

2013-26 REDUCING REGIONAL INEQUALITIES: WHICH NATIONAL POLICY FOR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT?

The issue of regional equality in France traditionally revolves around regional management policies, with the logic of social cohesion and national solidarity. In 2002, an Interdepartmental Committee on Regional Management (CIADT) stated that “the State has the responsibility of national cohesion, which involves the reduction of regional inequalities”. As of 2003, the Constitution stipulates that “the law provides equalization systems aimed at promoting equality between local authorities”. The creation of a Ministry of Regional and Housing Equality in 2012 reflects the importance of the issue of regional equality.

The report and the opinion of the ESEC stress the complexity of the phenomena in question: because of the influence of cities and towns on their peripheries, understanding the regional level in which people live requires one to take into account the institutional levels – regional, departmental, communal and inter-communal – residential areas and commuting.

95% of the population in France and three quarters of rural communes live under the influence of cities.

People also move during certain times of the year or of their lives and these regular or occasional population displacements affect regional inequalities.

A region may be in trouble in a particular

In 2010, 40 % of total metropolitan employment was concentrated within the Île-de-France, Rhône-Alpes and PACA (Provence-Alps-Côtes d’Azur)..

Île-de-France, the region with the highest GDP per capita, is ranked much worse on the quality of life index.

category (education, training, economy, employment, housing, poverty, health,

environment, etc.) but be in a favourable situation with regard to other criteria.

Sectoral inequalities also vary according to the selected zone: thus, employment zones have withstood the crisis relatively well in regions or departments that are doing poorly and vice versa. Inequalities reduce at regional and departmental levels but increase within the same region, for example between the town centre and the periphery. With decentralization, the autonomy of regional authorities can amplify, or conversely, reduce widening inequalities in any particular sector.

These sectoral inequalities also have

Urban neighborhoods in difficulty, rural areas disconnected from urban areas, but also some regional communities located in the North and East of France, or in the Overseas Territories, have all known serious economic difficulties at one time or another, worrying social situations, problems of access to public services, and occasionally degraded environments.

a cumulative nature in some regions, making their correction very difficult at the communal level with which the

local private and public stakeholders are concerned.

To encourage the reduction of regional inequalities and strengthen a “networked France”, the ESEC calls for the revival of a national regional planning policy, carried out over the long term by the State, mostly decentralised and diffused, with three main objectives: to implement the policies needed to enhance the overall (not only economic) appeal of all regions; maintain a high degree of GDP (including non-commercial) redistribution; fulfil the aspiration of individuals for a better quality of life in the regions where they live.



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In the light of these findings The ESEC formulates recommendations which may constitute the elements of a “roadmap” for the coming years:

👉 IMPROVE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

- Conduct, at different levels of communities, under the authority of the regional or departmental prefects, at least every six years, a prospective and comprehensive regional diagnosis that involves all stakeholders and that reveals difficulties and cumulative inequalities, ensuring in each region that the undertaking of this diagnosis conforms to the principles of participatory democracy;
- Take into account the role of local public officials in supporting outreach activities;
- Entrust to the National Standards Evaluation Commission the tailoring of existing standards to combat their proliferation and render cross-funding more efficient;
- Accentuate decentralisation by revising the management of regional governments by central governments, increase an across the board approach of their actions, apply the principle of fungibility at the regional level, strengthen the role of regional prefects in the implementation of public policies, restore the State’s engineering capabilities in support of small communities;
- Develop experimentation in the conduct of reforms.

👉 ENHANCE THE ACCESSIBILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE REGIONS

- Accelerate the deployment of ultra digital broadband to achieve universal regional coverage, the participation of the State should at least live up to the commitments it has made, increasing the density of the network of digital public spaces and their visibility;
- In the hierarchy of transport projects, prioritise the optimisation of existing infrastructure, road alternatives and air transport, as well as the methods and projects with the least environmental impact;
- Ensure consistency in transport by the systematic search for intermodality and complementarity;
- Secure financing in the medium and long terms for infrastructure networks, including transportation, by making use of the possibilities of the Euro-vignette 3 directive and especially the introduction and implementation of an accumulation of directed savings;
- Clarify through regional diagnosis the development of local co-constructed public service schemes, with those on the ground, through local public service committees, or directed at the public.

👉 ESTABLISH A BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF ALL REGIONS

- Build a French network, ensuring that the principled densification of housing concerns not only metropolises but also the medium-sized cities and towns centres;
- In the housing policy, prioritise the development of social rental housing and rental investment in existing establishments;
- Strengthen the policy of competitiveness hubs and hubs of companies operating in a network, while ensuring the presence of a diversified local within each region;
- Focus public policy priorities related to city policy on the neighbourhoods with most difficulties.

👉 STRENGTHEN THE REBALANCING INSTRUMENTS BETWEEN REGIONS

- Maintain and amplify vertical and horizontal adjustments;
- Restore a certain level of fiscal autonomy to communities so that they find a greater capacity for intervention and direct a portion of the State assistance to regional investment;
- Better assess the de facto “social equalisation” played by social transfers and implement in each region, consistently with the regional diagnosis, a policy adapted to accommodate the populations concerned;
- Consolidate the “equalisation” role of the European funds (ESF and ERDF) and set up a single regional counter for the processing of files;
- Hold an Interministerial Committee of Regional Management and Development (CIADT) early in 2014 to prepare a framework and programming law on the Equality of the regions that protects the national regional management policy, promoting a better across the board approach for Station action and increased decentralisation.