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# Combating discrimination and promoting equality

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When it comes to rights, we are all equal

**Défenseur des droits**  
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

# One institution, five specialist areas

**“The Defender of Rights ensures that rights and freedoms are upheld”**

Article 71-1 of the Constitution

The Defender of Rights is an independent institution tasked with defending rights and individual freedoms within five areas of expertise as determined by the law:



**Defending the rights of public service users**



**Ensuring the rules of professional conduct are followed by security officials** (police, “gendarmes”, private security services, etc.)



**Defending and promoting the rights of the child**



**Combating discrimination and promoting equality**



**Guiding and protecting whistleblowers**

## To accomplish its duties, the Defender of Rights:

- **processes the complaints** it receives by coming up with fitting solutions;
- **works to improve equal access to rights for all** through information and training and by forging partnerships and proposing reforms.



More than **50%**  
**of complaint files received by the institution** on discrimination concern **employment**

# Combating discrimination and promoting equality

In France, the Defender of Rights is the authority in charge of defending and facilitating access to rights for victims of discrimination. You can reach out to the Defender of Rights if you consider yourself to have been a victim of discrimination.

The alleged person behind this discrimination may be a natural person (an individual) or a legal entity (an association or society for example), a private entity (a company) or public entity (a State department, a local authority or a public hospital for example).

## For an instance of discrimination to be acknowledged, three elements must be present:

- **less favourable treatment** has been shown to a person;
- on the basis of at least one **ground stipulated by the law**;
- and which corresponds to a **situation that is recognised by the law**, such as recruitment, career path or access to housing, education, public services or public or private goods and services.

Not all differences in treatment amount to discrimination. The law also protects you if you are:

- a victim of harassment on the basis of a discrimination ground;
- sexually harassed;
- punished for having denounced an instance of discrimination as a victim or witness.

## The main discrimination grounds:

Origin, gender, pregnancy, physical appearance, surname, state of health, disability, sexual orientation, age, political opinions, beliefs, trade union activities, actual or assumed affiliation or not with a specific ethnic group, nation, race or religion, gender identity, place of residence, banking domiciliation, loss of autonomy, and vulnerability derived from one's financial situation.



**You can see the full list of discrimination criteria on the Defender of Rights' website.**



**I wasn't  
hired on  
account of  
my physical  
appearance**



**A lending  
organisation  
refused  
my loan  
because of  
my age**



**I have not been promoted  
ever since I came back  
from maternity leave**

## **What can the Defender of Rights do?**



**Investigate**



**Come up with  
an amicable  
settlement**



**Make  
recommendations  
about a situation**



**Present its  
observations  
before the  
courts**



**Call for  
disciplinary  
proceedings**



**Put forward  
proposals for  
reforming  
legislation**

# Delegates: a unique service on your doorstep

## The Defender of Rights is supported by a network of nearly 500 delegates

The Defender of Rights' delegates are available nationwide. Anyone looking for assistance with defending their rights can contact them free of charge at more than **750 reception points** in mainland France and overseas. These can be found in *Maisons de la Justice et du Droit* (legal advice centres/MJD), *Points d'accès au droit* (free drop-in centres for anyone looking for guidance on legal matters/PAD), prefectures or town/city halls for example.

### Delegates can:



Listen to your concerns



Guide you  
in your procedures



Help you to exercise  
your rights



Forward your case to  
the Head Office in Paris

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**80%**

of complaints lodged with the Defender of Rights are received by the delegates at their local offices



See the list of offices:

[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)

# Think your rights haven't been respected?

Get in touch with the  
Defender of Rights for free



## Via the delegates, at:

[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr) /  
"Comment obtenir des réponses?" (How can you get answers?) or in a reception point.



## Via freepost, so no need for a stamp:

Défenseur des droits - Libre réponse 71120 -  
75342 Paris Cedex 07 France



## Via our online form, at:

[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr) /  
"Saisir le Défenseur des droits" (Refer a case to the Defender of Rights)



You can also get information  
**by calling +33 (0)9 69 39 00 00** or making  
an appointment with a delegate.



**Don't forget to provide us with all the documents (copies of administrative documents, letters, emails, eye-witness accounts, etc.) that the Defender of Rights will need to examine your case.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

You do not have to pay anything to contact the Defender of Rights.

The Defender of Rights cannot call into question a judicial decision.

Its referral does not interrupt or suspend the time limits for civil, administrative or criminal proceedings or those concerning administrative appeals or appeals to the court.

Find out all our news at:



[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)



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