

# Legal framework workbook 2024

*FRANCE*

---

*Contributors*

Caroline PROTAIS

## 2024 National report (2023 data) to the EUDA by the French Reitox National Focal Point

**Supervision:** Guillaume Airagnes

**Coordination:** Marianna Perebenesiuk

### Contribution to the workbooks

1. *Drug policy*: Cristina Díaz Gómez
2. *Legal framework*: Caroline Protais
3. *Drugs*: Olivier Le Nézet, Clément Gérôme, Sabrina Cherki, Eric Janssen
4. *Prevention*: Carine Mutatayi
5. *Treatment*: Sophie Véron, Cindy Feng, Cristina Diaz Gomez
6. *Best practice*: Valérie Ulrich, Carine Mutatayi
7. *Harms and Harm Reduction*: Cindy Feng, Sophie Véron, Eric Janssen, Cristina Díaz-Gómez
8. *Drug market and crime*: Yasmine Salhi , Caroline Protais, Clément Gérôme, Sabrina Cherki, Ivana Obradovic
9. *Prison*: Caroline Protais, Melchior Simioni, Sophie Veron, Cindy Feng
10. *Research*: Maitena Milhet, Isabelle Michot

**Proofreading (French version):** Guillaume Airagnes, Ivana Obradovic, Valérie Ulrich, Stanislas Spilka, Nicolas Prisse, president of the Interministerial Mission for Combating Drugs and Addictive Behaviours, and the project managers of the MILDECA.

**Proofreading (English version):** Anne de l’Eprevier, Marianna Perebenesiuk

**Bibliographic references:** Isabelle Michot

**Legal references:** Anne de l’Eprevier

## Table of Contents

<b>T0. Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>T1. National profile</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>T2. Trends</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>T3. New developments</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>T4. Additional information</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>T5. Sources and methodology</b> .....	<b>15</b>

**When responding to the workbook, please be certain to use the fields associated with each question to allow the EMCDDA to identify the relevant parts.**

## **T0. Summary**

Please provide an abstract of this workbook (target: 500 words) under the following headings:

- Summary of T.1.1.1 on the characteristics of drug legislation and national guidelines for implementation within your country (are offences criminal; what is the range of possible penalties; are there alternatives to punishment)?
- Summary T1.1.2: on how do the penalties vary by drug / quantity / addiction / recidivism?
- Summary T1.1.3: are there distinct laws for controlling NPS?

In France, the regime applicable to the use of drugs and trafficking was established by Law no 70-1320 of 31 December 1970 on health measures to fight drug addiction and combat the trafficking and use of poisonous substances. The provisions of this law were since codified in the French Public Health Code (CSP in French).

The penalties incurred by the perpetrators of drug-related offences depend on the severity of the offences committed (see T1.1.1), thus the illicit use of drugs (Art. L.3421-1 of the Public Health Code) is less severely punished than drug trafficking (Art. 222-34 et seq. of the Penal Code) or related offences (money laundering, failure to provide proof of resources corresponding to one's lifestyle, etc.), because the perpetrator is considered by the law to be a delinquent as well as a patient. The criminalisation of drug use is reflected in a wide range of responses: some suspend or cancel prosecution but are still sanctions, such as alternatives to prosecution or fixed penalty notices; others result in legal proceedings, which may lead to a fine or other types of sentence (or even, sometimes, imprisonment).

Although French law makes no distinction between drugs as some countries do, it distinguishes between the illicit sale and supply of narcotics to a person in light of their personal use and other situations. Repeated offences are more severely sanctioned (see T1.1.2).

There are no specific laws regulating new psychoactive substances (NPS). The rationale for classifying a NPS on the list of narcotics is both individual (each prohibited substance is named on the list) and generic (See T1.1.3).

In 2023, new developments include the extension of the trial on the use of medical cannabis, Medical addiction microstructures, and the addition of synthetic opioids, CBD derivatives, and some new synthetic cannabinoids on the list of narcotics (see T3).

## **T1. National profile**

### **T1.1. Legal framework**

The purpose of this section is to summarise the basic penalties and other responses to the offences of use, possession for personal use, supply (including production) of illicit drugs.

T1.1.1. Please describe the characteristics of drug legislation and national guidelines for implementation within your country (are offences criminal; what is the range of possible penalties; are there alternatives to punishment)?

In France, narcotics-related offences are classed as crimes or offences according to their severity and the penalties incurred.

- **The illicit use of narcotics**

The illicit use of any substance or plant classed as a narcotic is an offence that will result in penalties that may go up to one year in prison and a fine of €3 750 (Art. L.3421-1 of the Public Health Code).

By virtue of the principle of opportunity applicable in French law, the facts must be considered on a case-by-case basis in order to adopt a penal response adapted to the local specificities and to each individual situation, taking into particular consideration the nature of the product used, its quantity, and the personality and criminal record of the individual.

The range of penal responses includes 3 types: the fixed fine which is issued directly by the security forces, alternatives to prosecution which are decided by the public prosecutor and legal proceedings which lead to the decision of a judge.

#### **1/ Criminal fixed fine (AFD)**

Created by [Law 2019-222 of 23 March 2019](#) establishing the 2018-2022 justice programme, the criminal fixed fine has been added to the system of criminal responses to illegal drug use since 1 September 2020. This fine is set at an amount of €200 (reduced to €150 and increased to €450 depending on the time taken to pay). It is issued by the police, without recourse to a magistrate, to people caught using a narcotic or being in possession of small quantities. This payment puts an end to legal proceedings but is considered a criminal conviction and is recorded as such in the criminal record. Article L.3421-1 of the Public Health Code provides that any illegal use of drugs may be subject to a fixed fine. In practice, it is reserved for situations in which the use does not appear to require the referral of the user to a health facility. Criminal policy instructions issued by the Public Prosecutor, specifying the nature and quantities of products that may be affected by the procedure, provide a framework for the action of law enforcement officers.

#### **2/ Alternatives to prosecution**

For all offences, including narcotics use, the law provides for alternatives to prosecution: the public prosecutor, instead of referring the case to court, offers one or more alternatives to the individual. If the individual accepts the alternative measure(s) and carries it(them) out, the public prosecutor closes the case with no further action. However, non-compliance, even partial, with these alternatives may result in a summons to appear before the court with a view to a ruling.

Alternatives may or may not be recorded in the criminal record.

Measures not recorded in the criminal record are provided for in Article 41-1 of the Criminal Procedure Code. As far as narcotics use is concerned, they mainly consist of the following:

- a reminder of the law by a judicial police officer or by a delegate of the public prosecutor;
- referral to a healthcare, social or professional organisation: in this context the person is invited to contact a treatment structure; he/she may also be required to complete an internship or training course at a healthcare, social or professional organisation, in particular, a course to raise awareness on the dangers of drug and alcohol use carried out at his/her expense;
- a court-ordered treatment measure.

The measures recorded in the criminal record are fixed penalty notice measures described in Article 41-2 of the Criminal Procedure Code. A fixed penalty notice measure, proposed by the public prosecutor, must be accepted by the individual and approved by a judge. In this context, a fixed penalty fine may be ordered, unpaid community service for a maximum of 60 hours, court-ordered treatment, a drug awareness course at the user's expense.

### **3/ Proceedings and court trials**

If alternatives to prosecution fail or if there is a justification due to the personality of the defendant, the public prosecutor may decide to prosecute. These proceedings can take several procedural forms, which result in a conviction if the defendant is found guilty. The most common procedural routes used for drug offences are:

- A penal order, a simplified procedure allowing the individual to be judged without appearing before the court. The individual can only be sentenced to a fine. No prison sentence can be pronounced in this context.
- A guilty plea: this allows the prosecutor to propose one or more sentences to an individual who recognises the facts of which they are accused. A guilty plea involves a public hearing during which the sentence proposed by the prosecutor and accepted by the individual must be approved by the presiding judge. Once proceedings have been initiated, the judge or court may order a prison sentence of up to one year and/or a fine of up to €3 750. These sentences may be suspended or conditional, with a number of obligations (e.g. compulsory drug treatment or court-ordered treatment).

The judge or the court may also impose alternatives to imprisonment, such as court-ordered treatment, a drug awareness course, community service, suspension of driving licence, a ban on carrying out certain activities, the obligation to wear an electronic bracelet.

- **Driving under the influence of drugs**

Driving under the influence of drugs, regardless of the quantity consumed, is an offence punishable by 2 years imprisonment and a fine of €4 500 (Art. L235-1 et seq. of the French Traffic Code). It is accompanied by an automatic loss of 6 points of the driving license.

This offence is accompanied by additional penalties which may also be imposed on the driver at fault (suspension or cancellation of the driving licence, day-fine, community service, road safety and/or drug awareness course, etc.).

In the event of an accident, the fact of having used drugs constitutes an aggravating circumstance. The penalties for accidents and associated damage resulting in total inability to work of up to three months are increased to three years' imprisonment and a fine of €45 000 (Article 222-20-1 of the Penal Code).

It is worth noting that cannabis test positivity is likely to last for up to several weeks depending on the person, and that the law does not establish a threshold, above which an offence has been committed. Similarly, some CBD users are likely to produce a positive THC test result, given that it is a legal substance in France. This reality is currently sparking numerous debates in France (see T3) (Willeman *et al.* 2023).

- **Drug trafficking** (Art. 222-34 et seq. of the French Penal Code)

Drug trafficking covers several offences which are punished differently:

- directing a criminal group with the aim of illicitly producing, manufacturing, importing, exporting, transporting, possessing, offering, transferring, acquiring or using drugs is a crime punishable by life imprisonment and a fine of 7.5 million euros (article 222-34 of the Penal Code) ;

- the illicit production and/or manufacture of drugs are also crimes, punishable by 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of 7 500 000 euros, which may be increased to 30 years of imprisonment if committed by an organised gang (article 222-35 of the Penal Code) ;
- the illicit export and/or import of drugs is punishable by a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of 7 500 000 euros, which may be increased to 30 years if committed by an organised gang (article 222-36 of the Penal Code) ;
- the illicit transport, possession, supply, transfer, acquisition or use of drugs (trafficking) are offences punishable by 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of 7 500 000 euros (article 222-37 of the Penal Code) ;
- Equivalent penalties are provided for in the event that drugs are issued through fictional prescriptions or convenience, or in order to facilitate, by any means whatsoever, illicit drug use (Art. 222-38 of the Penal Code) ;
- the illicit transfer or offer of drugs to a person for personal consumption is an offence punishable by 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of 75 000 euros, with the prison sentence being increased to 10 years when the drugs are, in particular, offered or sold to minors (article 222-39 of the Penal Code). In practice, according to the principle of opportunity, prosecutors and courts take into account the quantity detained and the circumstances of the offence in order to qualify the facts as criminal.

These offences may also lead to the confiscation of all or part of the offender's property or property at his freewill, even if it has not been bought from the proceeds generated by drug trafficking.

A specific investigation regime for drug trafficking cases (Art. 706-80 to 706-106 of the Criminal Procedure Code) is also provided for: extension of police custody to 96 hours with the magistrate's authorisation, night-time searches, sound recordings, controlled deliveries.

- **Other offences related to drug trafficking**

Drug trafficking acts also constitute the customs offence of smuggling, importing or exporting drugs without declaration which, under Article 414 of the Customs Code, is punishable by:

- A prison sentence of a maximum of 10 years;
- The confiscation of the object of fraud, the means of transport and the objects used to conceal the fraud;
- The confiscation of property and assets which are the direct or indirect product of the offence;
- A Customs fine of up to 10 times the value of the fraudulent goods.

Furthermore, the laundering of money from drug trafficking (Article 222-38 of the Penal Code) is punishable by 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of 7 500 000 euros. The maximum sentence is increased to 20 years for laundering of drug production/manufacture and 30 years for importing or producing drugs in an organised gang.

Finally, Article L.321-6 of the Penal Code makes it an offence not to be able to justify resources corresponding to one's lifestyle, or not to be able to justify the origin of property held, while being in habitual relationships with one or more persons engaged in the commission of crimes or offences, in particular relating to drug trafficking, and providing the latter with a direct or indirect profit. The penalty is 3 years' imprisonment and a fine of 75 000 euros.

All these penalties, which are not exhaustive, may be accompanied by various measures involving deprivation or restriction of liberty, professional bans, residence bans or inadmissibility for foreigners.

- **Legislation on tobacco and alcohol**

See the Prevention workbook.

T1.1.2. How do the penalties vary by drug / quantity / addiction/recidivism?

According to Articles 132-9 and 132-10 of the Penal Code, sentences may be doubled in the event of a subsequent offence, although this does not specifically concern drug law offences (DLO).

T1.1.3. What, if any, legislation within your country is designed to control New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)?

There are no specific laws regulating new psychoactive substances (NPS). The legal framework relating to narcotics applies to NPS, as soon as they are included on the list of substances classified as narcotics. The rationale for classifying a NPS on this list is both individual (each substance is named) and generic: it "starts with a basic molecular structure (not necessarily psychoactive) and stipulates the variants affected by the ban" (Martinez 2013). The decision is taken by the director of the French National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety (ANSM). For example, NBOMe was classified as a narcotic by [legislative order](#) in November 2015 according to this generic logic. However, some NBOMe are also classified by name, such as: 25B-NBOMe, 25C-NBOMe and 25I-NBOMe.

T1.1.4. *Optional. If available provide information in a separate paragraph on other topics relevant to the understanding of the legal framework for responding to drugs in your country, such as: drug driving, workplace regulations, drug testing, precursor control, organised crime legislation relevant to drug trafficking, issues focused on minors. Regulatory aspects of treatment and harm reduction are also of interest.*

The *Mission nationale de contrôle des précurseurs chimiques* (National mission for the control of chemical precursors, [MNCPC](#)) was set up in 1993 to coordinate the implementation of policies to fight the diversion of chemical precursors. Reporting to the Industry Department of the Directorate General for Enterprise, it aims to gather information on precursors used in industries, that are likely to be diverted by drug dealers and to pass it on to investigation and law enforcement services. Classified precursors, whose trade is strictly controlled, as well as other substances identified by the European Union as likely to be used in the manufacture of synthetic drugs are targeted by its action. The MNCPC and the professional organisations involved in the fight against the diversion of chemical precursors for trafficking have drawn up a national code of conduct setting out rules and best practices for securing these substances.

In an effort to comply with the "catch-all" clause (see T3), the MNCPC contributed, in 2023 and then 2024, to strengthening the power of customs to seize licit precursors on suspicion of use to manufacture NPS.

## T1.2. Implementation of the law

The purpose of this section is to

- Summarise any available data on the implementation of legislation.
- Provide any additional contextual information that is helpful to understand how legislation is implemented in your country.

T.1.2.1. Is data available on actual sentencing practice related to drug legislation? Please provide a summary and a link to the original information or state if no information is available.

In 2022, according to the Ministry of Justice, drug law offence (DLO) convictions for main offences (single or multiple) represented 9% of all criminal record convictions, i.e. around 50 000. These offences can be broken down as follows: illegal use (39%), possession-acquisition (54%), supply and sale (5%), trade-transport (1%), traffic-import-export (0,12%), facilitation of use by the others (0,06%) and other DLOs (0,8%). In the majority of possession-acquisition offences (this qualification being retained in case of drug trafficking), offenders were sentenced to prison sentences (83%) while offences related to the use of drugs were mainly sanctioned by fines (71%). The number of fixed penalty notices for offences against the legislation on poisonous substances, narcotics and doping products (Art. 41-2 of the Criminal Procedure Code), which were accepted and executed in 2023 reached 4 461. This is an alternative procedure to prosecution.

With regard to use, a significant proportion of the offences committed are sanctioned prior to prosecution in court. In terms of police activity, criminal fixed fines represent nearly 62% of those questioned about use, reaching nearly 160 000 en 2023. On the prosecution side, alternative measures to prosecution represent between 20 and 50% of the referral orders handed down to perpetrators of drug use offences over the past 10 years (including 40% in the form of legal reminders and almost 21% in the form of referrals to a health and social care facility in 2023). 4 072 fixed penalty notices relating to infringement of use were successfully handed down in 2023. At the level of the trial courts, fines represent the majority of judgements: they represent 71% of convictions for use in 2022 compared to 11% resulting in custodial sentences.

T.1.2.2. Is data available on actual sentencing practice related to legislation designed to control NPS? Please provide a summary and a link to the original information or state if no information is available.

Actual court practices on the penal response to NPS cannot be documented at present. They may have recourse to the article on inciting use, but no detailed statistics according to type of substances are available.

Furthermore, when suspect goods are detected by the services, particularly Customs, in order to remove it from the market, the substance may be assimilated to a "medication by function". The public prosecutor may decide to initiate an investigation and, if appropriate, to prosecute the offenders in court.

T1.2.3. *Optional. If possible, discuss why implementation might differ from the text of laws (e.g. political instructions, resource levels, policy priorities).*



## T2. Trends

The purpose of this section is to provide a commentary on the context and possible explanations of trends in legislation and the implementation of the legislation within your country.

- T2.1. Please comment on any changes in penalties and definitions of core offences (offences of use, possession for personal use, supply (including production) of illicit drugs) in the legal framework since 2000. If possible discuss the possible reasons for change (e.g. political philosophy, changes in the drug situation, public debate, policy evaluation).

The framework of the French policy for combating illicit drugs is set forth in the 1970 French law on narcotics [[Loi n°70-1320 relative aux mesures sanitaires de lutte contre la toxicomanie et à la répression du trafic et de l'usage illicite des substances vénéneuses](#)]. Only a few legislative changes have occurred since (see below). Beyond the modifications of the law, the orientations of the penal policy for combating drug use and traffic have been regularly redefined and have led to a quasi-systematization of the penal response to the use of narcotics (see T1.1.1).

The law of 9 March 2004 [[Loi n°2004-204 portant adaptation de la justice aux évolutions de la criminalité](#)] allows to reduce by half sentences handed down to offenders in particular for trafficking offences if, "by having informed the administrative or legal authorities, the offender has made it possible to put an end to the offence and possibly identify other guilty parties".

This possibility for "penitents" to get a reduced sentence for trafficking is a new feature in the French penal process.

The "delinquency prevention law" of 5 March 2007 [[Loi n°2007-297 relative à la prévention de la délinquance](#)] provided for a wider range of law enforcement measures that could be taken against drug users:

- It introduced a new penalty: a mandatory awareness course on the dangers of drug and alcohol use (article 131-5-1 of the Penal Code), mandatory and paying (€450 maximum, the amount of a third-class contravention). Its aim is to make offenders fully aware of the danger and harm generated by the use of narcotic substances, as well as the social impact of such behaviour. The drug awareness course may be proposed by the authorities as an alternative to prosecution and to fixed penalty notice. An obligation to complete the drug awareness course may also be included in the criminal ruling as an additional sentence. It applies to all individuals over the age of 13.
- It also broadens the scope of application of the court-ordered treatment measure provided for in Articles L. 3413-1 to L. 3413-4 of the Public Health Code: previously an alternative measure to prosecution, court-ordered treatment can now be ordered at all stages of criminal proceedings as a means of enforcing a sentence. The application directive issued by the Ministry of Justice on 16 February 2012 [[Circulaire CRIM 2012-6/G4 relative à l'amélioration du traitement judiciaire de l'usage de stupéfiants](#)] invites the legal authorities to systematically envisage a drug treatment order when circumstances reveal that the suspect needs treatment.
- This law also makes it possible to use the penal order, a simplified procedure allowing the person to be judged without appearing before the court, for the offence of drug use.

In addition, the [Law of 5 March 2007](#) makes being under the influence of drugs an aggravating circumstance for the crime of rape (Art. 222-23 of the Penal Code) and several offences: violence (Art. 222-11 and 222-13 of the Penal Code), sexual assaults other than

rape (Art. 222-27 and 222-29 of the Penal Code), sexual offences against a minor of fifteen years of age or under (Art. 222-5 of the Penal Code).

[Law no. 2019-222 of 23 March 2019](#) programming and reforming the 2018-2022 justice programme introduces various measures to improve the effectiveness of the criminal response to drug offences. In addition to the creation of the criminal fixed fine (see T.1.1.1), it extends the possibility of using the penal orders for offences involving the supply and transfer of drugs for personal use, while repealing the probation order and the penal transaction, which were very rarely used. These measures are alternatives to prison that simplify and speed up the criminal response.

T2.2. Please comment on how the implementation of the law has changed since 2000. If possible discuss the possible reasons for change (e.g. new guidelines, availability of alternatives to punishment).

Most of the drug law offence arrests concern the use of drugs, which therefore constitute a mass case. After a decrease between 2014 and 2020, they rose again in 2023, partly due to the entry into effect of the criminal fixed fine procedure (see T.3.1), representing almost 160 400 suspects implicated by the police and gendarmerie in 2023. In 2010, (since 2010 national statistics no longer provide details of arrests for each substance), 90% concerned simple cannabis use, 5% heroin use and 3% cocaine use.

In response to this rapid increase in arrests, alternatives to prosecutions (drug warning, referral to a health and social centre, drug treatment order, etc.) have been systematically applied (see T2.1). Although rare at the end of the 1990s, in 2023, case dismissals after alternative measures accounted for nearly 20% of measures pronounced against drug users. However, there was a significant drop from 2019 (when they represented 44% of the decisions handed down by the public prosecutor's office) and the adoption of the criminal fixed fine. The entry into effect of the latter measure has had the greatest impact on drug warnings, falling from 41 026 in 2019 to 4 582 in 2023, i.e. a division by almost 10. Among these alternatives to prosecution, the decline in court-ordered treatment initiated in the 2010s continued: 2 530 in 2012, compared with 1 181 in 2023. However, there is a significant increase in 2023, since they have multiplied by more than 5 since 2022 (209). Social and healthcare referrals follow the same trend: after rising sharply from 2004 onwards, they have been falling in recent years (9 721 in 2012 vs. 2 415 in 2023). However, they have been rising since 2022, when they stood at 1 705. Conversely, there has been a significant increase in drug awareness courses (about 13 000 in 2022).

The work of V. Gautron and I. Obradovic (Gautron and Obradovic 2023) nevertheless shows that these measures are not used in the same way in the various territories. They show that the choice of these measures is guided by motivations related with the management of the flow of criminal cases. In the most congested jurisdictions, for example, drug warnings are used for larger quantities of the seized product than in rural jurisdictions. The number of mandatory awareness course on the dangers of drug use pronounced in a given jurisdiction also depends on the number of social and health structures existing on the territory. Similarly, the article by Choquet and Mainaud (Choquet and Mainaud 2018) shows that criminal measures are not used in the same way depending on the offenders' profiles. In particular, they show that minors involved in drug trafficking are prosecuted more than 4 times out of 10 in a court of law, while minors who just use drugs are subject to alternative prosecution procedures almost 9 times out of 10.

Litigation relating to the offence of driving under the influence of drugs only accounts for around 28% of road traffic offences, but its volume has almost tripled between 2013 (19 000) and 2022 (54 000) (Protais *et al.* 2024).

Furthermore, the penal response to these cases of use is characterised by the increasingly frequent recourse to court convictions during the 2000s. Although the number of annual convictions remained below 5 000 in the 1990s, these increased more than seven-fold between 2000 and 2019 (more than 35 000 convictions for a drug use offence). Convictions have, however, been on the decline since the appearance of the criminal fixed fine: they are about 20 000 in 2022. The implementation of an early financial penalty by the police mechanically reduced the number of people brought before the courts. In fact, since its roll-out in September 2020, the number of the issued criminal fixed fines has significantly increased. The Ministry of Justice reported that 160 000 suspects have been issued with a criminal fixed fine in 2023. According to a recent report published by the Ministry of the Interior statistical office in March 2022 (Fumat *et al.* 2022), the implementation of criminal fixed fines has led to a sharp increase in suspects for the use of narcotics (+39%), which has been accompanied by a significant reduction in the proportion (-50%), and volume (-5 700), of not only minors suspected in 2021, but also women. In 2023, this trend was confirmed by police and gendarmerie services, who reported over 260 000 suspects for drug use. However, these developments vary greatly depending on the department: Bouches-du-Rhône, Seine-Saint-Denis, and Rhône are the departments in which the rates of suspects having been issued a criminal fixed fine are the highest: on the other hand, Meuse, Vendée and Finistère are where they are the lowest. Most of the fines relate to the use of cannabis (almost 98%), far ahead of cocaine (less than 2%), with other substances accounting for virtually no share.

Among the convictions for use, custodial sentences declined, while fines increased. Fines accounted for nearly 71 % of drug convictions in 2022 compared to 42% twenty years previously (2000). This increase in fines, can be explained by the transformation of the procedural routes for dealing with drug use since [Law No. 2007-297 of 5 March 2007](#) on the prevention of criminality, which opens up the possibility of using the penal order for ordinary users. This simple procedure that is quick to implement only allows fines to be imposed.

Lastly, fixed penalty notices accepted and enforced for offences against the legislation on poisonous substances, narcotics and doping products remain pronounced to a limited extent, amounting to almost 4 400 in 2023.

### T3. New developments

The purpose of this section is to provide information on any notable or topical developments observed in legislation, the implementation of legislation, evaluation, and the political position on drug legislations **since your last report**.

T1 is used to establish the baseline of the topic in your country. Please focus on any new developments here.

If information on recent notable developments have been included as part of the baseline information for your country, please make reference to that section here. It is not necessary to repeat the information.

T3.1. What, if any, laws have changed in the last year? Please use the following table to structure your answer, providing the title of the law, a hyperlink if available and a short summary of the change and explanatory comments.

The year 2022-23 was marked by a number of legislative and regulatory changes.

- **Implementation of the “catch-all” clause for customs: [law no. 2023-610 of 18 July 2023](#)**

This law aims to provide customs with the means to address new threats, by allowing customs officers to make precautionary seizures; the temporary detention and seizure of chemical substances (precursors of non-classified drugs) which could be used to produce synthetic drugs. Customs can also employ special investigative techniques to locate and shut down synthetic drug production laboratories.

- **Definition of a maximum permitted quantity for the sale of products containing nitrous oxide to private individuals: [decree of 19 July 2023](#)**

The sale of nitrous oxide to private individuals is limited to gas canisters within an individual weight of less than or equal to 8.6 grams; there may be a maximum of 10 gas canisters within a package.

- **Creation of a fine for hunting under the influence of alcohol: [decree no. 2023-882 of 16 September 2023](#)**

Creation of a €1 500 fine (€3 000 for repeat offences) which criminalises hunting or carrying out an act of destruction in a state of obvious intoxication, while holding a firearm or a bow.

- **CBD Legal Precedent: decrees no. [470132](#) and [473466](#) of 21 December 2023 and Judgement by the Court of Cassation of 21 June 2023**

The Council of State rejected the requests of the *Union des professionnels du CBD* [Union of CBD Professionals] and the National Organisation for the Reform of Marijuana Laws France association, directed against the refusal of the Ministries of the Interior, Justice, and Health to repeal a [decree of 13 December 2016](#) establishing the procedures for testing drugs of abuse. The applicant associations argued that the use of CBD while driving could not be criminalised, given that it is not a narcotic. Essentially, the Council of State reiterated that article L. 235-2 of the French Traffic Code criminalises driving under the influence of narcotics, and that the [decree of 13 December 2016](#), made thereunder, also specifies the methods for detecting the narcotic contained in cannabis, namely THC, and that available data indicates that THC is a psychotropic substance posing a risk of addiction and damaging health impacts.

The criminal division of the Court of Cassation confirmed the interpretation of the texts (article L235-1 of the French Traffic Code) in an [order of 21 June 2023](#), underlining that *“since the authorisation to market certain cannabis derivatives, whose content in delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol, a substance itself classified as a narcotic by the above-mentioned executive order, does not exceed 0.30%, has no bearing on the offence of driving after using narcotics, this offence being constituted if it is established that the accused drove after having used a substance classified as a narcotic, regardless of the dose absorbed”*.

- **Sustainability of the trial on “microstructures” via [decree no. 137 of 28 December 2023](#)**

“Participatory” health care centres (also known as “community” or “microstructures”) offer primary health care and social support, mainly targeting deprived areas.

These facilities aimed at precarious populations offer medico-psycho-social support provided by a multidisciplinary team which combines general practitioners and medical auxiliaries, psychologists, social workers, reception staff, health care mediators, and professional interpreters.

Despite their proved usefulness, their current funding models do not ensure the continuity of these facilities. The testing detailed in the decree therefore aims to build these facilities into a sustainable economic model, by testing different allocations with around twenty facilities. The model proposed upon conclusion of the trial aims to be incorporated into common law. The objective is therefore to eventually create 60 health centres. By [decree 138 of 28 December 2023](#), the trial also concerns “Equip’Addict” medical addiction microstructures.

- **Medical cannabis: [decree no. 2024-259 of 23 March 2024](#) pertaining to the extension of the trial on the medicinal use of cannabis**

The topic of medical cannabis and the trial which ran from 2021 for two years sparked numerous debates in France, at the point in time they were due to end. Promising results were shown after the two-year trial. The 79% of patients suffering from neuropathic pain who declared to feel a “strong and unbearable pain” upon inclusion, were no more than 29% after 3 months of treatment. As for patients suffering from multiple sclerosis, the assessment showed a significant improvement in pain and a decrease in spasms and stiffness. With regard to patients suffering from drug-resistant epilepsy, they evidenced a significant decrease in the number of epileptic seizures, along with a 57% increase in their general health after 12 months of treatment. Also, cancer and palliative care patients demonstrated a decrease in pain, the severity of nausea, and sleep problems. However, the assessment came under harsh criticism, particularly from the Academies of Medicine and Pharmacy who recognised (in 2022) that “*the trial derogated from the methodological, safety, and ethical requirements governing the assessment of each drug candidate*” and recommended a randomised clinical trial. On 10 October 2023, in the newspaper *Libération*, there was an opinion column led by Nicolas Authier, doctor and president of a scientific committee on medicinal cannabis, and a dozen parliamentarians, concerned about the possibility of continuing to prescribe cannabis-based medicines to patients taking part in the trial once it has ended. At the end of October 2023, the government began considering a marketing authorisation for cannabis-based medicines for 5 years. The government ultimately chose to continue the year-long trial, in anticipation of a marketing authorisation from the French National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety (ANSM) at the beginning of 2025, and to consolidate the scientific findings of the trial.

Decree no. 2024-259 of 23 March 2023 therefore extended the trial on the use of medical cannabis, to ensure the continuity of treatment for patients taking part in the trial, up until the marketing of the first authorised medicinal product, communicated to the ANSM no later than 31 December 2024. No new patient inclusions occurred after 27 March 2024. The [decree of 25 March 2024](#) establishes the specifications for the provision and distribution of cannabis-based medicines, for patients participating in the trial.

Nevertheless, there are still numerous issues which must be resolved prior to marketing authorisation, and particularly: the production of medical cannabis in France (it has been imported up to now, which increases the risk of shortages), the expansion of the fields of use to other diseases than those provided for in the trial, the methods of administering the treatment, and the legislation on driving, which punishes driving under the influence of narcotics (Rius and Saint-Marcoux 2023).

- **Some NPS newly added to the list of narcotics**

- In a [decision of 12 June 2023](#): hexahydrocannabinol (HHC) and two of its derivatives, HHC-acetate (HHCO) and hexahydrocannabinophenol (HHCP), were classified by the French National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety (ANSM).
- In a [decision of 20 July 2023](#): ADB-Butinaca,  $\alpha$ -PiHP, 3-methylmethcathinone, methyl-AP-237, Etazene, Protonitazene, and Etonitazepyne.

– In a [decision of 22 May 2024](#): H4-CBD, H2-CBD, and some synthetic cannabinoids with a chemical core known as benzo[c]chromene, such as HHCPO, THCP, and THCA.

T3.2. How was the law implemented in the last year? What, if any, changes have occurred? Please provide sentencing or other outcome data, or provide the link to any relevant reports or information.

See T.2.2

T3.3. Has there been an evaluation of the law in the last year, or other indications as to its effects? Please specify and provide links to the original report.

See T.2.2

T3.4. **Optional.** Summarise any major political discussions in the last year relating to legislation or its implementation that you feel is important in understanding the current legal framework within your country.

The regulatory document subjected to amendments / Initial version of the text	The amended regulatory document / Current version of the text		
Title. Hyperlink	Title. Hyperlink	Summary of change	Comments

## T4. Additional information

The purpose of this section is to provide additional information important to understanding drug legislation in your country that has not been provided elsewhere.

T4.1. **Optional.** Please describe any additional important sources of information, specific studies or data on the legal framework. Where possible, please provide references and/or links.

T4.2. **Optional.** Please describe any other important aspect of the legal framework that has not been covered in the questions above. This may be additional information or new areas of specific importance for your country (e.g. money laundering, tobacco, alcohol legislation, new/changing organisations/structures, regulations related medical or industrial cannabis, and regulatory framework of opioid substitution treatment).

## T5. Sources and methodology

The purpose of this section is to collect sources and bibliography for the information provided above, including brief descriptions of studies and their methodology where appropriate.

T5.1. Please list notable sources for the information provided above.

Legislative sources used are mainly the Public Health Code and the Penal Code. All information provided herein is based on permanent monitoring of legislation by the OFDT and on the following data:

- *Etat 4001*, Ministry of the Interior (for data on accused individuals)
- National criminal record, Ministry of Justice (for convictions)

Choquet, L.-H. and Mainaud, T. (2018). Le traitement judiciaire des infractions liées aux stupéfiants commises par des mineurs. Infostat Justice. Ministère de la Justice (158). Available: [https://www.justice.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-05/stat\\_Infostat\\_158.pdf](https://www.justice.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-05/stat_Infostat_158.pdf) [accessed 30/05/2024].

Fumat, V., Gerbeaux, A. and Poulhes, M. (2022). Amendes forfaitaires délictuelles pour usage de stupéfiants : premiers éléments d'évaluation. Document de travail SSMSI. Ministère de l'Intérieur, Paris. Available: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Interstats/Actualites/Document-de-travail-n-2-Amendes-forfaitaires-delictuelles-pour-usage-de-stupefiants-premiers-elements-d-evaluation> [accessed 30/05/2024].

Gautron, V. and Obradovic, I. (2023). Entre incitation aux soins, punition et gestion des flux. Le traitement ambivalent des usagers de stupéfiants par le parquet. In: Gautron, V. (Ed.), Réprimer et soigner. Pratiques et enjeux d'une articulation complexe. PUR, Rennes.

Martinez, M. (2013). Contrôler les NPS : du classement comme stupéfiant à l'utilisation d'autres réglementations. Actal (13) 62-66.

Protais, C., Douchet, M.-A., Le Nézet, O. and Guilbaud, F. (2024). 30 ans de réponse pénale à la conduite après usage d'alcool ou de stupéfiants. Tendances. OFDT (161). Available: <https://www.ofdt.fr/BDD/publications/docs/eftxcp2e1.pdf> [accessed 15/07/2024].

Rius, C. and Saint-Marcoux, F. (2023). Expérimentation du cannabis médical : une impasse pour la réglementation sur la conduite automobile ? [The medical experiment of cannabis and driving legislation: Are we in a driving impasse?]. Toxicologie Analytique et Clinique 35 (2) 143-150, 10.1016/j.toxac.2022.11.006.

Willeman, T., Micallef, J., Alvarez, J.-C. and Revol, B. (2023). Consommer du CBD ou conduire, faut-il choisir ? Thérapies 78 (6) 749-751, 10.1016/j.therap.2022.11.006.

T5.2. Where studies or surveys have been used please list them and where appropriate describe the methodology?