

Further to our *Contribution to the elaboration of the list of issues and questions in relation to the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of France regarding the implementation of the CEDAW*, co-elaborated with the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights, in October 2015, the High Council for Gender Equality transmits its remarks relating to some of the replies by the French Government to the questions raised by the Committee:

National Machinery regarding the advancement of Women (Question N°3)

Please further provide information on the resources of the High Council for Gender Equality (paras. 2.3.3 and 2.3.5) and of the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights and indicate whether their resources are sufficient for their mandates in the field of gender equality, how duplication of functions between them is avoided and how their advice, opinions and/or recommendations are implemented.

25. At the start of the High Council's second term, on 8 March 2016, the President of the Republic called for its "enshrinement by being written into law", so as to perpetuate it as an institution. In March 2016, the HCEfh presented its 2013-2015 Activities Report.⁷

26. Resources allocated to the High Council in 2016 total € 45,100 (€ 15,000 in 2014). It employed five staff full time and one half time. It has 72 volunteers.

27. The appropriation for the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights (CNCDH) for 2016 is € 1,119,881, an increase of 26 per cent over the 2014-2016 allocation.

28. Coordination between the High Council and the CNCDH is governed by their rules of procedure.

The High Council for Gender Equality cannot but underline the disproportion between the magnitude of expectations regarding gender equality, the importance of the reports it elaborated on its own initiative or upon ministerial request from 2013 to 2015, and the actual means granted to it. These means are described below :

- 5,5 positions are mentioned : in fact, only 3 agents occupy positions attached to the HCEfh and 2 agents are seconded, one by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one by the Prime Minister's Services, the renewal of their secondment is not ensured. 4 probationers (2 per semester) do complete the team of the HCE general Secretariat.
- The above-mentioned budget (45 100€) reflects expenditures formally attributed to the HCE in the budget of the Social Affairs and Health Ministry. It encompasses mainly travel costs for our members residing outside Paris (p.m. the contribution of our 72 members to the activities of the HCE is unpaid), and a few hospitality and publishing expenditures. Wages attributable to the Ministry of Social Affairs are not accounted for. Expenditures which are directly covered by the Services of the Prime Minister (offices computers and communication) are not accounted for either,

Our resources are more substantial than those mentioned in the reply of the French Government, which tends to present our institution financial means as ridiculously low, thus raising doubts about the usefulness and credibility of the sole independent entity dedicated to the promotion of Women's Rights in France.

That being said, the HCE is indeed confronted to the crucial issue of its resources : The French President confirmed on the 8th of March, when he hosted our new members and those who had been renewed, that he shared the imperative of inscribing the status of the High Council for Gender Equality in the Law (the HCE was set up by a decree on the 3rd of January 2013). We hope that consolidating our status by law will allow for formalizing our independence de jure; though we exert our independence, we must acknowledge that it is only on a de facto basis. We also look forward to obtaining through that law a budgetary independence, allowing us first to enlarge somewhat our team in order to broaden the scope of our work, a number of issues remain pending that a team of 3 dedicated positions and 2 whose secondment cannot be deemed secure, cannot yet cover.

The decree 2013-8, issued on 2 January 2013, creating the High Council for Gender Equality does not mention the issue of coordination/ articulation between the HCE and the CNCDH.

Violence against women (Question No. 6)

6.1 Indicate whether evaluations have been conducted with regard to the measures taken to date, in particular the implementation of Act No. 2010-769 of 9 July 2010 on violence against women, spousal violence and its impact on children, the four interministerial plans for preventing and combating violence against women, and the joint framework protocol established by the Ministers of Justice, the Interior and Women's Rights, and indicate the results of such evaluations and the adoption of policies based on them (§ 2.5.1)

44. The policy on preventing and eliminating violence against women is evaluated in specific parliamentary inquiries;17 by teams from the Inspectorates;18 and by independent bodies.19 CEDAW/C/FRA/Q/7-8/Add.19/2916-06379

45. The Act of 4 August 2014,20 drawing on recommendations made by the judicial and social affairs (IGSJ-IGAS) inspectorates in June 2013, extended the validity of protection orders from four to six months in order to afford more lasting protection to victims of spousal violence.

46. The High Council for Gender Equality (HCEfh) is the body responsible for overall evaluation of the Fourth Plan.

The HCE has presented last April an intermediate evaluation report (<http://bit.ly/1OW87KG>) that shows, as a first analysis, that the implementation of the Plan has made good progress, and that two thirds of the measures are almost fully implemented or close to that. The HCE salutes the dynamic under way and expects it to be sustained until the full completion of the Plan. Yet, from now on, the HCE calls for the greatest vigilance on the following five points :

- 1- Available data to date remain fragmentary, impacting the follow-up and evaluation,
- 2- Allocated financial resources lack transparency
- 3- Status of accommodation in emergency shelters and its interrelation with the access to social housing
- 4- Heterogeneous involvement from various Ministries, heterogeneous local-level management
- 5- Insufficient communication regarding new rules/duties and training and information tools

A final evaluation report will be remitted on the eve of the 25th of November 2016; it will also formulate recommendations with a view to the elaboration of the 5th interministerial Plan.

Participation in political and public life (Question n° 10)

10. The report presents the legislative measures and electoral reforms adopted to increase the participation of women in elective functions (para. 3.1.1). Please provide statistics on the gender composition of all legislative and executive bodies at the national, regional, departmental and municipal levels. Please also provide statistics for independent administrative authorities and key consultative State bodies, senior civil service administration, high-ranking positions in universities, the posts of ambassador and consul, positions in management and on company boards (paras. 3.1 and 3.2) and the professional and social responsibilities mentioned in paragraph 4.1.3 of the report.

The HCE published in February 2015 a report on « Parity in politics : between progress and stagnation - Assessment of the implementation of the Laws aiming at establishing parity during the 2014 local and intercommunal, European and senatorial elections » : <http://bit.ly/1qqtgRz>. It gives detailed statistics. It showed that while parity has indeed made progress in a range of Assemblies as a result of the legal constraints, yet their executive positions remain by and large controlled by men. Furthermore, 15 years after the adoption of the constitutional reform and of 9 Laws, our analysis underlines the importance of harmonizing the regulations on parity.

The High Council for Gender Equality and the Higher Council for Professional Equality demonstrated a contrasting evolution in their joint report on Women members of Boards of Directors or Supervisory Boards, reviewing the implementation of the Copé-Zimmermann Act (20/7/2011) and Sauvadet (12/3/2012); it was made public on 10 February 2016, see <http://bit.ly/1XisbrK>.

- In the private sector : major listed companies are heading fairly towards the 40% target set for 2017. The proportion of women in their Boards has reached 34% (CAC 40) and 32% (SBF 120). Yet, when all listed companies are considered, the average declines to 28%. Finally, the average drops to 14,2% for the roughly 400 non-listed companies targeted by the 2011 Act (500 employees minimum, turnover above 50M€)
- In the public sector : limited available data show mild progress in public companies, though still far from the targets set for 2017.

This evaluation indicates that, as for Laws relating to political parity, the legal constraint has allowed for an increase of women's participation (trebling of the number of women's seats in large companies since 2009), but has not yet induced a change in power-sharing (5% of women heading Boards of Directors or Supervisory Boards, among the CAC 40 listed companies only 2 are headed by a woman). There remains a long way to go as companies do not appear as having fully integrated this legal constraint.

Disadvantaged groups of women (Question No. 16)

In its report, the State party acknowledges that immigrant women are exposed to situations of inequality and violence more frequently than other women (§ 2.2.1.1). In the light of the current social and political context, which is characterized by an increasing number of acts of a racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic nature, provide information on measures taken or envisaged to combat all forms of discrimination against women belonging to racial, ethnic, national and religious minorities, including women living in sensitive urban areas, in particular single mothers, to ensure their equal access to employment, social security and social services, housing, health and education, and to the public and political arenas.

In June 2014, further to the Minister for Women's Rights, Youth and Sports' request, the HCEfh handed over its report "Fighting now sexual, social and territorial inequalities in sensitive urban areas and fragile rural areas" <http://bit.ly/1TXg3KI>.

Gender inequalities in these territories are worsened by the concentration of poverty, the tightened traditional distribution of social roles among women and men, as well as less access by women to their rights and to public services. These inequalities are massive, they are widely intertwined with social inequalities and are mutually reinforcing; as shown in the statistical study published in April 2014.

For the first time, an institutional report makes these inequalities visible, proposes practical tools for field actors, and formulates 44 recommendations focusing notably on:

- 3 priority fields : women's employment, public space –citizenship – violence, access to rights and public services
- A global approach, named "EGALiTER" (for Gender Equality and Territorial Equality), based on 6 methodological pillars : political support, training, reallocation of budget resources, coordination and animation, social innovation, evaluation./.