



# Analysis of Welfare Benefits Systems : The case of the “Revenu de solidarité active” in France

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Tender N° VT/2011/100 Pilot project – Social solidarity for social integration

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## Introduction

The European Minimum Income Network (EMIN) is a two year project (2013-2014) funded by the European Commission, that has the aim of building consensus to take the necessary steps towards introducing adequate minimum income schemes in EU Member States, in line with the European Commission's Active Inclusion Recommendation of 2008, the Europe 2020 strategy and in the context of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion. In October 2008, the European Commission adopted a recommendation on Active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market. The Active inclusion strategy encompasses three main elements: adequate income, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services<sup>1</sup>.

In a context of economic crisis, minimum income schemes represent a lifeline for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. They are often the only financial support available to people experiencing hardship, both for people who are unemployed and face numerous barriers to accessing paid employment. The French national statistics agency (INSEE) defines minimum income scheme as systems "aiming at constituting a minimum income for a person (or his/her family) in a precarious situation. They are non-contributory social welfare payments"<sup>2</sup> by which they mean that beneficiaries are not required to contribute financially to the scheme (in the form of taxes or unemployment insurance contributions) in order to benefit from it.

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has chosen to focus on the theme of minimum income schemes as part of a series of research and think pieces in 2013-2014. As part of this programme, EAPN decided to review the French minimum income scheme – the "Revenu de solidarité active" (RSA) – one of the nine such schemes currently in place in Europe)<sup>3</sup>.

The RSA aimed to improve on existing welfare benefit schemes in the following ways:

- Fighting poverty, in particular by addressing in-work poverty through a wage "top-up" for low-income workers (similar to working tax credits found in countries such as the UK) and by reducing the "threshold effects" of previous schemes (where a return to work was characterised by a short-term loss of income as benefits were removed before being replaced by earned income);
- Encourage unemployed people to go back to work by making work pay (through the wage "top-ups") and providing appropriate advice and guidance from a specialist advisor.

After a few years, this scheme is judged not to have fulfilled its main objectives. It did not reduce the number of people living in poverty in France, nor even prevent a rise in poverty, though this has to be seen in the context of the 2008 economic crisis. Neither was it able to incentivize people on benefits to return to work, in part because it was complicated to identify who is eligible and the amount of money they should receive, meaning many potential beneficiaries were not clear of the financial

<sup>1</sup> Recommandation de la Commission 2008/867/CE du 3 octobre 2008 relative à l'inclusion des personnes exclues du marché du travail [Journal officiel L 307 du 18.11.2008].

<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32008H0867:FR:HTML>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.insee.fr/fr/methodes/?page=definitions/minima-sociaux.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Ce rapport s'inscrit donc en complément du rapport : Frazier, Hugh, and Eric Marlier. *Évaluation de La Mise En Oeuvre de La Recommandation de La Commission Européenne Relative À L'inclusion Active: Analyse Des Politiques Nationales*. Rapport de synthèse. L'Europe Sociale. Réseau d'experts indépendants en inclusion sociale, CEPS, Commission européenne, Janvier 2013.

gains they could make. The complicated nature of the scheme also created confused for the employment advisors and social workers, who were often poorly equipped to handle large case loads of beneficiaries.

The RSA also had three secondary objectives, none of which were achieved to the extent hoped for. Firstly, it was hoped that rolling the in-work and out-of-work benefits into a single scheme would reduce the stigma attached to the RSA; but the RSA is still heavily associated with out-of-work poverty and carries a heavy stigma. Secondly, some hoped that the additional benefits for single parents and childcare would reduce gender inequality in access to work; again the results of the scheme were disappointing. Finally, service user participation was a key component of the RSA scheme, which is a welcome development. However, like many such attempts at involving beneficiaries in service design, service users were often *consulted* on ideas rather than involved in true co-design of the service. Several factors made this sort of full user participation difficult, including politicians' fear of having their power undermined by service users, and a lack of time dedicated to service user involvement from social workers. Only time will tell if beneficiaries' views will be placed at the heart of discussions around how to improve the RSA in future.

## 1. Overview

### 1.1. Social and institutional context of minimum income schemes in France

#### Revenu de solidarité active (RSA) socle

- 1 497 600

#### Allocation aux adultes handicapés (AAH)

- 964 900

#### Allocation supplémentaire d'invalidité (ASI)

- 8 1300

#### Allocation de solidarité spécifique (ASS)

- 378 200

#### Allocation temporaire d'attente (ATA)

- 47 000

#### Allocation solidarité aux personnes âgées (ASPA)

- 502 700

#### Allocation veuvage (AV)

- 6 300

#### Allocation transitoire de solidarité (ATS)

- 28 300

By the end of 2011, 3.7 millions of persons were beneficiaries of one of the nine minimum income schemes in place in France. This represents a 2.4 points increase, after a 2.5 points increase for the year 2010<sup>4</sup>. The number of beneficiaries of the “RSA basic”<sup>5</sup> has risen by 3 points. They make up 43% of all welfare benefit beneficiaries (see Table 1).

In the same year, 14.3% of the French population were living under the poverty line (60% median income) In other words, 8.7 million people were living on less than 870 Euros per month in the year 2011<sup>6</sup>. Minimum income schemes therefore continue to have an important role to play in addressing poverty.

**Tableau 1 – Minima sociaux en France en 2012 et nombre d'allocataires.**

Source : DREES, 2012,

<http://www.drees.sante.gouv.fr/nombre-d-allocataires-des-minima-sociaux,10484.html>

### 1.2. Emergence of the RSA

The RSA was introduced by a law adopted on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. The RSA was designed in part to respond to the lessons learned from previous schemes: the Revenu minimum d'insertion (RMI) – minimum inclusion income – and the “Allocation parent isolé” (API) – single parent benefit. Several reports were published during this phase that led to the development of the RSA. This includes the 2005 report of the Commission “Famille, vulnérabilité et pauvreté” (Family, vulnerability and poverty) entitled: “Au possible nous sommes tenus, la nouvelle équation sociale” (“We must deliver the possible : the new social deal”). It sets out several propositions, among which to combine earned income and social benefits (what became the RSA) and to reinforce advice, guidance and the quality of social work<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Labarthe, Julie, and Michèle Lelièvre. “Minima Sociaux et Prestations Sociales.” Direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation et des statistiques, 2013. [http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES\\_minima\\_sociaux\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES_minima_sociaux_2013.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Voir définition partie 1.3. Seul ce dispositif entre strictement dans la définition d'un minima social.

<sup>6</sup> Le revenu médian étant évalué à 1450 euros. INSEE, Revenu disponible par ménage (moyenne et médiane) de 1970 à 2011 [http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg\\_id=0&id=45](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&id=45)

INSEE, Taux de pauvreté selon le seuil en 2011, [http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=natfef04415](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=natfef04415)

<sup>7</sup> Hirsch, Martin. “Au Possible Nous Sommes Tenus” : Rapport de La Commission Familles, Vulnérabilité, Pauvreté. Ministère des solidarités, de la santé et de la famille, 2005. <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/054000264/index.shtml>.

Inspired by this report, the French government decided to pilot test the RSA in order to evaluate its impact and adapt the approach before scaling it up nationally. The pilot test took place in pilot sites in 33 French “départements” (council area), with each council defining two zones within its boundaries : the “test zone” where residents benefited from the RSA, and a “control zone” where they did not. The service implemented varied somewhat between pilot sites, including the precise way of calculating the RSA amount and the type of support services provided.

However, several commentators underlined shortcomings to this pilot testing phase:

- The pilot test, initially planned to take place over 3 years, was shortened to 18 months, meaning the longer-term impact of the scheme on its beneficiaries was not known.<sup>8</sup>
- The pilot test phase took place prior to the economic crisis, in a context very different from the situation during the scale up of the RSA.
- In the decision to scale up, political imperatives took precedent over the evidence of the RSA’s impact on beneficiaries.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3. The RSA’s objectives

The objectives of the RSA are described in the first article of the 2008 law<sup>10</sup>

- Contributing to sustainable livelihoods and fight against poverty<sup>11</sup>
- Support economic activity
- Foster social inclusion

In the explanatory memorandum to the bill, three complementary objectives are listed:

- Earned income should form the basis of individual income and is the best protection against poverty
- Every beneficiary must be given personalised advice, guidance and case work support that is tailored to their needs
- The RSA should be better linked with other welfare benefits, as part of a wider reform aiming at a better-coordinated welfare benefit system.<sup>12</sup>

In the original approach, the idea was to create a single benefit, with the precise amount of the benefit adapting to the persons’ circumstances as they changed. In practice, several forms of the RSA were created that can be grouped into 3 main categories:

- “RSA basic”, which targets people with no earned income, or very low earned income. It can be topped up for lone-parents with a child under 3 years old, or pregnant women.
- “RSA activity”, which targets people with an earned income that is insufficient to cover their basic needs.
- “RSA youth”, which targets adults under the age of 25 that are excluded from the other RSA schemes. They need to have been working full-time for at least 2 years in order to be eligible.

<sup>8</sup> Allègre, Guillaume. “L’expérimentation Du Revenu de Solidarité Active Entre Objectifs Scientifiques et Politiques.” *Revue de l’OFCE*, no. n° 113 (Février 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Gomel, Bernard, et Évelyne Serverin. “Expérimenter Pour Décider? Le RSA En Débat” *Centre d’Etude de l’Emploi*, 2009. [http://www.alternatives-economiques.fr/fic\\_bdd/article\\_pdf\\_fichier/1246373615\\_119-experimenter\\_decider\\_rsa\\_debat.pdf](http://www.alternatives-economiques.fr/fic_bdd/article_pdf_fichier/1246373615_119-experimenter_decider_rsa_debat.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d’insertion [http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=4CF49157824A23C158DC439713D0D510.tpdjo15v\\_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019860428&categorieLien=id](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=4CF49157824A23C158DC439713D0D510.tpdjo15v_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019860428&categorieLien=id)

<sup>11</sup> s’inscrivant dans un objectif de réduction de la pauvreté d’un tiers en cinq ans

<sup>12</sup> Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d’insertion [http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichLoiPubliee.do;jsessionid=77E875FD11FE5FB4EE5A15668F66045D.tpdjo15v\\_2?idDocument=JORFDOLE000019424060&type=expose&typeLoi=&legislature=](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichLoiPubliee.do;jsessionid=77E875FD11FE5FB4EE5A15668F66045D.tpdjo15v_2?idDocument=JORFDOLE000019424060&type=expose&typeLoi=&legislature=)

#### 1.4. Eligibility conditions

Eligibility conditions change slightly between the different schemes

| RSA basic   | RSA activity   | RSA youth  |
|---|--|--|
| The applicant should have the French nationality or a residence permit allowing them to work for more than 5 years, or be a national of one of the EU member-states or the European Economic Area, fulfilling the conditions required to obtain a legal stay and having lived in France for at least 3 months before the request. |  |  |
| Student or interns are excluded (except for apprentices)  |  |  |
| Parental returners, sabbatical, unpaid leave, or on standby are excluded  |  |  |
| Sole traders without any paid employees and with a turnover of no more than 800* minimum wage(SMIC <sup>13</sup> )/year   |  |  |
| Applicants should be under 25 years old   |  | Applicants should be between 18 and 25 years old   |
| Applicants should not earn any salary (or under 500 Euros)  | Applicants should earn a salary under a specific amount that varies according to the household composition | Applicants should have worked for the equivalent of 2 years full-time over the past 3 years before the request (3 214 hours)<br>Periods of unemployment are taken into account with the limit of 6 months thus eligibility period under examination is 3 years and 6 months.<br>Non-salaried workers need to prove an annual income of at least 43* RSA basic monthly amount over a two-year period. (20 080, 57 € on January 1st 2011). |

The number of households receiving the RSA has risen continuously since 2011. The growth has been more rapid for the *RSA basic* during the 2012-2013 period (+8.1 points) than on the 2011-2012 period (+3.3 points). The number of household benefiting from the *RSA activity* has steadily increased: an increase of 2.3 point over the 2011-2012 period and +2.7 points for the 2012-2013 period.

| Number of household receiving the RSA in France <sup>14</sup>   |           |           |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|   | June 2011 | June 2012 | June 2013 |
| RSA basic   | 1 554 000 | 1 606 000 | 1 737 000 |
| RSA activity  | 469 000   | 479 000   | 492 000   |
| RSA total   | 2 023 000 | 2 085 000 | 2 229 000 |
| Data: CNAF  |           |           |           |
| * Since September 1st 2010, the RSA covers young people between 18 and 25 years old. They make up only 0.4% of all beneficiaries. |           |           |           |

<sup>13</sup> Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance. In 2013 the rate is 1 128.70 Euros per month.

<sup>14</sup> Lelièvre, Michèle, Vincent Reduron, and Thierry Van Wassenhove. Les Allocataires Du RSA Fin Juin 2013. Etudes et Résultats. DREES-CNAF, Janvier 2014.

## 1.5. Amounts

### • RSA basic

The amount of the *RSA basic* varies according to the household composition. It can be topped up for lone parents: pregnant, single, divorced or widowed with children.

The law states that the amount of the RSA must be changed yearly to keep up with inflation, as measured by the consumer price index<sup>15</sup>. There is no obligation to up-rate the RSA at above the rate of inflation.

| <b>RSA basic amount (September 1st 2013)<sup>16</sup></b> |          |             |        |
|---|----------|-------------|--------|
| <b>Number of children</b>                                 | 1 person | Lone parent | Couple |
| <b>0</b>  | 499€     | 641€        | 749€   |
| <b>1</b>  | 749€     | 855€        | 899€   |
| <b>2</b>  | 899€     | 1069€       | 1048€  |
| <b>Per supplementary child</b>                            | 200€     | 214€        | 200€   |

### • RSA activity

The goal of the *RSA activity* is to “top-up” the earned income of a household, therefore its amount varies according to household composition – like a working tax credit.<sup>17</sup> There is no time limit placed on the *RSA activity*: it is maintained until the household income reaches a certain level.

The basic calculation of the RSA is<sup>18</sup>:

|  |
|--|
| <p>Guaranteed revenue = basic amount + 62% of monthly income<br/> <i>RSA activity</i> = Guaranteed revenue – other resources (.....)</p> |
|--|

In April 16 2009, a decree stated the basic amount of the RSA for a single person is 454.63 Euros per month. This amount is increased by 50% for a two-person household, and a further 30% is added for each additional person in the household<sup>19</sup>.

The income of every person in the household is taken into account<sup>20</sup>: wages, savings<sup>21</sup>, family benefits<sup>22</sup>, child support, benefits in kind (e.g.: free housing, housing benefits). The following forms of

<sup>15</sup> Loi du 1er décembre 2008, Art. L. 262-3 « La fraction des revenus professionnels des membres du foyer et le montant forfaitaire mentionné au 2° de l'article L. 262-2 sont fixés par décret. Le montant est révisé une fois par an en fonction de l'évolution des prix à la consommation hors tabac. »

<sup>16</sup> Décret n° 2013-793 du 30 août 2013 portant revalorisation du montant forfaitaire du revenu de solidarité active, <http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F502.xhtml>

<sup>17</sup> A description of the British working tax credit can be found here : <https://www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit/overview>

<sup>18</sup> Décret no 2009-404 du 15 avril 2009 relatif au revenu de solidarité active

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000020521930&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>

<sup>19</sup> Décret n° 2009-404 du 15 avril 2009 relatif au revenu de solidarité active

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000020521930&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>

<sup>20</sup> Les ressources à prendre en compte dans le calcul sont listées Art. L. 262-3 Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d'insertion

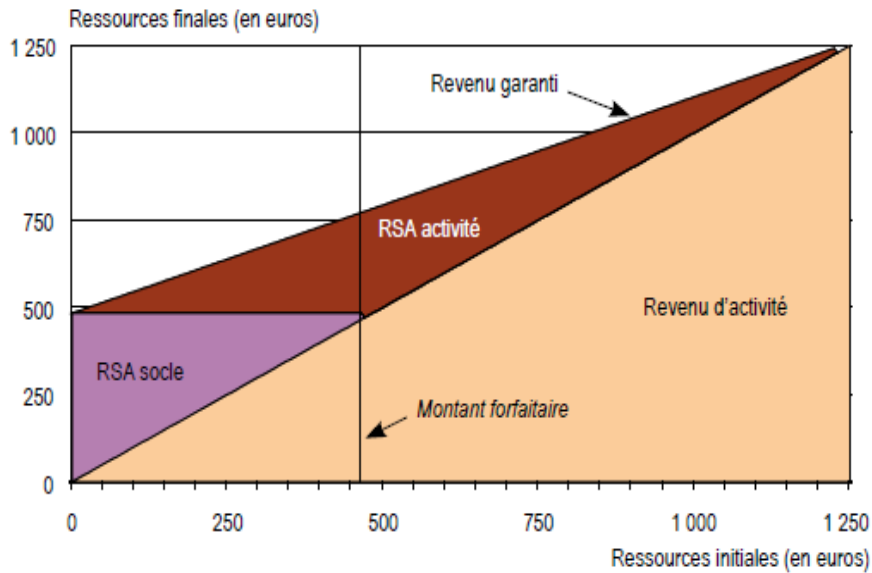
<sup>21</sup> Ils sont à inscrire dans la rubrique du questionnaire (« autres revenus ») y compris les revenus tirés du livret A. La CAF déduit alors 3% du montant de cette épargne du montant du RSA (pour un montant de 10 000€, le RSA sera coupé de 25€ par mois).

<sup>22</sup> Alors que les allocations familiales ne sont pas prises en compte dans les déclarations de l'impôt sur le revenu.



income are excluded from this calculation: early childhood benefit, back-to-school grants, school scholarships, return to work grants and unemployment state insurance schemes. The amount of the *RSA activity* decreases as the amount of earned income increases. The beneficiary can earn up to the minimum wage<sup>23</sup>.

Figure 1 – Schéma simplifié du RSA : cas d'une personne seule en 2013.  
Source : DREES, 2013



## 1.6. Application process and time duration

- **Application process**

Applicants can do a first eligibility test online<sup>24</sup> or through social services. If they are eligible they have to fill in a 6 page form<sup>25</sup>. The form requires details about their family composition, occupation, housing situation and all sources of income in the household, including their partner and dependents. Several documents are also needed. The file is sent to the appropriate social security agency – either Caisse d'Allocation Familiale (CAF), or the Mutualité sociale agricole (MSA, specialising in employees of the agricultural sector) - or to the Conseil général (local council). The benefit should be received the month following submission of the application.

The applicant then needs to declare its resources at least once a quarter or whenever there is a change to the social security agency. The amount of the benefit, and indeed the access to the scheme, are re-evaluated every time there is a change in their situation. This mechanism explains the high turnover rate in and out the *RSA activity*: 29% against 13.6% for the *RSA basic*<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance. Il est fixé à de 1 128,70 euros en 2013.

<sup>24</sup> [www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr)

<sup>25</sup> Deux pages pour le *RSA jeune*

<sup>26</sup> Lelièvre, Michèle, Vincent Reduron, and Thierry Van Wassenhove. *Les Allocataires Du RSA Fin Juin 2013. Etudes et Résultats*. DREES-CNAF, Janvier 2014.

- **Time duration**

The Leader of the local council can, after a meeting with a group of social workers, employment advisors and RSA beneficiaries, can pronounce a reorientation, suspension or reduction of the allowance. Reorientations refer to the type of support the beneficiary receives, which changes over time to adapt to the recipient's situation. Reductions or suspensions of the benefit are consequences of a failure to comply with the contract's obligations, exclusion by the job centre (Pole Emploi), and failure to ask for a maintenance claim<sup>27</sup>.

### 1.7. Advice and guidance: a right and a duty

Advice and guidance beneficiaries is obligatory for RSA beneficiaries who earn less than the RSA basic amount<sup>28</sup> or less than 500 Euros.<sup>29</sup> These beneficiaries fall within what is called the "rights and obligations" category. beneficiaries These beneficiaries have to meet regularly with their named advisor in order to continue to receive their benefit.<sup>30</sup> Their support is coordinated by a single named advisor, chosen by the local council. These beneficiaries can be referred either towards employment advice or social work support. Local agencies have an obligation to provide this support.

RSA beneficiaries who are not part of the "rights and obligations" category are not required to attend advice and guidance. However, it is available to them if they request it.

In any case, their advisor is named by the organisation in charge of the beneficiary's benefit claim (eg. the social security agency):

- For employment advice and guidance, the beneficiaries are referred towards the Employment Service (Service public de l'emploi), and in majority the Job Centre (Pôle emploi).<sup>31</sup> Other organisations may also provide support, such as job access centres or private sector job-placement providers. The beneficiary must then develop a personalised access to work contract with his/her referent. The resulting plan is a binding contract signed by both the RSA beneficiary and the State.
- For social work support, if the RSA beneficiary has housing or health issues, he/she is referred to the local council or another organisation able to provide appropriate support. Within the two first months, beneficiaries need to sign a contract engaging both parties:

<sup>27</sup> Code de l'action sociale des familles, Article R262-68

<http://www.legifrance.com/affichCodeArticle.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074069&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006906005>

<sup>28</sup> défini dans la partie 1.5

<sup>29</sup> *L'accompagnement Des Bénéficiaires Du Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA)*. Dares Analyse. Dares, Février 2013. <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2013-008.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Art L 262-29 Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d'insertion

<sup>31</sup> Pôle emploi est un opérateur du service public de l'emploi. Il est issu de la fusion entre l'Agence nationale pour l'emploi (ANPE) et le réseau des Assedic qui est devenue effective par la loi du 13 février 2008 relative à la réforme du service public de l'emploi. Il a pour mission d'accompagner tous les demandeurs d'emploi dans leur recherche jusqu'au placement, assurer le versement des allocations aux demandeurs indemnisés, aider les entreprises dans leurs recrutements et recouvrer les cotisations. L'objectif était de créer un opérateur qui permette notamment aux demandeurs d'emploi d'avoir un seul interlocuteur pour la gestion des offres d'emploi et de leur allocation. Pôle emploi existe juridiquement depuis le 19 décembre 2008, date de la première réunion de son conseil d'administration.

themselves and the support organisations. The plan often involves a range of support – often social work, childcare, health treatment, employment advice – and the lead advisor therefore needs to work in close collaboration with other agencies in their local area.

The beneficiary's needs are re-evaluated every six months, in order to adapt the type of support to their current situation. In practice their needs are re-evaluated on average annually.

## 1.8. RSA financing and RSA governance

The RSA scheme is funded from several sources:

- A 1.1% tax on income from property and investments: life insurance, dividends, property income and capital gains<sup>32</sup>. The amount of this tax did not match the amount initially forecast, as a result of the crisis. In spite of this, the current amount raised from this tax has not been completely spent, due to low take-up rates of the RSA<sup>33</sup>.
- An allocation of State funds from housing tax, a reallocation of housing benefits, a reform of the *Prime pour l'emploi*, and closing tax loopholes (250 million Euros). This allocation of resources has been reduced twice and has also been used to fund the Christmas allowance (364 million euros).

The National fund of active solidarities funds the RSA activity and youth. It is managed by the *Caisse des dépôts et consignations*.

The RSA basic is financed by a resources transfer from the national State to the local councils.

Local councils manage the RSA – not just payment of the benefit but also referrals, advice and guidance. The Job Centre is in charge of providing employment advice and guidance. Local councils can call on other partners to provide addition social support, such as the *Centres Communaux d'Action Sociale*.

Several agreements are signed in every local council area that provide a framework for the management of the RSA :

- Management Agreements between the local council and the social security agency, in order to determine the procedures and to precise the delegation of powers of the Department council president<sup>34</sup>.
- Referral and support agreements, with the local council, Job Centre, the local office of the State, social security agency, municipal authorities and any other employment advice

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<sup>32</sup>Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d'insertion <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000019860428&categorieLien=id>

<sup>33</sup> Interview de M. Hirsch, 2014, <http://www.localtis.info/cs/ContentServer?pagename=Localtis/LOCActu/ArticleActualite&jid=1250267247383&cid=1250267245807>

<sup>34</sup> Code de l'action sociale et de la famille, art L 262-25

partners. It specifies the criteria that a person must meet in order to become a beneficiary of the RSA<sup>35</sup>.

- An agreement between the local council and the Job Centre stating the way in which advice and guidance support will be funded, ensuring this complements – and doesn't duplicate - existing employment advice and guidance<sup>36</sup>.

In short, the RSA aims at topping up earned incomes and as such, is part of the first pillar of Active inclusion. However, it fails to entirely fulfil this objective, as will be shown in part 3 and 4.

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<sup>35</sup> Code de l'action sociale et de la famille, Art L 262-32

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074069&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006797246&dateTexte=&categorieLien=cid>

<sup>36</sup> Code de l'action sociale et de la famille, Art L 262-32

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074069&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006797246&dateTexte=&categorieLien=cid>

## 2. Link between the right to social inclusion and the active inclusion strategy

In 2008, the European Commission issued a recommendation regarding Active inclusion. It stressed the need for adequate incomes and the development of labour markets that foster inclusion and access to quality public services. State intervention is required to increase inclusion in– both the labour market and public services. In this report we distinguish between “social inclusion” and “social integration” : the former refers to inclusion through access to work and public services, whilst the latter is defined as a larger process of integration into society, in particular by building social bonds in the local community (sometimes referred to as “social capital”).<sup>37</sup>

### 2.1. Active inclusion strategies and inclusive labour markets

The RSA aims at contributing to poverty reduction in two ways: financially, by topping up earned income and by supporting access to work for people who are unemployed and/ or have no income. Hence the RSA is strongly linked to the development of an inclusive labour market. With this in mind, several schemes have been implemented that aim at re-integrating people into the labour market, including advice and guidance, new financial incentives, training, state supported contracts, and the development of social enterprises providing work opportunities (referred to as social firms or sheltered employment schemes in a UK context).

- **Intensive advice and guidance**

The RSA has encouraged a wide range of public agencies and local councils to organise all the steps involved in the process from welfare to work : information, accessing benefits, referrals to partner agencies, and providing advice, guidance and support, etc.

RSA beneficiaries have to look actively for a job. The Job Centre only supports beneficiaries who are formally registered with them, which is not the case of all RSA beneficiaries<sup>38</sup>.

In April 2014 an protocol agreement was concluded between the French Local Government Agency (*Assemblée des départements de France - ADF*) and the Job Centre (Pôle Emploi) to develop an integrated advice and guidance approach. The precise form that this approach takes at a local level will be decided by each local council<sup>39</sup>. The Job Centre, on the other hand, has proposed to test an integrated advice and guidance service (with particular attention to coordinate social work support and employment advice and guidance), to pool funding with local councils, and – in return - that job seekers be able to access support provided by local councils. This strategy is expected to be implemented in the coming months.

<sup>37</sup> Rhein, Catherine. “Intégration sociale, intégration spatiale.” *L’Espace géographique* tome 31, no. 3 (Septembre 1, 2002): 193–207.

<sup>38</sup> Jamme, Daniel. *Pôle Emploi et La Réforme Du Service Public de L’emploi : Bilan et Recommandations*. Les avis du Conseil économique, social et environnemental, Juin 2011.

<sup>39</sup> “Dossier de Presse : Signature Du Protocole National Entre l’ADF, Pôle Emploi et La DGEFP,” avril 2014. <http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/files/files/DP-Signature-protocole-adf-poleemploi-dgefp.pdf>

- **New financial incentives**

New one-off grants have been implemented in order to both support and encourage job seekers to return to work.

Access to work grants (Aide personnalisée de retour à l'emploi - APRE)

RSA beneficiaries in the “rights and obligations” category and returning to economic activity (paid work, training or starting up a company) are eligible for the APRE. This grant aims at covering all or part of the costs incurred by a beneficiary in order to get back to work, such as: transport, clothes or specific equipment, housing, childcare, and qualifications. The precise amount and the access criteria for APRE are set out at a local level by councils and the State.

→ In 2013, slight changes in the criteria and process for accessing APRE have been announced, which will be implemented in 2014.

Return to work bonus (Prime pour l'emploi - PPE)

The PPE is a negative tax for low-income households with limited earned incomes. It aims at encourage employment return or maintaining<sup>40</sup>. In 2008, 6.7 million of households received the PPE<sup>41</sup>. Its amount varies according to the household income.

→ Its aim is similar but complementary to that of the RSA, and a recent enquiry explored the pros and cons of merging the two schemes<sup>42</sup>.

- **Training**

Training is a key element of labour market inclusion. The number and diversity of training schemes in France means coordination of training at a local level is complex. A new fund was created in 2009<sup>43</sup> that aimed to improve professional training. However, at present, the poorest workers are the least likely to access funding for training. The Job Centre and Regional councils are currently changing their training offers to make them more accessible to this group.

Several reports underline how difficult it can be for people to access training, with the lack – or insufficiency – of grants to cover training costs a particular barrier<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Loi no 2001-458 du 30 mai 2001 portant création d'une prime pour l'emploi  
[http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=86F95AF79385C3B263FBCBB134688A34.tpdjo12v\\_1?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000768791&categorieLien=id](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=86F95AF79385C3B263FBCBB134688A34.tpdjo12v_1?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000768791&categorieLien=id)

<sup>41</sup> Labarthe, Julie, and Michèle Lelièvre. *Minima Sociaux et Prestations Sociales*. Direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation et des statistiques, 2013. [http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES\\_minima\\_sociaux\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES_minima_sociaux_2013.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Sirugue, C., Réforme des dispositifs de soutien aux revenus d'activité modestes, Rapport au Premier Ministre, juillet 2013. IGF, rapport sur la fiscalité des ménages, avril 2014  
<http://www.localtis.info/cs/BlobServer?blobkey=id&blobnocache=true&blobwhere=1250168407532&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobcol=urldata&blobtable=MungoBlobs>

<sup>43</sup> *Fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels*. Code du travail, Article L6332-18  
[http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do;jsessionid=87D9C5966493698955DC0C5E192A45B5.tpdjo04v\\_2?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006072050&idSectionTA=LEGISCTA000021341844&dateTexte=](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do;jsessionid=87D9C5966493698955DC0C5E192A45B5.tpdjo04v_2?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006072050&idSectionTA=LEGISCTA000021341844&dateTexte=)

<sup>44</sup> Jamme, Daniel. *Pôle Emploi et La Réforme Du Service Public de L'emploi : Bilan et Recommandations*. Les avis du Conseil économique, social et environnemental. Conseil économique, social et environnemental, Juin 2011.

- **Supported contracts**

Job seekers who are the furthest from the labour market (young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training, long-term unemployed) can have access to state-aided contracts for which the hiring and employment support are regulated and funded by the state. They are referred to as “supported contracts” (contrats aidés).

Supported contracts are short-term contracts aimed at beneficiaries of RSA. The employer of a RSA beneficiary pays directly his/her employee and in return receives a financial support from the State. As a counter-part for this support, the employer also provides advice and guidance for the worker (mentoring, training, etc.).

Several types of supported contracts exist: single inclusion contracts, created in December 2008; future jobs (“emplois d’avenir”), implemented in November 2012; generation contracts, since 2013;<sup>45</sup> and social integration contracts:

- Single inclusion contracts: targets minimum income scheme beneficiaries. In 2011, 444 000 single inclusion contracts were signed.
- Future jobs: targets youth from 16 to 25 years old, with little or no qualifications. The age limit is higher - 30 years old – for people with disabilities. A higher level of qualifications – up to graduates of a bachelor degree – is accepted for people living in certain areas : deprived areas (Zone urbaine sensible – ZUS), certain rural areas (zone de revitalisation rurale – ZRR) or in French overseas territories. State funds an income of up to 75% of minimum wage (35% in the case of for-profit organisations).
- Generation contracts: aims at retaining workers over 57 years old in the workforce and at hiring youth under 26 years old with a long-term contract. There are no qualification requirements.
- Social integration contracts: targets youth from 16 to 25 years old, facing significant barriers to accessing work. It combines financial grant, coupled with case work support to help them implement a return to work plan.

- **Sheltered employment schemes**

The Labour Code defines organizations supporting inclusion through economic activity (structures d’insertion par l’activité écomiques – SIAE), which we refer to as sheltered employment schemes. They target people facing a range of barriers to work, including health problems, housing difficulties etc. They provide a sheltered employment contract, access to training and to qualifications and -if necessary – a staged introduction into an ordinary work environment. SIAEs sign an agreement with the state to target particular groups, in coordination with the local Job Centre.

The organisations running these sheltered employment schemes take a wide range of forms, from charities to social firms, community groups and employer-funded bodies.

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<sup>45</sup> “Contrats aidés : quel impact sur l’emploi ? - Dossier d’actualité” 12 Novembre 2012. <http://www.vie-publique.fr/actualite/dossier/contrats-aides-impact-emploi/contrats-aides-quel-impact-emploi.html>.

- **Social economy**

The draft Social Economy (SE) legislation<sup>46</sup> introduces several new clauses aimed to promoting the development of a more social and sustainable economy. Organisations who wish to be recognized as part of the third sector have to justify the social benefit of their actions, that their articles promote participative and/or democratic governance, with limited for-profit objectives<sup>47</sup>. SIAEs are part of the social economy. The regulation of the social economy will be organised by a High Council (Conseil supérieur de l'économie sociale et solidaire), a national council and regional councils. On the local level, local economic cooperation clusters, mixing private and public organizations, are going to be developed. New financial tools for SSE will be implemented, though the Public investment bank (BPI France) and a social innovation fund, currently being tested. A call for proposals to support the development of these territorial clusters was launched in July 2013<sup>48</sup>. The reform of local government in France, currently in discussion, should clarify the role of local councils.

## 2.2. Access to quality services

RSA beneficiaries have low incomes and as a result often have difficulty accessing public services. However, a number of national, regional and local public schemes currently in place in France facilitate this access.

- **National schemes: health and housing**

RSA beneficiaries have access to universal health coverage (couverture maladie universelle – CMU). The person has to have been legally resident in France for the last 3 months. For those RSA beneficiaries on particularly low incomes also have access to the complementary health coverage (CMU complémentaire), which is a minimum insurance scheme. The person has to have an income of less than 8 593 euros per year for a single person, as of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2013<sup>49</sup>.

RSA beneficiaries, like anyone on a low-income, can receive housing benefits, to help pay their rent. These benefits are taken into account as a source of income when calculating the amount of RSA the person should receive. In spite of this, access to housing for low-income households has not improved in recent years<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Projet de loi relatif à l'économie sociale et solidaire

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichLoiPreparation.do?idDocument=JORFDOLE000027750379&type=general>

<sup>47</sup> "Loi Sur L'économie Sociale et Solidaire: Les Principales Mesures." *Challenges.fr*. Accessed June 20, 2014.

<http://www.challenges.fr/actu-en-direct/20140520.CHA4006/economie-sociale-et-solidaire-la-loi-est-votee.html>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.economie.gouv.fr/premier-appel-a-projets-pour-soutenir-poles-territoriaux-cooperation-economique>

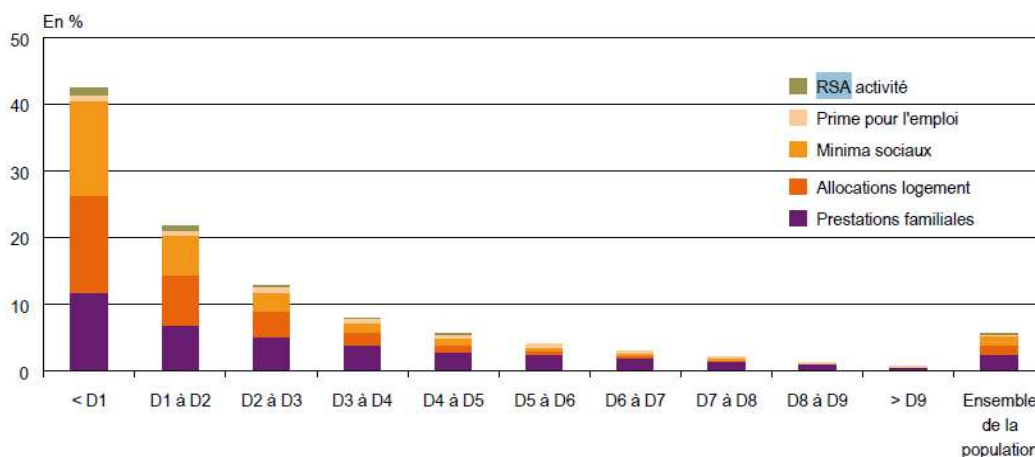
<sup>49</sup> "Couverture maladie universelle complémentaire : bénéficiaires et prestations." Fiche. <http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F10027.xhtml>

<sup>50</sup> *L'état Du Mal-Logement En France*. Fondation Abbé Pierre pour le logement des défavorisés, 2013.

<http://www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr/sites/default/files/content-files/files/18e-rapport-annuel.pdf>



Family benefits are universal – paid regardless of income – for households with at least two children under 20 years old. The basic amounts are of 129,35 Euros for 2 children, 295,05 Euros for 3 children and 460,77 for 4 children<sup>51</sup>. They make up a significant proportion of low-income families' budget, and indeed have the same importance as minimum income schemes or housing benefits for these families (figure 2).



**Lecture** • En 2010, les prestations familiales représentent 12 % du revenu disponible des ménages du premier décile de niveau de vie, les allocations logement et les minima sociaux respectivement 15 et 14 %.

**Champ** • France métropolitaine, ensemble des ménages ayant un revenu déclaré positif ou nul et dont le chef de famille n'est pas étudiant.

**Sources** • INSEE-DGFIP-CNAF-CNAV-CCMSA, enquête Revenus fiscaux et sociaux 2010.

Figure 2 – Part des prestations sociales non contributives dans le revenu disponible par décile de niveau de vie en 2010<sup>52</sup>

Social tariffs for electricity<sup>53</sup>, gas<sup>54</sup> and telecommunications<sup>55</sup> are available to RSA beneficiaries. Furthermore, households with an annual income of 25,005 euros for one person, do not pay council tax<sup>56</sup>. They also have a guaranteed access to kindergarten for children under 6 years old.

- **Local coordination: inclusion strategies**

Local inclusion strategies (LIS) define the objectives for inclusion and the actions the local council plans to implement in order to achieve them. They have a particular focus on beneficiaries of the RSA. The strategy is generally based on a local diagnostic to define needs of RSA beneficiaries. The strategy tailors local services to these needs. The plan has to be re-signed on March 31<sup>st</sup> each year.

Working with local partners, the local council also develops a local inclusion pact (LIP)<sup>57</sup>. This pact defines how local partners will work together to encourage the inclusion of people who are excluded or living in deprivation. It targets a wide range of groups, beyond simply RSA beneficiaries. LIP

<sup>51</sup> "Famille de 2 enfants et plus : allocations familiales." Fiche. <http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F13213.xhtml#N100CF>

<sup>52</sup> Labarthe, Julie, and Michèle Lelièvre. "Minima Sociaux et Prestations Sociales." Direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation et des statistiques, 2013. [http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES\\_minima\\_sociaux\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES_minima_sociaux_2013.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Tarif de première nécessité (TPN), mis en place en 2005

<sup>54</sup> Tarif spécial de solidarité (TSS) du gaz naturel, mis en place en 2008

<sup>55</sup> Décret n° 2010-760 du 6 juillet 2010 relatif aux personnes susceptibles de bénéficier d'une réduction de leur facture téléphonique <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000022447349&categorieLien=id>

<sup>56</sup> <http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F42.xhtml>

<sup>57</sup> Code de l'action sociale et des familles, Article L263-2

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074069&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006797312&dateTexte=&categorieLien=cid>

involves a range of public and private sector partners covering not just employment support but also social work. It aims at clarifying the role and priorities of each local partner and the intensity of their support. In the long run, it should allow pooling of funds and ensure users have access to better services.

- **Participation of people in a situation of poverty**

In the experience of EAPN France, involving users in the development and improvement of local services gives relevant inputs to improve the quality of these services.

People living poverty or social exclusion have – on some occasions - been involved in creating or implementing social policy. Indeed the 1<sup>st</sup> article of the 2008 law nationalizing the RSA stated that : “the definition, implementation and evaluation of the policies mentioned in the present article are implemented with in a way that promotes the genuine participation of the persons affected”<sup>58</sup>. RSA beneficiaries are represented in local multi-disciplinary teams, which are part of RSA governance at a local level.

The law vague however on service user participation in the development of local inclusion strategies; this varies from one local council to the next. A growing number of councils are now implementing participation schemes. Indeed, a 2013 survey by the General direction of social cohesion (DGCS) covering 69 local councils showed that RSA beneficiaries are represented in the multi-disciplinary teams in 3 quarters of councils, and that more than half have planned a ‘consultation groups’ . The aims of these varies schemes are to involve people affected in the implementation of the RSA and of the council’s inclusion policies. Other councils have tested other approaches, such as permanent inclusion forums where minimum income schemes beneficiaries, residents, NGO staff employees and volunteers amongst others discuss specific themes; or the “consultative council” in Meurthe-et-Moselle, made up of 10 RSA beneficiaries and 10 elected officials as well as other partners.

At a national level, several initiatives follow this local trend, such as the creation of a council made up of people living in poverty or social exclusion, attached to the National council of anti-poverty and social exclusion policies (CNLE).

In practice, beneficiaries’ participation varies greatly from one council to another, from basic information to consultation, and sometimes co-construction on specific projects. In addition, the current legal and budgetary framework makes real co decision-making with users very difficult, or some might say impossible.

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<sup>58</sup> Art. L. 115-2 Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d'insertion,

### 3. Weaknesses of the RSA and recommendations for its improvement

Recent academic research and government reports have pointed out a number of weaknesses with the RSA. In this section, EAPN France sets out some of these shortcomings coupled with recommendations for how to address them, at least in part. These recommendations were either developed by EAPN France directly (in purple), proposed during the EAPN France conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 (in blue), or were taken from another source: the government's Five-year Anti-Poverty Strategy (in green), and the National RSA Evaluation Council (in red). These recommendations are more areas for improvement than finalised proposals, and would require further research to make them truly operational. Juxtaposed in this way, not all of the recommendations appear complementary at first glance. However, all of them merit further exploration.

#### 3.1. Coverage and take-up

- **Coverage : most under-25s excluded**

*« We find ourselves faced by a paradox: our social security system doesn't protect the poorest groups in society », Nicolas Duvoux, sociologist, during the EAPN conference 30 June 2014*

The RSA youth can only be accessed by a tiny fraction of under-25s – in large part because few young people meet the criteria of having worked for the equivalent of 2 years full-time over the 3 years preceding their application. Indeed, at the end of 2011, just 9 500 households were beneficiaries of RSA youth in France, of which 2 900 were also beneficiaries of the RSA basic<sup>59</sup>. Yet the poverty rate amongst young people is 17.8%, significantly higher than the average poverty rate for the population of 14.1%.<sup>60,61</sup> In total, roughly 1.2 million young people were living in poverty in France in 2011.<sup>62</sup>

Rec.  
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France

**Open the RSA to all adults** 18 years and older living legally in France, without a requirement to have worked, living on low incomes, but only once an assessment has been done of the full range of benefits the person has a right to. Such a broadening of the scope of the RSA would require a change in legislation.

In addition, most migrants from countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) don't qualify for the RSA, as they need to have had a residence permit that allows them to work for more than five years prior to their application.

<sup>59</sup> CNAF, [https://www.caf.fr/sites/default/files/cnaf/Documents/Dser/dossier\\_etudes/dossier\\_156-etudesrsa.pdf](https://www.caf.fr/sites/default/files/cnaf/Documents/Dser/dossier_etudes/dossier_156-etudesrsa.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> 18 – 29 ans

<sup>61</sup> Insee, Taux de pauvreté des individus au seuil de 60% du niveau de vie médian selon leur âge [http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/detail.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=ir-erfs2010&page=irweb/erfs2010/dd/erfs2010\\_sl-pa-t60.htm](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/detail.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=ir-erfs2010&page=irweb/erfs2010/dd/erfs2010_sl-pa-t60.htm)

<sup>62</sup> Calculé à partir du nombre de 8,7 millions de personnes en situation de pauvreté en France. [http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=T14F055](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=T14F055)



• **Non-take-up**

The situation where people don't access benefits that they have a right to is described as "non-take-up". Low take-up for the RSA is a significant problem, and a cause for concern. In 2011, the non-take-up rate was 35% for the RSA basic, and 68% for the RSA activity. This means that of the 1.5 million households eligible for the RSA activity, only one third - 460,000 households – were actually receiving it at the end of 2010.<sup>63</sup>

90% of people who don't access their benefits don't think they are eligible, which demonstrates the lack of a good understanding of the RSA amongst its target population. The complexity of the application process is also a barrier to accessing the RSA.

Calculating the amount of RSA which each household should receive is a complex process. The uncertainty surrounding the amount of money a household will get creates anxiety.

The RSA continues to be associated with benefits dependency amongst those who do not access the benefit, including for those eligible for the RSA activity



**Implement a communications campaign** targetted at groups with high levels of non-take-up, such as the self-employed.

Simplify the assessment process : simplify the application, digitalise, tailor the regularity of re-applications to people's employment situation.

Standardise and simplify the allocation state benefits and grants to avoid the need to "prove you are poor" to each government agency.



**Tailor the regularity of RSA declarations** to the employment status of the applicant.

The allocation of the RSA could for instance be calculated automatically using tax returns for certain people. However, this would mean the RSA calculation would be based on the previous year's household income, meaning an RSA that is less reactive to the household's situation. The approach could also be based on that of the automation of social tariffs in the energy sector.



The RSA is calculated for a household, whilst the employment support is delivered to individuals.



**Implement communications campaigns** aimed at the general public promoting social benefits, and integrating the theme of a "right to benefits";

**Develop and monitor statistics regarding non-take-up** of social benefits, an action that should be overseen by the state and be linked with targets for reduction of non-take-up;

**Target an information campaign** on people who are eligible for benefits but have not yet accessed them;

**Ensure access to justice** by stabilising the funding of organisations who provide information, advice, and guidance to help citizens access benefits

**Support prefects to improve coordination between services** targeted at people living in poverty, to identify people in difficulty, to help them access the benefits and social security services to which they are eligible, and to implement communications campaigns targeted at certain groups.

<sup>63</sup> Bourignon, François. *Comité National D'évaluation Du rSa Rapport Final*. Comité national d'évaluation, 2011. [http://www.social-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport\\_RSA\\_15dec2011\\_vf-2.pdf](http://www.social-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport_RSA_15dec2011_vf-2.pdf)

### 3.2. Ensuring the RSA is adequate and the fight against poverty

The RSA was created to ensure beneficiaries' income was above the poverty line. As such, the RSA focused on income poverty, in turn linked to the amount households receive from salary and state benefits. Therefore, the RSA was initially set at 50% of minimum wage, which is updated annually to keep up with inflation. By 2014 the RSA basic was worth just 40% of minimum wage, too low to prevent its beneficiaries from falling into income poverty. Given that a post-tax minimum wage is 1,128.70 euros per month for someone working full time, the RSA basic would be 564,35 if it had remained at 50% of minimum wage.<sup>64</sup>

Préco EAPN  
France

**Index lik the RSA basic to the threshold of 50% of minimum wage.**

To be efficient to fight against income poverty, minimum wage has to be revalued.

The economy impact has to be measured.

- **Income poverty**

*« We are asking people who don't know how much [income] they will receive to be good at managing their household budget. It's absurd » Christophe Sirugue, Member of French Parliament, during the EAPN conference 30 June 2014*

The RSA activity has had a minimal impact on the level of income poverty of low-income workers. It reduced the income poverty rate of 22% by just 0.3 percentage points.<sup>65</sup> In addition, we feel it important to highlight that the annual evaluation reports of the "Solidarity, inclusion and equality of opportunities" unit (which monitors the RSA)<sup>66</sup> no longer monitors the impact of the RSA on poverty rates. Indeed, the RSA was introduced as part of a wider government push to reduce poverty by a third over five years, to improve the quality of life of people living in poverty and in particular people facing in-work poverty.

Rec.  
EAPN  
France

**Reduce the amount of information** required from beneficiaries

**Increase the reliability of statistics, and collect them more efficiently** through closer cooperation between public agencies and service providers (transferring statistics between organisations).

*« Because of the way it is calculated, the RSA creates incertitude which in turn generates anxiety » Patrick Blin, service user, during the EAPN conference 30 June 2014*

<sup>64</sup> Insee, Montant mensuel net du SMIC pour 35 heures de travail par semaine (151,67 heures par mois) - Après déduction de la CSG et CRDS, Mars 2014, <http://www.insee.fr/fr/bases-de-donnees/bsweb/serie.asp?idbank=000879878>

<sup>65</sup> Labarthe, Julie, and Michèle Lelièvre. *Minima Sociaux et Prestations Sociales*. Direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation et des statistiques, 2013. [http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES\\_minima\\_sociaux\\_2013.pdf](http://www.cnle.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DREES_minima_sociaux_2013.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Mission interministérielle rattachée au ministère des affaires sociales et de la santé et aux services du Premier ministre. Elle est composée de cinq programmes en lien avec la politique publique de cohésion sociale

The RSA activity is also not transparent enough. Beneficiaries of this benefit find it hard to calculate how much they will receive. In addition, overpayment of this benefit is common, and this money is regularly claimed back by the social security agency. In 2012, one in two RSA beneficiaries was affected by an overpayment. The amount of overpayments is estimated at 803 millions euros – almost a tenth of the total annual benefits spending of 10.5 billion euros. Over half (57%) of this amount was the result of error. The complexity of forms and the regularity with which applicants have to declare their income blurs the distinction between error and fraud. Indeed, we feel it important to highlight that “bad declarations” – often met by severe penalties – often appear to be result of pure error caused by the complexity of the application process.

Conference proposal

Should the RSA be calculated for individuals [instead of for households]? Should the RSA activity be calculated as part of tax returns [like a tax credit]? Should this same approach be used for the RSA basic ?

- **Non-income poverty**

« When you are an RSA beneficiary, you are only half living. Everything becomes complicated, particularly when you live in a rural area ». Patrick Blin, service user, during the EAPN conference 30 June 2014

The poverty line in France is set at 60% of median income. This level is simply a way of identifying who is considered to be at risk of living in poverty. However, it is important to look at what citizens need in order to be fully integrated into society. At the time of writing, EAPN is awaiting the results of a government study currently underway into the “reference budget”, expected to be published in 2014. The study will involve consultation with a panel of citizens to determine a ‘reference budget for full participation in society’, based on a basket of products and services. Determining a reference budget would be useful in so far as it takes into account the need for social inclusion. This need can only be properly assessed through a fully participative process where people themselves identify their own needs.

Rec.  
EAPN  
France

**Index-link the RSA to the reference budget**, calculated using a citizen-centred participatory approach.

The reference budget reflects what citizens consider to be an income that allows to participate fully in society, so takes into account notions of social cohesion and inclusion and not just monetary poverty.

It is particularly important to take into account social inclusion given that many beneficiaries of the RSA are socially isolated, lacking regular contact with friends, family and neighbours.

### 3.3. Adequate advice, guidance and support

« Distinguishing between social support and employment support causes compartmentalization. Its, in some senses, a backwards step for the world of social work », Philippe Villetorte, Gironde Local Council, during the EAPN conference 30 June 2014

When beneficiaries access the RSA they also have the opportunity to receive individualized support (social and/or employment) provided by a single case worker. Some beneficiaries feel this support is in fact an obligation, even an imposition. However, most people in the “rights and obligations” category (explained above) do not expect much from this support.<sup>67</sup> In practice, at the end of 2011, only 52% of RSA beneficiaries in the “rights and obligations” category were supported by a named case worker, and 23% were receiving no such support at all.<sup>68</sup> This situation underlines the lack of clarity regarding the role of a case worker as well as poor coordination of support at a local level. This situation persists in spite of the fact that public agencies have a legal obligation to provide such support.

Rec.  
EAPN  
France

**Provide social and employment support that can be accessed voluntarily** by those RSA beneficiaires who wish to be supported, rather than as an obligation for all recipients of the benefit. This would imply removing the "access to work contracts".

« The right to case work support is first and foremost the right to an assessment, one that is multifaceted and doesn't just focus on employability. It's also the right to a personalised plan»  
Christophe Sirugue, Member of French Parliament during the EAPN conference, 30 juin 2014.

Rec.  
EAPN  
France

#### **Provide a more precise definition of the named case worker**

Case workers need to be multi-skilled in order to provide tailored social and employment support. Therefore, we need to tailor training courses and the professional toolkit to their needs.

From the point of view of many social workers, case work support has become difficult given the high case loads, the diversity of peoples' needs, and the technical knowledge they need to acquire on a range of social issues. A changing socio-economic context adds another layer of complexity. Given these pressures, we might ask “what place is there for outreach?”

« The quality of services has obviously gone down as caseloads have increased and funding has stagnated » an employee of a local council, during the EAPN conference, 30 juin 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Alberola, Elodie, Léopold Gilles, and Florence Tith. *Les Effets Du RSA Peu Perceptibles Par Les Bénéficiaires*. Consommation et modes de vie. Centre de recherche pour l'étude et l'observation des conditions de vie, Avril 2012. <http://www.credoc.fr/pdf/4p/250.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> *L'accompagnement Des Bénéficiaires Du Revenu de Solidarité Active (RSA)*. Dares Analyse. Dares, Février 2013. <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2013-008.pdf>.

Support for migrants is inadequate. Migrants lack the help they need to access social services, in particular because they face a language barrier.

Rec.  
EAPN France

**Develop processes that facilitate better coordination of support** and shorter waiting times for access to support.

**Improve links between support workers at a local level** in order to add a group aspect to the assessment and support of beneficiaries.

**Improve our understanding of beneficiaries' support needs and expectations**

**Provide translation services** for those with an insufficient knowledge of the french language. This should speed up the process of integration and generate savings on the costs (financial, social and time) generated by a lack of understanding."

*« We must continue to receive support, otherwise we get further and further from the system, we need this contact to be reassuring not about inspection; but beneficiaries have to be conscience of the need for a bit of monitoring » Patrick Blin, service user, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.*

*« We need a rethink of the employment and social support provided to beneficiaries » Pascal FROUDIERE, Ministry of Social Cohesion, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.*



## 4. Active Inclusion policy

### 4.1. Link with inclusive labour markets

- **The quality of jobs accessed by RSA beneficiaries**

*« In-work support often comes as an afterthought, because there are too many other things to sort out first», a service user, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.*

The RSA basic has a low “exit rate” in so far as 69% of people who were beneficiaries of the benefit in January 2010 were still receiving it in December of the same year. In this time, only 15% of beneficiaries had stopped receiving the benefit without first accessing the RSA activity.<sup>69</sup>

The RSA activity seems, in some ways, to be based on a false assumption that people need an additional financial incentive to return to work. In practice, this may not be people’s main motivation, often closely linked with the symbolic value of work.

In December 2010, almost 1.3 million women (57%) and more than 970,000 men receive the RSA. Their level of economic activity is heavily influenced by their family set up. Whilst most RSA beneficiaries are unemployed, women living in a couple are more likely than average to be unemployed. Indeed, the majority of couples who receive the RSA activity follow a “single male bread-winner” model. Of those couples who receive only the RSA activity 78% have a single breadwinner, in 61% of couples this is a man in full-time work. Couples receiving both the RSA basic and activity are more likely to have a single salary (88%) and work part-time (55%).

Women who live alone often accumulate multiple jobs. Indeed, they have on average five times more different employers than single men who receive the RSA. These women are also more likely to work part time. For these women, access to childcare is a major barrier to making a successful return to work.<sup>70</sup>

Recommendation  
of the  
gouvernement's  
Five-year Anti-  
Poverty Strategy

**Set an objective for the proportion of training funding** allocated to low-skilled workers

**Put in place measures to ensure childcare** allows parents to attend training, in particular for single mothers

**Collect statistics on the uptake of vocational training** undertaken by RSA beneficiaries

**At a local level, put in place a training plan**, agreed with partners, in order to significantly increase the rate of access to training by job seekers. At a regional level, develop "Pacts for the educational and professional success of young people".

<sup>69</sup> Gomel, Bernard, Dominique Méda, and Évelyne Serverin. “Le Pari Perdu de La Réduction de La Pauvreté Par Le RSA.” *Centre d’Etude de l’Emploi*, no. 105 (Juin 2013).

<sup>70</sup> *Revenu de Solidarité Active Des Hommes et Des Femmes : Des Caractéristiques D’emploi Différenciées*. L’essentiel. Caisse nationale d’allocations familiales, avril 2014.

[http://www.caf.fr/sites/default/files/cnaf/Documents/Dser/essentiel/essentiel\\_-\\_genre\\_RSA\\_ESSENTIEL.pdf](http://www.caf.fr/sites/default/files/cnaf/Documents/Dser/essentiel/essentiel_-_genre_RSA_ESSENTIEL.pdf)

- **Supported contracts**

State-subsidized contracts – that we have called “supported contracts” – are not a sufficient solution to the employment problems created by the economic crisis. The original recruitment targets have not been met. The legal requirements in terms of in-work support and training are rarely respected for those people recruited. Too often, supported contracts are state aid for the employer rather than for the job seeker recruited.

Recommendation of the government's Five-year Anti-Poverty Strategy

**Expérimenter un réseau de parrainage** de bénévoles en appui aux demandeurs d’emploi

**Améliorer l’articulation entre accompagnement social et professionnel** et la coordination entre Pôle emploi et les Conseils généraux

**Analyser les problématiques de mobilité** des travailleurs pauvres et identifier des pistes d’actions

Indeed, many RSA beneficiaries rely mainly on supported contracts, at the expense of more stable, long-term employment. Supported contracts are too often used to « soak up » people who are unemployed at times of economic crisis.

Rec. EAPN France

**Strengthen the vocational training offer**, in particular in partnership with regional councils.

- **Sheltered employment schemes**

*« Service providers in the sheltered employment sector are themselves at risk. This explains their shortcomings when it comes to providing case work support » Civil servant from a local public agency, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.*

Rec. EAPN France

**Build stronger links** between sheltered employment schemes and the competitive labour market.

In December 2013, changes were introduced to the funding mechanism of sheltered employment schemes. As a result, service providers are funded differently depending on the administrative category of the person. This in turn leads to “creaming” and “parking” on a financial basis, with little regard for the human implications.

- **Access to work for young people**

In 2013, the unemployment rate of young people was 22.7%, significantly higher than the national average of 9.7% (Insee, employment survey, 2014). Young people also have low rates of access to the labour market: around 28% of young people in “Social integration contracts” gained employment in 2010 (Frazier et Marlier, 2013).

At the end of 2013, the French government set up a pilot test of the “Youth Guarantee”, aimed at 18-25 year olds not in education, employment and training, and living in social exclusion. The project aims to provide intensive employment support to these young people, combined with a financial benefit of an amount equivalent to the RSA for periods of unemployment and training. Ten sites are taking part in the first phase of the pilot test. The project is led at a local level by “Missions Locales” - local youth services that provide employment support to young people in difficulty. The pilot test will end on 31 December 2015.

Rec.  
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France

**Undertake regular evaluations of the impact of the Youth Guarantee pilot test**, sharing findings and adapting the approach taken by the pilot sites to reflect these findings

#### 4.2. Access to quality services and benefits

« The transition from RSA basic to RSA activity is difficult, and sometimes not automatic. From one day to the next : it just stops », Richard Delplanque, service user, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.

A number of problems have been observed with the transition from the RSA to other welfare benefits or state aids.

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France

**Smooth transitions between benefits** by ensuring the coordination between the RSA and other welfare benefits and settle interaction between system to **automatized payments**

However, it is important to remember that people need not only an income, but also quality services. By this we don't just mean employment services, but the full range of public services required for them to participate fully in society : health, education, housing etc.

Indeed, a person's economic inclusion is deeply linked with a person's broader integration into society, so it is important not to neglect this wider perspective. Once again the idea of a “basket of goods and services” mentioned above could be a useful approach for defining the services they require (culture for instance...)

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France

**Public agencies must prepare for legislative and regulatory changes being - or about to be - introduced** to ensure a better coordination of welfare benefits (amongst other changes, the reform of the Access to work grant, of sheltered employment schemes, and the RSA activity / Return to work bonus, as well as the the introduction of the "Youth Guarantee" and changes to the European Social Fund).

### 4.3. Local governance and partnership working

« Its better coordination at a local level that is missing, much more than funding », Christophe Sirugue, Member of French Parliament, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.

- **Local inclusion strategies and local inclusion pacts**

« Social partners [french term for trade unions and CEO umbrella bodies] need to get involved » Gilles DUCASSE, deputy chief executive of Emmaüs France [a homelessness charity]

Local inclusion pacts (LIP) vary both in the way they are prepared and in the precise form of the final document. This is because the legislation that introduced LIP remained relatively vague, allowing local councils significant flexibility in the way they developed and implemented their LIP. A number of aspects of these LIPs vary between local areas: their lifespan, the priority thematic areas, and the target groups. The partnership approach adopted can also vary between pacts, both in terms of the signatories of the final agreement, and the format of the document. Finally, the LIP can be interpreted either as a “definition of intent” defining the key strategic issues,

Préco EAPN France

**Reorganise local governance of inclusion services so that the local council works more at a community level**, for instance by setting up Inclusion forums involving beneficiaries. These forums should **focus on beneficiaries’ needs** with the aim of adapting the service offer to these needs. Meetings between the elected leader of the council and such forums could help ensure councils take beneficiaries’ points of view into account. Regular evaluation of services could also ensure beneficiaries needs come first in decisions about how to improve service..

EAPN France

Try to ensure greater **coherence between the objectives of the various public sector strategies and action plans at a local level.**

or as a document that translates these issues into a practical plan of action.

- **Decentralisation and inclusion policy**

« The policy, legal and funding framework is national, this makes it much harder for local partners to work together », a conference attendee, employee of a local council, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014

The RSA was preceded by a welfare benefit called the “revenu minimum d’insertion” (RMI), or minimum inclusion income. When the RMI was devolved from the state to local councils in 2003, the requirement to allocate a fixed proportion of funding to inclusion

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**Ensure inclusion services are funded by making it mandatory for local councils to set aside a percentage of their budget for such services and also for all co-funders of inclusion services.**

services was removed – prior to this it had been 17 % of spending on welfare benefit transfers.

Some councils have been forced, as a result of the shortfall in their budgets and the economic crisis, to discontinue certain inclusion services. This throws up questions about councils' ability to influence the situation in their area.

*« There needs to be a better coordination with housing benefits » Pascal FROUDIERE, Ministry of Social Cohesion, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014*

Rec  
EAPN  
France

**Organise dialogue between structures who have funds (subsiders) at the scale of a territory**, for instance under the shape of local Council in order to record actions about resources and precarity issues, and not about publics.

Conference  
proposal

Do we need to stop "sprinkling" a fragmented array of welfare benefits ?

- **The participation of service users**

*« You don't shout "I get the RSA" at the top of your lungs, because of the stigma associated. What you could do to combat that is to make ourselves more visible and have places we can meet » Patrick Blin, service user, during the EAPN conference, 30 June 2014.*

People who are living in poverty, or beneficiaries of welfare benefits, are not sufficiently involved in the development and improvement of social inclusion policy and practice at a local level. There are still huge disparities between the practices of different local councils, both regarding the creation of 'consultation groups', and the adoption of recommendations produced by these groups.

Rec.  
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France

**Create a legal framework clarifying the role of service persons experienced precarity (PeP)** in the process of designing and implementing inclusion services

**Strengthen and promote** the participation of service users in RSA governance and decision-making bodies, either in a group or individually.

## 5. Annexes

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## 5.2. List of contributions and mains changes

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| v3.0 | Anne Van Lancker,<br>Ramon Pena-Casas,   | EMIN<br>ANSA<br>Les petits frères<br>des pauvres /<br>membre ONPES   | <b>v3.0_30/4/2014 : report sent to EMIN : Anne Van Lancker et Ramon Penacasas (OSE) and to EAPN France</b><br>See detailed about modifications in the french version | <a href="mailto:penacasas@ose.be">penacasas@ose.be</a><br><a href="mailto:anne.vanlancker@telenet.be">anne.vanlancker@telenet.be</a>   |
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| V5.0 | Christophe Sirugue<br>Philippe Villetorte<br>Marc de Basquiat<br>Nicolas Duvoux<br>Patrick Blin<br>Diane Dalvard<br>Bruno Groues<br>Christophe Paquette<br>Bruno RENE-BAZIN<br>Sylvie Hanocq,<br>Claire-Selma Aitout | Assemblée<br>nationale<br>Conseil général de<br>Gironde<br>Mouvement<br>Français pour un<br>revenu de base<br>Sociologue<br>Personne usager<br>Ansa<br>UNIOPSS | 30/6/2014 : Version circulated to EAPN France and broadly for the Conference<br>See detailed about modifications in the french version                               | <a href="mailto:csirugue@assemblee-nationale.fr">csirugue@assemblee-nationale.fr</a><br><a href="mailto:p.villetorte@cg33.fr">p.villetorte@cg33.fr</a><br><a href="mailto:marc@de-basquiat.com">marc@de-basquiat.com</a><br><a href="mailto:nicolas.duvoux@parisdescartes.fr">nicolas.duvoux@parisdescartes.fr</a><br><a href="mailto:patrick.blin16@sfr.fr">patrick.blin16@sfr.fr</a><br><br><a href="mailto:diane.dalvard@solidarites-actives.com">diane.dalvard@solidarites-actives.com</a><br><a href="mailto:bgroues@uniopss.asso.fr">bgroues@uniopss.asso.fr</a><br><a href="mailto:cpaquette@cg06.fr">cpaquette@cg06.fr</a><br><a href="mailto:renebazin.bruno@wanadoo.fr">renebazin.bruno@wanadoo.fr</a> |

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| V6.0 | Sylvie Hanocq<br>Ben Rickey<br>Claire-Selma Aitout | Ansa   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Version traduite en anglais</b></li> <li>- <b>version to be diffused to the European Commission . Final version will be the one included feed back from EC</b> (end 2014/ beginning 2015)</li> <li>- version available on <a href="http://www.solidarites-actives.com/#_TYPE_EVENEMENTS">http://www.solidarites-actives.com/#_TYPE_EVENEMENTS</a></li> </ul> <p>version for french roadmap</p> <p>v6.1 : slight changes in recommendations boxes (<i>in italic below</i>)</p> <p>§4.2 « Smooth transitions between benefits by ensuring the coordination between the RSA and other welfare benefits <i>and settle interaction between system to automatized payments</i></p> <p>§4.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- « Ensure inclusion services are funded by making it mandatory for local councils to set aside a percentage of their budget for such services <i>and also for all co-funders of inclusion services.</i> »</li> <li>- « Organise dialogue between structures who have funds (subsiders) at the scale of a territory, for instance under the shape of local Council in order to record actions about resources and precarity issues, and not about publics »</li> <li>- « Strengthen and promote the participation of service users in RSA governance and decision-making bodies, either in a group or individually. »</li> </ul> | <a href="mailto:sylvie.hanocq@solidarites-actives.com">sylvie.hanocq@solidarites-actives.com</a><br>ben.rickey@solidarites-actives.com<br><a href="mailto:selmaclaire.aitout@solidarites-actives.com">selmaclaire.aitout@solidarites-actives.com</a> |

## 5.3. Comments of European Commission and answers from EAPN France (november 2014) in french

| Remarques en lien avec la numérotation  | Commentaires de la Commission 5/11/2014   | Réponses EAPN France 13/11/2014   |
|---|---|---|
| §1.6 page 10 : “durée – ajustements et revisions “: il y a une question de clarification  | [Commentaire ADG1] Est-ce les points que ce rapport demande de supprimer dans sa préconisation numéro 6?  | [Commentaire SH2] : Si la Remarque est de faire le lien avec la préconisation du §3.3 “ <b>Proposer un accompagnement socioprofessionnel non contraignant pour les allocataires du RSA sur la base de leur volonté à être accompagné, et non liée à l’allocation. Cela supposerait donc la suppression des « contrats d’insertion ».</b> c’est en effet en partie correct : EAPN demande que l’accompagnement et la suspension de l’allocation RSA soit décorellés. Je ne change rien ici puisque les §1 et 2 sont descriptifs et 3 et 4 sont les préconisations. Rmq : les N° de préconisations auxquels l’UE fait référence n’ont pas l’air de correspondre aux N° de préco que nous avons mis dans la roadmap France   |
| §2.1 page 13 il y a une suggestion de changement, pour laquelle on demande votre accord.  | [Commentaire ADG2] L’objectif 2 du RSA est d’encourager l’exercice ou le retour à une activité professionnelle. Je supprimerai donc le terme "indirectement   | [Commentaire SH3] : OK, j’enlève aussi “directement”  |
| §2.1 page 13 : la CE fait un commentaire concernant la suggestion d’accompagnement general.   | [Commentaire ADG3] Voir l’idée d’un seul point d’entrée : one stop shop du paquet d’investissement social européen  | [Commentaire SH6] C’est peut-être une bonne idée mais ce n’est pas encore tout à fait cela en France. Je ne change rien ici puisque les §1 et 2 sont descriptifs et les §3 et 4 sont les préconisations. Ajouter cette préconisation à ce stade nécessiterait de refaire un tour de piste de tous les acteurs consultés depuis le printemps. A garder en tête pour la suite.  |
| §4 page 29 : il y a une remarque de fond: la CE trouve qu’il y a contradiction entre le plaidoyer pour la participation individuelle et celui de laisser tranquille les personnes qui ne souhaitent pas être suivi.   | [Commentaire ADG5] Promouvoir la participation individuelle tout en proposant qu’on laisse tranquille les personnes qui ne souhaitent pas être suivies (voir préconisation 6.1.) Il existe une vraie contradiction entre les deux préconisations. Le suivi individuel me semble un élément clé à conserver. | [Commentaire SH6] Ce sont deux choses différentes :<br>§3.3 L’accompagnement des personnes qui devrait offert à la fois individuellement et /ou collectivement selon les besoins de la personne et pour lequel il demandé qu’il soit non contraignant, car actuellement peut être considéré dans certains cas comme une clause suspensive de l’allocation (cf §1.6 “durée : ajustements et revisions”<br>§4.3 La participation des personnes concernées à la construction des politiques publiques qui est l’objet de cette préconisation n’est absolument pas liée au besoin d’un accompagnement : il s’agit que les usagers d’un dispositif soient a minima consultés voire associés à la construction. Dans ces cas là, cette participation peut prendre la forme d’un groupe / d’un collectif qui s’exprime et travaille sur un sujet ou alors individuellement ainsi que c’est le cas par exemple de bénéficiaires du RSA qui sont présents dans les équipes pluridisciplinaires du RSA ainsi que demandé dans la loi.<br>Rmq : les N° de préconisations auxquels l’UE fait référence n’ont pas l’air de correspondre aux N° de préconisations que nous avons mis dans la roadmap France |
| §3.1 page 19 [Commentaire ADG4] et mail du 13/11/2104 : L’UE ne va pas faire des commentaires sur les roadmaps car celles-ci sont adaptées au public que le réseau rencontre dans différentes circonstances et exprime plus l’opinion du réseau. L’objectif est de ne publier qu’un rapport par pays. |   |   |