**KNIFE LEGISLATION AND HANDLING AT AIRPORTS**

**IN**

**FRANCE**

# FRENCH WEAPONS REGULATION

*1.1 Which knives are considered weapons under your local law?*

In France, a knife can de qualified as a weapon depending on its nature (see A below) or its destination (see B below). These two types of weapons are legally classified as category D weapons (see C below).

1. **Knives qualifying as weapons by nature**

Weapons by nature are defined both in the French Criminal Code and in the French Internal Security Code.

According to [Article 132-75 of the French Criminal Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006417499/2025-03-05/), qualifies as a weapon: “*any object designed to kill or injure […]”*.

Furthermore, [Article R.311-1 of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000049822740/2025-03-05/), in a section devoted to the definition of weapons and ammunition, sets forth the following definitions, which are relevant to knives:

* Weapon (2°): *“any object or device designed or intended by nature to kill, injure, strike, or incapacitate”*.
* Bladed weapon (10°): *“any weapon whose perforating, cutting or breaking action is due solely to human force or to a mechanism to which it has been transmitted, excluding an explosion*”.

Therefore, a weapon by nature is an object that has no other use than to cause death or injury, unlike an object intended for another use from which it has been diverted to be used as a weapon (*see B. below*).

1. **Knives qualifying as weapons by destination**

Weapons by destination are defined both in the French Criminal Code and the French Internal Security Code.

[Article 132-75 of the French Criminal Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006417499/2025-03-05/) provides that *“Any object* [other than a weapon by object] *which is likely to present a danger to individuals is considered a weapon if it is used to kill, injure or threaten or if it is intended, by the bearer, to kill, injure or threaten”* (added underlining).

[Article R.311-2 IV a) of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000049822745/2025-03-05/) also defines them as *“any object likely to constitute a dangerous weapon for public safety*”.

All knives - and similarly scissors - may fall under this definition, if they are used or intended to kill, injure or threaten another person. Knives and scissors are therefore weapons by destination.

1. **Category D weapon’s legal classification**

Weapons are legally classified into different categories, each of which involves a different legal framework (A: prohibited, B: subject to authorization, C: subject to declaration, D: freely purchased/detained by individuals above 18 years old but restrictions on holding/carrying).

Category D weapons, to which knives and scissors may belong either by nature (rare) or by destination, can freely be purchased and detained at home by individuals above 18 years old, but their holding and carrying outside of home is restricted (*see 1.2 below*).

* Category D weapon by nature

When it comes to knives, only daggers and dagger-knives are expressly listed as Category D weapons, which may be interpreted as those being the only knives qualifying as weapons by nature ([Article R.311-2 IV a) of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000049822745/2025-03-05/)).

In a [Circular of 26 June 2018](https://www.armes-ufa.com/IMG/pdf/cir_43692.pdf) published by the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry and addressed to customs service’s authorities, five criteria are exposed for a knife to qualify as a dagger or dagger-knife.

To be considered a dagger/dagger-knife, the knife must be (i) composed of a blade integral with the handle or fitted with a system enabling it to be made integral with the handle, (ii) double-edged over the entire length or at least at the tip, (iii) longer than fifteen centimeters, (iv) at least four millimeters thick and (v) have a handle incorporating a guard.

Hence, kitchen knives, pocket knives, multifunctional tools or Swiss knives should not be considered Category D weapons by nature.

* Category D weapons by destination

A Category D weapon may more generally be: “*Any object likely to constitute a weapon dangerous for public safety*” [(Article R.311-2 IV a) of the French Internal Security Code)](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000049822745/2025-03-05/). Under this definition, any weapon by destination may be considered a category D weapon.

French case law has recently considered that a ten-centimeter serrated Laguiole knife was a bladed weapon qualifying as a category D weapon[[1]](#footnote-2) and that a seven-centimeter serrated knife was part of this category too[[2]](#footnote-3).

Since all knives and scissors may be weapons by destination, all knives and scissors may qualify as Category D weapons. As a consequence, they may be purchased and detained at home by individuals above 18 years old, but not held and carried outside of home without a legitimate justification.

*1.2 Is there a legal requirement to have a legitimate/justifiable reason for carrying and/or transporting a knife in the public? If so, for what kind of knives (lock knife, folding knife [depending on a special blade length or not?], fixed knife or any knife)?*

Category D weapons can be legally purchased and detained at home ([Article R.311-2 IV a) of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000049822745/2025-03-05/)) by individuals above 18 years old.

Consequently, purchase and detention of weapons of any category by persons under 18 years old is prohibited ([Article L.312-1 of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038666524/2025-03-05/)), with limited exceptions for hunting and activities supervised by sports federations to practice shooting ([Article L. 131-14 of the French Sports Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000043982791/2025-03-05/)). Likewise, it is prohibited to sell such weapons to minors, i.e. individuals under 18 years old (Articles [L.317-2, 3°](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038666631/2025-03-19/) and [R. 312-1](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000045148158/2025-03-19/) of the French Internal Security Code).

Selling weapons to a minor is sanctioned by five years' imprisonment and a fine of €75,000 ([L.317-2, 3° of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038666631/2025-03-19/)). Where a company can be held liable for such sale, it incurs a fine of €375,000.

It is recommended that an age verification be carried out at the point of sale in order to prevent any violation of the ban on sales to minors:

* For in-store sales, age verification can be limited to individuals where it is questionable whether they are above 18 years old (as with the sale of alcohol).
* For online sales, a tick box may be considered where individuals must confirm that they are above 18 years old before they can make the purchase.

The holding and carrying of a knife outside of home require legitimate justification, irrespective of their nature and blade length ([Article L.315-1](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038666572/2025-03-05/) of French Internal Security Code).

With regard to this “legitimate justification”, French case law does not appear to be set in stone. Whether a justification is ‘legitimate’ will depend on the factual situation and on its interpretation by the police and/or the judge.

Old French case law ruled that the carrying of a Laguiole knife, an Opinel or a classic Swiss army knife, should not be interpreted as carrying a category D weapon. Some courts have considered that this is a tool that is part of the French tradition. The wearing of a knife in this case could therefore be considered legitimate. However, the recent developments in weapons regulation and the current attitude of the courts in this field cast a doubt as to whether this case law can still be relied upon.

For example, a ten-centimeter serrated Laguiole was considered a stabbing knife qualifying as Category D weapon[[3]](#footnote-4). Likewise, a seven-centimeter serrated knife was qualified as a Category D weapon[[4]](#footnote-5).

*1.3 How must these concerned knives of point 1.2 be carried or transported in public (e.g. in a closed or locked container)?*

[Article R.311-1 III of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000049822740/2025-03-05/) defines:

* holding a weapon as “*carrying a weapon that can be used immediately*” (10°);
* carrying a weapon as “*moving a weapon that is near but not immediately usable”* (13°).

Those actions are prohibited, except if the holder/carrier can give legitimate justification (*see 1.2 above*).

The way a Category D weapon is held or carried is irrelevant.

*1.4 Are there any public places which may be restricted by an authority (on certain days or at certain times) for carrying any knives or other dangerous tools (e.g. railway station, airport, market places, football stadiums, event halls etc.)?*

The holding and carrying of a knife may be prohibited in some places, regardless of any legitimate justification.

It is for instance forbidden:

* to enter with a knife in any official building, in courts or in museums;
* to access to polling stations with a weapon ([Article L.61 of the French Electoral Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006353166/2025-03-05/))
* to access vehicles used for the public transport of passengers with a weapon or disturb public order by giving the illusion of holding one.

Operators of private places (shows, sports events, trade shows, etc.) freely organize access control to their establishments and the items they accept on their premises. They are therefore free to refuse access to people carrying a knife, regardless of its nature. It is at the operator’s discretion.

*1.5 How is the blade length measured (only the cutting blade or including the blade shank)?*



A knife may be considered as a Category D weapon (at least by destination), irrespective of its length. This length will only matter for the justification of its holding or carrying.

There is no specific indication as to how the blade is measured.

*1.6 Are there any further dangerous objects which also fall under the French weapons regulation?*

Under French law, any object likely to cause a danger to public security can be considered a (usually Category D) weapon if it is used or intended to threaten, harm or kill (see under 1.1 B).

*1.7 What are the consequences of a legal offense?*

Holding or carrying a knife has two consequences: it is an (A) offense and (B) can lead to an aggravation of other offenses.

1. **The illegal holding or carrying of a Category D weapon**

Illegally holding or transporting a weapon constitutes an offense punished by up to 1 year imprisonment and a fine of up to €15,000 (Article [L.317-8 of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000047053570/2025-03-05/)).

If Category D weapons […] are transported by at least two people, or if at least two people are found together carrying weapons […], the penalties are increased to up to 2 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to €30,000. [(Article L.317-9 of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038666587/2025-03-05/)).

Except in exceptional cases, conviction for these offences is always accompanied by ([Article L.317-12 of the French Internal Security Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038666581/2025-03-05/)):

* a ban on possessing or carrying, for a period of up to five years, war material, weapons, ammunition and their components subject to authorization;
* confiscation of war material, weapons, ammunition and their components owned or freely available to the convicted person;
* withdrawal of the hunting license with a ban on applying for a new license for up to five years.

1. **The aggravation of other offenses**

There are many offenses that can be aggravated in case of holding or carrying a weapon. Those aggravations are regulated in [Articles 132-71 to 132-80 of the French Criminal Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006070719/LEGISCTA000006165269/2025-03-05/) and in specific regulations.

For instance, the use of weapon for a robbery could lead to the qualification of aggravated theft ([Articles 311-8](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006418143/2025-03-05/) and [311-9](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000006418145/2025-03-05/) of the French Criminal Code).

*1.8 Are there any exceptions?*

The sanctions incurred for the holding and carrying of Category D weapons (see. under 1.6) do not apply when a Category D weapon is of low danger and appears on a list established by ministerial order. However, no knife is on this list, set by the [Ministerial Order of 2013](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000027919926/2025-03-05/).

Criminal proceedings can be avoided, via a settlement procedure, if the knife is voluntarily handed over to the authorities. In this case, the only sanction would be the payment of a €500 fine (potentially reduced to €400 or increased to €1,000).

*1.9 Are there any legislative developments? If so what do they concern?*

No change in the law is expected in the short or medium term on this issue.

# FRENCH AIRPORTS REGULATION

* 1. *Is there any European regulation to be considered in this respect?*

European [Regulation EC no. 300/2008](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02008R0300-20100201) of 11 March 2008 on common rules in the field of civil aviation security.

[European Regulation EU no. 2015/1998](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02015R1998-20240901&qid=1741185696305) of 5 November 2015 laying down detailed measures for the implementation of the common basic standards on aviation security.

[Regulation 2015/1998](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02015R1998-20240901&qid=1741185696305) (Attachment 4-C) provides a list of prohibited items not to be held or carried by a person in a security area with restricted access or on board an aircraft.

Security restricted areas shall include at least the following:

* a part of an airport to which screened departing passengers have access; and
* a part of an airport through which screened departing hold baggage may pass or in which it may be held, unless it concerns secured baggage; and
* a part of an airport designated for the parking of aircraft to be boarded or loaded (Regulation 2015/1998, point 1.1.2.1).

Pursuant to [Regulation 2015/1998](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02015R1998-20240901&qid=1741185696305) (Attachment 4-C), knives or scissors with a blade longer than 6 cm are prohibited in the cabin and must be placed in the aircraft hold.

* + 1. *Are there any further national regulations to be considered in this respect?*

In France, [Ordinance n° 2022-831 of 1 June 2022](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000045848052/2025-03-04) creating a system of administrative and criminal penalties to punish the behavior of disruptive air passengers, created Article [L.6421-5 of the French Transport Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000045848864/2025-03-05/) which establishes a general obligation for the passengers not to compromise safety in aircrafts.

[Article L.6421-5 of the French Transport Code](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000045848864/2025-03-05/): “*Passengers taking a flight operated by public air transport must not, by their behavior, compromise or risk compromising the safety of the aircraft or that of persons or property on board*”.

European regulations directly apply in France. French transport regulation does not contain any specificities when it comes to the holding and carrying of weapons on an aircraft or in an airport.

* + 1. *If your country is outside the EU, what are the corresponding local regulations?*

N/A

* 1. *May the airports/airlines in your country issue any further (stricter) regulations for forbidden items?*

The General Directorate of Civil Aviation (“DGCA”) published [the list](https://airbag.dsac.aviation-civile.gouv.fr/AirBag) of prohibited articles in the cabin, including weapons.

The page dedicated to bladed weapons indicated that are prohibited in the cabin but may be placed in the aircraft hold, any “switchblade ***knife regardless of the length of the blade****, saber, sword, foil, dagger, crossbow, American fist,* ***knife or scissors with blade of more than 6 cm****, nail file, compass, needle and hook (knitting, embroidery) of metal or any other material strong enough to serve as a weapon, meat cleaver, ax and hatchet, machete, scalpel, shuriken, baton, sling and slingshot, ski pole, walking or hiking, skis, crampon, arrow and dart, ice ax and ice pick, ice skating, open razor (except safety razor or disposable razor with blades inserted into cartridges), baseball bat and leather ball, cricket bat, petanque ball, fishing rod, golf club, rigid and flexible club or stick, blackjack accessories, hockey stick, lacrosse stick, martial arts equipment such as finger protectors, flails, nunchaku, kubaton and kubasaunt, kayak and canoe paddle, American billiard cue and billiards, skateboard, tent pegs, hooks with an extended length of more than 6 cm, metal snow chains*.

It however specifies that knives and, more generally, cutlery, scissors or other items with a ‘blade’ of less than 6 cm, are not affected by this ban in the cabin.

The DGCA warns, however, that airlines may be more restrictive.

The company [Air](https://wwws.airfrance.fr/information/bagages/produits-interdits-et-reglementes) France publishes on its website the knives prohibited in their cabins.

The non-exhaustive list is as follows:

* Knives or flank knives, regardless of the length of the blade
* Scissors
* Knives, including ceremonial knives, of metal or any other material strong enough to serve as a weapon
* Tools that could be used as a blunt or sharp weapon, such as drills and drills, cutters, working knives, all saws, screwdrivers, crowbars, hammers, folders, wrenches, wrenches

The length of the blade is not specified in the list of the company. A small knife can therefore be prohibited in the cabin by the airline Air France.

On company [EasyJet](https://www.easyjet.com/en/help-centre/baggage/dangerous-goods), amongst the prohibited objects in the cabin, the company includes “*knives with blades of more than 6 cm*” and “*scissors with blades of more than 6 cm as measured from the fulcrum*”.

* 1. *May a pair of scissors or a saw be included in a pocket knife with a blade of max. 6cm? If so, is the size of the pair of scissors or the length of the saw of relevance?*

The company [Air France](https://wwws.airfrance.fr/information/bagages/produits-interdits-et-reglementes) prohibits all saws and scissors in the cabin, irrespective of their length.

The company [Easy Jet](https://www.easyjet.com/en/help-centre/baggage/dangerous-goods) prohibits, in their cabins, knives and scissors with a blade longer than 6 cm. In the event of a longer blade, the item will be placed in the aircraft holder.

* 1. *What is considered as a sharp object besides knives?*

The notion of sharp objects is very broad and includes *inter alia* swords, scissors, saws, open shavers, needles and hooks (knitting), walking poles and working tools.

* 1. *Are there any further aviation security regulations with respect to the Victorinox (pocket) knives to be observed?*

Apart from the onboarding refusal for not complying with the knife restrictions set by European law and the companies’ terms and conditions, there is no further regulation to be considered.

* 1. *Are there any changes intended in the near future? If so what do they concern?*

No change in the law is expected in the short or medium term on this issue.

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1. [Court of appeals of Rennes, 12 February 2019, n° 1602232](https://www.doctrine.fr/d/CA/Rennes/2019/UA32F55924B216073E929). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Administrative Court of appeals of Bordeaux, 18 December 2024, 24BX01664. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Court of appeals of Rennes, 12 February 2019, n° 1602232](https://www.doctrine.fr/d/CA/Rennes/2019/UA32F55924B216073E929). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Administrative Court of appeals of Bordeaux, 18 December 2024, 24BX01664.](https://www.doctrine.fr/d/CAA/Bordeaux/2024/CETATEXT000050803731) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)