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# Initial training of lawyers in the European Union

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France

## General description

Is initial training offered, if yes is it compulsory?

There is an initial professional training provided by regional professional training centers (“CRFPA” in French), which is compulsory before attending the examination leading to a certificate of aptitude for the legal profession (“CAPA” in French). Its duration is 18 months divided into three periods of 6 months. (See the question, “What is the duration and time frames of the training” below).

Does initial training differentiate between categories of trainees, e.g. for in-house lawyers and advocates?

The initial training to become a lawyer is not intended for people who want to become in-house counsel. However, many people who want to become in-house counsel enrol for this initial training, as it seems to be an advantage for being recruited.

Which entities are responsible for organising initial training?

The regional professional training centers are responsible for the initial training leading to the certificate of aptitude for the legal profession. There are 11 of them located in France.

The list of the 11 centers is available [here](#).

What is the statutory basis for initial training?

Legal basis: Articles 57 and following of the [Decree n°91-1197 of 27 November 1991](#), recently amended by [Decree n°.2023-1125 of 1 December 2023](#).

## Access to the initial training

Are there conditions for accessing the training?

To access the initial training, you must have obtained the first sixty credits of a French Master’s degree in Law or of a degree recognized equivalent by the [Order of 31 December 2024](#) and successfully passed the [CRFPA entrance exam](#).

This exam is held once a year. It is composed of admissibility tests (a summary note and a test on contract law (“droit des obligations” in French), a test in a specialized subject (choice between civil law, business law, social law, criminal law, administrative law, international and European law, and tax law), a procedure test (choice between civil procedure and amicable dispute resolution methods (“MARD” in French), criminal procedure, and administrative procedure and “MARD”) and oral admission tests (an English language test, and an oral exam on

the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms).

No person may sit this examination more than three times.

Legal basis:

- [Article 51 of decree no. 91-1197 of 27 November 1991](#)
- [Order of 17 October 2016 setting the syllabus and procedures for the examination for admission to the regional centre for the professional training of lawyers](#)
- [Decree n° 2024-1049 of 21 November 2024 on various measures relating to the judicial and legal professions](#)

What is the main recruitment procedure? If it is competitive - who runs it?

The CRFPA entrance examination is organized by judicial studies institutes (“Instituts d’études judiciaires”(IEJ) in French), each associated to a university. The [national commission of the access examination to the CRFPA](#) prepares written eligibility tests which, therefore, are the same for all candidates across the 11 centers. The oral admission tests are held by each judicial studies institutes.

All candidates must obtain an average score of 10/20 in the written tests to be eligible to sit the oral admission tests.

To be admitted, candidates must obtain a minimum average score of 10/20 across all tests, including the oral tests.

Are there alternative access routes to the training?

Yes, there is an exemption from the CRFPA entrance exam, allowing a direct access to the initial training, available to doctors of law (PhD).

There are also exemptions for certain professionals, exempting them from the CRFPA entrance exam, the initial training and the examination leading to a certificate of aptitude for the legal profession (CAPA).

Legal basis: Articles 54 and 97 to 98-1 of [Decree n°91-1197 of 27 November 1991](#).

## Format and content of the initial training

What is the duration and time frames of the training?

The duration of the initial training is currently 18 months divided into [three periods of 6 months](#):

- 6 months of practical teaching to acquire the fundamentals of the legal profession within a Lawyers’ School;
- 6 months devoted to the student's individual educational project (PPI);
- 6 months devoted to an internship in a law firm.

Since 2024, those periods can be combined within a work-study.

Legal basis: Articles 57 to 58.1 of [Decree n°91-1197 of 27 Novembre 1991](#)

How is the training organised?

This training is organised by the CRFPAs in accordance with the normative decision n° 2023-003 of the Conseil national des Barreaux (CNB) defining the organisational principles and harmonising the programs for the training of student lawyers.

Legal basis: [DNC-2023-003](#)

## Who are the trainers?

The trainers are practicing lawyers or honorary lawyers, law professors, magistrates, or professionals (accountants, drama teachers, language teachers, etc.).

## What is the content and objectives of the initial training?

The content is determined by the normative decision n°2023-003. It is divided into two parts: “the principles of organisation of the training” (the training and the trainers) and the “training program” (ethics, the lawyer's profession, management and development of the law firm and professional life, other complementary teaching and training).

The aim is to enable student lawyers to train for professional practice.

Legal basis: [DNC-2023-003](#)

## Who designs the initial training programmes?

The Conseil national des barreaux, through its professional training commission composed of lawyers, academics and magistrates, harmonizes the content of the programs set by the management boards of the CRFPAs by adopting the above-mentioned DNC.

## What methodology is used for the training?

The methodology combines different methods: lectures, workshops to enable practical application, teamwork, flipped classrooms, advocacy exercises, etc.

## What practical elements of the training are applicable to the trainees?

Trainees are subject to attendance obligations. The attendance of the trainee is taken into account in his/her assessment.

## How are trainees evaluated/assessed? How often and by whom?

The continuous assessment includes both the attendance of the trainee and his results in the following tests: individual oral tests (on professional ethics and pleading), written tests (with at least one test on legal advice, one test on drafting a procedural act and one test on drafting a legal act), and group works (including oral and/or written presentations).

The frequency of examinations is determined by each CRFPA.

Legal basis: [DNC-2023-003](#)

The examination leading to a certificate of aptitude for the legal profession (“CAPA”) is the final examination required to become a lawyer in France. To attend this examination, it is required to justify having obtained a French master's degree in law or a degree recognized equivalent by the [Order of 31 December 2024](#).

(See the question “Conclusion of the initial training and qualification procedure” below)

## Are there any training activities carried out in conjunction with other legal professionals? If yes: How does it work?

The CRFPA can initiate local partnerships , with the national school of magistrates (“ENM” in French), for example.

## What are the specificities regarding EU law training, linguistic training and European components of initial training, for example participation in CCBE or ELF activities?

European law must be included in every initial training program

In addition, trainees can take a training module on the practice of law in a foreign language.

How many trainees are accepted for training? Are the numbers of trainees adjusted annually and by who?

The number of trainees depends on the number of candidates admitted to the CRFPA entrance examination, which varies each year. Any candidate who has been admitted to the CRFPA entrance examination has access to the initial training delivered by the CRFPA of their choice (in accordance with the registration procedure implemented by each CRFPA).

## Termination of the initial training and qualification process

Does the initial training conclude with a final exam? How is it organised? Who is responsible for the exam?

The initial training concludes with the successful completion of the examination leading to a certificate of aptitude for the legal profession ("CAPA").

This examination is organized by each CRFPA, which is responsible for its conduct. It consists firstly of a 20-minute oral pleading exercise after a 2-hour preparation, on a case study in civil law, business law, social law, criminal law, administrative law, European law or tax law, according to the candidate's choice. And secondly, an oral test lasting approximately 40 minutes including an interview with a jury on a practical subject relating to the ethics and professional rules of the lawyer's profession, and an interview based on the two reports prepared by the candidate on his two periods of training mentioned above.

Once successfully passed, the candidate can take the oath and join the French bar association of his choice.

In any event, if the candidate had obtained the CRFPA entrance examination with a degree granting him the first sixty credits of a French Master's degree in Law or of a degree recognized equivalent, he must have obtained hundred and twenty credits of a French Master's degree in Law or of a degree recognised equivalent by the [Order of 31 December 2024](#) in order to be authorised to sit the CAPA. During his or her initial training, the candidate must therefore have followed a course of study enabling him or her to obtain the missing credits.

Legal basis:

- Articles 68 to 71 of [Decree No. 91-1197 of 27 November 1991](#)
- [Order of 20 June 2024 setting the program and procedures for the examination for the certificate of aptitude for the legal profession](#)

Is there a further recruitment procedure to become a lawyer upon completion of the initial training?

None.

However, there are exemptions for certain professionals to access the profession of lawyer. (see the question "Are there alternative access routes to the training?" above).

Articles 97 to 98.1 of [Decree No. 91-1197 of 27 November 1991](#)

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