

KEY QUESTIONS

the big six

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What are important milestones in France's annual budget process?

Amounts allocated to main ODA budget lines are determined in June and July

- The Finance Ministry defines general budgetary orientations: From February to April, administrative and technical staff within the Ministry of the Economy and Finance (Finance Ministry) and other ministries develop the economic forecast and measures to define the general orientation of budget policy.
- Prime Minister sends out budget guidelines: Around May each year, the Prime Minister sends three-year budget guidelines ('lettres de cadrage') to each Ministry. These guidelines include general orientations of the budget, such as objectives regarding budget deficit, staff payrolls, or major spending cuts or increases.
- MAE starts developing its budget request: In parallel, around May/June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) starts developing its budget request for the following year, including for the development budget. It does so in consultation with the Finance Ministry. Negotiations and arbitrations between the different ministries take place.
- Debate on budgetary orientations: From June until mid-July, the government presents its general budgetary guidelines for the next year to Parliament, and the 'debate on budgetary orientation' takes place. This debate provides an opportunity for CSOs to advocate for funding increases for ODA.
- PM sends expenditure ceilings: Usually by mid-July, the Prime Minister (PM) presents expenditure ceilings ('lettres-plafond') to each Minister, fixing the maximum allocation for each major public-policy area. This includes funding for the 'ODA mission' ('Politique française en faveur du développement'), jointly managed by the MAE (Program 209) and the Finance Ministry (Program 110).
- Ministries review their budget requests and decide allocations: From mid-July to October, the MAE and the Finance Ministry review their ODA budget requests in light of the expenditure ceiling and develop budget documents. Allocations to the two main ODA budget lines, programs 209 (MAE) and 110 (Finance Ministry), and budget lines within these programs, are decided upon during this period.
- Parliament examines, amends, and votes on budget bill: In October, the government submits its draft budget bill to parliament, which has 70 days to examine, amend, and vote on it. Members of Parliament only receive information on individual budget lines shortly before the vote, which inhibits any real influencing at that stage. In 2015 and 2016, however, Members of Parliament were able to influence budget allocations to development by voting to increase the amount of the financial transaction tax dedicated to development. After being voted on by the plenary, the budget is signed by the President before Christmas.

