The French State has developed its own system of preparation to fight against the accidental marine pollution, that has evolved with the experience acquired in each new accident (Amoco Cadiz, Erika, Prestige, etc.). The following characteristics are the most important:

- The preparation and fight against pollution are carried out by plans called POLMAR: the plans POLMAR-Mer and the plans POLMAR-Terre. The POLMAR-Terre plans are implemented in the strip of the coast and are there responsibility of the préfets du Département. Each Département adopts its own plan. The POLMAR-Mer plans are the responsibility of the préfets maritime.

- The préfets maritimes and the Département are in charge of pollution prevention. The préfets de Département take all the decisions. The nature of local authority on the spot in the Département polluted, gives them more effectiveness. The préfectures maritimes are "men of the sea" with a profound knowledge of maritime questions.

- Plans have periodic check-ups: POLMAR-terre plans every three years and POLMAR-mer plans every year.

- Plans contain a list of the most important areas to protect: an inventory of the means of fighting pollution; the location plans of the barrage against the pollution; the lists of the places to store and to treat the waste; the specialized private companies; the means of the assessment of the risks; the acts of health and safety and to protect economic interests; the possibilities of accommodation for the staff and of management of the volunteers; and a plan of protection of the aquaculture.

- The system plan has double coordination: coordination between authorities of the management of the accident and coordination between ministries. The préfet de zone coordinates the fight against the pollution in the coast and in the sea, in others words, it coordinates the actions of the préfet de département and of the préfet maritime. The coordination of the land and sea authorities is one of the most important points of the last review of the French system in 2002, after the Prestige accident. The minister charged with civil safety coordinates the acts of the different ministries.

El Centre de Documentation, de Recherche, et d’Expérimentations sur les Pollutions Accidentelles des Eaux (CEDRE) is a permanent centre in France with responsibility for the study of maritime pollution and its effects. It also has a role in providing education and documentation on maritime pollution. This Centre provides technical expertise which is central to the overall system.

- The French system prepares municipals plans, called infra-POLMAR plans, coordinated with POLMAR-terre plans.

The French legal code gives us some references and interesting ideas about the fight against the operational or deliberate pollution by crossings ships:

- There is a specific legal penal regime against the dumping of pollutants from ships, with prison sentences of up to 10 years and fines of up to one million euros. In French law it is possible to penalize an individual as well as a legal entity.

- French law has its own procedure to identify the offences quickly and to get the evidence to penalize the persons responsible for the dumping.

- After the Erika accident, the French jurisprudence notices a continuous increase in the sentences. Tribunals are accepting ever increasing types of evidence to penalize for the offences.

- In 2001, the French State created specialist jurisdictions in the Tribunaux de Grande Instance du Littoral, competent to judge the environmental offences of the ships. This has simplified and improved the speed and the effectiveness of the penalties system.

- In 2003, the French legislator created a special protected area in the Mediterranean sea along a strip of the French coast. Now, the courts can penalize the dumping of ships further out than the Territorial Sea of France.