



## The News

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*by Emma Phillips*

Demonstrations are planned in nearly 150 cities across France as unions are urging people to protest against the austerity measures in the 2026 budget. These include a lack of wage increases, the doubling of medical deductibles and the freezing civil of servants' wages. Meanwhile, the budget is continuing on its legislative journey, with the first part of the draft finance bill now in the hands of senators. Yesterday, members of the upper house decided to be more ambitious with the scope and raise the tax on small parcels from €2 to €5, which could bring in up to €800 million. The tax targets parcels arriving from outside of Europe. The aim is to discourage French people from buying on Chinese online platforms.

In Meurthe-et-Moselle, an investigation has now been opened into 'arson resulting in death' as the public prosecutor has confirmed that findings so far point to "the involvement of a third party in causing the fire". Five residents of a building in the small town of Neuves-Maisons lost their lives on Sunday. The fire broke out on the ground floor, where there is a shop, before the smoke rose to the upper floor.

Two minors arrested by domestic intelligence services were charged and remanded in custody on Sunday for 'criminal conspiracy with a view to terrorist enterprise'. They were allegedly planning to attack 'Jewish targets'. The two young people bring the count up to 20 minors who have been arrested for terrorism since the start of the year.

And finally, a French chef was crowned the world champion of pâté croute last night in Lyon. Judges decided that Thibault Gonzales had prepared the best example of the festive delicacy, in the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the championships, breaking a run of several years of Japanese chefs taking the top spot.