionality, prevention of discrimination and support for equal representation throughout cultural life.

Key indicators on gender equality in culture (2026)

Area	Women (%)
Students in higher cultural education institutions	60
Active workforce in cultural sectors	c. 50
Heads of publicly funded cultural institutions	43
Heads of major public cultural establishments	38
Feature film directors	28
New SACD members (all categories)	23
Leaders of the 100 largest cultural companies	17

Source: Ministry of Culture, *Observatoire de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans la culture et la communication*, 2026

2.5.6 Disability

Disability has progressively become a more structured dimension of French cultural policy over the past two decades, shifting from a narrow focus on physical accessibility towards a broader framework encompassing participation, artistic inclusion, employment and representation. This evolution is anchored in the [Law of 11 February 2005 on Equal Rights and Opportunities, Participation and Citizenship of Persons with Disabilities](#), which

established accessibility as a legal obligation across public services, including cultural institutions. It has also been reinforced by France's ratification of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#) in 2010.

Policy Framework and Accessibility

In France, disability policy in the cultural field is coordinated primarily by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with other public authorities, disability organisations and cultural institutions. Since the 2000s, successive national strategies have gradually broadened the policy focus from compliance with accessibility requirements towards a more comprehensive approach encompassing participation, artistic creation and cultural rights.

Accessibility nevertheless remains the cornerstone of disability policy in the cultural sector. Public authorities have progressively strengthened obligations relating to access to cultural venues, services and information. While most newly built or renovated national cultural institutions comply with accessibility standards, the adaptation of historic buildings and heritage sites remains more complex due to architectural and conservation constraints.

The Ministry of Culture has supported this evolution through dedicated "Culture and Disability" programmes and cooperation with specialised networks. Among the most significant initiatives is the Réunion des établissements culturels pour l'accessibilité (RECA), created in 2003, which brings together more than 200 cultural institutions to exchange expertise and promote good practices across the sector.

Policy efforts now extend beyond physical accessibility to include sensory, cognitive and digital dimensions. Museums, theatres, libraries and heritage sites increasingly provide audio description, French Sign Language interpretation, subtitling, tactile visits and adapted mediation tools. According to the Ministry of Culture, a majority of national cultural institutions now offer at least one adapted access service, although provision remains uneven across territories and categories of institution.

The digital transformation of cultural services has also created new challenges. Following the implementation of European accessibility standards, public cultural platforms have progressively improved their compliance with digital accessibility requirements. However, significant disparities persist between major national operators and smaller organisations, particularly regarding online services and digital content.

Participation and Cultural Access

Disability policy increasingly emphasises the right of persons with disabilities to participate fully in cultural life. Public programmes therefore seek not only to facilitate access to cultural activities but also to support active participation in artistic, educational and community-based projects. This evolution reflects the growing influence of a rights-based approach

inspired by [the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), particularly Article 30, which recognises participation in cultural life as a fundamental right.

Particular attention has been devoted to cultural mediation and arts education. Many museums, libraries and performing arts institutions have developed dedicated programmes for disabled audiences, often in partnership with specialised organisations, schools and social services. These initiatives reflect a broader understanding of cultural rights, according to which accessibility involves meaningful participation rather than mere physical access to cultural venues.

Professional Inclusion and Representation

Beyond audience access, cultural policy has increasingly focused on the professional inclusion of disabled artists and cultural workers. Public support schemes administered by the Ministry of Culture, [the CNC](#) and specialised cultural agencies encourage inclusive artistic creation, disability-led projects and accessible professional environments.

These measures complement the broader French framework promoting the employment of disabled workers. Public institutions, including cultural institutions, are subject to national obligations concerning the employment of persons with disabilities, while dedicated support mechanisms help finance workplace adaptations and professional inclusion measures.

Nevertheless, disabled persons remain underrepresented in cultural employment, mirroring wider labour-market inequalities. While public institutions are subject to a statutory employment target of 6% disabled employees and reported an employment rate of 5.93% in 2023 ([Fonds pour l'insertion des personnes handicapées dans la fonction publique \(FIPHFP\)](#), 2024), access to artistic training, recruitment opportunities and leadership positions continues to be constrained by both physical and institutional barriers.

Questions of representation have also become more visible in recent years. Disabled artists and disability-led artistic initiatives are increasingly recognised within contemporary cultural programming, while disability arts has gained greater visibility as a field of artistic expression in its own right. However, representation within mainstream cultural production and media remains limited.

Current Challenges

Despite significant progress, important challenges remain. Accessibility standards are implemented unevenly across the cultural sector, particularly in local cultural infrastructures and independent venues, where financial and technical constraints are often more acute. Digital accessibility, although improving, remains incomplete, and disparities persist between national institutions and smaller cultural organisations.

More broadly, current debates increasingly focus on moving beyond compliance-based approaches towards a more inclusive conception of cultural participation. This involves addressing barriers not only to access, but also to artistic education, professional careers, cultural governance and representation.

Recent policy discussions have also highlighted the need to better address invisible disabilities, including cognitive, neurodevelopmental and psychosocial disabilities. French public awareness campaigns and disability organisations regularly emphasise that invisible disabilities account for an estimated 80% of all disabilities. Consequently, cultural accessibility policies increasingly incorporate cognitive, sensory and psychosocial dimensions alongside physical accessibility.

Overall, disability policy in the French cultural sector has evolved from a focus on accessibility towards a broader approach centred on cultural rights, participation and inclusion. While considerable progress has been achieved, full equality of access and representation remains an ongoing objective of cultural policy.

2.6 Culture and social inclusion

Cultural and social inclusion is a key dimension of French cultural policy, reflecting long-standing concerns with social inequality, territorial imbalance and diversity within a Republican framework that does not formally recognise ethnic or cultural minorities. In accordance with Article 1 of the Constitution, France guarantees equality before the law without distinction of origin, race or religion. Consequently, public policies generally target individuals rather than communities, while relying on socio-economic and demographic indicators to identify and address inequalities.

According to French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies ([INSEE](#)) estimates, immigrants represented approximately 11.8% of the French population in 2023–2024, while foreign nationals accounted for 7.6% of the population. In French statistics, an immigrant is defined as a person born abroad as a foreign national. Immigrants may subsequently acquire French nationality, but they continue to be counted as immigrants. By contrast, foreigners are persons who do not hold French nationality at the time of observation. As shown in Table n°1, the immigrant population is characterised by a distinct age structure, with a particularly high concentration among working-age adults. The immigrant population in France reflects a wide diversity of geographical origins.

According to INSEE data from the 2023 Population Census, Africa accounted for approximately 45% of immigrants, followed by Europe (34%), Asia (15%), and the Americas and Oceania (7%). The largest groups included persons of Algerian, Moroccan, Portuguese

and Romanian origin. These demographic characteristics contribute to the cultural diversity of contemporary French society and provide an important context for policies promoting intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

Table n°1: Immigrant and foreign population in France by sex and age (latest available estimates, 2023–2024)

	Foreign population	Immigrant population
Men	51.0%	49.5%
Women	49.0%	50.5%
Age groups		
Less than 15 years	17.2%	6.1%
15–24 years	10.1%	8.9%
25–54 years	47.9%	53.8%
55 years and over	24.8%	31.2%
Number (millions)	5.6	8.2
Share of total population	8.2%	12.1%

Source: INSEE, Immigrés et étrangers en France, population estimates as of 1 January 2024

Language acquisition remains a central component of social inclusion and cultural participation. [The French Office for Immigration and Integration \(OFII\)](#) oversees integration pathways combining language training and civic education. According to recent estimates, a significant proportion of immigrants continue to experience difficulties in written or spoken French, underlining the importance of language policies for social participation. In this context, cultural institutions, public libraries and local cultural centres increasingly contribute to language learning and integration through cultural mediation, reading programmes and multilingual resources. [The General Delegation for the French Language and the Languages of France \(DGLFLF\)](#) also supports initiatives promoting both mastery of French and linguistic diversity.

In recent years, language requirements have become increasingly prominent within French integration policy. [The Immigration Law of January 2024](#) strengthened linguistic requirements for access to certain residence permits and French nationality, introducing higher expected levels of French-language proficiency for long-term integration pathways. These measures have generated public debate regarding the balance between integration objectives and the risk of creating additional barriers for some migrant populations. More broadly, they illustrate the growing importance attributed to language acquisition as both a tool for social inclusion and a condition for full civic participation.

Cultural participation remains strongly stratified along socio-economic lines. As shown in Table n°2, attendance at museums, theatres, concerts and heritage sites varies significantly according to socio-professional status. Museum attendance reaches 72% among higher

socio-professional categories, compared with only 31% among working-class groups, while theatre attendance ranges from 58% to 18%. Similar disparities are observed across most forms of cultural participation. These inequalities have remained relatively stable over time despite the expansion of cultural provision, increased public funding and the growing availability of digital cultural content.

Table n°2: Cultural participation by socio-professional category in France (latest Ministry of Culture survey, 2022–2023)

Cultural activity (annual participation)	Higher socio-professional categories	Middle categories	Working-class categories
Museum attendance	72%	54%	31%
Theatre attendance	58%	37%	18%
Concert attendance	64%	45%	25%
Cinema attendance (at least once/year)	88%	81%	69%
Reading books regularly	74%	56%	39%
Visiting heritage sites	69%	52%	28%

Source: Ministère de la Culture, Department for Studies, Foresight and Statistics (DEPS), latest available surveys on cultural practices and participation (2022–2023).

These persistent disparities continue to shape French cultural policy. Since the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1959, cultural democratisation has sought to broaden access to cultural institutions and artistic practices. More recently, this objective has evolved towards a broader conception of cultural participation and cultural rights, recognising the legitimacy of diverse cultural practices and experiences.

Territorial inequalities constitute another major challenge. Although France benefits from an extensive network of cultural facilities developed through decentralisation policies (see chapter 1.2), access to cultural resources remains uneven between major metropolitan areas, rural territories and priority urban neighbourhoods (*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*). In response, public authorities have strengthened programmes aimed at underserved areas through cultural outreach initiatives, arts and cultural education programmes, mobile cultural projects and schemes such as the Micro-Folies network (see chapters 5.1 and 6.1)..

Social inclusion policies also intersect with broader objectives relating to representation and diversity. [The National Museum of the History of Immigration \(Palais de la Porte Dorée\)](#) plays a central role in documenting migration histories and fostering intercultural dialogue through exhibitions, research and educational activities. In the audiovisual sector, the [Images de la diversité fund](#), managed jointly by the Ministry of Culture, the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT) and the CNC, supports projects that improve the representation of France's social and cultural diversity on screen.

In recent years, public policies have increasingly adopted a cross-cutting approach to inclusion, recognising the cumulative effects of socio-economic disadvantage, territorial inequalities, migration background, disability and gender. Particular attention has been devoted to young people through the expansion of arts and cultural education programmes and initiatives designed to reduce barriers to cultural participation (see chapter 5.1).

Despite these efforts, significant structural inequalities persist in access to cultural institutions, participation in cultural life and representation within cultural production. Cultural participation remains closely correlated with educational attainment and income level, while access to cultural professions continues to reflect broader patterns of social stratification.

Overall, French cultural and social inclusion policy has evolved from a predominantly access-oriented model towards a broader framework combining cultural democratisation, cultural rights, territorial equity and representational diversity. Nevertheless, reducing persistent social inequalities in cultural participation remains one of the principal challenges facing French cultural policy.

2.7 Societal impacts of arts

Social cohesion has long been a central objective of French urban and territorial cultural policy. Cultural action is increasingly understood not only as a means of providing access to the arts, but also as a mechanism for reducing territorial inequalities, strengthening civic participation and supporting local development. This approach is primarily implemented through the *Politique de la ville*, France's cross-sectoral urban policy framework targeting disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Combining social, educational, economic and cultural measures, it seeks to reduce territorial inequalities and improve living conditions in areas facing concentrated socio-economic challenges. Since 2020, the policy has been coordinated by the [National Agency for Territorial Cohesion \(ANCT\)](#), which integrates cultural initiatives within broader urban, educational and social development strategies.

France currently counts 1,514 priority urban neighbourhoods (*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville – QPV*), representing approximately 5.6 million residents, or 8.3% of the national population. These territories are characterised by a younger demographic profile, with approximately 38% of residents under the age of 25, and by higher levels of socio-economic vulnerability than the national average (ANCT, ONPV, 2024; INSEE, 2023–2024).

Within these neighbourhoods, cultural interventions increasingly combine artistic and cultural education programmes, partnerships with schools, libraries, cultural centres and local associations, as well as participatory and community-based artistic initiatives. Examples

include artist residencies in schools and neighbourhood centres, participatory public art projects, community festivals, reading and media literacy programmes, and initiatives supported through the [Cités éducatives](#) framework, which integrates cultural activities into broader educational and social inclusion strategies. The Cités éducatives programme, launched in 2019, is a national initiative targeting disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods (quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville – QPV). It seeks to strengthen educational opportunities and social inclusion for children and young people from birth to adulthood through coordinated action involving schools, local authorities, public services, cultural institutions, associations and families. Cultural and artistic activities constitute one of the programme’s key components, alongside educational support, citizenship education and youth development. These actions reflect a gradual shift from a model primarily focused on access to cultural institutions towards a broader understanding of culture as a tool for social inclusion, empowerment and local development.

Despite sustained public investment, significant inequalities in cultural participation persist. Research conducted by the Ministry of Culture and INSEE continues to show that socio-economic status, educational attainment, mobility constraints and territorial disparities remain important determinants of cultural engagement. Residents of disadvantaged urban areas generally participate less frequently in many forms of cultural activity than the national average, despite the expansion of local cultural provision.

As shown in Table n°2 (see Section 2.6), engagement in cultural activities varies considerably according to socio-professional status. These disparities are particularly pronounced for activities traditionally associated with cultural institutions, such as museum visits, theatre attendance and heritage site visits, indicating that barriers to participation extend beyond the mere availability of cultural provision and remain closely linked to broader social and educational inequalities.

At the same time, participatory and co-creative approaches have gained increasing prominence within French cultural policy. Local initiatives are increasingly designed not only to broaden access to artistic experiences but also to foster civic engagement, collective expression and community involvement. This evolution reflects wider European trends that emphasise cultural rights, active participation and community arts as important contributors to social cohesion and democratic life.

Overall, the French experience suggests that cultural policy can make a meaningful contribution to social cohesion and local development when integrated with educational, social and territorial policies. However, the long-term impact of cultural interventions remains shaped by broader structural factors, including income inequalities, educational disparities and territorial segregation. As a result, cultural action is increasingly conceived as

one component of cross-sectoral strategies aimed at promoting inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable community development.

2.8 Cultural sustainability

Cultural sustainability has gradually become a cross-cutting principle of French cultural policy, extending beyond the preservation of heritage to encompass the long-term resilience of cultural institutions, artistic ecosystems and cultural participation. Rather than constituting a distinct policy field, it is embedded across several public policy objectives, including heritage protection, territorial cohesion, cultural rights and ecological transition. This integrated understanding reflects broader international developments promoted by UNESCO, which increasingly recognises culture as both a driver and an enabler of sustainable development, while the European Union has likewise incorporated culture into the implementation of the [European Green Deal](#) and the [New European Bauhaus initiative](#).

Heritage conservation remains the historical cornerstone of cultural sustainability in France. The Ministry of Culture devotes more than €1 billion annually to the conservation and restoration of heritage, making it one of the largest areas of cultural expenditure. Heritage conservation remains the historical cornerstone of cultural sustainability in France. The Ministry of Culture devotes more than €1 billion annually to the conservation and restoration of heritage. France possesses one of the world's richest heritage inventories, comprising 45,080 protected historic monuments (1 January 2024), more than 1,200 museums carrying the Musée de France label, and 54 properties inscribed on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#). Together, these assets form the backbone of France's long-term strategy for safeguarding cultural heritage and transmitting it to future generations.

More recently, ecological transition has become a major strategic priority for the cultural sector. In 2023, the Ministry of Culture adopted its [Guide for the Ecological Transition of Culture](#) (2023–2027), the first comprehensive national roadmap dedicated to integrating environmental objectives across all cultural sectors. The strategy is organised around five priorities: developing sustainable modes of artistic production, promoting environmentally responsible digital practices, reconciling heritage conservation with climate adaptation, preserving biodiversity, and reducing the environmental impact of audience mobility. Rather than treating sustainability solely as an environmental constraint, the roadmap presents it as an opportunity to transform cultural production and management practices.

The roadmap is accompanied by concrete financial instruments. Through the [France 2030 investment programme](#), the *Alternatives Vertes* scheme, launched in 2021, supports innovative projects designed to reduce the environmental impact of the cultural and creative industries, for example through eco-design, reuse of materials, lower-carbon production

methods, digital sobriety and improved energy efficiency. Since its creation, the scheme has mobilised more than €34 million, including nearly €9 million for 14 new projects selected under *Alternatives Vertes 2* in 2024. At the same time, carbon accounting has become compulsory for film productions receiving support from the [National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image \(CNC\)](#), while numerous initiatives encourage eco-design, the reuse of exhibition and stage materials, and the development of common environmental standards for museums, festivals and performing arts organisations. These measures illustrate the gradual institutionalisation of ecological criteria within cultural governance.

Cultural sustainability also relies on the resilience of territorial cultural ecosystems. Through the network of [Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs \(DRACs\)](#), local authorities and inter-municipal cooperation, France supports thousands of publicly funded cultural institutions, including museums, theatres, libraries, archives, art centres and music schools. This decentralised governance model seeks to guarantee access to cultural life throughout the national territory while preserving local cultural diversity. Nevertheless, significant territorial disparities persist (see chapters 1.2 and 6.2). [DEPS](#) studies consistently show that cultural facilities and participation rates remain considerably higher in large metropolitan areas than in rural or remote territories, making territorial equity an ongoing policy challenge. The social dimension of cultural sustainability is equally significant. French cultural policy increasingly emphasises participation, artistic and cultural education, cultural mediation and community engagement as essential conditions for the long-term vitality of cultural life. Programmes implemented in priority urban neighbourhoods (*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*) combine artistic creation with educational and social objectives through partnerships involving schools, local authorities, cultural institutions and civil society organisations. At the same time, ensuring equitable access to culture across the national territory remains a major challenge in light of the significant disparities in population density and the contrasting needs of metropolitan, rural and remote areas. This reflects a gradual evolution from policies primarily focused on democratising access to culture towards approaches that also recognise participation, cultural rights and local cultural initiatives as fundamental components of sustainable cultural development.

Despite these advances, cultural sustainability has not yet been institutionalised through a single integrated policy framework. Environmental, social, economic and territorial dimensions continue to be addressed through separate strategies and evaluated using different indicators produced by the [Ministry of Culture, the Department for Studies, Foresight, Statistics and Documentation \(DEPS\)](#), the [French Agency for Ecological Transition \(ADEME\)](#), and other public bodies. As a result, assessing the overall sustainability of the cultural sector remains methodologically complex.

Overall, France illustrates a progressive shift from a conception of sustainability centred primarily on heritage conservation towards a broader understanding encompassing environmental responsibility, territorial resilience and inclusive cultural participation. While this evolution has accelerated in recent years, particularly through the ecological transition strategy adopted by the Ministry of Culture, the principal challenge now lies in strengthening coordination across policy domains and developing integrated indicators capable of measuring the long-term sustainability of cultural ecosystems in line with UNESCO's culture and sustainable development agenda.

2.9 Other main cultural policy issues

While the previous sections have examined the principal dimensions of French cultural policy, several cross-cutting issues continue to influence policy debates without constituting distinct policy fields. Rather than introducing new policy priorities, these issues illustrate the increasing interdependence between culture and broader societal transformations.

Culture remains one of France's principal tourism assets, with museums, historic monuments, festivals and cultural landscapes attracting millions of domestic and international visitors each year. Beyond its economic contribution, cultural tourism raises important policy questions concerning the long-term preservation of heritage, visitor management and the balanced distribution of tourism across the national territory.

Recent initiatives have therefore sought to promote more sustainable approaches to cultural tourism by combining heritage conservation with territorial development. One example is the [Mission Patrimoine](#) (also known as *Mission Bern*), a national programme launched in 2018 to identify and support endangered heritage sites throughout France, with a particular focus on rural areas and smaller municipalities. The programme is partly financed through the [Loto du patrimoine](#), a national heritage lottery organised in partnership with the [Fondation du patrimoine](#) and the *Française des Jeux*, which raises funds for the restoration of vulnerable historic buildings and sites. Beyond heritage conservation, these initiatives contribute to local economic development, strengthen regional attractiveness and encourage a more balanced distribution of cultural tourism across the national territory.

Alongside broader sustainability objectives, climate change has become an increasingly important consideration for heritage conservation. Historic monuments, archaeological sites, museum collections and cultural landscapes are progressively exposed to risks associated with rising temperatures, flooding, coastal erosion and other extreme weather events.

Public authorities are therefore placing greater emphasis on preventive conservation, climate risk assessment and the adaptation of heritage management practices. This emerging dimension complements existing heritage policies by recognising that the long-term preservation of cultural assets depends not only on restoration and maintenance, but also on their capacity to withstand changing environmental conditions.

Overall, these issues illustrate the continuing evolution of French cultural policy beyond its traditional objectives of supporting artistic creation and preserving heritage. They also demonstrate that many of the challenges facing the cultural sector increasingly require coordinated responses across cultural, environmental and territorial policies, reflecting the growing complexity of cultural governance in the twenty-first century.

3. Cultural and creative sectors

The cultural and creative sectors occupy a central place in France's cultural ecosystem, combining cultural, economic and territorial dimensions. They encompass a broad range of domains, including heritage, museums, archives and libraries; the performing and visual arts; music; architecture; publishing and the press; audiovisual and interactive media; design and other creative services; as well as cultural and creative tourism. Together, these sectors contribute to cultural diversity and artistic creation while also generating employment, economic value and innovation.

French public policy has long combined support for artistic creation with regulatory and economic instruments aimed at sustaining cultural production and circulation. In recent decades, greater attention has also been paid to the contribution of cultural and creative activities to competitiveness, international attractiveness and territorial development. The resulting ecosystem combines public funding, sector-specific regulation, market dynamics and increasingly internationalised value chains.

While architecture is also shaped by broader policies relating to urban planning, construction and the built environment, this chapter focuses on its cultural, artistic and professional dimensions as recognised within French cultural policy. More generally, significant differences persist between sectors in terms of economic models, employment structures, levels of public support and exposure to digital transformation. These disparities are being reshaped by broader structural changes, including the growing role of digital platforms, the globalisation of cultural markets and evolving patterns of production, distribution and consumption.

The following sections examine the main cultural and creative sectors in France, focusing on their structure, economic and institutional organisation, policy frameworks and ongoing transformations.

3.1 Heritage

Heritage remains one of the most important domains of cultural participation in France and continues to play a central role in cultural policy, national identity and territorial development. Public engagement with heritage is reflected in the sustained popularity of initiatives such as the [European Heritage Days](#), launched in 1984 and coordinated by the Ministry of Culture, which attract millions of visits each year across thousands of sites nationwide.

France's heritage sector is characterised by a dense ecosystem of public institutions, local authorities, heritage professionals and associations involved in the identification, protection and promotion of cultural assets. According to the [Ministry of Culture](#), as of 31 December 2023, France had 45,080 immovable properties protected as historic monuments, including 14,317 classified and 30,763 registered monuments. In addition, more than 280,000 movable objects were protected, including nearly 125,000 classified and over 155,000 registered objects.

Data Box n°1 : French heritage

Indicator	Latest available data (2023/2024)
Protected historic monuments (<i>monuments historiques</i>)	45,080 immovable properties (2023)
Classified monuments (<i>classés</i>)	14,317
Registered monuments (<i>inscrits</i>)	30,763
Protected movable objects	More than 280,000
UNESCO World Heritage properties	53 properties
Museums holding the <i>Musée de France</i> designation	More than 1,200
European Heritage Days	More than 15,000 sites open to the public each year

Sources: Ministry of Culture (*Chiffres clés de la culture 2025*; *Base Mérimée*; POP – *Plateforme ouverte du patrimoine*); UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Heritage is also closely linked to cultural tourism. Major museums, monuments and historic sites remain central to France's international attractiveness, while regional heritage contributes to local development and territorial visibility. However, this strong tourism dimension also creates vulnerabilities, particularly in highly visited sites exposed to visitor pressure, security concerns and fluctuations in international tourism.

French heritage policy is not limited to conservation. It increasingly emphasises access, interpretation and territorial balance. This orientation is reflected in the decentralisation of major cultural institutions and the strengthening of regional cultural infrastructure, with examples such as the [Louvre-Lens](#), the [MuCEM](#) (Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations) in Marseille and the [Centre Pompidou-Metz](#). These institutions illustrate a broader strategy aimed at redistributing cultural resources beyond Paris and reinforcing the role of heritage in regional development.

Legislative developments have further consolidated this framework. The [Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage of 2016](#) strengthened the protection of cultural assets and introduced the unified designation of “remarkable heritage site” ([site patrimonial remarquable](#), SPR), replacing several previously distinct protection regimes. SPRs provide a common framework for the protection, management and enhancement of areas of significant architectural, urban, archaeological, artistic or landscape interest (see chapter 4.2.2 *Legislation on culture and natural heritage*). Nearly 1,000 SPRs are currently designated across France, reflecting the territorial scope of this place-based approach to heritage protection. integrated UNESCO World Heritage principles into French law and introduced the unified designation of “site patrimonial remarquable”. This reform aimed to simplify previously fragmented protection regimes and improve regulatory coherence.

Intangible cultural heritage has also become an increasingly significant dimension of heritage policy, in line with the [UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#). France has developed recognition mechanisms for living heritage practices, including the gastronomic meal of the French as a social and festive food tradition, *compagnonnage* as a system for transmitting craft skills and professional knowledge, *fest-noz* as a Breton collective music and dance practice, and Corsican polyphonic singing traditions. This reflects a broader understanding of heritage as encompassing not only monuments and collections, but also practices, skills and forms of collective memory.

Digitalisation represents another major transformation of the heritage sector. It includes the digitisation of museum collections and archival holdings, the development of online catalogues and large-scale digital libraries, as well as new forms of virtual access to monuments and exhibitions. For example, *Joconde*, the collective catalogue of the collections of France’s officially recognised “Musées de France”, contains more than 700,000 records covering a wide range of objects, including archaeology, fine arts and ethnology, most of them illustrated. These records are accessible through [POP](#) (Plateforme ouverte du patrimoine), the Ministry of Culture’s open heritage platform. Other major initiatives include [Gallica](#), the digital library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and France’s participation in [Europeana](#), the European platform providing access to digitised cultural heritage resources. These developments expand access to heritage resources but also raise challenges related to long-term preservation, metadata standardisation, discoverability and cultural sovereignty.

Overall, French heritage policy combines an extensive legal protection framework with a dense network of national and local institutions and growing recognition of intangible and digital heritage. Its main challenges now lie in reconciling conservation with public access, managing tourism pressures at highly visited sites, reducing territorial disparities and ensuring the long-term preservation and accessibility of digitised heritage resources.

3.2 Archives and libraries

Archives and libraries form a central part of France's cultural and knowledge infrastructure, ensuring the preservation, organisation and transmission of documentary and bibliographic heritage. Beyond their traditional conservation functions, they also support access to culture and information, education, research and, increasingly, digital inclusion and mediation.

France has an extensive and territorially organised public archival network. According to [FranceArchives'](#) latest consolidated data, covering the period up to 2024, the network comprises three services with national competence, 99 departmental archive services, 17 regional archive services and nearly 600 municipal and inter-municipal archive services (FranceArchives, 2025). This territorial structure reflects the decentralised organisation of public archives in France and supports the preservation of documentary heritage at both national and local levels (see chapter 1.2).

At national level, the Archives nationales preserve records produced by central government institutions and documents of major historical significance. They operate alongside other specialised archival institutions, including the Archives diplomatiques of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which preserve France's diplomatic archives, and the Service historique de la Défense, responsible for military and defence archives. Digitisation has substantially transformed access to archival holdings, with increasing volumes of inventories and digitised records made available through institutional platforms and through [FranceArchives](#), the national portal providing access to archival resources held across the country.

Libraries constitute one of the most extensive local cultural networks in France. Municipal libraries and inter-municipal library networks, managed jointly at the level of groups of municipalities, form the core of this infrastructure and play a particularly important role in ensuring territorial access to culture. Their functions have expanded well beyond book lending: many now provide digital resources, internet access, educational and cultural activities, training workshops and services supporting digital inclusion.

This territorial coverage is particularly extensive. According to the Ministry of Culture's "Library Mapping" data, France counted 15,500 libraries in 2022. Public reading facilities were present in 40% of municipalities, while 85% of the population lived in a municipality equipped with such a facility and 97% lived within a ten-minute drive of one (Ministry of Culture, "[Cartographie des bibliothèques](#)", 2022). Libraries therefore constitute the country's most widespread local cultural infrastructure, although disparities remain in opening hours, staffing levels and the range of services available across territories.

The Bibliothèque nationale de France ([BnF](#)) occupies a central position within this ecosystem. As the national library, it is responsible for collecting, preserving and providing access to France's published heritage through the legal deposit system and extensive historical collections. Its holdings include books, manuscripts, prints, photographs, maps, sound recordings, and audiovisual materials. Its digital library, [Gallica](#), provides online access to around 10 million digitised documents, a threshold reached in 2023, illustrating the growing integration of physical and digital access within national library policy (BnF, 2023).

Archives and libraries are also central to France's broader digital cultural strategy. Long-term digitisation programmes have expanded remote access to collections and documentary resources, while common portals and interoperable catalogues have facilitated the circulation of information across institutions. These developments have transformed both professional practices and public access, but they also create challenges related to long-term digital preservation, metadata interoperability, technological obsolescence and the sustainability of digital infrastructures.

At the same time, libraries face growing expectations as multifunctional public spaces. Their expanding roles in cultural mediation, education, social inclusion and digital access are not always matched by equivalent increases in staffing and financial resources, particularly at local level. Archives similarly face the dual challenge of preserving rapidly growing volumes of born-digital records while maintaining access to extensive physical collections.

Overall, archives and libraries are evolving from predominantly custodial institutions towards more open and service-oriented infrastructures. Preservation remains a core mission, but it is increasingly combined with digital access, cultural mediation, territorial outreach and support for participation in cultural and knowledge-based life.

3.3 Performing arts

The performing arts constitute a major component of French cultural policy and encompass theatre, dance, music, opera, circus and other forms of live performance. The sector is characterised by sustained public intervention and a diverse ecosystem of publicly funded institutions, independent companies, festivals, producers and venues operating at national and local levels.

Public support for the performing arts is a long-standing feature of French cultural policy, closely linked to the objectives of cultural democratisation and decentralisation (see chapter 1.2). The State, primarily through the Ministry of Culture and its Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (Directions régionales des affaires culturelles, DRACs), supports artistic creation, production and dissemination. Local and regional authorities also play a major role

in funding venues, festivals, companies, and cultural infrastructure, making the sector strongly dependent on cooperation across government levels.

France has developed a dense network of publicly supported performing arts institutions. It includes national and territorial institutions operating under Ministry of Culture labels or designations, such as national theatres, national drama centres (centres dramatiques nationaux), national choreographic centres (centres chorégraphiques nationaux) and national stages (scènes nationales), alongside municipal theatres, opera houses, concert venues and other specialised structures. Independent companies and project-based organisations active across theatre, dance, music and circus complement this institutional network.

Festivals occupy an important place in the French performing arts landscape. According to the Ministry of Culture's 2023 National Mapping of Festivals, nearly 7,300 festivals held an edition in France in 2019; 22% were classified as performing arts festivals, while more than four in ten were music festivals (Ministry of Culture, DEPS, 2023).

The case of Avignon is particularly illustrative of the sector's diversity and internal tensions. The internationally recognised [Festival d'Avignon](#), founded in 1947, is a major publicly supported institution presenting a curated programme of theatre, dance and other contemporary performing arts. Alongside it, the [Festival Off d'Avignon](#) has developed as a distinct and more open festival ecosystem, bringing together a large number of independent companies and venues each summer. The coexistence of the "In" and the "Off" reflects the broader structure of the French performing arts sector, combining strong public institutions with a highly fragmented independent scene. While the Off provides significant opportunities for artistic visibility, professional networking and the circulation of productions, it also exposes companies to substantial financial risks linked to venue rental, accommodation, communication costs and intense competition for audiences and programmers. Avignon therefore illustrates both the vitality of France's festival-based performing arts economy and the structural inequalities that can affect independent artistic production. Beyond artistic presentation, festivals contribute to the circulation of works and artists and can strengthen cultural provision in territories with limited permanent infrastructure. Their economic and territorial effects nevertheless vary considerably according to their scale, funding model and local context.

Employment in the performing arts is characterised by a combination of permanent and project-based work. A distinctive feature of the French system is the specific unemployment insurance regime applicable to eligible intermittent workers in the entertainment sector (intermittents du spectacle) including artists and technicians employed under short-term contracts. This system supports employment continuity in a sector structured around discontinuous periods of work, while remaining the subject of recurring debates concerning access, labour insecurity and social protection. (see chapter 2.3),

The performing arts were particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis, as venue closures, event cancellations and restrictions on public gatherings disrupted both artistic activity and employment. Emergency support included general measures such as the short-time work scheme and the solidarity fund, alongside sector-specific assistance for performing arts organisations and festivals. A particularly significant measure was the so-called “année blanche” (“white year”) for intermittent entertainment workers, which extended unemployment benefit entitlements until 31 August 2021 in response to the collapse in employment opportunities. These measures helped sustain institutions and workers during the crisis, but recovery varied across different parts of the sector. The crisis also intensified existing concerns regarding the economic vulnerability of independent companies, employment conditions and the resilience of project-based production models.

Digital technologies have also affected the production and dissemination of live performance through streaming, recorded performances and hybrid formats. However, these forms of access have generally complemented rather than replaced physical attendance, which remains central to both the artistic experience and the economic organisation of the sector (see chapter 2.4).

Overall, the French performing arts sector combines strong public intervention, a dense institutional network and a distinctive employment framework. Its main challenges concern the sustainability of artistic production, employment insecurity, inequalities in territorial access and the capacity of institutions and independent operators to adapt to changing economic, social and environmental conditions.

Data Box n°2: Structural indicators for the performing arts in France

Indicator	Value	Reference year
National stages (<i>scènes nationales</i>)	78	2024
Designated multidisciplinary venues (<i>scènes conventionnées d'intérêt national</i>)	114	
Contemporary music venues (<i>scènes de musiques actuelles, SMAC</i>)	96	
National drama centres (<i>centres dramatiques nationaux, CDN</i>)	38	
National choreographic centres (<i>centres chorégraphiques nationaux, CCN</i>)	19	
National centres for choreographic development (<i>centres de développement chorégraphique nationaux, CDCN</i>)	16	

Labelled permanent orchestras	15	
National opera houses	11	
National centres for musical creation (<i>centres nationaux de création musicale</i> , CNCM)	8	
National centres for street arts and public space (<i>centres nationaux des arts de la rue et de l'espace public</i> , CNAREP)	18	
National circus centres (<i>Pôles nationaux cirque</i>)	14	
National puppet arts centres (<i>centres nationaux de la marionnette</i> , CNMa)	7	
Festivals in France	Nearly 7,300 festivals held an edition	2019
Performing arts festivals	22% of festivals recorded in the national mapping	

Source: [Ministry of Culture, Department for Studies, Foresight and Statistics \(DEPS\), Key Figures: Cultural Statistics \(2025\)](#); [Ministry of Culture, lists of nationally labelled cultural institutions \(2024\)](#); [National Mapping of Festivals \(2023\)](#).

3.4 Visual arts and crafts

The visual arts and crafts sector in France encompasses a diverse range of practices, including contemporary art, painting, sculpture, photography and other forms of visual creation, alongside traditional and contemporary crafts (*métiers d'art*). The sector lies at the intersection of artistic creation, cultural heritage and economic activity and combines publicly supported institutions with independent artistic practices and commercial markets.

Public policy for the visual arts is primarily led by the Ministry of Culture through the Directorate-General for Artistic Creation (*Direction générale de la création artistique*, [DGCA](#)), in cooperation with its Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRACs), local authorities and a network of specialised institutions (see chapter 1.2). Public intervention supports artistic creation, production, exhibitions, residencies, acquisitions and territorial dissemination, while commercial galleries, art fairs, auction houses and collectors play a central role in the market circulation of works.

A distinctive feature of the French system is its territorially distributed infrastructure for contemporary art. The Regional Contemporary Art Funds (Fonds régionaux d'art contemporain, [FRAC](#)), created from 1982 as part of the cultural decentralisation process, build public collections of contemporary art and support their circulation across the regions. They operate alongside contemporary art centres, art schools, museums and other exhibition spaces. Together, these institutions contribute to artistic production and public access beyond the major metropolitan centres, although resources and international visibility remain unevenly distributed.

The visual arts sector combines public support with a highly internationalised commercial market. Paris remains the principal French centre for major galleries, auction houses and international art fairs. More broadly, France occupies a leading position within the European Union art market: according to the [Art Basel](#) and [UBS Global Art Market Report](#) 2025, it accounted for 7% of global art sales by value in 2024, ranked as the world's fourth-largest art market and represented more than half of the EU market. This creates a marked contrast with the territorial objectives of public cultural policy: while publicly supported networks seek to decentralise artistic production and access, the country's principal commercial art-market institutions and international events remain concentrated in Paris.

Artists' working conditions remain a major policy challenge. In France, many visual artists operate under the specific social-security framework for artistes-auteurs, (see chapter 2.3) which covers creators of original works and differs from the intermittent employment regime applicable to many performing arts workers. Their income may combine sales of works, copyright and related artistic remuneration, public or private commissions, grants, teaching and other professional activities. This diversity of income sources reflects the fragmented economic structure of visual artistic careers and contributes to significant disparities between artists according to their market position, professional networks and access to institutional support. Public mechanisms, including creation grants, residencies, public commissions and institutional acquisitions, seek to support artistic activity but do not eliminate these structural inequalities.

The métiers d'art (artistic crafts) constitute a distinctive component of this landscape. In France, they form a legally recognised professional field: the official list established in 2015 identifies 281 métiers d'art across 16 areas of activity. These include highly specialised skills such as cabinetmaking and marquetry, ceramics, glassmaking, metalwork, jewellery, textile and leather crafts, instrument making and the restoration of cultural heritage. The sector therefore encompasses both long-established techniques and contemporary creative practices, occupying a particular position at the intersection of cultural heritage, artistic creation and economic production.

The transmission of artistic craft skills (métiers d'art) relies on a diverse ecosystem combining specialised education, apprenticeship and workshop-based learning. It includes specialised schools such as the [École Boulle](#), long-standing traditions of vocational transmission associated with compagnonnage, and dedicated schemes for rare skills. Among these, the [Maîtres d'art-Élèves programme](#), initiated by the Ministry of Culture in 1994 and managed since 2012 by the Institut pour les Savoir-Faire Français, supports the transmission of exceptional expertise from recognised professionals to selected practitioners. This plural system reflects the diversity of the sector, from established craft professions to highly specialised skills that may not be sustained through conventional training pathways.

Public visibility and engagement are also supported through initiatives such as the European Artistic Crafts Days ([Journées Européennes des Métiers d'Art](#), JEMA), which open workshops and other professional spaces to the public through demonstrations, exhibitions and encounters with practitioners. In 2025, the event recorded 1.7 million visits across 5,111 events in France, illustrating significant public interest in artistic crafts and the transmission of specialised skills.

Public policy has increasingly focused on the preservation and transmission of craft skills, professional training and the visibility of métiers d'art. However, the sector faces structural challenges linked to the economic viability of small workshops, access to training, generational renewal and the transmission of highly specialised skills. These issues are particularly significant where expertise depends on long periods of apprenticeship or where local production ecosystems have weakened.

Digital technologies have also transformed the circulation and mediation of visual art. Online catalogues, digital exhibition tools, social media and specialised sales platforms have expanded opportunities for visibility and access, while also increasing dependence on digital intermediaries. For artists and institutions, these developments raise questions concerning discoverability, copyright, remuneration and the long-term preservation of digitally produced works.

Overall, the French visual arts and crafts sector is characterised by the coexistence of a territorially distributed public infrastructure, fragmented forms of artistic employment and an internationally connected commercial market concentrated primarily in Paris. Its main policy challenges concern artists' economic conditions, territorial inequalities in visibility and resources, and the transmission and sustainability of specialised craft skills.

3.5 Cultural arts and creative industries

3.5.1 General developments

The cultural and creative industries occupy a distinctive position within French cultural policy, at the intersection of artistic creation, economic activity and public regulation. The French approach has long combined recognition of culture's economic contribution with the principle that cultural goods and services cannot be treated solely according to ordinary market logics. This dual perspective was notably expressed in the early 1980s under Minister of Culture Jack Lang, whose formulation “economy and culture, same fight” reflected a growing policy emphasis on the economic dimension of cultural activity without abandoning objectives of cultural diversity, artistic freedom and public access.

Since the late twentieth century, this approach has increasingly intersected with international and European debates on the “creative economy”. In France, however, the expansion of market-oriented cultural and creative activities has continued to coexist with extensive public intervention through regulation, sector-specific funding mechanisms, fiscal measures and support for non-market artistic production.

The scope of cultural and creative industries varies according to the statistical and policy framework used. In French public debate, the term generally covers sectors in which cultural content is produced and circulated on an industrial or commercial scale, including publishing and the press, cinema and audiovisual media, recorded music and video games. Broader definitions of the cultural and creative sectors may also include architecture, design, advertising, performing and visual arts, heritage and crafts. These differences in perimeter are important when comparing estimates of economic output, employment or value added.

The growing strategic importance attached to the cultural and creative industries has also been reflected in substantial cross-sectoral investment. According to the Ministry of Culture's [Cultural and Creative Industries overview](#) (2026), EUR 1 billion in State investment has been mobilised for the sector, including EUR 400 million under the CCI acceleration strategy financed through the fourth [Programme d'investissements d'avenir](#) (PIA 4), a national investment programme supporting research, innovation and strategic sectors, and EUR 600 million through the Culture component of [France 2030](#), the EUR 54 billion national investment plan launched in 2021 to accelerate innovation and the transformation of strategic sectors by 2030.

French policy towards these sectors combines general cultural objectives with specialised regulatory and financial instruments. Sector-specific public bodies, including the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée ([CNC](#)), the Centre national du livre ([CNL](#)) and the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#)), support creation, production and circulation through

mechanisms adapted to their respective fields. These range from grants and selective support schemes to sector-specific funding and redistribution mechanisms. Other instruments include reduced VAT rates for certain cultural goods and services, tax credits, the fixed book price system and credit guarantees for cultural enterprises.

Founded in 2019, the [Club we are](#) gathers 1,450 members and 1,000 companies from the creative, cultural and digital industries. The club comprises two venues in Paris and Lille, conceived as places to bring together executives, entrepreneurs, investors, artists and creators and support the dynamism of the cultural and creative ecosystems and foster synergies at national and international level. The club also initiated the association [We Are Creative](#) which brings together major stakeholders, notably professional unions and collective management organisations from public and private sectors like ADAGP, Unifrance, UPFI, SNJV, SNE, SNEP, ADAMI, SACEM, Ekoscènes (see chapter 7.2.1.). The association coordinated the [Panorama des industries culturelles et créatives 2025](#), a key study to comprehend the socio-economic actual impacts of these industries, which had their global added value increased by 21% from 2019 to 2024.

Digital transformation has become a major structural challenge across the cultural industries. Streaming services, online platforms and algorithmic recommendation systems have reshaped production, distribution and access, particularly in audiovisual media and music. These developments have intensified policy debates concerning the remuneration of creators, market concentration, the visibility of French and European works and the capacity of national support systems to adapt to globalised digital intermediaries.

Overall, the French approach to cultural and creative industries seeks to reconcile market dynamics with sustained public intervention. A major policy challenge is to adapt this long-standing model to increasingly globalised and platform-based value chains without weakening its commitment to cultural diversity and artistic creation.

3.5.2 Books and press

Books and the press occupy an important position within the French cultural industries, but they are shaped by distinct economic models and policy instruments. The book sector combines commercial publishing and retail activity with strong regulatory measures intended to preserve diversity in production and distribution, while press policy places particular emphasis on pluralism, access to information and the sustainability of news media.

The French book sector includes large publishing groups alongside independent publishers, distributors and an extensive network of bookshops. Market concentration remains an important structural issue, particularly in publishing and distribution, while independent actors continue to play a significant role in maintaining editorial diversity and local access to books.

A defining feature of the regulatory framework is the 1981 fixed book price law ([loi Lang](#)), extended to digital books in 2011. Under this system, the publisher or importer determines the retail price of a book, with only limited discounts permitted in most circumstances. The measure was designed to restrict price-based competition between retailers and to preserve a diverse bookselling network. It remains one of the most distinctive instruments of French cultural regulation.

Public support is structured in particular through the Centre national du livre ([CNL](#)), which supports different parts of the book ecosystem, including authors, translators, publishers, bookshops and literary events. Its interventions seek to support creation and translation, editorial diversity, access to books and the circulation of French-language literature in France and internationally. These mechanisms operate alongside other forms of public intervention. Books benefit from a reduced VAT rate of 5.5%, applicable to qualifying works in both physical and digital formats and extended to audiobooks under the relevant fiscal criteria (French Tax Administration, BOFiP, updated 21 August 2024). Territorial authorities also implement their own book policies. For example, the Île-de-France Region supports independent bookshops with projects involving stock development, creation, takeover, relocation or renovation, and runs a regional writers-in-residence programme combining support for authors with literary activities in host organisations (Île-de-France Region).

Digital transformation has diversified book formats and distribution channels without displacing print as the dominant format in France. The growth of online retail has nevertheless intensified competition between physical bookshops and major e-commerce platforms, leading to further regulatory intervention. Since October 2023, online orders containing new books worth less than €35 have been subject to a minimum delivery charge of €3; for orders of €35 or more, delivery charges must remain above zero (Order of 4 April 2023, [Arrêté du 4 avril 2023 relatif au montant minimal de tarification du service de livraison du livre](#)). This measure illustrates the continuing adaptation of the French regulatory model to digital distribution and its objective of preserving a geographically diverse bookselling network.

The press sector faces a different set of structural pressures. It encompasses national and regional newspapers, magazines, specialist publications and digital news media, with business models increasingly combining print and digital subscriptions, advertising and other forms of revenue. The long-term decline of print circulation and the migration of advertising expenditure towards global digital platforms have placed sustained pressure on traditional press models.

Public support for the press is a long-standing feature of French media policy and is primarily intended to preserve pluralism and access to political and general information. The system combines direct aid schemes with fiscal and distribution-related support. In 2024, the Ministry of Culture allocated EUR 23.4 million in pluralism aid to 376 press titles ([Ministry of](#)

[Culture, Public support for the press](#), 2025). Other mechanisms include support for press distribution and the Strategic Fund for Press Development (*Fonds stratégique pour le développement de la presse*, FSDP), which supports investment and innovation projects, including digital transformation.

Digitalisation has also transformed the relationship between press publishers and online platforms. France was the first EU Member State to transpose the neighbouring right for press publishers established by [Directive \(EU\) 2019/790](#), through [Law No. 2019-775 of 24 July 2019](#) on the creation of a neighbouring right for press agencies and publishers. The new framework requires digital platforms to negotiate remuneration for the online reuse of protected press content, but its implementation has generated significant disputes. A conflict with Google is particularly illustrative: following several years of proceedings over negotiation conditions, the [French Competition Authority](#) fined the company EUR 250 million in March 2024 for failing to comply with commitments made binding in 2022 concerning the application of neighbouring rights. The case illustrates the difficulties involved in translating a formal intellectual property right into effective bargaining power and remuneration for press publishers in a platform-dominated digital environment.

Overall, the book and press sectors illustrate contrasting forms of cultural regulation, but recent developments have increasingly brought them together around a common concern: the concentration of ownership and its potential implications for editorial independence and pluralism. This debate intensified following Vivendi's acquisition of Lagardère in 2023 (respectively a major French media and entertainment company and a diversified business active notably in publishing, media and travel retail). At the time of the transaction, Vivendi was controlled by Bolloré, according to the European Commission's assessment of the merger. The acquisition brought [Hachette Livre](#), one of France's largest publishing groups, into a corporate group with major interests across the media and cultural industries. The European Commission authorised the acquisition subject to conditions, including the divestment of the publishing company Editis and the magazine *Gala*, in response to competition concerns in publishing and press markets.

The issue acquired renewed prominence in April 2026 following a major crisis at [Grasset](#), a prestigious publishing house within Hachette Livre. After the removal of its long-standing chief executive, Olivier Nora, more than 130 authors and public intellectuals announced that they would leave the publisher, publicly framing the dispute as a threat to editorial independence and freedom of creation. The controversy transformed longstanding concerns about media and publishing concentration into a broader debate over whether existing competition rules and cultural policy instruments are sufficient to protect editorial autonomy when ownership extends across publishing, news media and other cultural industries.

These developments highlight an emerging challenge for French cultural policy: safeguarding diversity may increasingly require attention not only to market competition and sector-specific support, but also to the relationship between ownership structures, editorial independence and freedom of creation.

3.5.3 Audiovisual and interactive media

The audiovisual and interactive media sector occupies a strategic position within the French cultural industries. It encompasses cinema, television, radio, on-demand audiovisual services, animation and video games, bringing together public service media, private broadcasters, independent producers, digital platforms and interactive media companies. Public intervention remains particularly significant, combining sector-specific financing mechanisms, content regulation and support for production.

The French audiovisual landscape is structured around public service media, private broadcasters and an increasingly important range of on-demand services. [France Télévisions](#) and [Radio France](#) remain central public operators, alongside [Arte France](#), while commercial broadcasters and global streaming services occupy a major position in the distribution and financing of audiovisual content. The growth of on-demand services has significantly reshaped patterns of access to audiovisual content and increased the role of global platforms within the French media landscape.

Cinema remains one of the most distinctive areas of French cultural policy. In 2024, French cinemas recorded 181.5 million admissions, while French films accounted for 44.8% of admissions, according to the National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, [CNC](#)). In the same year, 309 films were approved by the CNC, the highest level recorded in its annual production statistics (CNC, 2025). These indicators reflect both the scale of cinema attendance and the high level of production activity within the French system.

Cinema also occupies a distinctive place in French cultural life and international cultural visibility. France hosts a broad range of film festivals, from internationally prominent events such as the [Cannes Film Festival](#) to specialised festivals devoted to animation, documentary film, short films and particular genres or audiences. These events contribute to public access, professional circulation and the international visibility of films. French cinema also benefits from structured international promotion through [Unifrance](#), the organisation responsible for promoting French films and audiovisual works abroad. According to Unifrance's preliminary estimates, French films generated 42.5 million admissions and EUR 272 million in box-office receipts in foreign cinemas in 2025 (Unifrance, 2026). This combination of domestic exhibition, festival circulation and structured international promotion helps

explain the particularly prominent position of cinema within French cultural policy and its broader international cultural influence.

A central feature of the French system is the redistributive financing model administered by the CNC. Its resources are notably derived from sector-specific taxes linked to cinema admissions, television services and the distribution of audiovisual content, including on-demand services. These revenues are redistributed through automatic and selective support schemes for film and audiovisual creation, production, distribution and cinema exhibition. Automatic support is generally linked to the previous economic performance of eligible works or companies and is reinvested in new projects, while selective schemes allocate funding according to cultural, artistic or sector-specific criteria.

One of the best-known selective mechanisms is the *avance sur recettes* (advance on box-office receipts), created in 1959. It provides funding to feature-film projects selected primarily on artistic grounds, generally before production, with the aim of supporting ambitious or distinctive works that may face difficulties securing sufficient market financing. Although formally conceived as an advance repayable from future receipts, it functions as a major instrument of cultural policy by enabling projects to be assessed on their artistic qualities rather than solely on their expected commercial performance. The mechanism illustrates a broader principle of the French model: revenues generated by the circulation and consumption of audiovisual works contribute to financing future creation.

The expansion of global streaming platforms requires a significant adaptation of this regulatory framework. Under the 2021 rules governing on-demand audiovisual media services (*services de médias audiovisuels à la demande*, SMAD), services targeting the French market can be required to contribute to the financing of European works and works of French original expression (*œuvres d'expression originale française*, EOF). According to the French Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication ([Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique](#), Arcom), for subscription video-on-demand services falling within the scope of the rules, the contribution is generally set at a minimum of 20% of net annual turnover generated in France, rising to 25% where at least one film is made available less than twelve months after its theatrical release in France. At least 85% of the relevant expenditure must be devoted to EOF works (Arcom, [Conventionner ou déclarer un SMAD](#)). The framework has therefore integrated major international streaming services into the financing of French and European audiovisual and cinematographic production, extending a central principle of the French model beyond domestic broadcasters.

Beyond production financing, French regulation also addresses the visibility of French and European works within on-demand services. Under [Decree No. 2021-793 of 22 June 2021 on on-demand audiovisual media services](#), the catalogues of services falling within its scope

must include at least 60% European works and 40% works of French original expression (*œuvres d'expression originale française*, EOF). The framework also requires services to give effective prominence to European and EOF works, rather than merely making them available in the catalogue. These provisions illustrate how French audiovisual policy has extended beyond financing production to address the conditions under which works are exposed and promoted within digital distribution environments.

Video games constitute a distinct and increasingly significant component of the French interactive media sector. The French market generated EUR 5.856 billion in revenue in 2025, according to the *2025 French Video Game Market Report* published by the French trade association representing video game publishers ([Syndicat des éditeurs de logiciels de loisirs](#), SELL, 2026). This figure refers to the value of the French consumer market rather than to the turnover of French production companies. On the production side, the *Annual Survey of Video Games in France – 2024 Edition* identified 980 companies, including 575 game development studios ([French Games Map](#), 2024). These figures illustrate a broad ecosystem combining major internationally active companies such as [Ubisoft](#), established studios such as [Quantic Dream](#), and a diverse independent development scene, alongside specialised training institutions.

Public policy has progressively recognised video games as both a field of cultural creation and an economic industry. The Video Game Tax Credit ([Crédit d'impôt jeu vidéo](#), CIJV) is a fiscal incentive designed to support the development of eligible games by reducing part of the production costs borne by companies established in France. Eligibility is subject to cultural and creative criteria, linking economic support to the contribution of projects to European cultural creation. Alongside this mechanism, the Video Game Support Fund ([Fonds d'aide au jeu vidéo](#), FAJV), administered by the CNC, provides selective funding for projects at different stages of development, including writing, pre-production and production. This combination of fiscal and selective support reflects the hybrid position of video games within French cultural policy, at the intersection of artistic creation, technological innovation and international market competition.

Overall, audiovisual and interactive media illustrate how French cultural policy has sought to adapt established support and regulatory principles to new forms of production and distribution. In the audiovisual sector, this has involved extending financing and visibility obligations to global on-demand services, while in video games public intervention combines selective cultural support with instruments designed to sustain production in a highly internationalised industry. The resulting framework reflects a broader evolution of the French model: rather than abandoning sector-specific intervention in response to digital transformation, it has progressively extended and adapted it to new actors, formats and modes of access.

3.5.4 Music

The music sector in France is a major component of the cultural and creative industries, encompassing recorded music, live performance, festivals, music publishing, collective rights management and digital distribution. It is characterised by a mixed model in which market dynamics coexist with substantial public intervention, regulatory mechanisms and a dense network of publicly supported institutions and venues.

Public intervention in the music sector involves the Ministry of Culture, its decentralised services, territorial authorities and a range of specialised institutions and publicly supported networks. A major institutional development was the establishment of the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#)) in 2020 as a public institution dedicated to the music and variety sector. Its statutory missions include supporting creation, production, distribution, live performance, export and professional development, as well as observation of the sector. The CNM also brought together missions previously carried out by several specialised bodies, contributing to greater coordination of public support within its field of competence.

Alongside the CNM, French music policy relies on a dense network of publicly supported and State-labelled institutions. According to the Ministry of Culture's [Chiffres clés 2025](#), this network includes 15 labelled permanent orchestras, 11 labelled opera houses — six regional national operas (*opéras nationaux en région*) and five lyric theatres of national interest (*théâtres lyriques d'intérêt national*) — as well as eight national centres for musical creation (*centres nationaux de création musicale*). In the field of contemporary music, 100 venues currently hold the contemporary music venues (*scènes de musiques actuelles*, SMAC) label across metropolitan and overseas France. Together, they present more than 6,000 events per season and provide performance opportunities for over 12,000 artists or groups, with particular attention to emerging artists (Ministry of Culture, *Scènes de musiques actuelles – SMAC*, 2025). Their remit covers creation, production and dissemination, support for professional and amateur musical practices, and cultural outreach. This labelled infrastructure illustrates the territorial dimension of French music policy and the coexistence of support for permanent institutions, musical creation and contemporary music.

The French recorded music market has returned to growth after the severe contraction experienced during the 2000s and early 2010s, with streaming now constituting its main source of revenue. According to the National Union of Phonographic Publishing ([SNEP](#)), *2024 Recorded Music Market Report: A Turning Point for the Music Industry* (2025), streaming revenues reached EUR 664 million in 2024, an increase of 9.5% compared with 2023. The same source reports 138 billion streams and 27 million streaming users, with subscription-based listening accounting for 80% of streams. These figures confirm the central role of streaming in the recovery and transformation of the French recorded music market.

This transformation has also intensified debates concerning the distribution of value between artists, authors, producers and platforms, as well as algorithmic visibility, fraud and artificial streaming. A significant recent policy development was the introduction, under the [2024 Finance Act](#), of a tax on paid and free online services providing access to recorded music. Effective from 1 January 2024, the revenue generated by this tax is allocated to the CNM, thereby extending the sector's financing mechanisms to online music distribution services (CNM, *Streaming Tax*, 2024; French Republic, *Finance Act for 2024*, 2023). Collective management organisations also remain central to the French music ecosystem. The Society of Authors, Composers and Music Publishers ([SACEM](#)) collects and distributes copyright revenues on behalf of authors, composers and publishers, and has expanded its activities in response to the growth of digital and cross-border uses (SACEM, *Annual Report 2024*, 2025).

Live music is another major component of the French music sector. According to the Centre national de la musique (CNM), [Live Performance in 2024](#) (2025), ticketing revenues for music and variety performances in venues outside the festival context reached nearly EUR 1.3 billion excluding tax in 2024, an increase of 16% compared with 2023. Festivals also form a substantial part of the French cultural landscape, but their economic sustainability has become a growing concern. According to the CNM's [Economic Situation of Contemporary Music and Variety Festivals Supported by the CNM](#) (2025), based on a panel of 68 festivals supported by the CNM, two-thirds ended their 2024 edition with a deficit. Between 2023 and 2024, their total costs increased by 6%, compared with a 4% rise in revenues, with artistic costs increasing by 9% and technical costs by 6%. These findings point to a widening imbalance between expenditure and revenue growth, despite continued increases in ticketing income.

French music policy combines direct public support, tax incentives and regulatory instruments. The CNM operates financial support programmes across recorded music, music publishing, live performance, independent record retail and international development. Its 2025 budget amounted to EUR 137.6 million and accompanied a major reform of its support system, including selective and automatic mechanisms ([CNM, 2025 Intervention Framework and Budget](#), 2024). Tax incentives complement these support mechanisms. France has three sector-specific music tax credits covering live music performance, phonographic production and music publishing (Ministry of Culture, [The Financing Strategy for the Music Sector in France](#), 2023).

Radio broadcasting quotas constitute a further regulatory mechanism. Under the rules monitored by the French Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication ([Arcom](#)), the general regime requires private radio stations to devote at least 40% of their popular music programming during significant listening hours to French-language songs, at least half of which must come from new talent or new productions. Alternative regimes apply to specific station formats, including stations specialising in young talent, musical heritage

and musical discovery (Arcom, *Song Quotas on the Radio*, 2026). These obligations are intended to promote French-language repertoire and the exposure of new talent and productions.

International circulation is an important dimension of the French music sector. The CNM supports the international development of music professionals and projects, while the [Institut français](#) contributes to the international mobility and visibility of artists through the French cultural network abroad. Recent export data point to the scale of this circulation. According to the CNM's [2025 Export Certifications: French Productions Excel Internationally](#) (2026), 758 singles and 57 albums produced in France, involving 440 artists, received Gold, Platinum or Diamond export certifications in 2025. The certified titles generated 50 billion stream-equivalents internationally, including more than 5 billion for new releases. These results underline the international reach of music produced in France and the growing importance of digital consumption in its circulation abroad.

Overall, the French music sector combines extensive public support and regulation with a dynamic commercial market and a dense territorial network of institutions, venues and festivals. Recent growth in recorded music and live performance, together with strong export certification results, points to continued dynamism across several segments of the sector. At the same time, the economic fragility of many festivals, the distribution of value in streaming markets, the visibility of diverse repertoires on digital platforms and the implications of artificial intelligence for creation and copyright remain major policy challenges.

3.5.5 Design and creative services

Design occupies a transversal position within the French cultural and creative landscape, at the intersection of artistic creation, industry, digital technologies and services. Its boundaries are difficult to define statistically, since designers may work as independent professionals, within specialised agencies or as employees embedded in sectors such as manufacturing, fashion, digital services and communication. Official data therefore vary according to whether they measure design professions, specialised design businesses or broader design-related activities.

According to the Ministry of Culture's [Design thematic overview](#) (2026), more than 60,000 designers work in France, while 231 institutions provide design education, approximately one-third of them public and two-thirds private. Complementary data on self-employment confirm the importance of independent work in this field: in 2022, specialised design activities accounted for 51% of the 102,400 non-salaried workers recorded in the arts and visual arts sector, meaning approximately 52,000 non-salaried workers in specialised design activities ([INSEE / DEPS, The Number of Non-Salaried Workers in the Cultural Sectors Has Almost Tripled in 15 Years, 2025](#)). These figures underline both the scale of design activity in France

and the difficulty of defining it as a single economic sector, since design is measured differently depending on whether the focus is on professions, training institutions or specialised design activities.

Public intervention in design is distributed across cultural, educational, economic and innovation policies rather than organised around a single sectoral operator. According to the Ministry of Culture's *Design* thematic overview (2026), State support covers creation, education, research and innovation, as well as initiatives promoting the national and international visibility of French design. More specifically, the Ministry supports designers through public commissions and dedicated funding for creation, research and innovation, while national institutions and higher education establishments contribute to experimentation, professional development and dissemination (Ministry of Culture, [Supporting French Designers](#), 2026). Design projects may also access broader innovation and digital-transition instruments available to cultural and creative industries, but these transversal schemes are not specific to the design sector.

Education constitutes an important component of the French design ecosystem. Within the higher education system overseen by the Ministry of Culture, 44 higher schools of art and design enrol approximately 11,400 students; the network comprises 10 national public institutions and 34 territorial or associative schools ([Ministry of Culture, Careers and Training in Culture Higher Education](#), 2025). These institutions award nationally recognised qualifications, notably the *Diplôme national d'art* (DNA), which confers a bachelor's degree, and the *Diplôme national supérieur d'expression plastique* (DNSEP), which confers a master's degree. Alongside this public higher education network, applied arts programmes and private institutions contribute to a broader training landscape encompassing product, graphic, spatial and digital design.

Design is also represented within major French museum and cultural collections, although it is rarely confined to institutions devoted exclusively to the field. [The Museum of Decorative Arts](#) in Paris holds more than 1.4 million works and artefacts across decorative and applied arts, including design, furniture, fashion, textiles, advertising and graphic design (Museum of Decorative Arts, *Collections*, 2026). Within the [National Museum of Modern Art](#), the design collection comprises around 10,000 works by nearly 900 designers, spanning the early twentieth century to the present ([Centre Pompidou, Design and Industrial Prospective](#), 2026). Beyond Paris, the [Cité du design](#) in Saint-Étienne combines exhibitions, research, higher education and public engagement, illustrating the territorial development of institutions specifically structured around design. Together, these institutions contribute to the preservation, study and public visibility of design as both cultural heritage and contemporary creation.

Overall, design in France is characterised less by a unified sectoral structure than by its presence across multiple economic and cultural fields. Its transversal position is reflected in a substantial professional and educational ecosystem, as well as in major public collections and institutions contributing to the preservation and visibility of design. At the same time, the dispersion of design activities across different industries, professional settings and employment statuses continues to complicate statistical measurement and the coordination of public intervention.

3.5.6 Cultural and creative tourism

Culture is a central component of France's tourism attractiveness: one tourist in two makes a cultural visit during their stay in the country. This relationship is supported by a dense network of museums, monuments, historic sites, festivals and cultural events, alongside gastronomy and other forms of living heritage. In 2023, France recorded nearly 100 million international arrivals, underlining the scale of the tourism context within which cultural participation takes place ([DEPS, Tourism and Culture, in Key Figures: Cultural Statistics – 2024, 2025](#)). Heritage sites, cultural institutions and events therefore play an important role not only in cultural participation but also in France's attractiveness as a destination.

Public policy in this field necessarily involves multiple levels of government and institutions. The Ministry of Culture contributes through heritage conservation, museums, monuments and cultural programming, while tourism policy involves central government departments, territorial authorities and [Atout France](#), the national tourism development agency responsible for supporting the development and international promotion of France as a destination. This dispersed governance reflects the transversal nature of cultural tourism, which connects cultural preservation and participation with destination management, economic development and territorial attractiveness. It also means that cultural tourism is addressed primarily through coordination between cultural, tourism and territorial policies rather than through a single dedicated national policy framework.

The scale of France's tourism economy provides an important context for cultural tourism. In 2025, France welcomed 102 million international visitors and generated a record EUR 77.5 billion in international tourism receipts, an increase of 9% compared with 2024. Domestic tourism consumption reached an estimated EUR 222 billion in the same year ([Directorate General for Enterprise, 2025 Tourism Review: France Confirms Its Position as the World's Leading Tourism Destination, 2026](#); [Atout France, The Economic Weight of Tourism in France, 2025](#)). While these figures concern tourism as a whole rather than cultural tourism specifically, they indicate the scale of the visitor economy within which cultural sites, institutions and events operate.

Heritage institutions constitute a major component of France's cultural tourism ecosystem. In 2024, the country had more than 1,200 officially recognised *Musées de France*, 110 sites managed by the Centre des monuments nationaux, 265 *Maisons des Illustres* and more than 46,000 protected historic monuments. National museums and exhibition venues under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture recorded 32.5 million admissions in the same year ([Ministry of Culture, *Heritage: Consolidated Attendance in 2024, 2025*](#)). Heritage participation is also widespread among the resident population: in 2024, 64% of people aged 15 and over reported visiting a monument, while 39% visited a museum or exhibition ([DEPS, *Cultural Outings of the French Population in 2024: Results of the Crédoc Barometer, 2025*](#)). These figures illustrate that France's cultural tourism model rests not only on a small number of internationally renowned sites, but also on an exceptionally extensive heritage infrastructure distributed across the country. The high level of heritage participation among residents further suggests that this infrastructure serves a substantial domestic public alongside international visitors, reducing the relevance of a strict distinction between tourism policy and cultural participation policy. This dual function is particularly important for territorial development: museums, monuments and historic sites can contribute simultaneously to local cultural access, destination attractiveness and the circulation of visitors beyond the most internationally prominent sites.

International recognition further reinforces the visibility of French heritage. Following the inscription of [the Megaliths of Carnac](#) and [the shores of Morbihan](#) in 2025, France has 54 properties on the UNESCO World Heritage List ([UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *France – Properties Inscribed on the World Heritage List, 2025*](#)). These properties include monuments, historic urban areas, cultural landscapes and natural sites distributed across the country. UNESCO inscription contributes to the international recognition of these sites and can support the visibility of regional destinations, although its effects on visitor flows depend on local accessibility, promotion strategies and site-management capacity.

Cultural tourism is not limited to museums and monuments. Festivals and major events extend cultural activity beyond permanent institutions and can contribute to destination attractiveness through seasonal programming and events rooted in specific territories. France has a particularly dense festival landscape: the Department of Studies, Foresight and Statistics (DEPS) of the Ministry of Culture identified nearly 7,300 festivals that had held an edition in 2019, while the 2024 Festival Barometer subsequently gathered responses from nearly 2,000 festivals across artistic disciplines and territories ([DEPS, *National Mapping of Festivals, 2023*](#); [DEPS, *2024 Festival Barometer, 2025*](#)). This ecosystem is geographically widespread but unevenly distributed across French regions: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Occitanie each accounted for more than 900 festivals in the national mapping, while Nouvelle-Aquitaine counted around 830. Major events can also

become significant components of urban attractiveness. In Lyon, the 2024 [Fête des Lumières](#) attracted more than 2 million visitors over four evenings; individual installations also drew very large audiences, including nearly 960,000 spectators for *Le Retour du Petit Géant* at Place des Terreaux and around 127,000 visitors for *Les Anooki* at the Parc de la Tête d'Or ([City of Lyon, It's Time for the Review..., 2024](#)). The event illustrates how temporary cultural programming in public space can operate at the scale of a major destination event, extending cultural tourism beyond permanent heritage institutions and museums. Its scale should not, however, be treated as representative of the wider festival ecosystem, whose tourism effects vary considerably according to audience origin, event duration and local reception capacity.

Gastronomy and wine tourism further broaden the scope of cultural tourism beyond museums, monuments and events. The *Gastronomic Meal of the French* has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2010, recognising a social practice centred on celebration, conviviality and the transmission of shared culinary traditions ([UNESCO, Gastronomic Meal of the French, 2010](#)). Wine tourism has developed into a substantial segment of the visitor economy: according to Atout France, French wine regions received 12 million wine tourists in 2023, including 5.4 million international visitors, while more than 10,000 wine cellars were open to visitors. Total expenditure associated with wine tourism was estimated at EUR 5.4 billion, comprising EUR 1.8 billion in direct wine-tourism expenditure and EUR 3.6 billion in complementary expenditure on services including accommodation, mobility and cultural activities ([Atout France, Wine Tourism in France, 2025](#)). This expenditure structure illustrates how wine tourism connects regionally rooted cultural and agricultural heritage with a wider territorial economy extending beyond wine production itself. The national *Vignobles & Découvertes* label further structures this offer by bringing together accommodation, restaurants, cellar visits, cultural sites, natural heritage, local know-how and events within recognised wine destinations ([Atout France, Vignobles & Découvertes Label, 2026](#)).

France's cultural tourism model draws on the combination of a dense heritage and museum infrastructure, high levels of domestic cultural participation and substantial international visitor flows. Its scope extends beyond monuments and museums to festivals, major public events, gastronomy and wine tourism, linking cultural resources to territorial attractiveness in diverse ways. This breadth is also a source of complexity: cultural tourism is not defined as a single economic sector and overlaps with heritage policy, tourism, hospitality, events and local development, complicating both statistical measurement and policy coordination. Key challenges therefore concern the preservation of highly visited sites, the territorial distribution of visitor flows and the capacity to reconcile tourism attractiveness with long-term conservation and access to cultural resources.

4. Law and legislation

French cultural policy operates within a highly codified legal framework combining constitutional principles, general legislation, sector-specific statutes and regulatory provisions. Cultural matters are not governed by a single comprehensive cultural law: the relevant rules are distributed across several legal codes and legislative instruments covering heritage, intellectual property, cinema and the moving image, audiovisual communication, education, labour, social security, taxation and territorial governance.

The constitutional foundation of public intervention in culture derives notably from paragraph 13 of the Preamble to the Constitution of 27 October 1946, to which the Preamble of the 1958 Constitution refers. It provides that the Nation guarantees equal access for children and adults to education, vocational training and culture ([Preamble to the Constitution of 27 October 1946, para. 13](#)). This provision forms an important constitutional reference for questions concerning access to culture, although French cultural law is also shaped by other constitutional principles and freedoms, including equality, freedom of expression and communication, and pluralism.

At legislative level, several codified frameworks play a central role. The *Heritage Code* ([Code du patrimoine](#)) governs major areas including archives, libraries, museums, archaeology and historic monuments; the *Intellectual Property Code* ([Code de la propriété intellectuelle](#)) regulates copyright and related rights; and the *Cinema and Moving Image Code* ([Code du cinéma et de l'image animée](#)) provides the legal framework for the organisation and public support of cinema and other moving-image sectors. Other areas of cultural policy are governed through general or sector-specific legislation, notably in audiovisual communication, books and the press, artistic employment, taxation and decentralised government.

A distinctive feature of the French framework is the extensive use of public regulation alongside direct public support. This is particularly visible in sectors such as cinema, audiovisual media, books and cultural industries, where legislation combines market regulation with cultural policy objectives through instruments including pricing rules, content and investment obligations, sector-specific support mechanisms and dedicated fiscal provisions. The resulting framework reflects the broader French approach of using legal and regulatory instruments to support creation, access, pluralism and cultural diversity while adapting sectoral rules to technological and economic change.

French legislation and consolidated legal texts are accessible through [Légifrance](#), the official public service for the online dissemination of French law. The portal provides access to legislation and regulations, legal codes, case law and other legal materials; selected French legal texts are also available in translation for documentary purposes ([Légifrance, French Law in Translation](#)).

4.1 General legislation

4.1.1 Constitution

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic of 4 October 1958 forms the foundation of the French constitutional order. Its Preamble refers to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 and to the Preamble to the Constitution of 27 October 1946, whose rights and principles form part of the constitutional standards applied by the Constitutional Council.

Culture is explicitly mentioned in paragraph 13 of the 1946 Preamble, which provides that “the Nation guarantees equal access for children and adults to education, vocational training and culture”. This provision constitutes the principal explicit constitutional reference to access to culture. Its legal significance should nevertheless be interpreted with some caution: the French constitutional framework does not establish a comprehensive autonomous fundamental right to culture, and cultural matters are also governed through other constitutional rights, freedoms and objectives ([Constitutional Council, Preamble to the Constitution of 27 October 1946](#); [Constitutional Council, QPC and Cultural Law, 2022](#)).

Several broader constitutional principles are relevant to cultural policy. Article 1 of the 1958 Constitution defines France as an “indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic” and guarantees equality before the law without distinction of origin, race or religion. Freedom of expression and communication, protected by Article 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789, is particularly important for artistic creation, media and cultural dissemination. Constitutional case law has also recognised the pluralism of currents of thought and opinion as an objective of constitutional value, notably in the field of audiovisual communication.

The Constitution also contains provisions with more specific cultural implications. Article 2 establishes that “the language of the Republic is French”, providing the constitutional basis for the official status of French. Since the constitutional revision of 23 July 2008, Article 75-1 has stated that “regional languages are part of France’s heritage”. The coexistence of these provisions reflects a constitutional framework combining the official status of French with recognition of regional languages as elements of national heritage.

The constitutional foundations of French cultural policy are therefore dispersed rather than organised around a single constitutional right to culture. Equal access to culture, freedom of expression and communication, equality before the law, pluralism and the constitutional provisions concerning language all shape the legal environment within which cultural policy is developed.

4.1.2 Allocation of public funds

The allocation of public funds to culture in France takes place within the general framework of public finance and administrative law. Cultural expenditure is financed by several levels of government, notably the State and territorial authorities, and is implemented through a combination of direct expenditure, subsidies, contractual arrangements and sector-specific support mechanisms. This multi-level structure reflects the distribution of cultural responsibilities across public authorities rather than a single centralised funding system.

Public grants are a central instrument of French cultural policy and support a wide range of beneficiaries, from major cultural institutions and publicly supported networks to associations, artistic teams and individual projects. Funding may be awarded on an annual or multi-annual basis, allowing public authorities to combine longer-term support for institutions and organisations with more flexible project-based assistance. Multi-annual agreements are particularly important where sustained public support is linked to broader objectives concerning artistic creation, public access, territorial outreach or cultural participation. In practice, cultural funding frequently involves co-financing between the State and territorial authorities, reflecting the shared role of different levels of government in cultural policy.

The scale of public expenditure illustrates this multi-level structure. In 2025, the budget of the Ministry of Culture amounted to EUR 4.6 billion. Territorial authorities, for their part, spent EUR 10 billion on culture in 2024, equivalent to EUR 146 per inhabitant and 4.0% of their total expenditure. Of this amount, EUR 7.7 billion corresponded to operating expenditure and EUR 2.3 billion to investment ([Ministry of Culture, Department for Studies, Foresight and Statistics \(DEPS\), Key Figures: Cultural Statistics – 2025](#); Ministry of Culture, *Tableau de bord des dépenses culturelles des collectivités territoriales*, 3rd edition, 2019–2024). Although these figures refer to different years and institutional perimeters and should not be added together, they show that cultural financing in France is not concentrated at central government level. The predominance of operating expenditure in territorial cultural budgets also reflects the continuing role of local authorities in sustaining cultural institutions, services and activities, alongside investment in cultural infrastructure.

The allocation of State cultural funding also reflects France's decentralised and devolved administrative structure (see chapter 1.2). While the Ministry of Culture defines national priorities and directly funds its public institutions and major programmes, its Regional Directorates for Cultural Affairs (DRAC) implement State cultural policy at regional level and allocate support to cultural institutions, artistic teams and projects according to national frameworks and territorial contexts. This territorial implementation interacts with the independent funding decisions of regions, departments and municipalities, producing a

system in which many cultural organisations combine resources from several public authorities.

In addition to direct budgetary appropriations and grants, public support for culture also takes the form of tax expenditures. The French system relies on a range of tax incentives, including deductions for corporate and individual philanthropy, as well as sector-specific tax credits, notably for the film, audiovisual and live performance industries. Although these measures do not constitute direct public expenditure, they represent forgone public revenue and therefore form an integral component of the public financing framework for culture.

Alongside general budgetary funding, several cultural sectors benefit from specialised public support systems. The Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée ([CNC](#)), the Centre national du livre ([CNL](#)) and the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#)) administer funding schemes adapted to the structures of their respective sectors. Their modes of intervention differ: the CNC operates selective and automatic support mechanisms for cinema and moving-image activities; the CNL supports actors across the book chain, including authors, translators, publishers, booksellers and literary events; and the CNM provides sector-specific assistance covering areas including recorded music, live performance and international development ([CNC, Support and Funding](#); [CNL, Support Schemes, 2026](#); [CNM, Financial Support, 2026](#)). The Institut pour le financement du cinéma et des industries culturelles ([IFCIC](#)) complements these arrangements by facilitating access to finance for cultural and creative enterprises and associations through bank guarantees and loans ([IFCIC, Financing Cultural Enterprises, 2026](#)).

4.1.3 Social security frameworks

Social protection arrangements for cultural professionals in France vary according to employment status and the nature of their income. The cultural sector includes salaried employees, public-sector staff, self-employed professionals and creators receiving income from original works. Two arrangements are particularly distinctive: the specific unemployment insurance rules associated with *intermittence du spectacle* and the social security framework for artists-authors (*artistes-auteurs*).

The term [intermittent du spectacle](#) does not designate a separate legal employment status. It commonly refers to performing artists and certain technicians who work as salaried employees under successive short-term contracts, often for multiple employers. Eligible workers may receive unemployment benefits under specific rules adapted to discontinuous employment. These rules, set out notably in Annexes 8 and 10 to the unemployment insurance regulations, play an important role in live performance, cinema and audiovisual production ([Unédic, Annexes 8 and 10 to the unemployment insurance regulations](#)).

The system has also been a recurrent source of social and political conflict. Reforms to unemployment insurance prompted major mobilisations in 2003, when strikes and protests contributed to the cancellation of several major festivals, and again in 2014. Although the contested reforms were not simply withdrawn, these mobilisations led to compensatory measures, renewed negotiations and continued adjustments to the system. They illustrate the importance of *intermittence du spectacle* not only as a social protection mechanism but also as a longstanding cultural policy issue.

Artists-authors ([artistes-auteurs](#)) are covered by a different framework reflecting the specific nature of income derived from the creation and exploitation of original works. The category includes, depending on the activity concerned, writers, composers, visual artists, illustrators, photographers and playwrights. Income may derive from copyright royalties, the sale of original creations or other remuneration linked to creative activity.

Under Article L.382-1 of the Social Security Code, artists-authors within the statutory scope are affiliated to the general social security system. Their protection is therefore integrated into the wider French system, while specific rules apply to artistic income, declarations and social contributions ([Social Security Code, Article L.382-1 and related provisions](#)).

The administration of the artists-authors framework has been progressively transferred to Urssaf, the French public network responsible for collecting social security contributions. Urssaf has collected contributions on artistic income since 2019 and assumed additional responsibilities for affiliation and social assistance in 2026 ([Sécurité sociale des artistes-auteurs, Principes du régime, 2026](#)).

More broadly, cultural professionals may combine several employment statuses and sources of income over the course of their careers, including salaried work, self-employment and income from artistic creation. This diversity can complicate the continuity of social rights and remains a significant challenge for social protection in the cultural sector.

4.1.4 Tax laws

France does not have a unified cultural tax code. Instead, cultural tax policy combines reduced tax rates, incentives for private philanthropy and sector-specific tax credits. These measures pursue different objectives, including widening access to cultural goods and services, supporting creation and production, preserving heritage and strengthening the competitiveness of cultural industries. State tax expenditures related to culture and communication were estimated at EUR 1.9 billion in 2025 ([Ministry of Culture, DEPS, Chiffres clés 2025 – Financement de la culture, 2026](#)).

Reduced rates of Value Added Tax (VAT) are an important component of this framework. The standard VAT rate in metropolitan France is 20%, but several cultural goods and services

benefit from reduced rates. Books, including digital books, are subject to a 5.5% rate, as are cinema admissions and many live performance tickets. A 10% rate applies to certain other cultural admissions and services, while the 2.1% rate notably applies to qualifying press publications and, under specific conditions, the first performances of certain newly created or newly staged works. These differentiated rates reflect longstanding policy objectives concerning access to culture, cultural diversity and media pluralism (General Tax Code; [DGFIP, official VAT guidance](#)).

Private philanthropy is another major component of cultural tax policy. Law No. 2003-709 of 1 August 2003 on philanthropy, associations and foundations substantially strengthened tax incentives for donations to eligible public-interest organisations. Under the current framework, eligible corporate donations generally give rise to a tax reduction of 60% within statutory limits, while donations by individuals may also qualify for income tax reductions under the conditions laid down by tax legislation. The 2003 law remains a central reference point for cultural philanthropy in France ([Law No. 2003-709 of 1 August 2003](#); [Ministry of Culture, *Qu'est-ce que le mécénat ?*](#)).

Sector-specific tax credits form a further major pillar of cultural policy. According to the Ministry of Culture's 2026 *Panorama des crédits d'impôt culturels*, ten cultural tax credits are currently identified. Three schemes account for around three quarters of the associated tax expenditure: the audiovisual tax credit, the cinema tax credit and the international tax credit for eligible foreign productions carried out partly in France. Together, these mechanisms support production expenditure and employment in France and are also used as instruments of international attractiveness ([Ministry of Culture, DEPS, *Panorama des crédits d'impôt culturels*, 2026](#)).

The domestic cinema tax credit generally amounts to 30% of eligible expenditure, subject to statutory conditions and ceilings. The audiovisual tax credit covers eligible expenditure for fiction, documentary and animation works, with rates varying according to the type of production. The international tax credit targets foreign-initiative film and audiovisual productions that carry out eligible production activities in France. These mechanisms occupy a central place in the fiscal support system for screen production (CNC, [Crédit d'impôt cinéma](#); [Crédit d'impôt audiovisuel](#); [Crédit d'impôt international](#)).

Beyond screen production, targeted tax credits support other cultural industries. The video game tax credit amounts to 30% of eligible development expenditure, up to EUR 6 million per company and fiscal year. Separate schemes also support live musical and variety performances, phonographic production, the publishing of musical works and, on a smaller scale, theatre and circus production. This sectoral diversification reflects the extension of tax-based support beyond the traditional film and audiovisual industries (CNC, [Crédit d'impôt jeu vidéo](#); [Ministry of Culture, DEPS, *Panorama des crédits d'impôt culturels*, 2026](#)).

French cultural taxation is therefore highly differentiated, combining reduced VAT rates, incentives for private philanthropy and sector-specific tax credits adapted to the economic characteristics and policy objectives of different cultural fields.

4.1.5 Labour laws

Employment in the cultural sector is governed by the general provisions of the French Labour Code, supplemented by sector-specific legislation and collective agreements. This combination is particularly important in activities characterised by short production cycles, project-based employment and multiple employers, notably live performance, cinema and audiovisual production.

A distinctive feature of French labour law is the legal treatment of performing artists (*artistes du spectacle*). Under Article L.7121-3 of the Labour Code, contracts engaging a performing artist for remuneration are presumed to be employment contracts, subject to the conditions laid down by law. This presumption applies regardless of the mode or amount of remuneration or the designation given to the contract by the parties. It provides an important distinction between the creation of an original work and its performance: while artists-authors are generally remunerated in connection with their creative activity and rights in their works, performers may be employed as salaried workers (Labour Code, Articles [L.7121-3](#) and [L.7121-4](#)).

Cultural employers may also use fixed-term contracts adapted to activities in which permanent employment is not customary. The *contrat à durée déterminée d'usage* (CDDU) is permitted in designated sectors including live performance, cultural activities, audiovisual production, film production and phonographic publishing. Its use is further regulated by collective agreements and is generally restricted to occupations for which temporary employment is customary. The CDDU is therefore central to project-based cultural production but does not constitute a general authorisation to employ all cultural workers on successive fixed-term contracts (Labour Code, [Article L.1242-2](#) and [Article D.1242-1](#)).

Collective bargaining plays a major role in adapting employment conditions to the diversity of cultural activities. Sectoral collective agreements regulate matters such as minimum pay, working time, job classifications, rehearsals, travel and other occupation-specific conditions. Separate agreements apply across fields including public and private live performance, audiovisual production, film production and other cultural industries. Labour regulation in culture is therefore largely structured through professional branches rather than through a single framework for cultural workers.

The use of discontinuous contracts is closely connected to the specific unemployment insurance rules associated with *intermittence du spectacle* (see chapter 4.1.3). The two

frameworks should nevertheless be distinguished: labour law governs employment relationships and the use of contracts, whereas the specific rules on *intermittence* concern unemployment insurance between periods of salaried employment.

Working conditions have also gained prominence in cultural policy and sectoral regulation. In 2025, the Ministry of Culture launched a 2025–2027 plan to strengthen prevention and action against gender-based and sexual violence and harassment across the cultural sector. Measures include stronger prevention and training, reporting and support mechanisms, and the use of public-funding conditionality. In the film sector, access to CNC production support has been subject since 2025 to mandatory training requirements for film crews on the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence and harassment ([Ministry of Culture, *Plan de lutte contre les violences et le harcèlement sexistes et sexuels dans la culture 2025–2027*; CNC, 2025](#)).

French cultural labour regulation thus combines general employment law with sector-specific contractual rules and collective bargaining. Its main distinctive feature lies less in a separate body of cultural labour law than in the adaptation of general labour law to the organisation of artistic and cultural production.

4.1.6 Copyright provisions

French copyright law is rooted in the *droit d'auteur* tradition and is principally governed by the Intellectual Property Code (*Code de la propriété intellectuelle*). French copyright law is rooted in the *droit d'auteur* tradition and is principally governed by the Intellectual Property Code (*Code de la propriété intellectuelle*). This approach places the author at the centre of protection. Copyright arises automatically upon creation and does not require formal registration. French law distinguishes between economic rights (*droits patrimoniaux*), which allow authors to control and benefit from the exploitation of their works, and moral rights (*droits moraux*), which protect the personal relationship between the author and the work ([Intellectual Property Code, Articles L.111-1 and following](#)).

Economic rights allow authors to authorise or prohibit uses of their works, notably reproduction and communication to the public, subject to statutory exceptions and limitations. As a general rule, these rights last throughout the author's lifetime and for 70 years after death. Moral rights protect the author's name, authorship and the integrity of the work and also include the rights of disclosure and withdrawal. A distinctive feature of French law is that moral rights are perpetual, inalienable and imprescriptible (Intellectual Property Code, Articles [L.121-1](#) to [L.121-4](#) and [L.123-1](#)).

The French framework also recognises neighbouring rights (*droits voisins*), notably for performers, phonogram and videogram producers, and audiovisual communication

undertakings. National law operates within a broader international and European framework, including the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the principal international treaty establishing common standards for copyright protection across its contracting parties, and successive European Union directives. The Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market ([Directive \(EU\) 2019/790](#)) has been particularly important in adapting copyright and neighbouring rights to online uses and platform-based distribution. France transposed the Directive's neighbouring right for press publishers in 2019, providing a legal basis for remuneration claims when protected press content is reused by online services. Subsequent negotiations between French press publishers and major digital platforms over the remuneration of protected press content have made neighbouring rights one of the most visible examples of the adaptation of copyright to the platform economy.

Digital transformation has also reshaped copyright enforcement. Since 2022, the Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication ([Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique, Arcom](#)), created through the merger of the CSA (France's former audiovisual regulatory authority) and Hadopi (the authority previously responsible for combating online copyright infringement), has been responsible for protecting copyrighted works and combating online piracy. Its powers include measures against services that seriously and repeatedly infringe copyright or neighbouring rights, as well as mechanisms targeting illegal streaming and mirror sites. The creation of Arcom reflects a broader shift from enforcement focused primarily on individual peer-to-peer users towards action against the infrastructures and services facilitating large-scale infringement ([Arcom, Promouvoir et protéger la création](#)).

Collective management organisations remain central to the practical administration of copyright and neighbouring rights. Bodies such as [SACEM](#) (Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique), which manages the rights of music authors, composers and publishers; [SACD](#) (Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques), which represents authors of dramatic, theatrical and audiovisual works; and [SCAM](#) (Société civile des auteurs multimédia), which represents authors working in documentary, audiovisual, literary, journalistic and multimedia fields, collect and distribute royalties and represent rights holders in their respective sectors. Their role has become increasingly important as the multiplication of broadcasting, streaming and online uses has made individual rights management more complex. Their activities are governed by the [Intellectual Property Code](#) and the [European legal framework on collective rights management](#).

Private copying remuneration (*rémunération pour copie privée*) is another significant feature of the French system. It compensates rights holders for certain private reproductions of protected works through remuneration collected on eligible recording and storage media.

The mechanism also has a direct cultural-policy dimension: under [Article L.324-17 of the Intellectual Property Code](#), collective management organisations must use 25% of the sums derived from private copying remuneration to support artistic creation, the dissemination of live performance, artistic and cultural education, and artist training. Private copying remuneration therefore serves both as a compensation mechanism for rights holders and as a source of funding for cultural activity (Intellectual Property Code, [Article L.324-17; Ministry of Culture, *Commission pour la rémunération de la copie privée*](#)).

Furthermore, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a major focus of French copyright policy. The central issues concern the use of protected works to train generative AI models, the ability of rights holders to identify and control such uses, transparency regarding training data, and the conditions under which creators may be remunerated. These questions have moved rapidly from general debate to concrete policy initiatives. In 2025, the Higher Council for Literary and Artistic Property (*Conseil supérieur de la propriété littéraire et artistique*, [CSPLA](#)) published a major report on the remuneration of cultural content used by AI systems. The government also launched a structured dialogue between generative AI developers and representatives of cultural and media rights holders, notably to encourage licensing and contractual arrangements. By the end of 2025, the Ministry of Culture reported that this dialogue had established a framework for negotiation, while progress on value sharing remained limited. ([CSPLA, *Rapport de mission relative à la rémunération des contenus culturels utilisés par les systèmes d'intelligence artificielle*, 2025](#))

A further issue concerns AI models developed or trained outside Europe but marketed within the European Union. In December 2025, a CSPLA report examined the law applicable to generative AI models commercialised in the European market and concluded that EU copyright law is intended to apply to their training and deployment. In parallel, further CSPLA work has addressed the protection of content generated with the use of generative AI. These developments illustrate a broader shift in French copyright policy: the debate is no longer limited to whether AI challenges authors' rights, but increasingly concerns the practical enforceability of those rights, transparency over training sources, and the development of remuneration and licensing mechanisms ([CSPLA, *Rapport de mission sur la loi applicable aux modèles d'IA générative commercialisés dans l'Union européenne*, 2025](#); [Ministry of Culture, *consultation between AI developers and cultural rights holders*, 2025](#)).

For France, the challenge is therefore no longer simply to regulate AI, but to ensure that technological innovation develops without undermining the principles of authorship, fair remuneration and cultural diversity that underpin the *droit d'auteur* tradition.

4.1.7 Data protection laws

France has developed a comprehensive legal framework governing the protection of personal data, combining one of Europe's earliest national data protection regimes with the harmonised rules established by the European Union. Although data protection legislation applies across all sectors of the economy, it has become increasingly significant for cultural policy as cultural institutions, creative industries and digital platforms rely more extensively on the collection, processing and circulation of personal data.

The French framework is based on Law No. 78-17 of 6 January 1978 on Information Technology, Data Files and Civil Liberties ([Loi informatique et libertés](#)), one of the first comprehensive data protection laws adopted in Europe. Originally enacted in response to the growing use of computerised public databases, the Act has been amended several times and is now fully aligned with the General Data Protection Regulation ([GDPR – Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679](#)), which has applied directly throughout the European Union since May 2018 and constitutes the principal legal framework governing the processing of personal data in France.

Implementation and enforcement are entrusted to the *Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés* ([CNIL](#)), France's independent data protection authority. Created by the 1978 Act, the CNIL supervises compliance with national and European data protection rules, issues guidance to public and private organisations, conducts investigations and may impose administrative sanctions where infringements are identified.

For the cultural sector, data protection has become an increasingly important aspect of digital transformation. Museums, libraries, archives, performing arts organisations and cultural venues routinely process personal data through online ticketing systems, membership schemes, digital collections, educational platforms and audience analytics. Streaming services and other digital cultural platforms also rely extensively on user data to personalise recommendations, measure audience behaviour and develop data-driven business models. Compliance with data protection legislation has therefore become an integral component of the governance of cultural institutions and digital cultural services.

Alongside the protection of personal data, French cultural policy has placed increasing emphasis on the governance, circulation and reuse of cultural data. Since the adoption of the Ministry of Culture's *Roadmap for Cultural Data and Content* ([Feuille de route Données et contenus culturels](#)) in 2021, policy has sought to improve the accessibility, interoperability and reuse of public cultural data while ensuring compliance with data protection and intellectual property law. Concrete initiatives include the publication of open cultural datasets through the Ministry's data portal, the adoption of common metadata standards such as [LIDO-MC](#) to facilitate the exchange of museum data, the implementation of the [IIIF](#) interoperability

framework for digital cultural images, and policies promoting the discoverability of French cultural content through structured metadata and semantic web technologies. These initiatives are intended to improve public access to cultural resources while supporting research, innovation and the digital visibility of French cultural heritage.

4.1.8 Language laws

The French legal framework governing language is founded on the constitutional principle that French is the language of the Republic while progressively recognising regional languages as part of the country's cultural heritage. French language policy therefore combines a longstanding commitment to linguistic unity with increasing support for linguistic diversity in the fields of culture, heritage and education.

The modern legal framework rests primarily on two constitutional provisions and one major statute. [Article 2 of the Constitution of 4 October 1958](#), introduced by the Constitutional Law of 25 June 1992, provides that "the language of the Republic is French", establishing French as the language of public administration, legislation, justice and public services. The principal legislative instrument implementing this constitutional principle is Law No. 94-665 of 4 August 1994 on the use of the French language ([Loi Toubon](#)). Named after the Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon, the Law establishes a right for citizens and consumers to receive essential information in French by requiring the use of French in public administration, employment, consumer information, advertising and public services. It does not prohibit the use of other languages in artistic creation, cultural activities or international communication. Earlier texts, notably [the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts](#) (1539), which introduced French into royal administrative and judicial acts, remain important historical references illustrating the long-standing role of language in the construction of the French State ([Constitution of 4 October 1958, Article 2](#); [Law No. 94-665 of 4 August 1994 on the use of the French language](#)).

Responsibility for implementing language policy lies primarily with the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* ([DGLFLF](#)), an interministerial department within the Ministry of Culture. The DGLFLF coordinates national language policy, promotes the use and enrichment of the French language, supports the safeguarding, transmission and promotion of the langues de France (regional and minority languages traditionally spoken within the national territory), encourages multilingualism, and contributes to the international promotion of French. [The Decree No. 96-602 of 3 July 1996 on the enrichment of the French language](#) established the institutional framework through which official French terminology is developed, particularly for new scientific and technological concepts, in cooperation with specialised terminology commissions and the [Académie française](#), the learned institution responsible for safeguarding and promoting the French language.

(Ministry of Culture, *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France*; [Decree No. 96-602 of 3 July 1996 on the enrichment of the French language](#)).

Alongside the constitutional status of French, the Constitution also recognises the cultural value of regional languages. Since the constitutional revision of 23 July 2008, Article 75-1 provides that "regional languages belong to the heritage of France". Although this provision does not confer official language status or create individual linguistic rights, it establishes regional languages as an element of national cultural heritage and provides an important constitutional basis for public policies supporting their preservation and transmission ([Constitution of 4 October 1958, Article 75-1](#)).

This constitutional balance was reaffirmed by the Constitutional Council in Decision No. 2021-818 DC of 21 May 2021 concerning the so-called [Molac Law](#) (*Law on the Protection and Promotion of Regional Languages*). The Council ruled that immersive teaching, understood as using a regional language as the principal language of instruction in public schools, was incompatible with Article 2 of the Constitution because French must remain the language of public education. At the same time, the decision confirmed the legality of bilingual education and did not call into question public support for the teaching, promotion and cultural development of regional languages (*langues de France*). In practice, languages such as Breton, Occitan, Basque, Corsican, Catalan and Alsatian continue to benefit from bilingual education in both public schools and associative school networks, as well as from regional broadcasting services, publishing initiatives and cultural projects supported by regional authorities and the Ministry of Culture ([Constitutional Council, Decision No. 2021-818 DC of 21 May 2021](#); [Ministry of Culture, Languages of France](#)).

Beyond domestic regulation, language policy also forms part of France's external cultural action. The promotion of the French language through the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* ([OIF](#)), cultural diplomacy and international cultural cooperation constitutes a major component of French cultural policy abroad, complementing domestic measures designed to safeguard the use of French within the national territory.

Contemporary French language policy is characterised by a continuing balance between three complementary objectives: safeguarding French as the common language of public life; preserving and promoting the linguistic diversity represented by the *langues de France*; and strengthening the international role of the French language through cultural diplomacy and the Francophonie in an increasingly multilingual and digital environment.

4.1.9 Other areas of general legislation

Several areas of general legislation, although not specific to the cultural sector, have a significant structural impact on cultural organisations, public authorities and the implementation of cultural policy in France.

Freedom of expression constitutes an essential legal foundation for artistic and cultural activity. It is protected by [Article 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789](#), which forms part of the French constitutional framework. In the cultural field, this general protection is complemented by the principle of freedom of artistic creation, expressly recognised by the [Law of 7 July 2016](#) on freedom of creation, architecture and heritage. Freedom of communication and the constitutional objective of pluralism also underpin the regulation of the press and audiovisual media.

The [Law of 1 July 1901](#) on associations provides the principal legal framework for non-profit organisations in France. It establishes the freedom to form an association without prior authorisation, although a declaration is required for an association to acquire legal capacity. The associative form is widely used in the cultural sector, particularly by performing arts companies, festivals, cultural education organisations, heritage associations and locally based cultural initiatives. It allows citizens and professionals to organise collective cultural activities on a non-profit basis and to receive public grants, subject to the applicable legal and financial requirements.

General rules on public procurement, competition and public funding also shape the operation of the cultural sector. Public cultural institutions and local authorities must comply with public procurement legislation when commissioning works, purchasing goods or services, or undertaking construction and restoration projects, although the applicable procedures vary according to the nature and estimated value of the contract. Public financial support for cultural organisations is likewise governed by French and European legal frameworks distinguishing grants awarded in support of activities of public interest from public procurement contracts through which public authorities purchase goods or services, as well as regulating state aid. While these rules aim to ensure transparency, equal treatment and fair competition in the use of public resources, they also recognise that public intervention may legitimately support cultural objectives, including artistic creation, heritage preservation and cultural diversity ([Code de la commande publique \(French Public Procurement Code\)](#); [Law No. 2000-321 of 12 April 2000 on the Rights of Citizens in their Relations with Public Authorities, Article 9-1](#); [Circular of 29 September 2015 on relations between public authorities and associations](#); [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Articles 107–109](#)).

Territorial legislation is particularly important because responsibility for culture is distributed across several levels of government. The decentralisation reforms initiated in the 1980s progressively strengthened the role of local and regional authorities in cultural policy (see chapter 1.2). The Law of 7 August 2015 on the new territorial organisation of the Republic ([Loi NOTRe](#)) maintained culture as a shared competence of municipalities, departments, regions and special-status authorities. This framework enables different public authorities to support cultural institutions and projects jointly, while also resulting in governance arrangements involving multiple funders and levels of decision-making.

At the international and European levels, French cultural policy is shaped by both international conventions and European Union law. The [2005 UNESCO Convention](#) on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions recognises the right of States to adopt measures supporting cultural diversity and has also influenced French legislation, notably through the recognition of cultural rights in the *Loi NOTRe*. Within the European Union, cultural measures must

also comply with rules governing the internal market, competition, public procurement and state aid. These legal frameworks are particularly significant for public funding, audiovisual policy and measures intended to support cultural diversity.

Taken together, these areas of general legislation demonstrate that cultural policy does not operate through sector-specific laws alone. Its implementation also depends on broader constitutional, administrative, territorial and economic rules governing freedom of expression, non-profit organisations, public action and the use of public resources.

4.2 Legislation on culture

4.2.1 General legislation on culture

French cultural legislation is characterised by an extensive system of legal codification. Rather than relying on a single cultural framework law, the legal basis of cultural policy is distributed across several legislative codes governing heritage, cinema, copyright, education, territorial governance, labour relations and social protection. These include the [*Code du cinéma et de l'image animée*](#) (Cinema and Animated Images Code), the [*Code du patrimoine*](#) (Heritage Code), the [*Code de la propriété intellectuelle*](#) (Intellectual Property Code), the [*Code de l'éducation*](#) (Education Code), the [*Code général des collectivités territoriales*](#) (General Code of Territorial Collectivities), the [*Code du travail*](#) (Labour Code) and the [*Code de la sécurité sociale*](#) (Social Security Code), together with complementary sector-specific legislation.

Taken together, these legislative frameworks provide the legal basis for public cultural action by combining principles of freedom of artistic creation, cultural diversity, public service, decentralised governance and regulated market intervention. They also reflect the traditionally strong role of the State in structuring, supporting and regulating cultural life.

A major legislative milestone remains the Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage ([*Loi relative à la liberté de la création, à l'architecture et au patrimoine, Law No. 2016-925 of 7 July 2016*](#)), which reaffirmed the principle of freedom of artistic creation, modernised the legal framework for heritage protection and strengthened several cross-cutting principles of French cultural policy.

More recent legislative developments have increasingly reflected the digital transformation of the cultural sector. Since 2021, reforms have progressively adapted the legal framework to online cultural distribution, platform regulation, copyright enforcement and artificial intelligence, while also implementing new European regulatory frameworks. The principal legislative developments adopted between 2016 and 2025 are summarised in Table 2. Their implications for individual cultural sectors are discussed in the following sections.

Table 3: Major legal instruments implemented by France in the cultural field

Title of the act	Year of adoption	Official publication / reference	Short description of progress
Law No. 2016-925 on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage	2016	Journal officiel de la République française (JORF), No. 0158, 8 July 2016	Strengthens artistic freedom, heritage protection and cultural diversity; modernises the heritage framework.
Law No. 2021-1382 on the Regulation and Protection of Access to Cultural Works in the Digital Age	2021	Journal officiel de la République française (JORF), No. 0250, 26 October 2021	Creates ARCOM through the merger of the CSA and HADOPI; strengthens copyright enforcement and digital regulation.
Decree No. 2021-793 of 22 June 2021 on On-Demand Audiovisual Media Services (SMAD)	2021	Journal officiel de la République française (JORF), No. 0144, 23 June 2021	Implements the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive by establishing investment obligations, European works requirements and rules for on-demand audiovisual media services.
Law No. 2024-449 on Securing and Regulating the Digital Space (SREN)	2024	Journal officiel de la République française (JORF), 22 May 2024	Implements key provisions of the Digital Services Act and strengthens the regulation of online platforms.
Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) (implementation phase)	2024–2025	Official Journal of the European Union (OJ EU), Regulation (EU) 2024/1689	Introduces obligations for AI systems with implications for copyright and the use of cultural content.

Sources: Legifrance; *Journal officiel de la République française* (JORF); *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJ EU).

4.2.2 Legislation on culture and natural heritage

French legislation on cultural and natural heritage is primarily codified in the [Code du patrimoine](#) (Heritage Code), which provides the principal legal framework for the identification, protection, conservation and transmission of cultural heritage. Article L.1 adopts a broad definition of heritage encompassing movable and immovable property of historical, artistic, archaeological, aesthetic, scientific or technical interest.

The *Code du patrimoine* is organised into seven books covering the principal fields of heritage policy: general provisions and the overarching principles of heritage protection (Book I); archives (Book II); libraries (Book III); museums (Book IV); archaeology, including preventive archaeology (Book V); historic monuments, protected areas and cultural heritage conservation (Book VI); and provisions applicable to overseas territories (Book VII). Together, these books provide a comprehensive legal framework for the governance, protection and transmission of cultural heritage in France.

A defining feature of the French system is its dual protection regime for historic monuments ([monuments historiques](#)), distinguishing between classified monuments (*monuments classés*), which benefit from the highest level of legal protection, and registered monuments (*monuments inscrits*), which are subject to a lighter but still legally binding protection regime. This graduated approach enables protection measures to be adapted to the significance of individual heritage assets and constitutes one of the most extensive statutory heritage protection systems in Europe.

The implementation of heritage policy is supported by the General Inventory of Cultural Heritage ([Inventaire général du patrimoine culturel](#)), whose operational management has been progressively decentralised since 2004. Regional authorities are responsible for carrying out the inventory, while the State retains responsibility for scientific and methodological supervision.

Recent developments have focused on strengthening the integration of heritage protection into territorial planning through the continued implementation of the [sites patrimoniaux remarquables](#) regime; adapting conservation policies to climate change and natural risks affecting heritage sites; and accelerating the digitisation and online accessibility of heritage collections through institutions such as the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* ([BnF](#)) and the *Institut national de l'audiovisuel* ([INA](#)), while promoting the reuse of public cultural data within the framework of copyright protection.

Another important area of recent legislative and policy development concerns the provenance of cultural property, restitution and the identification of looted cultural assets. France has adopted specific legislation authorising the restitution of certain cultural objects to their countries of origin, notably Benin and Senegal, while also reinforcing provenance research within public collections (see chapter 2.2 *Cultural rights and ethics*). At the same time, renewed efforts have been devoted to the identification and restitution of works looted during the Second World War, notably through the work of the Mission for Research and Restitution of Cultural Property Looted between 1933 and 1945 ([Mission de recherche et de restitution des biens culturels spoliés entre 1933 et 1945](#)), created in 2019, and the recommendations of the Commission for the Compensation of Victims of Spoliation (*Commission pour l'indemnisation des victimes de spoliations*, [CIVS](#)). These developments

reflect a broader commitment to addressing historical injustices while strengthening the transparency and documentation of museum collections.

Overall, the French legal framework for cultural heritage remains both stable and adaptable. While continuing to ensure a high level of legal protection, it has progressively incorporated new policy concerns relating to environmental sustainability, digital access, provenance research and the restitution of cultural property, reflecting broader changes in heritage governance.

4.2.3 Legislation on performance and celebration

The French legal framework governing the performing arts combines cultural legislation, labour law and sector-specific regulations. It reflects the dual nature of live performance as both an artistic activity and an economic sector characterised by project-based production, discontinuous employment and significant public intervention. Accordingly, the legal framework seeks to reconcile freedom of artistic creation, protection of cultural workers and public support for artistic production and dissemination.

A major development was the adoption of the Law on Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage ([Law No. 2016-925 of 7 July 2016](#)), which enshrined in French law the principle of freedom of artistic creation. Article 1 affirms that artistic creation is free, reinforcing legal protection against undue restrictions while recognising that any limitations must be prescribed by law and justified by legitimate public interests.

The organisation of live performance activities is subject to a specific regulatory regime applicable to *entrepreneurs de spectacles vivants* (live performance operators). Individuals and organisations that professionally produce, present or promote live performances—including theatres, concert halls, festivals, production companies, touring organisations and other presenters—must comply with statutory requirements relating to professional standards, labour obligations, health and safety, and the protection of artists, employees and audiences. This dedicated regime reflects the specific characteristics of the performing arts sector, where public performances involve safety requirements and where artistic production frequently relies on short-term and intermittent employment. Originally established by the [Ordinance of 13 October 1945](#) and subsequently incorporated into the [Code du travail](#) (Labour Code), the system provides the legal framework for the professional organisation and public oversight of live performance activities.

The employment of performing artists, technicians and other cultural workers is governed by the Labour Code together with sectoral collective agreements. These provisions regulate recruitment, contracts, remuneration, working conditions and social protection while taking

account of the specific characteristics of intermittent employment, which remains a defining feature of the French performing arts sector (see chapter 2.5.6).

Sector governance is supported by structured mechanisms for consultation and social dialogue. The National Council for Performing Arts Professions (*Conseil national des professions du spectacle*, [CNPS](#)), established in 2013, brings together representatives of the State, employers, trade unions and professional organisations to discuss employment, training and regulatory developments affecting the sector. At regional level, the Regional Committees for Performing Arts Professions (*Comités régionaux des professions du spectacle*, COREPS), created in 2004, facilitate coordination between public authorities and professional stakeholders on issues relating to employment, working conditions and territorial cultural development.

Alongside these regulatory mechanisms, public intervention is guided by the [Charter for Public Service Missions in the Performing Arts](#) (1998), which defines the principles governing publicly supported performing arts institutions. These include artistic freedom, cultural diversity, equal access to culture, support for artistic creation and dissemination, and balanced territorial development.

Overall, French legislation on the performing arts combines the protection of artistic freedom with a detailed regulatory framework governing professional practice, employment relations and public intervention. While the legal architecture has remained relatively stable, current policy developments increasingly focus on ensuring the long-term sustainability of employment models, strengthening social dialogue and supporting the adaptation of the performing arts sector to changing patterns of production, dissemination and audience engagement.

4.2.4 Legislation on visual arts and crafts

The legal framework governing the visual arts and crafts in France combines cultural legislation, public procurement rules and public policy instruments designed to support artistic creation and its dissemination. It reflects a long-standing tradition of public intervention in favour of contemporary creation, while also recognising the cultural, economic and heritage value of artistic craftsmanship.

A central instrument of this framework is the *1% for art* scheme ([1% artistique](#)), established in 1951. Under this mechanism, a proportion of the cost of constructing, extending or substantially renovating certain public buildings must be devoted to the commissioning or acquisition of a contemporary work of art integrated into the architectural project. The scheme applies to a wide range of public buildings commissioned by the State and, under certain conditions, by territorial authorities, and has become one of the principal mechanisms supporting the integration of contemporary art into public space.

The legal framework governing the scheme is currently defined by [Decree No. 2002-677 of 29 April 2002](#), as subsequently amended, which sets out the procedures for commissioning artworks as part of public construction projects. Because these commissions are financed with public funds, they are subject to the general principles of French public procurement law, including transparency, equal treatment of candidates and the use of expert selection procedures, while preserving the artistic nature of the commissioning process.

Public support for the visual arts is further guided by the [Charter for Public Service Missions in Contemporary Art Institutions](#) (1998), which defines the respective responsibilities of the State, territorial authorities and publicly funded institutions in supporting artistic creation, dissemination and public access. It provides the policy framework for institutions such as the *Fonds régionaux d'art contemporain* (FRACs), a nationwide network of publicly funded Regional Collections of Contemporary Art established to acquire, preserve and exhibit contemporary artworks throughout France, as well as contemporary art centres and other publicly supported visual arts organisations (see chapter 3.4).

The legal framework also encompasses the *métiers d'art* (art crafts), recognised in France as professional activities combining artistic creation with traditional craftsmanship. Public policies seek to safeguard and transmit specialised know-how through vocational training, apprenticeship, heritage conservation and international promotion. In this field, the Ministry of Culture works alongside the [Institut pour les savoir-faire français](#) (formerly the *Institut national des métiers d'art*, INMA), which promotes French craftsmanship, supports professional development and contributes to the recognition of exceptional artisanal skills.

Recent regulatory developments have mainly concerned the rules governing the use of public funds to commission artworks. Since 2019, these rules have been consolidated in the [Code de la commande publique](#) (*Public Procurement Code*), the French legal code governing contracts concluded by public authorities for works, goods and services. It therefore applies when the State, a local authority or another public body commissions an artist to create a work for a public building or space.

The framework requires public authorities to organise transparent and fair selection procedures, while allowing artistic criteria, professional expertise and the originality of the proposed work to play a central role in the choice of the artist. In parallel, contemporary art has increasingly been incorporated into public construction, urban redevelopment and heritage restoration projects, particularly through commissions linked to schools, hospitals, transport infrastructure and renovated public spaces.

Overall, French legislation on the visual arts and crafts combines public commissioning, cultural policy and public procurement law within a coherent framework designed to encourage artistic creation, safeguard traditional know-how and promote public access to

contemporary art. The legal framework has remained broadly stable in recent years, with changes focusing primarily on the consolidation of public procurement rules and the continued use of public commissioning as a key instrument for supporting artistic creation and integrating contemporary art into the built environment.

4.2.5 Legislation on books and press

The French legal and regulatory framework governing books, publishing and the press combines cultural policy objectives with market regulation and constitutional principles relating to freedom of expression and media pluralism. It is designed to promote cultural diversity, safeguard access to books throughout the country and preserve a pluralistic and independent press.

A central pillar of this framework is [Law No. 81-766 of 10 August 1981](#) on book pricing (*Loi Lang*), which introduced a fixed retail price for books determined by the publisher. Retailers may grant discounts of no more than 5%, thereby limiting price competition while preserving a geographically diverse network of independent bookshops. Widely regarded as one of the defining instruments of French cultural policy, the system seeks to maintain bibliodiversity and territorial access to books. The fixed-price regime was extended to digital books by [Law No. 2011-590 of 26 May 2011](#), ensuring regulatory continuity in the context of digital publishing.

The book sector is also governed by the [Code du patrimoine](#) (*Heritage Code*), notably its provisions relating to libraries and legal deposit, and by the [Code de la propriété intellectuelle](#) (*Intellectual Property Code*), which establishes the legal framework for copyright and publishing contracts. Public reading policies are largely implemented by municipal and departmental libraries. This framework was strengthened by [Law No. 2021-1717 of 21 December 2021](#) on libraries and the development of public reading, which formally defines the missions of public libraries, including equal access to knowledge, lifelong learning, cultural participation and freedom of access to information.

The legal framework governing the press is founded on the principles of freedom of expression, editorial independence and media pluralism. Alongside general competition law, it includes specific rules on the transparency of media ownership and a range of public support measures, including direct subsidies, distribution support and preferential VAT rates, intended to preserve media pluralism and support the economic sustainability of news publishing (see chapter 3.5.2).

Recent legislative and regulatory developments have primarily concerned the adaptation of the legal framework to digital publishing and online dissemination. Alongside the extension of the fixed book price system to digital books, France has implemented European legislation relating to copyright in the digital environment and digital services, notably the [Directive on](#)

[Copyright in the Digital Single Market](#) and the [Digital Services Act](#) (see chapter 4.2). These developments have strengthened the protection of authors, publishers and press publishers in their relations with online platforms while reinforcing transparency and accountability in the online distribution of cultural and journalistic content.

The French legal framework treats books and the press not simply as economic sectors but as cultural and democratic goods warranting specific public regulation. This approach underpins long-standing legal mechanisms designed to preserve cultural diversity, broad public access to information and a pluralistic media environment, while adapting progressively to the challenges of digital publishing and online dissemination.

4.2.6 Legislation on audiovisual and interactive media

The French legislative framework governing audiovisual and interactive media is primarily based on the [Code du cinéma et de l'image animée](#) (Cinema and Animated Image Code) and [Law No. 86-1067 of 30 September 1986 on Freedom of Communication](#) (*Loi relative à la liberté de communication*, commonly known as the *Loi Léotard*), which remains the cornerstone of broadcasting regulation in France. Together, these instruments establish the legal framework governing audiovisual services, cinema, broadcasting and certain digital media, combining cultural policy objectives with economic regulation and the protection of media pluralism.

The French regulatory system is characterised by the central role of the *Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique* ([ARCOM](#)), created in 2022 through the merger of the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel* (CSA), the former broadcasting regulator, and the *Haute Autorité pour la diffusion des œuvres et la protection des droits sur internet* (Hadopi), formerly responsible for online copyright enforcement. ARCOM supervises television and radio broadcasters, on-demand audiovisual media services and certain digital platforms. Its responsibilities include ensuring compliance with rules relating to pluralism, the protection of minors, commercial communications, the promotion of French and European works and the protection of copyright in the digital environment.

French audiovisual legislation is also closely shaped by European Union law. In particular, [Directive \(EU\) 2018/1808](#) revising the Audiovisual Media Services Directive ([AVMSD](#)) extended regulatory obligations to video-sharing platforms and reinforced rules concerning the promotion of European works, the protection of minors and measures against harmful content.

The *Cinema and Animated Image Code* provides the legal basis for the public support system administered by the *Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée* ([CNC](#)). It establishes a combination of automatic and selective support schemes financed through levies on cinema admissions, television services and on-demand audiovisual media services. The Code also regulates matters such as film classification, public support for cinema exhibition, including independent and *art et essai* cinemas, and the preservation of the national film heritage.

Following the transposition of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive, legislation has progressively extended long-standing obligations previously imposed on broadcasters to certain on-demand audiovisual media services. Streaming platforms operating in or targeting the French market are therefore subject to obligations concerning investment in French and European audiovisual production and the promotion of European works in their catalogues. These measures illustrate the gradual adaptation of the French regulatory model to digital distribution while maintaining its long-standing objective of supporting audiovisual creation.

French legislation also establishes the legal framework governing public service broadcasting and defines the public service missions entrusted to companies such as [France Télévisions](#), [Radio France](#), [France Médias Monde](#) and the [Institut national de l'audiovisuel \(INA\)](#). These missions include the provision of information, education, culture and entertainment, together with obligations relating to pluralism, accessibility and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Questions relating to photography and image use are governed primarily by the [Code de la propriété intellectuelle](#) (Intellectual Property Code), which protects original photographic works through copyright, and by [Article 9 of the Civil Code](#), which safeguards the right to privacy and the protection of a person's image. These rules increasingly interact with European data protection legislation and emerging legal issues relating to digital dissemination and artificial intelligence.

French legislation governing audiovisual and interactive media combines long-standing mechanisms supporting cinema and broadcasting with regulatory approaches developed in response to digital convergence. While preserving the principles of cultural diversity and public service that have traditionally characterised the French audiovisual model, the legal framework has progressively expanded to encompass streaming platforms and other digital media services. The organisation of the sector, its economic significance and recent policy developments are discussed further in Section 3.5.3.

4.2.7 Legislation on design and creative service

The French legal framework governing design and creative services is centred primarily on architecture, which constitutes the principal field subject to specific sectoral legislation in France. Other design activities are regulated mainly through general intellectual property and commercial law rather than dedicated sector-specific legislation.

[Law No. 77-2 of 3 January 1977](#) on Architecture establishes the fundamental principle that "architecture is an expression of culture" and that the quality of architectural creation, buildings and their integration into the surrounding environment is a matter of public

interest. This principle continues to underpin legislation governing architectural practice, urban development and the protection of the built environment.

A key obligation arising from the 1977 Law is the requirement that most construction projects subject to planning permission must involve a qualified architect, as provided for in [Article L.431-1 of the Code de l'urbanisme](#) (Urban Planning Code) the legal framework also establishes the professional organisation of architects through the [Ordre des architectes](#) (Institute of Architects) and regulates the conditions under which the profession may be exercised.

Architectural quality is further supported by complementary legislation on urban planning and heritage protection, notably through the Urban Planning Code and the Heritage Code. French legislation also provides the framework for the *Conseils d'architecture, d'urbanisme et de l'environnement* (CAUEs), departmental bodies responsible for promoting architectural, urban and landscape quality by providing advice and expertise to public authorities, professionals and private individuals.

Other design activities are governed primarily by the Intellectual Property Code, notably through copyright and design rights. Unlike architecture, France does not maintain a distinct legislative framework specifically dedicated to design professions. Public support for design, applied arts and creative industries is therefore provided mainly through cultural, industrial and innovation policies rather than through sector-specific legislation.

Overall, architecture occupies a distinctive position within French legislation as the only design-related activity governed by a comprehensive sector-specific legal framework. By contrast, other design activities rely principally on general intellectual property and commercial legislation. (See Chapter 3.5.4.)

5. Arts and cultural education

Arts and cultural education (*éducation artistique et culturelle* – [EAC](#)) is a long-standing priority of French cultural policy, implemented jointly by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of National Education. It aims to guarantee universal access to artistic practice, encounters with works and artists, and the acquisition of cultural knowledge, while fostering creativity, critical thinking and lifelong cultural participation.

Since the early 2000s, EAC has been progressively consolidated through national policy frameworks, notably the [Parcours d'éducation artistique et culturelle](#) (Arts and Cultural Education Pathway), introduced by the 2013 Law on the Refoundation of the School of the Republic, together with interministerial agreements and territorial cooperation schemes. The system combines formal education, extracurricular activities and partnerships between schools, artists and cultural institutions.

Recent policy developments have sought to broaden access to arts and cultural education while strengthening territorial equity and cooperation between the educational and cultural sectors. Among these developments, the [Pass Culture](#), progressively generalised from 2021, has expanded young people's individual access to cultural activities and resources. The 2021–2025 interministerial roadmap for arts and cultural education further reaffirmed the objective of universal access to EAC ("[100% EAC](#)"), while promoting digital cultural resources and strengthened partnerships between schools, cultural institutions and creative professionals.

Data box n°3 : Arts and cultural education in France

Indicator	Latest verified data	Source
Estimated public expenditure on arts and cultural education	~€3.5 billion (2023)	Cour des comptes (2025)
Pupils benefiting from at least one EAC activity	57% (2023–2024)	Cour des comptes (ADAGE data, 2025)
Collèges using the collective Pass Culture	98% (2023–2024)	DEPS, <i>Culture chiffres</i> 2025
Lycées using the collective Pass Culture	95% (2023–2024)	DEPS, <i>Culture chiffres</i> 2025
Cultural activities financed through the collective Pass Culture	>140,000 (2023–2024)	DEPS, <i>Culture chiffres</i> 2025

Sources: [Ministry of Culture \(DEPS\), *Culture chiffres* \(latest available editions\)](#); [Ministry of National Education \(DGESCO\)](#); [Cour des comptes, *L'éducation artistique et culturelle au bénéfice des élèves de l'enseignement scolaire* \(2025\)](#).

5.1 Policy and institutional overview

French arts and cultural education (*éducation artistique et culturelle* – EAC) is based on three complementary pillars: enabling all pupils to acquire cultural knowledge, encouraging artistic practice, and facilitating encounters with works of art, artists and cultural institutions. This approach reflects the longstanding objective of French cultural policy to combine equal access to culture with active participation and cultural literacy throughout compulsory education.

The current framework was progressively developed through successive interministerial initiatives. A significant milestone was the [Lang-Tasca Plan](#) (2000–2005), which strengthened the place of arts education within schools and expanded cooperation between educational institutions and cultural organisations. The system was further consolidated by the [2013 Law on the Refoundation of the School of the Republic](#), which introduced the [Parcours d'éducation artistique et culturelle](#) (Arts and Cultural Education Pathway) as a framework intended to ensure that every pupil benefits from a coherent artistic and cultural pathway throughout their schooling.

Institutional coordination is shared between the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for curricula, teacher training and the organisation of arts education within schools, while the Ministry of Culture provides artistic expertise, supports cultural institutions and co-finances educational initiatives. Since 2025, overall coordination has been entrusted to the Interministerial Delegation for Arts and Cultural Education ([Délégation interministérielle à l'éducation artistique et culturelle – DIEAC](#)), which oversees the implementation and monitoring of the national EAC policy across both ministries. The [Haut Conseil de l'éducation artistique et culturelle \(HCEAC\)](#), created in 2005, continues to provide strategic guidance through the [Charter for Arts and Cultural Education](#) and contributes to the development of national policy priorities.

Implementation relies on close cooperation between State services, territorial authorities and cultural institutions. At regional level, the *Directions régionales des affaires culturelles* (Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs – DRACs) coordinate programmes jointly with the education authorities (see chapter 1.2). They work alongside local and regional authorities, which play a central role in financing and organising extracurricular cultural activities, particularly through conservatoires, local cultural facilities and partnerships with artists. The *Pôles de ressources pour l'éducation artistique et culturelle* (PREAC), created in 2007, are regional resource centres that bring together schools, teacher training providers, cultural institutions and artists around specific artistic or heritage disciplines. Their role is to develop educational resources, organise professional training, and promote long-term partnerships between the education and cultural sectors.

Since the late 2010s, French policy has increasingly focused on extending universal access to arts and cultural education. The national objective of "[100% EAC](#)", reaffirmed in the 2020–2024 and 2021–2025 interministerial policy frameworks, seeks to ensure that every young person benefits from a structured artistic and cultural pathway throughout compulsory education. Recent developments have also reinforced teacher training, expanded the involvement of artists in educational projects, and encouraged the use of digital cultural resources, while maintaining the central role of partnerships between schools and cultural institutions.

French arts and cultural education is characterised by strong interministerial governance and extensive territorial cooperation, combining national educational objectives with decentralised cultural action. The practical implementation of these principles through schools, cultural institutions and specialised educational programmes is discussed in the following sections. (See Chapters 5.2–5.5.)

5.2 Arts in schools

Arts and cultural education is integrated into the national curriculum and forms part of compulsory schooling throughout primary and secondary education. It combines compulsory arts teaching with a wide range of complementary cultural activities delivered in partnership with artists, cultural institutions and territorial authorities.

Arts education is progressively developed throughout compulsory education. In primary education, visual arts and music are compulsory subjects. These disciplines continue throughout lower secondary education (*collège*), where they are complemented by interdisciplinary approaches linking artistic, historical and cultural learning. In upper secondary education (*lycée*), pupils may choose specialised arts pathways in disciplines such as visual arts, music, theatre, dance, cinema and audiovisual studies, or design. The 2019 reform of the *baccalauréat* further strengthened these artistic specialisations within the general upper secondary curriculum ([Ministry of National Education, Organisation of the General Baccalauréat, 2019](#)).

A distinctive feature of the French system is the network of *classes à horaires aménagés*, organised in partnership with conservatoires and other specialised cultural institutions. These programmes enable pupils to combine general education with intensive artistic training, particularly in music, dance and theatre ([Education Code, Articles D312-10 to D312-16](#)).

Alongside compulsory teaching, schools participate in a wide range of complementary programmes designed to strengthen pupils' artistic practice and cultural participation. These include [classes à projet artistique et culturel \(PAC\)](#), artist residencies in schools, heritage classes ([classes du patrimoine](#)), and long-term partnerships between schools and museums, theatres, archives, libraries and other cultural institutions. Although these schemes are supported by national policy frameworks, they are implemented locally through cooperation between education authorities, cultural organisations and territorial authorities.

Cinema education occupies a distinctive place within French arts education policy. Coordinated by the *Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée* ([CNC](#)), the nationwide programmes [École et cinéma](#), [Collège au cinéma](#) and [Lycéens et apprentis au cinéma](#) introduce pupils to film heritage and contemporary cinema through screenings, classroom activities and educational resources.

Digital cultural resources have become an increasingly important component of arts education. The [Lumni](#) platform, developed jointly by France Télévisions, the Ministry of National Education and several national cultural institutions in 2019, provides free educational resources covering a wide range of artistic and cultural disciplines. These digital resources are intended to complement, rather than replace, direct encounters with artists, performances, collections and heritage sites.

Schools are required to incorporate an arts and cultural dimension into their educational projects (*projets d'établissement*), ensuring that artistic and cultural education forms part of the broader educational experience. Its implementation relies on sustained cooperation between schools, cultural institutions, artists and territorial authorities, reflecting the partnership-based approach that characterises French arts and cultural education ([Education Code; Ministry of Culture and Ministry of National Education, 2020-2021 Interministerial Roadmap for Arts and Cultural Education](#)). See also Chapter 5.1.

5.3 Higher arts and cultural education

Higher arts and cultural education in France is characterised by a highly diversified institutional landscape combining specialised higher education institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, universities, and private schools. This pluralistic organisation reflects the diversity of artistic disciplines and professional pathways, while combining artistic excellence, academic research and preparation for employment in the cultural and creative sectors ([Ministry of Culture, Culture chiffres – Formations artistiques et culturelles, latest edition](#)).

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for higher education in fields including visual arts, architecture, heritage, performing arts, cinema and audiovisual media. The Ministry supervises a [network of nearly 100 institutions under the Ministry's supervision, and more than 36,000 students](#) in programmes that combine artistic practice, theoretical teaching and research. These include higher schools of art (*écoles nationales supérieures d'art*), or architecture (*Écoles nationales supérieures d'architecture*), national conservatoires for music, dance and drama, heritage institutions such as the [Institut national du patrimoine](#) or the [École du Louvre](#) as well as specialised schools in cinema and audiovisual studies. In some cases supervision is shared with the [Ministry of Higher Education and Research](#) (in architecture for instance). Together, these institutions combine artistic training with professional preparation and maintain close links with cultural institutions, heritage organisations and the creative industries. Universities offer a whole range of degree programmes in disciplines such as art history, archaeology, cultural studies, cultural management and mediation. Alongside the public sector, private institutions also contribute significantly to training in applied arts, design, animation, video games, fashion and other creative industries.

Like other European countries participating in the [Bologna Process](#), France has organised its public higher education system around three successive degree levels—Licence (Bachelor's), Master's and Doctorate. This common framework facilitates the recognition of qualifications and student mobility across Europe.

Graduate outcomes vary according to artistic discipline. Employment prospects are generally strongest in architecture, design, audiovisual production and heritage professions, while careers in the performing and visual arts more frequently involve project-based or intermittent forms of employment. This diversity reflects the broader structure of France's cultural labour market and the coexistence of salaried and freelance artistic careers ([DEPS, Observatoire de l'emploi culturel, latest available reports](#)).

Recent developments have focused on adapting curricula to changes in artistic practice and cultural professions. Higher education institutions have expanded provision in digital creation, immersive technologies and artificial intelligence, strengthened cooperation with the cultural and creative industries, and developed apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities. Internationalisation has also continued through Erasmus+ mobility schemes, joint degrees and European cooperation projects, reinforcing the integration of French higher arts education within the European Higher Education Area.

Data Box n°4: Higher Arts and Cultural Education in France – Main Indicators

Indicator	Latest value	Year	Source
Total higher education students	~2.97 million	2023–2024	Ministry of Higher Education and Research (SIES/DEPP), <i>Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche 2024</i>
Students in arts and cultural higher education	175,000	2021–2022	Ministry of Culture (DEPS), <i>Formations artistiques et culturelles en 2021 : 175 000 étudiants dans 700 établissements (Culture chiffres, CC-2023-3), 2023</i>
Share of total higher education	6%	2021–2022	Ministry of Culture (DEPS), <i>Formations artistiques et culturelles en 2021 : 175 000 étudiants dans 700 établissements (Culture chiffres, CC-2023-3), 2023</i>
Higher education institutions supervised by the Ministry of Culture (ESC)	99	2022–2023	Ministry of Culture (DEPS), <i>Chiffres clés 2024 de la culture et de la communication, "Higher artistic and cultural education"</i>
Students enrolled in Ministry of Culture institutions	36,300	2022–2023	Ministry of Culture (DEPS), <i>Chiffres clés 2024 de la culture et de la communication, "Higher artistic and cultural education"</i>
Graduates in employment three years after graduation	90%	2024	Ministry of Culture (DEPS), <i>Chiffres clés 2024 de la culture et de la communication, "Graduate employment of students from higher artistic and cultural education institutions"</i>

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research (SIES/DEPP); Ministry of Culture (DEPS).

5.4 Out-of-school arts and cultural education

Out-of-school arts and cultural education in France is primarily organised through a dense network of publicly funded conservatoires, complemented by associative, private and community-based arts schools. Together, these institutions provide structured training in music, dance and drama, while also supporting amateur artistic practice, lifelong learning

and access to pre-professional education. They therefore play a central role in the continuum between cultural participation, artistic practice and higher arts education.

The core of the French system consists of a nationwide network of publicly funded conservatoires. Unlike conservatoires in many other countries, which often function primarily as higher education institutions, French conservatoires provide structured artistic education outside the formal school system for children, young people and adults, while also offering advanced and pre-professional training. These institutions are classified by the Ministry of Culture according to their territorial remit as local or inter-municipal (*conservatoires à rayonnement communal ou intercommunal* – CRC/CRI), departmental (*conservatoires à rayonnement départemental* – CRD) or regional (*conservatoires à rayonnement régional* – CRR). Although administered and largely financed by territorial authorities, they operate under national pedagogical standards and classification criteria established by the Ministry of Culture ([Ministry of Culture, *Les enseignements artistiques spécialisés en musique, danse et art dramatique*](#)).

Conservatoire training follows a progressive curriculum organised into successive learning cycles, beginning with introductory classes for young children and progressing towards advanced amateur or pre-professional training. Depending on the discipline and the learner's progression, the full curriculum typically extends over around ten years or more. In departmental (CRD) and regional (CRR) conservatoires, the final cycle may lead to nationally recognised certificates, such as the *Certificat d'études musicales* (CEM), *Certificat d'études chorégraphiques* (CEC) or *Certificat d'études théâtrales* (CET), and may provide access to higher education in music, dance or drama ([Ministry of Culture, *Schéma national d'orientation pédagogique*](#)).

Conservatoires occupy a distinctive place within the French cultural system. Beyond vocational preparation, they provide artistic education for children, young people and adults, contribute to local cultural life through concerts, performances and exhibitions, and develop partnerships with schools, cultural institutions and community organisations. They are therefore considered both educational institutions and key actors in local cultural policy.

Alongside conservatoires, France also has a wide range of non-profit arts education providers, most of which are organised as associations under the French [1901 Law](#) on associations, as well as a smaller number of private schools. These include community music and dance schools run by local associations, specialised schools focusing on areas such as jazz, contemporary music or circus arts, and youth and popular education organisations such as [Les Francas](#), which work with around 1.8 million children and adolescents each year, and the nationwide network of [Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture \(MJC\)](#), comprising around 1,000 local associations. Together, these organisations complement the public network by responding to local demand, supporting specialised artistic practices and broadening

opportunities for cultural participation. ([Les Francas, Notre projet](#); [MJC de France, Rapport d'activité 2025](#))

The governance of out-of-school arts education reflects France's decentralised cultural model (see chapter 1.2). Territorial authorities are responsible for the operation and financing of conservatoires, while the Ministry of Culture defines pedagogical frameworks, awards institutional classifications and supports the overall development of the network. This shared responsibility seeks to ensure both national coherence and adaptation to local cultural needs ([General Code of Territorial Collectivities](#)).

Recent policy developments have focused on strengthening the territorial role of conservatoires, expanding access in rural and underserved areas, encouraging interdisciplinary teaching across artistic disciplines, reinforcing links with schools and higher arts education institutions, and promoting wider social inclusion through outreach activities and more accessible participation.

5.5 Vocational and professional training

Vocational and professional training in the cultural and creative sectors in France combines initial education, higher education, apprenticeships and continuing professional development within a system involving the State, regional authorities, higher education institutions and sectoral organisations. Reflecting the diversity of cultural occupations, training pathways prepare professionals for a wide range of careers, including performing artists and technicians, audiovisual production, design and crafts, architecture, heritage conservation, museums, publishing, and the rapidly expanding fields of digital creation, video games and immersive media.

Initial vocational education is available from upper secondary level through vocational diplomas such as the *Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP) and vocational baccalaureates (*baccalauréats professionnels*) in fields including arts and crafts, audiovisual production and live performance. At post-secondary level, students may pursue higher technical qualifications such as the *Brevet de technicien supérieur* (BTS) or the *Diplôme national des métiers d'art et du design* (DN MADE), before progressing to specialised higher education institutions or professional university programmes.

Higher arts education institutions under the Ministry of Culture also contribute to vocational and professional training by preparing students for careers in architecture, heritage, visual arts, design and the performing arts (see Chapter 5.3).

Apprenticeships have become an increasingly important pathway into cultural occupations following the 2018 reform introduced by the *Law for the Freedom to Choose One's Professional*

Future (Loi pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel). By simplifying funding arrangements and expanding access to apprenticeship contracts, the reform encouraged employers across the cultural and creative sectors to recruit apprentices, particularly in audiovisual production, design, crafts and technical occupations in the performing arts. Apprenticeships are now recognised as an important mechanism for facilitating the transition from education to employment.

A distinctive feature of the French vocational training system is the role of [AFDAS](#), the sectoral skills operator (*opérateur de compétences* – OPCO) responsible for the culture, media, communication, leisure and entertainment sectors. Originally created in 1972 to support training in the performing arts, AFDAS has gradually expanded its remit and today covers 31 professional branches, representing more than 125,000 enterprises, around 554,000 full-time equivalent employees, over 140,000 eligible *intermittents du spectacle* (see chapter 2.3) and approximately 368,000 authors and creators ([AFDAS, Chiffres clés 2024](#)). Rather than providing training directly, it finances continuing professional development, supports apprenticeship schemes, advises employers and workers on skills development, and facilitates access to vocational training for employees, freelancers and self-employed professionals. Its role is particularly important because many cultural professionals—especially in the performing arts and audiovisual sectors—have discontinuous careers, work for multiple employers or are self-employed. Continuous professional development therefore constitutes an essential component of career development, enabling workers to maintain and update their technical, artistic and digital skills throughout their professional lives.

Vocational and professional training continues to evolve in response to broader changes affecting the cultural and creative sectors. Digital technologies, new production methods and the emergence of creative fields such as immersive media and video game development are generating demand for increasingly hybrid skills that combine artistic, technical and digital expertise. At the same time, continuing professional development has become more important as cultural professionals adapt to changing technologies, evolving working practices and new forms of cultural production and distribution. These developments illustrate the growing emphasis placed on lifelong learning as a means of supporting the adaptability and employability of the cultural workforce.

6. Cultural participation and consumption

6.1 Policies and programmes

Policies supporting cultural participation in France are historically rooted in the principle of *cultural democratisation* (*démocratisation culturelle*), which has constituted one of the central objectives of French cultural policy since the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1959 (see chapter 1.1). Traditionally associated with André Malraux's vision of providing the widest possible access to the "masterpieces of humanity", this approach sought to broaden public access to heritage sites, museums, theatres and other major cultural institutions through the territorial development of cultural provision, public investment in cultural infrastructure, reduced admission fees and cultural mediation.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, this perspective has progressively evolved towards a broader conception of *cultural democracy* (*démocratie culturelle*), placing greater emphasis on cultural diversity, participation, amateur practices, local initiatives and the recognition of multiple forms of cultural expression. Contemporary cultural participation policies therefore combine efforts to widen access to established cultural institutions with support for participatory practices, digital cultural uses and locally rooted cultural initiatives. This evolution has also been reinforced by the growing recognition of cultural rights in French cultural policy, particularly following their inclusion in the Law on the Freedom of Creation, Architecture and Heritage ([Law No. 2016-925 of 7 July 2016](#)), which recognises the importance of enabling everyone to participate in cultural life (see chapter 2).

Today, French cultural participation policies are organised around four broad priorities: widening access to culture for young people and disadvantaged audiences; reducing territorial inequalities in cultural provision; promoting arts and cultural education throughout life (see chapter 5); and adapting cultural policies to digital practices and changing modes of cultural consumption. These priorities reflect a broader evolution of French cultural policy from an approach centred primarily on access to publicly funded cultural institutions towards a more diversified conception of participation, encompassing everyday cultural practices, amateur activities, digital uses and cultural rights.

A major recent development has been the introduction of the [pass Culture](#), initially launched as a pilot programme in 2019 before being extended nationwide in 2021. The scheme combines an individual component, enabling young people to discover and book cultural activities independently through a dedicated digital platform, and a collective component supporting arts and cultural education projects organised by schools. Through the platform, users can access books, cinema, live performances, museums, music, artistic workshops and certain digital cultural services. Since its introduction, the *pass Culture* has become one of the

flagship instruments of French cultural participation policy. In 2024, the Ministry of Culture allocated more than EUR 210 million to the scheme, illustrating its central place within national policies to encourage cultural participation among young people. Beyond its financial dimension, the scheme reflects a broader policy objective of encouraging cultural autonomy among young people by enabling them to make their own cultural choices while strengthening their familiarity with cultural institutions and artistic practices. Since its introduction, however, the scheme has also generated debate regarding its effectiveness in reaching young people who were previously least engaged in cultural activities and its impact on long-term cultural participation. Alongside the *pass Culture*, the [Micro-Folie](#) programme, launched in 2017, has become another flagship initiative for broadening cultural participation. Designed primarily for smaller towns, rural areas and disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, each *Micro-Folie* combines a digital museum with cultural mediation and local programming. By providing digital access to the collections of major French and international cultural institutions while developing activities tailored to local communities, the programme seeks to reduce territorial inequalities in access to culture. ([Ministry of Culture, Présentation du budget 2024 – Projet de loi de finances; pass Culture, La réforme du pass Culture](#)). (see chapters 5.1 and 6.1)

Pricing policies remain an important instrument for encouraging cultural participation. Since 2009, permanent collections in national museums have been free of charge for European Union residents under the age of 26 as part of the Ministry of Culture's policy of cultural democratisation. In addition, many national, regional and local cultural institutions offer reduced admission fees for students, jobseekers and other eligible groups, while territorial authorities have developed a variety of local culture passes, voucher schemes and subscription cards to encourage attendance. These measures are complemented by cultural mediation programmes designed to facilitate access for audiences who are less familiar with cultural institutions. ([Ministry of Culture, La gratuité des collections permanentes pour les 18-25 ans dans les musées nationaux](#)).

Digital transformation has significantly reshaped cultural participation patterns in France. Streaming platforms, social media, online gaming and digital cultural content have become central modes of cultural consumption, particularly among younger generations (see chapter 2.4). In response, public authorities have expanded policies to support access to legal digital cultural content, promote the visibility of French and European works online, reduce digital inequalities and develop new forms of digital cultural mediation (see chapters 2.9 and 3.3).. National cultural institutions, including the Bibliothèque nationale de France ([BnF](#)), the Institut national de l'audiovisuel ([INA](#)) and major museums, have complemented these policies by expanding the digitisation of collections, online exhibitions, virtual access to archives and educational digital resources, thereby extending public access to cultural

heritage beyond physical institutions. At the same time, public debate increasingly focuses on issues such as platform dominance, algorithmic visibility, creators' remuneration and the impact of digital consumption on traditional forms of cultural participation.

Despite sustained public investment, cultural participation continues to display significant social and territorial disparities linked to educational attainment, income, age and place of residence. Consequently, recent policies have placed increasing emphasis on improving access for rural and peripheral territories, disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, young people and persons with disabilities. Cultural participation is therefore increasingly understood not only as a question of access to cultural activities but also as a broader instrument for promoting social cohesion, citizenship and inclusion.

6.2 Trends and figures in cultural participation

France has a long tradition of monitoring cultural participation through large-scale national surveys conducted by the Department for Studies, Foresight, Statistics and Documentation ([Département des études, de la prospective, des statistiques et de la documentation – DEPS](#)) of the Ministry of Culture, often in cooperation with the research institute [CRÉDOC](#). Since the first edition of [Pratiques culturelles des Français](#) in 1973, these surveys have provided one of the most comprehensive and long-standing sources of information on cultural participation in Europe, documenting changes in cultural attendance, artistic practices and media consumption over time.

Recent evidence highlights both continuity and change in patterns of cultural participation. Following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance at cultural venues has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, while digital forms of cultural participation have become an integral component of everyday cultural life. At the same time, significant inequalities related to education, socio-economic status and place of residence continue to shape participation in many cultural activities. Tables 4a, 4b and 5 illustrate these developments through recent indicators on cultural attendance, media practices and amateur artistic participation.

Table 4a. : Attendance at selected cultural activities in France during the previous 12 months (% of the population aged 15+, selected years)

	2019	2023	2024
Activities heavily subsidised by the state and/or local authorities			
Theatre	23	14	24
Dance	12	8	14
Concerts (all genres)*	35	24	36
Libraries	32	30	37
Museums / exhibitions	41	33	39
Monuments / heritages sites	64	59	64
Activities without large public subsidies			
Cinema	59	53	60
Festivals	20	20	24

Source: [DEPS-CRÉDOC, Les sorties culturelles des Français en 2024 \(Baromètre des pratiques culturelles, waves 2019, 2023 and 2024\); Ministry of Culture.](#)

* The DEPS-CRÉDOC Cultural Barometer covers concerts of all musical genres and does not provide a separate indicator for classical music.

The DEPS-CRÉDOC Cultural Barometer indicates that the post-pandemic recovery of cultural attendance has not been uniform across cultural activities. Heritage sites and cinema rapidly returned to, and in some cases slightly exceeded, their pre-pandemic attendance levels, reflecting the resilience of broadly accessible forms of cultural participation. By contrast, attendance at theatre, dance performances and museums appears more sensitive to social and behavioural factors, having experienced a sharper decline during the pandemic before recovering strongly by 2024. These trends suggest that while overall participation has normalised, the pace and dynamics of recovery differ according to the type of cultural activity.

Table 4b. Selected cultural and media practices in France in 2018

Cultural and media practices during the previous 12 months	Share of the population (%)
Read at least one book (excluding comic books)	62
Read at least one newspaper (print or online)	51
Listened to recorded music	81
Watched television	94
Listened to the radio	82
Went to the cinema	63
Visited a museum or exhibition	29
Visited a historic monument	34
Used a public library	27
Attended at least one live performance	43
Played video games	44

Source: Ministry of Culture (DEPS), [Pratiques culturelles en France 2018](#), detailed statistical tables.

Note: Table 4b draws on *Pratiques culturelles en France (2018)*, the latest comprehensive national survey of cultural participation conducted by the Ministry of Culture (DEPS). Unlike the annual DEPS-CRÉDOC Cultural Practices Barometer, which focuses primarily on recent attendance at cultural venues (see Table 3a), this survey covers a much wider range of cultural and media practices, including reading, audiovisual consumption, artistic participation, digital practices and library use. Although conducted in 2018, it remains the principal national reference for analysing long-term patterns of cultural participation in France.

The *Pratiques culturelles* survey highlights a broad conception of cultural participation that extends beyond attendance at cultural institutions. While television, radio, recorded music and reading continue to structure everyday cultural life for a majority of the population, digital leisure activities such as video games have become firmly embedded alongside more traditional practices. These findings suggest that contemporary cultural participation in France is increasingly multi-dimensional, combining institutional attendance, home-based cultural consumption and digitally mediated forms of engagement rather than replacing one mode of participation with another.

Table 5: People who have carried out artistic activities in France in the last 12 months by type of activity, in % of total population, 2018

Artistic activity	2018 (%)
Writing	8
Painting or drawing	12
Photography	19
Video creation*	9
Digital content creation / website or blog creation**	n.a.
Amateur drama	1
Dance	7
Playing a musical instrument	7
Singing***	6

Source: [Philippe Lombardo, 23 millions d'amateurs pratiquent une activité de loisir créatif, artistique ou scientifique en 2018, France, portrait social 2022, INSEE](#), based on the Ministry of Culture (DEPS), *Pratiques culturelles des Français 2018*.

*Video creation corresponds to the French survey category audio/video editing (montages audiovisuels), which is the closest available equivalent.

** Digital content creation / website or blog creation has no direct equivalent in the French survey. No comparable national statistic is available.

*** The French survey records singing (chant) rather than specifically singing in a choir or group.

Note: The 2018 survey is the latest comprehensive national survey providing detailed statistics on amateur artistic practices in France. Earlier editions of the survey are not directly comparable because several activity categories and the questionnaire were revised over time, particularly with the introduction and reclassification of digital and audiovisual practices. Where necessary, the activity labels have been adapted to reflect the closest available categories in the French survey.

These data demonstrate that cultural participation in France extends beyond cultural consumption to include a wide range of creative practices. Photography, visual arts and audiovisual creation are more widespread than collective performing arts, reflecting the diversity of contemporary forms of artistic engagement. This broader understanding of participation has increasingly informed French cultural policy, which now places greater emphasis on participation, artistic practice and cultural expression alongside access to publicly funded cultural institutions.

Taken together, these findings illustrate the increasingly multifaceted nature of cultural participation in France. Attendance at cultural venues has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, while media consumption, digital leisure and amateur artistic practices demonstrate that participation extends well beyond visits to cultural institutions. The data also confirm that publicly supported cultural venues continue to play a central role within the French

cultural landscape, particularly museums, heritage sites, libraries and the performing arts. At the same time, previous DEPS surveys consistently show that participation remains unevenly distributed according to educational attainment and socio-economic background. Contemporary French cultural policy therefore seeks to reconcile the long-standing objective of *cultural democratisation*—broadening access to publicly funded culture—with increasing recognition of diverse forms of cultural participation, including digital practices, amateur creativity and cultural participation throughout everyday life.

6.3 Trends and figures in household expenditure

Household expenditure on culture in France reflects the profound transformation of cultural consumption over the past two decades. While overall expenditure has remained relatively stable in real terms, its composition has changed substantially. Household spending has progressively shifted from the purchase of physical cultural goods towards expenditure on digital services, subscriptions and internet-based access to cultural content. This evolution reflects broader changes in cultural practices associated with digitalisation, the expansion of streaming platforms and the growing integration of cultural consumption into everyday digital uses.

Table 6: Household final effective consumption of cultural and culture-related goods and services in France (2019 and 2024, current prices)

Items (Field/Domain)	Household expenditure (in million EUR and percentages)				Average per capita expenditure (EUR)	
	2019	%	2024	%	2019	2024
I. Books and press	8,405	14.4	8,675	12.8	124.97	126.39
Books	3,742	6.4	4,480	6.6	55.64	65.27
Newspapers	2,275	3.9	1,822	2.7	33.83	26.54
Magazines and periodicals	2,388	4.1	2,373	3.5	35.50	34.58
II. Audiovisual and multimedia	5,879	10.1	6,711	9.9	87.40	97.77
Cinema attendance	1,459	2.5	1,531	2.3	21.69	22.31
DVD and Blu-ray distribution	332	0.6	192	0.3	4.94	2.80
Video game publishing (excluding online)	3,400	5.8	3,789	5.6	50.55	55.20
Sound recordings	438	0.7	250	0.4	6.51	3.64
Online music services	250	0.4	950	1.4	3.72	13.84

III. Performing arts, museums and cultural services	19,039	32.6	23,247	34.4	283.07	338.69
Creative, artistic and entertainment services (market)	4,221	7.2	4,794	7.1	62.76	69.84
Creative, artistic and entertainment services (non-market)	10,286	17.6	12,408	18.4	152.94	180.77
Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural services (market)	266	0.5	878	1.3	3.95	12.79
Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural services (non-market)	4,266	7.3	5,168	7.6	63.43	75.29
IV. Information and communication technologies and related cultural services	24,796	42.5	28,971	42.9	368.67	422.08
Computer equipment and peripherals	3,695	6.3	4,638	6.9	54.93	67.57
Mobile phones	3,722	6.4	4,846	7.2	55.34	70.60
Consumer audiovisual equipment and accessories	5,195	8.9	5,111	7.6	77.24	74.46
Musical instruments	280	0.5	294	0.4	4.16	4.28
Optical and photographic equipment; recording media	679	1.2	520	0.8	10.09	7.58
Telematic services, software and video games	4,113	7.0	313	0.5	61.15	4.56
Repair of consumer electronic equipment	501	0.9	533	0.8	7.45	7.77
Repair of communication equipment	49	0.1	55	0.1	0.73	0.80
Repair of computers and peripherals	201	0.3	232	0.3	2.99	3.38
Hosting and information services	495	0.8	886	1.3	7.36	12.91

Computer programming and related activities	4,247	7.3	4,718	7.0	63.15	68.74
Radio and television programme distribution services	3,619	6.2	6,825	10.1	53.81	99.43
TOTAL	58,399	100.0	67,604	100.0	868.28	984.93

Source: Ministry of Culture (DEPS), *Chiffres clés, statistiques de la culture et de la communication 2025*, based on INSEE National Accounts (base 2020).

Note: The table has been adapted from the French satellite account for culture published by DEPS. Unlike the standard Compendium template, the French satellite account follows its own classification of cultural and culture-related goods and services. The categories presented here therefore follow the official DEPS nomenclature while retaining the four broad expenditure domains used in the Compendium template. Percentages were calculated on the basis of total household final effective consumption of cultural and culture-related goods and services reported by DEPS. Average per capita expenditure was calculated using DEPS household expenditure data and INSEE resident population estimates.

The evolution of household expenditure reflects the continuing transformation of cultural consumption in France between 2019 and 2024. While expenditure on books remained relatively stable, spending on newspapers and several forms of physical audiovisual media declined. At the same time, expenditure on communication-related services and certain digital activities increased, illustrating the growing importance of digital technologies in access to cultural content.

Compared with 2019, expenditure on cultural services had increased by 2024, particularly for museums, libraries and other cultural services. Household spending on cinema attendance also recovered following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the return of audiences to cultural venues. These trends suggest that the expansion of digital consumption has not replaced demand for in-person cultural experiences but has instead reshaped the overall composition of household cultural expenditure.

More broadly, the structure of household expenditure demonstrates the increasing integration of digital technologies into everyday cultural consumption. The growing weight of communication services, digital equipment and related activities highlights the evolving boundaries of the cultural economy and illustrates the challenges of measuring cultural expenditure in an environment where cultural content is increasingly accessed through digital infrastructures. These developments raise important policy questions concerning the regulation of digital markets, the accessibility of cultural content and the adaptation of cultural statistics to new forms of consumption.

6.4 Culture and civil society

Culture in France is supported by a dense and long-established network of civil society organisations, including cultural associations, amateur artistic groups and popular education organisations (*éducation populaire*). These actors complement public cultural policies by promoting cultural participation, supporting artistic practice outside professional settings, facilitating access to culture and strengthening local cultural life. Their activities contribute to social cohesion, lifelong learning and civic engagement across the territory.

Amateur cultural participation remains an important feature of French cultural life. The latest DEPS analyses based on the [Pratiques culturelles des Français](#) survey confirm that amateur artistic and creative practices remain widespread, although participation varies according to age, educational attainment and socio-professional background. The range of practices has diversified over time and includes photography, writing, drawing, music, audiovisual creation and other digital forms of expression. More generally, digital technologies have expanded opportunities for cultural creation, dissemination and participation by facilitating the production and sharing of cultural content through online platforms and social networks ([Ministry of Culture \(DEPS\), Pratiques culturelles des Français. Synthèse 2023–2024](#)).

Cultural associations continue to play a central role in the French cultural ecosystem. According to the Ministry of Culture, France had approximately 289,000 cultural associations in 2018, representing nearly one quarter of all associations in the country. Together, they accounted for around 14.7 million memberships and 3.5 million voluntary participations, illustrating their major contribution to cultural life and civic engagement ([Ministry of Culture \(DEPS\), Associations culturelles, 2024](#)). Operating throughout the country, they organise artistic activities, festivals, workshops, heritage initiatives and community projects while providing important spaces for voluntary engagement and cultural mediation. Their role is particularly significant in small towns and rural areas, where they often complement larger cultural institutions and contribute to the transmission of artistic skills and local heritage across generations.

A distinctive feature of the French model is the continuing importance of *éducation populaire*. Organisations such as the [Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture \(MJC\)](#), socio-cultural centres and national association networks combine cultural, educational and civic objectives by encouraging participation, creativity and collective action. Supported through partnerships with the Ministry of Culture, local authorities and other public bodies, they contribute to reducing cultural inequalities and strengthening citizens' participation in cultural life ([Ministry of Culture, Démocratie culturelle](#); [Ministry of Culture, information on éducation populaire](#)).

Recent developments have also reinforced participatory approaches to cultural governance. Public institutions increasingly collaborate with associations, artists and local communities in the design and implementation of cultural projects. The nationwide *Micro-Folies* programme illustrates this approach by bringing together local authorities, cultural institutions, schools and civil society organisations to develop locally tailored cultural activities and participatory projects. Similar collaborative approaches can also be found in community festivals, heritage initiatives and participatory cultural programming. These developments reflect a broader shift towards more inclusive cultural policies, in which civil society organisations act not only as cultural providers but also as partners in the development of local cultural strategies ([Ministry of Culture, *Micro-Folie*](#)).

Overall, civil society constitutes a fundamental component of the French cultural policy system. By linking public institutions with local communities, supporting amateur creativity and encouraging active cultural participation, civil society organisations contribute to the vitality, diversity and territorial reach of cultural life while adapting to ongoing social and digital transformations.

7. Financing and support

The French system of cultural financing is based on a diversified model combining public and private sources of funding. Public intervention remains a defining characteristic of French cultural policy and is implemented through a multi-level governance system involving the State, territorial authorities and a wide range of public cultural operators. This public investment is complemented by household expenditure, corporate sponsorship (*mécénat*), foundations and other forms of private financing, which together contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the cultural sector.

The organisation of cultural financing reflects the broader principles of French cultural policy, including shared responsibilities between different levels of government, support for artistic creation and cultural heritage, and the objective of ensuring equitable access to culture throughout the territory. In recent years, the financing framework has also evolved in response to fiscal constraints, the digital transformation of cultural industries and changing patterns of cultural consumption.

This chapter examines the principal sources of cultural financing in France. It first presents public expenditure at the different levels of government before reviewing the main support programmes available to artists and cultural organisations. It then considers the contribution of private funding, including corporate sponsorship (*mécénat*), foundations and other complementary financing mechanisms.

7.1 Public funding

Public expenditure remains the cornerstone of cultural financing in France. It is characterised by a multi-level governance system involving the State, territorial authorities and a range of public cultural operators. Because cultural expenditure is recorded using different accounting methods and institutional scopes, no single consolidated indicator is available. The figures presented in this section should therefore be regarded as indicative and are drawn from the most recent official budgetary and statistical publications.

Unless otherwise indicated, the data presented below are based on the [Loi de finances](#) (Finance Act), the annual budgetary annex [Effort financier de l'État dans le domaine de la culture et de la communication](#), the statistical publications of the Department for Studies, Foresight, Statistics and Documentation ([DEPS](#)) of the Ministry of Culture, and complementary analyses produced by the Ministry of Culture, the [Cour des comptes](#), the [Observatoire des politiques culturelles](#) and [ADMICAL](#) (Association pour le développement du mécénat des entreprises), the principal French organisation monitoring and promoting corporate philanthropy and sponsorship.

7.1.1 Indicators

Because cultural expenditure is financed through multiple channels, including transfers between the State, territorial authorities and public operators, it is not possible to calculate a fully consolidated total without significant double counting. The following table therefore provides an overview of the principal sources of cultural financing based on the latest available official data.

Table 7: Overview of cultural financing in France (latest available data)

Category	Sub-category	Amount (million EUR)	Reference year
State (budget and taxes)	Ministry of Culture	4 600	2024
	Other ministries' cultural expenditure	5 300	2024
	Public broadcasting financing	3 900	2024
	Cultural earmarked taxes	900	2024
	Fiscal expenditure (tax incentives)	1 900	2024
Total State (estimated)		16 600	2024
Territorial authorities	Communes, inter-municipal authorities, departments and regions	10 000	2024
Private expenditure	Household expenditure on cultural goods and services	21 800	2024
	Advertising and communication expenditure	17 000	2024
	Corporate sponsorship (<i>mécénat</i>)	900–1 000	2024
Total private expenditure		≈ 40 000	2024
Indicative total		≈ 67 000	2024

Sources: Ministry of Culture, *Loi de finances 2025*; Ministry of Culture, *Effort financier de l'État dans le domaine de la culture et de la communication* (Budgetary Annex to the Finance Bill 2025); Ministry of Culture (DEPS), *Chiffres clés, statistiques de la culture et de la communication* (latest edition); Ministry of

Culture (DEPS), *Tableau de bord des dépenses culturelles des collectivités territoriales* (2026); ADMICAL, *Baromètre du mécénat d'entreprise* (latest edition).

Note: Figures are indicative and are drawn from different official budgetary and statistical sources. They cannot be aggregated into a fully consolidated total because of methodological differences and financial transfers between funding levels (State, territorial authorities and private actors), which may result in double counting.

The budget of the Ministry of Culture has remained broadly stable in recent years, at around €4.5–4.6 billion, representing approximately 0.8% of the State budget.

Territorial authorities remain the largest public investors in culture at the local level, with expenditure amounting to around €10 billion in 2024, of which 7.7 billion was for operating costs and 2.3 billion for capital expenditure. This total is 8 per cent lower than the figure recorded in 2019 (10.8 billion euros at 2024 constant prices).

Household expenditure on cultural goods and services has increased in the post-pandemic period, reaching approximately €21.8 billion in 2024. Private funding—particularly corporate sponsorship (*mécénat*) and advertising expenditure—also makes a significant contribution to the cultural economy. Overall, the diversity of funding sources illustrates the mixed financing model that characterises the French cultural policy system.

7.1.2 Expenditure on government level

In the most recent analyses and budgetary documents published by the Ministry of Culture and the Department for Studies, Foresight and Statistics (DEPS, *Département des études, de la prospective et des statistiques*), State cultural expenditure implemented at territorial level through the Ministry of Culture—including decentralised services (DRAC) and national public operators—is estimated at approximately €3.8–4.5 billion in 2023–2024, depending on whether gross or consolidated expenditure is considered ([Ministry of Culture, *Effort financier de l'État dans le domaine de la culture et de la communication*, Budgetary Annex to the Finance Bill 2025](#); Ministry of Culture (DEPS), [Chiffres clés, statistiques de la culture et de la communication, 2025](#)).

Recent territorial analyses indicate that Île-de-France continues to account for a disproportionately large share of State cultural expenditure. Earlier analyses by the General Inspectorate of Cultural Affairs (IGAC, *Inspection générale des affaires culturelles*) estimated that the region received around 66% of State cultural intervention credits in the early 2010s. More recent Ministry of Culture territorial expenditure data suggest that this structural concentration has persisted, although no directly comparable updated percentage has been published. (IGAC, 2014; Ministry of Culture (DEPS), [Chiffres clés, statistiques de la culture et de la communication, 2025](#)).

This enduring concentration largely reflects the location in Paris of the Ministry's central administration, major national cultural institutions and numerous public cultural operators with nationwide responsibilities. At the same time, successive decentralisation policies have strengthened the role of the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRAC), expanded territorial contractual arrangements and reinforced support for regional cultural ecosystems (see chapter 1.2). These developments have contributed to a gradual diversification of State cultural expenditure across the country, although significant territorial disparities remain ([Ministry of Culture, Chiffres clés de la culture et de la communication 2024](#); DEPS, 2024).

Table 6. Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2024

Level of government	Total expenditure in EUR*	% share of total
State (central government)	9.6 billion	49 %
Regions	800 million	4 %
Départements	1,2 billion	6%
Municipalities and inter-municipal groupings	8 billion	41 %
TOTAL	19,6 billion	100%

Note: * At the date of expenditure

Sources: Ministry of Culture, *Effort financier de l'État dans le domaine de la culture et de la communication*, Budgetary Annex to the Finance Bill 2025; Ministry of Culture (DEPS), *Tableau de bord des dépenses culturelles des collectivités territoriales* (2026). Figures compiled from official budgetary and statistical data.

7.1.3 Expenditure per sector

Table 8: Direct state cultural expenditure and transfers (central level)*: by sector, [year], in 1000 of national currency

Information currently not available.

7.2 Support programmes

7.2.1 Strategies, programmes and other forms of support

Public support for artists and creative professionals in France is based on a diversified system combining direct public funding, specialised sectoral operators, territorial co-financing mechanisms and private sponsorship. Rather than relying on a single funding

instrument, French cultural policy mobilises a broad range of complementary measures, including operating and project grants, commissions, acquisitions, residencies, mobility schemes, professional advice and export support. This diversity reflects the long-standing objective of supporting artistic creation throughout the different stages of cultural production while ensuring balanced territorial development.

At national level, support is coordinated by the Ministry of Culture through both its central administration and its decentralised services, the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRAC – *Directions régionales des affaires culturelles*), which administer many funding programmes and coordinate partnerships with territorial authorities ([Ministry of Culture, Organisation du ministère](#); [Ministry of Culture \(DEPS\), Chiffres clés, statistiques de la culture et de la communication, 2025](#)).

The implementation of these policies relies on specialised national public operators responsible for individual cultural sectors. The Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP) supports visual artists through grants, commissions, acquisitions and professional development schemes. The Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée ([CNC](#)) administers one of the most comprehensive public support systems for cinema and audiovisual production in Europe, combining automatic and selective funding mechanisms for film, television, animation and digital creation (see chapter 4.2). In 2024, the CNC allocated EUR 758.7 million in financial support, including EUR 314.5 million for cinema and EUR 285.5 million for the audiovisual sector. In the literary sector, the Centre national du livre ([CNL](#)) supports authors, translators, publishers, booksellers and literary organisations through grants and mobility programmes. The Office national de diffusion artistique ([ONDA](#)) encourages the circulation of performing arts productions across France and internationally, while the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#)) supports music creation, production, dissemination, export and professional development through financial assistance and sectoral support programmes. According to its 2024 Activity Report, the CNM examined several thousand funding applications and allocated over EUR 100 million through its various support schemes, benefiting a wide range of organisations and professionals across the music sector. ([CNL, Rapport d'activité 2024](#); [ONDA, Rapport d'activité 2025](#); [CNM, Rapport d'activité 2024](#)).

Alongside national mechanisms, territorial authorities constitute a major pillar of artistic support. Regions, departments and municipalities finance artistic production, festivals, residencies, creative commissions and cultural infrastructure, frequently through co-financing agreements with the Ministry of Culture. This shared responsibility reflects the gradual decentralisation of French cultural policy while preserving a strong strategic role for the State (see chapter 3).

Artist residencies have become an increasingly important instrument of cultural policy. Beyond providing financial support and working conditions for artists, they contribute to cultural participation, territorial attractiveness and cooperation between artists, cultural institutions and local communities. The national directory maintained by the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP) illustrates the breadth of these opportunities: in 2024, it listed more than 150 grant programmes and over 200 artist residency schemes throughout France ([CNAP, Aides, allocations et résidences d'artistes, 2024](#)). The CNAP also provides direct support to visual artists through its own funding programmes. According to its 2024 Activity Report, it awarded 325 grants representing EUR 1.8 million, 66% of which benefited first-time recipients, while acquiring 260 works by 105 artists for the national contemporary art collection ([CNAP, Rapport d'activité 2024](#)).

Direct public funding is complemented by a dense network of professional organisations and collective management organisations (*sociétés de gestion collective*), which redistribute copyright and neighbouring rights revenues while also providing legal advice, social support and professional services for creators and performers. For example, organisations such as [SACEM](#) (music), [SACD](#) (dramatic and audiovisual works) and [SCAM](#) (documentary, literary and multimedia authors) not only collect and distribute royalties but also finance cultural projects, creative grants, professional training and emergency social assistance for their members. These mechanisms represent an important complementary source of income for many artists, particularly in sectors characterised by discontinuous employment.

Private support also plays a growing complementary role. Corporate sponsorship (*mécénat*) and private foundations contribute to the financing of artistic creation, exhibitions, festivals, residencies, cultural education projects and heritage conservation. According to the [ADMICAL](#) Barometer of Corporate Philanthropy, culture consistently ranks among the principal fields supported by corporate sponsorship in France, accounting for approximately one quarter of sponsored projects ([ADMICAL, Baromètre du mécénat d'entreprise en France, 2024](#)). Major foundations active in this field include the [Fondation de France](#), the [Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain](#), the [Fondation d'entreprise Hermès](#) and the [Fondation Jean-Luc Lagardère](#).

Overall, the French model is characterised by the articulation of general public responsibility for culture with specialised sectoral expertise, territorial partnerships and complementary private funding. This institutional diversity allows support measures to address the specific needs of different artistic disciplines while contributing to broader objectives of cultural diversity, territorial cohesion and access to artistic creation.

7.2.2 Artist's funds

Public support for artistic creation in France is organised through a combination of public commissions, acquisition policies, permanent public collections and sector-specific funding schemes. Rather than relying on a single dedicated artists' fund, the French model distributes financial support across a network of specialised mechanisms reflecting the diversity of artistic disciplines and the long-standing principle of public responsibility for culture. These instruments complement the broader support programmes presented in Section 7.2.1 (see Section 7.2.1).

Public commissions constitute one of the oldest instruments of French cultural policy. They enable public authorities to commission original works in fields including visual arts, design and architecture while integrating contemporary creation into public space. The best-known mechanism is the "1% for art" ([1% artistique](#)) scheme, established by the [Decree of 18 May 1951](#) and now governed by the [Code de la commande publique](#). It requires that approximately one per cent of the construction cost of eligible public buildings be devoted to the commissioning or acquisition of a contemporary artwork specifically created for the site. Initially limited to State buildings, the scheme has progressively been extended to projects undertaken by territorial authorities. According to the Ministry of Culture, it has resulted in the installation of more than 12,500 artworks throughout France since its creation, making it one of Europe's longest-running public art commissioning programmes ([Ministry of Culture, Le 1% artistique, updated 2023](#)).

Public acquisition policies constitute a second pillar of support. The Fonds national d'art contemporain (FNAC), managed by the Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP), is the French State's national contemporary art collection and one of its principal instruments for supporting visual creation. Through acquisitions, commissions, loans and conservation activities, it supports living artists while enriching the national collection and promoting the circulation of contemporary works in museums, cultural institutions and exhibitions in France and abroad. According to the CNAP, the FNAC comprised more than 107,000 works in 2024, spanning painting, sculpture, photography, design, graphic arts, decorative arts, video and new media ([CNAP, Rapport d'activité 2024](#)). Alongside its acquisition policy, the CNAP also provides direct financial support through grants for artistic research, production, publication, residencies and international mobility (see Section 7.2.1).

Support for contemporary creation is further reinforced by the Regional Funds for Contemporary Art (FRAC), established in 1982 as part of France's decentralisation policy. Unlike traditional museums, the FRACs are regional public institutions whose mission is to acquire, preserve, exhibit and circulate contemporary artworks while promoting access to contemporary creation through educational activities, cultural mediation and partnerships

with schools, cultural venues and local authorities. Today, 23 FRAC operate across metropolitan and overseas France. Together, their collections comprise more than 35,000 works created by more than 6,000 French and international artists, forming one of Europe's largest decentralised public collections of contemporary art ([Platform – Regroupement des FRAC, 2024](#)).

These transversal mechanisms are complemented by dedicated funding schemes in individual cultural sectors. In the audiovisual field, the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée ([CNC](#)) finances writing, development, production, distribution and exhibition through a combination of automatic and selective support mechanisms (see chapter 4.2). The Centre national du livre ([CNL](#)) provides creation grants, residency support and mobility schemes for authors, translators, publishers and independent bookshops, while the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#)) supports music creation, recording, live performance, international development and professional training through dedicated financial assistance programmes. Together, these sector-specific funds ensure that public support is adapted to the artistic, economic and professional characteristics of each cultural field.

Overall, the French system of artist support is distinguished by the articulation of public commissions, acquisition policies, decentralised public collections and specialised sectoral funding mechanisms. Rather than concentrating support within a single funding instrument, it combines complementary mechanisms operating at national and territorial levels throughout the different stages of artistic creation, production and dissemination. This diversified architecture reflects the broader objectives of French cultural policy: sustaining artistic freedom and creation, enriching public collections, promoting cultural diversity and ensuring that contemporary works remain accessible to audiences throughout the country.

7.2.3 Grants, awards, scholarships

Grants, awards and scholarships constitute an important component of the French system of support for artistic creation and professional development. They are provided by a combination of public authorities, specialised public operators, professional organisations, academies, foundations and private sponsors, reflecting the diversity of actors involved in cultural support.

Artistic awards occupy a particularly prominent place in French cultural life. Beyond recognising artistic excellence, many prizes contribute to the public visibility of artists, stimulate media attention and, in some sectors, have a measurable impact on careers and audiences. In literature, where France maintains one of the world's richest traditions of literary prizes, distinctions such as the [Prix Goncourt](#), Prix Femina and Prix Renaudot remain major cultural events during the annual *rentrée littéraire* —the autumn publishing season, when several hundred new French-language titles are released over a few weeks—

significantly influencing book sales and public debate. Comparable forms of professional recognition exist across other artistic disciplines, including the [César Awards](#) for cinema, the [Molière Awards](#) for theatre, the [Victoires de la Musique](#) for music and the Palme d'Or awarded at the [Cannes Film Festival](#). Numerous additional prizes are conferred by academies, festivals, local authorities and cultural institutions, illustrating the diversity of recognition mechanisms within the French cultural landscape.

Alongside these honorary distinctions, grants constitute an essential instrument of cultural policy. The Ministry of Culture, the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRACs) and specialised national operators—including the Centre national des arts plastiques ([CNAP](#)), the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée ([CNC](#)), the Centre national du livre ([CNL](#)) and the Centre national de la musique ([CNM](#))—provide financial support for artistic research, writing, production, creation, international mobility and professional development (see Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2). Depending on the discipline, this support takes the form of project grants, creation grants, production aid, mobility schemes or residency funding, accompanying artists at different stages of their careers.

Scholarships complement these mechanisms by supporting the education and professional development of future artists. France's network of higher education institutions under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture comprises 99 institutions educating around 37,000 students, including approximately 12,300 scholarship recipients. Students enrolled in these institutions—including schools of fine arts, architecture schools, conservatoires and specialised institutions for cinema and audiovisual studies—may benefit from means-tested grants awarded by the Ministry of Culture, as well as mobility grants designed to facilitate artistic training and international exchanges. These schemes are complemented by European mobility programmes, notably [Erasmus+](#), and by scholarships and project grants awarded by individual institutions, foundations and professional organisations. ([Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research](#) (*Enseignement supérieur et recherche*), updated 2026; [Order of 23 December 2022 laying down the conditions and procedures for the award of scholarships and financial assistance to students enrolled in higher education institutions under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture](#).)

Taken together, grants, awards and scholarships form a coherent system in which symbolic recognition complements financial support. While artistic awards enhance reputation and professional visibility, grants and scholarships provide the material conditions necessary for creation, experimentation, training and international mobility. Together, these complementary instruments reflect the French approach to cultural policy, which combines public investment in artistic creation with long-term support for professional development and the recognition of artistic excellence.

7.2.4 Support to professional artists'

Support for professional artists in France extends beyond direct public funding to encompass professional representation, collective rights management, social protection and career development. This multifaceted system reflects the French approach to cultural policy, in which artistic activity is supported through complementary public, professional and collective mechanisms throughout artists' working lives.

Professional organisations, trade unions and employers' associations play an important role in representing the interests of artists and cultural workers. Organisations such as the *Syndicat français des artistes-interprètes* ([SFA-CGT](#)), representing performers, and the *Syndicat national des entreprises artistiques et culturelles* ([SYNDEAC](#)), representing publicly funded performing arts institutions, participate in social dialogue and contribute to the negotiation of sectoral collective agreements. They are also frequently represented on consultative bodies responsible for cultural policy and the allocation of public support. Beyond defending professional interests, many organisations provide legal advice, training, information services and guidance on employment conditions.

The independent cultural sector is represented by umbrella organisations bringing together a wide range of associations, companies and cultural initiatives. Among the most important is the Union fédérale d'intervention des structures culturelles ([UFISC](#)), which federates more than 2,000 organisations active in the independent cultural and creative sectors. Through advocacy, networking, professional development and policy dialogue, UFISC contributes to strengthening the sustainability and visibility of independent cultural organisations within the broader cultural ecosystem.

Collective management organisations constitute another major pillar of professional support. In addition to collecting and distributing copyright and neighbouring rights, they finance programmes supporting artistic creation, professional training, mobility, live performance, cultural dissemination and social assistance. Under the provisions of the [French Intellectual Property Code](#), part of the income generated by private copying remuneration and certain non-distributed rights is allocated to actions promoting artistic creation, the dissemination of live performance and cultural development. Major organisations include the Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique ([SACEM](#)), the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques ([SACD](#)), [ADAMI](#), [SPEDIDAM](#), and the collective management organisations representing phonogram producers ([SCPP](#) and [SPPF](#)). According to its [Annual Report 2023](#), SACEM redistributed approximately EUR 1.4 billion in royalties worldwide while continuing to finance numerous programmes supporting creators and music professionals.

Professional support also relies on a distinctive system of social protection. Performing artists and certain technicians working intermittently may, under specific conditions, benefit from the unemployment insurance arrangements specifically designed for discontinuous salaried careers (see Chapter 5.1.6). These provisions are complemented by continuing professional training, career guidance, residency schemes and international mobility programmes implemented by public authorities, specialised public operators and professional organisations.

Recent policy developments have increasingly focused on improving the sustainability of artistic careers. Public authorities and professional organisations have devoted growing attention to issues including fair remuneration in the digital environment, particularly following the implementation of the [EU Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive](#); gender equality and the prevention of gender-based and sexual violence through dedicated action plans in the cultural sector; and the ecological transition of cultural activities, notably through the [Décarbonons la Culture!](#) strategy launched by the Ministry of Culture in 2023. Improving working conditions, strengthening social dialogue and promoting equal access to professional opportunities have also become important priorities. Together, these developments illustrate the growing recognition that supporting professional artists requires not only financial assistance but also an enabling legal, social and professional environment adapted to the evolving conditions of artistic work.

7.3 Private funding

Private funding constitutes an important complement to public cultural financing in France. It relies primarily on corporate philanthropy (*mécénat*), private foundations, individual giving and, increasingly, participatory forms of financing such as crowdfunding. Unlike commercial sponsorship, *mécénat* refers to voluntary financial or in-kind support provided without direct commercial consideration. Its development has been strongly encouraged since the adoption of the [Law of 1 August 2003 on Sponsorship, Associations and Foundations](#) (*Loi relative au mécénat, aux associations et aux fondations*), commonly known as the Aillagon Law, which introduced one of Europe's most favourable tax incentive systems for charitable giving by companies and individuals. This legal framework complements the public financing mechanisms described in Chapter 7.2 and reflects the French approach of combining public and private support for culture ([Ministry of Culture, *Le mécénat culturel*](#); [Law No. 2003-709 of 1 August 2003](#)).

Corporate philanthropy has become the principal source of private support for cultural activities. According to the [Admical Corporate Philanthropy Barometer 2024](#), more than 170,000 companies declared philanthropic donations in 2023, representing an estimated

€3.8 billion in overall corporate giving. Culture remains one of the principal beneficiary sectors: 28% of philanthropic companies support cultural projects, while the Ministry of Culture estimates that 17% of total corporate philanthropy expenditure is directed towards culture and heritage. Heritage conservation, museums, music, visual arts, festivals and local cultural initiatives are among the principal beneficiaries of private support, complementing the public funding schemes described in Sections 7.2.1–7.2.4 ([Admical, Baromètre du mécénat d'entreprise 2024](#); [Ministry of Culture, Le mécénat culturel](#)).

Corporate philanthropy is particularly significant in the fields of built heritage and major cultural institutions, where private companies frequently complement public investment through financial contributions, donations in kind or skills-based volunteering (*mécénat de compétences*), under which companies make employees available to cultural organisations during their working time. Recent studies also indicate that companies increasingly view cultural philanthropy as part of their corporate social responsibility strategies and territorial engagement, contributing to local development, access to culture and partnerships with local communities ([Admical, Baromètre du mécénat d'entreprise 2024](#)).

Private foundations constitute another important source of support for artistic creation, heritage conservation and cultural innovation. Among the most prominent are the [Fondation de France](#), which finances projects of general interest across numerous fields including culture; the [Fondation du patrimoine](#), dedicated to safeguarding local and regional heritage; and corporate foundations such as the [Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain](#), the [Fondation d'entreprise Hermès](#) and the [Fondation Louis Vuitton](#), which support contemporary creation, exhibitions, artists and cultural education according to their respective missions. Several of these foundations also work in partnership with public cultural institutions and local authorities, illustrating the hybrid nature of cultural funding in France.

Alternative forms of private financing have also expanded during the past decade. Crowdfunding platforms have become an increasingly common source of support for artistic and cultural projects, particularly in the fields of heritage, publishing, audiovisual production and festivals. At the same time, the [Mission Patrimoine](#), launched in 2018, has established an innovative funding mechanism for endangered heritage sites. The programme is coordinated by the Fondation du patrimoine, a private foundation recognised as serving the public interest, and financed through a dedicated heritage lottery organised by La Française des Jeux (FDJ), the French national lottery operator, in partnership with the Ministry of Culture. By combining public action, private philanthropy and citizen participation, the scheme has become an important complementary source of funding for the restoration of heritage assets throughout France. It also contributes to territorial development by supporting heritage projects in rural and small urban areas (see chapter 2.9).

Private funding complements rather than substitutes public investment in culture. Together with the public financing mechanisms described in Chapter 7.2, it forms part of a mixed funding model that combines substantial public responsibility for culture with an increasingly diversified ecosystem of philanthropic, corporate and civic contributions. This balance between public leadership and complementary private support remains a defining characteristic of the French system of cultural financing.

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