



PRESS RELEASE

17 September 2020

PUBLIC ENTITIES AND POLICIES

HOUSING IN OVERSEAS DEPARTEMENTS AND REGIONS

Overseas départements and regions (DROMs) face specific constraints in terms of housing: building land is scarce and expensive due to their geography, construction costs are higher than in mainland France and rapid and heterogeneous demographic changes make planning more complex.

Despite the efforts made in recent years, notably through the first Overseas Housing Plan (PLOM) adopted in 2015, private and public stakeholders appear to be struggling to meet demand - in particular for social and very social rental housing - and to improve the housing conditions of overseas residents.

The housing stock in the DROMs amounts to 775,000 dwellings for 2,152,000 inhabitants, of which only 155,000 are social housing. Between 2002 and 2017, it has received cumulative central government funding, in grants and tax expenditure, in excess of €3.6bn.

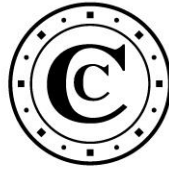
The Cour des comptes calls for a profound rethinking of intervention mechanisms adopted by the public authorities. The aim of the second PLOM is to refocus them on the reality of local situations and the needs of the population.

Territories subject to serious constraints

Due to the geographical constraints specific to overseas territories, development space is limited and building land is scarce and increasingly expensive (+40% between 2014 and 2017). These territories are also experiencing a range of demographic changes: rapid population growth in Mayotte and French Guiana, due to immigration, while the West Indies has a declining and ageing population.

Faced with these specific and changing realities, public and private stakeholders are finding it difficult to respond effectively to the needs of the overseas population:

- the directorate general for overseas territories is struggling to set a course for the various public policies;
- the often poor financial position of local and regional authorities has the effect of reducing their own capacity to invest;
- social housing organisations have found new impetus with the investment of Caisse des Dépôts, but they have much work to do to meet a demand that is under great strain. The 155,000 existing social housing units cover less than one-third of needs, while on average around 80% of the overseas population is eligible for them.



The outcome of the first PLOM adopted in March 2015 is unsatisfactory and illustrates the need for an approach that is much more anchored in the reality of the territories and the particular significance of the land issue. The implementation of mainland rules in terms of land, urban and housing planning and scheduling has led to the imposition of too many schemes (SAR, SCOT, PLUI, PLU, PLH etc.) to be effectively implemented by local authorities.

The annual objective of building 10,000 social housing units has not been reached, while the renovation of city centres, the reduction of substandard housing and the renovation of social housing are marking time.

Mechanisms to be reframed and better deployed

In light of these observations, the intervention mechanisms available to public stakeholders must be rethought.

This requires, firstly, taking better account of the major importance of the private sector, in which 85% of the population lives, and by protecting and more effectively targeting household aid.

Those who shape housing policy must also better understand the needs of the population, better identify land and development resources, and better deploy tools such as regional land/urban development funds. The dual system of public funding, shared between tax incentives and subsidies, also needs to be rethought.

Finally, the construction rules and standards designed for the mainland and now applied directly to the DROMs need to be adapted. Despite the tax benefits granted, construction costs are on average 20% to 30% higher than in mainland France.

The implementation of the second PLOM, adopted in December 2019, must combine pragmatism and better monitoring in order to meet the needs of the population.

The Cour des comptes makes a total of 14 audit recommendations aimed at better identifying housing and planning needs, the better allocation of financial resources and better targeting of action.

[Read the report](#)

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