

# AFA awaits results of enquiry by independent auditor

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Court of Auditors, Paris (Credit: commons.wikimedia.org/TouN)

France's Court of Auditors has conducted a review of the country's anti-corruption agency to establish if it's making effective use of public funds.

The French anti-corruption agency (AFA) confirmed on 3 April that France's Court of Auditors had conducted a review of its activities, resources and use of funds. An AFA spokesperson said the agency is now awaiting the outcome of the enquiry.

A person familiar with the matter said the Court of Auditors "clearly wants to assess the AFA's efficiency", and that it was intriguing that the AFA was being examined only a couple of years after it [launched its operations in 2017](#). The agency declined to comment on the particulars of the review.

The AFA is tasked with overseeing the compliance programmes of companies that have entered into France's version of a deferred prosecution agreement and has an annual budget of between €10 and €15 million.

"Ultimately, the goal [of the Court of Auditors' enquiry] is not to diminish the compliance commitment of France, rather make it a lot better," said the same individual with knowledge of the enquiry.

The Court of Auditors is the independent body tasked with examining whether government agencies' activities are proportionate to the resources allocated to them and in keeping with their stated objectives.

The body can recommend improvements to how public funds are allocated to the agencies it examines. The Court of Auditors [says](#) that while its recommendations are not binding, over 70% of them are partially or fully implemented in the three years following its enquiry.

Enquiries are conducted by judges whose investigative powers include interviewing officials at the targeted body, conducting onsite investigations and compelling the targeted body to hand over documents.

Following a review, the investigative magistrates write a report and submit it to the court, which can propose a course of action for the investigated agency or department. The body must then respond to the court's proposals within a set deadline, which is always at least one month from the receipt of the court's confidential decision.

The Court of Auditors' reports are eventually made public "where appropriate", [according to its website](#).

Stéphane de Navacelle at Navacelle in Paris said that the AFA should be strengthened as a result of the review, whatever the outcome. He said that either the Court of Auditors will recommend no new measures and so boost the AFA's credibility, or it will make recommendations which will enhance its efficiency.

De Navacelle also said that two consecutive adverse decisions by the AFA's sanctions committee may have raised some eyebrows at the Court of Auditors, but that alone probably did not trigger the enquiry.

The AFA sanctions committee in February [refused to impose](#) a €1 million penalty, recommended by the AFA itself, on mineral company Imerys for deficiencies in the company's risk mapping, code of conduct and accounting. This followed after the committee [ruled in July](#) that electrical equipment supplier Sonepar had no case to answer despite the AFA's request for another €1 million fine over compliance failures.

An AFA spokesperson said in an email that the agency has also recently been examined by the Inspectorate General of Finances, but that this was a common procedure to evaluate policies among public bodies. The spokesperson declined to comment further.

A spokesperson for the Court of Auditors meanwhile declined to confirm whether it had launched an enquiry into the AFA and added that it did not comment on works in progress.

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