



National Poverty Report 2021

EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK (EAPN) France

Poverty Watch Report (English version) – France



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I. Overview

EAPN is a European network dedicated to the fight against poverty which was created in 1990 under the presidency of Jacques Delors, then President of the European Commission. The network comprises 31 national networks bringing together national, regional and local associations and 18 major European associations. Its task is to make the fight against poverty one of the priorities of the European Union and, in the long term, eradicate poverty and social exclusion. The participation of people in poverty is a major focus of its work.

EAPN France is the French branch of EAPN Europe. It brings together national and regional associations in the solidarity sector; some of these associations manage numerous social and medico-social establishments and structures. These regional associations and collectives contribute to the integration of the most vulnerable people through housing, employment, economic activity, language acquisition or leisure activities. UNIOPSS (National Interfederal Union of Private Health and Social Works and Organisations) is the founding organisation of the European Anti-Poverty Network – EAPN Europe and EAPN France.

The EAPN France network has four main objectives:

- 1) To recognise the possibility for people who are furthest from the labour market to return to work;
- 2) To recognise the right of the most vulnerable people to sufficient, stable and predictable resources through the existence of an adequate minimum income;
- 3) To recognise the right to quality social services for all, with support for the most vulnerable people;
- 4) To strengthen the voice of the poor and vulnerable in developing policies that concern them by devoting their 'expert' capacity in the field.

The current work of EAPN France focuses on implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, the access to sustainable food for all, the establishment of a European minimum income, the tackling of poor housing problems, access to education and culture and the link with other national EAPNs. Since the beginning of Mr Guy Janvier's Presidency in 2016, EAPN France has focused its mission on three specific themes: the right to sustainable food, minimum income, and people's participation in poverty.

The National Poverty Watch Report and 2021 Covid-19 Update are intended to provide an overview of poverty and social exclusion in France. This document can serve as a basis for the European Semester process and for monitoring the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The objectives are to identify developments and trends in poverty and highlight the main problems impacting people living in poverty and social exclusion. The report aims to identify the impact of national and European policies implemented to reduce poverty. The Poverty Watch is an instrument designed to propose concrete recommendations and raise public awareness and to enable the construction, and, in the long term, build a real social Europe.

II. Poverty: definitions, measures, data

1. What do we mean by poverty?

*'While everyone has an idea of what the word means, poverty remains, in the sociological context, a prenotation, i.e. a vague and latent idea to reflect a social reality. Its definition is therefore the subject of many debates, giving rise to different concepts.'*¹ If there is no consensus on the definition of poverty and it is difficult to find a satisfactory definition, it is because the concept is specific to a given time and society. According to the TLF dictionary, poverty is *'The state, the condition of a person who lacks resources, material means to lead a decent life'*. The European Council of December 1984 supplemented the latter by considering as poor, *'those persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so low that they are excluded from the minimum acceptable standards of living in society'*.² In order to understand the realities of life and to highlight the point of view of people living in poverty, Joseph Wresinski, at the Economic and Social Council in February 1987, proposed the following definition: *'The lack of basic security connotes the absence of one or more factors enabling individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. The situation may become widespread and result in more serious and permanent consequences. The lack of basic security leads to chronic poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people's lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people's chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future.'*³

In the European Union and in France, the monetary poverty is the most widely used approach to measure poverty. At Community level, Member States have adopted a calculation method based on relative criteria, known as the Laeken criteria in 2001. The poverty line is 60% of median income level. According to Eurostat, there are 72 million people living below this threshold in the EU of 27 in 2019, or 16.5% of the population. France's poverty rate is below the European average, with a rate of 13.6% in 2019 (Eurostat).

In France, according to the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), *'An individual (or a household) is considered poor when he lives in a household whose standard of living is below the poverty line.'* At national level, the threshold is the same as that of the EU (60%), but poverty rates are also published according to other thresholds (40%, 50%, 70%). In 2018, the median standard of living of the population in metropolitan France is €1 770 per month for a single person (INSEE). Indeed, the poverty line is €1 063 per month in 2018 (latest available data). This threshold has increased by €21 in four years. In 2018, 9.3 million people were living below the

¹ [In the French] Charbonnel, Jean-Michel. 'Point de repère. Définir et mesurer la pauvreté: un exercice délicat', *Informations sociales*, vol. 182, no. 2, 2014, p.1. | Jean-Michel Charbonnel, 'A benchmark. Defining and measuring poverty: a delicate exercise', *Social Information*, vol. 182, no. 2, 2014, p.1.

² [In the French] Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale, *Les Travaux de l'Observatoire 2000*, Chapitre 1, page 25. | National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion, *The Observatory's Work 2000*, Chapter 1, page 25.

³ [In the French] Joseph Wresinski, *Rapport Grande pauvreté et précarité économique et sociale*, Journal officiel de la République française, meetings of the Economic and Social Council, 10 and 11 February 1987. | Joseph Wresinski, *Report Extreme poverty and economic and social insecurity*, Official Journal of the French Republic, Economic and Social Council meetings of February 10 and 11, 1987.

poverty line. If we take the threshold at 50% of the median standard of living, €885 per month for a single person, there are 5.3 million poor people in France for the same year.

However, it should be noted that the monetary approach has its limitations. Indeed, it cannot account for poverty at a given time: if the median income increases faster than the income of the poor, then poverty increases. Moreover, it cannot reflect the situation of the poorest of the poor. This approach for calculating poverty is therefore insufficient and does not take into account, for example, disparities in charges and territorial inequalities. It is therefore necessary to use other indicators to better reflect reality. These indicators include: living conditions, access to rights, health, housing or culture and leisure.

Alternate approaches are therefore used. The approach to poverty in living conditions specifies the criteria that must be satisfied. According to INSEE, a person is poor in living conditions if he has at least 8 difficulties out of 27 grouped into four main dimensions: lack of resources, late payments, consumption restrictions and housing difficulties. It should be noted that the threshold of 8 deprivations is conventional and should not be interpreted as an absolute threshold of decent living. Also, the approach of absolute poverty is used, taking into account the goods and services essential to a dignified life (food, housing, clothing, etc.). In addition, the National Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion (ONPES) has established 'reference budgets' that correspond to what is needed to participate effectively in social life; or about €1 400 per person.

EAPN highlights the multidimensional nature of poverty. *'Multidimensional poverty deals with the experience and impact of poverty on the life course of individuals. Poverty results in many deprivations, not just a 'lack of money' – or other things – but also through experiences, opportunities, services and environments that others consider normal. These deprivations may include financial resources, access to quality education and health care, social integration, family support, housing and residence status. People in poverty may also suffer from stigmatisation, shame, discrimination, isolation and exclusion from social life, negative consequences of decisions taken lightly or in the short term, poorer mental and physical health and shorter life expectancy.'* This concept of multidimensional poverty is essential to recognise the broader psychological, social and cultural effects of poverty, as well as its economic effects and the fact that they are interdependent and cumulative.

The AROPE instrument – At Risk Of Poverty and Social Exclusion – is used at the European level by the European Commission to measure poverty. This is the indicator used to monitor whether reducing poverty included in the Europe 2020 Strategy is met. This 'multifactor' indicator combines the following criteria:

- 'At the risk of poverty' (the income poverty): measures the percentage of people living in a household with net disposable income (after social transfers) below 60% of the median standard of living.

- Severe material deprivation: refers to the inability to cover the expenses of at least 4 of the 9 goods/services considered necessary to have a decent standard of living (payment of the rent, water/electricity bills, heating, holidays, etc.).

- Low work intensity: corresponds to the share of persons living in a household with members of working age (18 to 59 years, except for students aged 18 to 24. Households composed only of

children, students under 25 and people over 60 are entirely excluded from the calculation of the indicator) who worked at less than 20% of their potential in the previous 12 months.

The 'AROPE' situation occurs when at least one of the three factors is met. Some people even combine all the factors.

2. The latest data on poverty in France

2.1 Trend analysis and deviations from Strategy 2020 goals:

As part of the 2020 Strategy's goal 'for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'⁴ to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by at least 20 million between 2008 and 2020, France committed to reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion by 1.9 million.

In 2008, the number of people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion in France was 11 150 000, or 18.5% of the population. In 2019, there were 11 120 000 people or 17.9% of the French population. Between 2008 and 2019, there was a reduction of 30 000 people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. France is, in fact, far from the initial goal.

Year	AROPE rate (people affected by at least 1 of the three criteria) in %.	AROPE (people affected by at least 1 of the three criteria) in millions	People at risk of poverty after social transfers (%)	People in severe material deprivation (%)	People aged 0 to 59 living in households with very low work intensity (%).
2008	18.5	11 150 000	12.5	5.4	8.8
2019	17.9	11 120 000	13.6	4.7	7.9

2.2 EU SILC key indicators (Survey on living conditions):

The following data highlights the most vulnerable groups, who suffer most from the three factors that make up the AROPE indicator – income poverty, severe material deprivation and low work intensity.

AROPE rate by gender:

	Men (in %)	Men (in thousands)	Women (in %)	Women (in thousands)
AROPE rate	17.3	5 184	18.5	5 936

Source: Eurostat, 2019, ILC_PEPS01.

⁴The Europe 2020 strategy, adopted in 2010, aims to achieve high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion in the 27 EU Member States (excluding Croatia which joined the EU in 2013) and consists of five main goals in the fields of employment, research and development, energy, education and the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Women (18.5%) are more likely to be in a situation of poverty and/or social exclusion than men (17.3%).

AROPE rate by age:

Age Group	AROPE rate (in %)	AROPE rate (in thousands)
Under 16 years	21.8	11,160
16–24 years	27	1,660
25–54 years	17.4	4,038
55 and over	13.6	2,851

Source: Eurostat, 2019, ILC_PEPS01.

The age groups that are most in an AROPE situation are the youngest: 21.8% of under 16 and 27% of 16–24 years old. This young population is composed of two main groups: children from low-income families and young adults. The AROPE rate is the highest for young adults (16–24 years) due to relatively high unemployment, low wages and job insecurity, but also because young people are excluded from minimum social security benefits, such as the Active Solidarity Income (*Revenu de Solidarité Active* – RSA).

AROPE rate by statutes:

Status	AROPE rate (in %)
Unemployed	59.3
Other inactive	42.7
Retirees	11.4
In employment	9.3

Source: Eurostat, 2019, ILC_PEPS02.

The AROPE rate for the unemployed (59.3%) is about 6.4 times higher than for the employed population (9.3%). Similarly, for the ‘other inactive’ population category (42.7%), the AROPE rate is significantly higher than those in employment: 4.6 times higher.

In 2019, there were 2.5 million unemployed in France (INSEE), or 8% of the working population. For the same year, 1.6 million people were willing to work but discouraged (given the complicated labour market situation). They were therefore not counted as unemployed but as ‘inactive’.⁵ These discouraged people are, for example, single mothers with no childcare facilities or low-skilled adults who give up when faced with the type of job and the remuneration they receive. (Report of inequalities in France, 2021 edition, Inequality Observatory.)

Regarding the situation of young people, in 2019, 18.4% of 20–24-year-olds were unemployed and 11.4% of 25–29-year-olds (INSEE). According to INSEE, the under-30s accounted for 36.5% of all unemployed people for the same year. Young people are the most vulnerable population in the labour market and are most at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, especially when low qualification level.

⁵[In the French] Observatoire des inégalités, (2021), Rapport des inégalités en France, édition 2021 | Inequality Observatory (2021), Report on inequalities in France, 2021 edition.

At the end of 2020, an additional 270,000 jobseekers were registered by the French national employment agency (*Pôle Emploi*), representing an 8% increase in unemployment over the year and an 8.8% increase in unemployment over the year young people (under 25 years). For the first quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate is almost stable (+0.1 point). It is 0.3 points above its level of a year ago, regaining its end 2019 before the health crisis. In Q1 2021, the unemployment rate increased for the 15–24-year-olds (+1.2 points), is almost stable for the 25–49-year-olds (+0.1 points) and even decreased for those aged 50 and over (-0.3 points).⁶ The health crisis has thus destroyed a certain number of jobs with strong sectoral differentiation (more than three quarters of the losses concern the commercial tertiary sector, notably the sectors most affected by the activity restriction measures, such as accommodation, catering or household services) and geographical differentiation (Île-de-France and the regional metropolises were the most affected).

However, it is important to take a step back from these data. Indeed, these figures only measure the ‘official effect’ of job losses for employees. They, therefore, do not include people discouraged from seeking work, self-employed people whose activity was stopped by the pandemic and informal jobs (undeclared ‘odd jobs’), for which they are not entitled to unemployment benefits.

Focus: Bad employment (*mal-emploi*) rate in France

	Number in thousands	In %
Bad employment	7,700	25
—Precarious workers	3,600	11
—Unemployed	2,500	8
—Inactive people willing to work	1,600	5
—Active and inactive people willing to work	31,300	100

Bad employment includes the unemployed, the precarious (fixed-term contracts, temporary work, work-study) and the inactive wishing to work.

Reference: 7.7 million people are in a situation of bad employment.

Source: inequality Observatory calculations according to INSEE – Data 2019

At-risk-of-poverty rate at work by type of employment contract:

Type of employment contracts	At-risk-of-poverty rate in work (%)
Full-time	5.5
Part-time	15.5

Source: Eurostat, 2019, ILC_IW07.

Part-time workers (15.5%) are about 2.8 times more at risk of poverty than full-time workers (5.5%). At the end of 2020, more than 2 million people were in partial employment, most of them were women (INSEE).

⁶Unemployment, according to the ILO and labour market indicators (employment survey results) – First Quarter 2021. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS AND ECONOMICAL STUDIES (INSEE)

At-risk-of-poverty rates by age and gender:

	At-risk-of-poverty rate in work (%)				
Age	16 to 19 years	18 to 24 years	25 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 and over
Man	9.8	6.8	7.7	6.8	1.7
Woman	39.9	8.6	7.4	7.1	7.3
Total M & W	21.8	7.6	7.5	6.9	4.5

Source: Eurostat, 2019, ILC_IW01.

The group most affected by the risk of poverty at work are young women aged 16 to 19 (39.9% compared to 9.8% of men of the same age, i.e. four times higher risk for women). For those aged 65 and over, women (7.3%) are 4.3 times more at risk of in-work poverty than men (1.7%). In general, women are at the highest risk of in-work poverty. For 2019, France had 3.6 million precarious workers: mainly people in temporary or fixed-term contracts. According to the calculations of the Inequality Observatory, the number of people in ‘bad employment’⁷ can be estimated at 7.7 million in total in 2019.

AROPE rate per level of education attained:

Educational attainment (population aged 18 and over)	AROPE rate (in %)
Low (below primary education, primary and lower secondary education)	25.2
Medium (upper secondary education and post-secondary non-tertiary education)	16.2
High (higher education)	8.8

Source: Eurostat, 2019, ILC_PEPS04.

In the French labour market, the level of education is very important for accessing a job. The least qualified people (mostly from working-class backgrounds and often women) face a particularly complex professional integration process, leading them to be rejected from employment or to occupy precarious positions.⁸ The AROPE rate for people with a low level of education (cf. figure ‘AROPE rate per attained education level’) is 25.2% compared to 8.8% for people with a high level of education (higher education). Some sectors are big providers of precarious contracts, including service occupations such as medico-psychological support for the elderly or disabled (the poverty rate is highest for these occupations: 55.5%⁹). The so-called precarious jobs (low wages, difficult working conditions, flexible hours/part-time) are mainly low-skilled service jobs (held mainly by women) and industrial jobs. Young people are also represented mainly in precarious employment: in 2019, 52.7%

⁷The ‘Bad employment’ includes the unemployed, precarious employees and people who wish to work but who are not counted as unemployed by INSEE. Not included in the ‘bad employment’ are people in part-time jobs to avoid duplication, as a person can be both part-time and on a precarious contract, as well as self-employed workers without a permanent contract, who, especially the least qualified, work a lot for very low pay (Report on inequalities in France, 2021 edition, Inequality Observatory).

⁸Centre d’observation de la société.

⁹Inequality Observatory calculations according to INSEE – Data 2019

of young workers aged 15–24 had a precarious contract. By comparison, in 10 years, this share has increased by 5.7 points.¹⁰

Gender Pay Inequalities

The average pay gap between women (€2 118 net per month) and men (€2 547 net per month), in 'full-time equivalent',¹¹ is €429 less every month for women, or 16.8% less (INSEE, 2017). This gap increases when comparing all working times¹²: women (€1 515 net per month) earn on average €453 less per month, or 23% less than men (€1 968 net per month). Gender inequalities in terms of employment are linked in particular to the orientation of women towards fields leading to the least valued and lowest-paid sectors, the fact that women have less access to positions of responsibility or the fact that women are predominantly represented in part-time contracts. Furthermore, when all the factors that can affect wages are removed, a gap remains that cannot be explained. It can then be interpreted as gender discrimination only.

The impact of the Covid crisis on job insecurity:

As the data are still provisional and incomplete, it is currently difficult to measure the impact of the Covid crisis on the labour market and job insecurity. Indeed, the decline in economic activity has resulted in a decrease in the number of precarious workers due to the termination of short contracts (temporary and fixed-term contracts).¹³ Therefore, it is necessary to wait a few months before knowing the real impact of the Covid crisis.

AROPE rate by household composition:

Type of household	AROPE rate (in %) 2019
One single adult without dependent children	23.7
One single adult with dependent children	41
Two adults without dependent children	10.8
Two adults with dependent children	16.4

Source: Eurostat, ILC_PEPS03.

According to INSEE, in France in 2019, single-parent families (one parent living alone with children) accounted for nearly a quarter of families with children. In the vast majority of these families (80% of the cases), the mothers live with their children, according to the 2016 ERFS (INSEE's Tax and Social Income Survey). Of these women, 55% have one dependent child, one third have two children, and about 10% have three or more children (ERFS Tax and Social Incomes Survey - 2026). The AROPE rate in 2019 for single parents with dependent children (41%) is 2.5 times higher than for families with two adults with dependent children (16.4%).

Single-parent families are more likely to be poor because they have fewer financial resources and are exposed to a higher risk of unemployment than couple families with children (Acs, et al., 2015). Single

¹⁰ INSEE.

¹¹ Comparison of wages on the basis of 35 weekly hours, thus cancelling out the effect of part-time work and overtime.

¹² These wage incomes are calculated on the basis of all employees (full-time, part-time or intermittent).

¹³ French Inequality Observatory.

parents with children are often dependent on maintenance payments, which can represent a significant amount of their financial resources and are not always paid (Lardeux, 2021). Single-parent families face other issues, including reconciling work and family life (Nicolas and Tomasini, 2008). For example, when a single parent of a child under three years of age is working, the possibility of using paid childcare is less frequent than for a two-working couple: 65% versus 79% (High Council for Families, Children and Seniors – *Haut Conseil de la Famille, de l'Enfance et de l'Âge*, 2018).

2.3 Other national data:

Immigrant poverty rate:

	The poverty rate in % (at 60% of the median income)	Number of poor (in thousands)
Immigrants born in Africa	39.5	1 060
Immigrants born in Europe	17.6	359
Immigrants born on another continent or stateless	35	345
Immigrants (total)	30.7	1 780

Field: Metropolitan France, persons living in a household with positive or zero declared income and whose reference person is not a student.

Sources: Insee-DGFiP-Cnaf-CCMSA, (*enquête Revenus fiscaux et sociaux*) Tax and Social Income Survey 2018.

Of the total French population, immigrants represent about 10% or 6.5 million people. At 60% of median living income, there are more than 1.7 million poor immigrants or 19.1% of all poor people in 2018. The poverty rate of all immigrants (all nationalities) is 30.7% in 2018. When this rate is compared to the national average of 14.8% in 2018 (INSEE), we see that immigrants are twice as poor.

There are many reasons; household size, but above all, the low level of qualification of this population (40% of immigrants aged 15 to 64 have a college certificate or a primary school certificate), which leads to lower wages and a higher level of unemployment. There are 59% of immigrants who are employees or workers, compared to 46% of non-immigrants¹⁴. The unemployment rate for immigrants was 13.6% in 2019 against 7.8% for people born in France (INSEE, 2019). This rate reaches 16% for professionally active persons born outside the European Union. However, the unemployment rate of the population can only be explained by the low level of qualification. Indeed, other factors explain this, such as the language barrier for recent arrivals or that immigrants who do not have French nationality or are not from the EU are excluded from 5.4 million jobs, i.e. one in five jobs in France. Finally, immigrant populations face discrimination in the labour market.

Poverty rate by region and overseas departments:

Regions	The poverty rate in % (2018)
Paris Region (ÎLE-DE-FRANCE)	15.6
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region	12.7
Brittany	10.9
Pays de la Loire	10.8

¹⁴Observatoire des inégalités, (2021), Rapport sur les inégalités en France, Edition 2021. | Inequality Observatory (2021), Report on Inequality in France, 2021 edition.

Grand Est	14.8
Centre-Loire Valley	13.1
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	12.9
Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur	17.3
Nouvelle-Aquitaine	13.6
Normandy	13.5
Occitania	17.2
Corsica	18.5
Hauts-de-France	18
Martinique	29.8
Réunion	38.9
Metropolitan France, Martinique and La Réunion	15.1
Guadeloupe	34.5
French Guiana	52.9
Mayotte	77.3

Interpretation: in 2018, half of the poor people living in the Île-de-France have a standard of living that is 22.6% lower than the national poverty line.

Field: Metropolitan France, Martinique and La Réunion, tax households (excluding collective housing and homeless) whose disposable income is positive or zero.

Sources: [In the French] Insee-DGFiP-Cnaf-Cnav-CCMSA, *Fichier localisé social et fiscal 2018* ; INSEE, *Budget de famille 2017 (pour la Guadeloupe, la Guyane et Mayotte)* | Insee-DGFiP-Cnaf-Cnav-CCMSA, *Social and fiscal localised file 2018*; Insee, *Family Budget 2017 (for Guadeloupe, French Guiana and Mayotte)*.

The territories most affected by poverty are the French overseas territories (Mayotte, French Guiana, Reunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique), where the poverty rate is significantly higher than in metropolitan France. By way of comparison, the poverty rate in Mayotte (77.3%) is 4.1 times higher than in Corsica, the region of metropolitan France with the highest rate. In contrast, the poverty rate in Martinique (29.8%, the lowest in the overseas territories) is about 2.7 times higher than in the Pays de la Loire or Brittany region, which are the metropolitan regions with the lowest poverty rates. The Hauts-de-France, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Occitania and Île-de-France regions also have particularly high poverty rates, which are above the average for metropolitan France, Martinique and La Réunion (15.1%).

Evolution of the number of beneficiaries of social allowances in 2021:

The number of beneficiaries of the majority of solidarity allowances rose sharply in 2020 due to the Covid crisis. Since the autumn of 2020, the number of workers has stabilised and has fallen slightly since early 2021.¹⁵

- **Beneficiaries of the active solidarity income (RSA – *Revenu de Solidarité Active*)¹⁶:**

¹⁵Drees (2021), Monthly monitoring of solidarity benefits during the health crisis – June 2021 edition.

¹⁶**The Active Solidarity Income (RSA)** is intended for anyone who is at least 25 years or taking care of at least one child, born or unborn. The RSA is a differential allowance that supplements the household's resources to meet the threshold of a guaranteed income, or lump sum, whose scale varies according to family composition. The RSA can be conditionally increased (RSA increased). This increase is granted temporarily, without age conditions, to a single parent who is responsible for one or more children or to a single pregnant woman (Drees).

According to the latest available data from April 2021¹⁷, 1.96 million households are benefiting from the RSA. There was a decrease of 0.5% compared to April 2020. The number of RSA beneficiaries is gradually returning to its pre-crisis level of 1.93 million in February 2020. Year-on-year growth¹⁸ in RSA numbers increased until August 2020 (2 056 100 beneficiaries), with the largest increase recorded (+8.6%) due to the worsening economic situation and the maintenance of entitlements during this period. The growth in the number of recipients continued to increase but more slowly in October (2 068 400 recipients) and November (2 073 700 recipients) and then decreased for the first time since the crisis in December 2020 (2 059 200 recipients). As a result, the number of beneficiaries is steadily decreasing: - 96,800 in total between the end of December 2020 and April 2021, a decrease of 4.7% (DREES, June 2021).

- **The beneficiaries of the specific solidarity allowance (ASS)¹⁹:**

Between March 2020 and March 2021 (latest available data²⁰), the number of recipients decreased by 5.7%, from 349 700 to 329 700. The number of ASS recipients increased significantly between May and September 2020 (+11.2%) and then gradually decreased until March 2021 (-13.2% between September 2020 and March 2021). This decrease in the number of ASS recipients can be explained by government measures to extend unemployment benefit entitlements during the second lockdown (Drees, June 2021).

- **The beneficiaries of the Youth Guarantee²¹:**

At the end of March 2021, 99 400 young people benefited from the Youth Guarantee (latest data available), compared to 86 800 in March 2020, an increase of 14.6% in one year. In March 2021, the scheme is at its highest level since its generalisation in 2017. Concerning the initial entries in the scheme, in March 2021, the number dramatically exceeds that of a year ago (13 300 against 6 300). This is particularly due to the first lockdown, which led to a decline in entry in March 2020 (Drees, June 2021).

¹⁷It should be noted, however, that data for the months of December 2020 to April 2021 are provisional and therefore subject to revision in the coming months.

¹⁸The Year-Over-Year growth of one month m is the rate of growth between the number of employees in the month $m-12$ and that in – the month m .

¹⁹ **The specific solidarity allowance (ASS)** is an allowance for jobseekers who have exhausted their rights to unemployment insurance and who can prove that they have at least five years of paid employment in the last ten years preceding the termination of their employment contract. The ASS beneficiaries are the beneficiaries who are compensated on the last day of each month (Drees).

²⁰Again, the data for November 2020 to March 2021 are provisional and are therefore likely to be revised in the coming months.

²¹**The Youth Guarantee** is a scheme for young people aged 16 to 25 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and who are in a precarious situation. It offers them, for twelve months, intensive support provided by a local mission as well as an allowance for twelve months. The scheme can be extended for a maximum of six months. As part of the '1 Youth, 1 Solution' plan, and following the Government's announcements of 26 November 2020, 100,000 additional places are planned for 2021, bringing the total number of potential beneficiaries to 200,000 supported young people. The entry conditions (non-taxation and resource criteria) are made more flexible from June 2021 and the duration of the youth's journey can be adjusted according to his situation from October 2021. It can range from 9 to 18 months in order to adapt to the support requirements (Drees). This scheme should be replaced by the Revenu d'engagement (i.e. Commitment Income), open to young precarious workers.

Food aid recipients:

The survey carried out by the CSA Institute for the Food Banks from September 30th to November 10th 2020, among 1 000 beneficiaries of the partner associations of the French Federation of Food Banks (Fédération Française des Banques Alimentaires) gives us the latest information to measure the impact of the health crisis on food insecurity. As a result, more than 2.1 million people have recently benefited. The current crisis has led to an increase in the number of people using food aid, with an increase of 25% in March 2020 at the start of the first lockdown. According to the study, 51% of beneficiaries have been using food aid for less than a year, and 35% have been using it for less than six months. *'While job loss, illness and separation are still the top three reasons for the worsening financial situation of beneficiaries, the impact of the health crisis is palpable.'*²² 12% of respondents affirm that their financial difficulties have worsened as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. In addition, 52% go to the food aid association (*association d'aide alimentaire*) at least once a week.

Regarding the profile of beneficiaries of food aid, the study shows that the average age of the beneficiary is 48 years. The majority of beneficiaries are women (70%), 45% of whom are 50 years or older. Of these, 56% have one or more children, 31% of whom have a child under 3 years of age in their care. Single-parent families made up 30% of the beneficiaries. 37% are isolated people. The majority have stable housing (86%). In terms of education, 24% have a baccalaureate or higher level, and 63% have a higher level than the Secondary 3. Concerning the employment situation of the beneficiaries, 20% are employed, of which 70% are part-time workers, and 83% are from the lowest occupational categories (employees and workers). This means that 80% of beneficiaries are unemployed. Among them, 27% are unemployed, 17% are retired, 14% are disabled/ill, 2% are foreigners or asylum seekers, and 2% are students. Finally, 71% of beneficiaries live on less than €1 000 per month, and the average financial resources of beneficiaries are €839 per month. According to the study, their primary resources are minimum social benefits and family allowances.

In comparison with other associations involved in food aid, the French Popular Relief (*Secours Populaire Français*) noted a 45% increase in the number of people received during the first confinement (45% of whom went there for the first time) and a 30% increase over the year 2020. As for the food distribution of the Salvation Army Foundation in the 20th arrondissement this summer, 56% of first-time users were registered.

The latest data on poor housing:

In its latest report on the State of poor housing in France (2021 edition), the Abbé Pierre Foundation estimates that in November 2020, at least 300 000 people were homeless in France, within the meaning of INSEE.²³ Of these 300 000 people, 27 000 are reported to be homeless, 183 000 in shelters, 100 000 in the national asylum system, and 16 000 in slums.

According to the 2021 report of the Abbé Pierre Foundation, 4 million people are living in poor housing in France. These populations are housed in different ways. The Foundation has three main forms of poor housing: the uncomfortable habitat, the lack of space and the absence of one's own home.

²²National survey of people received by associations and CCAS (Centre communal d'action sociale - Communal social welfare centre). Survey 2020, CSA for Food Banks.

²³The homeless can be with no shelter, in makeshift housing, in collective accommodation, at the hotel.

2.4 million people live in uncomfortable housing: 91 000 living in makeshift accommodation, 208 000 travellers without a site and 2.1 million living in uncomfortable accommodation (accommodation lacking at least one basic amenities: running water, indoor toilets, kitchen, heating). There are 934 000 people affected by the lack of space²⁴. Finally, the lack of self-housing affects 835 000 people: 143 000 people have no home (INSEE censuses in accommodation centres in 2012), of which 11 000 are homeless, 25 000 constantly live in hotels, 24 000 in accommodation centres for asylum seekers, and 643 000 are housed with third parties. It should be noted that the data presented in the Foundation Abbé Pierre's 2021 report, mainly from INSEE, date essentially from 2013. It is, therefore, still too early to measure the impact of the health crisis even if we can assume that the economic crisis of 2020 and 2021 will have a definite impact on poor housing.

Regarding fuel poverty²⁵, according to the French Fuel Poverty Observatory (ONPE *Observatoire national de la précarité énergétique*), an estimated 6.7 million people are affected by it, representing 12% of households. The fuel poverty rate in 2019 was 11.9%, down from 2013 (-2.6 points). According to a survey conducted by the ONPE (June 2020), in 2020, 18% of the population said they had experienced difficulties paying energy bills, and 53% of households said they had limited their heating to avoid excessive bills. Here again, it is still too early to measure the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on fuel poverty. *'Support measures have been taken, but the consequences will be twofold. On the one hand, some households will see their incomes decrease (loss of employment for employees and cessation of activity for some self-employed). On the other hand, winter lockdowns have led to a sharp increase in heating costs. The bill will increase, especially for those with the worst insulated homes and poor individual heating systems. The rate of fuel poverty will most likely increase, but so will the intensity of fuel poverty for those most in need.'*²⁶

The 'multiplication of poverty and the emergence of 'new publics': the impact of the health crisis

At the beginning of May 2021, the National Council for Policies to fight against poverty and social exclusion (CNLE - *Conseil national des politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale*)²⁷ submitted a report to the Prime Minister, Jean Castex, analysing the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the population, particularly the most vulnerable. This report 'poverty multiplied: Dimensions, processes and responses (spring 2020-spring 2021)' reveals that *'the crisis has led to a cumulative reinforcement of the different dimensions that characterise poverty, which is referred to as 'multiplied poverty', an expression intended to emphasise that the crisis has led to a worsening of an already deteriorated condition as well as the exposure of new groups to poverty'*.²⁸

²⁴In the sense of INSEE, the 'normal' population of a dwelling corresponds to at least one room for the household, one for a couple, one for singles aged 19 and over, one extra room for two children of the same sex or under seven years, if not one room per child. If a dwelling does not meet this standard, then it is considered 'overcrowded'. This is the criterion used by the Foundation Abbé Pierre.

²⁵According to the ONPE, households are energy poor if they are among the poorest 30% and if they spend more than 8% of their budget on energy (heating and lighting).

²⁶Inequality Observatory (2021), Report on Inequality in France, 2021 edition.

²⁷ CNLE: Consultative body composed of 65 members, elected representatives, representatives of associations, experts and 32 people in situations of poverty or precariousness.

²⁸ 'The poverty multiplied: Dimensions, processes and responses (spring 2020-spring 2021)', CNLE.

These ‘new publics’ are individuals in stabilised positions who have been weakened by the crisis, such as the self-employed and people working in sectors hard hit by the economic crisis (commerce, catering and accommodation, tourism, events and culture, aeronautics). However, they are primarily people who were already on the edge of poverty before the crisis. Those who did not have significant resources beforehand and therefore the cessation of the activity led them to use associative services or the communal social welfare centres (CCAS). The crisis has therefore pushed people who are not poor monetarily but who are very vulnerable²⁹ into precariousness. This is also the case for young people who have been largely affected by the pandemic in all areas³⁰: economic, relational, psychological, access to rights. This is evidenced by the lines of students going to food aid during the health crisis. Young people are all the more affected when they ‘cannot benefit from the family solidarity on which the protection granted by the institutions is partly based’³¹.

Finally, the report states that attention must be paid to the fact that the processes of impoverishment are a long-term process and that a definitive conclusion cannot in fact be reached at this stage: *‘Situations that occurred in 2020–2021 will deteriorate over time. People who have been hit by economic difficulties this year are likely to see their situation worsen, as the Abbé Pierre Fondation strongly emphasises, referring to a ‘time bomb’. While the damage appears to be contained, the recovery in activity could coexist with a deterioration in the situation of those households that have been most strongly affected by a deterioration in their situation. Thus, for those who have experienced financial difficulties, a gap in their financial situation may result in lasting financial difficulties. Pauperisation takes the form of a spiral where difficulties on several levels are cumulative and unfold with delay. If the crisis did not cause an overall shift in society, at least visible through statistical observation at this stage, it has weakened, without doubt sustainably, many of its components.’*³²

III. The action of the French government and the European Union

At the national level, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty is the main government response to fight poverty. The Recovery Plan (*Plan de relance*) is the response in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.

The President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, presented on September 13th, 2018, the National Strategy for Prevention and Fight against Poverty. The total budget for the strategy is EUR 8.5 billion. The five commitments of the latter are:

²⁹[In the French] Nicolas Duvoux et Adrien Papuchon, ‘Qui se sent pauvre en France ? Pauvreté subjective et insécurité sociale », *Revue française de sociologie*, 2018, p. 607-647. | Nicolas Duvoux and Adrien Papuchon. Who feels poor in France? Subjective poverty and social insecurity. *The Revue française de sociologie*, 2018, p. 607-647.

³⁰Even though their situation had already deteriorated before the health crisis, as the OECD had already warned for several decades (OECD, *Growth and Inequality*, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2008).

³¹‘The poverty multiplied: Dimensions, processes and responses (spring 2020-spring 2021)’, CNLE.

³²‘The poverty multiplied: Dimensions, processes and responses (spring 2020-spring 2021)’, CNLE.

- Equality of opportunity from the beginning.
- To guarantee children's fundamental rights daily.
- A guaranteed training path for all young people
- More accessible, equitable and incentive-based social rights
- Invest for the accompaniment of all towards employment.

In order to implement these commitments, the government has developed measures under different themes:

Tackling inequalities from an early age:

- 1) Distribution of breakfast in all priority territories since September 2019, i.e. 100 000 students. The major drawback is that the implementation of this measure depends mainly on the local authorities.
- 2) Access to individual childcare for all CMG families (Supplement for childcare of the parents' choice) from 2019, for structures from 2022 and the creation of 1 380 relay maternal assistants by 2025.
- 3) A training plan for early childhood professionals (600 000 new professionals trained by 2022).
- 4) Achieving social diversity in the methods of welcoming young children: entry into force of the 'social mix' bonus and the 'territory' bonus for QPV (priority districts of city policy) in January 2019. Here again, this implementation depends on the goodwill of local communities.
- 5) The social pricing of school canteens at €1 per meal per child for fragile territories since April 1st, 2019.

Support towards employment and autonomy:

- 1) The creation of a Public Employment and Integration Service (SPIE - *Service public d'insertion et de l'emploi*): It is currently being deployed (two calls for projects have been launched with the aim of intensifying territorial experimentation in 2021 and 2022).
- 2) The deployment of Budget Advice Points: 400 budget advice points have been deployed to date.
- 3) The obligation of training up to 18 years since the decree of August 5th, 2020.
- 4) The training plan for social workers: €9.5 million will be allocated by the State to co-finance this plan, which will enable the training of 50 000 professionals each year.
- 5) Assistance in leaving child welfare: the elimination of 'brusque releases on expiry of the sentence' (*sorties sèches*) from child protection.

Facilitate access to rights:

- 1) Support for RSA beneficiaries, in particular through the deployment of the Business Guarantee, a new form of support for 300 000 people by 2022.
- 2) The introduction of the Universal Working Income (RUA - *Revenu universel d'activité*). The consultation work on the RUA has been on hold since the first confinement in 2020 and has not yet resumed. At the moment, only a report on the subject is planned for autumn 2021.
- 3) The automatic renewal of the Solidarity Health Supplement for RSA beneficiaries since April 1st 2019.

In its latest memo dated March 2021, the Strategy Evaluation Committee indicates that of the 35 measures presented, only four have been fully implemented (the revaluation of the activity allowance; the implementation of complementary solidarity health; the renewal of the complementary health solidarity for RSA beneficiaries; deployment of the 400-budget advice points). Two measures were abandoned (support for communities in 60 QPVs – priority districts of city policy – with two adults per kindergarten class; experiments to diversify the operators and methods of use of the Youth Guarantee). Finally, the other measures are being implemented, but their progress is very uneven.

The Committee and the Citizens' Panel in charge of the evaluation stress that the implementation monitoring is not satisfactory. Concerning the seven measures that required contracting with departments, monitoring and evaluation of departments require reliable and relevant indicators, which is not currently the case. In addition, the Committee indicates that the political support for the strategy is insufficient to provide the delegation in charge with the means for inter-ministerial coordination and steering that can ensure a level of implementation in line with the initial objectives.

The Committee made many recommendations to improve the implementation of the strategy. These recommendations include: develop a definition of severe poverty that combines other criteria with monetary poverty; strengthen administrative support and affirm the interdepartmental positioning of Commissioners for the fight against poverty; examine the opportunity to recentralise the financing of the RSA to relieve the departments of budgetary constraints and thus limit the questioning of the rights of persons eligible to benefit from it; expand access policies and mechanisms that are effective in addressing non-recourse; to resume consultation on universal income from work in order to be able to implement similar aid quickly.

In response to the health crisis, the French government presented the €100 billion 'France Relance' recovery plan on September 3rd, 2020, of which €40 billion comes from the European Union subject to the submission of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and its approval by the European Commission. All the investments presented in the NRRP come from the 'France Relance' plan and pursue the same key priorities: ecology, competitiveness, social and territorial cohesion.

The 'France Relance' plan includes three components, one of which is dedicated to social and territorial cohesion, for which €36 billion has been allocated. This component is divided into several major thematic measures: Safeguarding jobs (€7.6 billion), disability (€100 million), young people (€5.6 billion), vocational training (€1.9 billion), research (€2.9 billion), the consultation 'Ségur de la santé' (€6 billion), the territories (€3.8 billion) and finally support for precarious people (€800 million).

Among these major thematic measures, we can cite a few concrete examples, such as the '1 young person, 1 solution' plan, which aims to mitigate the crisis consequences by helping to build personalised integration paths for young people who are far from employment. This plan for young people is reflected, for example, in the increase in the number of places in the Youth Guarantee scheme from 100 000 places to 150 000 places. We can also mention a recruitment aid for unemployed people with disabilities that allows the employer to receive €4 000 for the recruitment of a disabled worker, for a contract of at least three months and not exceeding two minimum wage. Or the partial activity scheme, as a bulwark against unemployment during the crisis, for which 6.6 million euros have been allocated.

Concerning the component intended to support people in precarious situations, many associations active in the fight against poverty were indignant about the amount allocated to this component. The recovery plan is aimed too little at the poorest: less than 1% of the total recovery plan. This component includes three main measures: the €100 increase in the back-to-school allowance, exceptional support for people in extreme poverty (e.g. construction of new accommodation centres in areas of high demand or collective kitchens for people living in hotels) and finally, a plan to support associations for the fight against poverty to the tune of €100 million in the form of calls for projects, initially planned to be broken down in two years and then amended to one year – something that the associations were not happy with. Another critical measure is allocating an additional €200 million for the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty.

The government then announced new measures to prevent and fight the slide into poverty on October 24th, 2020. These measures include exceptional aid of €150 for beneficiaries of the RSA (**Active solidarity income**), the ASS (**the specific solidarity allowance**) and the APL (**the personalised housing allowance**) and for young people under 25 who are not students or scholarship students, aid of €900 in guaranteed income for precarious workers until February 2021 (although some of the most precarious remain outside the target of this aid, which states that workers who can receive it must have worked 60% of the time in 2019), the possibility of staying under the IAE-status for an extended period of 12 months to limit the number of brusque releases on expiry of sentence, the extension of the €150 aid paid by 'Action Logement' to prevent unpaid rents and to help pay housing expenses, support for food aid, strengthening of access to health care for patients without rights, distribution of free masks, the increase in the supply of emergency housing and the doubling of the number of social housing units at very low rent levels.

While these measures are necessary, they are mostly short-term and cyclical measures, so they do not take into account the fact that many people will find themselves in a situation of long-term poverty as a result of the health crisis, economic and social problems. They do not respond to the problems existing before the crisis. This is underlined by the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) in an opinion on the National Recovery and Resilience Plan issued on March 9th, 2021. For the CESE, the recovery plan must be linked to pursuing longer-term objectives based on structural measures.

In the NRRP, several reforms are planned for the social and territorial cohesion component (€15.2 billion), including unemployment insurance. This reform postponed by the government following the health crisis, but partially implemented since July 1st, 2021, should be fully implemented from October 1st 2021. One of the important measures of the reform which will enter into force in October is the change in the calculation of the reference base wages (SJR - *salaire journalier de référence*), which is the indicator for determining the amount of unemployment benefit paid to jobseekers. Therefore, the SJR will take into account the monthly wage divided by all the days of the month, even those that have not been worked, while so far, the SJR state measured by days worked only. This change in the calculation will therefore penalise the unemployed working discontinuously. In this regard, Unédic³³ estimates that 1.15 million recipients will have a daily compensation 17% lower than before when they open up rights to unemployment insurance and even up to 40% for the 400 000 for the most precarious. In addition, the reform provides for an extension of the minimum working

³³ Unédic is an association entrusted by a public service delegation with the management of unemployment insurance in France, in cooperation with Pôle emploi.

time for which unemployment insurance is payable: it will be necessary to have worked 6 months minimum in the last 24 months (against 4 months on the last 24 months today). Thus, many people will be penalised, especially young people entering the labour market on short contracts. According to the Unédic, 190,000 people would not be able to obtain their entitlement within a year of the measure coming into force, and 285,000 people would experience a delay in obtaining their entitlement (of 5 months on average). The reform would allow the government (once fully implemented) to save 2.3 billion euros per year, according to Unédic. This reform is met with unanimous opposition by employees' trade unions and associations. The reform is seen as unfair because it will affect people who are already weakened (those with short or spaced contracts, young people) and is seen as absurd in the current context, where the crisis has hard hit the most precarious people and many more are or will fall into poverty.

At the European level, two elements are essential in the fight against poverty in the EU Member States: The European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Social Fund (ESF). Also, the SURE scheme during the health crisis was essential to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the pandemic and is an important step forward, showing the solidarity of the European Union.

The European Pillar of Social Rights was adopted unanimously by member states on November 17th, 2017, in Gothenburg (Sweden). It consists of three major components: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and social inclusion. The Pillar contains 20 principles laying down concrete guidelines for the Union's social policy in the coming years. On March 4th, 2021, the European Commission presented an action plan for implementing the Pillar, including concrete actions to implement these principles. The action plan also includes three new goals for employment, training and poverty reduction by 2030. These three main objectives are :

- 1) at least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 years should be employed;
- 2) at least 60% of adults should participate in training activities each year;
- 3) the number of people threatened with poverty or social exclusion is expected to decrease by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children.

At the Porto Social Summit, which took place on 7 and 8 May 2021 within the framework of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, all the partners (the President of the European Commission, President of the European Parliament, European social partners and civil society organisations) have committed themselves to implement the 3 main goals for 2030 and have also committed themselves to translate the 20 principles of the Pillar into concrete actions. As for the heads of State and government, they jointly adopted the Porto declaration. The Declaration focuses on people's well-being, social progress, upward convergence of social rights, education and training, a post-pandemic recovery rich in quality jobs, adequate working conditions and equality between citizens. They approved the Action Plan to implement the Commission's Pillar and its main objectives and committed themselves to setting national objectives that could contribute to achieving European targets.

However, the quantified objectives on which the heads of state and government have committed themselves are not binding. Moreover, because of the division of the Member States on specific subjects, it is difficult to make concrete progress in constructing a real social Europe. This division of

Member States on social issues is currently illustrated by the proposal for a directive on minimum wages made by the European Commission in October 2020. On the one hand, the so-called Southern countries are in favour of it. On the other hand, the Northern countries, which are committed to their successful national collective bargaining model, and the Eastern countries, which want to remain competitive on the labour market, reject the harmonisation of minimum wages. The proposal for a directive is therefore still blocked by certain Member States. In contrast, only two out of five workers are covered by a collective agreement in the European Union, and 24 million active citizens cannot live decently on the minimum wage they receive.

Nevertheless, despite the divisions between the Member States, the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted in 2017, has made some progress in building a more social Europe: parental leave, teleworking, part-time work, the Posted Workers Directive adopted in 2018. Further draft legislation is expected soon, particularly for platform workers and on companies' duty of vigilance. These upcoming legislative projects will be priorities of the French Presidency in the EU Council for the first half of 2022.

The SURE instrument – A European instrument for temporary support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency – was set up in the context of the health crisis to support the Member States that needed to mobilise significant financial means to fight the economic social consequences of the pandemic. The maximum amount of this financial assistance is 100 billion, in the form of EU loans, allowing the Member States to take on increased public spending to preserve jobs. In short, the SURE instrument makes it possible to support short-time working schemes and similar measures to preserve jobs and protect employees and the self-employed against unemployment and loss of income. The development of this scheme is a major step forward in demonstrating the solidarity of the European Union. Indeed, the Member States have given each other mutual support, through the EU, by making available additional financial resources in the form of loans. In total, the EU has provided around €90 billion in the form of back-to-back loans. 19 EU member states have benefited from this aid.

The European Social Fund (ESF), and more specifically axis 3 of the National Operational Programme (NOP) dedicated to poverty and the promotion of inclusion, is one of the essential levers in the fight against inequalities and support of the most vulnerable.

During the elaboration of the ESF strategy for the period 2014–2020 in 2013, 8.6 million people in France lived below the poverty line. This is why the ESF has been largely geared towards social inclusion. This represents €1.6 billion, representing more than half (56%) of the total ESF appropriations for this period allocated for social inclusion and the fight against poverty (Axis 3 of the National Operational Programme). This makes it possible to respond to the Europe 2020 Strategy, which aims to increase the return to employment of the most vulnerable groups (long-term unemployed, inactive, people with disabilities, etc.) consequently. 55% of these people, supported by ESF funding, are unemployed, and 31% are inactive. Of these, 24% come from priority districts of city policy (QPV), 39% are foreign, and 32% are migrants. Within the category of jobseekers, 56.2% are long-term unemployed, and 71.8% have a low level of training. Moreover, most of these persons are recipients of minimum social benefits (74%), of which 18% are RSA beneficiaries.

The priority of the ESF for the period 2014–2020 was to improve the employment support pathways, providing comprehensive support according to the social and professional needs of the participants and their social barriers (digital divide, mobility, health problems, housing, etc.), this would be achieved through better coordination between the various actors involved in integration (Departments, local plan for integration and employment PLIE, French employment agency, local missions, etc.). Coaching is one of the major entrances of the ESF, to which 79% of participants were directed.

The ESF has also provided support for economic integration activities (IAE), of which 8% of participants have been directed in this direction. Almost 20% of ESF allocations under Axis 3 (EUR 202 million) have been allocated. For the majority of cases (90%), the IAE actions represent integration projects.

Concerning young people, a specific instrument to support this audience, especially for young people, neither in employment, education or training (NEET) was set up in 2014 by the European Commission: the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). This funding tool is intended to enable the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee, which stipulates that the Member States must implement the necessary means to offer young people under 30 a sustainable solution for professional integration: employment, training, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of losing a job or leaving the education system.

Overall, the 2014–2020 ESF programming shows promising results with regard to the return to employment of participants: 37% of exits were positive, of which 31% were towards employment and 6% towards training. Among those in employment, 52% are sustainable jobs, 32% permanent and 50% full-time. Regarding the inactive, 59% of them showed a positive evolution with 19% moving towards employment or the creation of a business, 6% towards training and 34% towards an active job application.

The goal of supporting 2 million people has been achieved (for axis 3): more than 2.4 million unemployed and inactive people were supported under the social inclusion component (axis 3) in 2021. A total of 3.3 million people have been supported within the framework of the ESF. Finally, in terms of the amounts deployed, almost 2.9 billion euros have been programmed at the beginning of 2021. Since 2014, nearly 10 000 initiatives in inclusion and the fight against poverty have been programmed on the State's operational programmes (OPs) by more than 2 500 operators.

IV. The best practices in France

We will cite here an example of good practice implemented in France.

This is the 'Zero Long-term Unemployment Territories' (TZCLD - Territoires zéro chômeur de longue durée) scheme. The scheme was initiated by the association ATD Quart Monde and then joined by other actors involved in the fight against the exclusion, including Emmaüs France, Secours catholique and the Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité (FAS). Thanks to adopting an experimentation law (law of February 29th 2016), the scheme has been tested since January 2017 in 10 territories (from 5 000 to 10 000 inhabitants). It aims to hire unemployed people who have been away from employment for at least twelve months. The latter is based on voluntary work, where the people supported are employed on permanent contracts (CDI - Contrat de travail à durée indéterminée), at the French

minimum wage SMIC and voluntarily, by social and solidarity economy enterprises, known as employment enterprises (EBE - Entreprises à but d'emploi), for activities that are not covered by the private sector in the employment areas concerned (e.g. recycling centres, solidarity grocery shops, etc.). Employment enterprises are financed mainly by the reallocation of unemployment-related costs (allowances, RSA, etc.).

The fundamental objective of this project is to demonstrate that *'no one is unemployable and that, thanks to collective mobilisation, the economy can be at the service of people and the planet, provided that those who are furthest from employment are at the heart of the process'*³⁴. The scheme is a tool available to the territories to provide a concrete response to people far from employment.

In April 2021, the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics (DARES – Direction de l'Animation de la Recherche, des Études et des Statistiques) presented the results of the experiment 'Zero Long-term Unemployment Territories'. The study indicates that the number of people recruited into these enterprises for employment purposes is more likely to be women, young people (more than half are under 42) and people with low degrees (28.3% have no diploma). According to the report, *'the structures created by the zero long-term unemployed experiments have helped improve the employment path, and more broadly the well-being, of the beneficiaries of the experiment (health, social inclusion, self-confidence, etc.). As a result, the latter are more often in employment and especially in sustainable employment than if they had not benefited from this scheme. The role played by the permanent contract in this dynamic of improvement is probably major in the long-term horizon and the feeling of professional and financial security that it confers'*³⁵. The recipients interviewed said that they have less housing spending on their budgets and that they give up care for financial reasons.

The law of December 14th 2020, extended the experimentation of the scheme to 50 new territories and extended the experimentation for five years.

V. EAPN France's action and our key recommendations

EAPN France is currently focusing its activities on three themes. Working groups have been set up: the right to sustainable food for all, people living in poverty and minimum social standards.

EAPN France would also like to see solid measures for access to housing and accommodation for the homeless whose asylum seekers and refugees are in place.

Concerning the Universal Income of Activity (*RUA - Revenu Universel d'Activité*), it is regrettable that its implementation has been (temporarily) abandoned. Indeed, and all the more so following the health crisis, a universal income from work could allow many people to avoid falling into extreme poverty. The *RUA* should, in principle, merge several social aids into a single allocation based on resources and activity. Reducing poverty means, above all, guaranteeing everyone's access to fundamental rights and founding a comprehensive policy that would include housing, food, employment, health, education, culture and recreation. A minimum income must guarantee every

³⁴ ATD Quart Monde.

³⁵ Experimentation of Zero Long-term Unemployment Territories, Report of the Scientific Committee. April 2021, Dares.

adult the 'adequate means of subsistence' enshrined in the Constitution. In other words, the allowance must above all be sufficient from a monetary point of view. A person in France should not have to live with less than 50% of the median income or €855 for a single person. Young people (18–25 years old) do not benefit from the RSA, while a quarter of them live below the poverty line. While simplifying social benefits is essential, not all benefits should be recast, and some precision should be maintained. For example, housing benefits, disabled adults' benefits and solidarity benefits for the elderly should remain autonomous. They are not always automatically linked to a poverty benefit. Finally, we recommend real support in the search for integration not to stigmatise people in precarious situations.

The right to sustainable food for all is a fundamental issue for EAPN France.³⁶ Indeed, the current model of agricultural production is unsustainable. One-third of French farmers are poor and live on less than €350 per month. On average, only 8% of the food price paid by the consumer goes to the producer. There are 8 million people in food insecurity. There is no constitutional protection of the right to food. Articles 10 and 11 of the Preamble to the Constitution of October 27th 1946, have not been interpreted in this way. The National Food Programme does not refer to this right. The opinion of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) of February 10th, 2014, and the law of October 13th, 2014, are declaratory only. There is also no recognition at the European level. The food insecurity monitoring system is failing. We recommend setting up a food insecurity observatory. This observatory would be responsible for diagnosing the situations included in the territorial food security (*PAT plans alimentaires territoriaux*). An article could also be included in the French Family and Social Action Code (*Code de l'action sociale et des familles*) as part of the fight against the exclusion. There is a food supply problem in agribusiness, and it is a framework and model that creates poverty. We recommend building the logic of food democracy. Food aid has been moved from the Rural Code to the Family and Social Action Code³⁷. One-third of the French farmers are poor, and a significant number of them, unknown in a precise way, according to us, benefit from food aid!³⁸

The reminder of EAPN France's claims on the right to sustainable food:

—Develop **studies and approaches on the right to food in northern countries**: based on the elements of the definition that we believe are important: systemic approach, food democracy, dignity, non-discrimination, sustainability, the contribution of territorial approaches... Show the **differences between food aid and the right to food** on the progressive realisation of the right to food.

—Develop work on the need to **deal separately with the challenges of the fight against food waste and those of the fight against food insecurity**.

—Develop policy evaluations concerning **the PANTHER approach** ³⁹(human rights-based) **in the development, implementation and monitoring of the food policies of European countries**.

—Support **initiatives other than food aid to respond to food insecurity** and enable their financing, notably through the FEAD.

—**Access to food is a sovereign mission whose financing must be long-term**.

³⁶See EAPN France's position on the implementation of a right to food in the European Union: http://eapn.fr/eapn-france-sengage-reconnaissance-dun-droit-a-lalimentation-france/#_ftn2

³⁷Decree No. 2019-703 of July 4, 2019, on the fight against food insecurity, which amends the French Family and Social Action Code (*Code de l'action sociale et des familles*).

³⁸According to the MSA (Agricultural Social Mutuality).

³⁹Principles developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). PANTHER: Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination, Transparency, Human Dignity, Empowerment, Rule of Law.

—Involve all actors in the food system and, particularly those affected by precariousness in the evaluation, monitoring and implementation of policies, and allow the real conditions for their participation.

The fight against poverty must also be seen as a profitable and indispensable investment in the economic and social needs of the most precarious in order to fight against growing poverty. Like EAPN Europe, EAPN France believes that poverty and social exclusion constitute a denial of fundamental rights and a failure to respect and protect human dignity.

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