

## Summary – Presentation “Overseas France: Federalism Through the Backdoor, and Across Oceans”

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The European Union's borders don't stop on the Mediterranean Sea as it is often claimed in the context of migration. Overseas territories from different European countries challenge the classical imagination of states and their territory. The example of French overseas territories shows us how a country organizes these territories and the challenges it faces by it.

While France disposes of a rather centralized political system, its overseas territories add a strong component of federal asymmetry to the country's administration. The French overseas territories are very diverse one from each other. This has not only to do with their different geographical situations but also with their very pluralist administrations. Each of them is organized in a different way when it comes to their relationship with the French metropole, with the European Union and with their geographical neighboring areas (regional cooperation e.g. Caribbean association). Furthermore, this has an impact on their degree of autonomy, their law-making process, administrative questions and on their financial resources. The French Constitution differs between the following three types of overseas territories. The first category are the “Overseas regions and departments”. To these territories, everything that applies to the French metropole, is applying the same way. The second category are the “overseas collectivities”. These collectivities dispose of a certain degree of administrative autonomy. “Collectivities with special status”, in contrast to the first two categories, are characterized by their law-making power. Also, they have the possibility of changing their status through special processes. New Caledonia is an interesting example of a “collectivity with special status”. It is marked by waves of violence and has continually been confronted to the question of independence claimed by the Kanaks, the majority population. The *Matignon Accord* in 1988, as a response to these circumstances, granted more autonomy to the group of islands. The decision got confirmed by the *Nouméa Accord* in 1998. Despite all that, the population of New Caledonia voted for remaining with the French Republic in November 2018.

We can conclude, that the French overseas territories are an illustrative example for the challenges of conflict of interests and their regulation in a federal context. On the one side, the overseas territories are highly dependent financially not only on metropolitan France but also on the European Union. On the other side, Metropolitan France, as well as the European Union, have a strong interest in these territories, mainly geopolitically speaking. A balanced federal mechanism can be seen as a key instrument in order to meet the demands from the different parties.