

LET'S TALK ABOUT FRANCE !

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IN NOVEMBER 2007
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Conclusions of the Commission on institutional reform

The commission tasked with modernizing institutions of the Fifth Republic chaired by Edouard Balladur, submitted its report to President Sarkozy on 29 October. The major proposals include: **making it possible for the President of the Republic to speak before Parliament as well as broadening the Parliament's role.**

http://www.elysee.fr/documents/index.php?mode=view&lang=fr&cat_id=1&press_id=593

<http://www.vie-publique.fr/actualite/panorama/texte-discussion/projet-loi-lutte-contre-contrefacon.html>

French Current Issues

National commitment to poverty eradication

At the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, Martin Hirsch, High Commissioner for Active Solidarity Against Poverty presented the **national commitment that aims to achieve the goal set by the President of the French Republic to reduce poverty by one third by 2012**. This national commitment to poverty eradication concerns economic, social, fiscal, family, health, education and housing public policies. The State, local and regional authorities and all welfare bodies are mobilized. The project has eight major thrusts:

- To bring poverty eradication to the European level during the French presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2008;
- To devise poverty indicators in addition to the monetary indicator, so that we can better factor in living conditions of low-income people;
- To organize a large-scale forum on social inclusion;
- To implement income support to maintain earnings of returnees to work (*revenue de solidarité active-RSA*) and reform the means-based allowances;
- To include, with agreement of social partners, poverty among items to be negotiated that can have an influence on how the rate is determined;
- To conduct a study on the impact the main legislative and regulatory measures taken in the realm of welfare, taxes and the environment have had on poverty;
- To regularly monitor the evolution of poverty with all actors concerned. An annual meeting will be scheduled at the same time the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) publishes its statistics and two intermediary meetings will take data from various observatories into account.

In the news

New legislation to fight counterfeiting

Act 2007-1544 of October 2007 introduced **new mechanisms to fight ever-increasing counterfeiting**. They include faster and simplified procedures to bring a case before a court when it regards an urgent matter, a right to information that allows civil judicial authorities to better identify those in the counterfeiting network and considerable improvement in calculating damages courts grant to their victims.

http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Engagement_national_contre_la_pauvrete.pdf

Justice: overhaul of the judicial map (court location)

This reform aims to restructure 1,200 courts (**regional courts, commercial courts, juvenile courts, appeal courts, etc.**) at some **800 locations**. Scheduled over three years, this reform will begin in 2008 with the introduction of "examining magistrate clusters" provided for in the Act of 5 March 2007 to strike a better balance in criminal procedure. They will initially comprise two examining magistrates, then three as of 2010. The overhaul of commercial courts and courts of first instance is scheduled for 2009 and that of regional courts for 2010.

tested. A panel of fourteen museums and historical monuments chosen on the basis of their broad diversity, will be totally free.

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/index.htm>

In the news

France to test free admission to museums

On 23 October, Christine Albanel, French Minister of Culture and Communications, presented the free museum experiment. It is part of a broader aim to bring culture to the masses. The experiment will take place from 1 January to 30 June 2008 throughout France. **Only museums' permanent collections will be free**, as temporary exhibits already attract regular museum goers. Two free museum plans – total free admission and targeted free admission – will be

The new judicial map will make it possible to pool resources and federate teams and tools to create specialized clusters with a particular competence.

http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/information/questions_reponses_484/quoi_consiste_reforme_carte_57721.html

The Grenelle Environment Forum: the main conclusions

The Grenelle Environment Forum submitted its conclusions on 25 October 2007 after four months of consultations that brought together institutional actors, representatives of civil society and citizens. During his speech, **Nicolas Sarkozy announced that a four-year "major national sustainable development programme" is to be launched to develop energy, the "engines of the future", biodiversity and environmental health.** In addition, future legislation transposing the EU Directive on GMOs is to include the transparency principle and provide for

the suspension of the commercial production of GMOs. Regarding transport, an additional 2,000 kilometres of track will be built by 2012 for the TGV high-speed rail system. The lines thus freed up will be allocated to freight transport. Inland waterway transport will also be promoted. Concerning housing, by 2012, all new buildings built in France should comply with "low-consumption" standards, and the number of old buildings renovated every year will be doubled. Finally, the Economic and Social Council is to be reformed for it to give environmental non-governmental organizations a place alongside the social partners. The public procurement code will be revised to make environmental clauses compulsory.

Grenelle de l'environnement : rapport général (General Report on the Grenelle Environment Forum), Thierry TUOT, Ministry for Ecology and for Sustainable Development and Town and Country Planning; FRANCE. State Secretariat for Ecology. *La Documentation française*, 2007, 39 pages.
<http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/074000693/0000.pdf>

Higher Council for Radio and Television: 2006 Annual Report

The report takes stock of all the important events of 2006 including the launching of digital terrestrial television (DTTV), preparing the ground for digital radio, high-definition television, personal mobile television. It also explains

each of the High Council for Radio and Television's competencies (frequency management, authorizations, agreements and statements, programme oversight, sanctions and bringing cases before the public prosecutor, litigation, opinions, etc.).

Higher Council for Radio and Television - Report 2006. *La Documentation française*, 2007, 168 pages.
<http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/074000699/0000.pdf>

The final report to be published in December 2007 will address incomes, research and higher education, social mobility, cutting public spending, supporting certain sectors and the role of the precautionary principle.

Commission pour la libération de la croissance française : premières propositions sur le pouvoir d'achat (Commission to promote growth in France: initial proposals to improve purchasing power). La Documentation française, 2007.

<http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/074000673/0000.pdf>

Initial proposals to improve purchasing power

The *Commission de libération de la croissance française* (commission to promote growth in France), chaired by Jacques Attali, issued a report on 15 October 2007 presenting its first proposals on improving purchasing power by lowering prices and on housing. The main proposals focus on increasing competition: prohibiting resale at a loss, getting rid of the authorization procedure in retail introduced by the Galland, Royer and Raffarin laws and authorizing of consumer class actions. As regards housing, the commission considers that 500,000 new apartments should be built a year, making it easier to change residence and improving access to housing. It proposes the construction of 10 new Ecopolis cities by 2012, which will serve as models in terms of social mix, communications and ecology. According to members of the Commission, the recommendations will increase the GNP by 0.8 points and generate several hundred jobs.
