NEW REGULATION · DECREE NO. 2026-526 OF JUNE 22, 2026

# International students: a new financial-means threshold to demonstrate

Effective August 1, 2026

Decree No. 2026-526 of June 22, 2026, published in the Official Journal, significantly raises the level of financial means that a third-country national applying for a residence permit on student grounds must demonstrate. The minimum amount, previously indexed to the maintenance allowance paid to French government scholarship holders, is now tied to the **SMIC** (the French statutory minimum wage). In practice, the requirement rises from around €615 to **€877.50 per month** based on the current SMIC — an increase of roughly 43%. An overview for practitioners and host institutions.

## What the decree changes

The text creates a new **Article R. 422-2 of the CESEDA** (the French Code on the Entry and Residence of Foreign Nationals and the Right of Asylum), worded as follows: the foreign national must demonstrate monthly means of subsistence equal to at least **47% of the gross monthly minimum wage (SMIC)** in force on the date the application is filed, for full-time activity.

Two breaks from the previous regime are worth highlighting:

**A new reference index.** The threshold is no longer based on the monthly maintenance allowance paid to French government scholarship holders — a benchmark considered too low and insufficiently responsive — but on a fraction of the SMIC. The reform follows the recommendations of the French Court of Auditors (Cour des comptes) in its March 2025 report on the attractiveness of French higher education for international students.

**Dynamic indexation.** The required amount now follows SMIC revaluations automatically; the reference index is updated at least once a year and indexed to inflation.

## The new calculation

Since its automatic revaluation on June 1, 2026, the gross monthly SMIC stands at **€1,867.02** (35 hours). Applying the 47% rate gives:

**€1,867.02 × 47% = €877.50 per month**

A practical point: the decree refers to the SMIC "in force on the date the application is filed." The threshold is therefore not fixed: each SMIC revaluation — annually on January 1, or mid-year in the event of high inflation, as occurred on June 1, 2026 — automatically changes the amount to be demonstrated. The €877.50 figure reflects the SMIC at the date the decree was published and is set to rise.

## Scope

The new threshold applies to applications filed under Articles **L. 422-1** ("student" permit) and **L. 422-4, L. 422-5, and L. 422-6** (students under an EU mobility program).

By contrast, situations in which the CESEDA already exempts the student from demonstrating means of subsistence remain outside this strengthened requirement — in particular, a foreign national who has passed the entrance examination of a higher education institution that has signed an agreement with the State (Art. L. 422-2). The decree also repeals the last paragraph of Article R. 422-8 (student extending their stay or returning to the territory), as a matter of coordination.

## Entry into force and application over time

The decree enters into force on **August 1, 2026**. The new threshold will apply to residence applications filed on or after that date. Applications filed before August 1, 2026 remain governed by the previous regime.

The scheme is extended to Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia.

## A reform to be placed in a wider context

The increase in the resource threshold should not be read in isolation. It adds to several measures adopted in 2026 that weigh on the financial situation of non-EU students:

- the framing of exemptions from **differentiated tuition fees** (Decree No. 2026-385 of May 19, 2026), which progressively caps at 20% the share of students each institution may exempt;
- the **removal of housing benefit (APL)** for non-EU, non-scholarship foreign students, applicable from July 1, 2026 — a loss of around €150 to €250 per month.

Taken together, these developments tighten the means requirement at a time when student living costs are rising. The higher resource threshold should therefore be anticipated ahead of filing, failing which the application may be refused.

## Key takeaways for practitioners

**Anticipate the exact amount at the date of filing:** reason in terms of a percentage of the SMIC in force rather than a fixed figure, as the threshold changes with each revaluation.

**Secure proof of means** (bank certificate, sponsorship, scholarship, parental resources) up to the new monthly threshold.

**Audit pending files:** filing before or after August 1, 2026 does not carry the same consequences.

**Inform host institutions and students** sufficiently early, particularly for 2026–2027 enrollments via the Études en France platform.

**The LexCase Immigration & International Mobility team** remains at your disposal to assist you with all of your immigration and residence matters in France, as well as in your dealings with French consulates around the world — from assembling your applications through to securing your residence permits.

Sources: Decree No. 2026-526 of June 22, 2026 (JORF) · Article R. 422-2 CESEDA · Decree No. 2026-385 of May 19, 2026 · SMIC as at June 1, 2026 (€1,867.02 gross/month).

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