

2019-06

RIFTS AND TRANSITIONS: RECONCILING FRANCE

In response to the events that have been engulfing France for the past six-plus months, the ESEC was keen to outline an initial series of measures, in keeping with its **specific positioning** and an **innovative methodology**.

On the one hand, as an assembly for organised civil society, the ESEC is passing on the strong message of the intermediaries who liaise between the population and the public authorities. On the other, the method adopted to draft this opinion involved - according to diverse terms - a temporary commission made up of ESEC members, a grassroots group of 26 citizens, contributions from each of the ESEC's 12 working groups and a consultation platform.

The ESEC's opinion and grassroots group contribution differ in the principle according to which they have been written. The group of citizens expresses the opinion of its members, while the ESEC's opinion reflects the work of the temporary commission, which in turn conveys the views of the groups making up the Council.

The opinion shares or takes into account a large number of proposals made by the grassroots group.

The assessment delivered in the opinion confirms some of the sensitive issues often raised, especially over the past few months. French society is riven by deep **divisions** between rich and poor, the included and excluded, those who feel part of an open world and those who feel trapped with no way out, and the decision-makers and those affected by these decisions.

At the same time, far-reaching demographic, economic, digital and ecological **transitions** are in progress which are reshaping the world as we know it and calling for radical change. How we proceed may either narrow or widen these divides.

Two series of recommendations can be made in this regard: the first bear on the content of public policy; the second outline a new pact whereby citizens will be more closely involved in such decisions.



Michel Badré

is a member of the ESEC's Section for the Environment and the Delegation for Long-Range Planning and Evaluation of Public Policies where he represents the Environment and Nature group.

Contact:

michel.badré@lecese.fr



Dominique Gillier

is a member of the ESEC's Section for Labour and Employment, where he represents the CFDT Trade Union Group.

Contact:

dominique.gillier@lecese.fr

THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

FIRST SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

- ✎ With a view to creating more wealth and sharing this out more equitably, the ESEC recommends developing innovative education that reduces social inequalities (*Recommendation 1*), setting up a multiannual support plan for industry (*Recommendation 2*), sharing out wealth more equitably by bolstering purchasing power (*Recommendation 3*) and the transparency of executive pay (*Recommendation 4*) and, finally, overhauling the tax system to make it more progressive and inclusive and consider the sustainable development goals (*Recommendation 5*).
- ✎ Given the energy transition challenges and territorial and social divides, it suggests defining public development policies that are both sustainable and inclusive (*Recommendation 6*) in the spheres relevant to everyday life: energy (*Recommendation 6.1*), housing (*Recommendation 6.2*), mobility-transport (*Recommendation 6.3*) and agriculture and food (*Recommendation 6.4*). Spatial or urban planning documents must enable policy coherence across regions in this respect, on the basis of better coordinated drafting methods (*Recommendation 6.5*).
- ✎ By improving public services - after a reminder of the basic principles underpinning such services (*recommendation 7*), it should be possible to deliver appropriate healthcare provision for all ages and areas (*Recommendation 8*), access to digital technology which opens up new possibilities without excluding anyone (*Recommendation 9*) and local access to community public services (*Recommendation 10*).

SECOND SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?

- ✎ The measures taken will not be accepted and applied unless the communities in question are able to help define the general interest and participate in subsequent relevant decision-making. To rebuild trust, the decision-making process is therefore just as decisive as the decisions themselves. This is the purpose of the **democratic pact** advocated by the ESEC, and which is grounded in various principles.
- ✎ The ESEC suggests holding a specific debate after the Great National Debate in progress, on what the best balance is between representative democracy, intermediary representation and citizen participation. In this regard, the ESEC will share the outcome of the original method trialled to draft this opinion (*Recommendation 11*).
- ✎ The democratic process must be shaken up afresh by extending participation of the general public in decision-making (*Recommendation 12*) and by developing best practices as far as controversy management, consultation and expert appraisal are concerned (*Recommendation 13*).
- ✎ From municipal to European level, more effective subsidiarity should result from jointly developed local territorial projects (*Recommendation 14*) and from greater legitimacy and capacity building on the part of the European Parliament (*Recommendation 15*).
- ✎ At company level, an updated social agreement should rely upon wider employee involvement in governing bodies (*Recommendation 16*) and formalisation of employee views about their work (*Recommendation 17*).
- ✎ Lastly, the ESEC would like to play a part in the developments to be carried out. It suggests involving participants selected at random in its work (*Recommendation 18*), establishing a right to interpellation of the Government and Parliament (*Recommendation 19*) and organising regular contributions from organised civil society to public policy assessment (*Recommendation 20*).