

## *Better connecting overseas France*

DANIELLE DUBRAC AND PIERRE MARIE-JOSEPH

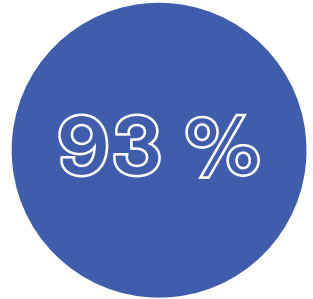
Comprising 11 overseas territories, ‘Oceanic France’ sees its relations too often limited to those with ‘Hexagonal France’. National and European standards, and economic trade models centred on mainland France and Europe, have major social and environmental consequences for these territories: an ecological footprint and the cost of air and sea transport, high living costs and limited purchasing power for their inhabitants, etc.

Connections are there to bring people together: digital technology makes it easier to communicate across the globe; maritime transport enables goods to be traded around the world; and air links are necessary for people to travel long distances.

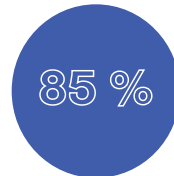
In this respect, the overseas territories have exceptional assets: high-quality port, air and digital infrastructures in line with their needs, but also in comparison with international standards and neighbouring territories.

For the French Overseas Territories, these infrastructures represent a potential that must be exploited in order to promote their economic and social development, to enable their inhabitants to benefit from affordable fares, and also to achieve the objectives necessary to successfully complete the ecological transition, such as the carbon neutrality of maritime transport by 2050. These connections can also strengthen the links between the overseas territories and the nation, through access to public services, republican equality and solidarity, and facilitate their emancipation by promoting their inclusion in their regional space.

### **How can we better connect overseas France?**



**very high-speed fibre coverage on Réunion, compared with 88% in France**



**of Martinique's merchandise flows are domestic goods from France**

## 4 ways to better connect overseas France

### 1 Legally define a 'right to territorial continuity' for the French Overseas Territories, broaden the criteria and increase the resources available for territorial continuity schemes, in particular with the help of European funds

What is 'territorial continuity'? This is a public service principle: its aim is to strengthen cohesion between different territories in the same State, by compensating for the constraints associated with their remoteness, isolation or difficult access.

#### → Why ?

Territorial continuity in the French Overseas Territories takes the form of means-tested assistance with the cost of return air tickets. For some people living in the French Overseas Territories, travelling to France or another Overseas Territory is synonymous with expensive plane tickets, the prices of which are subject to seasonality and the cost of fuel (30 to 40% of the final price). These remaining costs are also reflected in the supply of goods, and therefore have an impact on the purchasing power of people living in the French Overseas Territories.

### 2 Capitalise on overseas France's connections by developing regional cooperation and implementing a 'connection platform' or 'hub' strategy in the medium term

#### → Why ?

Overseas France's connections are mainly with France, even though they lie on the world's major sea and air routes, and in the path of the world's largest undersea

telecommunications cables. These positions can become levers for job creation and economic development, with the creation of air, port and digital hubs.

### 3 Obtaining European recognition for marine propulsion as a means of decarbonising maritime transport

#### → Why ?

Wind propulsion of ships can reduce fuel consumption by 10-15% on an existing ship, and up to 90% on a new ship. As well as supporting the goal of making maritime transport carbon-neutral by 2050, this recognition would help to sustain a booming French wind-powered industry.

### 4 Upgrading certain existing airport infrastructures

#### → Why ?

Mayotte, French Guiana, Miquelon-Langlade, Futuna and the inhabited islands of French Polynesia need to be upgraded in order, for example, to increase their capacity, develop new air connections in the regional area or open up certain parts of the territory.

## THE RAPPORTEURS

### Danielle Dubrac

danielle.dubrac@lecese.fr • 01 44 43 64 20

Chairwoman of the Union des syndicats de l'immobilier (UNIS), Chairwoman of the Seine Saint-Denis Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ESEC member of the Enterprise Group.

### Pierre Marie-Joseph

pierre.marie-joseph@lecese.fr • 01 44 43 64 42

Business leader, Honorary Chairman of the Martinique Association for the Promotion of Industry (AMPI), ESEC councillor - Chairman of the Overseas France Group.