

RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

CONSULTING AND INFORMING THE FRENCH PARLIAMENT. Under the terms of article 88-4 of France's constitution, the SGAE forwards all draft EU acts to the French Parliament – National Assembly and the Senate – for scrutiny before they are adopted by the Council of the European Union. The Parliament can call the Secretary General or its representatives to attend public hearings whenever necessary.

INFORMING FRENCH MEPS. The SGAE keeps French members of the European Parliament informed about France's position on key issues debated in parliamentary committee meetings and plenary sessions.

RELATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY. The SGAE holds regular meetings with civil society representatives – including business, trade unions and think tanks – who have a vested interest in European developments, helping to foster a better understanding of EU issues and France's positions.

INFLUENCING THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS IN FRANCE'S INTERESTS

The SGAE monitors and bolsters France's presence in the European institutions by promoting vacant positions, placing seconded national experts and publishing EU civil service competitive entrance examinations. It also seeks to promote multilingualism and to enhance the role of the French language in the European institutions.



For more information about the SGAE and its latest news, visit: www.sgae.gouv.fr.

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PREMIER MINISTRE

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

*ensuring France
speaks as one
in the European Union
and the OECD*

THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS (SGAE), UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRIME MINISTER, IS THE INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION BODY FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS. The SGAE is responsible for making sure that France speaks with one voice in the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The SGAE therefore covers all fields identified by the European treaties (Treaty on European Union, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Euratom Treaty) with the exception of Common Foreign and Security Policy, which is dealt with by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The SGAE's remit further extends to matters coming under EU powers (and, therefore, EU coordination) covered by international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The SGAE is a unique source of expertise on European affairs in France. It offers advice to the government on EU issues by drawing on its command of European law and procedures, its deep knowledge of EU matters, its keen understanding of EU negotiations and European partners' interests as well as its close relations with stakeholders.

Through its coordinated influence strategy, the SGAE promotes France's interests within the European Union

The SGAE's remit covers the following key areas.

INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION. The main thrust of the SGAE's work is founded on a simple principle: to make sure that France speaks with one voice in the European institutions and that French action is effective and consistent.

The SGAE's remit was established by decree no. 2005-1283 of 17th October 2005. Its task is to prepare France's positions in the European Union institutions, the OECD and the FAO and to work in cooperation with ministries as necessary ahead of EU Council working groups and meetings.

The SGAE also prepares European Council meetings in line with the French President of the Republic's policy aims.

The SGAE scrutinises EU matters, drawing on the expertise and the positions of government ministries. It establishes the French government's position for EU negotiations and prepares instructions and memoranda. Whenever necessary, it submits matters to the Prime Minister's Cabinet for mediation.

The SGAE approves government instructions, forwarding them to France's Permanent Representation to the European Union (or to the OECD) so that it can uphold the French position during negotiations.

The SGAE implements influence strategy on legislations that are considered as a priority for France, in particular by submitting position papers to the European Parliament.

APPLICATION OF EU LAW. Proper application of EU legislation is not only a national obligation and an obligation under the European treaties, but also a key to enhance France's credibility and influence toward EU institutions and partners.

Moreover, proper transposition and application of EU law is fundamental to ensure legal certainty of businesses and citizens and helps to protect the French government against fines levied by the EU and domestic courts.

The SGAE works with the General Secretariat of the Government – under the terms of the circular of 27th September 2004 – to oversee the transposition of EU directives into domestic law and to prepare for pre-litigation proceedings (such as formal notices and reasoned opinions).

The SGAE works with the Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, which represents the French government on legal matters, in cases brought before the European Union courts. The SGAE monitors infringement proceedings. Its work also covers preliminary rulings and legal opinions on the interpretation of EU law.

The SGAE is the national contact point for SOLVIT, a system that citizens and businesses can use to exercise their rights and freedoms under EU law. In France, 90 % of cases are resolved using this system.

OVERVIEW OF THE SGAE'S STRUCTURE

The SGAE is divided into separate units, each covering a different area of EU policy, under the overall authority of the Secretary General, three Deputy Secretary-Generals and a team of Advisers.

