

THINKING TOGETHER ABOUT DEMOCRACY OF TOMORROW

This first study undertaken by the DPEPP deals with an across the board subject and presents avenues that open up possibilities for the future. Since the opinions issued by the Council establish proposals, it aims to provide elements of reflection and questioning intended to enrich the public debate on the desirable evolutions of our democracy.

If democracy in France is today seen as already achieved, records of observed abstention ballot after ballot, with the exception of the presidential election, and more broadly the defiance expressed by citizens with respect to policy makers, demonstrate a growing disenchantment with its operation.

“ Participation in local, parliamentary and European elections continues to decline. For the latter ones, the abstention rate was around 40% in 1979, and rose to greater than 60% in 2009”

Although the fundamental principles of our democratic system are not questioned, the processes that embody it, and in particular the political decision making process, appear to be in crisis because they fail to produce political decisions that are perceived as legitimate and effective.

The ability of our democracy to deal successfully with contemporary and future challenges is therefore called into question. If there has proven to be no single solution to this, many intellectuals, academics, citizens' movements or even key politicians have made proposals to try to respond to the increasingly strong criticisms that are raised against our democratic process. They deserve to be discussed, debated, and in the case of some, tested.

“ The forward looking approach favoured by the delegation allows it to play the role of whistleblower in the event that the democratic issue shall not be addressed. Development of three trend scenarios thus allow us to highlight certain risks of trend on the 2030 time horizon:

- A greater and greater disenchantment which would weaken representative democracy;
- An increasing influence of opinion polls on political action;
- An authoritarian trend to face challenges of the 21st century”

From this perspective, one element appears to be a determining factor: temporality. On the one hand, preparing for the future by surmounting these main challenges requires us to begin now, in order to escape, under the dictate of urgency. On the other hand, to achieve this, adjusting the pace of decisions seems essential, whilst taking the time necessary to complete each stage of the decision-making process, the guarantee of long-term acceptability and effectiveness.

Far from pretending to end this debate, this study aims instead to open and share it, so that a true discussion, extensively involving civil society, can be carried out.

“ The last twenty years have shown a continuing deterioration of confidence in politicians. According to CEVIPOF (Centre d'Étude de la Vie Politique Française [Centre for the Study of French Political Life]), in 2012:

- 54% of French people think that democracy does not work very well or not well at all
- Only 13% of French people trust political parties”



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AVENUES ARTICULATED THROUGH 5 MAJOR STEPS OF DECISION MAKING PROCESS

RESTORE MEANING TO DECISIONS AND BETTER BALANCE SHORT AND LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

The quality of a political decision is determined by the time dedicated to defining its meaning and its objectives, and to developing a forward-looking perspective on the issues to which it must respond.

It is possible to achieve this by:

- **introducing** a phase of unavoidable dedicated discussion into the legislative process (a more detailed presentation of motives, statement of intent)
- **organising** public debate on the role and missions of a dedicated assembly in the long term

ORGANISE THE DEBATE IN ADVANCE TO ENRICH THE DECISION

To move from an “intermittent democracy” limited essentially to the elections to a more continuous democracy organised as a flow of exchanges between power and society, several avenues may be considered:

- **promoting** systems of participatory democracy at all levels of governance and determining the conditions of their success
- **testing** mechanisms for citizen participation within the ESEC and even allowing them to submit a case to the National Commission for public debate
- **establishing** representativeness criteria for associations willing to participate in an institutionalised civil dialogue
- **supervising** lobbying practices to make them transparent

BETTER IDENTIFYING THE REAL DECISION MAKING POSITIONS TO DEVELOP A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The goal is to strengthen procedures that enable a real obligation to account for the performance of an elective office. This necessitates as a priority establishing a clear division of responsibilities, by:

- **clarification** of the contours of our semi-presidential, semi-parliamentary system
- **better distribution** of skills and responsibilities between the State and local authorities

STRENGTHEN THE PLURALISM OF THE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Increase pluralism allowing for a better legitimisation of political decisions and enhance its acceptability by:

- **searching** for a better mix between the majority and proportional electoral systems for legislative elections
- **respecting** parity within deliberative assemblies, by making existing legislative devices more restrictive
- **limiting** the accumulation of mandates, both simultaneous and successive
- **improving** the status of the elected official

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND EVALUATE THEM

In the Rule of law, the effective application of the law must be guaranteed and its evaluation systemised by:

- **rendering** the *ex post* evaluation procedure mandatory
- **reinforcing** the monitoring and evaluation role of Parliament
- **improving** the rights conferred on parliamentary groups representing the opposition
- **rendering** more effective the contributory role of the ESEC in the assessment of public policy
- **turning** open data into a vector for democratic evaluation