

Implementation of the European Youth Pact in France

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In accordance with the spirit of the Lisbon strategy, the European Youth Pact focuses on the social and vocational integration of young people and gives priority to education and training, which are factors of social cohesion and have repercussions on the business sector.

The implementation of the European Youth Pact therefore mobilises numerous partners and, above all, the whole range of ministries concerned.

The implementation of the Pact follows three fundamental axes, which are presented in the French National Reform Plan [Plan national de réforme (PNR)].

1 - Integrating youth

A high-quality school system and higher education system enable a better integration of youth in society and the modern world. For this purpose, it is appropriate to ensure that:

- Pupils of all ages receive support to enable their individual success with the help of an “individually designed educational success programme” [programme personnalisée de réussite éducative], which is based on teaching assistants in primary and secondary school or a vocational exploration programme starting in grade 3.
- Failure in school is prevented and the number of school dropouts is reduced from primary school onwards: pupils with difficulties shall be identified as early as possible, intervention resources are put in place to avoid leaving these pupils behind, methods are identified for the acquisition of the basic skills defined in the priority principles for education, equal opportunities are promoted for the access to high-quality training, and young people leaving the school system without diploma or qualification are able a “Second chance” system.
- Higher education is modernised by aligning it with the general trend in Europe: a structure is established with diplomas, which will be understandable and comparable throughout Europe, a “double diploma” policy with associated Master Degrees is put in place, mobility is encouraged through individual support (scholarships, the Erasmus programme...), higher education institutions as well as training and certification resources are subjected to a stricter assessment.

2 - Preparing and improving the transition from school to work and response to competence-related needs

- Development of apprentice training systems: the “social cohesion plan” [plan de cohésion sociale] plans to increase the total number of apprentices from 370,000 to 500,000 within five years by mobilising companies to train apprentices and by enhancing the attractiveness of apprentice training through a higher status and higher remuneration.
- Development of entrepreneurial spirit and communication of good practices in this field. A national competition of “Youth Initiatives” [Initiatives Jeunes] and the “School-to-Business Week” [semaine Ecole-Entreprise] are introduced to encourage these projects and to give them a higher standing.
- Adaptation of competences of all age groups to the new needs of the economy by improving the knowledge of spoken foreign languages and general availability of apprenticeships as well as information and communication technology skills.

3 - Investing in youth

Young people shall be enabled to integrate into the working world and into society by

- Supporting young people's way into the working world: the “Emergency employment scheme” has organised an individualised approach at ANPE for each of the 57,000 youth, who have been unemployed for more than a year. 60% of them have been offered a job or vocational training. The “Contract for the integration in social life” [contrat d’insertion dans la vie sociale (CIVIS)] is meant for young people between 16 and 26 and offers them a possibility to implement a project for their integration into a permanent job.
- Facilitating the recruitment of young people in the commercial sector: promoting the CDI employment through the conclusion of an “Initial recruitment contract” [contrat première embauche].
- Integrating young people in the life of their municipalities with all its dimensions.

With respect to the last item, specific activities are developed by the Ministry for Youth, Sports and Associations. An Internet portal has been established to inform young people of the whole range of government actions affecting them (www.jeunesse.gouv.fr). The other actions put in place by the Ministry also include:

The ‘Young entrepreneurs’ programme

In 2005, the “Wishing to take action!” [Envie d’agir!] support programme was extended by new category: entrepreneurial activities. It mobilises various resources to support projects and to provide young people with financial support, when they want to establish or take over a company. 13 Youth Initiative Centres [Espaces Initiatives Jeunes], which are dedicated to the establishment or resumption of business activities, were set up to support young people in the realisation of their projects. This supportive approach combines individual attention, information and counselling so that the young initiators of business projects are put in touch with the right partners to smooth their way into business. More than 250 companies have been established or revitalised by young people with the help of the Envie d’agir! programme. The objective for 2006 is to double that figure.

Volunteer services

An Act on Volunteer Services in Associations has recently been adopted by Parliament. In a single Act of Parliament, it harmonises the various types of volunteer services currently existing in France and enables the development of new programmes. A volunteer is given the following benefits: a contract for a maximum term of two years, an allowance, training, social rights and a certification of acquired skills. The volunteer experience may be pursued in any country in Europe.

Volunteer services in associations are one aspect of the National Voluntary Civic Service Programme, which will affect 50,000 young people between 16 and 25 years in 2007.

Summer jobs

For many years, the Ministry for Youth has accompanied young people in their search for summer jobs in cooperation with the Youth Information network and the network of the National Employment Agencies. Since 2005, this programme has been considerably extended. In quantitative terms, 100,000 seasonal jobs are offered to young people. In qualitative terms, the action will include future: encounter forums for young people and employers on the national level and in all regions, workshops supporting the job search, the dissemination of specific information and a dedicated Internet site. In geographic terms, European job offers are also available through a link to Eurodesk and Eures.