

FORUM 4 Facilitating access to employment for those farthest from the labour market by supporting the RSA measure

**ESF: A
Partner
to Tackle
the Crisis**

**European
Conference**

**3rd and 4th December
2009**

Palais des congrès,
Dijon
France

Forum 4 Presentation

The issue

The Active Solidarity Income or RSA measure had been tested in 34 departments since May 2007, and was mainstreamed to all of France on 1st June 2009. This measure provides those who are not working with a minimum income and those who work with complementary income. The RSA is a "mixed" instrument that replaced all the other social minimum allowances and certain temporary fixed-rate aids such as the "return to work bonus". The RSA had more than 800,000 applications at the end of August 2009, representing 30% of the estimated number of modest workers who can receive a complementary income, and it has become a tool to promote in order to facilitate professional inclusion of people made more vulnerable by the crisis.

Providing support to these beneficiaries remains key for ensuring a lasting return to work. Since 2009, the European Social Fund has supported this major reform by jointly financing guidance and support measures for RSA recipients.

This new measure could transform the actions taken in favour of people farthest from the labour market. It needs to be resituated in the context of local inclusion pacts and supposes setting up renewed partnerships, particularly with Pôle Emploi, the French national employment office. A survey done by the National Observatory of Decentralised Social Action¹ brought to light the pragmatic approach taken locally to implement the RSA and begin forming new roles and partnerships among those working in insertion. Implementing the RSA is the fruit of previous experiments done in the area of active insertion. The latter can only be developed as part of a territory-based governance strategy that requires local leadership and mutualising tools among the various stakeholders. ESF support is serving as a lever to help those working in insertion to be more effective in their work with the most vulnerable groups.

¹ Results of this survey of all French metropolitan departments and regions were published in the ODAS newsletter "Observer pour mieux agir" (Observe to Develop Better Initiatives) dated October 2009. ■■■



European Social Fund: A Partner to Tackle the Crisis / Forum: Facilitating access to employment for those farthest from the labour market by supporting the RSA measure

The project

Experimenting with the Active Solidarity Income (RSA) by the Eure General Council

Eure, a "pivotal" territory

Eure has an average surface area and population size, is neither totally rural nor totally urban, located in the heart of Normandy, but also serving as a transition with the capital Ile de France region, and as a result has remarkable characteristics, with business activities irrigating the entire territory (it ranks as the 7th industrial department in France), sectors that excel economically (aeronautics, automobile, chemistry-pharmaceutics), and a network of small and medium cities that link the territory (guaranteeing service to residents and quality natural and farming areas). Yet, this department has a population that does not have a high enough level of initial training, with a traditional employment structure and low school performance. The unemployment rate is 11% and the department currently has 11,233 RSA beneficiaries. ■■

Innovating to better integrate disadvantaged people

Due to its structural weaknesses, the Eure has made social and professional integration of disadvantaged people one of its priorities, in order to ensure economic development that really benefits all Eure residents. Solidarity among inhabitants (the department's social initiatives) represents 40% of the local budget and 50% of municipal staff. In the fight against exclusion, the Eure has chosen to innovate to better integrate. That is how the department began experimenting the RSA measure in 2007, pioneering the measure with the help of the New Agency for Active Solidarities, presided over by Martin Hirsch. Following 33 distinct experimentations, the RSA was then mainstreamed to all of France on 1st June 2009. The Eure Department, bolstered by its experimentations and partnerships (state, CAF family allowance office, MSA agricultural social welfare offices, CPAM state social welfare offices, Pôle Emploi employment agency, Central Office for Social Activities, local associations, etc.), chose to organized decentralized platforms in its Territorial Social Action Units. Nearly 10 sites welcome new recipients of the RSA and provide group information sessions regarding the measure's entitlements and obligations. Before attending, beneficiaries receive a self-evaluation form to fill out which helps in the face-to-face orientation meeting with General Council agents and the Pôle Emploi. This



European Social Fund: A Partner to Tackle the Crisis / Forum: Facilitating access to employment for those farthest from the labour market by supporting the RSA measure

meeting sets out to better understand the person's difficulties and to offer support best adapted to his situation. To take into account the law's goal, which is to make professional insertion a priority, 60% of the people are oriented towards the Pôle Emploi. The others either get social support (from the General Council or Local Social Action Centres), or socio-professional support, with the help of insertion association, the insertion-through-work sector, and the two local insertion and employment plans.

The various insertion experiments led in the Eure Department have been supported by the European Social Fund and require even more contribution in the face of the European active inclusion goals that take shape very concretely on a local level. ■■

Speakers

Moderator

Dominique Blin is Director for Childhood, Family and Insertion at the Côte d'Or General Council. She was in charge of setting up the RSA experiments starting in autumn 2007 and its mainstreaming since 1st June 2009. She participated in the work done by the High Commissariat for Active Inclusion with representatives from other Departments and set up the first Local Insertion Programme in January 2009. ■■

Experiences

Geneviève Besson is Director of the Fight against Exclusion at the Eure General Council, for which she has worked for 13 years. She has a PhD in sociology, is trained as a social worker and then an employment counsellor. She has professional field experience with a wide variety of target groups (children, adults, elderly) and in a variety of positions (management, facilitation, expertise) through her work in three public functions, in associations and in the National Employment Agency. She wrote a book on local social development that published by Harmattan in 2008. ■■

Nadine Seiwert is in charge of the Hérault General Council's territorial insertion network. ■■



European Social Fund: A Partner to Tackle the Crisis / Forum: Facilitating access to employment for those farthest from the labour market by supporting the RSA measure

Perspectives

Cyprien Avenel

Dominique Blin is Director for Childhood, Family and Insertion at the Côte d'Or General Council. She was in charge of setting up the RSA experiments starting in autumn 2007 and its mainstreaming since 1st June 2009. She participated in the work done by the High Commissariat for Active Inclusion with representatives from other Departments and set up the first Local Insertion Programme in January 2009. ■■

Nathalie Hanet

Nathalie Hanet has been Director of Local Authorities and Partnerships at the Pôle Emploi French Employment Office since March 2009, and held a variety of responsibilities in associations and federations that fight exclusion, following a career in research (Foundation Abbé Pierre, Sociological Observatory of Change, National Centre for Scientific Research/National Foundation of Political Science, or CNRS/FNSP). She presided over Emmaüs Alternatives for eight years, while also serving as general manager of a group of associations developing housing-based insertion services (Centre for Housing and Social Reinsertion (CHRS), a maternal centre and emergency) and work-based insertion. She was an activist and served as part of the FNARS (National Federation of Social Reinsertion Associations), and then was secretary general of COORACE, a federation of work-based insertion enterprises and associations. In 2007/2008, she was a member of the Commission for Liberation of French Growth, presided over by Jacques Attali. ■■

Magdalena Mazur and Ewa Jagusiak-Dziubandowska

Representatives of the Labour Office, Opole Voivodehip, Poland. ■■

Reporter

David Soubrié, alumni of the National School of Administration, has worked at the General Delegation for Employment and Continuing Training since 2006. He has successively held the positions of assistant and then head of professional insertion mission. He is currently an expert advisor. ■■