

Cour des comptes



Chambres régionales
& territoriales des comptes

WHICH DEVELOPMENT FOR MAYOTTE?

**To better respond to
the challenges of demographics, attaining
departmenthood, and the expectations of the people
of Mayotte**

Thematic public report

June 2022

Executive summary

Mayotte became a French overseas department in 2011, in response to the long-standing, repeated aspirations of the people of Mayotte and their elected representatives. In 2016, the Court¹ noted the inadequate preparations for this institutional reform, which, although unrelated to the crises in the archipelago, did not lead to resolve them. The central government and the department are struggling to outline sustainable development prospects for Mayotte, while difficulties are getting worse.

The first challenge facing the Mayotte archipelago is demographics. The population growth rate has accelerated over the past decade, reaching 4% in 2017. There are many indications that its population, estimated at 289,000, is actually greatly underestimated. This uncertainty is detrimental to the reliable measurement of the archipelago's socio-economic characteristics, as well as to the proper dimensioning of public policies.

The archipelago's population is projected by INSEE to reach between 440,000 and 760,000 inhabitants by 2050, the main determining factor being changes in migratory flows. In the highest hypothesis, the population density would increase to more than 2,000 inhabitants per km² (compared to 774 today), i.e., the highest density in France, after Paris and its inner suburban departments. Mayotte would comprise only large housing estates, car parks, and road networks.

In such a context, controlling immigration is a prerequisite for stabilising the socio-economic framework. The resources devoted to the fight against illegal immigration have been strengthened and better organised since 2018.

Crime in Mayotte has reached an unprecedented level, and security has become the primary concern of the inhabitants; confidence in the police is low.

In the field of education, the lag is difficult to offset. The level of school facilities in the territory and the demographic growth make it necessary to build on a massive scale. Lost time is being made up for in terms of secondary education. However, the construction rate of primary schools is far too low in relation to the 850 additional classes needed to accommodate children under satisfactory conditions. The education level of remains low, in an archipelago where half the population does not speak French.

In the face of such challenges, public institutions do not have the necessary basis to lead the archipelago's development with clarity.

The local authorities, which are still in their first steps, starting with the department itself, lack expertise and engineering. The emergence of a Mayotte elite still does not provide sufficient number of the managers that Mayotte needs. More support will be needed, while respecting the powers of local authorities. The department's project management capacity remains insufficient, although it has undertaken to upgrade the skills of its managers. Its financial situation is satisfactory, because of delays in the effective exercise of its powers and in the implementation of its investment programmes.

Central government services are weakened by the fact that the number of staffs has been drastically reduced, in ignorance of the difficulties that are not comparable to those encountered in mainland France. The staff of the prefecture, in particular, are too busy handling successive emergencies to provide the impetus and coordination necessary for the development of the archipelago. In addition, their high turnover, the resulting vacancies, and the insufficient formalisation of initiatives have led to a rapid loss of memory, which affects the continuity of the actions undertaken.

¹Court of Accounts, *La départementalisation de Mayotte [Departmenthood of Mayotte]*, Public thematic report, January 2016.

In recent years, the central government has implemented two action plans for Mayotte.

The first, named "Mayotte 2025", was announced in 2015. With 324 actions, this plan, which had no specific allocated resources, established objectives that were often imprecise and did not address the issues of security and immigration, which are central to the concerns of the people of Mayotte. It did not receive monitoring and leadership beyond one year. No assessment of the plan was established and there was no reporting beyond its first year of implementation. Its contribution to the needs of the territory and the population of Mayotte were not evaluated.

The second, the "*plan pour l'avenir de Mayotte (Plan for the Future of Mayotte)*", was drawn up as an emergency response to the social crisis in early 2018, which paralysed the archipelago over two months. Consisting of 53 measures and at a reported cost of €1.3 billion, it combined emergency measures and long-term proposals. It devoted an entire section to immigration and security issues, which were at the root of the crisis. During the first year of its implementation, the plan brought a new dynamic to the central government's action in Mayotte and saw significant progress, with the creation of a regional health agency and a full-fledged education authority, a renewed effort in the fight against illegal immigration, and more resources devoted to security.

The major investment component of this second plan was formalized in the convergence and transformation contract concluded in fall of 2019, as in other overseas territories. The progress on such investments varies, depending on the capability of the project owners to complete them. While secondary school construction continues at a satisfactory pace, there has been little progress on primary schools and on water sanitation and public transport networks. This plan, like the previous one, only received structured monitoring for a short period.

All in all, there is currently no strategic programming document for the development of Mayotte. The preparation of the regional development plan, started in 2011, has still not been completed. The Operation of National Interest provided for in the 2018 plan has so far only given rise to an outline, which has not been supported by Mayotte elected officials.

Land disputes, a cause of uncertainty about property ownership that was highlighted during the transition to formal law, are a major handicap to public action. There has been little progress in settling them, despite the 2017 creation of the Mayotte Public Land and Development Agency.

Finally, the spread of informal and/or unhealthy housing could not be stopped. The share of insecure housing, at around 40%, did not change from 1997 to 2017, and the increase in annual social housing production in recent years is not at all in proportion to the need.

On each of these topics, project management is not coordinated enough. However, the Court stressed this need when it published its 2016 report on Mayotte departmenthood.

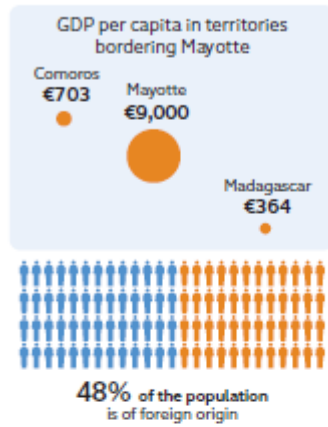
Following extensive consultation with the people of Mayotte and their elected representatives, the Government prepared a bill for the accelerated development of Mayotte². On 13 January 2022, the departmental council issued an unfavourable opinion on this bill and it was abandoned.

An in-depth strategic reflection on the sustainable development of Mayotte has yet to be conducted. Otherwise, the archipelago will remain dependent on Government funding from the mainland, which seems neither desirable for the people of Mayotte nor sustainable in the long term given the demographic outlook.

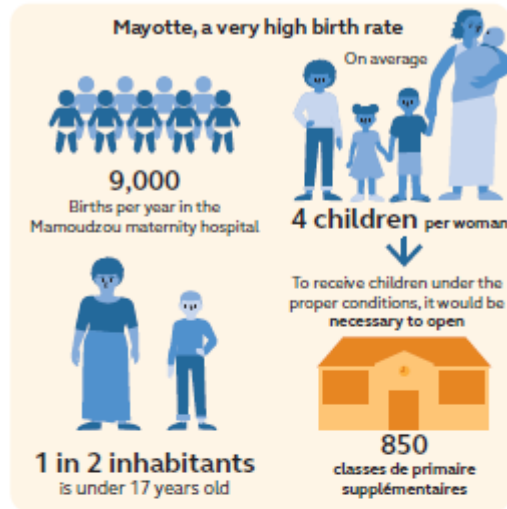
² Bill on the accelerated development of Mayotte and various provisions on French Guiana.

What development for Mayotte?

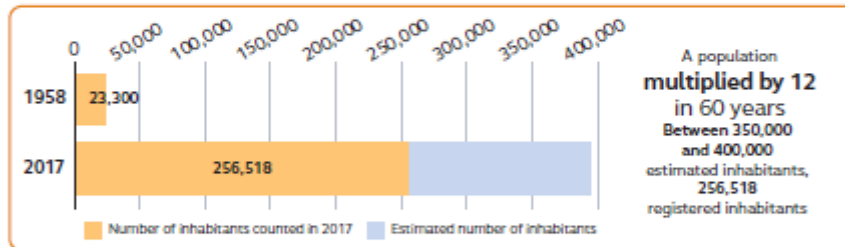
Mayotte, a very attractive territory for the surrounding populations



Mayotte, a very high birth rate



Mayotte, exponential demographics hard to control



84% of the population lives below the poverty line

Two central government-led action plans



Source: Court of Accounts, based on data from the central government, INSEE and IEDOM

Recommendations

Consolidate government action

1. Establish and regularly publish, without waiting until 2025, reliable data on the population present in Mayotte (*Ministry of the Economy, Finance, and Economic Recovery, Ministry of Overseas France*).
3. Make any new exceptional central government aid to the department conditional on the gradual improvement of the quality of its management, possibly via a contract of objectives and means (*Ministry of Overseas France - Mayotte Prefecture*).
4. Reinforce the Prefect of Mayotte by grouping the prefecture's security and public order functions under the authority of a single member of staff and by providing the General Secretariat of Regional Affairs (SGAR) with a permanent steering and monitoring/evaluation unit for Mayotte's development plans (*Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Overseas France*).
5. Provide any future development plan for Mayotte with pre-established governance at the central and local levels, together with precise reporting and monitoring-evaluation tools (*Ministry of Overseas France - Mayotte Prefecture*).

Strengthen the fight against illegal immigration

6. Strengthen the capability to intercept smugglers' boats before they reach Mayotte's territorial waters, particularly by studying the legal, operational, and financial feasibility of pre-positioning a pivot vessel to the north-west of Mayotte (*Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Overseas France*).
7. Increase the security of acts relating to the immigration police by refining the analysis of reasons for the release or dropping of charges and adjusting police practices accordingly (*Ministry of the Interior - Mayotte Prefecture*).
8. Coordinate action against illegal immigration through regular meetings between the Prefect of Mayotte, the French ambassadors to the countries where the immigrants originate, the ambassador responsible for regional cooperation, and the senior commander of the Armed Forces in the Southern Indian Ocean Zone (FASZOI) (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Armed Forces, Ministry of Overseas France - Mayotte Prefecture*).
9. Involve the Prefect of Mayotte in the monitoring of the Comoros Development Plan (PDFC) (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*).

Promote sustainable development of the territory

2. Make any new public investment in the port of Longoni conditional on a permanent decision on the future of the public service delegation, as well as on an in-depth geo-economic and logistical study of the actual development prospects for the port in its regional oceanic environment (*Ministry of Overseas France, Department of Mayotte*).
10. Based on a shared diagnosis, define a common strategy for strengthening the project management capabilities of the local authorities in Mayotte (*Ministry of Overseas France - Mayotte Prefecture, Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sport*).

11. Accelerate the settlement of land disputes, particularly by strengthening the resources allocated to the Land Emergency Commission (*Ministry of Overseas France - Mayotte Prefecture, Department of Mayotte*).
12. Mobilise the land resources necessary for the development of Mayotte by strengthening the land portage provided by the Mayotte Public Land and Development Agency (EPFAM) and by formalising, without further delay, the liquidation of the Mixed Investment Syndicate for the Development of Mayotte (SMIAM) and the devolution of its assets (*Ministry of Overseas France, Department of Mayotte*).
13. Conceive of the long-term development of Mayotte, considering its integration into its regional environment (*Ministry of Overseas France - Mayotte Prefecture, Department of Mayotte*).