

Institutions and the political system

Theme 2 of 5 · conforms to the official programme (arrêté du 10 October 2025)

Revision sheet — Institutions and the political system

This topic accounts for **6 of the 40 questions**. The official programme (the référentiel of the **decree of 10 October 2025**) splits it into three sub-topics: **democracy and the right to vote** (3 questions), **organisation of the French Republic** (2 questions) and **the European Union** (1 question). Above all, remember the key roles and figures. This sheet covers **the whole of the programme**.

The essentials in 30 seconds

- France is a **state governed by the rule of law**: the law applies to everyone, including the State.
- The **President of the Republic** is elected for **5 years** by direct universal suffrage.
- The **Parliament** (National Assembly + Senate) votes the law; the Constitution is that of the **Fifth Republic (1958)**.
- France is a **founding member of the European Union**.

1. Democracy and the right to vote (3 questions)

- **The rule of law**: the law stands above everyone and binds all, including the public authorities.
- **Separation of powers** — **executive** (president and government, who apply the law), **legislative** (Parliament, which votes the law), **judicial** (independent judges, who administer justice).
- **The right to vote** — reserved for citizens of **French nationality**, of **legal age** (18) and enjoying their civil and political rights.
- Voting is **free, secret, personal and equal** (one person = one vote).
- **Pluralism** — the existence of several political parties is a necessary condition of democracy.

2. Organisation of the French Republic (2 questions)

The executive

- The **President of the Republic**: elected for **5 years** by direct universal suffrage; appoints the Prime Minister, chairs the Council of Ministers, is head of the armed forces and can dissolve the National Assembly.
- The **government**: led by the **Prime Minister**, it conducts the policy of the Nation and is accountable to the National Assembly.

The legislature

- **The National Assembly** — **577 deputies**, elected by direct universal suffrage (the Assembly has the final say).

- **The Senate** — elected by indirect suffrage. Together they form **Parliament**, which votes the law and oversees the government. lexamencivique.fr — free and official revision sheets

Other institutions and levels

- The **Constitutional Council** (ensures the Constitution is respected), the **Rights Defender** (to contact in cases of discrimination), the **Bank of France**, the courts.
- **Local authorities**: the **commune** (the **mayor**), the **department** and the **region**, each with its own local competences.
- **Elections**: presidential, legislative, municipal, European... each with its own term length.

3. The European Union (1 question)

- France is a **founding member** of the EU (Treaty of Rome, 1957; European Union since the Maastricht Treaty, 1992).
- **Symbols**: the blue flag with twelve stars and the anthem (*Ode to Joy*).
- **Institutions**: the **European Parliament** (elected by citizens), the Council of the EU and the European Commission.
- **Principles**: European citizenship, free movement, economic cooperation; the common currency is the **euro**.
- An EU citizen residing in France may vote in **municipal and European** elections.

Common mistakes

- Saying the president is elected for **7 years**: it has been **5 years** since 2002.
- Confusing the **National Assembly** (deputies) with the **Senate** (senators).
- Forgetting the question on the **European Union** (symbols, institutions).

Tip: memorise the key figures (5 years, 577 deputies, 1958), then practise with the [timed mock exam](#).