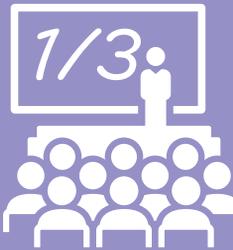


ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

For decades, the Overseas Territories have suffered from various gaps in access to public services, with highly varied circumstances. The ESEC finds that the disparities are still quite significant, not only with mainland France, but also within and between the various overseas territories. For example, French Guiana, Mayotte and Saint-Martin are experiencing particularly troubling difficulties. Apart from the many reasons for these situations, the ESEC cannot tolerate variable outcomes that jeopardise equal rights and effective access to primary public services.

With



of the population under 20 years old, the challenge for these territories lies with training and professional integration

Social movements have led to large-scale demonstrations, particularly in Reunion, in November and December 2018. These followed uprisings in the Americas and Reunion in 2006, 2008 and 2009, in Mayotte in October 2011 (with 45 days of blockades to protest high living costs), then in French Guiana in 2017, and again in Mayotte in early 2018. These public demonstrations are an expression of the malaise and injustices that have persisted for many years. However, repeated demonstrations have only

led to short-lived awareness and insufficient corrective measures in view of the deep-seated difficulties facing the territories. These repeated protests should be seen as an expression of anger at the broken promises and the distress of our fellow citizens in the overseas territories.

The findings of this study have been widely corroborated by the various hearings and interviews conducted with trade union and association representatives in the various territories. The findings of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, presented at the colloquium held on 14 June 2018 (*Outre-mer: à vos droits!*), as well as the many reports of the Human Rights Defender have supported this study. As Mr Jacques Toubon reminded the delegation: *"In overseas France, more than anywhere else, access to rights depends on access to public services, and when this access is blocked, rights are effectively denied."*

In many areas, public officials are not sufficiently mobilised given the stakes. The government should move away from a reactive and crisis-based approach and work constructively with stakeholders in the territories to build long-term public policies. The government does not rely enough on local authorities and people from the territories who know the population and its specific needs. The gradual disappearance of in-person public services is an additional factor affecting vulnerable groups in overseas France.

The ESEC believes that the overseas territories need both a general remedial plan and an investment plan to



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transition toward tenable, sustainable human development models tailored to each territory. The shortcomings in health care, education and the environment are priorities that must be addressed, as they affect the future of our territories.



PUBLIC SERVICE CENTRE

Out of **1,383** public service centres in France, only **21** are located **in the overseas territories**

FRENCH GUIANA

The infant mortality rate is **8.8% in French Guiana**, compared to a national average of **3.5%**



MAYOTTE HOSPITAL CENTRE (CHM)

is the only hospital in the area. Designed for **300 beds**, it actually accommodates nearly **900 patients**

THE ESEC'S POINTS OF CONSIDERATION

➤ Point 1

Stabilising the situation will require more effective integration of the needs of the overseas territories in the government's sectoral public policies, ensuring better consideration and the mobilisation of additional resources. However, public policies must be tailored and differentiated according to each territory. To achieve this, the prefects must have expanded powers and increased autonomy to deal with the needs of the population and the particularities of the local situation.

➤ Point 2

The government should move away from a reactive and crisis-based approach and work constructively with stakeholders in the territories to build long-term public policies. In this respect, the signing of the first Convergence and Transformation Contracts for the period 2019-2022 is a positive step towards better consideration of local needs. These contracts bring together stakeholders, clearly define priorities and provide visibility. The ESEC believes that they should be evaluated over time with the broad participation of the relevant overseas communities.

➤ Point 3

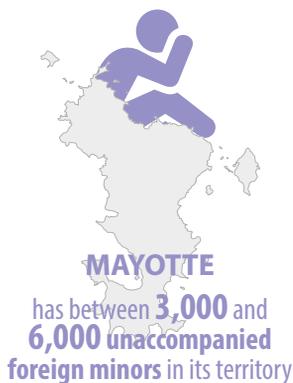
The ESEC calls on the National Commission for the Evaluation of Government Policies in Overseas France to carry out a detailed evaluation of public spending in Overseas France, territory by territory, and to assess the budgetary adjustments required to ensure equal resources in light of the specific needs of each territory, distinguishing between increases in operating expenditures and specific infrastructure investment needs.

➤ Point 4

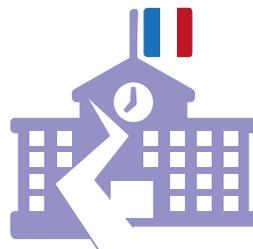
The ESEC calls for the inclusion of an "Overseas Impact Clause" in the legislative process. Legislative and regulatory impact studies must systematically account for overseas concerns in the ex-ante evaluation of the clause. This study should not be limited to a legal and institutional analysis of the clause, but should also incorporate social, economic and environmental impacts specific to overseas France.

➤ Point 5

The ESEC calls for an examination of the indicators used for overseas territories. It is essential to have reliable and comprehensive indicators that allow for comparisons over time and space in order to objectively monitor public policies. The data should be systematically included in official national publications. The presentation and interpretation of national indicators must also take into account the local context and realities.



RÉUNION
One in three young people in Reunion leaves school without a diploma



MAYOTTE
The CNCNH has reported that nearly **80%** of schools in **Mayotte** do not meet minimum safety and hygiene standards

➤ **Point 6**

The ESEC calls on public officials, the national government, local authorities and partner organisations to set up public service centres throughout the French overseas territories. They are an essential local resource that allows the most vulnerable to access their rights and public services.

➤ **Point 7**

The ESEC urges the government to create technical support platforms for local authorities and/or associations in the prefectures, particularly to help them carry out their investment tasks. These platforms will be able to provide local authorities with administrative expertise in public procurement, as well as financial engineering expertise to help them implement complex equipment projects and mobilise European funds.

➤ **Point 8**

The transition to digital must not come at the expense of universal access to public services. The government must invest in both network coverage and user support. Remedial action in the overseas territories must factor in the digital paradigm from the outset so as not to fall further behind. Vulnerable groups, of which there are many in overseas France, should continue to have access to local offices and community facilities in order to connect with each other (reception points in public service centres, digital buses, etc.).

➤ **Point 9**

The pool of overseas administrative staff must be expanded by creating post-baccalaureate courses to prepare students for public administration schools, as well as a Preparatory Institute for General Administration (IPAG) in each department and locality. Initial and continuing training programmes, which remain scant in overseas France, could be strengthened by developing public service schools and training and management centres for the local civil service in each overseas region. The ESEC encourages public officials to set up a Regional Administration Institute in the French overseas territories.

➤ **Point 10**

The ESEC supports the “Cadres d’avenir pour Mayotte” training scheme and calls for it to be expanded to the other territories.

➤ **Point 11**

The ESEC believes that the government should adjust the number of police, gendarmes and magistrates needed to maintain service and enforce a policy of day-to-day security.

➤ **Point 12**

In addition to the public service centres already mentioned, the ESEC believes that good local practices, such as the provision of interpreters, legal assistance centres, field visits by officials to local communities and remote municipalities, “law canoes”, mobile courts, etc., should be strengthened and expanded. Associations are essential for supporting constituents, providing access to the law and citizenship, and ensuring the proper administration of justice. Government support for civil society should be maintained to ensure that associations remain in place.

➤ **Point 13**

The ESEC believes that child protection must be a top priority. The government and the departments should coordinate better and mobilise the necessary resources to protect young people, at a time when associations, child welfare agencies and judicial youth protection services lack staff, supervision and training. They should also expand maternal and child welfare services on the ground.

➤ **Point 14**

The ESEC recommends expanding the geographic coverage of hospitals, health centres and clinics open to all patients, allowing access to health care, including in remote areas and for vulnerable groups.

➤ **Point 15**

Regional health strategies should prepare for the future ageing of the population and devise health pathways for the elderly and dependency support programmes. Additional resources should be allocated to care centres. Nursing homes should be made affordable, with a pricing system that matches the income of the residents.

➤ **Point 16**

In Mayotte, ordinary law access to welfare benefits, universal health coverage and government medical assistance for foreigners should be implemented. A timetable should be developed with the government, the department and the Mayotte Social Security Fund to render it effective within the next 5 years. The ESEC is in favour of aligning all social security benefits in Mayotte with those in mainland France. Access conditions and benefit levels should be harmonised.

➤ **Point 17**

Education and academic success must be the first priority. The ESEC calls for a major mobilisation of all the relevant actors to bring educational offerings up to standard. The government should provide the necessary resources and correct any underfunding to bring it in line with existing needs. Accordingly, it should invest heavily in equipment to provide an education in line with national standards.

➤ **Point 18**

The ESEC believes that the government must increase the number of teachers to a maximum of 24 pupils per class, require compulsory schooling at the age of three and double the number of Year 2 and Year 3 classes in priority education networks. Initial and in-service teacher training should be strengthened, taking into account the social, cultural and linguistic realities of the pupils.

➤ **Point 19**

The ESEC believes that the existence and effectiveness of the Overseas Maritime Councils should be maintained, along with their activities and effective governance, as these bodies aid in developing strategic documents for the maritime region. Training for natural and environmental protection associations should be encouraged so that they can raise awareness among all local actors. The French Biodiversity Agency should support and strengthen actors and networks in overseas territories committed to aquatic and marine biodiversity.