



Mutual Learning Programme

Host Country Discussion Paper

The implementation of the Emplois d'Avenir in France: the role of local actors

Peer Review on 'Emplois d'avenir' – 'jobs with a future' scheme'

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Table of Contents

1. Quick Summary	1
2. Labour market situation in the host country	2
3. Policy measure	6
4. Results.....	14
5. Difficulties and constraints.....	17
6. Success factors and transferability.....	21
7. Annex :References	23

1. Quick Summary

The Emplois d'avenir (EA) scheme was launched in November 2012. One year later, the measure seems to have reached the objective of 100,000 contracts to be signed for the year 2013. 50,000 additional contracts are scheduled for the year 2014. The EA can be described as a classical tool in youth employment policy. It actually represents a new layer in a long series of French employment policies setting up subsidised work contracts in the non-profit or private sector. Nevertheless this measure has been designed to address the lessons of previous similar measures – in particular their insufficient targeting on the young people with the lowest qualifications, their poor skills training content, the short duration of the contracts, on average equal to eight months, and their part-time character.

The Missions Locales (ML) (specific agencies which are part of the public employment service and are dedicated delivering services to young people) have been entrusted with the practical implementation of the EA. The implementation has faced several difficulties in the first months. A phase of learning was then necessary for the actors to master all the different innovations of the EA and to convert them into actual practices. The major difficulties in the implementation have concerned the joint elaboration of a training plan with the employer. On the one hand, it is complex to anticipate both the needs of the employer and the employee in terms of training, and to formalise a comprehensive action plan over a 3-year period. On the other hand the training system is complex in France and actors in the training field have not been associated enough with local operators. Employers have been quite reluctant to take part in the first months and many have adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Public authorities have pragmatically made some rules evolve. Some rules have been progressively relaxed (for instance regarding the duration of contracts) so as to facilitate the negotiation with them. In addition, some eligibility criteria have been relaxed to help the ML identify more young people.

The programme 'took off' six to eight months after its launch and eventually the targeted 100,000 contracts were signed for 2013. The challenge will now be to continue to create 50,000 additional contracts in 2014, and to accompany all the young people in their job. Employers will be monitored with respect to their commitment in terms of training and integration into work.

The overall figure of the number of placements created nevertheless masks important discrepancies between regions and between ML. Urban areas have had the greatest difficulties in reaching their own objectives while rural areas have more easily managed to reach theirs.

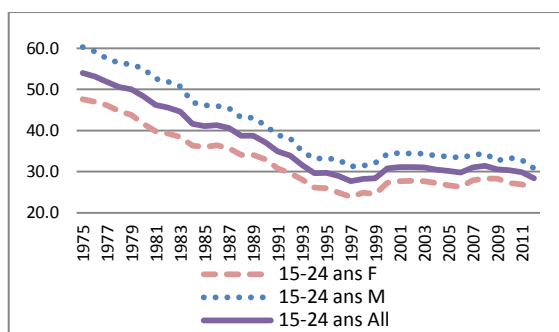
Established performance targets can be questioned. They suggest that the *outcomes* in terms of placement are the responsibility of the intermediaries on the labour market. However the outcomes that ML have reached locally do not depend only on their efforts. Their action also depends on the involvement of local employers, on the quality of local partnerships, on existing resources that may help operators to negotiate with potential employers (for instance additional financing of the labour cost or of the training measures). To put it differently, the placement outcomes are not the sole responsibility of the intermediaries; they have to be seen as a joint and shared responsibility.

Today, both employers and beneficiaries seem to be generally satisfied with the measure but there is so far insufficient qualitative evidence on this. Quantitative assessments show that the programme is in line with its ambitious objectives, in particular in targeting the less qualified young people.

2. Labour market situation in the host country

The creation of the Emplois d'avenir scheme aims at improving the access to employment of young people with low or no qualifications. A characteristic of the French labour market is the low employment rate of the 15-24 year olds. It has been oscillating around 30% for the last 20 years (after a long period of decrease due to the prolongation of education in the 1970s and 1980s – Graph 1). This employment rate is twice as low as in Denmark, and 1.5 times lower than in the UK or Germany¹. By contrast, the employment rate of people aged 30-54 is above the average of OECD members, leading some authors to assert that "France has a specific problem with youth employment".²

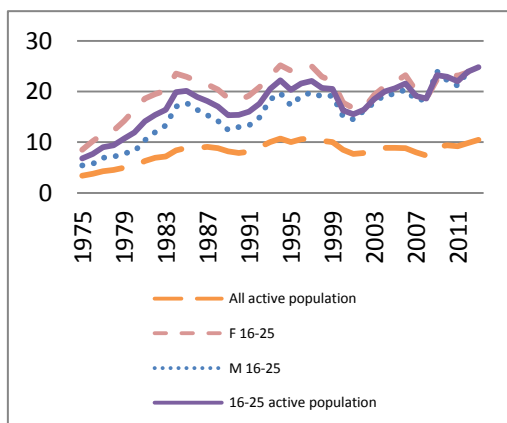
Graph 1. Employment rate (ILO definition)



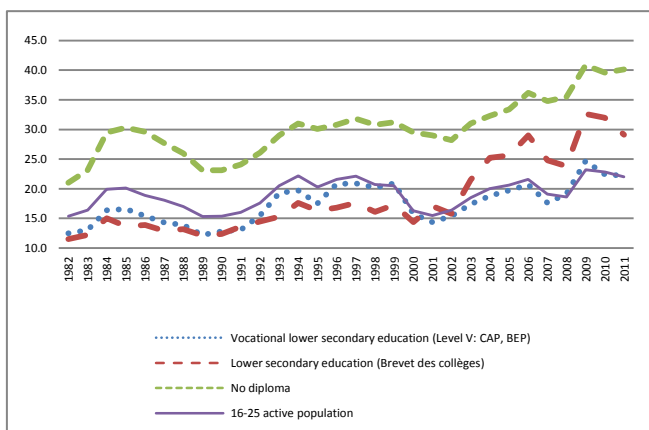
Source : INSEE

The situation regarding unemployment figures is similarly of concern. In 2012, the average overall unemployment rate for young people aged 16-25 reached 23.9%, its highest level in the last 30 years (Graph 2). In September 2013, the rate was 24.6%. The unemployment rate of young people is nearly 2.5 times higher than the overall unemployment rate (9.8% in 2012). As can be seen from Graph 2, youth unemployment is very sensitive to economic trends. It increases more rapidly than the overall unemployment rate in periods of economic slowdown, but also decreases more rapidly in periods of recovery.

Graph 2. Unemployment rates according to age and sex



Graph 3. Unemployment rate, young people 16-25 with low or no qualification



Source : INSEE

¹ Cahuc et al. (2013), p. 2.

² Id.

Low-qualified young people experience even higher unemployment rates (Graph 3). In 2011, 40% of young people who left school with no diploma and 30% of those who left school after completing only lower secondary education (after the “*collège*” and not going to the “*lycée*”) were unemployed. In comparison, young people who graduated from technical/vocational secondary education (obtaining a *CAP* grade or *BEP* grade, which corresponds to the level V of the French qualification framework, equivalent to ISCED level 2) experience unemployment rates in a similar proportion than their overall age group (all qualifications included). The unemployment rate for young people with a higher secondary grade (*baccalauréat* including vocational grades) is in general 4 to 5 percentage points lower than the general average for the active population aged 16-25.

The unemployment rate on its own is, however, only a limited indicator for the situation of young people on the labour market. This rate relates only to the active population. However, a majority of young people aged 16-24 are still in training.³ By contrast, another indicator is the *share* of young people in unemployment. This indicator relates to the whole category of young people, not only the active fringe of them. This share is around 10% today. As a result, the picture is more complex than the simple (and often heard) idea that one young people out of four are currently unemployed. A report from the public “Employment Orientation Counsel” (*Conseil d’orientation de l’emploi*) proposed to distinguish between at least two subcategories of age, as the category 16-24 is very comprehensive⁴. The unemployment of young people aged 15-19 is firstly a school-related issue. Unemployed young people in this category are mostly those who have dropped out school without a qualification. By contrast, unemployment of the 20-24 regroups a lot of different situations, linked with personal trajectories but also the functioning of the labour market. Among them are the young people who have dropped out school at earlier stages and are still unemployed, young people who have just completed education after general secondary school, those who have not graduated from higher education, and finally those who are looking for a job after their graduation.

This variety of situations calls for observation tools, in particular longitudinal analyses, which may give a detailed outlook on people’s trajectories in their access to employment. The duration of unemployment varies a lot depending partly on individual characteristics and of course on the job market situation at the local level. Access to employment is actually something progressive and gradual. As a result, young people are more likely to experience unemployment than active people with more years of experience on the labour market. The impact of diplomas and qualifications can be analysed in this light. In 2010, the unemployment rate of new entrants on the labour market who left school with no qualification (*brevet des collèges*) between 2006 and 2009 (i.e., one to four years before) is 45%, compared to 27% for those who graduated with a vocational secondary diploma (CAP-BEP), 18% for the owners of the *baccalauréat* and 10% for those with a higher education diploma.⁵ These differences according the diploma obtained tend to diminish with the years of experience on the labour market.

Other studies highlight the variety of trajectories into employment for young people. The research centre CEREQ has followed a representative cohort of young people who left school in 2004 and analysed their patterns of access in employment. Several typical trajectories can be defined, that range from a rapid and lasting access to employment to trajectories that show a significant distance to the labour market. The

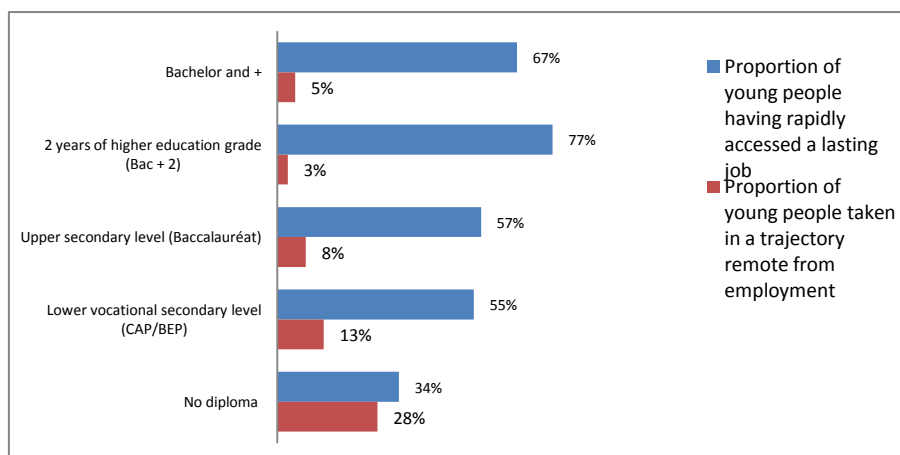
³ It is important to distinguish between the ages, as the relation to employment is very different at 16 or at 24. In 2009, only 16% of young people aged 15-19 were counted as active. The proportion increases at 64% for the 20-24. Source: Conseil d’orientation de l’emploi (2011).

⁴ Conseil d’orientation de l’emploi (2011), p. 12.

⁵ Le Rhun, Minni (2012).

following graph compares the qualification level of those characterised by these two (opposite) types of trajectory. One third of young people with no qualification have rapidly accessed sustainable employment, compared to 55-57% of those with the CAP-BEP or *baccalauréat* and 77% of young people with two years of higher qualification. By contrast, 28% of young people with no qualification are taken in a trajectory with some distance to the labour market, while only 13% with CAP-BEP level qualification and 8% of those with a *baccalauréat* grade can be found in this group.

Graph 4. Trajectories of access to employment (2007)



Source : CEREQ (2007), *Génération 2004*

The Emplois d'Avenir scheme directly targets these young people with no or low qualification (up to lower secondary level and in some cases up to a Bachelor level and only by special dispensation). According to the Ministry of Employment, each year more than 120,000 young people leave school with no or low qualification. Not all these people are registered as unemployment however. Many of them swell the ranks of the so-called "NEET" (neither in education, employment or training) category. In 2011, 500 000 young people aged between 16-25 with no or low qualification could be included in this category.⁶

Furthermore, some territories are particularly affected by even greater difficulties in offering access to the labour market for young people. These territories are of a diverse nature. First, there are the "*zones urbaines sensibles (ZUS)*" (disadvantaged urban areas), where young people with low qualifications are over-represented. Even the young people with qualifications are touched by these difficulties there. In these areas, the youth unemployment rate was 42% in 2010.⁷ These urban areas are also characterised by an over-representation of young people with a migrant background, which is a factor of discrimination on the labour market. Second, some rural areas are also disadvantaged. Access to employment is rendered more difficult by the lower presence of employers on the territory and by problems of mobility for young people. Third, French overseas territories also face significant issues with youth unemployment. Around one active young person out of two is registered as unemployed in these overseas territories (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Reunion Island). In 2007, between 26% and 58% of young people in the overseas territories have left the school system with no qualification.⁸ A priority has been given to these

⁶ Press package on EA, 29/08/2012. In total there are 8,2 million young people aged 16-25 in France. In 2011, 12.8% of them – more than one million – were considered as NEET (all qualification levels included). Source: INSEE.

⁷ Quantin (2011).

⁸ Doligé (2009).

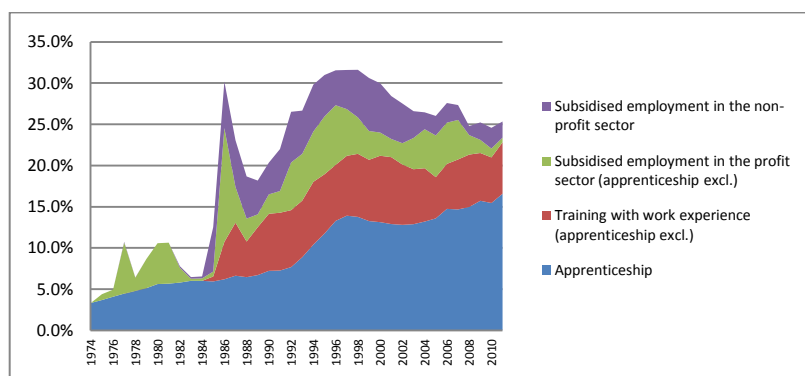
three kinds of territories in the design of the EA scheme. The eligibility to the EA has been extended up to Bachelor levels for the young people who live there.

3. Policy measure

3.1 A new layer in a long succession of public measures for youth employment

The Emplois d'Avenir (EA) scheme takes its place in a long succession of measures taken by the different governments since the end of the 1970s to tackle the growing issue of youth employment. From 1977 until today, more than 30 public schemes dedicated to youth employment have been implemented, sometimes creating the feeling of a "piling up" of public measures⁹. Today one job out of four occupied by young people is directly concerned by these employment policy measures, compared to one job out of thirty for the overall working population (Graph 5).¹⁰ The vast majority (85%) of these jobs supported by employment policy measures are apprenticeship measures. When excluding apprenticeship measures, in 2010 around 59,000 young people occupied a subsidised job contract in the public sector and 81,000 in the private sector.

Graph 5. Proportion of young people in the employment policy measures



Source: COE

Different logics and rationales have governed the design of these measures. A first logic is to *reduce the cost of labour* for employers hiring young people, in order to compensate their differential of productivity with other workers, due to their lack of professional experience. These measures particularly concern the private sector. They are particularly subject to the risk of a deadweight effect. A second logic is to *act on the qualification and skills* of young people in order to improve their employability. Several measures aiming at developing apprenticeships can be included in this category (they also incorporate incentives for employers in terms of a reduced minimum wage). A third logic is to *create subsidised work contracts* in the non-profit sector or the private sector, either open to all people or specially dedicated to young people. The EA are associated to this latter logic.

In general terms, the rationales behind such subsidised work contracts are manifold. First is the idea to facilitate the direct recruitment of persons with difficulties in the non-profit sector (local authorities, administration, associations). The cost of such employment is low or close to zero among these employers under such schemes. These jobs are sometimes deemed to be part of the so-called "social treatment" of unemployment and to artificially reduce the unemployment statistics (particularly where there are unlikely to be jobs available at the end of the measure).

In the second place however, they have an important counter-cyclical effect by offering work experience during times of low availability of vacancies and preventing a

⁹ See for instance the list of measures drawn by Aeberhardt et al. (2011)

¹⁰ Conseil d'orientation de l'emploi, *op. cit.*

loss of human capital and employability which are associated to long-term unemployment. An additional advantage is linked to the French institutional framework: as there is no minimum income for young people under the age of 25 (except if they have family duties), these work contracts provide some of them with an income (in the absence of unemployment benefits that young people with no work record cannot claim¹¹).

Third, these subsidised jobs have always been conceived as satisfying new social or societal needs. The first scheme in 1984 was called the "Collective Utility Works" (Travaux d'utilité collective or TUC), initially created for 16-21 years old and later extended to the 21-25 age group. The "original sin", one could say, of this very first programme, was that beneficiaries did not sign a proper work contract with the associated rights. They were counted as trainees and did not receive a wage, but an allowance at a level much lower than the minimal wage. Since then, these subsidised jobs have always carried on an image of not being "real" jobs. This has been the case even after 1990 when the TUC contracts were substituted by a new measure (called Contrats Emploi Solidarité or CES and not being reserved only to young people), now based on a genuine labour contract and a minimum wage. The TUC as well as the CES were constructed as part-time jobs and fixed-term contracts. The measures that followed in 2005 (CAE, CAV) and 2010 (CUI12) were based on the same principles. Between 1997-2002, the "Emplois Jeunes" scheme (Youth Jobs, reserved to young people under 25) tried to take a different direction. They were based on a 5-year subsidy, allowing the creation of either open-ended contracts or fixed-term contracts. This programme tried to reconcile long-term support for young people with the idea mentioned above of giving the means to local authorities or associations to offer new activities corresponding to unmet local needs.

3.2 Objectives: a better targeting of low qualified young people

The EA was launched a few months after the election of François Hollande in 2012. From a political point of view, the left party has always promoted subsidised work programmes.¹³ After more than ten years in opposition, this programme was one of the major propositions of the Socialist Party during the presidential contest. With 100,000 EA jobs scheduled for the year 2013, it is expected that the EA should play a decisive role in helping president Hollande's "pledge", namely "to curb the unemployment rate" by the end of the year 2013, to be fulfilled.

The Emplois d'Avenir scheme is directly inspired by the different rationales identified above concerning subsidised jobs programmes. Its conception is in direct lineage with these previous measures. Nevertheless it has been designed so as to improve several elements or drawbacks that were emphasised in the assessment of previous measures. In this sense the scheme contains a series of innovations from the perspective of policy design.

A first innovation lies in the targeting of the young beneficiaries themselves. Eligibility criteria have been fixed as follows:

- Beneficiaries must be aged 16-25 (up to 30 if the young people is disabled)
- They must have a qualification level inferior or equal to a lower secondary level, that is to say a CAP or BEP, which are vocational grades. These levels

¹¹ Jobseekers need to have worked 122 days or 610 hours during the last 28 months to claim unemployment benefits.

¹² Respectively *Contrat d'Accès à l'Emploi*, *Contrat d'Avenir* and *Contrat Unique d'Insertion*

¹³ The first programmes were launched under the two presidential mandates of François Mitterrand in the 1980s and 1990s, while the large "Emplois Jeunes" programme was run by the government Jospin.

correspond to the level V of the French qualification framework, equivalent to ISCED level 2.

- In disadvantaged urban and rural areas, as well as in overseas territories, eligibility rules have been enlarged, so as to take into account the greater difficulties faced by young people, even those with higher qualification levels. According to this priority rule, young people with qualification levels up to Bachelor levels can access EA, provided they have been looking for work for at least 6 months out of 12 for the holders of a CAP-BEP, and 12 months out of 18 for higher levels.

Very interestingly then, the scheme relies on a twofold principle of targeting: targeting the low qualified young people, on the one hand, and targeting young people in disadvantaged areas, on the other. If the core target group are low qualified young people wherever they live, eligibility conditions for those in disadvantaged areas have been enlarged up to former students in higher education with insertion difficulties.

This qualification-based targeting is new. By contrast, the previous work subsidy programmes (or the other ones still existing, like the CUI-CAE) did not rely on such qualification-related or residential eligibility criteria. For instance, the CUI-CAE contract can be proposed to any person “facing specific social and professional difficulties in his/her access to employment”, which is a rather open definition that offers margins of manoeuvre and assessment to local operators. In 2011, 70% of the beneficiaries of the CUI-CAE have a qualification inferior or equal to the CAP-BEP, and 20% a qualification equal to the *Baccalauréat* (upper secondary level).¹⁴ This measure is open to all ages and 28% of beneficiaries only were under 26. The last major job programme dedicated to young people was the above mentioned “Emplois Jeunes” scheme (1997-2002) which did not target the lowest level of qualification, quite the contrary: in the three first years of the programme, 40% of the beneficiaries had at least followed two years of higher education.

A second innovation lies in the design of the work contract itself. One main drawback of the previous job subsidy programmes is their duration and the working time. All the previous measures in the non-profit sector have so far been designed as part-time contracts, except the “Emplois Jeunes” programme, or have been in practice mainly used part-time contracts. The average working time of the beneficiaries of CUI-CAE was 25 hours per week in 2010.¹⁵ This contract cannot be inferior to 20 hours but can perfectly be used full-time (35 hours); however only 10% of employers used this contract full-time in 2010¹⁶. In the past, other similar measures were limited to 20 hours a week.

One major issue with this part-time character of the contract is that it leads to low wages. But it also has some utility for people with difficulties in accessing the labour market. Some people cannot work full-time because this would be too much demanding, in particular because they have some “obstacles” to be solved first and this requires some time (for instance, to find solutions to one’s social problems in the fields of housing, health, addiction, etc.). Another argument is that working part-time would allow people to receive training when not at work. However this is not a well-developed practice (see below). This has driven the designers of the EA to incorporate an important training component directly during the working time (see below).

The innovation therefore lies in the fact that EA have been from the start conceived as full-time jobs. The possibility is however left for local operators to conclude a part-

¹⁴ Bahu (2012)

¹⁵ *Id.*, p. 8.

¹⁶ By contrast, more than 70% of subsidised contracts in the private sector are used full-time. Source: *ibid.*

time job (no less than a half-time i.e. 17.30 hours a week) if the situation of the young people calls for it.

Another new aspect is the duration of the contract, which can last up to three years and should at a minimum last one year. Except from the case of the five-year "Emplois Jeunes" contracts, subsidised work contracts have in general been limited to two years (with a possible extension up to five years for people aged 50 or more, for disabled persons and for the beneficiaries of assistance allowances with little employability). In practice, these previous contracts lasted far less than two years. In 2010 the average duration of work contracts of CUI-CAE beneficiaries was just over 8 months.¹⁷ From that perspective, the EA has been conceived to increase beneficiaries' employability through a longer-term support.

A third innovation lies in the principles governing the selection of employers and the role of local and regional levels. The EA is mainly a subsidised work contract dedicated to the non-profit sector. It is envisaged that 90% of the contracts should go to this sector (associations, public administration, local authorities, etc.). Only 10% of the contracts are dedicated to the private sector.

Another new aspect was that local operators should follow a strategy fixed at the regional level defining the "priority" sectors of activity. In each of the 22 French regions, a "regional orientation plan" was set up at the launch of the EA. This plan had to identify the economic sectors to be given priority in the implementation of the measure. As put by the ministerial circular, "these sectors should be promising in the future" (both for the non-profit sector and the profit sector). Regional plans have most frequently mentioned the green economy, the IT sector, but also social services like health and social care. For the profit sector, additional lists of eligible sectors or even professions were published by the prefects of Regions (through prefectural decrees). In some cases these lists were very detailed with the use of the codification used by Pôle Emploi (e.g., H2902 "boiler making" or J1501 "nursing auxiliary") in order to target either jobs with vacancies or in "promising" sectors.¹⁸ This targeting of the employers, which adds to the targeting of young people, was hitherto unseen in the design of similar measures.

At the local level, the public employment service has moreover been asked to select the employers on the basis of the quality of the job proposed. Several engagements are expected from the employers, the first of them being to be able to offer a job with an important training and mentoring component. In this regard, employers should not only be seen as rough "measure consumers" (a term that is frequently heard in PES agencies) but genuinely engaged and committed to offer a employability-enhancing work environment. To ensure a good coordination of actors at this local level, "operational committees" were to be set up which bring together at least the ML, Pôle Emploi and Cap Emploi, as well as representatives of the central State (Direccte, i.e. the local representatives of the Ministry of Employment)¹⁹. One of the roles of these committees is to define the conditions for a job offer collected towards an employer to be "qualified" as a "Emploi d'avenir", and consequently eligible for the public subsidy. These committees have had a variable periodicity from one place to another, either weekly or monthly.

A fourth innovation concerns the centrality given to training and access to qualifications in the measure. This is maybe one of the most important lessons learnt

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Several regions have decided to open the benefit of the EA to any employer in the private sector (no sectoral restrictions), provided the work contract is full-time, open-ended and includes access to a qualification.

¹⁹ This list could be enlarged to the region, département, municipality or even other local partners, but it was not compulsory.

from previous similar subsidy measures. The EA must incorporate an individual training plan that should mix on-the-work training, mentoring, guidance and a possible access to a formal qualification. From a practical point of view, the role of local counsellors in the local structures (ML) is crucial here. They have been given the responsibility of building the training with the employer (what also includes helping the employer find the financing, the training provider, etc.). The employer signs a structured tripartite engagement (with the young and the ML) where the training plan is synthesised.

This logic of formalised engagement regarding training and access to a possible qualification is one of the major innovations of the EA. Previous similar programmes were in general provided with a really poor training content. Whatever the type of employer (profit or non-profit sector), only a proportion comprised between one fourth and one fifth of beneficiaries of previous similar programmes (between 2005-2007) have declared having received training during their contract.²⁰ 40% of these training periods were just “adaptation to employment” periods in the non-profit sector (70% in the profit sector). Although they are necessary for the integration into employment, these forms of training do not really enhance the employability of the beneficiary for the future. By contrast, less than 25% of those who declare having received training have mentioned having received skills training (leading to a qualification).

The problem is that all evaluation studies converge in emphasising the role of training on transition into work, especially for beneficiaries of this kind of subsidised contracts.²¹ When not associated with a minimum content of skills training, the effect of subsidised work contracts (more particularly in the public sector) on access to employment is weak if not nil.²² Evaluation reports also emphasise the role of accompaniment and guidance and this is the point of the last noticeable innovation.

Last, a fifth innovation lies in the role dedicated to local agencies of the PES in the implementation of the programme. The EA is mostly delivered by the Missions locales which are specific agencies belonging to the PES and dedicated to youth insertion (reserved for the 16-25 age group not in education). At the local level, the Missions locales cooperate with Pôle Emploi (the main operator of the PES) and Cap Emploi (specific service for disabled workers). As the main operator of the EA programme, the Missions locales have been entrusted with many new duties. Thus far they have been in charge of the social and professional accompaniment of young people, working in close partnership with Pôle Emploi. Counsellors in these agencies are accustomed to use the different measures of the national employment policy, for instance the several policy tools already mentioned such as subsidised work contracts.

In the context of the implementation of the EA, the Missions locales have to behave as intermediaries between the employers and young people. On one side they have to collect job offers that can qualify for the EA programme; on the other they have to identify young people eligible to the measure, prepare them for the job interview and eventually accompany them during the duration of the contract. This latter aspect is the real novelty. Although the Missions locales already provided a tailored, on-going accompaniment to young people during their insertion “pathway”, the formalisation of the follow-up of the EA beneficiaries during all the duration of the contract is relatively new. Follow-up meetings with the young people and the employer must be fixed at several steps, at the beginning of the contract, then after 3 months, then at the 12th and 24th months, finally 2 months before the end of the contract. Through the formalisation of these milestones, a more intense follow up and guidance should be put into practice, with the goal of identifying the potential obstacles to a lasting integration into work and to prepare the transition into another job. During these

²⁰ Leminez et al. (2012).

²¹ Biau et al. (2008); Fendrich et al. (2009).

²² Cahuc et al. (2013); Aeberhardt et al. (2011).

meetings, the ML should also control that the employer respects the engagements in terms of mentoring, training and quality of integration.²³

All in all, this review shows that the EA can actually be described as a quite classical tool in youth employment policy (a new layer in subsidised work contracts) that nevertheless has been designed so as to incorporate the lessons of previous similar measures – in particular their insufficient targeting on the young people with the lowest qualification and their poor skills training content. The design of the measure has entrusted the ML with an important role at the local level. The logic of a mutual commitment can be seen as putting some responsibility on employers with respect to their role in the lasting insertion of the beneficiary. This might be seen as a fair counterpart to the subsidies received from the State (reminder: 35% of the minimum wage in the private sector and 75% in the non-profit sector).²⁴

3.3 A quantitative objective further elaborated locally

The EA scheme was launched in the end of October 2012. The Government has fixed a clear objective: to conclude 100,000 EA contracts by the end of 2013 and 150,000 by mid-2014. For 2013, this objective includes the EA contracts analysed there but also 6,000 specific “Teacher” contracts which pass through other channels than those described thus far. To be more precise then it is 94,000 mainstream EA contracts that should be reached for the year 2013.

This objective has been further elaborated by regions, departments and local levels. The local levels correspond to the perimeter of action of the ML (there are around 450 ML over the territory). The local objectives have been defined against statistics such as the proportion of low qualified young people registered as unemployed, the proportion of low qualified young people accompanied by the ML and the proportion of young people living in disadvantaged areas.

These local objectives are therefore very different from one place to another. For instance, the ML in Paris has an objective fixed for 1,123 EA contracts to be concluded for the year 2013. Another, smaller, ML situated in a rural area in the south-western Aquitaine region has an objective ten times smaller (108 EA).

These quantitative results are monitored by public authorities at the local level. Other types of information are also monitored, concerning the characteristics of beneficiaries, employers and the nature of work contracts.

This results in a highly elaborate planning and monitoring exercise. The ML have very often had the feeling of being assessed only in the light of the outcomes and not of the efforts made. Given the difficulties experienced in the first months of implementation (see below), this data monitoring was not well accepted by the ML. The fact is that these quantified objectives have not been defined according to the functioning of the local labour market or existing job opportunities corresponding to the EA scheme, but only according to the data related to young people as mentioned above. In many cases this monitoring has put some pressure on the ML, in particular when they had to justify for poor results.

²³ An employer who would not respect his/her engagements might have to reimburse the totality of perceived subsidies.

²⁴ In some regions, local authorities may even subsidy partly or fully the remainder for the non-profit sector. For instance the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region compensates the remainder for 2000 employers in the economic sectors defined as priority. The Ile-de-France Region pays for 20% of the remainder for the associations that recruits full-time, under open-ended contracts.

3.4 The practical implementation of the measure and the coordination of local actors

As already mentioned, the local operators of the PES play an important role in the practical implementation of the EA. The ML have been defined as the main operator of the measure. They should work in close partnership with Pôle Emploi et Cap Emploi. In effect, a young person who does not work is not automatically registered as unemployed by Pôle Emploi. ML are sort of one-stop shops for young people not in education, where they can find a personalised accompaniment in the fields of professional and social insertion. Since 2001, the ML and Pôle Emploi act as “joint contractors” (*co-traitance*) for the accompaniment of unemployed young people. This means that Pôle Emploi can externalise the accompaniment of some young people towards the ML, but it also conserves the guidance of some others. This segmentation is based on the counsellors’ assessment of the situation of young people. In general the young people with no real professional project, with low qualification or with several obstacles regarding access to employment are entrusted to the ML.²⁵ Disabled young people can be entrusted to Cap Emploi.

Some data on the Missions locales²⁶

There are around 450 ML on the territory, which constitute a network of more than 5000 information/reception desks. In 2012 the ML have received more than 1.3 million young people among whom 500,000 young people for the first time. They are financed by public budgets mainly from the state and local authorities. The total budget represented 524 million euros in 2012, i.e. 457 euros per accompanied young person. Since the launching of the EA, the number of the young people received at the ML has grown by 13%, which is a sign of the good response that the scheme has had.

This division of labour is useful because it relies on a principle of specialisation and services. While the qualified young people will benefit from the services provided by Pôle Emploi, the less qualified young people will benefit from the ones offered by the ML, which are much in line with their needs. The principle of joint contracting means that a young person accompanied by the ML can at any time also benefit from the services of Pôle Emploi (e.g., a skills assessment).

Thus far, Pôle Emploi has been the main operator of the practical implementation of employment policies. This time it is the ML which have been given the overall responsibility of the EA. In the application circular, the Ministry of Employment has divided its implementation into eight steps. This has made the assignment of duties between the local actors a little clearer (table below). All operators were supposed to search for job offers (which means contacting local employers), identifying the young people who correspond to these offers and who respect the eligibility criteria, and to try to do the matching between the employer and the candidates. These first steps are vital because they concern the whole matching process.

²⁵ Bouchardeau (2007)

²⁶ Germain report (2013), p. 72.

Table 1. The different steps in the implementation of the EA and task assignments between the local operators

Phases	Operators
a) Prospecting potential employers	Missions locales, Pôle Emploi and Cap emploi
b) Qualification of the job offers (verifying they respect the eligibility criteria and some minimal levels of commitments)	
c) Identifying young people who might correspond to the offers	
d) The intermediation between the employer and candidates	
e) Negotiation with the employer of his/her commitments and engagements in terms of job content, skills training, etc.	Missions locales or Cap emploi
f) Signature of the administrative files that open the right to the subsidy from the State	
g) Accompaniment of the young person and the employer during the duration of the contract and control of the engagements	
h) Preparing the transition to another job if the employer cannot keep the young people	

4. Results

Some lessons can be drawn from the quantitative results provided by the Ministry of Employment and from some evaluation reports based on the first months of implementation.

4.1 Quantitative results

At the time when this discussion paper is written (mid-November 2013), it is fairly probable that the initiative is on track to meet its target of 100,000 EA for the end of 2013 (more precisely, the objective of 94,000 EA as 6,000 "Teacher" jobs are included in this figure and actually already 6,500 Teacher Jobs had been created in October 2013²⁷). By the end of October, 75,000 EA had been signed. However during the first months of 2013, until the month of May approximately, many doubts had arisen about the capacity of the programme to meet its target. The fact was that in the first months of the implementation, the progression in the number of EA created has been quite slow and the pace was lower than the expectations of the Ministry. After May, the pace strongly increased²⁸. In July for instance, more than 2,500 EA were signed each week on average.²⁹ Some reasons explaining this delayed take-off are given below.

This overall figure of the number of placements created nevertheless masks important discrepancies between regions and between ML. In September 2013, compared to the then rate of achievement of placements at national level (57% overseas territories excluded), some regions were 15 percentage points or more below their objectives (Ile-de-France or Champagne-Ardenne) while some other did perform much better (Midi-Pyrénées, Haute-Normandie or Poitou-Charentes being over 75% of placements)³⁰. The *départements* with the lowest rates were located in very urban areas with a lot of disadvantaged areas, in particular in the Parisian area. At that time, some areas already exceeded their objective. These are areas which are located in very rural regions (e.g., the Cantal department, which already achieved 135% of the objective in September). At a local level where performance targets have also been fixed for ML (as seen above), the same discrepancies have also been observed. While some of them rapidly reached their objectives, others still have to struggle with lower results. It actually appears that urban areas have been those where the number of EA to realise was the higher while rural areas have been those where this number was the lower.³¹ Maybe the bar was set too high for certain territories – and reversely too low for others. These questions the way targets have been fixed as they were based primarily on the basis of the number of young people (higher in urban areas) without taking into account labour market dynamics. Instructions have been given by the prefects to the *départements* and ML with best records not to stop their efforts once they reached 100%.

Some elements can be drawn regarding the efficiency of targeting, in a first place that of beneficiaries. In September 2013, 85% of beneficiaries had a qualification inferior to the baccalauréat and 74% a level inferior or equal to the CAP-BEP. Less than 3% of beneficiaries have a higher education level. 35% come from a disadvantaged area – in particular 16% from an urban disadvantaged area (ZUS). 3% of the EA have been signed by disabled young people. 35% of beneficiaries had been long-term

²⁷ Source: Ministry of Employment, 31/10/13, "Emplois d'avenir, un an d'action".

²⁸ In May 2013 that is seven months after the launching of the measure, only 20.000 contracts had been signed. In two months from May to July, this figure doubled and by the end of August 50,000 EA were reached. Then in two months between September and October 25,000 additional contracts were signed, leading to a total of 75,000.

²⁹ Germain report (2013), p. 43

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48. Each region, département and ML was fixed their own objective. In oversea territories the "prescription rate" was only equal to 36%.

³¹ This being due to the method of calculation of the objective, based in particular on the number of young people.

unemployed before entering the measure. These overall figures show a good targeting of the measure on the less qualified. The information we have from the missions locales do not report evidence of creaming, even though local operators sometimes have to strongly negotiate with employers about the prerequisites they would like to fix. Evidence suggests that many employers often have high demands and prerequisites which are not in line with the effective nature of the work. The share of young people living in urban disadvantaged areas is lower than the objective (20%). Local operators have been asked to intensify their actions in direction of these people.

Regarding the targeting of employers, intermediary figures in October indicated that 88% of the contracts were signed in the non-profit sector (35% of associations and 33% of local authorities) and 12% by the private sector. The share of the private sector has rapidly progressed, as it was only equal to 5% in July 2013. In the private sector, the three first sectors which have used the scheme are hotels-restaurants-tourism (19% of EA), construction (18%) and commerce (15%). In the non-profit sector, almost one fourth of the EA correspond to jobs in service to individuals, cleaning or waste collection, the other types of jobs concerned being located in the green sector, leisure centres, office duties or technical jobs.

Regarding the type of contracts, one first observation is that only a little bit more than half (56%) of beneficiaries have signed a 3-year contract or more (including 12% of open-ended contracts). One third of contracts were signed for 1 year. This contrasts with the ambition to deliver long-term support to young people. As seen above, 1-year contracts could be proposed only in case where the situation of the young beneficiary would call for it; actually this possibility has been used much more in order to convince employers reluctant to engage themselves for three years. This is an example of the kind of adjustments observed in the regulation and implementation of the measure (see below).

In the private sector, 65% of contracts are open-ended. This result is average. This is due to the fact that priority has been given to open-ended contracts in the negotiation with private employers.

A positive aspect is that 87% of the work contracts are full-time. There was some margin of manoeuvre for local operators making it possible to accept part-time offers – this figure shows that this possibility was not used too much.

Another interesting result is that in October 2013 less than 4% of the contracts had been cancelled either by the employer or the employee. In less than one case out of two, it was the employer's decision. This proves that the identification of candidates by local operators has been good and that the accompaniment in the first months has proven efficient. Nevertheless a lot of the contracts are recent (half of the 75,000 contracts were signed less than four months ago) and a lot of efforts will have to be done in the future months in terms of accompaniment.

Maybe the more problematic issue concerns access to skills training. Only 36% of the contracts include a commitment from the employer to engage in skills training (leading to a qualification).³² This corresponds to four employers out of ten in the non-profit sector and one out of four in the private sector.³³

4.2 Qualitative assessment

The quantitative elements given thus far need to be completed with other, qualitative, elements. At the end of 2013, it can be said that the scheme has meet its targets and has managed to offer job opportunities to low-qualified young people. The employers who have resorted to the scheme seem to be satisfied with it. Many young people who

³² Source: Ministry of employment, 31/10/13, Emplois d'avenir, un an d'action.

³³ Germain report (2013), p. 127.

only have experienced very short-time job contracts so far have had access to a long-term contract for the first time through the measure. The EA contract looks for many of them as a chance to gain independence and stability, and also to open new opportunities for the future when associated with a training adapted to the needs.

For the moment we can only rely on partial elements drawn from contacts on the ground or the press. It is important that large qualitative studies be launched in order to fully appreciate how employers and young people themselves assess the measure.

On another qualitative level, many points can also be raised regarding the implementation process. This is what we emphasise in the coming paragraphs.

5. Difficulties and constraints

5.1 A delayed take off and a necessary learning phase

We will insist on the role of the ML which have been put at the centre of the implementation process.³⁴ The implementation has actually experienced two phases. The first phase can be called a “learning” phase. It characterises the first months of implementation, from the launching in November 2012 to May 2013, during which local partnerships have been set up and local actors have progressively learned how to “master” the measure. The second phase corresponds to the months after May, which correspond to the effective “take off” of the programme.

This take off was initially thought to come earlier. It actually took six to eight months for actors to master the measure. It was the first time that ML were given the responsibility of the implementation of such a massive programme. There has been a necessary time to learn and adapt the work in the organisations; however being given the political context and the importance given to the programme, some pressure has nevertheless been constantly put on local operators to achieve quantitative results in these first months.

This learning phase has been both internal and external. On the internal side, work organisations in the ML have had to adapt to the requirements associated with the implementation of the EA. In general, the ML have a team of counsellors dedicated to the “global” or overall guidance and accompaniment of young people (this might concern professional orientation, retraining, but also social matters such as housing or health for instance), and another and more reduced in size team of counsellors specialised in access to employment. The latter counsellors are called “employment counsellors” or “employers partnership counsellors” (*chargés de relations entreprises*). The principle is that each time that a young people applies or wants to apply for a job offer, he or she may receive a personalised coaching by the latter. Another role of the “employment counsellors” is indeed to look for job offers and to set up specific partnerships with local employers, offering them recruitment services among other things. These “employment counsellors” have therefore had a central role in the implementation of the EA: they had to prepare themselves to the new measure, then to contact all local employers possibly interested by the measure, negotiate with employers the content of the job and check the employers’ commitment to provide training and a good working environment to the future employees; and in the mean time to identify young people eligible to it, prepare and coach them for the job interview, etc. In addition they have to do also several administrative duties in particular filling the job subsidy application that is later used by public authorities. All in all, this series of new tasks has represented an important change in practices which requires some time in order to be familiar with.

On the other side (the external character of the learning phase), the ML have also been asked to work in close partnership with other local operators such as the Pôle Emploi and Cap Emploi, as well as local public authorities (Direccte administration, representing the Ministry of Employment locally). A difficulty was that a job offer could either be received by the ML or Pôle Emploi or Cap Emploi, and that all eligible jobseekers in these three instances should have equal information about the existing offers. Many difficulties have occurred regarding the correct sharing of information between these agencies which do not have necessarily a long tradition of working

³⁴ We mainly draw here on a research study we have conducted for the research department of the Ministry of Employment, based on five monographies of Missions locales in the first months of implementation (Farvaque and Messaoudi, 2013).

together in close partnership. Some job offers have not always been shared, this in order to give priority to “one’s” young people.

All these elements focus on the fact that some time was required to adapt the work organisations, on the internal side, and local partnerships, on the external side. Local “operational cells” have been set up in order to help these different forms of learning. The presence of public authorities in these cells have permitted to transfer information, to ensure that all actors had a similar level of knowledge and to collectively improve the mastering of the measure. In the first months of implementation, these operational cells have been very useful in order to develop the knowledge. Public administration could be directly interrogated on very practical difficulties that in fact were frequent (regarding the eligibility of such or such young people or employer).³⁵ This direct relation with the administration has been a key element in the learning phase, because it had enabled local operators to have precise answers to very specific cases. A practical guide had initially been written by the Ministry of employment but despite some useful information for the very beginning, it could not later answer the plurality of particular cases faced by actors. In the first months of implementation, the Ministry wrote a complementary document called “Questions/Answers” that compiled a series of very practical questions and gave the point of view of public administration. This document has been updated several times. It has proven to be a very important tool in the implementation process.

To sum up, it is not surprising that some time has been necessary for such a large measure to “take off”, but the political context seems to have forgotten this. In fact, all relevant actors have started to work together at the launching of the measure, but not before. This is particularly true of the partnerships between local intermediaries and training organisations (training providers and financiers). The latter have been associated very lately to the process. As a result, while already in the first months of the implementation the ML were asked to achieve quantitative results, they had not even started to collaborate with all relevant actors in the field of training. This entailed that they were not totally ready to create individualised, efficient training action plans as they did not master all the (very complex in the French case) dimensions regarding training. Another difficulty is that local actors may have been constrained by the time that the elaboration of sectoral national agreements has taken. For instance in the field of health and social care, a national agreement intervened quite lately between social partners – this made that until then, no EA could be signed in this sector³⁶.

5.2 A progressive relaxing of certain rules

During the first months of implementation, the rules governing the EA have also evolved to take into account some difficulties experienced from the ground, and also to facilitate the involvement of employers. These evolutions have a result given more margins of manoeuvre to local intermediaries. The most important adaptations were the relaxing of the initial constraint imposed on the prior duration of unemployment (6 months out of 12 for the holders of a CAP-BEP, 12 months out of 18 for higher levels living in a targeted area) and the conditions regarding the work contract (one-year contracts have been more easily authorised while they should initially only be exceptional). This adaptation was made in order to facilitate the identification of potential beneficiaries by the ML. This time criterion has appeared to be too restrictive. The adaptation was also meant to simplify the administrative duties. In

³⁵ Many practical difficulties have arisen, for instance regarding whether or not the young people live in a targeted area (in a ZUS or not), regarding the duration of past unemployment (how to take into account partial activity or situations where young people were not registered as unemployed), and on the employers’ side regarding their eligibility (as a sectoral list of eligible private employers was to be priority set up), their obligations regarding training, the potential additional subsidies from the branch in what respects the financing of training, etc.

³⁶ Example mentioned in the Germain report.

effect it has appeared quite time-consuming to check for every young people identified his/her precise time spent as unemployed. Moreover not all these young people were officially *registered* unemployed, even though they were not employed. Exemptions for more qualified young people living in disadvantaged urban areas (ZUS) have been given most easily, if not automatically in certain regions.

The elaboration of the training plan with the employer is also an element which has been thought differently after some months of implementation. During Spring 2013, the initial conditions were relaxed. A prior and precise definition of the training plan – at the moment of the tripartite signature between the employer, the young beneficiary and the ML – was not considered a precondition. It can now be defined during the first months of the contract and later formalised at the time of the first follow-up interview in the third month. This relaxing has been very important in practice. It has facilitated the work of intermediaries and also their capacity to finalise contracts with employers. How many companies are able to formalise a 3-year individualised training plan at the time of the recruitment? This is what was more or less implicit in the initial legal texts. It appears more consistent to progressively prepare this training plan, so that it be properly adapted to the needs of both the employer and the young people. The important point here for local operators is to make it clear that the necessary commitment of the employer in terms of training is not abandoned, but that some time is given to all actors to decide for the most appropriate training content of the EA.

This series of adjustments and relaxing conditions has had positive effects in terms of quantitative performance. It is true that in certain areas, in the first months of implementation, local actors had had a quite strict interpretation of the rules, which led to poor performance results and also to difficulties in the negotiation with the employers. The good application of the rules in particular those that have been relaxed is locally controlled by public authorities (local representatives of the Ministry of employment). These public authorities might also give local actors some additional margins of manoeuvre, for instance in what regards other criteria, such as authorising part-time contracts. This had been the case in regions with difficulties to reach the quantitative goals. In what concerns the issue of relaxing certain criteria, a debate arose in the first months of the implementation about the possible enlargement of the benefit of the EA to higher levels of qualification. Voices have expressed their concern that the qualification criteria were too restrictive, that many young people with a *baccalauréat* level also have important difficulties to access employment and that they might also be eligible to the measure. Saying this, the implicit idea was that only after such an enlargement of eligibility criteria the scheme would reach its objective of 100,000 contracts. The end of the year has shown that this objective could be reached without such an enlargement. Nevertheless the difficulties encountered by many young people with higher qualifications, who cannot benefit from any job subsidy measure, remains an issue. A report has proposed that locally a quota of 5% of the EA might benefit to young people not respecting the qualification eligibility criteria.

5.3 Negotiation with potential employers and placement objectives

The general objective of 100,000 EA has been elaborated locally for each of the ML, as seen above. This performance target can be questioned: what is the meaning of such precise performance and placement targets? The Missions locales are not placement agencies as the Pôle Emploi can be. As intermediaries on the labour market, they cannot themselves create the jobs. This is why this quantitative objective measuring of *outcomes* has been a real matter for local actors as it could not give any idea of the important *efforts* made during all the process. The outcomes, measured in terms of the number of EA created locally, do not completely depend on the efforts of counsellors in the missions locales and not even on the quality of local partnerships. Several issues are beyond the scope of these local actors.

One important task realised by the counsellors in the Missions locales has been to find job opportunities around by contacting employers, and then to negotiate the content of the job with them. This negotiation is a central moment of the implementation of the measure. According to us, one central issue that might not have been sufficiently thought at the launching of the EA concerns the “negotiation power” of the intermediaries with local employers. This power has grown during the learning phase that we have just described above. But this capacity of negotiation has faced several difficulties, in particular the financial difficulties of many organisations in the non-profit sector and a certain prudence or wait-and-see attitude from local authorities. In the non-profit sector, where employers are accustomed to use this kind of job subsidy programmes, many innovations have raised concerns, as the job contracts are longer, should be full time and incorporating training.

A major difficulty whatever the type of employer (private or non-profit) has been the training period, which has been seen as too much constraining. The training plan actually requires from the employer to commit himself over a long period of time. It also requires having enough resources in time and staff to follow the young employee. Indeed, the training has a cost which is at the employer’s charge and which has to be anticipated at the outset. Given these perceived difficulties, many employers have preferred to resort to other policy measures or to abandon the project or recruiting under the EA scheme. In sum, the negotiation power of the intermediaries can only be enhanced there if there are collective resources (for instance under the form of the participation of other financing bodies or some accompaniment of employers in the field of human resources). The Emplois d’avenir should not be seen as created only by the sole intermediaries in particular the Missions locales – an idea that the performance target have contributed to raise –, on the contrary they only result from a *co-creation* or a *joint action* involving a whole collective of actors.

6. Success factors and transferability

The EA is a measure that has been appreciated by local actors for its many innovations, in particular the place of training and the long-term perspective offered to young people. This contrasts with other job subsidy programmes. As well, the targeting on the young people with the lower qualification has been much praised, even though some inevitable threshold effects or “pavement” effects as named in a report have occurred (that is the fact that young people may benefit the measure if they live on a certain side of the road, classified as being in the “ZUS” perimeter, while they will not if they live the opposite side). These effects have often been emphasised by practical actors when claiming for an enlargement of the eligibility conditions. These claims had some echo when the measure struggled to take off in the first six months or so.

As said above, we do not have enough material regarding the assessment made by employers or young beneficiaries, but existing data like the weak rupture rate or partial qualitative elements drawn from newspapers indicate that overall, both sides seem to be satisfied with the measure. Some initial failures were emphasised in newspapers (like the case of a social welfare agency which wanted to dismiss six young EA employees as they were not skilled enough) but they first of all showed that the measure cannot correspond to any recruitment project and that employers have to be informed well about their duties and commitment.

We have focussed on the fact that the implementation has been quite complicated in the first months. Today many improvements have been made and the measure seems fully operational. The ML have furthermore gained new fields of expertise in particular regarding training and are considered as reliable partners. A success factor has been the quality and size of the team of “employment counsellors” that is the ones dedicated to the setting up of partnerships with local employers. The more dense their relations with the local economy, the most effective has been the implementation of the EA. By contrast, in some ML the relations with local employers are sometimes not developed enough, which has been a factor of difficulty. Budgets have been provided by the State to reinforce these teams. But they were associated with a conditionality principle (or at least interpreted that way by local agencies) putting that these sums should be reimbursed if the quantitative objectives were not eventually reached. This has been perceived as a very constrained support. The perverse effect has been that several ML have waited to recruit staff because of this risk, this in consequence entailing an increased workload for the rest of the team.³⁷

Another success factor has been the involvement of actors in the field of training to accompany employers, to arrange training sessions adapted to the needs and of course to finance fully or partly the cost of training.

On the employers’ side, the main success factors have been the engagement of local authorities in recruiting young people under EA. Some have been quite reluctant either for political reasons or by lack of resources to supervise the young people. This difficulty was also observed in associations or small companies. For this reason, the more the ML and their partners are able to provide a HR expertise to the smaller structures, the more the intermediation can be effective. By contrast, several larger companies (named “key accounts”) have soon or later engaged themselves on large

³⁷ In 2011, there were 10,500 employees (full-time jobs) in the ML hence the overall ratio would be 9.5 EA by employee. The ratio of the number of young people by employee is 130. However, not all these employees have accompanied young people towards jobs in the EA framework. If one only considers the “employment counsellors” and not all the counsellors in the Missions locales, then the ratio is higher. Based on the data drawn in five ML (Farvaque and Messaoudi, 2013), this ratio would be comprised between 40 and 110. This depends on one side on the size of the team of “employment counsellors” and the decision to hire or not new counsellors in 2013, and on the other side of course on the number of EA objectives.

volumes of EA (for instance 1,000 jobs at the national postal service, 500 at the SNCF – national railway company –, 200 at the RATP – the subway network in Paris, etc.). These volumes have often been directly negotiated between these companies and the State. In a similar perspective, the progressive though quite late elaboration of national sectoral agreements in the public or non-profit sector (for instance in many sports federations) has been crucial to develop the number of EA. In some sectors, additional financing have provided many incentives to recruit. As well, some local authorities have also provided extra financing in direction of non-profit employers.

Still concerning the place of private employers, many debates have ensued. The risk of deadweight effect is of course not nil. However, the private sector may sometimes provide young people with better opportunities for the future (under the form of permanent contracts). If there is accompaniment and control, windfall effects are reduced. Another argument is that job subsidies in the private sector are cheaper for the public budget (35% of subsidy instead of 75%).

Some difficulties observed on the ground have progressively been solved, thanks to a pragmatic adaptation of rules which interpretation has often been strict at the beginning. Public authorities could be flexible that way while keeping inflexible vis-à-vis the growing claim for a general enlargement. This has been a positive factor.

Several difficulties remain. A first one concerns the cumbersome administrative procedures imposed on local actors. Some relaxing is strongly praised by actors, because this represents a time which is not spent with potential employers or young candidates. A second difficulty concerns the stereotypes associated with the programme. The EA have immediately been associated by many (including many employers) with young people with multiple difficulties or unemployable youngsters. The public communication could have been improved on that aspect. In relation with this idea, a third difficulty relates to the global image of the scheme, seen as just one more job subsidy programme with no real long-term perspective for the employees. The programme has been strongly associated in the public opinion with a sort of opportunistic measure to diminish unemployment in France. Only the future and future assessment – in particular cohort studies and qualitative surveys – will say if these jobs were really designed to improve their beneficiaries' future situation.

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