



PRESS RELEASE

ENTITIES AND PUBLIC POLICIES

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LOCAL STATE ORGANISATIONS

Clarifying their tasks, adapting their territorial organisation and establishing trust

"The regional administration of the French Republic is performed by local authorities and by local state organisations": this principle, enshrined in the Law of 6 February 1992, underlines the paradoxical situation of local state organisations.

A lack of resources means that at times they are struggling or failing completely to fulfil their roles in some parts of the country. At the same time, resources continue to be allocated to tasks that are not or are no longer a priority, especially as they overlap with skills transferred to local authorities.

The government's decentralised departments have recently undergone major reforms in response to major geographical, socio-demographic, legal and institutional upheavals. These measures need to be pursued further, by clarifying their roles, adapting their territorial organisation and entrusting them with greater control over their human and financial resources.

Refocusing decentralised departments on the government's priority tasks

The governmental roles performed by local state organisations are in a permanent state of flux, and vary tremendously from one region to another. Some tasks have been transferred to local authorities, others have been created or enhanced, but there is scope for improvement in terms of their management structure, supervision and evaluation.

Certain audit and inspection tasks have not been properly carried out, such as inspections of classified facilities. However, since its previous investigations, la Cour has noted improvements in the inspections carried out by the veterinary department and the labour inspectorate.

The efficiency gains needed to ensure that the government's tasks are accomplished could do more to rely on the development of digital tools, whose consequences are important in terms of relationships with users and departmental restructuring, which presupposes significant enhancement of the existing networks.

Looking further ahead, the performance of the government's tasks needs to be rationalised, for example by assigning the most technical tasks at interdepartmental, regional or even supra-regional level. Housing and roads would both benefit from a streamlining of the manner in which decentralised departments are organised. In other cases such as youth, sports, social action, economic action and jobs, skills are not clearly distributed and overlap too frequently with those of other actors, especially inter-municipal and regional bodies, resulting in confusion for the general public as to each actor's responsibilities and making their interventions unnecessarily complex. Where local state organisations fail to add value, some of these tasks could be eliminated, for example in the areas of guidance, training and tourism.



Adapting the local state organisations to new regional challenges

The government has not drawn the logical conclusions from the regional reform of its local state organisations, which were reorganised even before the newly elected regional councils were set up. The role of the Prefect (préfet), especially in the regions, needs to be redefined. Multi-site regional departments have been split between administrative centres in the former regions, thereby hampering day-to-day management and operations. At inter-departmental level the network is unchanged and remains unnecessarily dense. It needs to change so as to bring the local state organisations into line with the needs of their catchment areas and to make public services more effective and more efficient. One solution would be to set up new public services premises that encourage resource pooling and synergies, by bringing departments together and making them more accessible and visible for citizens.

Comprehensive overhaul of local state organisation's resource management

Empower local state organisation presupposes that we are confident in their ability to manage the human and financial resources placed at their disposal.

La Cour has noted that rigid management of human resources in ministerial "silos" is hampering staff adjustment to requirements, such as they may be assessed at regional level. Staff allocation has not kept up with the changes, for example in national education or in the network of finance departments. In addition, there are numerous significant impediments to staff mobility, both between ministries and between regions and functions. Lending is also insufficiently feasible on a local level. In these two areas la Cour suggests experimentation in order to better adapt to local realities, albeit within the confines of the Organic Law relating to the Finance Acts (loi organique relative aux lois de finances).

Lastly, the pooling of state local organisation support functions may lead to progress, but it remains too compartmentalised within each ministry, except in property and finance management and procurement.

Recommendations

La Cour has drawn up 49 recommendations focusing on four areas:

1. realigning the local state organisations with the government's priority tasks and allocating the performance of these tasks more effectively within the local state bodies;
2. making digital public services a driver for transformation of local state organisations;
3. accelerating the overhaul of the territorial network of local state organisations;
4. entrust local state organisations with the pooled and decompartmentalised management of their resources.

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