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tomorrow's
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today

Mayotte

Study on living conditions and access to selected basic needs in the EU outermost regions

REQUEST FOR SERVICES 005 Under Framework contract
2020CEI60AT013

1.0 Key economic and social structure of the region

► **Specificities of the region:** Located in the Mozambique Channel in the Indian Ocean, and situated north-west of Madagascar, Mayotte is a small archipelago made up of two main islands: Grande-Terre and Petite-Terre. In 2011, Mayotte's status changed and it became a French overseas department. The islands' terrain is hilly, featuring ancient volcanic peaks and deep ravines, and is home to the world's third largest lagoon. Mayotte has a tropical maritime climate that leads to a hot and rainy season between November and May with monsoons and cyclones, while the rest of the year sees a cooler, drier climate. As per the most recent census in 2017, the population is 256,500¹ with an average annual increase of +3.8% since 2007. Recent surveys suggest that the population had surpassed 300,000 in 2022². Between 1978 and 2017, the average annual population increase ranged from 2.7% to 5.8%³. Migration is a defining factor, and almost half of the population does not have the French nationality⁴. Irregular migration represents a serious concern for the island, contributing to the rapid population growth, putting additional pressure on already strained infrastructure. The high number of persons living in temporary housing, together with irregular migration, renders collecting up-to-date and accurate data in Mayotte challenging. Data gaps have been particularly observed in the areas of housing tenancy regimes, habitability, and facilities. The region is currently facing a water crisis, and the limited access to water not only causes health concerns but also risks creating insecurity in the region. The region suffers from limited administrative capacity, and the available information is based on requests on demand (and about informal access to water) and limited (the last census and comprehensive data collection date back to 2017).

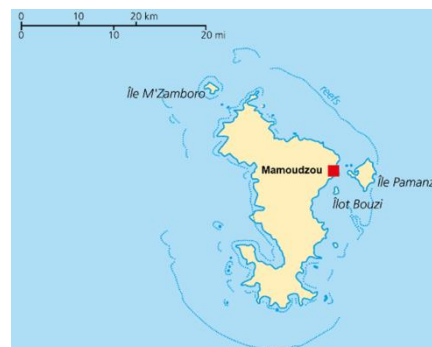


Figure 1. Mayotte map. Source: DG REGIO

► **Water and sanitation** and **Adequate Housing** have been identified as the **key basic needs** to be analysed in Mayotte. **Key facts and figures** are summarized below:

► **Key area 1 “Water and sanitation”:** One third of the population does not have running water in their house⁵, and two thirds of households lack basic sanitation facilities⁶. The existing water production and distribution infrastructure does not have the capacity to meet the increasing demand, linked to demographic pressure.

► **Key area 2 “Adequate housing”:** Around 40% of homes in the region are made up of fragile constructions (sheet metal, wood, vegetation, or earth)⁷. 65% of persons of foreign nationality are living in a tin house, compared to 25% of people with French nationality in the region⁸.

2.0 Water and sanitation

2.1 Access to drinking water and sanitation in Mayotte

2.1.1 Conditions in place to meet the needs and main factors constraining access

Conditions in place

- Water in Mayotte comes from three main sources: surface water (64%, including rivers and reservoirs), groundwater (30%), and seawater that goes through a desalination process (6%)⁹. The region's water resources are highly sensitive to **climate**, with **droughts** and **floodings** having the potential to cause sudden and severe changes in ground and surface water levels.
- The average **water consumption** in the region is 0.09m³ per inhabitant per day, which is 40% lower than the average in France¹⁰. As the population of the region grows rapidly, the demand for water increases. Between 2013 and 2017, there was an increase in water consumption by +25%¹¹. Between 2014 and 2020, the average water consumption per customer increased from 194.94m³ to 210.374m³, while the domestic volume per inhabitant served increased from 34.69m³ to 35.10m³¹². Currently, the demand for water is around 42,000m³, while capacity is at 39,000m³¹³. The rise in population means an expected increase in demand by 2,000m³ per year¹⁴.

- ▶ According to the most recent data emerging from the 2017 census, water in Mayotte is **inaccessible** for many people: 3 out of 10 households are not able to access a water point inside their residence¹⁵. This is due to several factors, including informal housing, costs associated with installing water infrastructure, and the overall costs of purchasing water. While the **price of water**¹⁶ decreased from 2014 (1.75 €/m³) to 2020 (1.56 €/m³)¹⁷, the number of inhabitants unable to pay their water bills rose from 7.55% in 2015 to 15.57%¹⁸. On average 17% of a household budget goes towards paying water bills or purchasing water. For those without water in their home, 43% have a tap for water in the backyard, while 20% rely on neighbours, relatives, or third parties, and the remaining population accesses water from a standpipe, well, river, or stream¹⁹.
- ▶ Until 2023, the **governance** of water in the region was delegated by all 17 municipalities to the Intercommunal Syndicate of Water and Sanitation (SIEAM), which was responsible for the construction and operation of the drinking water supply and distribution, and sanitation. Operations relating to drinking water supply and distribution continue to be operated under a public service contract to Société Mahoraise des Eaux (SMAE). In 2022, Mayotte became the last of the French regional administrations to have a dedicated Water Office, which is now responsible for overseeing all water management in the region. In the coming years, it is expected that this dedicated office will lead to improved management of water resources and infrastructure in the region, as well as better collection of water-related data.
- ▶ **Funding** the development and maintenance of water infrastructure in Mayotte comes from various mechanisms at the **national level**. As a result of water crises, additional national investment plans have been announced for the coming years, with a budget of around 450 million euro²⁰.
- ▶ At the **EU level**, for the programming period 2021-2027, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme plans to invest 77.5 million euro on water and sanitation in the region^{21 22}. The ERDF and European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme for 2014-2020 also has a specific objective on increasing drinking water production, storage and distribution of drinking water²³. Mayotte also receives funding as part of France's Recovery and Resilience Plan for 2021-2026 (RRP)²⁴, which includes an estimated 1.5 billion euro designated for the outermost regions and will support investments in access to water and the construction of housing²⁵.

Water crisis in Mayotte

The 2023 drought in Mayotte is the worst to hit the territory since 1997 and second worst in 60 years. The region's two hill reservoirs were only at 25 and 14 % of their capacity at the end of August 2023, compared with 106 and 82 % respectively in August 2022²⁶. Emergency **water restrictions** intended to ensure the continuity and accessibility of services to the population led to the water supply being cut for two out of every three days, and water was unconsumable for 12 hours once supply resumed. The price of bottled water was fixed to prevent shops from increasing the prices²⁷. Additionally, the lack of secure water storage had adverse effects on human health, as chlorine disappears after 48 hours in plastic storage, leading to higher bacterial risks. There was an increase in water-borne diseases since the drought began²⁸. As a response, an investment plan on water was announced by the French Government²⁹.

Constraining factors

The region faces challenges which partially constrain access to this basic need or are likely to constrain access in the future:

- ▶ **Climate change** contributes to less predictable rainfall patterns and longer and more intensive periods of water scarcity and droughts, significantly impacting access to water and worsening droughts since 2016³⁰. Rainfall in the region is concentrated on the Northern part of Grande-Terre due to the nature of winds in the rainy season and its less steep slopes that lead to perennial rivers. Seasonal rains limit the time for water to be collected and stored yet continues to be needed throughout the remainder of the year.
- ▶ **Deforestation** amplifies Mayotte's water crisis, with an annual deforestation rate of 1.2%³¹. This reduces the capacity of the soil to capture rainwater, depleting ground water reserves.
- ▶ Overall, the **quality of drinking water** produced in Mayotte is good, as the water distributed across the region is considered drinkable. However, by the time the water is accessed by the end user, the quality deteriorates due to several factors such as infrastructure and environmental impacts. Contamination by water-borne diseases, such as typhoid fever, hepatitis A, acute gastro-enteritis and cholera, are a major risk during the transport and storage of water and a lack of hygiene³². Additionally, the high temperatures in the region lead to bacteria proliferating in stagnant water. Therefore, water storage tanks are currently not a viable solution for water storage. Water quality in Mayotte is monitored at production plants and

across the distribution system. There are some minerals present in the water, such as Manganese, which is naturally occurring and safe in low quantities but can negatively affect the health of vulnerable populations, such as children and pregnant women³³. Recently, Escherichia Coli (E.coli) bacteria and coliform bacteria have been found in water³⁴.

- ▶ The current **infrastructure in the region is aging**, and given its design, the breakdown or failure of one part of the system can have notable impacts across the region. Any failure of the infrastructure reduces the capacity of producing and distributing water, driving up demand. The average renewal of drinking water networks increased from 2014 (0.06) to 2019 (0.31), and then decreased in 2020 (0.06)³⁵. In 2021, a failure of the Méresse borehole required months of repair works while a breakdown of an osmosis unit at the Petite-Terre desalination plant was addressed quite quickly. Nevertheless, the malfunctions added pressure on the existing system³⁶. The frequency of unscheduled service interruptions³⁷ increased from 2017 (0.07%) to 2020 (7.38%). In 2022, it was confirmed that despite an expansion of the Petite-Terre desalination plant, the plant was only able to produce less than half of the expected capacity, equivalent to 2,000m³ per day, rather than the anticipated 5,300m³³⁸. Now that the rehabilitation works have been completed, the plant is potentially capable of producing 4,700m³ per day³⁹.
- ▶ The present **water infrastructure** was built when the region had a smaller population and its capacity was not designed to produce and distribute the quantities needed to meet the needs of today's population. The region has seen a decrease in the percentage of compliance of distributed water samples taken for sanitary control with microbiological quality limits⁴⁰ between 2014 (99.61%) and 2020 (94.30%)⁴¹, but has seen an increase from 2014 (98.75%) to 2020 (99.70%) in the compliance of distributed water samples taken for sanitary control with physico-chemical quality limits^{42 43}.

3.0 Adequate housing

3.1 Access to adequate housing in Mayotte

3.1.1 Conditions in place to meet the needs and main factors constraining access

Conditions in place

- ▶ For those able to secure permanent housing, the **living conditions** are notably better than in 2007, and increasingly so at a faster rate than the living conditions of those living in houses made of tin or natural materials. Permanent houses are more likely to have electricity, access to water and sanitary facilities, and secure flooring⁴⁴. Within households, many are equipped with electricity. However, that number has decreased from 93.57% in 2012 to 89.96% in 2017. Sanitation facilities were the second most common service while only supplied to 40.76% of households in 2017⁴⁵. A report of the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE)⁴⁶ explained this with recently recorded high immigration levels. There was a prominent increase of 20 percentage points in connection to the sewerage system, which grew from 18.48% in 2012 to 38% in 2017. Solar water heater and air-conditioned rooms remained less widespread, 4.19% and 0.02% respectively in 2017⁴⁷.
- ▶ Most houses in Mayotte are small compared to their counterparts in mainland France, both in terms of **housing size and capacity**. Almost 47% of homes consist of only one or two rooms, and housed more residents than there is sufficient space for. Overcrowding is common in the region, with 57% of households overcrowded. Amongst these overcrowded households - 33% of households are considered to have accentuated overcrowding - a level of overcrowding almost non-existent in mainland France. Housing occupancy conditions in permanent structures are improving, as the average number of rooms per house is increasing and the number of occupants per house decreasing. However, overcrowding remains prevalent in sheet-metal houses, with an average of 4.5 persons per house, made up on average of 2.2 rooms⁴⁸.
- ▶ Between 1977 and the early 2000s, **social housing** was prominent in the region, and played a critical role in improving housing conditions, with 800 homes financed annually under a model using Société Immobilière de Mayotte (SIM) boxes. New social housing policies were established in 2005, but their eligibility criteria represented a barrier. Conditions included French nationality, age, and residency⁴⁹. Since 2018, there has been a rise in social housing units per inhabitants in the region, from 10.4 per 10,000 inhabitants to 84 in 2022, though well below the national average of 777 per 10,000 inhabitants⁵⁰. A variety of schemes exist, including home improvement schemes, housing allowances, and relocation due to substandard conditions. While there are schemes to support safe and affordable housing, the absence of a centralised information and coordination of the initiatives has meant that they are not well known.

- ▶ From an **administrative** point of view, housing policy falls under the responsibility of the national government and is under the framework of the second **Overseas Housing Plan 2019-2022**, a plan extended until the end of 2023. To offer a new solution to the problem of substandard housing, a new scheme for "adapted very low-income social rental housing" (LLTSA) for people on very low incomes has been introduced in 2021 on an experimental basis for a period of five years⁵¹. The national government has supported local authorities to draw up (inter-)municipal plans to combat substandard housing⁵².
- ▶ The State offers **funding** for social housing through the so-called 'unique budgetary line' (or LBU). The other main streams of the State's policy to promote social housing are tax measures, grants, and loans from Action Logement and the National Housing Agency (ANAH)⁵³. The Banque des Territoires also provides financing in the form of loans and equity investments⁵⁴. At the European level, the ERDF 2021-2027 Programme for Mayotte, InvestEU⁵⁵ and the French RRP for 2021-2026⁵⁶ offer grants and financial tools to increase access to housing, including spaces for the elderly. For instance, the ERDF 2021-2027 Programme includes a specific objective to promote socio-economic integration of marginalised low-income households and disadvantaged people including those with special needs, through integrated measures, in particular housing and social services with a total amount of 20 million euro⁵⁷. In the case of the ERDF-ESF Operational Programme for 2014-2020, there is a specific objective focused on the renovation to increase the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock with an amount of 200,000 euro⁵⁸. In addition, the French RRP focuses on protecting windows against solar radiation and replacing existing air conditioning units to step up efficiency⁵⁹.

Constraining factors

The region faces challenges which partially constrain access to this basic need or are likely to constrain access in the future:

- ▶ **Socio-economic factors make it** particularly challenging to access adequate housing in the region. With 77% of the population below the poverty line, the number of people living in poverty is 5 times higher than in mainland France⁶⁰. Moreover, demographic pressure (more than half of the population is under 18 years old) and migration, in combination with limited land available for building, are putting institutions and the ecosystem under considerable strain.
- ▶ **Legal and administrative** barriers are hindering access to adequate housing in the region. These obstacles include challenges in determining social housing eligibility. Another issue involves managing a database of the recipients of SIM housing. This follows a change in how persons declare their legal names as part of a civil status revision after Mayotte became a French department in 2011⁶¹. While certain policies on social housing are decided by the national government, others fall under the jurisdiction of the regional administration⁶².
- ▶ **Housing conditions are of lesser quality for persons of foreign nationality**, primarily from neighbouring countries, notably the Comoros. Housing quality refers to the materials used for construction and access to sanitary facilities. The rates of these have changed little over the years and could be partly due to foreigners being less likely to access employment (12%) compared to French people born in Mayotte or abroad (42%) and French people born in mainland France or another overseas administration (78%). In 2017, 65% of people with foreign nationalities lived in a tin house, compared with 25% of French nationals, and 3% of French nationals born in another overseas administration or mainland France⁶³.
- ▶ Closely linked to the above, urban development in Mayotte continues to rely essentially on **self-building practices**, which is often not compliant with regulations in force, exposing inhabitants to various risks like flooding, landslides, submersion, as well as health issues.
- ▶ The nature of the terrain and growing population have contributed to **land scarcity**, posing a challenge for both social housing development and private construction. As land becomes scarcer, people are resorting to building in areas with less suitable conditions. This increased demand for land also leads to higher prices, making housing even less affordable.
- ▶ **Limited supply of and costly materials** slow down the construction of adequate housing, a challenge both agencies responsible for building social housing and private construction companies are faced with. The Competition Authority pointed out in 2016 that the price of building materials was 35% higher in Mayotte than in mainland France⁶⁴. This scarcity drives up prices and encourages people with fewer financial resources to search for alternatives, often of lesser quality, safety and durability, such as tin or natural materials⁶⁵.
- ▶ For those living in tin houses, **liveability and security** in their neighbourhoods presents a concern in comparison with those living in permanent dwellings. More than 50% of tin houses residents were dissatisfied with the upkeep of public spaces in their neighbourhood, along with household waste collection and public transportation⁶⁶. Insecurity was also a concern for 31% of residents in tin houses, compared to 23% of those in permanent housing.

- ▶ There has been an increase in the share of households made of metal sheets from 33.33% in 2012 to 37.72% in 2017, accompanied by a prominent decrease of wooden houses from 4.65% to 0.95%⁶⁷. Despite these improvements, the number of dwellings of **fragile construction** (those made with materials including sheet metal, wood, vegetation, or earth) remained roughly the same between 1997 and 2017. Only the materials that were used changed. In 1997, 21% of houses were constructed with walls made of cob, raffia, or coconut. Those constructed of tin represented 14%. By 2007, the number of houses constructed with tin had risen to 33% while the number of those with cob or raffia was halved to 6%. Other natural materials such as wood, vegetation, and earth made up less than 1%⁶⁸. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of houses constructed with tin rose from 33.33% to 37.72%, showing a steep increase in the use of tin for building houses.

4.0 Mitigating actions and recommendations

Needs identified in Key Area 1: Access to water and sanitation

INCREASE WATER PRODUCTION THROUGH DESALINATION AND DRILLING BOREHOLES

- ▶ Promote investments for additional **desalination facilities** and increase the capacity of existing desalination facilities, leveraging existing funding opportunities.
- ▶ Drill additional **boreholes** to provide easier access to groundwater.

UPGRADE AND EXTEND EXISTING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE TO INCREASE DISTRIBUTION CAPACITY AND DURABILITY

- ▶ Assess and repair existing **infrastructure** used in the production and distribution of water.
- ▶ Identify methods to better **collect and store water**, to reduce water shortages in dry season. To this end, create storage infrastructure to ensure sufficient reserves.
- ▶ Determine methods or materials to increase the **durability of the infrastructure**.
- ▶ Offer and/or facilitate access to **workshops and trainings** on project management and financial planning to support local authorities in managing infrastructure projects and investments.

IMPROVE WATER MONITORING AND LEAK DETECTION TO SAVE WATER AND INCREASE WATER AFFORDABILITY

- ▶ Replace and modernise faulty **water meters** to protect consumers from abnormally high bills.
- ▶ Increase the number of **smart water meters**, able to detect and reduce leaks in the water network.

PROTECT DRINKING WATER AT THE SOURCE

- ▶ Fight and protect **deforestation** to save on water filtration costs⁶⁹.
- ▶ Create **protection zones** around public catchment areas to protect and preserve water resources and production points by controlling human activities in the vicinity (urban planning, agricultural practices, etc.).

Needs identified in Key Area 2: Access to adequate housing

IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND RELIABILITY

- ▶ Conduct an annual **census** in the region, to start in 2025 as announced by INSEE⁷⁰.
- ▶ Include populations living in temporary housing, and those of non-French nationality in data collection efforts, to ensure **representation** of the entire population.

HELP HOUSEHOLDS EXIT TEMPORARY AND UNSAFE HOUSING BY INCREASING PERMANENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- ▶ Analyse key **factors constraining access** to permanent housing for all persons living in Mayotte, considering the different legal statuses of people residing in Mayotte.
- ▶ Promote **access to land, resources, and materials** needed to build a greater number of permanent houses.
- ▶ Increase **social housing capacity** to provide a greater number of households with safe and permanent housing.

TAILOR CONSTRUCTION NORMS AND PRACTICES TO THE SPECIFICITIES OF MAYOTTE

- ▶ Identify **regulations** (including the requirement of specific materials) that may deter construction and propose adaptations tailored to the resources and (climatic) conditions of the region.
- ▶ Foster circular economy actions to reduce the environmental footprint of the construction sector, especially given the high emissions and costs of importing materials from mainland Europe, such as reusing and recycling of building materials or using alternative locally sourced and low carbon materials.

Annexes

Annex 1 - References

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³⁷ This indicator refers to the rate at which unexpected disruptions in water supply to consumers take place.

³⁸ Usine de dessalement de Petite-Terre, Préfet de Mayotte, 2022. <https://www.mayotte.gouv.fr/Actualites/Communiqués-de-presse/Communiqués-de-presse-2022/Usine-de-dessalement-de-Petite-Terre>

³⁹ Information provided by the General Directorate for Services of the "Société Mahoraise des Eaux (SMAE)"

⁴⁰ This indicator refers to the process of collecting water samples from the water distribution network to assess the microbiological quality of the water supplied to consumers.

⁴¹ Part de la population alimentée par une eau conforme au regard de la microbiologie en 2021, Office de l'eau, 2021. <https://chiffrecl.eau.fr/2167>

- ⁴² This indicator refers to the process of collecting water samples from the distribution network to assess the physico-chemical quality of the water supplied to consumers.
- ⁴³ Fiche de métadonnées du jeu Services publics d'eau potable - jeux de données exploités pour les rapports nationaux, SIPSEA, 2022. <https://data.eaufrance.fr/jdd/7d6a3010-cf19-42c3-8a38-9823074185ce>
- ⁴⁴ Quatre logements sur dix sont en tôle en 2017, Pierre Thibault (Insee), 2019. <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4202864>
- ⁴⁵ Logements et résidences principaux en 2020. Recensement de la population, INSEE, 2020. <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/7631186?sommaire=7631713>
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