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The French Citizens’ Convention On Climate Change: The Right Response?”

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Climate Change: Impacts & Responses

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Canada



Introduction

- Origins and reasons for the setting up of the Citizens' Convention for climate change (CCCC)
- CCCC v "Grenelle de l'environnement"
- a new experimental form of participatory democracy in the field of environmental protection with a clear objective, yet whose legal/institutional status was a source of a controversy
- While the report of the Convention offers a comprehensive range of proposals to reach its set overall objective, it is yet too early to assess its full impact on the legislative process and on the economy and society since the 2021 Bill on the fight against climate change and resilience strengthening in the face of its effects is currently being debated in parliament.



Outline

- Mandate and objective of the Convention
- The institutional structure and decision-making process of the Convention
- The outcome of the convention
- The follow-up of the outcome of the convention
- Concluding remarks



Mandate and objective of the Convention

- French Prime Minister's lettre de mission
- Terms of reference of the CCCC:
 - to make proposals to fight global warming by defining a series of measures to achieve a reduction of at least 40% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990
 - to draw up a report summarising its debates and presenting proposed legislative and regulatory measures that it deemed necessary to achieve the said objective
 - the proposed legislative and regulatory measures be implemented either by referendum, by primary and secondary legislation
- Its remit notably covered:
 - energy efficiency,
 - housing insulation and their financing;
- Basic principle of its action was that each of its proposals were to be costed and fully funded.



The institutional structure and decision-making process of the Convention 1

An institutional structure that reflected and represented the diversity of the French society

“engage the whole society in the ecological transition, through a representative sample of the population, and to mobilise the collective intelligence to move from consensus on the diagnosis to compromise on the solutions, and start a deep transformation of our lifestyles.” (PM’s letter)



The institutional structure and decision-making process of the Convention 2

An independent body with autonomous decision-making powers

Governance committee:

- two experts on climate change and participatory processes from the Ministry for ecological transition,
- three experts on climate change,
- three experts on participatory democracy and four experts from the economic and social sector.
- Three guarantors appointed by the president of the Senate, the president of the National Assembly and the president of the ESEC to ensure the neutrality and sincerity of the debates.



The institutional structure and decision-making process of the Convention 3

Thematic groups

5 thematic clusters to reflect the societal changes necessary to achieve the objective of the Convention:

- Food and agriculture
- Housing and accommodation
- Employment and industry
- National and regional development and transport policy
- Lifestyles and consumer behaviour



The working calendar of the Convention

- Commencement on 4 October 2019
- 8 month-calendar comprising 7 working week-end sessions.
- During that period, the member of the Convention auditioned climate experts, economists, professionals from the economic and social sectors and associations.
- The last working session took place on 19-21 June 2020.
- On 21 June, vote on each of the proposals, rejecting only one of them, and on which of those should be submitted to referendum.



The outcome of the convention

- On 26 June 2020, publication of final 460-page report entitled
 “Les Propositions de la Convention citoyenne pour le climat”
 (The Citizens’ Convention’s Proposals on Climate Change)
- 149 proposals into 5 headings (consuming, producing and working, moving around, housing and food)
 and, within each heading, subdivided into objectives
- 2 other headings on constitutional amendments and the financing of the proposed measures.



The follow-up of the outcome of the convention

- President Macron's response to the members of the Convention of 29 June 2020
- Referendum on an amendment of Article 1 of the Constitution to include the “concepts of biodiversity, environment and fight against climate change”
- Bill on the fight against climate change and resilience strengthening in the face of its effects (*Projet de loi portant lutte contre le dérèglement climatique et renforcement de la résilience face à ses effets*)



Concluding remarks

- For further reading please see

C. Dadomo, '*COUNTRY REPORT: FRANCE The French Citizens' Convention on Climate Change*' to be published in THE IUCN AEL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (issue 11, March 20221)

