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French Government Cuts Youth Culture Pass Funding by 50%

The French Government has announced a 50% reduction in the country's Culture Pass, four years after its nationwide launch for young people aged 15 to 18 to participate in cultural activities.

The French government has reduced its Culture Pass funding by 50% for 18-year-olds, cutting their annual allowance from €300 to €150, effective March 1, 2025.

The legislation signed by Prime Minister François Bayrou, Culture Minister Rachida Dati and other ministers saw the pass for 18-year-olds reduced from €300 to €150, while the €20 available for 15-year-olds and €30 for sixteen-year-olds and seven17-year will all be scrapped. A reward of €50 will be provided for 17-year-olds, and 17-year-olds with disabilities or lower-income backgrounds will remain. Younger teens (15–16) retain access to free cultural offers via the Pass platform but do not receive direct funds.

The pass, introduced by the French government in 2021 to fulfill a commitment in Macron's 2017 manifesto, can be spent on the purchase of cinema, museum, and theatre tickets; books, art materials, dance courses, instruments, or an online cultural subscription. Once registered for the app, 18-year-olds have two years to redeem their pass.

Age Group	Previous Credit (€)	New Credit (€)
15-year-olds	20	0 (free access only)
16–17-year-olds	30	50 (at age 17)
18-year-olds	300	150
Eligible 18-year-olds	–	+50 (supplemental)

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This move is part of broader austerity measures to address France's budget deficit, which reached 6.1% of GDP in 2024. Institutions like the Académie des Beaux-Arts warn that these cuts threaten "freedom of research and creation". Over 40,000 signatories, including Juliette Binoche and Joey Starr, joined the Debout pour la culture movement, criticising the cuts as a "dangerous calculation" for democracy. Trade unions highlight potential job losses, estimating that each €20,000 reduction will eliminate one cultural sector job.

The move follows a rush by the French government to plug national debt, which peaked in September last year at €3.2 trillion, or 112% of the nation's GDP. The cuts aim to reduce France's deficit to 5.4% of GDP in 2025, involving €30 billion in spending cuts and €20 billion in tax hikes. The Ministry of Culture's budget was slashed by €150 million, while local governments lost €2.2 billion in subsidies, thereby risking regional cultural access.