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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fifth periodic report submitted by France under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2021* **

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The annex to the present report is available on the Committee's web page.



I. Issues of particular relevance

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues (E/C.12/FRA/QPR/5)

1. The National School for the Judiciary, which trains judges and prosecutors in France, holds two types of training that may relate to the provisions and application of the Covenant:
 - As part of their basic training, all students (i.e., trainees) complete a six-week internship outside the judicial courts, where they may have the opportunity to see first-hand how international law, including the Covenant, is applied. In 2021, four trainees completed their internships at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, one at the Office of the Defender of Rights, one at the International Institute of Human Rights and another at the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. Some students have the opportunity to complete a three-week international internship at a judicial academy abroad, at an embassy or with a judicial liaison officer (assigned to an embassy). In 2020, 78 individuals (23 per cent of the class) were able to do an internship of this kind.
 - In the context of in-service training, a three-day seminar on “United Nations law on fundamental freedoms” is taught by an auxiliary judge of the Court of Cassation and the Secretary-General of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. The seminar does not explicitly broach the topic of the Covenant but does cover the structure of international human rights bodies, the question of the direct applicability of United Nations conventions and some of their monitoring mechanisms. Ten people took part in the seminar in 2021.
2. The provisions and application of the Covenant are not systematically taught at lawyer training institutions. In fact, prior familiarity with them is required to pass the entrance examination for the regional lawyer training centres, as this is one of the basic subjects taught in university law courses. The Covenant is thus addressed in the main oral examination for the regional lawyer training centres. The French National Bar Council has informed the Ministry of Justice that a reference to the Covenant will be included in the next edition of its *vade mecum* on human rights.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

3. The Act of 27 May 2009 established the National Commission for the Evaluation of State Policies in Overseas France, which is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of public policies in overseas France, and specifically measures to promote economic and social development. The Commission is organized in five working groups (policies for the integration and employment of young people; mechanisms to set prices and price levels; territorial continuity policies; social housing policies; and consideration of the situation of overseas France in national public policies). It submits a public socioeconomic impact assessment report to the parliament every two years. The last one covered 2018–2019.
4. The Ministry for Overseas France regularly produces evaluation reports on the situation in the overseas departments and regions and on the measures that have been put in place there. In March 2020, a report was published on the “evaluation of the implementation of preventive measures for school children” that was performed pursuant to the third National Nutritional Health Programme 2011–2015 and the Obesity Plan 2010–2013. The report and its recommendations are the basis for the fourth National Nutritional Health Programme, whose overseas component will be launched in the fall of 2021. In order to improve access to quality education, measures to take account of multilingual situations have been introduced in the overseas educational districts and in the Wallis and Futuna Islands. They were the subject of an evaluation report in December 2020, which in particular takes stock of the mother-tongue liaison assistant system that was set up in French Guiana in 1998. Lastly, a dossier published in May 2021 assesses the situation and the measures taken to combat food insecurity and malnutrition in overseas France. It presents the fourth National Nutritional Health Programme and the next national programme, for 2021–2027, of the European Social Fund, for which the overseas regions will be eligible, including the objective of combating material deprivation by providing food aid and/or material assistance to the neediest people.

II. Implementation of the Covenant

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (a) of the list of issues

5. Between 2009 and 2019, the poverty rate in France (the percentage of the population with a standard of living below the poverty line) increased from 13.6 per cent to 14.6 per cent. The rate rose after the 2008 economic crisis, fell in 2012 and 2013 and subsequently changed little between 2014 and 2017. The trend in the level of inequality, defined by the ratio between the total income of the richest decile and the total income of the poorest 40 per cent of the population, can be analysed for the period from 2008 to 2018. The ratio ranged from a low of 1.07 to a high of 1.18 during this period, with a steady annual increase, albeit with significant declines in 2013 (0.09 points) and 2016 (0.03 points). The 2019 figures are the latest available, with year N data confirmed in year N+2.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (b) of the list of issues

*Public expenditure and income*¹

6. See annex 1.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (c) of the list of issues

*Tax rate (as a percentage)*²

7. See annex 2.

Income taxes (as a percentage)

8. See annex 3.

Poverty indicators since 1997

9. See annex 4.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (d) of the list of issues

*Public budget allocated to social spending since 2014*³

10. See annex 5.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (e) of the list of issues

*Social spending (in billion euros)*⁴

11. See annex 6.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

12. France is working to ensure that social and environmental rights are taken into account in the common commercial policy of the European Union. In trade negotiations, France ensures that conditionalities are included in the chapters on trade and sustainable development. The agreements concluded with Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea and Singapore contain specific commitments by the parties to respect the core conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In the event of disputes over these chapters, the agreements of the European Union call for a political dialogue and intervention by a group of experts who issue a report on the violation of the chapters. Such is the case in the ongoing procedure between the European Union and the Republic of Korea concerning the latter's

¹ Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2381414#tableau-figure1>.

² Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/serie/s1030>.

³ Sources: Ibid.

⁴ Sources: drees.solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2021-01/Vue%20d%27ensemble_1.pdf.

lack of ratification of the ILO core conventions that it had undertaken to ratify. To take this a step further, France supports the possibility of imposing trade sanctions.

13. The implementation of the trade and sustainable development chapters falls fully within the remit of the European Commission's new Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, who in November 2020 launched a complaints platform. The platform can be used by companies, associations, member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens to report difficulties in implementing the labour, environmental or climate provisions of trade agreements.

14. With a view to revising the regulation on the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which is due to enter into force on 1 January 2024, France supports the establishment of a common core of prioritized conventions on human rights, social rights and environmental protection, to be ratified and implemented by all the beneficiary countries. This core would include the conventions provided for in the GSP regulation and would be supplemented with the multilateral agreements on the environment and biodiversity (Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, Paris Agreement on climate change). Other texts could also be included in the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) regime, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. France would also like the revised regulation to define more demanding conditionalities for the textile and clothing sector, in both social and environmental terms.

15. Lastly, France supports the implementation of a European mechanism to strengthen the fight against forced labour in the value chain of the European Union, in particular in the framework of a European legislative initiative on sustainable corporate governance, which should be adopted by the summer of 2022. In this regard, on 12 July 2021 the European Commission published a guide on the duty of European companies to show due diligence in addressing the risks of forced labour in their operations and supply chains.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 6 (a) of the list of issues

16. The Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) issued a clear legal opinion in 2018 on the allocation of official development assistance (ODA), resulting in an unprecedented diplomatic and financial commitment for the global public good and the adoption, on 20 July 2021, of the framework law on solidarity in development and on the reduction of global inequality. In 2017, French ODA for the first time passed the €10 billion threshold, rising to 0.43 per cent of gross national income (GNI) in 2018 and 0.44 per cent in 2019. With €10.9 billion of ODA in 2019 and €12.4 billion in 2020 (0.53 per cent of GNI), France remains the fifth largest provider of aid in the world. Despite an anticipated decrease in GNI, French ODA will continue to rise, reaching a target of 0.55 per cent of GNI for ODA by 2022.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 6 (b) of the list of issues

17. France contributed €774 million (\$1 billion at the time of the Fund's creation) to the Green Climate Fund in the period 2015–2018, the fourth largest contribution. It has doubled its contribution to the Green Fund for the period 2020–2023, with €1.55 billion. In 2021, ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), France became a co-chair of the Green Climate Fund.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 6 (c) of the list of issues

18. Following the conclusions issued by CICID on 8 February 2018 relating to the incorporation of a human rights-based approach in the country's development cooperation policy, an interministerial strategy entitled "Human Rights and Development" was adopted on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on 10 December 2018.

19. The strategy addresses a dual objective: (i) to leverage French cooperation and development assistance policy in the country's diplomacy promoting human rights; and (ii) to ensure that the implementation of projects and programmes financed by France do not

undermine human rights, in accordance with the European Consensus on Development, adopted in June 2017.

20. Four priorities have been identified for the implementation of the strategy:

- Human rights education and promotion of the link between sustainable development and the realization of human rights
- Support for development actors in implementing the rights-based approach
- Support for rights defenders in the face of increasing restrictions on civil society action
- Support for effective implementation of the universal periodic review and similar regional mechanisms

21. Since 2019, France has significantly increased the amount of its contribution to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (€110,000 in 2020, with priority given to Madagascar and Iraq). It also supports capacity-building activities for civil society organizations to facilitate their participation in the universal periodic review process. For example, in 2020, it provided €28,000 in support to the Human Dignity association, which helped civil society in the Niger draft an alternative report presented during the country's examination under the universal periodic review mechanism. In 2021, France provided €25,000 in funding to UPR Info, an NGO, for a project to raise awareness among national human rights institutions and civil society of the follow-up to implementation of recommendations made under the universal periodic review mechanism in Liberia, Mauritania and Madagascar.

22. In 2020, a multi-year action plan for 2020–2024 was drawn up with all French development actors working in the field of human rights cooperation, setting out effective measures to implement the commitments made in the interministerial strategy.

23. The integration of human rights into the country's development assistance strategy and in its activities related to the Sustainable Development Goals specifically requires training for the personnel of the central administration, local authorities and public development actors in the rights-based approach to development and the ways to make it effectively operative. In 2021, the French Development Agency (Agence française de développement) (AFD) therefore developed a series of training sessions for its personnel.

24. In addition, a working group of the main French public development agencies will review all their operational policies to ensure that they are in line with the principles of doing no harm and maximizing benefits.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 6 (d) of the list of issues

25. Since 2006, Proparco (a section of AFD devoted to work in the private sector) has been carrying out evaluations to measure the results and impacts of its financing. In particular, Proparco assesses the effects of funded projects on: (i) the sustainment of employment and job creation, (ii) women's employment, (iii) social policy practices (conditions of employment, health and safety of workers, etc.) and (iv) improvement of access to essential goods and services. From a methodological point of view, Proparco, in cooperation with its counterpart, the European Development Finance Institutions (EDFI), has developed a harmonized approach to business and human rights, based in particular on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Such requirements will provide orientations for the development of a practical guide and operational tools. An action plan for the implementation of the EDFI approach will be defined by Proparco at the end of 2021 and will focus in particular on promoting the consideration of human rights in the operations of companies and institutional partners that receive funding.

26. In addition, Proparco has set up an independent environmental and social complaint mechanism, developed jointly with its counterparts in Germany and the Netherlands. This mechanism affords any persons or groups that consider themselves adversely affected by the environmental or social aspects of a project financed by Proparco the opportunity to file a complaint with it and to have their complaint handled by a panel of independent experts. In

2020, communication/awareness-raising on the mechanism was carried out with companies funded by Proparco through the introduction of specific clauses in financing agreements.

27. In 2015, the African Enterprises Investment and Support Fund (Fonds d'investissement et de soutien aux entreprises en Afrique) (FISEA), a fund owned by AFD and advised by Proparco, together with other European development banks, invested \$5.5 million in the Novastar Ventures East Africa Fund (Novastar I), an impact investment fund. The Novastar fund's mission is to invest in social enterprises that meet the criteria of the "social business" initiative launched by the AFD Group. The Bridge International Academies (BIA) company was thus one of the four companies in Novastar's portfolio. In September 2019, FISEA made a commitment to invest \$10 million in the Novastar II fund. This new seed and venture capital fund will invest in young and small African companies with a high economic and social impact in order to promote the development of formal employment for local populations and improved access to consumer goods and social and financial services.

28. In its investments, Proparco's approach, which is defined jointly with the European development finance institutions in a constant effort to improve and harmonize their action, reduces the environmental and social risks posed by the financial intermediaries that it funds. Proparco thus requires that the financial intermediaries evaluate the projects they finance based on the performance standards of the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation and the ILO core conventions. When the evaluation shows insufficient results, an action plan is drawn up with the financial intermediary and is attached to the contract.

29. During the study of the investment project in Novastar, in 2015, Proparco carried out due diligence in the field – including consideration of environmental and social aspects – with the aim of analysing the companies receiving investment, including BIA. Specifically, this included an interview with the promoter (on the applicable model, regulatory aspects, accessibility, environmental and social aspects and Novastar's strategy) and a visit to two BIA schools in Kenya. In addition, quarterly follow-up was carried out with the manager and the BIA teams.

30. According to information from the Novastar fund manager, the BIA operations were in compliance with national and international standards. Proparco has also regularly communicated with NGOs on this subject. Given the importance of this sector for the AFD Group, the impact of the company and the concerns of civil society, the AFD Group and all investors have continued to pay particular attention to the BIA project. Proparco is closely following the work of the International Finance Corporation's Compliance Advisor Ombudsman; it expects a final report to be issued by December 2021.

31. As FISEA is only a minority investor, the AFD Group cannot compel Novastar to suspend its financing of BIA. Therefore, while awaiting the conclusions of the International Finance Corporation's complaint management mechanism, FISEA would exercise its right to refrain from contributing to any new financing of BIA until the results of the investigation are known and there are clear answers to the various points raised by civil society.

32. Lastly, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs has undertaken, in cooperation with the AFD Group, to draft a general policy paper detailing the rules and principles that apply to the financing of both for-profit and non-profit private education entities in the framework of French ODA. This policy paper recalls the principles of international law that all French ODA investments must respect, including those set out in the Covenant (see article 13, on the right to education).

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

33. The assessment of the National Strategy for an Ecological Transition to Sustainable Development 2015–2020 mentions the main public policies that have contributed to strategic objective 3 of the Strategy, in relation to economic, social and cultural rights:

- In terms of health and the environment: the second National Food Programme (2014–2019), the third National Environmental Health Plan (2015–2019), the National Plan for the Reduction of Air Pollutant Emissions (2017), the National Health Strategy (2018–2022), the Balanced Trade Relations in Agriculture and Food and Healthy, Sustainable and Affordable Food Act (2018), the National Food and Nutrition

Programme (2019–2023), the National Sport and Health Strategy (2019–2024) and the “Healthy Ageing” Strategy (2020–2022)

- In terms of energy vulnerability: the road map for the energy renovation of buildings (2017), the Act on Housing, Planning and Digital Technology (2018), the Energy Cheque (2018) and the “MaPrimeRénov” scheme (2020)
- In terms of social inequality: the road map of the Multi-Year Plan against Poverty and for Social Inclusion (2015–2017), the road map of the Interministerial Committee on Disabilities (2017), the Permanent Conference on Women’s Sport (2017), the National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty (2018), the Act on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2018), the Interministerial Strategy on Equality between Women and Men (2018), the Act on Emergency Economic and Social Measures (2018), the Disability and Inclusion Plan (2019) and the Overseas Trajectory 5.0 strategy (2019).

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

34. The National Low Carbon Strategy, adopted on 21 April 2020, has two goals: to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and to reduce the country’s carbon footprint. The Strategy, which is built on a projection based on current knowledge, establishes national carbon budgets for the periods 2019–2023, 2024–2028 and 2029–2033. In addition, the Multiannual Energy Plan adopted on 21 April 2020 sets the priorities for energy policy for the next 10 years. It aims to diversify the energy mix, reduce energy consumption in all sectors and ensure a secure energy supply.

35. Some elements of the National Low Carbon Strategy have been taken up in legislation, in particular through the following:

- Act No. 2019-1147 of 8 November 2019 on energy and climate, through its four main objectives: reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and accelerating the development of renewable energies; addressing the problem of poorly insulated properties; creating tools for steering, governing and evaluating our climate policy; and better controlling the price of energy
- Act No. 2019-1428 of 24 December 2019 on mobility, through its three main themes: investing more and better in everyday transport; facilitating and encouraging new solutions to enable mobility for all; and initiating the transition to cleaner types of mobility
- Act No. 2020-105 of 10 February 2020 on combating waste and on the circular economy

36. Work on the implementing provisions for these laws is under way (see the Government’s response to the report of the High Council on Climate).⁵

37. In addition, the Government is working to implement the 149 proposals put forward by the Citizens’ Climate Convention, a citizens’ panel set up in 2020 at the initiative of the President. The panel, consisting of 150 members chosen by lot, was intended to reflect the diversity of French society.⁶ Its objective was to specify measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent in relation to 1990 levels, by 2030, in a spirit of social justice. The Government has moved to achieve this objective on various fronts (for example, provisions adopted in the Finance Act, decisions taken by the Ecological Defence Councils, the economic recovery plan and a dedicated bill on the subject). By May 2021, the Government considered that 75 legislative measures of all types had already been implemented; 71 were being implemented and only 3 had been dropped. A dedicated website makes it possible to follow up on responses to these proposals.⁷ A bill to combat climate change and build resilience to its effects was introduced further to the proposals put forward by the Citizens’ Climate Convention and was adopted by the French parliament on 20 July

⁵ <https://www.hautconseilclimat.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/reponse-gouvernement-rapport-hcc-2020-finale.pdf>.

⁶ <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/279701-convention-citoyenne-pour-le-climat-experience-democratique-inedite>.

⁷ <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/suivi-convention-citoyenne-climat/>.

2021.⁸ It contains new, specific measures, such as the prohibition of the sale of vehicles producing the worst pollution as from 2030, a ban on the rental of poorly insulated properties and the creation of an “Eco-Score” label indicating the environmental impact of consumer goods and services.

38. The Relaunch France stimulus package adopted by the Government to support the economy in the face of the health crisis, presented on 3 September 2020, makes environmental transition a strategic objective, with an allocation of €30 billion.

39. Climate governance has been significantly strengthened with the creation of the High Council on Climate (an advisory body responsible for informing political decision makers on medium- and long-term lines of action and for independently assessing French climate action), the introduction of an “environmental budgeting” approach, and climate assignment letters sent by the Prime Minister to 10 government ministers, and the plans of action drawn up in response to them.

40. The Ministry for Ecological Transition has developed its analysis and evaluation tools to take into consideration the socioeconomic impacts of low-carbon transition measures. The economic and social impacts of the National Low Carbon Strategy were specifically assessed in its accompanying report. In this context, the Government has put in place incentives, subsidies and systems to support investment. In 2020, the Government also increased energy transition support for the poorest households (for example, with strengthened targeting and subsidies for housing renovations or vehicle replacements) and it is further strengthening such actions in 2021–2022:

- The major economic sectors that could be most affected by climate change in France, in terms of employment, are construction (2 million jobs), transport (1.2 million jobs), tourism (1.5 million jobs) and agriculture and fishing (1.6 million jobs).
- In March 2007, the Ministry for Ecological Transition set up an interministerial group to assess the damage and consider measures to limit the cost of the impact of climate change. In the absence in France of a regionalized, long-term socioeconomic forecast by sector, it was decided to use the current French socioeconomic situation to work on a “constant economy” scenario, which makes it possible to isolate the impact of climate change from that of other developments. Only a limited number of sectors were studied, and within these sectors, the analysis focused on a selection of climate change impacts.
- Economic sectors sensitive to water resources, such as industry, agriculture and the drinking water supply could be affected by an overall shortfall of 2 billion m³ of water per year. With the current rate of urbanization, and in the absence of any adaptation, coastal risks (erosion and submersion) will ultimately affect several hundred thousand people and lead to the destruction of housing. The agricultural and agrifood sectors will be the most affected by climate change, with viticulture in particular experiencing large regional disparities. Due to a scarcity of water resources, hydroelectric power plants are expected to produce about 15 per cent less electricity, and losses are expected in the efficiency of energy production and transmission.
- By 2100, a significant impact is to be expected on summer business activity, as tourism becomes less attractive, except in the north of France and in certain departments in the Alps. In general, the tourism sector will have to adapt to the future effects of climate change in order to limit the negative impacts and take advantage of potential opportunities.
- Climate change could also make it necessary to adapt road infrastructure, although the effects of repeated heatwaves are not yet known. If current protections prove insufficient, permanent submersion resulting from a one-metre overall rise in sea level could lead to costs of up to €2 billion.

41. A first national adaptation strategy was published in 2006. Subsequently, in 2011, France adopted the National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change covering the period 2011–2015. A consultation process in 2016 led to the preparation of the second National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change, which covers the period 2018–2022. The measures in the second

⁸ <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/loi-climat-resilience>.

National Adaptation Plan are divided into six main areas of action that take into account all the problems posed by current and anticipated climate change impacts:

- Governance: establishment of effective coordination between the State and the regions for the implementation and monitoring of the second National Adaptation Plan; establishment of regional observatories on the effects of climate change, in particular in overseas France
- Prevention and resilience: research into and implementation of nature-based solutions in response to expected increases in extreme events
- Nature and environment: adaptation and preservation of environments to ensure the favourable development of biodiversity and environmental heritage, whose ecosystem services are essential for coping with the many impacts of climate change
- Economic sectors: adaptation of major economic sectors to create jobs and limit climate impacts that undermine employment
- Knowledge and information: improvement of knowledge and training and provision of information to stakeholders and the public in order to accelerate the country's adaptation and consolidate the basis for decision-making, with particular emphasis on the overseas territories
- International dimension: development and export of French know-how in this area and efforts to maintain the influence of French diplomacy in climate negotiations

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

42. A compensation fund for pesticide victims, which has been fully operational since the end of 2020, allows for the compensation of employees, current and retired farmers and children who were exposed before birth owing to the occupation of one of their parents.

43. For disorders related to chlordecone to be recognized as occupational diseases, a medical board's opinion on the causal link between the occupation and the pathology is required. For Parkinson's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, workers who have been exposed to pesticides benefit from a presumption of origin of the disorder. In late 2020, recommendations were issued to the compensation fund's single eligibility recognition board to facilitate the recognition of coverage for prostate cancer. Lastly, the competent joint committees have commenced consultations, based on the results of the joint expert report of the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety, with the social partners so that they can inform the authorities of their position on the establishment of a table of occupational diseases.

44. The chlordecone IV plan 2021–2027 does not provide for a redress or compensation mechanism for “environmental victims”. However, it calls for financial support for persons in economically affected professions (fishermen, farmers) and for public health programmes to provide medical support for both the general public (free chlordecone contamination tests, monitoring of the most vulnerable or exposed groups, prevention advice through the Family Gardens and Titiri programmes, consultations on environmental pathologies, etc.) and people in affected professions (measures taken to improve medical monitoring of exposed workers, to support them in their efforts to obtain recognition of occupational diseases and to provide better protection of workers through preventive measures in companies).

45. Mercury contamination of the population has been the subject of research, epidemiological studies and prevention programmes for many years in French Guiana.

46. Following the establishment of a mercury competence centre in 2003, a mercury and lead centre was set up in 2017, with the participation of public services and bodies, to better understand contamination mechanisms and to identify measures to prevent adverse health effects of mercury and lead.

47. The recommendations issued by the High Council for Public Health in 2021 concerning health promotion should make it possible to strengthen prevention on the ground.

48. At the international level, efforts against mercury pollution are conducted through the Minamata Convention on Mercury, ratified by France on 28 July 2016.

49. In 2014, the French Directorate-General for Health requested the French Society of Clinical Toxicology to develop recommendations for health professionals for the biometrological assessment, monitoring and case management of pregnant women exposed to mercury in the environment and for the assessment and follow-up of their children's mercury exposure.

50. These recommendations were taken up by the High Council for Public Health in an opinion it issued in 2021 on health inequalities in French Guiana. As part of a preventive approach, the recommendations call for screening of target populations, risk reduction measures through the provision of information and education for at-risk groups, and the medical follow-up of such groups.

51. Act No. 2010-2 of 5 January 2010 on the recognition and compensation of victims of French nuclear testing established the eligibility criteria for compensation of testing victims, including location, time and pathological conditions. The compensation is calculated according to the principle of full reparation for the presumed victims of French nuclear testing. To receive it, a person must suffer from one of the radiation-induced pathologies listed in a decree and must have been present in the Sahara between 13 February 1960 and 31 December 1967 or in French Polynesia between 2 July 1966 and 31 December 1998.

52. Compensation claims are submitted to the Committee for the Compensation of Victims of Nuclear Tests, which has been an independent administrative authority since 2013. The Committee examines applications on the basis of the methodologies recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Since 2018, the Committee's methodology, which has been confirmed by the provisions of article 4 (V) of the Act of 5 January 2010 mentioned above, has specifically been based on article R.1333-11 of the Public Health Code, according to which the exposure limit for the public is 1 millisievert (mSv) per year.

53. Since 2010, 584 claims have been approved and 485 offers of compensation accepted.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

54. Act No. 2017-399 of 27 March 2017 on the duty of care of parent and subcontracting companies establishes an enforcement mechanism, as follows:

- When a party with standing considers that a company has not satisfied its duty of care, the party can send it a notice requiring it to comply with its obligations within three months.
- Once the three-month period has elapsed, if the party considers that the company still has not met its duty of care, it can request the competent court to require it to comply, subject to a penalty for non-compliance. The presiding judge may also be asked to take action under an expedited procedure.

55. The Act on the duty of care, which until recently had been the only one of its kind in the world, is among the tools available to France to implement its National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. Since its entry into force, several notices to comply and summonses have been issued against French multinationals by complainants (often NGOs). It is too early to draw any conclusions from these proceedings, as they are ongoing. In January 2020, the High Council for the Economy published an evaluation of the law's implementation, in which it noted that, while awareness among senior managers had increased since the law's adoption, the level of companies' commitment and development in this field remained uneven at the time of writing.

56. Several French authorities work to raise awareness of the Act on the duty of care among economic actors and to promote it with stakeholders and international partners. France actively supports European efforts in the area of sustainable corporate governance, begun in 2020, to establish a general cross-cutting duty of care obligation for corporations at the European level. This obligation would include targeted mechanisms (addressing forced labour, deforestation and forest degradation and mineral resource supplies for batteries) in line with future obligations for non-financial reporting and classification. France submitted a written contribution on the European duty of care in February 2021, along with several non-papers on the topic.

57. France also relies on the work of the French national focal point for responsible business conduct at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The national focal point's secretariat continues to promote and raise awareness among stakeholders of instruments relating to the duty of care (OECD, United Nations and ILO standards; sectoral guides on the duty of care in global supply chains; the Global Forum on Responsible Business Conduct, etc.), in particular among those in the private sector, in order to promote the proper application of the Act and the effective implementation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The secretariat emphasizes the correlation between the various international standards for responsible business conduct, namely, between the United Nations-OECD guidelines and the core ILO standards.

58. For several years now, the national focal point's secretariat has participated in multidisciplinary academic work on the topic of the duty of care, the aim being to explore the scope of the Act and its effect when applied. Lastly, it is also continuing its work as the dispute resolution body for matters of corporate social responsibility and responsible business conduct. Of the cases processed since 2011, over 50 per cent relate to companies' duty of care and over 70 per cent to human rights (including social rights). This work helps to ensure that companies exercise their duty of care and to promote the effective application of international standards of corporate social responsibility. The national focal point's secretariat monitors the implementation of the recommendations it makes to enterprises and publishes a follow-up bulletin.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

59. The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies and the Directorate for Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics of the Ministry for Solidarity and Health regularly publish statistics on disadvantaged groups. The Government provides the parliament with an annual monitoring table containing indicators for each of 11 thematic objectives of the poverty reduction efforts, including the fight against financial poverty and inequality or against poverty affecting children and older persons.

60. An evaluation committee is responsible for monitoring implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty (2018–2022). Its annual assessment looks at the strategy's 35 measures using indicators selected in accordance with the expected outcomes. Some of the measures are also the subject of a scientific impact assessment to determine their causal effect. An assessment of the strategy as a whole is also carried out annually, taking into account the policies that share the goal of reducing poverty or those addressing the same target population, as well as policies with different goals, whose effects might have an impact on the national strategy.

61. Lastly, a national coordination committee against food insecurity was set up in December 2020 to assess the situation, establish a platform for dialogue and provide a framework for coordination among the actors engaged in the fight against food insecurity.

62. With regard to the overseas departments and regions, see the section on paragraph 3 of the list of issues.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues

63. Since 2019, all companies with over 250 employees and, since 2020, all those with over 50 employees have had to publish annually their score on the professional equality index for men and women (an overall grade, out of 100). In 2021, 70 per cent of companies with over 50 employees published their grade, compared with 59 per cent in 2020. Although only 2 per cent of companies have obtained the highest mark (100), the percentage of companies of all categories achieving scores higher than 75 has risen from 55 to 56 per cent since 2020. Two of five indicators have remained the same as in 2020 (return from maternity leave 11/15; parity among the 10 highest remuneration packages /10). Only a quarter of enterprises are at or near parity.

64. The amount of women's retirement pensions derived from their own retirement entitlements (direct entitlements minus the extra amount for children) remained on average 41 per cent less than that of men in 2018, as against 50 per cent less in 2004. While the survivor's pension scheme, whose beneficiaries are mostly women, results in a reduction of

this gap to around 28 per cent, the average gross pension received by women remains far below that received by men (€1,398 vs. €1,954 per month). This gap, which is narrowing, primarily reflects disparities during working years. Women on average have lower remuneration and less linear careers than men owing to interruptions caused by maternity and child-rearing and to greater engagement in part-time work. The rules calling for quarterly validation under the general pension scheme do, however, mitigate the effects of part-time work on pension entitlements.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

65. Over the last 10 years, the Government has undertaken a number of reforms to support the integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market.

Cross-cutting schemes for persons who have difficulty finding employment

66. A skills investment plan was launched in 2017 with a budget of €15 billion. The plan's priority targets are low-skilled job seekers and young people, with a particular focus on persons with disabilities or who live in disadvantaged areas. The plan aims to provide training to a million unskilled or low-skilled job seekers and 1 million young people lacking access to the labour market between 2018 and 2022.

67. The policy on subsidized contracts was modified in 2018 with the establishment of employment skills pathways (Parcours emplois compétences) (PEC) schemes. Focused on the non-market sector, these schemes provide persons who have difficulty finding employment with a job, along with training and support from the employer and the public employment service.

68. In 2020, 134,000 persons with difficulty finding employment benefited from a scheme that promotes labour market integration through economic activity known as the work integration pathways (parcours d'insertion par l'activité économique) (IAE). Support for its sustained growth continued in 2021, which helped with the economic recovery, in keeping with the mission set out by the Ambition Pact on work integration. The objective is to provide support for at least 200,000 people in 2021 and 240,000 in 2022.

69. Since the adoption of Act No. 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's future employment, an enhanced employer's annual contribution to individual training accounts has been provided for low-skilled workers and persons with disabilities (€800 per year instead of €500, with a ceiling of €8,000 instead of €5,000), thus giving them privileged access to training.

70. In addition, a pilot project consisting in the creation of areas free of long-term unemployment is currently being expanded. It was launched in 10 areas in 2017, pursuant to Act No. 2016-231 of 29 February 2016 on piloting a project to end long-term unemployment at the local level, and has yielded positive results. It will be expanded to 50 more localities pursuant to Act No. 2020-1577 of 14 December 2020 on strengthening employment inclusion through economic activity and piloting "zero long-term unemployment areas". Under the scheme, job-creation enterprises are established in specific areas for the purpose of hiring long-term unemployed people on open-ended contracts by reallocating the funds earmarked for unemployment benefits. These social service solidarity enterprises offer services not otherwise available in such areas and thus do not compete with local businesses. The persons hired by these job-creation enterprises are most often women, young people (over half are under the age of 42) or individuals lacking educational certification, most of whom have no diploma of any kind (28.3 per cent). Without this project, only 55.9 per cent of the employees of these job-creation enterprises would have a job, and barely one third would hold an open-ended contract.⁹

⁹ See the report of the scientific committee, chaired by Olivier Bouba Olga, "Expérimentation Territoire zéro chômeurs de longue durée", Dares, April 2021.

Youth

71. A large-scale plan for youth employment was adopted in 2013 in response to the European Youth Guarantee recommendation. Augmented youth employment support measures have been put in place, including contractual employment support schemes, with extra assistance, known as the “youth guarantee”, for the most vulnerable youths. These measures implemented by local branches aim to offer all young people under the age of 26 who are not studying, working or in training a stable solution for their integration in the labour market (for example, through apprenticeships, jobs, internships or training). They are offered 12-month schemes that combine refresher training, work on cross-occupational skills, soft skills and social support. The most intensive version of the scheme – the “youth guarantee” – also includes an allowance.

72. The Pôle emploi government employment centre also offers young people between the ages of 16 and 29 enhanced support for three to six months through an intensive youth support scheme.

73. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis put an end to the downward trend in youth unemployment that had recently been observed. Since the start of the crisis, a huge emergency plan called “One youth, one solution” has been rolled out, with a budget of €6.7 billion. The Government is committed to providing labour market integration or a repeat of initial training to any young person who needs it. The package combines hiring assistance, support for work-study contracts, training in skills and occupations of the future and tailored integration schemes for those who are least likely to find a job otherwise.

74. To respond to young people’s financial difficulties, the grant under the contractual employment support schemes was expanded on 1 January 2021, and specific financial aid has been set up for young people overseen by the Association for the Employment of Supervisory Staff and those who are enrolled in an intensive youth support scheme run by Pôle emploi.

75. Lastly, discussions are under way¹⁰ to develop a recruitment allowance, to be launched in September 2021. The youth recruitment allowance is based on the principle of offering all young people who need it a pathway to employment in which their needs are assessed so that they can receive individualized support tailored to the difficulties they face. Young people with financial difficulties will receive an allowance as part of the support. They will also have to sign a contract involving a mutual commitment between them and the government employment centre. The committee on the youth recruitment allowance has met and will finalize the scheme before its launch.

Older workers

76. Recruitment and retention of older workers are encouraged through various programmes. Employers can seek financial assistance to recruit job seekers over the age of 45 on specific work-study contracts that lead to a professional qualification (professional enhancement contracts).

77. The “senior” fixed-term contract is aimed at facilitating the return to work of persons nearing the end of their careers and enabling them to accrue supplementary pension entitlements.

78. Under the PEC employment skills scheme, when employers hire older persons who are long-term unemployed for permanent positions or on contracts of more than six months, they receive monthly subsidies of 30 to 60 per cent of the minimum gross salary.

Persons with disabilities

79. The terms for the obligation to employ workers with disabilities (set at 6 per cent for enterprises with at least 20 employees) were strengthened on 1 January 2020, and a temporary

¹⁰ See press release: <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/actualites/presse/communiqués-de-presse/article/1-jeune-1-solution-elisabeth-borne-lance-le-comite-du-revenu-d-engagement-pour>.

bonus of up to €4,000 for the recruitment of workers with disabilities was introduced as part of the national economic recovery plan.

80. A reform of the framework for disability-friendly companies, which entered into force on 1 January 2019, has made it possible to try out new ways of supporting persons with disabilities in obtaining employment by facilitating links between such companies and other types of enterprises.

81. Persons with disabilities get priority with regard to certain components of the skills investment plan (see below) and can benefit from a contractual employment support scheme – youth guarantee until the age of 30. In addition, they benefit from a higher employer’s annual contribution to their individual training accounts (as mentioned above).

82. Another element of the amendment of Act No. 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one’s future employment is the reform of the approved agreement scheme, whereby employers can be exempt from paying contributions if they sign on to a State-authorized agreement with the social partners that includes measures to promote the recruitment or retention of workers with disabilities. Since 2020, the duration of such agreements has been limited to three years, renewable once.

83. Furthermore, it has been ascertained that 80 per cent of disabilities are invisible and that employers are often unaware of them. In order to ensure that disability and persons with disabilities are better represented in audiovisual media, in keeping with the commitments made by the signatories of the French Broadcasting Authority charter signed on 3 December 2019 in the context of the Interministerial Committee on Disabilities, an editorial committee has been set up; it includes the participation of expert associations, with a view to ensuring that disability is better represented in the media.

84. The French authorities continuously promote a change in the perceptions of the skills of persons with disabilities. For instance, they have adopted a road map entitled “Dare to hire”. In this connection, contact is fostered through workplace immersion. The “duoday” initiative (which puts employers and individuals directly in touch) and, more recently, the possibility of alternating work and study under the duoday initiative, are examples of this. Contact plays a crucial role in combating stereotypes.

Persons living in underprivileged geographic areas

85. Persons living in underprivileged geographic areas (urban policy priority areas under the French City Policy and rural revitalization areas) are eligible for specific labour market integration schemes.

86. The “payroll tax exemption” scheme provides financial support to employers for the recruitment of individuals who live in urban policy priority areas (as defined under the City Policy).

87. As part of the measures to counteract the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, people living in urban policy priority areas or in rural revitalization areas are eligible for employment skills pathways PEC schemes (see above), with higher subsidy levels.

88. The “One youth, one mentor” scheme, which is part of the “One youth, one solution” plan, is designed to increase the number of young people who receive support from a mentor (a student or a working or retired professional) for their schooling, their choice of a career path or their entry into the labour market. Priority is given to people living in underprivileged geographic areas (urban policy priority areas and rural revitalization areas) and vulnerable groups.

89. The President has set an objective of 100,000 young people to benefit from the scheme in 2021, or three times the 2020 figure, rising to 200,000 in 2022.

90. Between 2012 and 2020, the number of victims who opted to take action following an incident of discrimination rose by 19 per cent. Now, nearly 75 per cent of workers who encounter discrimination say they have taken action. Over the past eight years, victims have become twice as likely to take action after experiencing discrimination. Half of people who have experienced discrimination have now broached the subject with their employer, compared with 31 per cent previously. In the same period, in the private sector, the proportion

of cases giving rise to litigation rose from 8 to 14 per cent, and cases involving the assistance of a lawyer climbed from 8 to 17 per cent. The share of cases involving staff representatives or trade unions, which had fallen between 2010 and 2013, saw an upsurge between 2012 and 2020, rising from 21 to 36 per cent. Lastly, in 32 per cent of those cases, the labour inspectorate was contacted, an increase of 19 percentage points.

91. More than half of workers (52 per cent) believe that trade unions and staff representatives are effective at helping workers and public servants who have experienced discrimination or discrimination-based harassment.

92. Pôle emploi, the government employment centre, received additional funds in 2021 under the economic recovery plan:

- €250 million to address the rise in unemployment (through human resources and targeted spending)
- €69 million to increase the number of people eligible for the intensive youth support scheme, which would make it possible to recruit people to fill an additional 1,300 full-time equivalent posts. These posts are required to raise the number of young people receiving support from 135,000 to 240,000
- €160 million to bolster the existing national market of massive open online courses (MOOCs) by building up the catalogue of distance courses, thus funding 30,000 additional training courses

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

93. As part of the reform of the unemployment insurance system, there are plans to introduce an incentive-disincentive adjustment to the level of employer contributions to unemployment insurance. The contributions (currently fixed, at 4.05 per cent) would be higher or lower based on the number of terminated or temporary contracts resulting in registration with Pôle emploi. The goal is to prevent job insecurity by encouraging companies to either offer more open-ended contracts or to extend fixed-term contracts.

94. The law establishes the principle that open-ended contracts should be the norm and sets out strict rules for alternatives to such contracts. Fixed-term and temporary contracts must not have the purpose or effect of filling posts in the long term that are associated with a company's normal ongoing activities.

95. The law also establishes a limited list of cases in which other types of contract are authorized. Employers or temporary agencies' client companies that ignore the rules on fixed-term and temporary contracts are subject to various civil and criminal penalties. Regarding criminal penalties, non-compliance with certain rules carries a fine of €3,750; repeat offences carry a fine of €7,500 and 6 months' imprisonment.

96. Depending on the type of irregularity in the use or form of fixed-term or temporary contracts, the workers concerned may be entitled to have their contracts reclassified as open-ended. When certain rules governing short-term contracts are violated, the contracts are presumed to have been concluded for an open-ended period, and this presumption is irrefutable. However, for other rules, the employer can provide proof of the fixed duration of the contract.

97. When temporary agencies' client companies keep temporary employees on in an irregular manner after the end of their assignment or use temporary employees in an irregular manner, the temporary contracts are automatically reclassified as open-ended contracts. Thus, when client companies continue to employ temporary employees after the end of their assignments without concluding an employment contract with them or without a new temporary employee leasing agreement, the employees are deemed to be engaged by the client company, with an open-ended contract. Where courts allow the reclassification, they grant the employee, at the cost of the employer or the client company, compensation of no less than one month's salary, without prejudice to compensation or damages owed in the event of dismissal.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

98. No employees can be punished, dismissed or discriminated against on account of their trade union activities (art. L. L1132-1 of the Labour Code). Employers cannot take into consideration such activities when making decisions, including on matters of recruitment, promotion and remuneration (art. L. L2141-5 of the Labour Code). When employees who believe they have been the victim of discrimination can present evidence to support their claim, the burden is on employers to prove that their decision was justified, by citing objective facts completely unrelated to discrimination (art. L. L1134-1 of the Labour Code).

99. Elected staff delegates – whether primary or alternate members – and trade union representatives in company social and economic committees cannot be dismissed without authorization from the labour inspectorate. Former trade union representatives are protected against dismissal for six months following the end of their term or the closure of the body in question.

100. Failure to apply the provisions on trade union discrimination carries a harsh penalty (a fine of €3,750) and may give rise to criminal penalties in cases involving a refusal to hire or discriminatory punishment or dismissal (3 years' imprisonment and a fine of €45,000).

101. The labour inspectorate regularly conducts investigations to uncover possible links between employees' trade union activities and managerial actions taken against them.

102. The potential risk of worsening disparities in working conditions resulting from enterprise-specific contracts is addressed by the fact that sectoral agreements take precedence over such contracts in essential matters of social governance. Additionally, an industry can decide that sectoral agreements take precedence over enterprise-specific contracts in four areas: occupational hazard prevention; the hiring and retention of workers with disabilities; the number of workers required for the designation of trade union representatives, how many can be designated and how they are credited for their trade union activities; and bonus pay for hazardous or unhealthy work.

103. In fields where the law stipulates that enterprise-specific contracts take precedence, an industry can continue to fulfil its regulatory function by introducing supplementary provisions for companies that do not conclude agreements in that area. These provisions also come into play in the negotiation of enterprise-specific contracts. When the parties fail to agree, the sectoral agreement remains applicable.

104. The conclusion of enterprise-specific contracts is subject to a high threshold for majority representation. In order to be valid, such a contract must be signed by one or more representative trade unions having obtained over 50 per cent of the votes in staff elections. In enterprises without trade union representatives, draft agreements that are submitted for the direct endorsement of employees must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the staff.

105. At companies with fewer than 20 employees, it is possible to call a referendum for employees to directly adopt a draft agreement only when there is no trade union representative or elected staff delegate to the social and economic committee. Thus, referendums can be called only in situations where negotiations with trade unions or elected staff representatives are not possible.

106. In addition, the Labour Code provides for a minimum of two weeks between the times when the employer submits the draft agreement to employees and when the staff consultation can take place. This period is intended to enable employees to seek information on the procedure and on the content of the proposed agreements, by contacting department-level trade unions or their departmental Observatory for analysing and supporting social dialogue and negotiation.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

107. The reform of the unemployment insurance system in July 2019 initially provided for:

- A minimum affiliation period of six months to qualify for the allowance (compared with four months previously, and one month for renewal of entitlement)

- A new method of calculating the allowance, based on the employee's previous average income
- The introduction of degressive entitlements for the higher income brackets

108. In the light of the health crisis, the Government wanted to consult employers' organizations and trade unions with the aim of adapting the reform to the new economic and social situation. Decree No. 2021-346 of 30 March 2021, which was published following the consultation, is intended to increase the eligibility of job seekers for insurance benefits for as long as the economic and social situation has not improved in a sustainable manner and to limit the effects of the new calculation of benefits on the compensation for workers in the most precarious employment.

109. Accordingly, the minimum affiliation period required for eligibility for the benefit, which had already been reduced as from 1 August 2020, will remain four months. The period after which the benefit becomes degressive for certain job seekers has been extended to eight months rather than six, provided the following two general conditions are met:

- The total number of declarations of intention to hire, for contracts exceeding one month, must be higher than 2.7 million, for four consecutive months
- The total number of job seekers in category A must fall by at least 130,000 over the previous six months

110. Lastly, as from 1 July 2021, a correction was made to the new way of calculating benefits. The principle of the reform consisting in calculating the amount of the benefit on the basis of average monthly income rather than exclusively on the number of days worked has not changed. However, to support workers in precarious employment whose periods of employment are particularly intermittent, the periods of inactivity taken into account in the calculation will be capped to keep them from excessively reducing compensation.

111. Implementation of a plan to reform the retirement pension system by adopting legislation establishing a universal pension scheme has been postponed due to the health crisis.

112. In 2018, the median amount of the pensions received by recent cohorts of retirees (ages 65 to 74) was 74 per cent of the average income of employed people nearing retirement (ages 55 to 59). This relatively high level is a key factor in ensuring that the overall standard of living of retiree households is similar to that of active households. In fact, retirees are under-represented in the lower deciles for standard of living. The poverty rate among retirees remained far below the rate among the general population in 2018 (8.7 per cent, as against 14.8 per cent). The average net retirement pension that year was €1,382.

113. In order to significantly reduce poverty among older persons, the maximum amount of the solidarity allowance for older persons (*Allocation de solidarité aux personnes âgées*) (ASPA) was raised by 10 per cent between 2018 and 2021, to reach €906.81 per month as from 1 January 2020, for a person living alone.

114. The amount of the full retirement pension under the general social security system cannot be less than a certain base known as the minimum allowance. In 2021, the amount of the minimum allowance was €705.36 per month, or €8,464.28 per year. This allowance is granted irrespective of the retiree's non-pension income. These amounts include the basic pension (to which the additional pensions should be added). On 31 December 2019, 4,762,000 retirees were receiving this minimum pension.

115. To address the COVID-19 pandemic and avoid the layoffs that could result from an economic slowdown, the Government strengthened the part-time work scheme. Part-time work provided no entitlement to a basic pension. According to forecasts by the National Old-Age Pension Fund, if no measures were taken to alleviate the impact of partial unemployment on pension rights, 5.5 per cent of employees working part-time would have had fewer qualifying quarters certified in 2020 than they would have had certified without the cutbacks.

116. The Government responded by extending eligibility for a basic pension to employees who were forced into part-time work between 1 March 2020 and 31 December 2020, a

measure which also applied to employees who were forced into part-time work for extended lengths of time. Periods of part-time work are thus taken into account for the basic pension.

117. Studies by, among others, the advisory board on pensions have identified at least two factors to explain the limited uptake of ASPA benefits: (i) people do not know enough about the benefits, or even that they exist at all, and (ii) people are reluctant to apply for the ASPA benefit owing to the complexity of the administrative procedures or a fear of being stigmatized.

118. In its 2012 report on social security, the French Court of Accounts (Cour des comptes) raised the issue of the lack of awareness among beneficiaries. It also drew attention to the fact that the legal obligation of pension funds to provide information was limited to when beneficiaries claimed their pensions. However, many retirees are not yet eligible for the ASPA benefit at the time when they claim their pensions and will not become eligible until the age of 65.

119. Since 1 January 2017, all beneficiaries of the retirement pension system, whether contributors or retirees, have had access to an online personal retirement information account where they can find all their retirement data (number of qualifying quarters, amount of contributions, points) and a tool to estimate future benefits.

120. Established under a law adopted in 2014, the single claim for harmonized pension schemes (Liquidation unique des régimes alignés) was set up on 1 July 2017. This mechanism enables workers who have contributed to the general pension system or to the pension system for agricultural workers, or who have been self-employed, to claim all of their retirement pensions through a single application. On the basis of simulations run on the cohort born in 1942, the LURA mechanism alone has reduced by 10 per cent the proportion of beneficiaries who do not avail themselves of their full benefits.

121. At the beginning of 2017 the authorities introduced a series of measures to simplify procedures, for instance for recipients of the allowance for adults with disabilities (Allocation aux adultes handicapés) (AAH). At the statutory retirement age, recipients of this allowance whose degree of disability is 80 per cent or higher are no longer required to request the ASPA solidarity benefit for older persons. All those born on or after 1 January 1955 can thus choose to keep the AAH allowance. Such persons can call upon their contact organization to make sure that the AAH allowance will continue to be disbursed beyond the statutory retirement age.

122. Since 2014, the National Family Allowance Fund (Caisse nationale des allocations familiales) (CNAF) has undertaken an ambitious effort to reduce the number of people who do not avail themselves of social benefits, using a new mechanism known as the “entitlements appointment”. In keeping with the single window concept, the Fund’s branches offer their most vulnerable beneficiaries a personalized consultation to discuss an array of social entitlements, regardless of whether they are managed by the branches themselves.

123. A study was conducted in 2016 at the request of CNAF specifically to measure the impact of these appointments on beneficiaries. According to the study, in March 2016, an average of 63 per cent of persons who had been informed at the appointment that they were eligible for at least one benefit registered for one within three months of the consultation. Overall, 4 out of every 10 people register for a benefit following the appointment.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues

124. Among the tools used to tackle maltreatment in the home are telephone platforms, support groups and the work of associations. The best known of these associations is Fédération 3977, which aims to combat maltreatment by providing families with advice, guidance and information via its 3977 national hotline. In 2019, the hotline received 25,000 calls. The association documented more than 4,200 situations of maltreatment, resulting in 28,000 support measures and 6,000 individual actions. Three quarters of victims are older persons, mostly over 80 years of age. A quarter of reported cases concerned maltreatment of adults with disabilities. In 73 per cent of cases, the reported maltreatment took place in the victim’s home; in 27 per cent, it took place at institutions.

125. The authorities have put in place tools to change perceptions of vulnerable older persons in institutions, and they are a crucial part of the fight against maltreatment. A multi-year action plan for 2021–2023 will soon be implemented, in consultation with stakeholders. The plan draws on the work of the Commission for Combating Maltreatment and Promoting Good Treatment and is also addressed in the context of the bill entitled “Generations in Solidarity”.

126. The National Agency for the Assessment and Quality of Social and Medico-Social Services and Institutions, among other bodies, regularly publishes recommendations on best practices for the directors and staff of care facilities for older persons.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

127. According to an estimate of the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques) (INSEE), the monetary poverty rate in metropolitan France stood at 14.5 per cent in 2019, with 9.1 million people living below the poverty line. Although the figures for 2020 are not yet known, it appears that the health crisis has had and will continue to have major economic and social consequences.

128. The evaluation committee of the National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty has published its 2021 report. The report presents new conclusions on the implementation of the Strategy and the first available elements for its evaluation, describes the evaluation work in progress and to come, specifies the points it wishes to bring to the Government’s attention regarding its policy to combat poverty, and makes recommendations. The Strategy has two main objectives: to avoid the social reproduction of poverty and to enable people to escape poverty. The evaluation committee also decided to assess progress against a third objective: to leave no one in a situation of extreme poverty.

129. The committee raised six points for attention: better defining and understanding extreme poverty, combating the effects of the coronavirus crisis on poverty, tackling the non-take-up of benefit entitlements, helping the most deprived 18- to 24-year-olds, assessing the overall effectiveness of support in its entirety and speeding up implementation of the Housing First plan.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

130. The prevention component of the National Health Strategy 2018–2022 is set out in the “Priority on Prevention” National Public Health Plan, which provides for a health promotion policy and, within that framework, the fourth National Nutritional Health Programme, for the period 2019–2023, which is designed to improve the health of the population through better dietary practices and physical activity. Its objectives include reducing the incidence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents by 20 per cent, stabilizing the incidence of overweight in adults and reducing obesity in adults by 15 per cent, with two main thrusts:

- Making the environment healthier: The Programme helps the public make better food choices and encourages manufacturers to improve the nutritional quality of food (as shown on the Nutri-Score label). It also aims to reduce the influence on children of unhealthy food advertising and marketing.
- Promoting healthy behaviours by making new recommendations on nutrition and physical activity, notably encouraging people to spend less time in front of screens when not at work and to increase their physical activity. The Ministry of Solidarity and Health and the National Health Insurance Fund have set up the “Get Back on Track” (“Mission: Retrouve ton cap”) pilot project. Deployed in the four departments of Seine-Saint-Denis, Nord, Pas-de-Calais and La Réunion, it offers early multidisciplinary care (nutrition, psychology and physical activity) adapted to the needs of children aged 3 to 8 who are at risk of overweight and obesity.

131. The National Nutritional Health Programme is complementary to the third National Food Programme, for 2019–2023, adopted pursuant to the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The third National Food Programme has a cross-cutting approach aimed at various target groups (children, adults, communities, food chain professionals, associations, etc.). In terms of

structure, it has three thematic components: social justice, food education and reduction of food waste; and two cross-cutting components: local food projects and institutional catering. A plant protein plan was launched in 2021 to promote the production and encourage the consumption of plant proteins in France, in line with the new nutritional recommendations. French farming is committed to the agroecological transition. These initiatives, coupled with the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, together help preserve family farming throughout France.

132. At the international level, France has an International Strategy for Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture for the period 2019–2024, which serves as its new road map in this field, with five objectives:

- Strengthen global governance of food security and nutrition
- Develop sustainable agricultural and food systems to address climate change and biodiversity loss
- Reinforce action taken by France to comprehensively address the various factors that contribute to the undernourishment of young children and pregnant and breastfeeding women
- Support the formation of sustainable agrifood chains to promote the creation of decent jobs in rural areas, particularly for young people
- Strengthen food assistance actions for vulnerable populations and improve their resilience

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

133. Housing is particularly difficult to access in large cities. Numerous mechanisms have been developed to address this problem. There is a large social housing stock of more than 5 million units.

134. The aim of the Housing First plan is to steer homeless people towards long-term housing and to offer appropriate and flexible support. This policy is designed to respond to individuals' needs, as expressed by the people in question. It is based in particular on an expansion of the supply of supported and ordinary housing in order to control and reduce the use of temporary accommodation, in particular overnight stays in hotels. By speeding up access to housing, the Housing First plan aims to restore the original purpose of emergency accommodation: to provide unconditional and immediate shelter for people in distress.

135. Providing direct access to long-term housing as quickly as possible is also a guiding principle of the slum clearance and refugee housing policies.

136. In 2020, 13,821 social housing units were allocated to households living in emergency accommodation, accommodation centres, social rehabilitation centres or hotels, and 7,970 to households that declared themselves homeless or in makeshift housing, thus bringing the total to 21,791 social housing units that were allocated. The allocation of housing units to these households came to a virtual standstill for two months during the spring (owing to the confinement of the population in the context of the pandemic), before rebounding so that the number of units allocated in 2020 was only 6 per cent lower than in 2019. Between June and December 2020, the authorities allocated 1,700 social units more than in the same period in 2019. However, the overall number of social housing units allocated fell by 15 per cent.

137. The proportion of social housing units allocated to homeless households rose from 3.93 per cent of the total in 2017 to 5.63 per cent in 2020, reflecting the higher priority that was accorded to this group.

138. In addition, in 2020, 9,865 housing units were mobilized for 18,092 refugees. These data refer to dwellings that were mobilized for beneficiaries of international protection either locally, through the national platform or under the European resettlement programme. Since 2018, more than 60,000 refugees have thus accessed housing as a result of government action.

139. In 2020, 9,441 new accommodation places were opened in the rental intermediation system: 107 per cent of the annual target. A target of an additional 40,000 places was set to be reached by 2022; 60 per cent of that target has been achieved.

140. The 2018 plan to relaunch the rental intermediation system has driven a sharp acceleration in the creation of State-funded places. The housing stock built up in the 10 years between 2008 and 2017 was expanded by 75 per cent in the three years that followed.

141. As at 31 December 2020, there were approximately 57,000 places in about 22,000 dwellings, with an average of 2.6 places per unit.

142. In 2020, only 656 accommodation places were opened in boarding houses and supported living residences. The stoppage of construction in the spring is likely to have caused significant delays, with openings postponed until 2021.

143. Nevertheless, the trend remains positive and 1,574 Assisted Rental Loans for Integration for persons living in boarding houses and supported living residences were approved in 2020. Between 2018 and 2020, 4,282 such loans were approved, almost as many as in the seven-year period from 2011 to 2017, although the overall annual number of approvals for Assisted Rental Loans fell by 13 per cent between 2019 and 2020. Of the total number of Assisted Rental Loans financed in 2020, 5,799 were for general social housing (in addition to the 1,574 for boarding houses and supported living residences).

144. Within this framework, specific housing programmes have been developed for women victims of violence, pregnant women and new mothers and marginalized groups. In respect of the latter, a call for projects has been launched.

145. A stock of temporary accommodation with 200,000 places is available for persons in irregular situations. There are no conditions for access to this accommodation.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues

146. Over the last twenty years or so, illegal settlements and squats have reappeared in mainland France, inhabited mainly by poor European migrants. In July 2021, the authorities counted nearly 430 sites with more than 10 inhabitants, occupied by more than 21,000 people (including 14,000 with European citizenship). These data come from the Résorption-bidonvilles (slum clearance) digital platform created in 2019, which is used by government agencies at the departmental level to identify sites that have been illegally occupied on a long-term basis.

147. The government instruction of 25 January 2018 is aimed at giving a new impetus to the clearance of illegal camps and settlements. The instruction affirms the principles of humanity and respect for the laws of the French Republic and requires effective public action, with the objective of clearing slums.

148. The instruction calls upon prefects to initiate slum clearance actions “as soon as possible after initial formation [of the site] regardless of whether legal proceedings have been initiated to evacuate it”. These actions include ensuring safe living conditions, camp organization, performing pre-evacuation assessments and providing solutions for occupants to leave the site and find legal accommodation possibilities, until such time as the camp has been fully cleared. A site is deemed to be cleared when a majority (two thirds) of its inhabitants have found permanent housing solutions and there has been no resettlement at another site.

149. A national budget is set aside to support local clearance actions. In September 2019, the Government decided to double this budget from €4 million to €8 million in 2020. Between 2018 and 2020, actions co-funded from this national budget line have enabled more than 4,100 people to access housing and more than 2,500 to obtain employment.

150. Regarding the closure of sites with more than 10 inhabitants (citizens of European and non-European countries):

- In 2019, 233 sites were closed, 125 pursuant to administrative or judicial decisions, and 19 sites were cleared.
- In 2020, 264 sites were closed, 91 pursuant to administrative or judicial decisions, and 17 sites were cleared.

151. The sites that were not closed down were cleared as a result of their inhabitants moving to other sites or returning to their countries of origin. Closures are now better

prepared, as a social analysis is conducted to determine the residents' situation and provide them with guidance once the site closes.

152. The clearance policy is part of a comprehensive approach that encompasses the rights to accommodation, housing, health care, schooling and employment; child protection; women's rights; the fight against crime and human trafficking; respect for public order; and legality of residence. While the €8 million budget has been maintained in 2021, it is insufficient to meet demand from the departments concerned. Decentralized services are encouraged to seek co-financing from the State, local authorities and the European Union.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 22 of the list of issues

153. During the COVID-19 health crisis, public health and humanitarian issues in illegal settlements came to the fore, notably with regard to water and hygiene. As part of its response to the crisis, the Government has:

- Initiated and supported on-site interventions to improve living conditions (providing access to water, sanitation and hygiene). Almost 90 per cent of site residents had access to water as at 2 June 2020, thanks to the extensive mobilization of local actors.
- Requested logistical support from emergency and humanitarian actors including Solidarités International, Action against Hunger, Médecins du Monde and the French Red Cross, as well as traditional social support associations, for water, sanitation and hygiene, food distribution and preventive health-care measures
- Adapted the Résorption-bidonvilles (slum clearance) digital tool to include information on COVID-19 and living conditions at sites. Stakeholders can use the platform to know whether water and electricity are effectively being supplied to each site and if action needs to be taken.

154. Thanks to these efforts, new practices and partnerships have emerged. These must now be translated into the development and implementation of local slum clearance strategies.

155. The assistance provided to migrants living in camps varies by region. In the Paris region, a census of migrants sleeping rough is taken twice a week during outreach rounds by specialized associations (France terre d'asile). This census makes it possible for the prefectures to organize operations for the evacuation of large and small camps with a view to preventing the formation and establishment of settlements. In the course of these operations, homeless people are referred to temporary shelters. In 2020, 19 sheltering operations took place in the departments of Paris and Seine-Saint-Denis, with the result that 8,691 people, including isolated and vulnerable people (single women and families) were provided with shelter. Between 1 January and 21 July 2021, 17 sheltering operations took place in the Paris department, with a total of 4,225 people sheltered. At the same time, daily outreach rounds were carried out to provide the population with information about their right to stay, the asylum procedure and accommodation arrangements, and to organize food distributions and to offer health care.

156. The State has put in place various humanitarian services to ensure dignified living conditions at the migrant camps in Calais. In 2020, migrant numbers in Calais fluctuated between 400 and a peak of 1,200 during the summer. Since August 2017, the services provided have included:

- Access to water: until August 2020, two or three 1,000-litre tankers, each with a row of 10 taps, made rounds in the Calais area. Water is available seven days a week from 9.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. at three different sites. A drinking fountain with two taps was installed in August 2018 and is accessible seven days a week. The facilities include a 400-litre capacity portable toilet block, with three washbasins. During the COVID-19 health crisis, these facilities were expanded so that there are now 52 water taps available to the migrant population – 10 on the Monod site, available seven days a week, and 42 on the Route de Saint-Omer site, available five days a week. Water is also regularly distributed in reusable 5-litre jerrycans, 99,765 of which have been distributed since July 2018.
- Toilet access: 34 stalls have been installed in the three places most frequented by migrants. They are available seven days a week and are serviced daily. There is also

a shower block with 14 toilets. The migrant population therefore has access to a total of 48 toilet cubicles. A team of workers filling 20 full-time equivalent posts, employed by associations, provides access to water and toilets seven days a week, 365 days a year. There are 28 showers, open to all, which have been installed at a dedicated site that migrants can reach by shuttle bus five days a week.

- Access to a healthy, balanced diet: during his visit to Calais on 16 January 2018, the President of France announced the expansion of humanitarian services to include food distribution to migrants. This service was launched on 6 March. Food is distributed seven days a week, twice a day: breakfast and a meal consisting of a double ration, corresponding to the nutritional needs of young adult men.
- Information for migrants: every day, mobile teams move around Calais providing reliable and clear information on accommodation, the asylum procedure, the right to stay and access to health care and shelter.
- Accommodation and shelter: in 2020, establishments provided shelter for 8,581 people.
- A health-care access point, attached to the hospital, is open five days a week. It received 6,795 visits in 2020.

157. Since the Equality and Citizenship Act was passed in January 2017, a new regulatory framework has been adopted for the reception and housing of Travellers, including regulations on major stopping points (March 2019) and on permanent reception areas and rented plots for families (December 2019). The stabilization of the regulatory framework should be conducive to the development of reception facilities and the diversification of Traveller housing to better meet the needs of Travellers for an established anchorage (a permanent dwelling in use for part of the year).

158. To support this new approach and improve information for stakeholders and decision makers, specific tools have been developed, in consultation with all relevant partners. For example, in spring 2019 the Interministerial Task Force on Accommodation and Access to Housing and the National Advisory Commission on Travellers organized a national technical day to propose elements of methodology and good practices for the review of department-level Traveller reception plans. Subsequently, a national guide was drawn up by the housing ministry with the involvement of a panel of stakeholders. Published in the autumn of 2020, it has been widely distributed to prefectures and government agencies (including those responsible for health, education and social affairs) and made available online to promote the new regulatory provisions and the adoption of best practices.

159. Lastly, in the framework of the recovery plan adopted in response to the health crisis, support has been granted on an exceptional basis to people in precarious situations, to improve their living conditions. In 2021 and 2022, a specific budget of €20 million has been allocated to groups of local authorities that wish to accelerate major renovations of permanent reception areas for Travellers.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 23 (a) of the list of issues

160. Since the passage of the Social Security Funding Act for 2004, arrangements for the funding of health establishments by the public health insurance system have been determined by the establishments' legal status and the disciplines that they practise:

- For establishments that carry out medical, surgical, obstetric and dental activities, there is a mixed funding system comprised partly of activity-based allocations and partly of grants (annual operating expense allocation, general service task contracting, annual lump sums and pay for performance).
- Establishments offering psychiatry and medium-stay care are funded through grants for public and private non-profit establishments, on an activity basis (price-per-day). Some funding (less than 10 per cent) for aftercare and rehabilitation activities is provided through an activity-based allocation.

161. Between 2011 and 2020, resources for public and private health establishments grew steadily by an annual average of 2.3 per cent, and resources allocated through activity-based funding by 2.1 per cent. As a result, there has been no reduction in hospital funding over the

past 10 years. As part of the strategy for transforming the health system, a review was conducted in order to change the way health establishments are funded.

162. All prospective developments were outlined in a 2019 report and initial steps were taken in 2019 in the following areas:

- Development of pay for performance
- Reform of the funding model for psychiatry, aftercare and emergency care, with the introduction of funding based on population levels
- Introduction of piloted population-based funding of medical activities beginning in 2022

163. The aim of these reforms is to achieve a target level of 50 per cent activity-based funding for health establishments.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 23 (b) of the list of issues

164. The public health insurance system is comprised partly of compulsory basic health insurance financed by social security and partly of optional supplementary health insurance provided by insurers (provident societies, mutual insurance funds and insurance companies). In 2019, compulsory basic health insurance covered 78.2 per cent of health expenditure, while supplementary insurance covered 13.4 per cent. The portion payable by households continues to fall and stands at 6.9 per cent – a smaller share than in most OECD countries.

165. The Universal Health Protection (Protection universelle maladie) (PUMa) system introduced on 1 January 2016 replaces and builds upon the basic Universal Health Coverage (Couverture maladie universelle) (CMU) system. It covers the health-care costs, on an individual basis and without risk of a break in entitlements, of anyone who works or resides in France in a stable and regular manner.

166. Thus, the conditions of entitlement have been simplified:

- Employees no longer have to demonstrate a minimum level of activity – the fact that they are employed is enough.
- Self-employed workers are also entitled to coverage of their health-care costs from the start of their activity.

167. People who are not employed benefit from coverage of health-care costs simply by virtue of their having a stable and regular residence in France. This protection allows people to remain in their health insurance scheme even if they lose their jobs or if their personal situation changes.

168. With 95 per cent of people covered by supplementary insurance, France has the most widespread level of private coverage of the major OECD countries. Several steps have led to this point. Since January 2016, employers have been required to provide all employees with collective supplementary health coverage, regardless of their length of service (the company pays 50 per cent of contributions). Moreover, for those with the lowest incomes, supplementary universal health coverage (couverture maladie universelle complémentaire) (CMU-C) was introduced in 2000 and assistance for the purchase of supplementary health coverage in 2005; these mechanisms were merged in 2019 to become the Solidarity-based Supplementary Health Coverage (Complémentaire santé solidaire) (CSS) scheme.

169. CSS coverage is free for single-person households whose income does not exceed €752 per month. For single-person households whose income does not exceed €1,016 per month there is a contribution of between €8 and €30 per month (not exceeding €1 per day), depending on the person's age.

170. The average price of supplementary health coverage is €36 per month for students and €112 euros for people over 65 years of age.

171. Beneficiaries of CSS coverage are thus fully exempt from upfront payments and benefit from rates with no excess fees for doctors and most health-care professionals. In the event of hospitalization, the fixed daily fee is covered with no time limit. Beneficiaries are also exempt from any flat-rate contribution of €1 for medical consultations or procedures,

medical imagery/radiology and medical tests and charges for medicines, paramedical services and medical transport.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 23 (c) of the list of issues

172. In 2019, it was estimated that fewer than 200,000 people were living with hepatitis C in France, and the number has been steadily falling.

173. There are now rapid diagnostic tests, which are less efficient than screening for specific antibodies and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for viral ribonucleic acid, but which can be done using a simple blood sample. These tests are a complementary tool that are particularly useful for associations working with at-risk populations in non-health-care settings.

174. Under its strategy for prevention, screening and access to treatment for drug users, the Government aims to prevent infection and reinfection by stepping up risk and harm reduction efforts, including by: (i) enhancing risk and harm reduction tools and materials; (ii) making them more accessible to drug users (needle exchange programmes in pharmacies, mailing of prevention materials, etc.); and (iii) broadening the range of risk and harm reduction measures that have met with success. It also seeks to tailor activities to vulnerable groups by adapting available tools and by trialling eligible initiatives under article 51 of the Social Security Funding Act for 2018. These include the Depist’C Pharma project, in which a mobile unit equipped with a PCR machine offers hepatitis C screening and treatment. Institutional strengthening and support for associations also allow for the tailoring of services to vulnerable groups. Lastly, access to hepatitis C treatment has been improved: all patients have had access to direct-acting antiviral drugs since 2016, while two pangenotypic drugs have been widely available by prescription since 2019.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 24 (a) of the list of issues

175. The Government’s policy has been to quickly develop a range of solutions adaptable to local contexts, including:

- The roll out of individual financial assistance, under a negotiated agreement, for medical staff to set up practice in areas under pressure; of measures to facilitate work/retirement combinations; and of measures to encourage such staff to work in underserved areas, even without establishing a practice there, and to strengthen cooperation between health professionals
- Measures to promote internships in doctors’ surgeries, multi-professional group practices and health centres, including a 50 per cent (€300) increase in the allowance paid to internship supervisors in areas under pressure
- The advancement of the digital revolution in health, with strong support for the development of telemedicine (remote consultations between doctors and between doctors and patients)
- Better organization of health professionals to ensure a continuous and lasting health-care presence, notably through the development of coordinated practice. In addition to multi-professional group practices and health centres, all forms of coordinated practice will be encouraged in line with local conditions: mechanisms including primary care teams, in which general practitioners join forces with other health professionals and territorial professional health communities, in which regional health actors come together more broadly in a common project, will be leveraged.

176. It is difficult to evaluate the precise impact of this policy, given the variety of mechanisms applied.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 24 (b) of the list of issues

177. Previous autism plans and the current National Autism Strategy have enabled the roll out of an active policy of early detection and improved access to diagnosis and school enrolment.

178. In order to measure the adequacy of this policy and maximize its responsiveness to the specific needs of people with neurodevelopmental conditions, in late 2019 the interministerial task force for the National Autism Strategy launched an initial impact study, with participation by affected individuals and families. A new study, conducted in 2021 with 14,000 respondents, yielded the following findings:

- The conditions are still mostly detected first by the person’s close circle and family (in 63 per cent of cases). Sixty-five per cent of parents whose children have been diagnosed since the launch of the Strategy in 2018 received support before the diagnosis or within three months of it.
- The proportion of parents who reported having effective access to an inclusive solution has risen from 67 per cent to 73 per cent.
- The percentage of children with autism in full-time schooling has risen from 61 per cent to 67 per cent.

179. International scientific data and publications were taken into consideration in the development of the National Autism Strategy adopted in 2018. The first of the Strategy’s stated commitments is to “put science back at the heart of public policy concerning autism by endowing France with research of the highest quality”. To achieve this, the Strategy envisages: (i) the creation of a research network of excellence (the organization of a research community centred on a scientific cooperation group, the establishment of three national centres of excellence and the creation of researchers’ posts); (ii) the development of reliable databases for research purposes; (iii) the more rapid dissemination of knowledge, particularly through continuous learning programmes; and (iv) support for the development of technologies conducive to the learning and autonomy of persons with autism.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 25 of the list of issues

180. The latest measures taken in relation to State medical care (Aide médicale de l’État) (AME) were adopted in the light of a study conducted by the Social Affairs Inspectorate and the Finance Inspectorate, the results of which were published in a report entitled “State medical care: Analysis and proposals” (“L’aide médicale de l’État: diagnostic et propositions”), in October 2019. This study looked at the medical and administrative steps taken by foreigners in an irregular situation seeking to access health care. The authors of the study recommended that caution should be exercised before making any changes to the AME system that might lead to an increase in the number of persons choosing not to seek treatment or to a deterioration in the health of the target groups. The range of medical services covered by AME therefore remained unchanged. Since the study’s recommendations related mostly to the security of the system, the Government has taken steps to prevent the abuse or misuse of AME, while ensuring that care is properly provided to rights-holders. For example, first-time applications for AME must now be submitted to the health insurance fund in person, thus making it possible to verify the physical presence of the applicant.

181. When foreign nationals claiming to be minors alone on French territory present their cases to departmental councils, the councils provide them with shelter and systematically proceed with assessments to ascertain if the persons in question are minors and are in fact alone; it has sole jurisdiction over the assessments. As part of this multidisciplinary assessment, the president of the departmental council may request the local prefecture to perform a documentary check or to verify whether the person claiming status as a minor is already registered in the Minors’ Age Assessment Support system (Appui à l’évaluation de la minorité) (AEM), the Visabio system or the French authorities’ foreign national records application, using the person’s fingerprints. Whether or not the foreign national has already been registered, the assessment is not terminated; it continues regardless. The result of the database search is only one of the factors taken into account by the departmental council. Decree No. 2019-57 on the establishment of the AEM system therefore has no impact on the rights of unaccompanied minors; it simply establishes a possible additional step in the assessment process undertaken by the departmental councils. The persons claiming status as minors are sheltered for the duration of the assessment and only a juvenile judge has the power to decide whether they should be assigned to long-term placement with the Child Welfare Service (Aide sociale à l’enfance) (ASE).

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues

182. The priority education policy provides for an increase in the resources mobilized in support of students in the 1,094 “priority education networks” located in the most disadvantaged areas of the country and in neighbourhoods where social segregation is the most acute. It does this through various means, including increased teaching resources, consultation time and teacher training, higher pay to make posts more attractive, increased educational support and extracurricular activities for students, increased cooperation with local authorities and school stakeholders, and the use of pedagogical management and networking of governance in schools. In 2015, the priority education map was amended to make the policy more relevant. This major overhaul has led to a steady build-up of resources since 2015:

- Since 2017, the splitting of classes in the first two years of primary school in priority education areas has resulted in the establishment of 10,800 classes, benefiting around 300,000 pupils. All classes in the first two years of primary school in priority education areas have been divided in two since the start of the 2020 school year. This has resulted in the creation of an additional 10,700 full-time equivalent posts compared with the number at the start of the 2016 school year and has brought the average number of students per class to 12.7.
- The progressive splitting of classes in the third year of preschool has been under way since the start of the 2019 school year and will be applied as a priority to all final-year preschool classes in high priority education networks (REP+) by the start of the 2021 school year, ultimately benefiting a total of 150,000 students.

183. “Local support contracts” are also being trialled with a view to giving the educational authorities more scope for action in assessing local difficulties and developing a tailored academic strategy that goes beyond the national REP+ priority education policy.

184. Thanks in part to the investment of an additional €10 million under the Recovery Plan, the Cordées de la Réussite (Linked for Success) Programme has been relaunched to promote academic aspirations and the pursuit of higher education. Under this Programme, personalized support is provided to students from the fifth year prior to graduation until the end of the final year of upper secondary school, including through group activities intended to broaden their cultural horizons and help them to discover different career paths and professional fields, along with a peer student mentoring scheme. A total of 200,000 students are expected to receive support under the Programme in 2021.

185. Compulsory schooling until the age of 18 was introduced in the Education Code and has been in force since the start of the 2020 school year, with the aim of more effectively reducing school dropout. To that same end, the general and technical upper secondary education system and the vocational track have been reformed to offer students more freedom to make their own life plans and better dovetail with the opportunities available for further study through the reform of the university application process (the “Parcoursup” platform) and the strengthening of social support for students (study grants). These reforms help to diversify successful channelling and reinforce the support offered through counselling, including by making dedicated counselling sessions available throughout lower and upper secondary school.

186. The allocation of university places to students through the Parcoursup platform is grounded in the principles of non-discrimination and equality. The impact of such mechanisms, which are intended to provide better career guidance and promote educational aspiration, will be known only at the end of a follow-up process involving cohorts of students whose career choices will be monitored over several years. An infocentre is being built by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; it makes use of data on guidance counselling, the allocation of university places and school dropout currently recorded in existing information systems.

187. Since 2020, the Learning Neighbourhoods (Cités Éducatives) Programme has been piloted in 80 of the most disadvantaged urban policy priority areas to strengthen cooperation between municipalities and school stakeholders. The Programme, which has a budget of €100 million for a period of three years (2020–2022), helped students in disadvantaged

neighbourhoods to weather the health crisis in the spring of 2020 by providing computer equipment that allowed them to continue their schooling remotely and by mobilizing all State and local authority partners to identify and give support to potential dropouts. In 2021, it was extended to 46 new areas, with 80 more to be certified in 2022.

188. In terms of social assistance, the State has distributed breakfasts to students in the most disadvantaged schools in participating municipalities (with a target of 200,000 in 2021) and is undertaking an ambitious programme to increase the size of grants and boarding school allowances.

189. To prevent drop out and demotivation among students during the health crisis, the “Learning Vacation” (Vacances Apprenantes) Programme was rolled out in the summer of 2020. It included academic refresher courses in French and mathematics, an “open school” programme proposing sporting and cultural activities and stays at leisure centres and holiday camps. A total of 950,000 young people took part in the activities on offer and an “Open School” Programme was extended to the autumn holidays, with nearly 620 schools and educational establishments and just over 50,000 students taking part.

190. Since the start of the 2017 school year, national assessments of the French-language and mathematics aptitudes of students in the first and second years of primary school and in the first year of middle school have been under way to measure the impact of efforts to reduce the correlation between social factors and academic achievement. The results of these assessments clearly show that the progress made by early primary school pupils in 2018/19 was not carried over into the 2019/20 school year. The keys to success are the child’s attendance at school throughout the year, the personalization of learning pathways, which is facilitated by such assessments, and effective teaching practices, which will be re-evaluated. The initial effects of emphasizing basic knowledge are very encouraging, even if the proportion of students experiencing difficulties in French and mathematics at the start of lower secondary school remains high.

191. With regard to children with disabilities, several texts adopted since 2014 have outlined the procedures and tools that should be employed to more effectively assess the needs of students with disabilities, including with regard to the role of staff and the establishment of standardized tools (including school and establishment-level plans, personal education plans, a guide to assessing compensation needs in terms of schooling and changes to the composition of the multidisciplinary teams employed by departmental centres for persons with disabilities, which must now include a teacher whenever decisions are made on matters relating to schooling). In addition, attendants for students with disabilities are employed in schools to promote the autonomy of students with disabilities. They are contractual employees working for the public service who assist children with disabilities in their daily activities, facilitate their access to learning and help them to take part in social activities.

192. With regard to access to higher education, students with disabilities may have their applications reconsidered if they are offered a place at an establishment where their disability-related needs would not be met. Subsidies amounting to a total of €7.5 million are granted by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation to higher education institutions every year to help them cover the costs of providing special assistance to students with disabilities (€217 per student in 2019), complementing the funds earmarked for that purpose by the institutions in their own budgets. The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has issued a circular establishing the criteria for awarding scholarships on the basis of social criteria. Additional entitlements are granted to students with disabilities, whose course of study may be longer than average.

193. Roma and migrant children enjoy the same guarantees of access to education as all children living in the State party, in accordance with national law, and benefit from all existing school support measures.

194. Decree No. 2020-811 of 29 June 2020 contains a list of the supporting documents that may be requested for registration on school lists and specifies that a sworn statement is sufficient to prove the identity of children, their legal guardians and their domicile.

195. Students whose first language is not French who have recently arrived in France¹¹ are enrolled in ordinary classes and may benefit from special schooling arrangements (special educational units for newly arrived students whose first language is not French, referred to as “UPE2A”, or who have not previously attended school, referred to as “UPE2A-NSA”), which allow them to follow special courses that meet their particular needs (intensive French courses, special mathematics and foreign language classes, etc.). Newly arrived students whose first language is not French who live in shanty towns or who are unaccompanied minors require special attention in view of their very precarious situation.

196. In shanty towns where a comprehensive support system has been put in place by the Interministerial Task Force on Accommodation and Access to Housing, 80 per cent of children attend school (compared with 20 per cent of children living in shanty towns without such support). The Interministerial Task Force has given departmental education service directors and Learning Centres for Non-Francophone Students and Children from Itinerant and Travelling Families (Centres académiques de scolarisation des élèves allophones et enfants issus de famille itinérantes et du voyage) (CASNAV) access to its digital “shanty town clearance” platform so that they can anticipate demand by identifying the number of children living in such settings.

197. The support provided to unaccompanied minors is coordinated by the Youth Judicial Protection system, which has entrusted the Child Welfare Service with the task of ensuring that they are housed and attending school. Unaccompanied minors receive tailored support on arrival and benefit from the pedagogical expertise of the CASNAV learning centres. In the reception unit, the minors are given an academic and linguistic assessment administered by a teacher and are interviewed by a psychological guidance counsellor so that a guidance proposal can be made in accordance with their level of education and personal plans.

198. In order to provide a more appropriate response to the new educational needs arising from the increase in the proportion of students who have had long breaks in their schooling or who have literacy deficits, the most severely affected educational districts have piloted special arrangements in upper secondary schools for students in highly precarious social situations at risk of dropping out of school. In addition, unaccompanied minors between the ages of 16 and 18 are given access to vocational training to help them gain social independence and leave the child welfare protection system. However, unaccompanied minors’ efforts to pursue studies and training are often undermined by the termination of their protection under the social care system at the age of 18.

199. Students whose families are highly itinerant can enrol in the distance learning courses organized by the National Centre for Distance Learning. In the 2019/20 school year, 10,138 students participated in such courses.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 27 of the list of issues

200. Because of the principle of the indivisibility of the Republic, and in accordance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination, France does not recognize the collective rights of any group defined by a common origin, culture, language or belief. In France, it is the individual who has rights. Therefore, no monitoring indicators mentioning origins can be provided.

201. Since 2015, the Teaching of Language and Culture of Origin Programme has been gradually phased out and replaced by the International Foreign Language Education Programme. The first bilateral agreements on international foreign language education were concluded in 2016 and 2017.

202. Two countries that were our partners in the Teaching of Language and Culture of Origin Programme, Croatia and Serbia, chose not to join the International Foreign Language Education Programme. Families interested in education in Croatian or Serbian can enrol their children in activities organized by the long-standing associations promoted by those countries.

¹¹ A total of 67,909 students whose first language is not French arrived and were enrolled in French schools and educational establishments in the 2018/19 school year (Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance Department Information Note No. 20.39).

All other partner countries have concluded bilateral agreements on international foreign language education with France, with the latest agreements about to be signed.

203. As from the 2020/21 school year, only the International Foreign Language Education Programme remains. Classes in classical Arabic, Italian, Portuguese and Turkish are currently on offer.

204. The main differences between the Teaching of Language and Culture of Origin Programme and the International Foreign Language Education Programme are that the latter is optional (the choice of enrolment is left to the family) and open to all students regardless of their origin, and it uses curricula based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Classes are available from the second to the final year of primary school.

205. A decision of 21 May 2021 (Decision No. 2021-818 DC) of the Constitutional Council on the Act on the Protection of the Heritage of Regional Languages and Their Promotion declared immersive teaching in a language other than French and the use of the diacritical signs of regional languages in civil status documents unconstitutional.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues

206. In 2018, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation presented the National Science Plan, the aim of which is to ensure universal open access to publications and to set up a permanent, dynamic structure for the open sharing of research data in Europe and internationally. The Ministry also publishes an annual open science barometer to monitor and analyse the situation with regard to open science and to keep track of any developments.

207. The Ministry has a department dedicated to steering national public policy on the place of science, technology and industry in society and, more broadly, on the management of relations between society and the scientific community. It coordinates and monitors the national strategy on scientific culture through the National Council for Scientific Culture and handles the funding of national activities such as the National Science Fair (Fête de la Science) in conjunction with higher education and research institutions. It also supports national associations working in the field of scientific and technical culture and oversees, in a primary or secondary capacity, the activities of the main national institutions in this field.

208. With regard to gender equality, since 2013, the Ministry has been leading a network of focal points promoting equality in higher education and at research institutions. These focal points are responsible for the mainstreaming and coordination of equality policies in their institutions. In October 2020, the network comprised around 300 persons. The Ministry is in regular contact with them, in particular through the Standing Conference of Equality and Diversity Focal Points, which has a networking and training role. Since 2014, the Ministry has also been organizing the National Day for Equality in Higher Education and Research to promote the sharing of experiences and best practices.

209. On 17 May 2021, the Ministry published a new guide on combating hatred and discrimination against LGBT+ persons. The guide aims to support higher education and research institutions in their efforts to prevent, raise awareness of and combat hatred and discrimination against this group. In addition, in 2020, the Ministry of Culture published two guides for its staff and its schools on providing support to persons who change their gender identity and on combating racism and antisemitism.

210. A network of focal points working against racism and antisemitism was set up in higher education and research establishments under the 2015 “Mobilization of schools for the values of the Republic” plan. There are currently more than 140 such focal points in various institutions taking measures to raise awareness of, prevent and address racism and antisemitism.

211. The Ministry of Culture also coordinates a network of focal points known as discrimination prevention officers, who are present in all its services, establishments and schools. The discrimination prevention officer network now has nearly 200 members and meets regularly to share best practices between institutions, to identify shortcomings and needs and to present new projects and mechanisms. Since 2020, discrimination prevention officers have also been taking measures to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based

violence, in accordance with a circular issued on 30 November 2019 on the establishment of equality focal points within the civil service.

212. The activities and measures carried out by the Ministry of Culture to promote equality and combat discrimination and gender-based and sexual violence are presented annually in the Ministry's Equality Road Map. The Ministry's activities are informed by data collected in the various cultural sectors. The measures undertaken or supported by the Ministry of Culture to promote equality, and also diversity, concern and involve the Ministry's services and establishments, which work collaboratively with local authorities, all local and national public institutions for culture and creativity and companies active in the cultural field and in the creative industries.

213. Modules on inclusion and anti-discrimination are in place or are being developed in schools associated with the cultural and creative sectors. These modules raise the question of stereotypes, analyse the representation of women in art and make tools available to gain an understanding of certain behaviours so that students are able to decipher and, if necessary, oppose them. The Ministry is also working with textbook publishers, through the Association of Educational Publishers, to address stereotypes in textbooks and their illustrations.

214. The Ministries of Culture, Education, Higher Education and Research, Employment, and Solidarity and Health are working together to develop a portal for accessible publishing and a plan to digitize non-accessible books adapted to this purpose. The aim is to significantly increase the number of books available to persons who have disabilities that make reading difficult. In cooperation with associations and the Interministerial Committee on Disabilities, the ministries concerned agreed to launch a study in 2021 to produce a clearer picture of the extent of such a service and the different forms that it might take and possible operating models. The results of the study will be available at the end of 2021.

215. With regard to the "development" of culture, the Ministry of Culture and its partners are working to accelerate a diversification of viewpoints and talents. They are aiming for parity in appointments to the heads of the institutions under its supervision; supporting or establishing projects aimed at socially disadvantaged groups in specific cultural sectors; ensuring equal access to the means of creation and production; introducing quotas, where possible, such as the current 30 per cent women's quota for filmmakers and programme directors hired by France Télévisions; and making public support conditional on compliance with commitments to combat sexual and gender-based violence, which hinder women's careers.

216. Under the leadership of the President of the Republic, the Ministry of Culture has established a new space for sharing and encounters – a platform of services called the Culture Pass (Pass Culture), aimed primarily at 18-year-olds. After an initial pilot phase in 5 departments and supplementary testing in 14 more, the Culture Pass was extended to the whole of metropolitan France and the overseas territories in May 2021.

217. In addition to removing the financial barrier to access to culture, the Culture Pass aims to encourage diversity in artistic and cultural practices and to offer something for every young person, without distinction. One of its main aims is to reach audiences that are normally excluded from the cultural sector. Specific measures have been taken to reach young people in urban policy priority areas and rural areas and young persons with disabilities. It is also intended to help teenagers become independent in their choice of cultural activities.

218. The Ministry of Culture has been working for two years on projects based around the notion of the discoverability of online cultural content, in collaboration with the Government of Quebec. Discoverability of content in the digital environment refers to its availability online and its ability to be found among a large body of other content, especially by persons who have not been specifically looking for it. This work led to the development of a draft joint France-Quebec strategy containing 12 proposals for action that can be launched in both France and Quebec, independently or jointly.

III. Good practices

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (a) of the Committee's previous concluding observations (E/C.12/FRA/CO/4)

219. Every year since 1987, the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty has been observed on 17 October. In 2020, it was organized by ATD Fourth World, the Refuser la Misère 2020 Collective and 60 French organizations on the Parvis des Libertés et des Droits de l'Homme (the Esplanade of Human Rights), at the Trocadero in Paris.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (b) of the Committee's previous concluding observations

220. On a temporary and exceptional basis, Decree No. 2020-764 of 23 June 2020 on the conditions of entitlement to and continuity of certain family benefits in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic relaxed the conditions that must be met in order for people to be able to freely choose the type of childcare covered by such benefits and made certain rules governing entitlement to family benefits for foreign nationals less stringent.

221. Urgent financial support measures to assist families in need were put in place at the outset of the health crisis. The family allowance received by nearly 32 million people was paid at the beginning of April 2020, ahead of the usual schedule, so that families in need would not be left destitute. An exceptional solidarity allowance of €150 has been set up for households receiving the solidarity income supplement (Revenu de solidarité active) (RSA) or the job-seekers' welfare allowance (Allocation de solidarité spécifique). Households with children receive a bonus of €100 per dependent child under the age of 20. This benefit is paid automatically to 4.1 million families.

222. In order to avoid any disruption in the payment of benefits, entitlements to minimum social benefits have been extended by three months and the recovery of undue payments has been suspended indefinitely. In addition, families who are directly affected by the crisis can request an emergency review of their situation and their benefits.

223. The closure of schools, nurseries and centres for children with disabilities can lead to additional costs for families. The public authorities have therefore committed to reimbursing all nursery days that have gone unused since the beginning of the lockdown. People caring for their own children full-time receive daily allowances financed by the social security system. Lastly, in order to support families whose children have been left without meals owing to the interruption of canteen services, a local benefit of €35 is paid to the families of students between the ages of 3 and 17 in the overseas departments.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (c) of the Committee's previous concluding observations

224. Overhauling the social benefits delivery system is a key aim of the 2018–2022 poverty strategy. To reduce the number of people who do not avail themselves of social benefits and to facilitate access to entitlements, the Government has set up a support service for the recipients of the RSA solidarity income supplement and has launched an overhaul of minimum social benefits through its plan to establish a universal minimum income allowance (revenu universel d'activité).

225. Since the introduction of the universal minimum income allowance is expected to affect a quarter of households in France, a public consultation was organized in 2019–2020 and a citizens' panel was set up. Although the results of these consultations have already been made public, because of the health crisis, it has not been possible to continue the work completed thus far. An arbitration process on the future of the reform is under way.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (d) of the Committee's previous concluding observations

226. To ensure continuity of access to entitlements for the greatest number of recipients during the COVID-19 health crisis, simplified procedures were established for access to social benefits (such as the RSA solidarity income supplement and family benefits) and to health care and treatment. For example, the decision to allow electronic applications for State medical assistance throughout the health crisis and to suspend the requirement for the in-person submission of applications for primary health insurance funds has facilitated access to entitlements for persons who are in an irregular residence situation and reduced the number of persons choosing not to apply.
