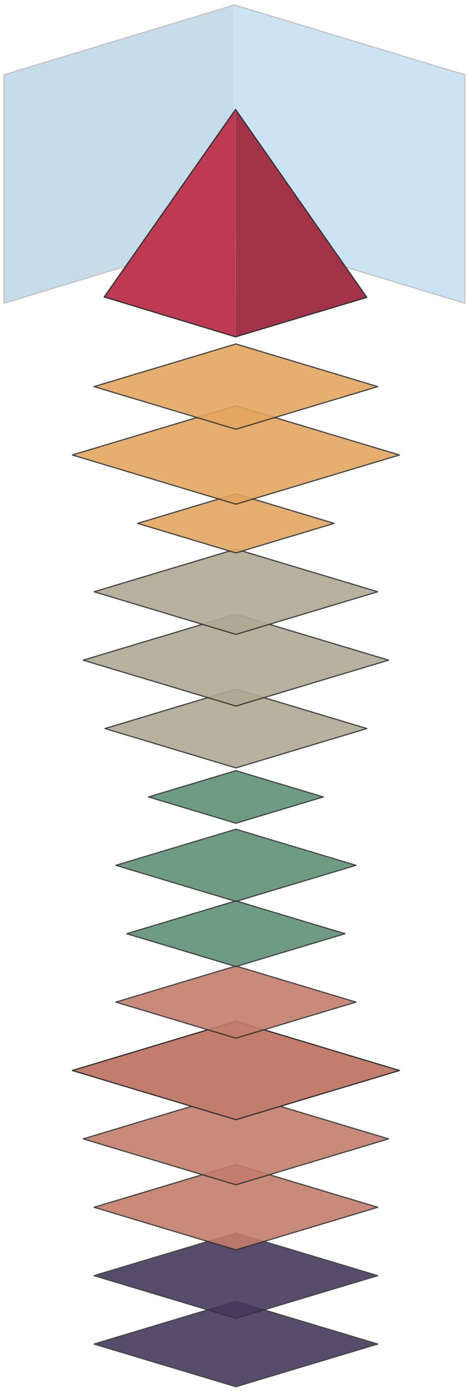
GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX

GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

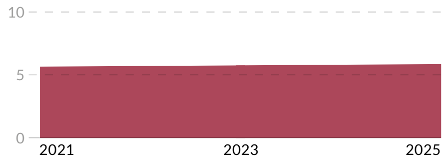
FRANCE



5.92 ↗0.10

CRIMINALITY SCORE

56th of 193 countries ↗2
6th of 44 European countries ↗3
1st of 11 Western European countries -



CRIMINAL MARKETS	6.13	↗0.20
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	6.50	↗0.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	7.50	↗1.00
EXTORTION & PROTECTION RACKETEERING	4.50	0.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	6.50	↗0.50
TRADE IN COUNTERFEIT GOODS	7.00	0.00
ILLICIT TRADE IN EXCISABLE GOODS	6.00	↗0.50
FLORA CRIMES	4.00	0.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.50	0.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.00	0.00
HEROIN TRADE	5.50	↘0.50
COCAINE TRADE	7.50	↗0.50
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00	0.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	6.50	↗0.50
CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES	6.50	0.00
FINANCIAL CRIMES	6.50	0.00

CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.70	0.00
MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	5.50	↘0.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	6.50	0.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	3.50	0.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	7.50	↗0.50
PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS	5.50	0.00

This project was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State.

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Funded by the European Union

ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

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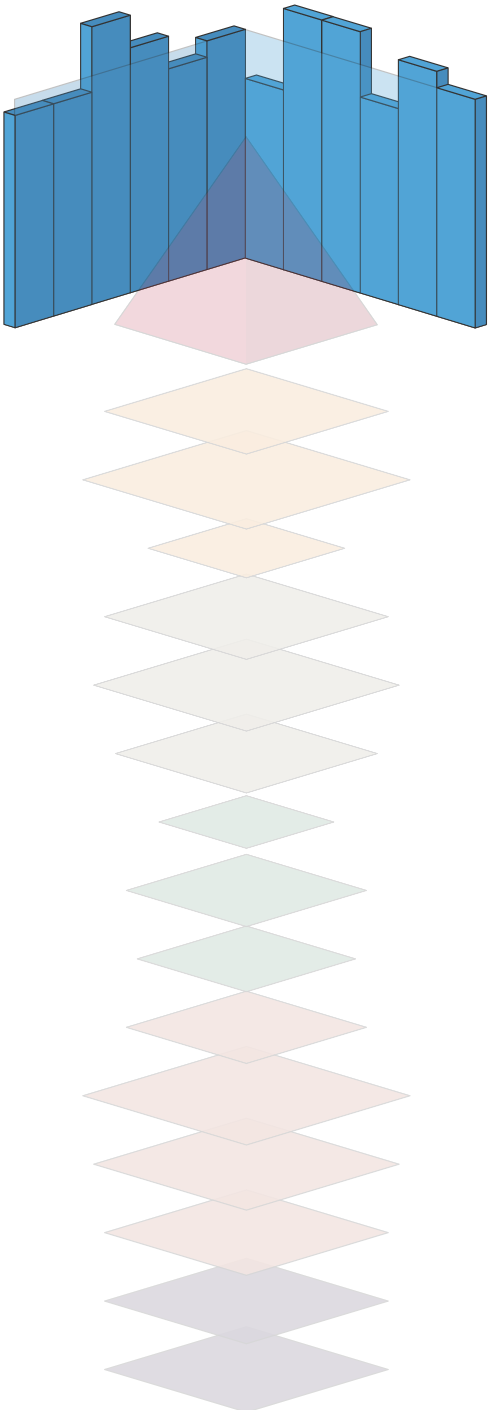
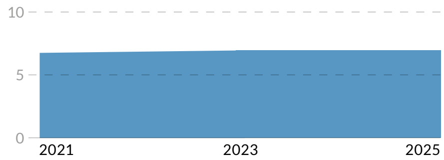
FRANCE



7.04 ↗0.08

RESILIENCE SCORE

26th of 193 countries ↗1
19th of 44 European countries -
11th of 11 Western European countries -



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	**6.50**	0.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	**6.50**	↘0.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	**8.50**	0.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	**7.50**	0.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	**6.50**	0.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	**7.00**	0.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	**5.50**	0.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	**8.00**	0.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	**8.00**	0.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	**6.00**	↗1.00
PREVENTION	**7.50**	↗0.50
NON-STATE ACTORS	**7.00**	0.00

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

France remains a significant hub for human trafficking, with a well-entrenched criminal market involving international organized crime syndicates. The country serves as a source, transit and destination for victims, many of whom are subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced begging. The market mainly targets vulnerable groups such as migrants, children and financially precarious individuals, with growing numbers of child victims. Most trafficked individuals are foreign nationals and are engaged in commercial sex in the country. Nigerian groups, including Black Axe Confraternity and Eiye syndicate, as well as Romanian, Bulgarian and Chinese criminal networks, are key players in the human trafficking market and operate extensively. Online platforms are increasingly used for trafficking ¬– a pattern that has been described as the 'uberization' of the sex trade. The increasing use of debt bondage, psychological coercion and cultural manipulation has made the non-monetary impact of human trafficking in France particularly complex.

Human smuggling is highly organized and lucrative in France, which serves as a key transit point for migrants attempting to reach the UK, with smuggling networks operating sophisticated logistics, including small-boat journeys across the English Channel. In recent years, authorities have seen an increase in the number of dismantled smuggling networks, providing evidence of the scale of this market. Vietnamese and Iraqi networks have strengthened their presence, exploiting diplomatic ties and engaging in forced labour practices. Migrants smuggled into France are frequently exploited in delivery services, agriculture and domestic work, often in conditions that blur the lines between smuggling and trafficking. Smugglers frequently force migrants into drug transport, deepening the link between human smuggling and narcotics trafficking. The French state has intensified its response, but ongoing high smuggling rates challenge these efforts. In Mayotte, human smuggling networks have created a parallel economy, with traffickers moving individuals throughout the Comoros islands and coercing them into forced labour and sex work. Informal settlements in Mayotte provide a haven for these networks, a factor which complicates enforcement efforts.

Extortion and protection racketeering remain localized, mainly affecting specific regions such as Corsica and Ile-de-France. Organized crime groups have been involved in targeted extortion schemes, particularly in urban areas where drug-trafficking operations dominate. Corsica has witnessed cases of mafia-style extortion, involving coercion and intimidation of local business owners. In some cases, criminals have demanded regular 'protection' payments from shopkeepers. Extortion linked to jewellers has also emerged, with criminal groups targeting luxury industries in France. Also, online fraud schemes using extortion tactics have increased, where individuals are blackmailed into paying money. Despite these cases, there is no evidence of large-scale systemic extortion, and law enforcement actions have successfully disrupted several small-scale extortion networks in recent years.

TRADE

France's arms trafficking market has expanded, with increasing seizures of automatic rifles such as Kalashnikovs. The violence in urban drug disputes, particularly in Marseille, is exacerbated by the availability of firearms, with shootings occurring frequently. Telegram has emerged as a key platform for illicit firearm transactions. French and Belgian authorities dismantled a major 3D-printed weapons network in 2024 – a notable example of the evolution of new trafficking methods. The trafficking of firearms in France is closely linked to other criminal markets, particularly drug-related violence, as gangs acquire weapons for use in territorial conflicts. The widespread presence of automatic weapons has intensified inter-gang conflicts, leading to record levels of homicides in cities such as Marseille and Grenoble.

The counterfeit goods trade is a well-organized criminal enterprise. Major hubs include markets in Saint-Ouen-Sur-Seine and La Réunion, where luxury and everyday counterfeit items are widely available. China remains the dominant source country, with Türkiye also gaining prominence. The proliferation of online sales has complicated enforcement efforts, while major international events like the 2024 Olympics have provided further opportunities for counterfeit goods distribution. The involvement of organized crime groups in counterfeiting has led to a diversification of products to include pharmaceuticals, luxury apparel and even industrial equipment. Clandestine factories, manufacturing products such as counterfeit cigarettes, have been dismantled in France in recent years. The financial losses for legitimate businesses caused by these illicit activities are substantial, with counterfeit goods undercutting authentic products and damaging brand reputations.

The illicit trade in excise consumer goods, particularly tobacco, is a highly profitable sector. Tunisia has been identified as a source country, with smuggling networks operating between Italy and France. The high taxation on legal tobacco has fuelled demand for contraband products, leading to significant financial losses for the state. The tobacco smuggling market is increasingly interconnected with other forms of organized crime, including drug trafficking and money laundering, as criminal groups use tobacco smuggling networks to launder proceeds from illicit activities.

ENVIRONMENT

France plays a role in the illegal timber trade, mainly as a transit and destination country. The demand for oak from China has driven illicit exports, with sawmills and shell companies facilitating laundering operations. Enforcement remains weak, with customs checks largely ineffective. Also, French Guiana faces high rates of illegal deforestation linked to organized criminal networks. The exploitation of timber resources contributes to broader environmental degradation, affecting biodiversity and accelerating deforestation in protected areas.

Wildlife trafficking is a major illicit market, with France acting as both a transit and destination country. High-value commodities such as elvers (juvenile eels), exotic birds and illegal pets like caracals are frequently trafficked. France's role as a key player in the global illegal wildlife trade is evidenced by large-scale operations targeting smuggling networks. France's overseas territories, such as French Guiana, provide ideal conditions for trafficking, being fauna-rich environments with easy transit links to mainland France and elsewhere in Europe. Online marketplaces have a growing role in driving the illicit wildlife trade, allowing traffickers to connect directly with buyers across Europe and Asia.

The illegal gold-mining sector in French Guiana is a major criminal enterprise, imposing major economic losses for the French state. Brazilian illegal miners dominate extraction, while Surinamese and Chinese actors facilitate laundering. Despite large-scale enforcement operations, illicit gold mining remains a persistent issue, often linked to human trafficking and environmental degradation. The destruction of rain forest and the contamination of water sources due to illegal mining operations continue to pose significant environmental and health risks.

DRUGS

France is a major consumer and transit country for heroin, with supply routes shifting from Switzerland to France due to the influence of ethnic Albanian traffickers. Seizures have increased, reflecting a steady supply, though heroin remains less prevalent than cocaine or cannabis. The heroin trade has contributed to local violence, particularly in urban areas where distribution networks operate through hidden 'bendos'. The heroin market is deeply entwined with other criminal activities, including money laundering and human trafficking, as traffickers often exploit migrants to transport and sell drugs. While heroin consumption in France is not as widespread as other substances, its social impact remains significant, with addiction contributing to healthcare burdens and social instability in affected areas.

Cocaine trafficking is one of the most lucrative and violent criminal markets in France. With the trade estimated at billions in annual revenue, the trade fuels gang violence, particularly in Marseille, where 'narchomicide' killings are on the rise. Cocaine enters France via West Africa, with methods including the recruitment of drug mules from French Guiana and maritime drop-offs. Despite record seizures, cocaine remains widely available, with high purity levels and stable retail prices. The involvement of Colombian criminal networks and West African intermediaries highlights France's critical role in the European cocaine supply chain. In urban centres, distribution is highly organized, with street-level dealers using encrypted messaging apps and social media platforms to drive sales. The scale of the market has led to intense territorial disputes between rival gangs, contributing to increasing rates of drug-related homicides.

Cannabis is the most widely consumed illicit drug in France, with an estimated 5 million regular users. Smuggling routes mainly begin in Spain, with large-scale seizures at the French-Spanish border. The market is structured into hierarchical criminal networks, with low-level 'small hands' handling distribution. The violence associated with cannabis trafficking has escalated, with rising homicide rates in cities like Marseille and Toulouse. In addition to imported cannabis, domestic cultivation has expanded, particularly in rural areas and through indoor hydroponic operations. The emergence of organized growing operations has led some criminal groups to diversify their activities to include high-potency cannabis production. Law enforcement crackdowns on trafficking networks have led to periodic disruptions, but the demand for cannabis remains consistently high. France's illicit market also faces growing pressure from neighbouring countries in which cannabis laws have been relaxed.

Synthetic drugs, including MDMA, methamphetamine and ketamine, represent a growing segment of the French drug market. Seizures of synthetic substances have increased sharply in recent years, with production occurring mainly in the Netherlands and Belgium. Methamphetamine consumption is lower per capita in mainland France than in French overseas territories, notably in Polynesia. Authorities have struggled to combat the synthetic drug trade due to its decentralized nature, with small-scale production labs emerging in response to law enforcement efforts. The French government has intensified its response, implementing targeted operations to dismantle trafficking rings and curb distribution.

CYBER-DEPENDENT CRIMES

France has become a major target for cyber-dependent crime, with ransomware attacks posing significant threats. LockBit and other international ransomware groups operate extensively in the country. French institutions and businesses face frequent cyber-attacks, and this has led to heightened cybersecurity investments and law enforcement responses. The rise of cryptocurrency-based financial crimes has further complicated enforcement efforts, with cybercriminals using digital currencies to launder illicit proceeds.

FINANCIAL CRIMES

Financial crimes in France are highly lucrative and involve highly organized networks. The "Cum-Cum" and "Cum-Ex" dividend tax fraud schemes have implicated major banks. Large-scale VAT fraud, money laundering and corporate embezzlement remain prevalent. Despite significant law-enforcement measures, France's criminal markets remain deeply entrenched, with organized networks adapting to enforcement pressures. Fraudulent investment schemes and corporate corruption have also emerged as significant concerns, with high-profile cases involving multinational corporations and political figures.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

France has a moderate presence of domestic mafia-style groups. These groups prioritize financial gain rather than territorial control, differentiating them from traditional mafia organizations. However, they operate discreetly, with a high rate of infiltration in legitimate businesses, and engage in a range of criminal activities, including drug and arms trafficking, extortion, theft, money laundering, prostitution and human trafficking. Corsica has a particularly significant mafia presence. These groups exert notable influence in the political and administrative spheres, limiting the effectiveness of central government control. Intimidation and corruption are commonly used by these organizations to infiltrate legitimate businesses and public institutions.

Loosely organized criminal networks in France are diverse, highly adaptable and deeply embedded in society. However, although they maintain a local base, they frequently have strong transnational links. They operate with high levels of violence, engaging in kidnappings, torture and assassinations to maintain control over illicit activities. Urban and suburban centres such as Paris and Marseille serve as major operational hubs, with rural connections facilitating activities like clandestine cigarette production. Prisons serve as breeding grounds for criminal collaboration, fostering alliances that endure beyond incarceration.

State-embedded actors are present in France and mostly engage in money laundering, tax evasion and corruption. Various officials, including politicians, civil servants and law enforcement personnel, have historically been implicated in these crimes, often in connection with transnational networks. Recent high-profile corruption cases have deepened concerns about governance integrity.

Foreign criminal actors play a substantial role in France's illicit markets. Albanian-speaking organized crime groups are especially prominent and are mainly involved in theft and the repatriation of stolen goods. Other Eastern European groups are predominantly engaged in skimming and jackpotting operations. The dismantling of an organized crime group originating from the Western Balkans in 2024, with arrests in France and Monaco, revealed the hierarchical structure of these groups, particularly one led by a Serbian national. Armenian criminal organizations are active in both France and Spain and investigations into the 'Thieves in Law' network uncovered an extensive Armenian presence in France, demonstrating the international reach of such networks. The economic influence of the Chinese mafia is significant, as their specialization in money laundering underpins broader criminal activities. Nigerian criminal groups are engaged in human trafficking and have attempted to infiltrate the drug trade, although their influence remains secondary to domestic actors. Italian mafia groups are well-established in southern France, where they co-operate with local criminal organizations in money laundering and drug trafficking. Marseille has become a focal point for violent territorial conflict, with groups such as the 'Mocro Mafia' (expanding from its Dutch and Belgian base) the DZ Mafia and Yoda controlling the drug trade. These turf wars frequently involve hitmen and heavy weaponry, resulting in significant casualties. Cybercrime linked to foreign actors has expanded, with China-based groups such as APT IronHusky, APT41 and APT31 conducting cyberattacks on French businesses and infrastructure. Ransomware groups like Lockean and Egregor have also been active, targeting corporations and critical systems. The increasing integration of foreign criminal elements into France's illicit economy underscores the transnational nature of organized crime.

Legitimate businesses in France are frequently exploited by criminal organizations for money laundering and financial crime. Sectors such as real estate, hospitality and retail are particularly vulnerable. Corsican criminal groups have substantial investments in the hotel and casino industries, using these sectors to launder illicit profits. It was reported that two-thirds of corporate-owned real estate assets are held anonymously, exacerbating money laundering risks. Digital financial services and cryptocurrencies have further eased money laundering transactions, allowing criminal actors to move funds across borders discreetly. Organized crime has also penetrated the sports industry, with instances of match-fixing and corruption linked to major events such as Grand Slam tennis tournaments.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

France's governance approach towards organized crime has evolved, with an increased focus on financial crimes and cybersecurity. While the government officially prioritizes combating organized crime, recent efforts have placed greater emphasis on counterterrorism and radicalization. As a result, organized crime is sometimes treated as a secondary priority, despite its impact on the country's economy and security. The French Ministry of the Interior launched a major reorganization in January 2024, which included the creation of the Office anti-cybercriminalité within the Direction nationale de la police judiciaire. This move was aimed at enhancing cybercrime investigation capabilities. While these efforts demonstrate the state's commitment to fighting organized crime, they have also been met with criticism. The restructuring of the Judicial Police has raised some concerns about the erosion of the separation of powers, particularly with departmental directorates falling under the authority of police commissioners who report to the prefect. In response to fiscal crime, France has proposed several measures to combat tax fraud and evasion, including lifting banking and commercial secrecy, targeting tax evasion and reducing access to tax havens. However, opposition groups argue that these measures lack ambition and fail to tackle the scale of the issue effectively. Similarly, the debate around drug policy is polarized, with some advocating harsher penalties, while others, including the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, call for a regulated legalization model for cannabis.

France has made some efforts in enhancing government transparency and accountability, through participation in international anti-corruption initiatives, the establishment of independent institutions, and the publication of budgets, procurement contracts and other documents. Despite efforts in combating corruption, France faces persistent deficits in transparency and public trust. The public perception of widespread political corruption – held by a majority of the population – remains critical and is fuelled by high-profile cases. Moreover, anti-corruption efforts are hindered by resource constraints and a stronger focus on international rather than national corruption issues. The transparency framework is also considered weak, applying only to the executive and excluding state-owned enterprises and private entities performing public functions. While specific exceptions align with international standards, they lack harm testing and a public interest override, with secrecy laws remaining intact.

France's international cooperation efforts remain strong. The country is a state party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on migrant smuggling, human trafficking and the illicit firearms trade. France has also played an active role in Europol, Eurojust and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, contributing to transnational law enforcement initiatives. Despite this, there have been shortcomings on cooperation on mafia-related cases, with some sources attributing difficulties to political reluctance. More recently, France has strengthened its international efforts, including a 2024 agreement with Italy to exchange information on migrant trafficking networks.

France has a comprehensive legal framework addressing various forms of organized crime, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling and money laundering. However, while these legal provisions are robust, enforcement remains inadequate. The country's legal code does not include a specific definition of organized crime, making certain investigations more difficult. Practitioners have called for the introduction of legislation similar to Italy's 'mafia-type association' law to enhance investigative capabilities. Concerns have been raised about the balance between security measures and civil liberties, particularly following legislative proposals to increase state surveillance through interconnected databases.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

France has eight specialized inter-regional jurisdictions (JIRS) dedicated to organized crime, financial crimes and complex economic offences. These jurisdictions operate with specialized magistrates and utilize extensive investigative tools, including wiretapping and infiltration techniques. But challenges remain, particularly regarding legal restrictions on the prosecution of crimes committed outside France. Furthermore, concerns about judicial independence persist, as public prosecutors are appointed by the Minister of Justice, raising potential conflicts of interest. The prison system in France faces serious challenges, with a 119% occupancy rate leading to hygiene and security risks, and restricting law enforcement's ability to prevent illicit activities within prisons. The European Court of Human Rights has condemned France multiple times for detention conditions that violate human rights standards. While efforts have been made to improve prison management, overcrowding and inadequate facilities remain pressing problems.

Law enforcement efforts against organized crime are multifaceted, with specialized units targeting drug trafficking, financial crimes, cybercrime and human trafficking. The Central Directorate of the Judicial Police has achieved notable successes in combating counterfeiting and drug trafficking, while a specialized intervention unit, Search, Assistance, Intervention, Deterrence (commonly known by its French acronym RAID) has played a key role in tackling violent crime and terrorism. Even so, coordination between different agencies has proved difficult, and critics have questioned the effectiveness of operations in permanently dismantling organized criminal groups. Law enforcement efforts to curb human trafficking have been hindered by a lack of a national referral mechanism, which limits victim identification and protection.

France's position as part of the Schengen zone poses problems related to territorial integrity, particularly in preventing the trafficking of illicit goods. French Guiana has emerged as a key transit point for cocaine smuggling, while border regions with Italy and Spain remain hotspots for human smuggling. The government has responded by increasing joint operations with neighbouring countries, but there are still some concerns about corruption and the influence of organized crime within some transport and trade infrastructure.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

France has a strong anti-money laundering framework, reinforced by compliance with international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force. The country's Financial Intelligence Unit – Traitement du renseignement et action contre les circuits financiers clandestins – plays a critical role in analyzing financial crimes and processing intelligence related to money laundering and terrorist financing. Nonetheless, money laundering through real estate, gambling and digital financial services continues to be prevalent. In October 2024, French authorities seized €70 million worth of luxury assets linked to Russian businessmen as part of a major money-laundering probe.

The economic regulatory environment in France remains highly structured, with government intervention historically shaping major sectors such as transport, telecommunications and energy. France's economy is in fact assessed by OECD indicators as more regulated than that of many other EU countries. Recent efforts have been made to streamline regulatory processes and increase market competition. However, striking a balance between economic deregulation and financial security has proved difficult, particularly in sectors vulnerable to organized crime, such as finance and digital platforms.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

France provides state and non-state support for victims of organized crime, with 192 local victim support associations operating across the country. These organizations receive funding from the ministry of justice and work in coordination with law enforcement agencies. Also, the French Victim Support and Mediation Institute serves as a federation of victim support associations. France has implemented various measures for victim care, including witness protection programmes. However, funding for victim support remains relatively low. Despite France's strong reputation for advocating for rights, it lags other European countries in funding victim assistance. Obtaining refugee status for trafficking victims also remains difficult, with inadequate access to shelters and protection services for victims of human trafficking. National attitudes in France toward drug users and crime victims are shifting toward a public health approach. Support includes dedicated services for extortion victims, compensation through the Victims Guarantee Fund, and planned reforms for chemical submission cases, such as free test kits and simplified hospital complaints by 2025.

France is highly proactive in combating and preventing organized crime at both European and international levels through the adoption of several national prevention strategies for specific threats such as drug trafficking, money laundering and cyber threats. But there are still insufficient training programmes for civil servants focused on the prevention of organized crime. In 2024, the country has introduced a comprehensive plan to tackle drug trafficking and gang violence, featuring increased police presence, judicial reinforcements and stricter anti–money laundering measures. New national measures also include a coordination unit, expanded specialized courts, and additional police and investigators in Marseille, which is a hub of gang activity. Lastly, France has made notable progress in combating financial crime through stronger legislation, targeted enforcement and enhanced international cooperation.

France has a strong civil society sector, with independent media and investigative journalists playing a significant role in exposing organized crime and corruption. On the other hand, media concentration and conflicts of interest within state-owned broadcasting networks are both notable risk factors. Anti-mafia activists in France argue that civil society lacks awareness about organized crime. Journalists covering organized crime have reported instances of police violence and intimidation, reflecting broader societal tensions about press freedom.

This summary was funded in part by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.