

Client alert

January 2nd, 2026

Stricter integration requirements - Civic exam and proficiency in the French language¹

Summary: As of January 1, 2026, new integration requirements under the Immigration Act of January 26, 2024, are now in effect. Applicants must now fulfill two separate obligations: passing a civic exam and demonstrating French language proficiency through a recognized test or diploma.

The civic exam is now mandatory for certain CIR (“Contrat d’Intégration Républicaine”) holders applying for long-term residence permits, as well as for all naturalization applications. The decrees of December 22, 2025, set the required French levels: A2 for multi-year residence permits, B1 for 10-year residence permits (“carte de résident”), and B2 for naturalization.

1) THE CIVIC EXAM

The civic exam aims to test candidates’ understanding of the fundamentals of French society. It covers the values and principles of the Republic, the functioning of institutions, rights and duties, and key aspects of French history, culture, and daily life. It takes place at the end of the mandatory four-day civic training course organized by the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII). Passing the exam results in an official certificate proving the applicant’s civic integration.

Persons concerned:

- Signatories of the Republican Integration Contract applying for their first multi-year residence permit or their first 10-year residence permit, in particular holders of a “salaried employee” or “private and family life” residence permit.
- Anyone applying for naturalization on or after January 1, 2026, whether or not they are signatories of the CIR.

Exemptions:

- Holders of “talent,” “student,” “visitor,” or “seasonal worker” visas/residence permits;
- Beneficiaries of international protection;
- Family members of European Union nationals;
- Persons born in France who have resided there for at least eight years;
- Foreigners who are ill;
- Persons over the age of sixty-five.

¹ Reference texts:

- Immigration Act of January of 26 January 2024
- Decree of October 10, 2025, relating to the civic exam
- Decrees of December 22, 2025 relating to proficiency in the French language (Official Journal of December 26, 2025)

The exam is only required once and is not required for renewals. It can be retaken as many times as necessary, with a one-day waiting period between attempts.

Examination procedure:

- Only two organizations are authorized to administer the civic exam: the **Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIP)** and **France Éducation International (FEI)**, which have authorized centers throughout the country. Registration for exam sessions is already open at several test centers.
- The civic exam will take place on a digital device (computer or tablet) and cannot exceed 45 minutes, except in cases of specific accommodations. It consists of 40 multiple-choice questions written in French, with four possible answers per question, only one of which is correct. The Ministry of the Interior adapts the language level according to the exam chosen (multi-year residence permit or first 10-year residence permit).
- A correct answer is worth one point. An incorrect answer or no answer is worth zero points. The passing threshold is 80%, i.e., a minimum of 32 correct answers out of 40 questions.

At this stage, no official information has been announced regarding the registration fee for the civic exam. Fees are set by the test centers and may vary from one center to another. Some centers charge approximately €70–€80.

If successful, a digital certificate with a photo will be issued within 24 to 48 hours. This certificate has no expiration date.

Note: *To prepare for the exam, candidates can refer to the [“Formation Civique” website](#), which offers thematic review sheets. The website is currently being prepared and should be complete in the coming weeks.*

2) DEMONSTRATING FRENCH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Starting January 1, 2026, the required French language proficiency levels will be raised. Level A2 will be required to obtain a multi-year residence permit (instead of A1), level B1 for a 10-year residence permit (instead of A2), and level B2 for naturalization (instead of B1).

The requirement to be proficient in French already existed for 10-year residence permits and naturalization; the terms and conditions remain unchanged, but the expected levels have been raised. This requirement now also extends to multi-year residence permits.

The language level can be justified in two ways:

1. By holding a recognized French diploma, in particular:
 - The national brevet diploma
 - A diploma or professional certification at least equivalent to level 3 of the national framework for professional certifications
 - A diploma directly attesting to the required level of French (A2, B1, or B2 depending on the permit)
2. If the applicant does not hold a recognized diploma, French proficiency can be demonstrated by passing an official language test. Only the *Test de connaissance du français* (TCF) issued by France Éducation International and the *Test d'évaluation du français* (TEF) issued by the Paris Chamber of

Commerce and Industry are accepted. The language level must be selected at the time of registration, depending on the residence permit being applied for or the French language level the applicant wishes to demonstrate.

The test certificate is valid for two years and includes the candidate's identity, photo, and the level achieved. The confirmed language level applies to the residence permit in question and does not need to be retaken upon renewal. However, a new test will be required if applying for a residence permit that requires a higher language level, particularly for a 10-year residence permit.

It is strongly recommended that applicants plan ahead for these steps, as registration and the delivery of results can take up to three weeks on average after taking the test.

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