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France: Political Development and Data for 2020

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Introduction

As for most countries, 2020 has been the year for Covid-19 in France. A national health emergency was enforced by the government between 24 March and 10 July for the first time. It was in place again from 17 October onward. Two periods of strict lockdowns were decided, the first between 17 March and 11 May and the second between 30 October and 15 December. From March onwards, France lived at the rhythm of weekly addresses from the executive monitoring the evolution of the pandemic and announcing new policies to face it. At the end of 2020, the death toll of the pandemic amounted to about 65,000.

Between March and May 2020, lockdown measures put a halt to mass protests and social movements that marked 2019 in France (Houard-Vial & Sauger 2020), with the exception of a wave of protests when George Floyd was murdered by a white police officer in the United States. The United States has been a key focus over the year, the presidential campaign there attracting much interest. If the pandemic triggered the decision of President Emmanuel Macron to replace Prime Minister Edouard Philippe with Prime Minister Jean Castex, it also softened political debates only for a rather short period of time, polemics on its management by the executive mushrooming quite rapidly after the first lockdown period.

Election report

Senate elections

Senate elections in France have never attracted a lot of attention, either from the public or from specialists. The reasons for this can be found in the facts that French bicameralism remains asymmetric, that the elections are indirect and that a conservative majority has always emerged from these elections, with only a short period of exception between 2011 and 2014 (Kerrouche et al. 2011).

On 27 September, half of the 346 seats of the Senate were up for election (with a renewal by half every three years) by an electoral college of 89,715 ‘*grands électeurs*’ made up of local, regional and national office-holders. Participation is mandatory (and turnout achieves thus 98.7 per cent in 2020) and elections are organized at the departmental level with all voters gathered in the same place. The electoral system depends on the number of seats in the

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Table 1. Elections to the Senate (*Sénat*) in France in 2020

		Date of election	27 September 2020	Previous election	28 September 2014
		Electorate	89,715	Total seats	172
		Total votes cast	88,593	Turnout	98.7%
		Valid votes cast	86,814	Share of valid vote	98.0%

Party	Votes			Seats			
	Proportional (%)	Majoritarian (%)	Majoritarian – runoff (%)	Proportional (%)	Majoritarian (%)	Total (%)	
Radical left	<i>Communistes, France Insoumise</i> (COM)	2.0%	4.4%	4.3%	0.9%	3.4%	1.7%
Left and Socialists	<i>Parti socialiste et union de la gauche</i> (PS)	17.5%	16.1%	15.4%	18.6%	16.9%	18.0%
Ecologists	<i>Europe Ecologie Les Verts</i> (EELV)	3.8%	4.0%	2.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.6%
Other left	<i>Divers gauches</i> (DVG)	10.1%	9.3%	9.5%	7.1%	6.8%	7.0%
Centrists	<i>La République en Marche, Union centriste</i> (UC)	13.9%	16.5%	18.8%	11.5%	13.6%	12.2%
Right and The Republicans	<i>Les Républicains et union de la droite</i> (LR)	26.7%	27.0%	27.6%	35.4%	33.9%	34.9%
Other right	<i>Divers droites</i> (DVD)	19.9%	18.8%	16.8%	23.9%	25.4%	24.4%
National Rally	<i>Rassemblement national</i> (RN)	4.2%	1.6%	1.8%	0.9%	0.0%	0.6%
Other	<i>Divers</i> (DIV)	2.0%	2.3%	3.0%	0.9%	1.7%	1.2%

Notes: Senate elections are held by half every three years. Reported here are only elections held in 2020. Senate elections are indirect elections held with a form of parallel electoral system with both proportional representation in districts with a magnitude strictly superior to two and two round runoff elections in smaller districts.

Source: Ministère de l'Intérieur (2020).

department. In departments with two seats or fewer, the electoral system is a uninominal or a plurinominal two-round, runoff system. In departments with more than two seats, a proportional closed list-system is in place, with the d'Hondt method of allocation.

Elections to the Senate do not always provide a clear picture of the balance of forces as candidates' labels have a large diversity and as the configuration of electoral coalitions also varies significantly. Table 1 provides the results of these elections. Right-wing candidates (from The Republicans/*Les Républicains* (LR), without explicit any label or in a right-wing coalition) won almost an absolute majority of votes and a majority close to 60 per cent of the seats. The left maintained to some extent its ground despite gaining only fewer than 20 per cent of the votes. The Republic on the Move/*La République en Marche* (LREM) decided on a strategy for which its label was mostly invisible to soften its limited capacity to attract those voters still structured by traditional cleavages.

What Table 1 does not show is that the Greens increased their share in the Senate thanks to their participation in the lists of the union of the left. The Ecologists/*Europe Ecologie*

Les Verts (EELV) were seen as the clear winners of the municipal elections held six months previously, on 15 and 22 March.

Municipal elections

As a result of the pandemic, the municipal elections took place under special conditions. The first round took place on 15 March 2020, just a few hours after President Macron announced lockdown measures. As a result, the turnout was the lowest ever recorded: only 44.6 per cent (18.9 percentage points less than in 2014). As for the second round, while initially planned on 22 March, it was delayed until the end of the lockdown measures and was held on 28 June. Again, the turnout was the lowest since 1945 with 41.6 per cent of voters.

The elections were marked by the victory of the Ecologists, whose lists won in a number of big cities, such as Bordeaux, Lyon, Besançon, Strasbourg and Grenoble, as well as other smaller municipalities. Those victories confirmed the trend, observed in the 2019 European elections, towards an increasingly central role for ecologist forces in the recomposition of the left-wing space. However, ecologists still need the support of other left-wing parties to build winning coalitions.

Among the other key results, President Macron's party failed to have its 'local moment'. It lost in the second round in some of the cities previously administered by mayors close to the LREM, such as Lyon. The candidate for the city of Paris, Agnès Buzyn, failed to be elected to the city council, although Paris voted massively for the LREM in the European elections.

Lastly, despite an overall weak performance, for the first time in almost 20 years the party led by Marine Le Pen managed to conquer a city of more than 100,000 inhabitants (Perpignan).

Cabinet report

In July 2020, President Macron dismissed Prime Minister Philippe and appointed Jean Castex, a conservative civil servant with a background in health administration and former deputy chief of staff to former President Nicolas Sarkozy. This choice came as a surprise as many observers expected President Macron to pick a centre-left politician after two years of social crisis.

When leaving Matignon, Philippe was highly popular. He was at the forefront during the pandemic and the first lockdown, which gave him an image of commitment. This popularity certainly destabilized his relationship with Macron. But this dismissal is more probably to be explained by the presidential calendar. Two years before the presidential election, President Macron certainly feared his Prime Minister could reshape the courses of the President's ideas when he disagreed with them. Macron has painted his programme a bit greener, whereas Philippe, more conservative, may have been unhappy with this shift, especially with Macron's promise to hold a referendum on greening the French constitution. Philippe also disapproved of Macron's plan to revive the reform of state pensions without protection against future deficits.

Table 3. Cabinet composition of Castex I in France in 2020

Duration of Cabinet Period covered by table Type of Cabinet	Inception From	7 July 2020 7 July 2020	Dissolution Until	Still in office at end of year 31 December 2020				
			Oversized Coalition					
A. Party/gender composition on 7 July 2020			Seats in Cabinet	Seats held by women	Seats in Parliament			
			N	% of party	N	%		
The Republic On the Move	<i>La République En Marche</i>	(LREM)	16	38.0%	6	37.5%	303	52.5%
Territories of Progress ¹	<i>Territoires De Progrès</i>	(TDP)	11	26.2%	5	45.4%	–	–
Democratic Movement In Common	<i>Mouvement Démocrate En Commun</i>	(MoDem) (EC)	5	11.9%	4	80.0%	46	8.0%
Radical Movement ¹	<i>Mouvement Radical</i>	(MR)	1	2.4%	1	100.0%	–	–
Act	<i>Agir</i>	(Agir)	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	–	–
Unaffiliated	<i>Indépendants</i>	(Indep.)	7	14.3%	5	66.6%	15	2.6%
Totals			42	97.6%	22	52.38%	364	63.10%
B. Composition of Castex I Cabinet on Cabinet inception date 7 July 2020								
Ministerial Title		Minister						
Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs	<i>Ministre de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères</i>	Jean-Yves	Le Drian		1947	Male	TDP	
Minister of National Education and Youth	<i>Ministre de l'Education nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports</i>	Jean-Michel	Blanquer		1964	Male	LREM	
Minister for Economic and Financial Affairs	<i>Ministre de l'Economie, des Finances et de la Relance</i>	Bruno	Le Marie		1969	Male	LREM	
Minister of Defence	<i>Ministre des Armées</i>	Florence	Parly		1963	Female	TDP	
Minister for Home Affairs	<i>Ministre de l'Intérieur</i>	Gerald	Darmanin		1982	Male	LREM	
Minister of Labour, Employment and Integration	<i>Ministre du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion</i>	Elisabeth	Borne		1961	Female	TDP	
Minister of Overseas	<i>Ministre des Outre-mer</i>	Sebastien	Lecornu		1986	Male	LREM	
Minister of Territorial Cohesion and Relationships with Territorial Collectivities	<i>Ministre de la Cohésion des Territoires et des Relations avec les Collectivités Territoriales</i>	Jacqueline	Gourault		1950	Female	MoDem	
Minister of Ecological Transition	<i>Ministre de la Transition Ecologique</i>	Barbara	Pompili		1975	Female	EC	
Minister of Justice	<i>Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice</i>	Eric	Dupond-Moretti		1961	Male	Indep.	
Minister of Culture	<i>Ministre de la Culture</i>	Roselyne	Bachelot		1946	Female	Indep.	
Minister of Solidarity and Health	<i>Ministre des Solidarités et de la Santé</i>	Olivier	Veran		1980	Male	TDP	
Minister of the Sea	<i>Ministre de la Mer</i>	Annick	Girardin		1964	Female	MR	
Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation	<i>Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation</i>	Frederique	Vidal		1964	Female	Indep.	

Table 3. Continued

Minister of Agriculture and Food	<i>Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation</i>	Julien	Denormandie	1980	Male	LREM
Minister of Transformation and Civil Service	<i>Ministre de la Transformation et de la Fonction publiques</i>	Amelie	De Montchalain	1985	Female	LREM
Delegate Minister in charge of Relation with Parliament and Citizen Participation	<i>Ministre délégué chargé des Relations avec le Parlement et de la Participation citoyenne</i>	Marc	Fesneau	1971	Male	MoDem
Delegate Minister in charge of Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, de la Diversité et de l'Égalité des chances</i>	Elisabeth	Moreno	1970	Female	Indep.
Delegate Minister of Foreign Trade and Attractiveness	<i>Ministre délégué chargé du Commerce extérieur et de l'Attractivité</i>	Franck	Riester	1974	Male	Agir
Delegate Minister of Housing	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée du Logement</i>	Emmanuelle	Wargon	1971	Female	TDP
Delegate Minister of Transport	<i>Ministre délégué chargé des Transports</i>	Jean-Baptiste	Djebbari	1982	Male	TDP
Delegate Minister of Public Accounts	<i>Ministre délégué chargé des Comptes publics</i>	Olivier	Dussopt	1978	Male	TDP
Delegate Minister of Industry	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de l'Industrie</i>	Agnes	Pannier-Runacher	1974	Female	TDP
Delegate Minister of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises	<i>Ministre délégué chargé des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises</i>	Alain	Griset	1953	Male	Indep.
Delegate Minister of Sports	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée des Sports</i>	Roxana	Maracineanu	1975	Female	Indep.
Delegate Minister of Memory and Veterans Affairs	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de la Mémoire et des Anciens combattants</i>	Genevieve	Darrieussecq	1956	Female	MoDem
Delegate Minister of Citizenship	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de la Citoyenneté</i>	Marlene	Schiappa	1982	Female	LREM
Delegate Minister of Integration	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de l'Insertion</i>	Brigitte	Klinkert	1956	Female	Indep.
Delegate Minister of the City	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de la Ville</i>	Nadia	Hai	1980	Female	LREM
Delegate Minister of Autonomy	<i>Ministre déléguée chargée de l'Autonomie</i>	Brigitte	Bourguignon	1959	Female	TDP
State Secretary for Disabled	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargée des Personnes handicapées</i>	Sophie	Cluzel	1961	Female	LREM
State Secretary for Tourism, and Francophony	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargé du Tourisme, des Français de l'étranger et de la Francophonie</i>	Jean-Baptiste	Lemoine	1977	Male	LREM

Table 3. Continued

State Secretary for European Affairs	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargé des Affaires européennes</i>	Clement	Beaune	1981	Male	TDP
State Secretary for Biodiversity	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargée de la Biodiversité</i>	Berangere	Abba	1976	Female	LREM
State Secretary for Priority Education	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargée de l'Éducation prioritaire</i>	Nathalie	Elimas	1973	Female	MoDem
State Secretary for Youth	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargée de la Jeunesse et de l'Engagement</i>	Sarah	El Hairy	1989	Female	MoDem
State Secretary for Digital Transition	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargé de la Transition numérique</i>	Cedric	O	1982	Male	LREM
State Secretary for Social and Responsible Economy	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargée de l'Économie sociale, solidaire et responsable</i>	Olivia	Gregoire	1978	Female	LREM
State Secretary for Pensions and Health at Work	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargé des Retraites et de la Santé au travail</i>	Laurent	Pietraszewski	1966	Male	LREM
State Secretary for Childhood and Families	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargé de l'Enfance et des Familles</i>	Adrien	Taquet	1977	Male	LREM
State Secretary for Rurality	<i>Secrétaire d'État chargé de la Ruralité</i>	Joel	Giraud	1959	Male	TDP
State Secretary, Government Spokesperson	<i>Secrétaire d'État, porte-parole du gouvernement</i>	Gabriel	Attal	1989	Male	LREM
C. Changes in composition of Castex I Cabinet during 2020		Outgoing minister	Outgoing date	Incoming minister	Comments	
Ministerial title						
None						
D. Party/gender composition on 31 December 2020			Seats in Cabinet	Seats held by women	Seats in Parliament	
			<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
			<i>%</i>	<i>% of party</i>		
The Republic On the Move	<i>La République En Marche</i>	(LREM)	16 38.0%	6 37.5%	270	46.7%
Territories of Progress	<i>Territoires De Progrès</i>	(TDP)	11 26.2%	5 45.4%	–	–
Democratic Movement	<i>Mouvement Démocrate</i>	(MoDem)	5 11.9%	4 80.0%	57	9.8%
In Common	<i>En Commun</i>	(EC)	1 2.4%	1 100.0%	–	–
Radical Movement	<i>Mouvement Radical</i>	(MR)	1 2.4%	1 100.0%	–	–
Act	<i>Agir</i>	(Agir)	1 2.4%	0 0.0%	–	–
Unaffiliated	<i>Indépendants</i>	(Indep.)	7 14.3%	5 66.6%	15	2.6%
Totals			42 97.6%	22 52.38%	342	59.1%

Note: MPs from these parties are members of various parliamentary groups but are members of the LREM groups for a majority.

Table 4. Party and gender composition of National Assembly (*Assemblée Nationale*) in France in 2020

	Party		1 January 2020				31 December 2020			
			All		Women		All		Women	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The Republic on the Move	<i>La République en Marche</i>	(LREM)	303	52.5%	147	48.5%	270	46.9%	134	49.6%
The Republicans	<i>Les Républicains</i>	(LR)	104	18.0%	24	23.1%	105	18.3%	28	26.7%
Democratic Movement	<i>Mouvement Démocrate (MoDem) et Démocrates apparentés</i>	(MoDem)	46	8.0%	16	34.8%	57	9.9%	21	36.8%
Socialist Party	<i>Socialistes et apparentés</i>	(PS)	29	5.0%	13	44.8%	29	5.0%	14	48.3%
Agir ensemble group	<i>Agir ensemble</i>	(Agir)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	21	3.6%	8	38.1%
Union of Independents	<i>UDI et indépendant3</i>	(UDI)	27	4.7%	8	29.6%	19	3.3%	5	26.3%
Liberties and Territories	<i>Libertés et territoires</i>	(LT)	20	3.5%	4	20.0%	17	3.0%	5	29.4%
France Unbowed	<i>La France Insoumise</i>	(LFI)	17	2.9%	7	41.2%	17	3.0%	7	41.2%
Democratic and Republican Left	<i>Gauche démocrate et républicaine</i>	(GDR)	16	2.8%	4	25.0%	16	2.8%	4	25.0%
Unaffiliated	<i>Non inscrits</i>	(NI)	15	2.6%	6	40.0%	24	4.2%	10	41.7%
Totals			577	100.0%	229	39.7%	575	100.0%	236	41.0%

Notes: ‘Mouvement démocrate et apparentés’ changed its name to ‘Mouvement démocrate (MoDem) et Démocrates apparentés’ on 23 September 2020.

Agir ensemble created on 20 May 2020.

‘UDI, AGIR et Indépendants’ changed its name to ‘UDI et Indépendants’ on 26 May 2020.

Totals may vary across the period as some seats may be left empty for short periods of time. The maximum number of seats is 577.

N refers to both group members and affiliated members (‘apparentés’).

Source: Assemblée Nationale (2021).

The Castex Cabinet is mostly composed of members of the presidential party the LREM. There is no major partisan shift compared with the previous Philippe Cabinet, with ministers who were previously members of the centre-right and *Les Républicains*, some of them from the centre-left and the Socialist Party/*Socialistes et apparentés* (PS). This Cabinet is supported by an oversized coalition, with the LREM, but also with ministers from the centrist Democratic Movement/*Mouvement Démocrate* (MoDem) and from the Act/*Agir* (Agir) (centre-right). Compared with Philippe II, changes were somehow important at the Secretary of State level with many new incomers.

In 2020, changes in the government were limited at the ministerial level. In February, the Minister of Health and Solidarity went out of the government to lead the presidential party list for the municipal election in Paris.

Parliament report

In 2020, no election nor key shift was held with regard to the lower house of Parliament. Yet, the slow but continuous decline in the number of members of the group the LREM has

kept going. From 303, the group was down to 270 by the end of the year. This means that the LREM lost its absolute majority in the chamber. Yet, it keeps its firm control of the majority thanks to its closed ally, MoDem, and the support of other small parties. On 19 May, seven members of the group contributed to create the new but short-lived ‘Ecology, Democracy, Solidarity’ group, including, for instance, the one-time Macron loyalist Cédric Villani. The group was not positioned in the opposition, but intended to push the government to adopt greener and more worker-friendly reforms to prevent voters from switching to the far-right. The group itself was dissolved on 16 October, its members going to various other groups.

As for the higher house, Senatorial elections were held in September to elect 172 out of the 348 seats. The right-wing and centre parties held onto their majority. The Greens, meanwhile, thanks to its participation in electoral coalitions with the left parties, had enough seats to form a political group, after winning six seats in the election.

The year 2020 was turbulent in legislative terms. First, to deal with the pandemic, the government introduced in March an emergency law establishing a ‘health state of emergency’. It empowers the government to take general measures in order to fight the effects of Covid-19, as well as a number of specific measures such as authorizing the government to adapt procedural deadlines, limitation periods and certain contractual deadlines during the health state of emergency. Through lots of amendments, the Senate refused the government the right to introduce many control mechanisms over policymaking on the longer term (more than two months).

Second, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin presented in October his bill ‘Global security’ (*Sécurité Globale*). In this project, article 24 was broadly criticized, be it by MPs or public opinion. The draft bill prompted protests across the country called by press freedom advocates and civil rights campaigners. Article 24 made it a crime to share images of the police with an ‘obvious intention to harm’ – such as inciting violence against officers – punishable by a year in prison and a €45,000 fine. The proposed ‘global security’ law was partly a response to demands from police unions, who said it would provide greater protection for officers. Finally, after three weeks of protests and debates, in an apparent effort to quell criticism, Christophe Castaner, former Minister of Interior and head of the LREM, said at the end of November that the Bill would be completely rewritten and a new version submitted.

Among the other key legislative bills, the government presented its law project on the ‘republican principles’. A few weeks after the terrorist murder of a history teacher Samuel Paty, the government introduced many measures to protect secular principles. The package aims at positioning President Macron on the issue of ‘*laïcité*’, a fundamental marker of French politics, and the fight against radical Islamism, a key to the next presidential election.

Political party report

In 2020, three ministers decided to launch their own political party. First, Jean-Yves Le Drian and Olivier Dussopt, respectively, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Public Accounts, launched in January Territories of Progress/*Territoires de Progrès* (TDP), a centre-left party, gathering former socialist members, and part of the presidential majority. It is represented by 46 MPs at the National Assembly and four Senators.

Table 5. Party and gender composition of the Senate (*Sénat*) in France in 2020

	Party		1 January 2020				31 December 2020			
			All		Women		All		Women	
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The Republicans	<i>Les Républicains</i>	(LR)	144	41.4%	43	29.9%	148	42.5%	52	35.1%
Socialist and Republican	<i>Socialiste et Républicain</i>	(SR)	71	20.4%	26	36.6%	65	18.7%	24	36.9%
Centrist Union	<i>Union Centriste</i>	(UC)	51	14.7%	21	41.2%	54	15.5%	19	35.2%
The Republic on the Move	<i>La République en Marche</i>	(LREM)	23	6.6%	3	13.0%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Democratic, Social, and European Rally	<i>Rassemblement Démocratique et Social Européen</i>	(RDSE)	23	6.6%	5	21.7%	15	4.3%	4	26.7%
Communist, Republican, Citizen and Ecologist	<i>Communiste Républicain Citoyen et Ecologiste</i>	(CRCE)	16	4.6%	9	56.2%	15	4.3%	8	53.3%
Independents – Republic and Territories	<i>Indépendants – République et Territoires</i>	(IRT)	14	4.0%	2	14.3%	13	3.7%	2	15.4%
Rally of the progressive and independent democrats	<i>Rassemblement des démocrates progressistes et indépendants</i>	(RDPI)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	23	6.6%	5	21.7%
Ecologist – Solidarity and Territories	<i>Ecologiste – Solidarité et Territoires</i>	(EST)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	12	3.4%	4	33.3%
Unaffiliated	<i>Non Inscrits</i>	(NI)	6	1.7%	2	33.3%	3	0.9%	1	33.3%
Totals			348	100.0%	111	31.9%	348	99.9%	119	34.2%

Note: Rassemblement des démocrates progressistes et indépendants is a parliamentary group in the Senate including representatives of La République En Marche! (LREM).

Source: Sénat (2021).

Second, Barbara Pompili, Minister of the Ecological Transition, launched In Common/*En Commun* (EC), in April. En Commun is a centre-left wing and ecological party in support of the presidential majority. It is represented by eight MPs in the National Assembly.

There were also some other slight changes for the LREM. In September, the ex-minister for Home Affairs, Christophe Castaner, became the new leader of the President's party in Parliament. This nomination intervened in a context where the group struggled to overcome internal divisions. As a former minister and long-time ally of President Macron, Castaner was expected to consolidate the unity of the group, two years before the 2022 presidential elections. Almost 40 MPs have left the LREM since the beginning of Macron's mandate. Castaner was also expected to lead the party's efforts to pass a range of big reforms during the year (see below).

Institutional change report

The year 2020 was marked by either controversial debates or complete failures. First, the Convention on Climate ended with much disappointment. The idea of a Convention on climate emerged during the *Grand Débat National*, the national consultation initiated by President Macron in 2019. In January 2019, in the midst of the Yellow Vest/*Gilets Jaunes* protests triggered by the rise of the eco-tax, a proposal to create a climate Citizens' Assembly

was suggested to Macron by the movement *Gilets Citoyens et Démocratie Ouverte*. The citizen's Convention on Climate has known further developments in 2020. Its mandate was to define a series of measures that will allow it to achieve a reduction of at least 40 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared with 1990) in a spirit of social justice. In June 2020, the panel of 150 citizens presented to President Macron a report containing 149 measures. A few months later, the government dispatched the measures out of the 149 intended to be kept, either in budgetary laws or in the comprehensive government bill 'Climate and Resilience' (to be discussed in the French Assembly in March 2021). However, the Citizens' Convention considered in a vote that the government proposals were not up to expectations, grading these with a 2.5 out of 10.

The second issue that appeared to be in a deadlock is the reform of the electoral system for the elections of members of the National Assembly. Promised by Macron in his 2017 presidential campaign, the proposal consisted in moving towards a mixed electoral system, complementing the two-round majority system by a small number of representatives elected through a proportional system, with a target at 20 per cent of the total number of seats. While the Senate in particular proved very reluctant to approve this reform, the project was suspended until 2022 because of lack of consensus.

Issues in national politics

Presidential elections on horizon

The year 2020 has also been marked by debates among parties over the next presidential elections, and more precisely about the organization of internal primaries.

Initiated in 2011 by the *Parti Socialiste*, primaries have also been held in 2017 by *Les Républicains* and the EELV. As for 2022, the right-wing party *Les Républicains* will take the decision after the June 2021 regional elections. As for the EELV, they will organize their own primaries in September 2021.

Covid-19

National politics were obviously highly focused on the pandemic and more especially on the government strategy on reforming the public health service. Many voices in the opposition especially called for a deep reform of it, leading the government, under the leadership of the Minister for Health and Solidarity, Olivier Véran, to launch the '*Ségur de la Santé*' during summer 2020. This wide consultation of health professionals has driven the government to adopt 33 measures, most of them consisting in financing the creation of new jobs, the modernization of technical equipment, etc.

Sources

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