



Probation in France : Beyond an alternative sanction

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Why probation matters in France ?

System Structure: The French probation system is structured to balance rehabilitation and control, with various roles contributing to its function.

Prison + Probation services



Direction de l'administration pénitentiaire



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Why probation matters ?

The work carried out by French probation services is fundamental, as they are:

- Positioned at the last link of the penal chain
- Mandated by the judicial authority
- Key players in public security policy

Probation is not just an alternative to incarceration :

- Reduces recidivism through supervised reintegration
- Strengthen social cohesion – keeping individuals connected to family, work and community.
- More cost-effective than imprisonment.



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French context

183 prison facilities

> 83 000 individuals in prison

104 probation services

> 180 000 probationners

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Evolution of probation in France

CAPL

Creation of parolee assistance and placement committees (CAPL) at the headquarters of each district court. The role of these committees is to supervise parolees and help those who have been permanently released who wish to do so. The prison social worker is responsible for coordinating this post-release committee.

Suspended sentence with probation

Creation suspended sentence with probation (SME), replaces the sentence enforcement judges with sentence enforcement judges (JAP), extends the role of the assistance and placement committees for released prisoners (CAPL), which become the probation and assistance committees for released prisoners (CPAL) for monitoring sentences in the open environment, and legalises sentence adjustment measures (semi-liberty, temporary leave).

Timeline Start

1946

CAPL

Creation of parolee assistance and placement committees (CAPL) at the headquarters of each district court.

1958

Suspended sentence with probation

CAPL becomes the probation and assistance committee for released prisoners (CPAL).

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Evolution of probation in France

Shift towards reintegration – focused probation

Introduction of judicial review to avoid pre-trial detention/Law introducing sentence reductions for good behaviour/ Act introducing the first alternatives to imprisonment for short sentences (suspension of driving licence, withdrawal of hunting licence, day fine, confiscation, etc.) and encouraging the reorganisation of sentences

Community service

Community service introduced and day-fine.

Electronic monitoring

Law establishing electronic surveillance as a means of enforcing custodial sentences. Adopted on the initiative of Senator Cabanel, this law provides for the placement under electronic surveillance of prisoners serving a sentence of less than one year or whose remaining sentence is less than one year.

1970s

Shift towards reintegration

A series of acts focusing on probation.

1983

Community service

1997

Electronic monitoring launched

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Evolution of probation in France

SPIP

Decree creating the penitentiary integration and probation services (SPIP). The SPIPs have departmental jurisdiction. They replace and merge the probation and assistance committees for released prisoners (integration in an open environment) and the socio-educational services of prisons (integration in a closed environment).

Title 7

The 'Taubira' Act on individualisation of sentences and reinforcing the effectiveness of criminal penalties. It introduces a new alternative penalty to imprisonment: the "contrainte pénale". The law also creates a new arrangement for the end of a sentence: release under constraint. It also abolishes the minimum sentences introduced in 2007.



French probation services – A multi-sector team of justice professionals



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Probation as part of a Justice and social ecosystem



Judges & Courts

Tailor sentencing

Prison facilities

Coordinate smooth transition from custody

Families and Social services

Strengthen reintegration

Education and Vocational training

Secure employment post-sentence

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Challenges in French Probation: The need for structural reform



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Thank you!

Merci!

Teşekkürler!



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