



D

**Defending
the rights of
public service
users**

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 **45%**

of complaint files received by the institution concern **cases where social rights are being challenged or not recognised.**

Defending the rights of public service users

Individuals are received and assisted by public services throughout their lives. But sometimes the complexity and lack of clarity surrounding procedures are such that public service users are prevented from benefiting fully from their rights.

In light of the difficulties that a user might encounter when dealing with an administration or public service, the Defender of Rights helps people to defend their rights more effectively and guides them in their formalities, particularly through its delegates.

The Defender of Rights takes action to defend users' fundamental rights when the steps they have previously taken to exercise their rights or appeal a decision have not been successful.

Which public services are concerned?

- **State departments:** ministries, prefectures, regional or *département*-level directorates, local education authorities, regional health agencies, schools, etc.;
- **Local authority departments:** town/city halls, *département*-level councils, regional councils, local public services, etc.;
- **Private organisations fulfilling a public service mission:** family benefits funds (CAFs), primary health insurance funds (CPAMs), *Pôle emploi* (national employment service), Self-employed health & welfare service (RSI), National Old-Age Insurance Fund (CNAV), etc.;
- **Other public services:** public institutions, health facilities, *département*-level centres for disabled people (MDPH), energy providers (Engie, GRDF, ENEDIS, etc.) and water companies, public transport operators (SNCF, RATP, etc.) for non-commercial aspects.



I was refused access to my deceased mother's medical record



My application for the personalised housing benefit has got held up at the family benefits fund



The job centre suspended my benefits even though I had updated my situation online

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**

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

Think your rights haven't been respected?

Get in touch with the
Defender of Rights for free



Via the delegates, at:

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 /
"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



Défenseur des droits

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE