

IDSS COUNTRY STUDY

FRANCE

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Section I: Summary

1. Key features of the reform period

The reform episode started in 2014 and is still currently being set up. In September 2015, 75 *départements* were involved in the programme. By the end of 2016, two and a half years after the memorandum of understanding was signed, all local governments at the *département* level were involved in the programme, except for two, and around 1,000 PES counsellors were working as part of the programme, with 43,843 recipients being monitored.

The two main implementing bodies of the reform episode are the public employment services (PES) and the social services of the *départements*. The PES had undergone several reforms. They were unified in 2008, when the former unemployment benefits institution and the employment services institution were merged. In 2014, the French PES were restructured to provide a new range of services depending on the profile of jobseekers. These services include: 1) an online follow-up system for those who are able to return to employment quickly; 2) individual, in-person follow-up meetings with a PES counsellor; and 3) a reinforced and robust follow-up scheme for jobseekers who require activation and training. The programme “Comprehensive support and guidance” for welfare social recipients and jobseekers with complex social problems is now the fourth service.

In 2014, the PES had around 53,000 employees (equivalent to 47,000 full-time employees). Local governments at the *département* level have had overall responsibility for social welfare minimum income benefits, such as the Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA, earned income top-up benefit), and for activating recipients.

According to administrative data, in April 2014, the unemployment rate was at a critical level, 9.7%. At the same time, 2.08 million household were in receipt of RSA, and many individuals, whether they were looking for work or not, had complex social issues, including health issues, child care issues, housing issues and sometimes issues relating to the local administration's jurisdiction. In the French welfare system, it is not compulsory for individuals to be registered as looking for work when in receipt of welfare benefits. Before 2014, depending on each *département*, the partnership between the PES and the social services of the *département* were very different.

When the basic guaranteed income benefit, formerly known as the Revenu Minimum d'Insertion, (RMI) was introduced in 1989, led by the Socialist government of Prime Minister Michel Rocard, the idea was to help those in receipt of the RMI to find work, in particular

through supported employment, direct job creation with a social utility, and hiring subsidies. When the RSA was created in 2009 by the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) government, under President Nicolas Sarkozy, and following a proposal by a special committee led by Martin Hirsh who was well-known for his previous NGO experience, the idea was to separate the RSA into two benefits: 1) a basic benefit (RSA socle) for those with significant employment difficulties; and 2) an earned income top-up benefit for those on low incomes (RSA activité).

It was presented as an activation policy in line with European policies. A political and public debate on this type of activation scheme has been taking place ever since. References to the Peter Hartz reforms, as well as other activation models across Europe (mainly the UK approach and the Nordic model), including their positive or negative impacts, have shaped the debate.

RSA socle and RSA activité are both managed at the local and decentralised levels, and the relevant local government layer is called a *département*. The RSA socle is managed by the local *département* government, which is financed by the national government, whereas RSA activité is managed by the national government directly. The latter has now merged with a tax credit (Prime pour l'emploi, PPE), and is called Prime d'activité (PA). Both RSA socle and RSA activité are paid by the social security agency at the local level (CAF, Caisses d'allocations Familiales), acting only as a payment office.

The question of how to design a strong partnership between the PES and social services at the *département* level has been on the agenda for over 25 years. The Ministry for Labour and its central direction the General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP, Délégation générale à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle) were in favour of an activation policy via a new partnership programme between the services of the *département* and the PES. The possibility of financing from the European Social Fund (ESF) played an important role, and it was decided that a pilot comprehensive support and guidance programme would be set up via a memorandum of understanding signed by the three stakeholders: 1) the DGEFP, representing the Government; 2) the Association des Départements de France (ADF, Association of the *Départements* of France), representing the local governments; 3) and Pôle emploi (the French PES). The memorandum of understanding was signed on 1 April 2014, and the programme has been gradually implemented since this date. A pilot phase in some *départements* preceded the agreement. The programme named “Accompagnement global” encompasses three different issues:

- Setting up common social databases
- A coordinated support, guidance and follow-up scheme for activating those in receipt of social benefits and for jobseekers with complex social issues (a social case worker and an employment counsellor working as a team)
- A specific support and guidance scheme for PES-registered jobseekers with social issues that are unable to look for work without first solving their non-job-related issues.

The organization for this programme is different for the *département* as compared to the PES: while there are PES counsellors (Pôle emploi) in charge of this “comprehensive support and guidance” who dedicate their work only for this programme, the social case workers in the *départements* services are often not specialized for it.

The quality of partnership is very different from one *département* to another: for example, the *département* Var has externalized the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” to associations, while the department of Yvelines set up a common body (a GIP, *Groupement d’Intérêt Public*) to monitor the departmental integration policy and to encourage a very strong partnership. The Department Aveyron is only focused on social problems while the *Département* of Bas-Rhin is fully involved in job search for social benefit recipients. Further, the tools and active labour market policies (ALMPs) vary greatly. Thus, the sanctioning practice can be quite different from one *département* to another, as would be the use of its placement activities, implementation of direct job creation programmes and supported employment. Some *départements* have already built up intensive contacts with social enterprises in order to implement their activation strategy over the past and continue to do so, while a few *départements* favour rapid employment in the regular labour market. In the context of our IDSS country case study we analysed the implementation of the programme in two *départements*, Essonne and Alpes Maritimes.

Below, we will describe two case studies as example of implementations at the local level.

The *Département* Essonne belongs to the wider agglomeration of Paris and has several large suburb cities (Evry, the administrative capital, Etampes, Corbeil, Orsay...). The *département* is characterized by contrasting realities such as scientific and technological areas (e.g. Orsay-Saclay) and middle towns with a strong concentration of social problems.

Just after the national agreement setting up the programme “Comprehensive support and guidance” (2014), the two implementing bodies (the *département* social services and the PES services) started to work on the local implementation, beginning by a small experimentation on two local agencies. They planned two actions: “guidance and follow-up in pairs” and a social guidance for 400 jobseekers with complex problems, considered as unable to join a training or an activation path. The programme was soon set up to all the services of the *département*. The implementation process involved other local partners such as the local provider for social benefits (CAF), *missions locales pour l’emploi des jeunes* (local employment services for young people) and the social services within the local councils (Communes). The main actors were the social caseworkers of the *département* services and their managers (directors of “Social solidarity houses” that managed childhood and family problems, housing, health and RSA recipients), the PES employment counsellors and their directors. The work process was not completely defined in order to leave autonomy to the case workers and PES counsellors.

“Immersion days” were organized for both caseworkers and employment counsellors to share their practices and cultures. Then, the jobseekers with complex social problems and the RSA

recipients ready for activation were guided by *département* social caseworkers and PES counsellors through regular tripartite meetings that are considered as very useful. Every month, a Technical Committee takes place to solve institutional difficulties, individual problems and data base solutions.

RSA recipients are encouraged to get in contact with Pôle emploi and jobseekers with social problems are encouraged to meet a caseworker in order to solve the obstacles to take a job.

At the same time, the Département de l'Essonne started a new activation policy through mailings towards the RSA recipients: in case of recipients not answering, the welfare benefits would be suspended.

The Département des Alpes-Maritimes is located in South - East France. Its capital Nice is a regional centre and France's fifth largest city, with an above average poverty rate if compared to other large cities (CCAS Ville de Nice, 2015). The *département* has worked in partnership with the PES since the introduction of the RMI, thus before the introduction of the RSA.

The *département* included the "Comprehensive Support and Guidance" as one of its approaches in its labour market integration strategy, the "Plan emploi-insertion 06" ("employment and social inclusion"), launched in February 2014. Traditionally, the approach in this *département* is based on a work-first approach. Twenty years ago, the *département* set up a programme for placing welfare benefit recipients into the regular labour market that is based on employer-oriented services, in particular recruitment services, provided by the Department and a good network of companies (programme "Cap Entreprise"). The particularity of this approach is that the NGO proposes RSA recipients for open vacancies. As participation is voluntary, a positive self-selection among participants can be assumed. The participant is referred to the employer without a CV. Most jobs posted are jobs that do not require much specialisation. A specific methodology IOD¹ is used in order to collect job characteristics and to follow-up with the employer on the job characteristic after placement. The jobseeker will get intensive follow-up during the application process as well as after taking up work. The NGO will act as a kind of mediator in case of conflicts, which increases sustainability of employment. This programme was set up with financial support of the ESF. A new programme launched in 2015 and co-financed by the ESF is called "Action Flash" and focuses for a rapid intervention.

The *département* could increase the number of its own caseworkers thanks to time saved as a result of process digitalization (e.g. registration). It organized training for its social caseworkers on the issue of "empowerment" of the jobseeker. The PES has selected counsellors to work in the "Comprehensive Support and Guidance" programme on the basis of their previous experience with hard-to-place jobseekers as well as their motivation. They eventually learned a lot through the mixed team approach (working in pairs with the social workers).

¹ <https://transfer-iod.org/public/>

Other local actors are involved such as the CCAS (*centre communal d'action sociale*) that depends from the municipality and the Houses of Solidarity that depend on the *département* but have several local centres. Interviews revealed that much of the success depends on the pro-active stance of the social workers. One example is a centre for homeless people. If the homeless show some willingness to get employment (which is reportedly often the case with those coming to the centre for homeless) the social assistance will get immediately in contact with his/her colleague from the PES (within one or two days). In this specific case informality and rapidity of contact are the key success factors. Another example was the pro-active stance of a social assistance to convince lone parenting women with a migration background living in "difficult" urban areas (*quartiers politiques de la ville*) to take up employment. Obviously, outreach activities are important as the participation in any kind of intensified guidance and subsequent job placement is voluntary.

2. Driving forces, success and failure factors of the reform period

The programme has been widely successful, and the main drivers for success refer to:

- The need for a new partnership was a view shared by stakeholders and actors at nearly all levels
- The role of the ESF financing half of the PES counsellors involved in the programme (500 counsellors out of 1,000)
- The method: pilot schemes in a few *départements* and roll-out after a short assessment
- The strength of intensive support, guidance and follow-ups for people out of work
- A procedural reform initiative on a pragmatic level outside the political debate focusing on an acceptable activation model.

Our interviews confirmed that the programme was a success, and the field-level experts who met for our study (both employment counsellors and social case workers) hoped that the programme would continue for subsequent years, according to the rules of the ESF programme.

Our own qualitative research and interviews with stakeholders indicate that "Comprehensive Support and Guidance" was considered as successful mainly because:

- The quality of the services: the programme consists of a reinforced guidance (number of meetings, individual guidance, online permanent links between jobseekers or RSA recipients and their counsellor or caseworker). A PES counsellor in charge of the programme has to guide a rather low average of 70 to 80 people;
- Clearer structure of partnerships across the country, although divergence in the implementation between Departments remain;
- The "Comprehensive Support and Guidance" has been regarded as a "tool". It has somehow escaped political / ideological discussions, which has helped to implement it;

- Training of counsellors and caseworkers is important;
- Direct exchange of experiences and mutual learning between social caseworkers and PES counsellors is fruitful (they come from a different working “culture”);
- Good contacts to employers at the regular labour market and providing recruitment services is key for succeeding to integrate hard-to place groups into the labour market. One weakness of most *départments*’ social services is that they have few contacts to “regular” employers and used to focus on placing their “clients” in supported employment, which may lead to stigmatisation. A mixed strategy, placing vulnerable groups both in private and social enterprises may be more appropriate. A closer cooperation with the PES and the Department’s social services can represent a good opportunity for using a wider range of services and programmes;
- Networks are multiplied.

On the other hand, we would qualify the following as weaknesses and challenges encountered during the programme:

- The problem of diverging priorities concerning the target groups may persist, learning from each other (linking social inclusion AND labour market integration) thus remains an important challenge;
- The programme is staff consuming. The net benefits could, however, be positive;
- A cost-benefit analysis is not carried out, as there are high methodological problems linked to such an exercise;
- The classification that the *département* has to deal with “social issues” and PES with “labour market integration issues” would need to be overcome over time. While it is important that PES counsellors learn more about the complexity of non-labour market related problems, social counsellors still would need to understand the importance of labour market integration;
- There is no obligation for RSA recipients to register with the PES. Voluntary participation in the scheme means that there is a positive selection of participants into the programme. On the other hand, it may be at first sight more efficient as it allows to focus on those who are more employable, however at the societal cost of leaving other groups behind;
- Outreach activities would need to be improved to those in need but not claiming the RSA;
- There is still no shared financial responsibility for the target group;
- IT-problems for database-sharing remain.
- A national evaluation is being carried out with results expected by the end of March 2018².

² Starting in February 2017, the results of this evaluation will be published in Spring 2018.

3. Good practices and dissemination possibilities in an EU context

A few lessons for Europe emerge. The following factors are important when designing and implementing the integrated delivery of social services, they mainly concern the philosophy and quality of the follow-up and guidance:

- A comprehensive and strong support, guidance and follow-up in line with an activation policy (psychological, social and work-oriented) in order to be able to solve the different problems at the same time;
- When participation in the comprehensive guidance is voluntary, there is a danger of leaving the most vulnerable groups which are furthest away from the labour market behind and difficulties to outreaching the most vulnerable people are not resolved. Nevertheless, even if participation is voluntary both main actors (the PES and social services) can implement outreach activities.
- The two-persons team is a very good and innovative method to follow-up jobseekers or social benefit recipients: this lesson from our field work would be in line with the assessment of the *garantie jeune* in France that sets up the notion of plural guidance and contributes to organize a sort of network for the young people. The Youth Guarantee is a good mix of collective and individual guidance, an example of stop-and-go methods with opportunities for working and training and a change from a “desk environment to core unit of empowerment”.³ The practice of some NGOs, as SNC in our study, shows the importance of this innovative way of guidance through pairs and not only face-to-face meetings;
- Rapid communication between different services is key (in-house or between different institutions). In practice, informal contacts have increased rapidly;

A full harmonization of approaches at the local level may not be necessary if this would hinder the willingness to cooperate. A partnership approach could be an alternative to integrated approaches.

³ dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/dares...et.../lagarantie-jeunes-evaluation-du-dispositif

Section II: Detailed description of the reform episode

Contents

1.	Setting the scene.....	9
1.1.	The broad socio-economic and political context	9
1.2.	The activation and poverty alleviation agenda and other relevant political issues	13
1.3.	A brief overview of the institutional setting at the starting point of the reform	15
1.4.	A brief overview of the benefit system at the starting point of the reform	16
1.5.	Brief description of the institutional status quo before the reform	20
2.	Details of the reform episode (initiative)	23
2.1.	Brief description of the initiative.....	23
2.2.	The rationale behind the initiative	23
2.3.	Detailed description of the NEW system	23
2.4.	Context of the initiative: where did the idea come from?	23
2.5.	The political decision phase: the actors	25
2.6.	The political phase: the actions.....	25
2.7.	The designing phase: the actors.....	27
2.8.	The designing phase: the decisions.....	27
2.9.	Who implemented the initiative?	28
2.10.	Implementation process	28
2.11.	Costs of the initiative.....	35
2.12.	Monitoring	35
2.13.	Impact assessment.....	37
2.14.	Any important follow-up measures?.....	38
2.15.	Any other detail that seemed important but wasn't mentioned so far?	38
3.	Assessment and conclusions.....	38
3.1.	What external factors helped/hindered the launch of the initiative and its successful implementation?.....	38
3.2.	Lessons for the country	39
3.3.	Lessons for Europe	39
3.4.	Main strengths and weaknesses	40
4.	References	42
-	Pole emploi (2016), <i>L'approche globale de l'accompagnement</i> , http://www.pole-emploi.org/actualites/l-approche-global-de-l-accompagnement-@/543/view-article-149040.html	43

1. Setting the scene

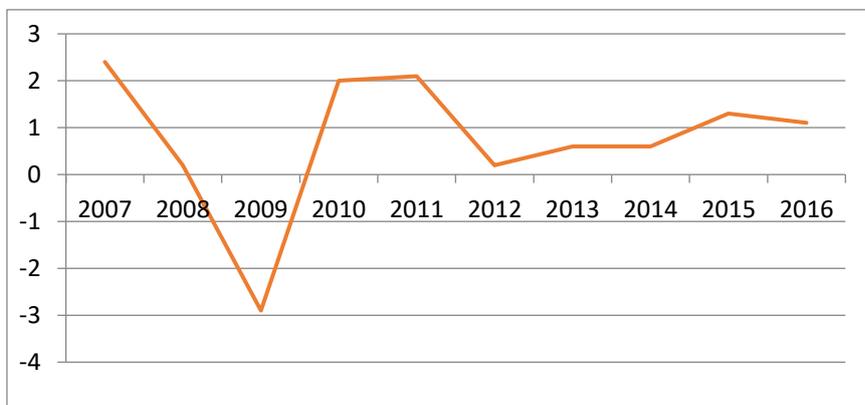
1.1. The broad socio-economic and political context

The setting-up of the programme « **Comprehensive Support and Guidance** » (*accompagnement global des demandeurs d'emploi*) is in the focus of this report. It was launched in April 2014.

- The socio-economic context

In 2014, France is still tackling the consequences of the financial crisis of 2008. The economic and social situation could be described by a low growth rate, a low investment rate within private sectors, a high unemployment rate, and an explosion of the number of social benefit recipients.

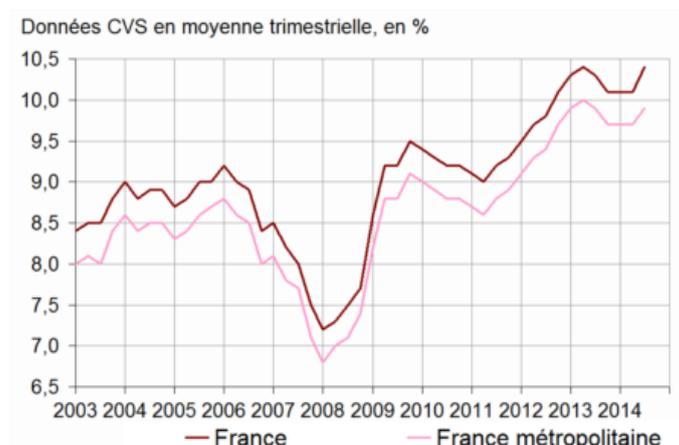
Figure 1: GDP growth rates 1950-2016



Growth rates 2007-2016 (INSEE)

In metropolitan France (without the overseas Departments such as La Réunion, Martinique...), the unemployment rate was at 9.9 % by mid 2014 (2.8 million people). By the end of 2014 it was at 10.4%, according to administrative data of the PES.

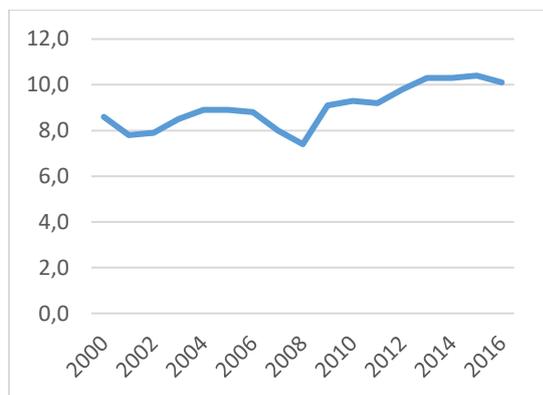
Figure 2: Unemployment rates 2008-2014 according to administrative data in France



Source: Pôle emploi

Figure 3 shows that the unemployment rate according to the ILO definition has been above 8% in France most of the time since 2000. The number of unemployed rose as a consequence of the economic crisis and peaked at 10.4% in 2015 and has slightly fallen since then. The number of unemployed registered at the PES Pôle emploi was higher than the number of unemployed according to the ILO definition.

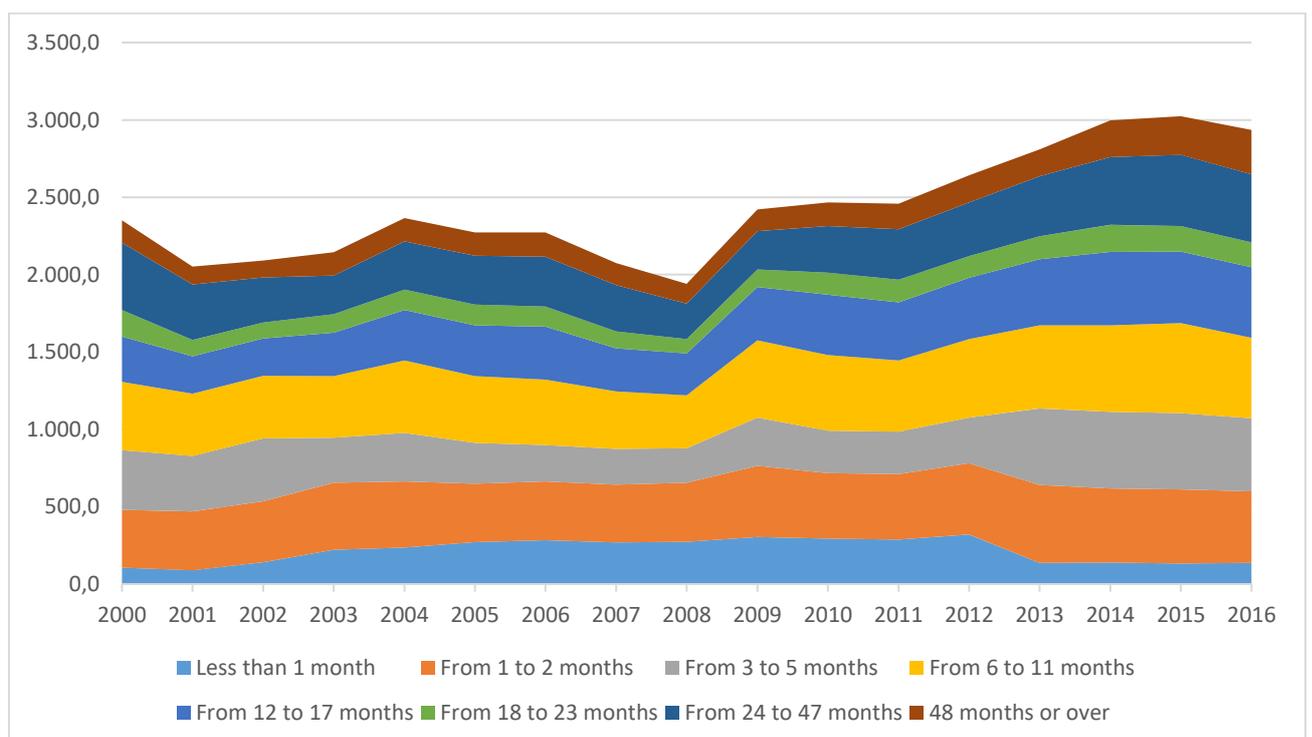
Figure 3: Unemployment rate in France (ILO Definition), 2000-2016



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey data

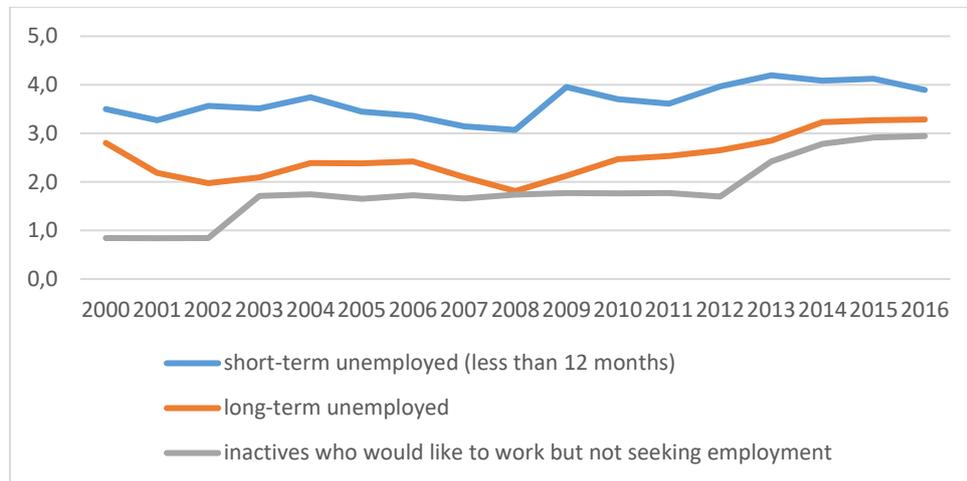
As figure 4 shows, since 2009 the number of long-term unemployed and very long-term unemployed has risen. Further, the share of inactives wanting to work (as a share of the working population), but not actively searching has been increasing since 2012 (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Number of unemployed by length of unemployment, France, 2000-2016



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey data

Figure 5: Share of long- and short-time unemployed, and inactives wanting to work but not seeking for work, in % of working age population (15-64), France, 2000-2016



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey micro data data, own calculations on the basis of Duell et al. 2016

The number of RSA recipients increased by 17.6% between 2008 and 2013, reaching 4.21 million people. The number of social benefits recipients peaked in 2014 and 2015, amounting to 2.53 million of households by the end of 2015. The period of benefit receipt was very long for most RSA beneficiaries: by the end of 2013, 88% of the RSA recipients received their benefits for more than one year and 52% for more than three years (Cour des Comptes National Report, 2015).

In addition to the worryingly increasing number of RSA recipients, non-take up of social benefits has been a concern. In France, the *Observatoire des non-recours aux droits et services* (Observatory of non-take-up of rights and services, Odenore) estimates that roughly one third of those eligible to social benefits are not claiming them (Warin 2006: 121).⁴ Non-take up of social benefits seems essentially to concern isolated populations because they are in more adverse situations, such as the working poor or single parents. An analysis of EU-SILC micro data confirms this result, as one third of long-term unemployed did not receive any welfare benefit in 2013 (Duell et al. 2016).

- The administrative context:

France has traditionally been a centralised country. Several large decentralisation laws were passed in 1981-82, opening a new administrative organization: these laws had encompassed urbanism, transport infrastructures, primary schools, social policies, and vocational training. They were confirmed and completed in 2003 (with a new constitutional principle: “France: organization of the République is

⁴ In France the notion of access to ‘rights’ (to benefits) is commonly used rather than access to benefits. The use of the notion of rights reflects to some extent the cultural heritage of the French revolution. Odenore is a product of a research programme on non-take-up of public services, run by a CNRS laboratory at the *Institut d’études politiques in Grenoble*. The idea developed from exploratory research on non-take-up of public services, undertaken in the early 2000s for the *Direction générale de l’administration et de la fonction publique*. Although actors in the government administration and non-governmental organisations were familiar with the concept of non-take-up, it was not being measured. In order to develop scientific knowledge on non-take-up, it therefore seemed necessary to construct an ad hoc tool that could be used to identify it (Warin 2006: 121, <https://odenore.msh-alpes.fr/>).

decentralized”) and again in 2009 and 2013. Metropolitan France is organised in 97 Departments (*départements*) and 13 Regions (*régions*; the latest administrative reform of 2016 decreased the former number of 22 regions). Overseas Departments are grouped in five further Departments and regions. The lowest administrative levels are municipalities, which can be cities or very small villages; in 2014 there were 36 552 municipalities (*communes*) in metropolitan France. At the moment there is a trend in voluntary grouping together and creating inter-municipalities (*inter-communalités*).

Social policies such as social services for poor families, children care, old people were decentralized to the lower levels of government (firstly in 1982, and in 2003 and 2009). Depending on the social policy field, either the municipality or the department level is in charge and the division of work between municipalities and Departments varies by Department. Therefore, in this report, both social services delivered by the Department or by the municipalities are regarded as being delivered at the local level. Regional governments (elected) are in charge of economic development, lifelong training, and vocational former education while the departmental governments (elected) are in charge of transports, infrastructures and social policies.

The minimum basic income named RMI introduced in 1988 was decentralized in 2003 (18 December 2003) and the creation of the RSA in 2009 followed the same pattern. The local governments departments are in charge of financing the RSA-socle and in charge of activation policies. While, the budget for financing the RSA is provided partly by transfers from the national level to the Departments, a part of the financing has to be provided by the Departments’ own revenues, and the share of resources provided and the financial burden for the Departments has disproportionately increased. With the economic crisis since 2008 and the changes in the structure of employment and unemployment, the social budgets of local governments have reached top levels over the last years. They increased by 22% between 2008 and 2014. The RSA represented 42% of the Departmental social benefit expenditures in 2014. The expenditures for the integration of RSA recipients, paid by the Departments after deduction of financial endowment from the national level increased by 2.7 times between and the net expenditures for the RSA benefit increased by 5 times between 2009 and 2014 (ODAS - Observatory for Social Action)⁵.

Despite this decentralized organization of social services, the PES has maintained its centralized structure as the national provider of employment services and thus remains the main actor within the labour market. Its tasks are implemented through local agencies (Agences locales de Pôle emploi) and completed by local institutions such as “Missions Locales pour l’emploi des Jeunes” (local institutions for young people) and “Maisons pour l’emploi” (one-stop-shop for some employment services at the municipal level).

All the experts interviewed underline that a decentralized financing of welfare benefits decided at the national level is not sustainable in the long term because the amounts and rules regarding conditions of eligibility for being a recipient and amount of the benefits are decided by the national government. This is perceived as a paradoxical situation and during the year 2016, discussions took place between the national government and ADF but they didn’t succeed. The expenditures at the level of the Departments have substantially increased, putting the budgets under serious pressure. This is why the Department and its network Association des Départements de France (ADF) are rigorously aiming at decreasing the number of social benefit recipients. After the March 2015 elections for Departmental Councils, bringing a majority to the conservative Party, this policy tends to become a priority.

- The political context

⁵ Lettre de l’ODAS juin 2015

When the reform episode started, the majority in Parliament was socialist and the Prime minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, developed new steps of decentralization and new steps of social dialogue. For example, in July 2012 and in June 2013, two National social Conferences (“*Grandes Conférences sociales*”) gathered all partners (government, social partners, local governments and NGOs) to work on employment, labour market and labour shortages, lifelong learning, and welfare benefits.

1.2. The activation and poverty alleviation agenda and other relevant political issues

Prior to the introduction of the comprehensive guidance scheme, the main economic and social reforms launched during the years 2012-2014, included:

Tackling unemployment:

- The creation of a new type of employment subsidies for young people, “*les contrats d’avenir*” (“jobs for future”), launched in 2012. These are targeted at young people (below 25 years) with a low qualification level and often NEET(s) and/or living in deprived urban areas. The types of jobs proposed could be within the public administrations (mainly local government services) and semi-public organizations such as associations, agencies and the private sector. For employers the programme provides social taxes exoneration and public subsidies. For the year 2016, there were 65 000 participants. One specificity of this programme was the length of the contracts (up to three years) as well as the aim to include a training element.
- The creation of the “generation contract” for private employers, providing tax credits when hiring a young person aged under 26 years and maintaining an older worker aged at least 55 years for working in a two-staff team in a company. This measure was not successful: by mid-2015, there were only 40 300 generation jobs as compared to the expected 220 000.

In search of flexibility (flexicurity):

- A national trans-sector agreement was signed by the social partners in January 2013, confirmed by a law passed in June 2013: “Agreement for supporting employment”. Wage reduction or increase in working time were expected to be exchanged for “no redundancies”. Only five agreements were signed during the year after the law was passed. Of these, two large agreements signed at the beginning of 2014 were relevant, both in the automotive sector (Renault and PSA group)
- The new status of “self-employed” decided in 2010 was confirmed and very successful: by the end of 2016, it concerned 1 075 000 people.

In search of enterprises competitiveness:

- **After a national Report by Louis Gallois (past President of Airbus Group), it was decided to create a tax-credit for companies in order to lighten the social tax burden.**

In search of human competencies:

- A national Agreement was signed between social partners about lifelong learning, creating a new individual training account (*Compte personnel de formation*), a right to an individual guidance (*Conseil en évolution professionnelle*) and a decrease of training levies for companies.

The milestones relating to minimum income, employment and activation policies, as well as the fight against poverty included the following:

- 1988: creation of the RMI by a socialist government (Michel Rocard as the Prime minister– François Mitterrand as the President)
- 2001: a law creating the “Employment prime”, as a negative tax, for the working-poor, by a socialist government (Lionel Jospin as the Prime minister – Jacques Chirac as the President)
- 2003: a law about decentralization with new responsibilities about social integration and social benefits for local governments at the departmental level (under a conservative government Jean-Pierre Raffarin as the Prime minister – Jacques Chirac as the President): since then, departmental governments are in charge of the RMI and after 2009 of the RSA. It means financing the RSA-socle and being in charge of activation policies and services.
- 2005: a national Report from Martin Hirsch (Past President of the NGO Emmaüs) issuing from a National workshop “Family, Poverty and Weakness”: the main proposition is to change the RMI benefit considered as being not efficient.
- 2009: creation of the RSA; during this period the national government was managed by the conservative Party UMP (François Fillon as the Prime minister - Nicolas Sarkozy as the President). When designing this benefit, the aim was to activate the recipients towards work by combining income from work and welfare benefits. This new policy was considered as being in line with the European activation policy.
- 2011: a general assessment of the RSA was realized by a National Evaluation Committee (under the presidency of François Bourguignon, head of the Paris School of Economics) and through randomized methods. Its conclusions about the impact of RSA were very critical: the RSA had no real effects on the poverty rate and it had not reached its aim of improving the employment rate for the recipients. The jobs obtained are mainly short-term and part-time contracts at a low level of qualification. The rates of non-take up were at a high level (58% in 2010). This evaluation was very important because the RMI and afterwards the RSA were the main drivers for developing randomized evaluations (for example, in 2008-2009, some voluntary local governments at the departmental level had experimented and assessed the first framework of the RSA). The same evaluation underlines the problem of the low quality of follow-up (need for vocational follow up or for psychological and social follow up). After this evaluation, no change was decided about the general pattern of RSA, but the question of the follow up remained on the political agenda.
- 2013: a report from Monique Iborra (Socialist Party) was published in conclusion of a Parliament Mission about the PES. This Report was an answer to the question whether a psychological and social follow-up was needed and it was the starting point for the programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance”. Its main proposal was to set up a comprehensive guidance (both social and vocational) for all jobseekers facing social difficulties, whether they are RSA recipients or not, in order to guide them towards work.
- 2014: a national agreement between Pôle emploi, ADF and the government (DGEFP) for setting up the “**Comprehensive Support and Guidance**” (*accompagnement global*) (under a socialist government and a socialist majority within the local governments at the departmental level - Jean-Marc Ayrault as the Prime minister – François Hollande as the President).

The programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” encompasses three different points:

- Setting up common social data bases shared by the PES and the Department’s social services;
- A coordinated follow-up and a strong coordination for activating recipients (a case worker + an employment counsellor working as a team);

- A specific follow-up for jobseekers registered with the PES having severe social problems and being unable to look for a job without solving these problems.

During this period (around 2014), the PES was ruled under a new director (appointed in 2011) and debates focused on activating long-term jobseekers as well as on the question of implementing a “carrots and sticks” approach for jobseekers refusing to take up the jobs proposed. From the point of view of the PES, the idea was to move away from standardization of services because the clients’ needs varied significantly. This approach was often discussed in France against the background of a rigid and philosophical vision of equality. There were divergent views between the positions of the trade union members of the PES board. The main trade union confederations have different points of view: the reformist French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT) was more in favour of an individual approach while the General Confederation of Labour (Confédération générale du travail, CGT), well-known as being more “revolutionary”, was supporting the same follow-up for everybody. The German activation system after the Hartz reforms has sometimes been proposed as a possible reform. This was discussed in a controversial manner, as the Hartz reforms were regarded as being too strict and unsocial by the most left-wing parties and some of the trade-unions and researchers.

During the years 2014-2016, a new debate arose about the struggle against poverty, the non-take-up of welfare benefits such as the RSA and the need to simplify welfare benefits (there are currently 10 different benefits) as well as to unify their access. This was then aim of a National Report to the Prime minister in 2016 (Christophe Sirugue Report on social benefits) that was completed just before the starting of the debate about the “basic income” during the last campaign for the Presidential election. The debate through the political parties was mainly about simplification and the Sirugue Report was followed by merging RSA-activité and Prime pour l’emploi in order to support the mix of income from work and social benefit.

1.3. A brief overview of the institutional setting at the starting point of the reform

In order to describe the welfare benefit and related services and PES services, we need to describe three main bodies: 1) the Social Security Administration, 2) the PES and its main partners, and 3) the local governments in charge of social affairs (among them social benefits such as RMI and RSA) and training for jobseekers at the regional level.

- 1) The Social Security Administration is organized in three main sectors: healthcare system, pensions system, and family benefits. The French public welfare system is financed by compulsory contributions paid directly from salaries and employers and is completed by income taxes (CSG for “*Contribution sociale généralisée*”). As for minimum incomes, although they are financed by the government for the RSA-activité and by the department for RAS-socle, the benefits are paid to each recipient by the family benefit sector: head of the network named CNAF - Caisse Nationale d’Allocations Familiales (National Fund for Family Benefits) and CAF at the departmental level, with no responsibility in activation policies.
- 2) The French PES is named Pôle emploi. It was created in 2008 by merging two previously separate institutions, the employment services provided by ANPE and the benefits payments provided by ASSEDIC. Its main partners are the “*Missions Locales pour l’emploi des jeunes*” (local agencies for young people employment) in charge for example of the programme Youth Guarantee, financed by the national government, the regional local government and the

municipalities; and “*CAP Emploi*” for disabled people financed by a national association named AGFPH through company taxes based on salaries.

- 3) The local governments in charge of social affairs are the Departments. They finance the “RSA-socle” (basic RSA for people without employment) and manage the support, guidance and follow-up for all RSA recipients mainly with regard to their social problems and needs. To finance the RSA-socle, the departments receive a special endowment from the national government. The counsellors in charge of the follow-up for RSA recipients are caseworkers and social inclusion counsellors working within the Departments social services. They are in general not specialists of the labour market rules. In addition, municipalities deliver some social services.

1.4. A brief overview of the benefit system at the starting point of the reform

Working age citizens could claim:

- The Active Income of Solidarity (RSA)

With its creation on 1st of June 2009, the Active Income of Solidarity (RSA) replaced the past Minimum Income for Integration (RMI) that had been created in 1989. This benefit is available for all people without any resources aged more than 25 years, French or foreigners with a right to live in France, or accepted as refugees. Young people aged 18-25 are eligible if they are single parents or if they have worked for 2 years over the past 3 years.⁶

There are two types of RSA:

- A basic means-tested minimum income for people without any income from work (*RSA-socle*);
- A complementary RSA for people working and having a low salary, often a part-time work or a short-term contract (*RSA-activity* as a tax credit since December 2016).

Although, RSA recipients should search for work it is optional for RSA them to be registered with the PES.

RSA-socle: the amount (December 2016) was: 535 EUR/month for a single person. For a couple with 2 children the allowance amounted to 1 100 EUR, and for a couple with 5 children 1 729 EUR.

RSA-activity: the amount is depending on the level of income from work. To be eligible, the monthly net income should be below 1 500 EUR. In March 2017, on average, the RSA-activity amounted to 156 EUR per month. It is designed as an in-work benefit. In some case the RSA-socle and RSA-activity can be cumulated, depending on the household revenues.

In 2008, in metropolitan France, about 1 million people received RMI benefits and the number of beneficiaries of the single parent allowance API was 172 000, while in 2009 the number of beneficiaries of the newly introduced RSA-socle, replacing the RMI and the API, amounted to 1.3 million people. In 2014, there were 1 691 000 recipients of RSA-socle and 1 735 000 in 2015 (source: Drees). In 2015, about 4.3% of the population aged 15-64 in metropolitan France (4.7% including the overseas Departments) were beneficiaries of the RSA socle. This share varied between 1.6% in the Department

⁶ <http://www.caf.fr/allocataires/droits-et-prestations/connaitre-vos-droits-selon-votre-situation/j-ai-moins-de-25-ans-ai-je-droit-au-rsa>

Haute-Savoie and 7% in the Department Seine-Saint-Denis (in the suburbs of Paris). The in-work benefit “*prime d’activité*” (merging the former “*prime pour l’emploi*” and RSA-activité, was paid to 2.5 million households, covering in addition to the 2.5 million main claimant about 0.64 million spouses and 1.9 million children (amounting to a total of nearly 5 million people) (according to data released by CNAF on 6 July 2017). According to our interviewees in one of the Departments the *prime d’activité* was assessed as being a very useful measure to incentivise social minima recipients to go back to work.

- The Special Solidarity Benefit (ASS – *Allocation Spécifique de Solidarité*)

This benefit is available for long-term unemployed people who have exhausted eligibility to unemployment benefits. It is different from the unemployment benefit that is calculated according to the past salary.

The amount was (December 2016): 488 EUR/month for one person.

- The Adult Disability Benefit (AAH – *Allocation Adulte Handicapé*)

This benefit is used for people with disabilities being recognized by National and departmental Commissions.

The amount (December 2016) was: 808 EUR/month for one person.

- The *garantie jeune* (Youth Guarantee)

This new allowance is targeted at young people not in employment, not in education nor in training (NEET). The follow-up is very strict. The beneficiary is required to participate in activities mixing working and training periods. The support and follow-up for young people is provided by “*Missions Locales pour l’Emploi des Jeunes*”, a partner and member of the PES.

The amount of this allowance (December 2016) was 471 EUR/month for one person. This is important as young people are excluded from the RSA.

- Non-take up of welfare benefits

As already pointed out, non-take-up of social benefits, meaning that those eligible to social benefits do not claim their entitlements, is a major obstacle to the effectiveness of social protection and contributes to poverty and remoteness of employment.⁷ It combines questions of effectiveness and efficiency of social policy, equality of citizens in the access to their rights, as well as good fiscal governance. Improving targeting and efficiency of benefits, that is to avoid both fraud and non-claiming, is a key challenge for modern societies. Taking into account earlier studies in France, Odenore presented an explanatory typology comprising three main forms of non-take-up (Warin, 2010): (i) due to *non-knowledge*, when the offer is not known, (ii) due to *non-demand*, when the offer is known but not requested, (iii) due to *non-reception*, when the offer is known and requested but not obtained

⁷ In 2010, 8.6 million citizens in France lived below the poverty line (60% of the medium income/revenue median, 4.8 million if taken 50% as the medium income, according to Insee, see Kerleau, Outin, 2013). One third of these citizens were working, a share representing a share of in-work poverty of 7.5% of all active (meaning employed or self-employed) persons in France. Overall, in 2010, the share of poverty was at 14.1% and had increased by 1.1% as compared to 2008 (Kerleau, Outin, 2013).

(Hamel, Warin, 2011). The government report on poverty in France in 2012 mentions the lack of knowledge of both the level and the reasons of non-take-up as well as the adequate means to fight against it (Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Santé, 2012). Non-claiming contributes to a separation of the sphere of social assistance from the sphere of work, and thus limits the efforts related to the activation function of social policies.⁸ French governments have launched several initiatives to test how outreaching, targeting and take-up of benefits by those eligible to it can be improved. These initiatives are grounded on the one hand on the objective and the resulting strategies to combat poverty and on the other hand on the objective to modernize public action. The SGMAP (Secretary General for Government Modernisation) conducted an implementation-oriented research action on the topic of non-take-up from October 2012 to October 2013. This action allowed implementing small-scale experiments in two pilot Departments. In the context of the multiannual plan for the fight against poverty and for social inclusion adopted in January 2013, the SGMAP together with the minister for the fight against poverty and for social inclusion, Marie-Arlette Carlotti, and the PES had decided on an experimental project for reducing non-take-up (Premier Ministre, 2013, 2014). According to the logic of one-stop-shops, the local CAFs invite potential beneficiaries to *Rendez-vous des droits* in which CAF officers analyse the situation of people that might be eligible to allowances and support managed by the family branch and those managed by partner authorities. The *RDV des droits*, provided through the National Agreement between the CNAF and the Government, are targeted at registered populations at the CAF. Due to this targeting, they will not open rights to persons unknown to the CAF. Two target groups are in focus: persons eligible to RSA and those received in the context of a specific allowance (housing, single parents, etc.) (Duell, Thurau 2016).⁹ A recent report (Christophe Sirugue Report, Assemblée Nationale, 2016) proposed to merge all these social basic incomes.

1-5 The main agents involved in managing the benefit system and providing employment and social services

The main agents involved in managing the benefit system and providing employment and social services are:

- The Government, which is in charge of defining the policy, the rules and the amount of the different social benefits.
- The governance system is developed through two main ministries: 1) Ministry of Employment, Work and Training (the name changes according to each government) and 2) Ministry of Social Affairs. In each ministry, two general strategic and administrative directorates (with a staff around 200 people) are in charge of employment policies and social policies: *Direction Générale à l'Emploi et à la Formation Professionnelle* for the first one, and the Direction for Social Security for the second one.

In the following, a short description of the implementing bodies is given: 1) the Social Security Administration, 2) the PES and its main partners, 3) the local Governments in charge of social affairs and training for jobseekers, 4) the role of NGOs.

⁸ This has shown the French experience of the 'activity' component of the RSA. RSA activity is characterized by a much higher non-take-up than the RSA 'base' which is restricted to the unemployed. RSA activity also lacks clarity and the beneficiaries are struggling to predict the amount. The complexity of the benefit is high and the processing time rather slow (EMIN/EAPN, 2014).

- 1) Autonomous public bodies - the Social Security services: they are organized in three main sectors: Healthcare system, Pensions system, Family benefits. The French public welfare system is financed by compulsory contributions paid directly by employees and employers as a percentage of the wages. As for minimum incomes (RMI and after RSA), the benefits are paid to the recipients by the Family benefits sector, head of the network named the CNAF - Caisse Nationale d'Allocations Familiales (National Fund for Family Benefits) and named CAF at the department level.
- 2) Autonomous public bodies - the French PES is named Pôle emploi : it was created in 2008 by merging previously two separate institutions, the employment services were previously provided by ANPE and benefits payments by ASSEDIC. Its main partners are: “*Missions Locales pour l'emploi des jeunes* » (Local agencies for young people employment), which are financed by the national government, the regional local government and the municipalities; and *CAP Emploi* for disable people. The PES is autonomous for its organization and management but under the wardship of the national government for its budget. The social partners are members of its board.

Pôle emploi is also depending of the Unemployment Insurance Fund UNEDIC, the social partners institution that collects and manages the contributions for unemployment insurance. UNEDIC is autonomous and managed by the social partners.

- 3) Local governments: there are three main levels of territorial organisation in France: regions, Departments and municipalities. The local government and services in charge of social affairs is the Department level: they finance the RSA-socle and manage the support, guidance and follow up of recipients concerning their social problems and needs. They also manage others social problems such as child care, housing problems and benefits and support for old people. The experts in charge of this follow up are caseworkers and social inclusion counsellors (*conseiller insertion*) who are not specialists on labour market rules and vocational paths.

The Department services have a large degree of autonomy in their organizational choices.

- 4) NGOs: numerous national associations, such as SNC – *Solidarités Nouvelles contre le Chômage* - (interviewed for this study at the different levels), *ATD Quart Monde*, and a lot of local associations are involved in providing support, guidance and follow-up. They are often engaged in partnerships with the PES. Some NGOs involved in the struggle against poverty as Secours Catholique or Secours Islamique could be actors of activation policies for social benefits recipients.
For example in the Department of Bas-Rhin, NGOs are actively involved in the implementation of “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” within a partnership between the Department services and the PES services (*Antenne, Entraide, Le relais...*).

1.5. Brief description of the institutional status quo before the reform

	provision type 1 (or client group)	provision type 2 (or client group)
Name of provision (benefit or service)	Active Income of Solidarity (RSA-socle) for people without any resources Active Income of Solidarity –RSA - activity for people working for low salaries	- Unemployment benefit (Insurance) - Unemployment benefit for long term unemployed (ASS)
Main purpose of the benefit/service	Fight against poverty	Replaced income during unemployed periods
Main access criteria (insured, means-tested, other criteria, e.g. age, family status, etc.)	More than 25 years old without resources French or foreign people with the right to live in France Refugees	Insured Registered in the PES services
Target group and its size in proportion to total non-working active age population	Not known as the provision of integration services does not depend from benefit receipt.	About 2 750 million people receive unemployment benefit and ASS out of 3 million unemployed according to LFS data in 2014
Who is the main actor that determines the client journey?	Department social services	PES services
Who evaluates claims for this benefit / decides on who can participate in this service (if the service is open to all, please indicate that)?	Department social services	PES services and a PES ombudsman
Who enforces the activation (job search, accepting job offer, etc.) requirements (if these exist)?	Department social services	Employment and vocational counsellors in the PES and their partners “Missions locales pour l’emploi des jeunes” – “Cap emploi”)
Who decides on sanctions (in case of non-compliance)?	Department Council (elected)	PES inspectors (different from counsellors)
Who pays the benefit / delivers the service?	Social security agencies (for family benefits)	PES services + UNEDIC
Who provides the funding behind (e.g. local government using their own revenues or local gov. using a per capita subsidy from the central budget)	Local government (Department) using their own revenues and national transfers National government for the RSA-activity (for people working and having both a social benefit and a salary)	Unemployment Insurance Fund (UNEDIC) financed by compulsory contributions of employees and employers and managed by the social partners

In the original system there were a number of inefficiencies, including:

- Unknown recipients

It seems that RSA recipients are not systematically activated and followed up. According to the interviews carried out for this country study, numerous recipients received their benefits every month but never met a counsellor nor a caseworker. As the RSA recipients are not obliged to be registered with the PES, they often have no contact with any employment or training counsellor that could provide an activation opportunity for them and/or convince them to be activated.

According to one interviewee, even those RSA recipients registered at Pôle emploi are often not systematically and regularly activated. In the case of the Department of the Alpes-Maritimes it was therefore decided that the social services would help with following up RSA recipients registered at Pôle emploi if they have not met their PES counsellor for one year or longer. RSA recipients are obviously not (always) a target group of the PES.

Another inefficiency of the system is linked to weaknesses in outreaching to those in need. As explained above the non-take up of welfare benefits has retained much attention in the academic debate and has been taken up by the previous government as an issue that needs to be tackled. In 2011, the non-take up of the RSA-socle was 35%, and the non-take up of the in-work benefit RSA-activity was estimated to amount to 68% (EMIN/EAPN 2014).

- Discontinuity between social services and PES services: not delivered by the same agents, not in one-stop-shop.

There is no one-stop-shop approach for unemployment benefit recipients, RSA recipients and disability recipients in France. There has been a division of work between the PES, providing employment and social services. Although partnerships existed before for certain target groups, such as young people and people with disabilities, the contacts were less intense.

- Limits for counsellors to deliver services to clients with complex needs

One of the problems for efficient service delivery of services to groups with complex problems consists in the specialisation level of PES counsellors. PES counsellors have not the competencies and the network resources to solve problems that are not directly linked to the labour market (so-called “peripheral barriers” in the French context). However, these represent serious obstacles to getting a job: for example housing problems, health or drug addiction, psychological or psychiatric problems, mobility problems (no driving license or no car or motor bike), nursing for children particularly in case the job requires atypical working times (e.g. night shifts). Therefore, the board of directors/the management of Pôle emploi were in search of new partnerships that could help their counsellors, especially because the number of clients with complex needs is increasing. With the introduction of the new scheme for the Comprehensive Support and Guidance, specialisation improved.

On the other side, caseworkers in the Department services were in general not expert about the labour market functioning, the different types of working contracts, and the different subventions for employment and training. However, some Departments have decided to be more engaged with activation and labour market integration. E.g. in the case of the Alpes-Maritimes a plan for labour market integration and social inclusion has been developed by the Social Services of the Department. But this strong orientation towards the regular labour market, as is the case in this example, is more an exception rather than the norm. Other Departments may develop and implement labour market integration strategies, but are more likely to do so from a social policy angle and will favour direct job creation programmes for performing socially useful work. Thus, there was a real complementarity

between the counsellors' competencies and resources and the caseworkers' competencies and resources – however, it was not organized.

In principle the activation process starts with the identification of barriers and leads to the preparation of an individual action plan, called “career” project (*projet professionnel*) in the French context. The criteria used to conduct this diagnosis are relatively similar among the different actors as they refer to both personal and employment or skills-related factors. They include, among others, social skills, personal and familial environment, language skills, education and professional career. In addition, the above-mentioned “peripheral barriers” are taken into account. This has in principle not changed.

The usage of sanctions was not effectively implemented by the different service providers (only the PES has timidly implemented them, as well as a few Departments, of which the Alpes-Maritimes). Since two years, an experiment has been conducted in about 10 Departments, with a division of roles among those staff members who are randomly monitoring and sanctioning and those counsellors who are following up the job seekers. The trade unions represented within Pôle emploi are very much objecting the idea that the PES counsellor who is guiding and following up the jobseeker is in a position to control and sanction him.

2. Details of the reform episode (initiative)

2.1. Brief description of the initiative

The programme relies on changing the organization of support, guidance and follow-up of jobseekers and social benefit recipients by creating two-persons teams (one PES counsellor + one social caseworker) and by developing more cooperation in daily work, without changing the institutions. At the end of 2016, all Departments were involved in this programme, except two (a sort of political exception for departmental governments opposed to Pôle emploi). The participation is voluntary, although some Departments may have experienced it as being imposed by Pôle emploi, as some of our interviews revealed.

The duration of the programme for the target group is between 12 and a maximum of 18 months under specific circumstances. The exit from the programme could be to take up a job, to start a training session or to enter another activation path with the PES.

2.2. The rationale behind the initiative

The rationale behind the initiative was to change the way of working and to gradually change the expertise and culture both of employment counsellors and social caseworkers. The Government wanted to boost activation policies and to set up permanent partnerships between the PES and local government social services.

The three actors (PES, central government and Association des Départements de France) aimed to offer to clients (jobseekers with complex social problems and minimum income recipients oriented towards labour market integration) a social and vocational follow-up within an activation approach.

There were no targets about the benefits-cost relationship but the decrease in the number of social benefit recipients could lead to lightening the financial burden for the local governments at the departmental level.

2.3. Detailed description of the NEW system

As described above, the programme is not a new welfare system: it takes place within the already established welfare system. There is no change in the benefits system since the new programme is only a partnership between PES counsellors and Departments social services staff (“case workers” and “social inclusion” and/or labour market integration counsellors).

Note of the authors: Therefore, the chart to be filled in this section is not relevant.

2.4. Context of the initiative: where did the idea come from?

According to the different interviewees, the initiative was mainly under the lead of the PES Pôle emploi that wanted to simplify the different types of partnerships between PES services and Departments' social services perceiving the great need to solve complex social problems of some of their clients, particularly the long-term unemployed. This is why the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” approach quickly became one of the now “four” support and guidance processes within the PES (see for details below).

From the point of view of the PES and relating the interview with UNEDIC, the National Insurance Fund, the referral towards an individual intensive follow-up was already present since 2011-2012 (in the National Agreement between the Government, UNEDIC and Pôle emploi). The idea was to individualize

client services because the clients' needs are different in each case: this idea was not shared by all the trade unions participating at the board of UNEDIC (mainly the workers trade-union named CGT).

From the point of view of the PES, there was a lot of “mixed financing” for PES staff working in the social teams of the Department, and vice versa, in the previous partnership settings. In some departments, some PES counsellors were dispatched in the department social services, working at the same place; in other departments, Pôle emploi financed through a local subsidy some posts within the department services...So the new Pôle emploi director (Jean Bassère since 2011) wanted to clarify the partnership between the PES and the Department's social services.

In 2012-2013, regular meetings with the PES Director, the DGEFP general Director (Emmanuelle Wargon who was the post cabinet Director of Martin Hirsch when he set up the RSA) and the ADF for the Departments prepared the new programme.

The “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” has to be understood as a new and rather apolitical process and working tool based on improved cooperation, as well as the understanding that new approaches are necessary to tackle complex problems in a holistic way. Many actors perceive its advantage from a pragmatic point of view, leaving aside the ideological debate (although in some suburbs of Paris, critical voices have expressed their negative view on any attempt to activate unemployed (e.g. the “communist” trade Union CGT in the Department Seine-Saint-Denis¹⁰). This may be an important success factor and increases the chances of being sustainable and perhaps a stepping-stone to an advanced model of integrated services delivery.

The “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” approach has been developed from experiences that had been made in the years before. These involve improved inter-institutional cooperation at local level and the setting-up of institutions in charge of the comprehensive follow-up of specific target groups (e.g. with the setting-up of *Missions locales pour l'emploi des jeunes* at the local level in order to follow-up young unemployed and NEETs) as well as experiences in intensifying and individualising the follow-up and testing of innovative approaches.

In 2010, the Minister for Youth and Solidarity, Marc-Philippe Daubresse, launched 10 measures in order to respond to a report on the implementation of the RSA reform. One of these measures aimed at encouraging the PES and the *conseils généraux* of the Departments (on a voluntary basis) to explore ways of a comprehensive support and guidance of jobseekers with complex problems by integrating social and labour market oriented approaches. The experimental measure was conducted in eight Departments: Calvados, Cantal, Gard, Gironde, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Morbihan, Pas-de-Calais and Vendée.

The strategic plan of Pôle emploi 2015 introduced in 2013 set up three different types of follow-up: (i) follow-up and job search support – only online (*suivi et appui à la recherche d'emploi*), (ii) guided follow-up (*accompagnement guidé*), and (iii) intensified follow-up (*accompagnement renforcé*). The latter has been targeted at jobseekers with employment barriers but who can be expected to get an employment within the next six months. In all the intensified guidance schemes (*accompagnement renforcé*), the caseload of counsellors was significantly lower than would be the average for a PES counsellor, and ranged between 50 to 70 jobseekers per counsellor (Parent 2014).

Furthermore, the programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” could build on experiences made with other target groups, in particular for young people. Thus, the already mentioned *garantie*

¹⁰ <http://cg93.reference-syndicale.fr/actus-cd/accompagnement-global-pole-emploi-un-protocole-inacceptable/>

jeune provides a financial allowance for NEET and links it to activation measures. It offers a “guarantee” for several labour market options, which means offering young people a pathway that includes work experience and training opportunities. This is based on the principle of a contractual relationship between the *Missions locales* and the young person. The support and follow-up is based on the “work first” principle, that is to say offering a plurality of professional experiences, which can be completed with training opportunities. The approach is innovative as it places young jobseekers or NEET in a micro network (consisting of other young people with similar problems, contacts with employers, etc.). The individual action plans should then be dealt with in a flexible manner and to allow mixing up employment spells followed by training spells. A further innovation is that the every young person is followed-up by two or several counsellors, allowing to have different views on the same case. This approach is therefore staff-intensive (Farvaque, 2016).

2.5. The political decision phase: the actors

The partnership between the local authority (Department) and the French PES Pôle emploi took place within the long history of relations between the services in charge of social policies, social benefits and social services for benefit recipients and the PES services. The Departments have been in charge of social integration since 1988, the date of creation of the general minimum income RMI,. From 1988 to 2008, there were strong partnerships between the counsellors in the PES services (the former ANPE) and the caseworkers in the departmental social services. Sometimes, depending on the different Departments, staff from PES was detached to work in the departmental social services. Some Departments decided to create in their services a labour market integration unit with an intense communication between PES officer and the Department’s service. But this was not the case in all Departments. Others have been more reluctant to cooperate with the PES as they felt the PES did not act in the interest of their “clients”, who are RSA recipients, or that it did not act in line with their convictions regarding the treatment of unemployed.

2009 is the date of the creation of a new design for the minimum income named RSA. At this moment, social work and services for activation of the unemployed people were clearly separated. From this date, for example, the Department of Essonne where we conducted interviews, decided that case workers had not to take into account the employment question and concentrate their activities about social problems. By contrast, in the Department Alpes-Maritimes where we also conducted interviews, the social services had already developed their own activation approach. A multitude of different types of approaches and partnerships were set up in the different *Départements*.

As already stated, in 2013, after a National Social Conference and a national Report about poverty, it was decided to set up a new partnership between the Departments (social services) and the PES Pôle emploi.

2.6. The political phase: the actions

The initiative was the result of two main actions:

- Firstly, an intervention by the Parliament making the point after the past merger of the two bodies that originated the new PES Pôle emploi: it was the result of a Parliamentary Task Force and the Reporter was a Deputy member of the Socialist Party and Vice-President of Midi-Pyrénées Region (Iborra 2013). That was the occasion for a political debate about the quality of services delivered by the PES Pôle emploi created in 2008. One of the main issues was about the importance of “regionalization” of employment services versus a sole national PES.

This report proposed to coordinate and unify the fields of social integration and of employment and training: “Too much actors play a role on the same stage. Social services, employment services and training are too strictly separated (.../). The guidance delivered by Pôle emploi is too much standardized and the PES has to change for an individual guidance. There is a lack of partnership with the actors in charge of social integration, especially the department social services.”

Lastly, the Iborra Report proposed to give to the PES and the Department Councils and services a double target of “comprehensive guidance” for all the jobseekers with complex social problems, independent from whether they are RSA recipients or not (Proposal N° 27). To implement this action, the Report pointed out that the Department could be able to lend social caseworkers to the PES and to develop common tools of information.

Proposals for reforming the PES submitted in 2013 (Report IBORRA)

Proposal n° 25: specify the notion « people being distant from the labour market » – which is not to be mixed up with long-term unemployment - and define the content of the intensified follow-up accordingly.

Proposal n° 26: improve monitoring of resources spent by of Pôle emploi for the follow-up of RSA recipients and resources spent by the *Départements* in the area of labour market integration, in particular for jobseekers.

Proposal n° 27: entrust the PES (Pôle emploi) and the *Département* councils with the comprehensive support and guidance of all job seekers encountering social problems, independently from their entitlement to RSA.

Proposal n° 28: strengthen the links between the PES and the Departments, in particular by sending social workers to employment services, and by appointing an official representative of Pôle emploi to the Department council and by using the using link sheets.

Proposal n° 29: enhance financial and staff resources of the conseils régionaux for the labour market integration of jobseekers.

Source: Iborra 2013

After this Report was published and welcomed by different stakeholders, setting up the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” scheme was mainly an initiative from the two stakeholders and active actors (the PES and the departments). The government was involved as supporting the initiative that was in line with its target (aiming at a better mix between social inclusion follow-up and employment follow-up). And the government was active for organizing the financing through mobilisation of the ESF. Finally there was a real “consensus” about this initiative. The general feeling of our interviewees is that the main driver for setting up the programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” was at the initiative of Pôle emploi. A real cooperation with ADF and the support of the administrative direction DGEFP within the Labour and Employment Ministry were decisive. So the Parliament Report was more an occasion than a driver.

The decision of the European Commission to support these types of initiatives through the ESF was not the driver, but a real help for setting up the programme.

2.7. The designing phase: the actors

Note of the authors of this draft: these questions have already been addressed in the other sections (as far as info was available). In our view repetition should be avoided.

2.8. The designing phase: the decisions

Since 2013, discussions took place between the DGEFP (Central Direction for employment and training policies), the head of the Departments network (*Association des Départements de France*) and the top management of the Pôle emploi. According to our interviewees, this common work was probably more important than the Parliament Report (Iborra 2013).

They set up the basic principles of the new programme:

- To improve and coordinate the management of the different actors in social and employment fields;
- Each actor should focus on its core activity: solving social problems (caseworkers) and returning to employment (PES counsellors);
- To personalize clients services for jobseekers with complex social problems;
- To standardize the clients' services within the country.

It could be said that it is not a first step to full institutional integration, but a strong and compulsory cooperation between separate services. But the way in which cooperation is organized might be different in each Department. This is confirmed by our interviews. So in the general framework of the national agreement, a specific agreement had to be negotiated and signed in each Department.

Examples of our fieldwork show different forms of implementation:

- The Department Var implements the programme via outsourcing this task to NGOs;
- The Department Bas-Rhin is fully involved in the new programme and implements it through strong partnership between the PES services, the Department – among them specialised counsellors seeking for vacancies in local companies - and counsellors working for local NGOs;
- The Department Essonne is convinced that the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” is a very good opportunity that they awaited for a long time and they set up the implementation in a very serious way in sort of making it efficient for all stake-holders;
- The Department Alpes-Maritimes integrates the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” initiative in its labour market integration approach (that has already a long history).

From the PES point of view, the target group were the jobseekers (particularly long-term unemployed) with complex social problems and who needed to solve these problems before being job-ready. The size of this group was not clearly mentioned because the assessment of the guidance need is widely related to the perspective of the counsellor or of the case-worker.

From the ADF (Association of the Departments) point of view, the target group was the RSA recipients being able to work and who needed to be activated. In 2015, after departmental elections, the conservative party LR won 80% of the local governments and the ADF became more in favour of activation policies and strongly defended “work oriented social measures”. As an example, in 2016, the Department Nord set up a radical work oriented policy for social benefit recipients: there were 115 000 recipients in the area and among them 45 000 “unkown”, without any follow-up. If they don't agree with an activation path, these people could be sanctioned by suspending benefit payments.

The programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” does not include financial incentives but it is assumed that the programme is nevertheless beneficial for the different stakeholders:

- 1) For the Departments, the activation programme could allow some cost cuttings in welfare benefits.
- 2) For the PES the wages of half of the 1000 counsellors working only on this programme are paid through the ESF subventions.

There are no fixed targets and quantitative evaluations. Interview results reveal that placement results are below those for other unemployed, but barriers to employment are higher. Further, the counsellors have much autonomy in the diagnostic and the measures proposed. Some of them favour curative, others preventive measures. Further, usual quantitative monitoring models are not good enough to capture innovative elements of the programmes that are linked to the aim to increase the jobseeker’s autonomy and the problem solving and job search dynamics. Qualitative methods are preferred to measure the success of the programme.

2.9. Who implemented the initiative?

At the national level, the general direction of Pôle emploi set up a number of specific tools:

- A guide for the Department directors of Pôle emploi;
- A guide for the manager of each local Pôle emploi antenna (named *Agence Pôle emploi*);
- An intranet network opened to the counsellors in order to exchange about practices, problems met, solutions (Q and A), and commentaries;
- An intranet network for managers about the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” and other relations between Pôle emploi and department at this level.

At the departmental level, the local direction of Pôle emploi and the Department’s social services set up a convention and then implemented the programme.

2.10. Implementation process

The implementation of the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” varies between Departments. Apart from the political will to promote labour market integration of non-employed with complex problems, the setting up of the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” is influenced by the Departments own activation approaches, the way social services are delivered and prior positive or negative experiences with working with the PES at local level.. While most Departments would like to regard labour-market integration from a social policy angle, there are a few Departments with dedicated activation strategies.

Further, the tools and active labour market policies (ALMPs) vary greatly. Thus, the sanctioning practice can be quite different from one Department to another, as would be the use of its placement activities, implementation of direct job creation programmes and supported employment. Some Departments have already built up intensive contacts with social enterprises in order to implement their activation strategy over the past and continue to do so, while a few Departments favour rapid employment in the regular labour market (as is the case in the Department of the Alpes-Maritimes).

In principle, each unemployed RSA recipient should have one caseworker (called “single referee”) who coordinates the activation process that might go beyond one office. The process starts with classifying the person into one of two categories: social inclusion or labour market integration orientation. This

profiling is carried out by a platform made of several actors working in different organisations. Once the RSA recipient has been put into one of these categories, s/he is orientated towards one “single referee” who works in one of the following organisations: the PES, social services of the Department, NGOs, etc. According to interviews those RSA recipients who have registered themselves with the PES will be referred to a PES counsellor, while those who have not may be referred to a social caseworker or an NGO (in case of externalisation of services). The practice may vary from one Department to the other. This single referee is supposed to develop an integration path with the unemployed. The counsellor can rely on outsourcing in order to address specific issues.

However, the conditions under which single referees of the social services, private providers or NGO staff (in case the comprehensive follow-up was outsourced) and the PES counsellors identify those barriers differ (Sztandar-Sztanderska, Mandes, 2014). At the PES, where a person has to be registered and then profiled, the counsellor conducted in the past a rather standardised interview and s/he is obliged to respect strict time limits. Since three years the counsellors have more discretion and autonomy. They can themselves decide on the frequency and length of interviews. This was one of the major reforms of the Pôle emploi director since 2011, Jean Bassère. Pôle employ elaborated a guide for diagnostic tools for jobseekers (not only for those participating in the Comprehensive Support and Guidance Programme. The objective of the diagnosis is to identify potentials, needs and barriers of the individual: occupational mobility and occupational objectives of the individual, job-search needs, and the “peripheral” (non-labour market related) employment barriers). In all three areas potential detailed actions as well as possible questions and pathways to be discussed with the jobseekers are proposed in the guide. The diagnostic toolkit is an electronic tool, although it is based on individual assessments and interviews.

Non-profit and private organizations working with already formally profiled RSA recipients also follow a flexible framework when it comes to the content of counselling, although frequency of meetings and general objectives are given. The interviews with the NGO SNC (Solidarités Nouvelles contre le Chômage) carried out for this country study and the interviewed caseworkers in the context of the project LOCALIZE (Sztandar-Sztanderska, Mandes, 2014) emphasise that this room for manoeuvre is crucial in order to develop of a good relationship with the beneficiary, which enables identification of “real barriers” as well as the beneficiary’s expectations and way of thinking.

Interviews carried out in the context of the research programme LOCALISE as well as in the local case studies of this study, caseworkers complain about the increasing formalisation of contacts between organisations involved in the policy delivery. It is therefore deemed important to build-up informal contacts between PES counsellors and social workers, as well as between social workers of different units or organisations. The rapidity of the action is a key success factor for labour market integration and it is important to offer immediate solutions and pathways when a person out-of-work with complex problems is willing to take up an employment. However, our interviewees also perceived positive aspects of formalisation as this permits to get an idea of the trajectory.

One of the guiding principles of the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme is the meeting between PES staff, social workers (in-house or subcontracted) and the beneficiary.

Although in principle RSA recipients should search for work, this is difficult to control as there is no obligation for them to register with the PES which would ease tracking job-search efforts. Further, participation in the Comprehensive Support and Guidance scheme is not mandatory. A social caseworker can try to convince an RSA recipient to participate in the scheme. According to interviews with social caseworkers, as this guidance programme works well, there are now more demands by RSA recipients hoping to benefit from the intensified guidance (they would know about the programme

through friends, neighbours etc.). Referring a registered jobseeker to the Comprehensive Support and Guidance scheme is more straightforward as this is one option among different degrees of intensity to follow-up the jobseekers (it is the most intensive one). Further, at the PES specific caseworkers are following-up jobseekers in the Comprehensive Support and Guidance scheme, there is no such a specialisation at the social service Departments visited (although, the work organisation may differ from one Department to the other). Interviewed social workers would be in favour to have more specialisation in-house.

As the scheme is not mandatory for RSA recipients, there is a positive self-selection of participants. There is the danger that those furthest away from the labour market are left behind and are not activated. It is thus important that social services as well as the PES are pro-active and elaborate strategies to reach-out to these target groups. Again, Departments may have quite different strategies, policies, and objectives with regard to activating those target groups. On the other side, the intensified guidance is in principle available also to people (long-term unemployed) with complex problems that are not receiving the RSA.

While the PES has defined standards relating to how support and guidance should be delivered to long-term unemployed and other jobseekers with complex problems, it seems that social action was barely formalized when the new approach started to be implemented (Legros 2015), with probably quite different realities in Departments.

The PES is now determining specific counsellors responsible for the Comprehensive Support and Guidance, independently of their role of being the single referee for RSA recipients. Their caseload varies between 70 and 100 cases. They now build up a network of local service providers and NGOs. According to PES counsellors interviewed in the Department of the Alpes-Maritimes the introduction of the new scheme made a real difference in their organisation of work and networking. As already stated above, the Social Departments have in general not defined case workers specialised in the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme. This has been criticised by some interviewed social workers. The building up of personal contacts with the PES counsellor and relevant external activation service providers are key.

Another limit is often in-house cooperation at the social services or cooperation with services delivered by other institutions such as municipalities. Not all other services will give priority to provide services (e.g. childcare) for participants in the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme, as their caseload may already be perceived as being high. Thus, staff availability, networking and shared commitment is crucial also between different units / organisations delivering social services. Further, a limit is the lack of some specific training offers, such as language courses.

File sharing is another key element for implementation. During the implementation of the new programme, the main problems were related to the information and data system. Interviewees are hoping for the merger and simplification of the different informatics systems (software, individual files...). For example, the informatics and online tools for counsellors consist in:

- Shared databases: departmental governments and their services have access to the document called “DUD” (*Dossier Unique du demandeur d’emploi* – Single Jobseeker File) but according to the different departmental organizations the free access to this individual file is different. For example in Essonne, the social caseworkers do not have free access to this file which is reserved for the managers.
- PES at the department level (but only with some Departments) has access to the RSA recipients’ orientation files. But they could not have an access to social files (family problems,

debt problems that fall under confidentiality and CNIL – National Commission for Informatics and Freedom). To give an example, the Department Bas-Rhin gave full free access of its database to the PES. In case the departmental government are reluctant to give such access, this is due to the confidential particularity of social individual information (family situation, household debt, medical problems...).

In several Departments, data bases on the different non-job related “peripheral” obstacles and solutions were set-up for the employment counsellors of the PES. It aims at allowing the PES counsellors to have good network for proposing measures to the jobseekers.

To understand the implementation process a number of field-level interviews were carried out in two Departments (Essonne and Alpes-Maritimes). In the following, some lessons learned from the implementation process in these areas will be presented, although it should be taken into account that the examples are illustrative but not representative. While the Department of Essone belongs to the wider agglomeration of Paris, the capital of the Alpes-Maritimes, Nice, is a regional centre and France’s fifth largest city, with an above average poverty rate if compared to other large cities (CCAS Ville de Nice, 2015). In 2015, in Essone, the share of RSA recipients in the working age population (15-64) amounted to 4.3% and in the Alpes-Maritimes to 5.2% (average of metropolitan France: 5.7%). Insights on the implementation in other Departments may be taken into account once the national evaluation will be available.

Example 1 Département of Essonne

After the national agreement between DGEFP, ADF and Pôle emploi was signed in April 2014, the two implementing bodies (the Department social services and the PES services at the departmental level) started to work on the local implementation. In February 2015, an agreement was signed at the departmental level of Essonne. In this agreement the main two actions were planned: 1) “guidance and follow-up in pairs” (joint guidance by a social caseworker and a PES counsellor) for 1 800 jobseekers; 2) social guidance for 400 jobseekers with complex social problems, who are considered to not be able to join a training or an activation programme at this stage. At the beginning, two local agencies were selected to experiment the new programme (Evry and Palaiseau) and a steering committee was set up to monitor the pilot project. In May 2015, the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme was set up for all the services of the Department. So it took one year from the national agreement to the concrete implementation in Essonne. But the agents in local services were informed and trained since January 2015.

The implementation process involved other local partners that are usually working with the Department services, such as the local provider for social benefits (*CAF*), *Missions Locales pour l’Emploi des jeunes* (local employment services for young people), and the social services within the local councils (*Communes*).

The main actors were: the case workers of the social services of Departments and their managers (directors of “Social Solidarity Houses” that managed childhood problems, family problems such as housing, health and RSA recipients), the PES counsellors and their managers, the Department direction for employment and social integration and the PES directorate at the departmental level. The work process was not completely defined in order to leave autonomy to case workers and PES counsellors except for the methods for orienting jobseekers and RSA recipients towards this programme, the

design for the tripartite meetings with the clients (PES, Department and the “client”), a resources guide and an excel table for monitoring the process.

After the staff had been informed, “immersion days” were organized: the social caseworkers spent two days in a PES local agency and PES counsellors spent two days in a Social Solidarity House. So the different staff discovered how their colleagues were working and exchanged about their different methods and working organizations. From the point of view of staff it was very important and immediately successful: they were all in favour of the new programme. It could be said that in Essonne the implementation of the programme was well prepared. (A social caseworker stated: “I had never been in a job centre: it changed my mind!”).

Since May 2015, jobseekers with complex social problems and RSA recipients ready for activation were guided by PES counsellors and Department social caseworkers towards the new programme (participation is voluntary). Then they could have tripartite regular meetings in order to approach both social problems and job search if possible: these tripartite meetings are considered by the social caseworkers and PES counsellors as very useful. Every month, a Technical Committee (Social Solidarity House + Pôle emploi antennes) takes place to approach institutional difficulties, individual problems, data base solutions and IT systems.

The orientation towards the programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” could be done by the PES counsellors, the department caseworkers, the financing services of CAF, the social services of local authorities (communes) but the process is the same and they use a single “fiche de liaison”.

RSA recipients are encouraged to get into contact and to register with Pôle emploi (even if it is not compulsory) and jobseekers with complex social problems are encouraged to regularly meet a caseworker that contributes solving the obstacles to take a job.

At the same time, the Department of Essonne started a new activation policy through a mailing action for social benefit recipients not registered as jobseekers in the PES lists. They are strongly encouraged to come to the Social Solidarity Houses: if they come, they could start a path towards a job; if not, their welfare benefits would be suspended. Several other Departments set up the same policy.

Example 2 Département des Alpes-Martitimes

The Department has worked in partnership with the PES since the introduction of the RMI, thus before the introduction of the RSA. At the time when the RMI scheme was in place, the Department followed a more comprehensive approach, as each case social worker had in principle to deal with social and labour market integration. At that time, the Department developed expertise in labour market integration and some of the Department’s caseworkers had this specialization. The Department paid for PES staff to be located at the social services of the Departments, while 15 other PES counsellors t the PES were specialized in serving RSA recipients (this was not an exception, as probably around 50 other Departments had such arrangements). In this Department there are around 27 000 RSA recipients, of whom 40% are not registered with the PES.

One weakness of the approach at that time was the high caseload of caseworkers at the Department which rendered an effective comprehensive support and guidance difficult.

The Department has to refer the RSA recipient to a counsellor in charge of follow-up: he/she could either be a PES counsellor or a social caseworker of the Department itself or to a social worker from

an NGO or private provider commissioned by the Department. Those referred to the PES are in general those who are already registered at the PES.

The Department's own labour market integration strategy, which has been developed for many years, is based on a work-first strategy. 20 years ago the Department has set up a programme for placing welfare benefit recipients into the regular labour market that is based on employer-oriented services, in particular recruitment services, provided by the Department and a good network of companies (programme "Cap Entreprise"). The particularity of this approach is that the NGO proposes RSA recipients for open vacancies. As participation is voluntary, a positive self-selection among participants can be assumed. The participant is referred to the employer without a CV, thus the employer would not have an a-priori discriminatory stance (e.g. with regard to age, migration background). Further, the employer would not know that the candidate receives RSA and probably has a "difficult CV" (e.g. imprisonment, other career breaks, addictions, etc). Most jobs posted are jobs that do not require much specialisation and are often posted by SMEs who are interested in saving recruitments costs. A specific methodology IOD¹¹ is used in order to collect job characteristics and to follow-up with the employer on the job characteristic after placement. The jobseeker who is an RSA recipient will be accompanied to the first interview and after a few days (or weeks) meetings with the employee as well as with the employer will be held in order to identify whether the integration into work works well. The NGO will act as a kind of mediator in case of conflicts, which increases sustainability of employment. Meetings may take place again after a while. The placement results are encouraging. This programme was set up with financial support of the ESF. A new programme launched in 2015 and co-financed by the ESF is called "Action Flash" and focuses for a rapid intervention. This programme is implemented by an NGO (La Fondation de Nice). In most cases RSA recipients (if not participating the "Comprehensive Support and Guidance" scheme) would have an interview with his or her social worker twice a year. The programme consists in very intensive guidance for a period of three months for those who just (re-) claimed RSA. The RSA beneficiary is followed-up once a week. Guidance provided is focused on detecting willingness to work, potentials and employment barriers. Overall, the competence-based approach is the key element. Trust building is seen as a key success factor. Another success factor consists in the own personal network for providing support to overcome employment barriers. Group workshops and peer learning are tools that are also considered to be successful.

The caseload of a counsellor is 30 RSA beneficiaries. A satisfaction survey was carried out, and most participants were satisfied. Many found the guidance period of three months too short, some others found weekly follow-up too intense. More than two-thirds of the programme participants have eventually terminated RSA receipt after programme participation.

One of the challenges identified by this Department was to convince social workers about the necessity of labour market integration as a priority and about the need to simultaneously resolve access to employment and social problems rather than starting to first find a solution for the social problems and postponing the activities towards labour market integration. The Department therefore organized training for its social caseworkers on the issue of "empowerment" of the jobseeker. Further, the point of departure is not to focus on the employment barriers and assess the labour market distance (as is done in some other Departments) but to consider equally the competences and opportunities of the person. The Department employs also two psychologists.

¹¹ <https://transfer-iod.org/public/>

The “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme was first considered as being somehow imposed to the Departments by proposing a division of labour (Department in charge for social circumstances and Pôle emploi as specialists for labour market integration), which did not reflect the understanding of the Department. Instead of receiving some additional financing from the PES for staff dealing with RSA recipients, this PES staff was now being (co-)funded by the ESF in the perception of the Department. Nevertheless, thanks to previous partnerships with the PES and the good relations that could be built up at that time, the Department considers the new inter-institutional cooperation and the results of the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” as positive. The caseload of PES counsellors for dealing with RSA recipients is estimated as being between 80 and 90 jobseekers per counsellor.

The Department could increase the number of its own caseworkers thanks to time saved as a result of process digitalization (e.g. registration). In 2016, about 2 600 RSA recipients not registered with Pôle emploi were invited to an interview by the Department. About 600 of them did not show up and their RSA benefit payment was suspended until they showed up. This Department has in general a comparatively high sanction rate.

The Department included the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” as one of its approaches in its labour market integration strategy, the “Plan emploi-insertion 06” (“employment and social inclusion”), launched in February 2014. The guiding principle of this plan is the focus on labour market integration of RSA recipients, rapid intervention, co-operation with companies, tackling so-called peripheral employment barriers, fight against fraud, and monitoring RSA recipients and imposing sanctions (suspension of benefit payments) upon the decision of a multi-disciplinary team in case obligations related to the social integration contract are not fulfilled.

As in the Department of Essonne other local actors are involved such as the CCAS (*centre communal d'action sociale*) that depends from the municipality and the Houses of Solidarity that depend on the Department but have several local centres. Interviews revealed that much of the success depends on the pro-active stance of the social workers. One example is a centre for homeless people where the homeless can get a bed, something to eat and basic medical care. If the homeless show some willingness to get employment (which is reportedly often the case with those coming to the centre for homeless) the social assistance will get immediately in contact with his/her colleague from the PES (within one or two days). In this specific case informality and rapidity of contact are the key success factors. Another example was the pro-active stance of a social assistance to convince lone parenting women with a migration background living in “difficult” urban areas (*quartiers politiques de la ville*) to take up employment. Obviously, outreach activities are important as the participation in any kind of intensified guidance and subsequent job placement is voluntary.

The PES has selected counsellors to work in the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme on the basis of their previous experience with hard-to-place jobseekers as well as their motivation. They eventually learned a lot through the mixed team approach (working in pairs with the social workers). A share of participants in the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme are persons not receiving the RSA. The structure of participants referred to Pôle emploi counsellors differ somewhat from those of the Social Services: in 2015/16, about 77% of them got the RSA or another minimum income, 51% of participants were long-term unemployed, 20% lived in “difficult” areas of the city of Nice. In the first half of 2016, the share of minimum income recipients did not change, the

share of long-term unemployed decreased slightly to 48% and the share of people living in difficult areas increased slightly to 22%.

The Department succeeded in reducing its expenditures on RSA, which is regarded as a major success. On average participants have a shorter period of RSA receipt. The political will of this Department to get people with complex problems into work is certainly an important success factor. Another success factor can be found in the fact that a partnership structure in the programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” was rolled out nationally. A third factor of success was unanimously seen in the intensity of follow-up.

After participation in the “Comprehensive Guidance and Follow-up” programme, 43% of the former participants found employment in 2015/16 and 38% in the first half of 2017. Adding those who enrolled in education, there are in total 48% “positive exits” (employment, self-employment, training) in 2015/16 and 43% in the first half of 2017, according to the latest PES data. It is assessed that half of them would again become an RSA claimant.

Nevertheless, according to interviewees progress could still be made, in particular in speeding up the process. On average it still takes 50 days to organise a first joint interview (PES counsellor, social caseworker and programme participant), which is considered as being by far too long. Further, there is a lack of social workers, and social workers from the different units would in many cases need to be better motivated to participate in the programme (in addition to the cases they already have to treat) and to set priorities. Further, according to our interviewees, partnerships can still be intensified.

2.11. Costs of the initiative

The main costs of the programme consist in staff wages for the PES. As for Pôle emploi, 1 000 counsellors are allocated to the programme, of whom 500 are financed through the PES budget and the other 500 receive ESF financing. No systematic information could be obtained from the Department administrations because caseworkers involved in the new programme are not different from other caseworkers. More information will be added when the national evaluation will be released.

The example of the Alpes-Maritimes showed that the Department dedicated more staff for the activation of their “clients”, without engendering new costs. The Department could benefit from efficiency gains made through digitalisation of some procedures for work re-organisation. The budget for labour market integration decreased over time. The reasons for this decrease are manifold and it is not clear whether the most recent decline was linked to the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” (as the Department is not paying any longer PES staff for their employment services for RSA recipients). Likewise, interviewees explained that Pôle emploi could reallocate staff thanks to efficiency gains achieved through digitalisation.

2.12. Monitoring

At the local level

In each Department, the local government and the PES at the departmental level met regularly within a steering committee for programme monitoring. For example, in the Department of Essonne, about 1 800 people (jobseekers or RSA recipients) were referred to “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” and by the end of 2016, 52.5 % of them left the scheme for training or employment and are considered

as “people with an active solution”. The average of the programme duration is 6 months (Pôle emploi, departmental directorate).

In the Department of Essonne, 6 000 registered RSA recipients were “unknown”. They were contacted by the Department, but despite emails and calls for meetings with caseworkers some of them did not show up. About 400 were sanctioned by suspending their benefit payments. Similarly, in the Department of Alpes-Maritimes, the social services were proactive in identifying those RSA recipients who received neither support and guidance nor follow-up (by the social services of the Department or by the PES). Sanctioning those RSA recipients is a key element of the Department’s strategy.

The Departments monitor the stock and flows of RSA recipients. In the case of the Department of Alpes-Maritimes, the composition of households exiting the RSA receipt by gender, age composition of the household and length of benefit receipt is monitored on a monthly basis. This monitoring differs from the one of PES as households and not individuals are recorded. The Department monitors the net expenditures on RSA as well as the budget for labour market integration measures. It is important to note that the Department has launched a monitoring of its activation strategy including the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance”. However, it is not possible to disentangle data related to the implementation of the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance”. In 2016, the net RSA expenses of the department declined for the first time since its introduction. The Department argues that this decline is the result of its activation strategy. This assessment, however, relies on monitoring data, as no impact evaluation was carried out.

In the example of the Department of Essonne, the different caseworkers and counsellors noticed that the main employment barriers were mobility (public transport versus the need to have a car or a motorbike), childcare, psychological problems and the lack of qualification. In the Department of Alpes-Maritimes, identified barriers include debt, childcare, psychological problems (including “life accidents” and “trajectory accidents”), addiction, lone parents, lone mothers with a migration background and lacking knowledge of the French language.

The PES has various tools to monitor and pilot its services and specific programmes, e.g. they have a national Committee and local Committee to improve the quality of services, to introduce new practices and new methods of guidance for the jobseekers. National NGOs and NGO local groups (as SNC – *Solidarités Nouvelles contre le Chômage*) are members of these consultative Committees.

A particular effort was undertaken to set up IT tools for programme monitoring, including Excel charts and shared databases. All Departments that were involved in the programme at an early stage had developed numeric tools and opened for all professionals working in the social integration field (social security administration, social services in towns, Departments, the PES and its partners....).

Monitoring at regional level

The PES at regional level (there are 13 regions in France without the overseas regions) publishes basic data on the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance”. For the Region Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, to which the Department Alpes-Maritimes belongs, the following data are publicly available: In the whole region 77 PES staff is allocated to this programme. About 82% of jobseekers were satisfied with this support and guidance (results of the client satisfaction survey). Other regions are publishing more details, e.g. as in the case of the region Bourgogne-Franche-Comté. At the level of this region detailed results are displayed: how many participants in the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance”

programme have (i) entered training and (ii) left to employment on a fixed-term and permanent contract or subsidised employment, (iii) entered other ALMPs. Further, for each Department (there are 8 Departments in this region) the number of PES staff in the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme, the number of participants that entered the programme and the percentage of RSA recipients (and percentage of those living in priority urban areas), as well as transitions to training and employment are documented.

A national survey shows a high client satisfaction rate of 81% in 2016 (Pôle emploi 2016).

Monitoring of the results of the Comprehensive Support and Guidance at the national level

Details will be provided for the final report. Note of the authors: the PES did not provide us with relevant monitoring data yet. We wait for the results of the evaluation report in autumn.

2.13. Impact assessment

An evaluation of the experimental phase of the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” was carried out in the Department of Doubs in 2011, which was the first department to set up the programme (Mazouin et al. 2011). The qualitative evaluation analysed inter-institutional cooperation and looked at individual pathways. In this Department there was already a strategy for labour market integration in place when the experiment started (in place since 2004). In this context a partnership with the PES has been built up. Thus, the experimental measure was a continuation of already existing approaches. The strength of the experiment implemented in this Department consisted in the political will of the actors and the existence of partnerships between the Department and Pôle emploi. Another success factor consisted in a more efficient use of the budget, shifting from “orientation” to “action”. Departments’ case workers and PES counsellors were now working in pair with the objective of labour market integration, rather than working in pair for “orientation”, as was previously the case. Further, this experiment succeeded in fostering cooperation at “field level” rather than cooperation mainly being restricted to the level of management. The evaluation pointed to the need to better reach out to RSA beneficiaries that were referred to Pôle emploi, to establish a more thorough diagnostic at the moment of registering, to better link IT systems for the follow-up of beneficiaries in order to fully share the information on the beneficiary (which may violate the principle of confidentiality and anonymity of personal data).

An administrative assessment of the 2014 National tripartite agreement between the PES, the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UNEDIC) managed by the social partners, and the Government was recently realized by the Ministries of Employment (IGAS) and Economy (Inspection des Finances). The assessment covers more items than the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” approach, but one chapter addresses this programme. The results are not public but are very positive. According to the meeting we had with the DGEFP (government) about the “*accompagnement global des demandeurs d’emploi*” it could be said:

- 40 000 people participated at the end of 2016
- 67% of the people followed-up are RSA recipients
- 11% are ASS recipients (long-term unemployed no longer entitled to unemployment insurance benefits but only solidarity benefits)
- 21% are in urban districts with a specific policy (“Politique de la Ville”)
- 1000 PES counsellors are working in the programme “Comprehensive Support and Guidance”
- About 44% of the participants found a job.

The National tripartite Agreement of April 2014 envisages a national evaluation before the end of 2017. This evaluation is currently carried out (kick off meeting in January 2017 and the main results are expected for October 2017). The study will be carried out in 11 Departments, among them Essonne.

The evaluation is jointly carried out by two experts (Pluricité and Dyctis) and monitored by a steering Committee that encompasses three stakeholders: the DGEFP (government), the PES Pôle emploi through its Statistic and Evaluation services, and the ADF (Association des Départements de France).

The evaluation will focus on the results, the main drivers for success and the identification of shortcomings. The methods will be both quantitative and qualitative, completed by a web inquiry with employment counsellors and caseworkers. Further, the Pôle emploi study service plans a quantitative evaluation.

The results of the evaluation are not available yet and will be integrated in the autumn report 2017.

2.14. Any important follow-up measures?

In each Department, an on-going process of improvement takes place: for example in Essonne, the departmental steering Committee meets every year and local technical Committee meets every six weeks. Proposals for modification have been done: simplification of the IT system, accessible now through Internet and Extranet, more information exchange in order to solve the individual problems quicker and reduce the delays.

2.15. Any other detail that seemed important but wasn't mentioned so far?

No.

3. Assessment and conclusions

3.1. What external factors helped/hindered the launch of the initiative and its successful implementation?

Our own qualitative research and interviews with stakeholders indicate that “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” was considered as successful mainly because it consists in a reinforced guidance (number of meetings, individual guidance, online permanent links between jobseekers or RSA recipients and their counsellor or caseworker).

A caseworker in charge of the programme has to guide an average of 70 to 80 people. To compare, a caseworker in Department services could be in charge of 350 RSA recipients. In the PES services, the average number of people is depending on the types of following: in the third type of following (intensified follow-up), the average is 90.

The support of the Government was important to allow the PES to specialize some counsellors in this programme and to adapt the number of jobseekers followed by one counsellor.

The co-financing of this programme by the ESF can be considered as an external factor that helps its implementation.

3.2. Lessons for the country

In search of a good mix between social and vocational follow-up, the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme helps to solve “peripheral” social problems by providing employment guidance at the same time. As the full integration of the different services in charge is not on the agenda, it is very important to strengthen and develop partnerships and the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme can be regarded as useful in this respect. However, adjustment to the processes were necessary and partnerships are not necessarily working well now when there has been already distrust between the agents before the implementation of the new programme.

The “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” programme is likely to harmonize cooperation structures between the Departments and Pôle emploi but not necessarily harmonizes the activation and social policy approaches between Departments. It could be said that there are stronger differences between the 97 Departments than between local PES services.

The quality of partnership is very different from one Department to another: for example the department Var has externalized the “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” to associations because this government didn’t want to change its services functioning, meanwhile the department of Yvelines set up a common body (a GIP, *Groupement d’Intérêt Public*) to monitor the departmental integration policy and to encourage a very strong partnership. The Department Aveyron is only focused on social problems while the Department of Bas-Rhin is fully involved in job search for social benefit recipients.

The new social policies (since the 2015 elections) at the Department level are increasingly oriented towards activation of RSA recipients by an intensive follow-up and a carrots and sticks approach (although there are great variations in the sanctioning praxis).

The new national social and employment policy could be more oriented towards activation through a mix of in-work benefits (*prime d’activité*) and wages from work on one hand, and through a very intensive monitoring for jobseekers including sticks.

Another open question is: should all RSA recipients be registered in the PES files in order to receive orientation towards an activation process? In 2017, RSA providers opened a new online service to facilitate and simplify the access to social benefits. But the caseworkers we met are worried because it seems to forget the guidance and monitoring dimension. All interviewed caseworkers underline that an automatic registration to receive the RSA-socle could lead to a possible increase of the number of RSA recipients “unknown” to the social services except if a specific policy is set up to get in contact (mailings, meetings) and start an integration path.

3.3. Lessons for Europe

A few lessons for Europe emerge. The following factors are important when designing and implementing the integrated delivery of social services, they mainly concern the philosophy and quality of the follow-up and guidance (it is worth noticing that this lesson is in line with some of the recent OECD studies):

- The quality of guidance for jobseekers;
- The need for intensive monitoring, the stronger the monitoring, the easier it is to apply sticks;
- A comprehensive and strong support, guidance and follow-up in line with an activation policy (psychological, social and work-oriented) in order to be able to solve the different problems at the same time;

- When participation in the comprehensive guidance is voluntary, there is a danger of leaving the most vulnerable groups which are furthest away from the labour market behind and difficulties to outreaching the most vulnerable people are not resolved. Nevertheless, even if participation is voluntary both main actors (the PES and social services) can implement outreach activities.
- The two-persons team is a very good and innovative method to follow-up jobseekers or social benefit recipients: this lesson from our field work would be in line with the assessment of the *garantie jeune* in France that sets up the notion of plural guidance and contributes to organize a sort of network for the young people. The Youth Guarantee is a good mix of collective and individual guidance, an example of stop-and-go methods with opportunities for working and training and a change from a “desk environment to core unit of empowerment”.¹² The practice of some NGOs, as SNC in our study, shows the importance of this innovative way of guidance through pairs and not only face-to-face meetings;
- The political commitment at all levels and acceptance that local implementation might differ from one another;
- Rapid communication between different services is key (in-house or between different institutions). In practice, informal contacts have increased rapidity;
- A full harmonization of approaches at the local level may not be necessary if this would hinder the willingness to cooperate. A partnership approach could be an alternative to integrated approaches.

3.4. Main strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

Our own qualitative research and interviews with stakeholders indicate that “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” was considered as successful mainly because:

- It consists of a reinforced guidance (number of meetings, individual guidance, online permanent links between jobseekers or RSA recipients and their counsellor or caseworker). A caseworker in charge of the programme has to guide a rather low average of 70 to 80 people;
- Clearer structure of partnerships across the country, although divergence in the implementation between Departments remain;
- The “Comprehensive Support and Guidance” has been regarded as a “tool”. It has somehow escaped political / ideological discussions, which has helped to implement it;
- Training of counsellors and caseworkers is important;
- Direct exchange of experiences and mutual learning between social caseworkers and PES counsellors is fruitful (they come from a different working “culture”);
Good contacts to employers at the regular labour market and providing recruitment services is key for succeeding to integrate hard-to place groups into the labour market. One weakness of most Departments’ social services is that they have few contacts to regular employers and used to focus on placing their “clients” in supported employment, which may lead to stigmatisation. A mixed strategy, placing vulnerable groups both in private and social enterprises may be more appropriate. A closer cooperation with the PES and the Department’s social services can represent a good opportunity for using a wider range of services and programmes;

¹² dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/dares...et.../lagarantie-jeunes-evaluation-du-dispositif

- Networks are multiplied;
- The question of job quality is also assessed as being important: it was not possible at the departmental level to disentangle the share of people re-employed in the supported public sector and the normal labour market (associations, NGO, integration adapted companies working for local authorities...). The directorate interviewed estimates this share to be around 50%.

Weaknesses / challenges:

- The problem of diverging priorities concerning the target groups may persist, learning from each other (linking social inclusion AND labour market integration) thus remains an important challenge;
- The programme is staff consuming. The net benefits could, however, be positive;
- A cost-benefit analysis is not carried out, as there are high methodological problems linked to such an exercise;
- The classification that the Department has to deal with “social issues” and PES with “labour market integration issues” would need to be overcome over time. While it is important that PES counsellors learn more about the complexity of non-labour market related problems, social counsellors still would need to understand the importance of labour market integration;
- There is no obligation for RSA recipients to register with the PES. Voluntary participation in the scheme means that there is a positive selection of participants into the programme. On the other hand, it may be at first sight more efficient as it allows to focus on those who are more employable, however at the societal cost of leaving other groups behind;
- Outreach activities would need to be improved to those in need but not claiming the RSA;
- There is still no shared financial responsibility for the target group;
- IT-problems for database-sharing remain.

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