



# Step-by-step assessment of youth support as part of the youth engagement contract

Report

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## SUMMARY

[1] <sup>1</sup>The Youth Engagement Contract (CEJ) is a support and professional integration scheme aimed at young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are neither in training, nor in employment, nor in studies (known as NEETs). This scheme has been deployed since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 by the 900 local employment centre agencies and by the 440 local employment missions, and replaces the Youth Guarantee. The Minister for Labour, Full Employment and Inclusion commissioned Igas to conduct a “step-by-step assessment of the scheme, one year after its launch”. Among the main subjects to be examined, the letter of engagement mentions in particular the reliability of the indicators, the quality and relevance of the service offer and questions relating to certification.

[2] Conducting an assessment of a scheme during its first year of implementation is not straightforward and it is above all the deployment conditions that are then analysed rather than the effectiveness of the scheme, which is in principle still uncertain. To carry out its work, the mission relied on the available dashboards, data extracted from information systems, interviews with national managers, field trips in six regions and in-depth interviews in a seventh region, but also on *ad hoc* surveys that it carried out with directors and advisors of employment agencies and local missions. Appendix 1 specifies the methodological elements and presents all the results of the two surveys conducted with the advisors. This rather extensive investigation work, carried out with the support of both networks and after case reviews conducted with randomly selected advisors, has made it possible to considerably enrich the diagnosis made and to improve the understanding of the dashboards.

### 1. Three significant contextual elements: the health crisis, labour market dynamism and the prefiguration work for France Travail

[3] Three significant contextual elements should be considered in the assessment of the scheme. Indeed, **the health crisis** has led to a significant **deterioration in the mental health** of the population, as confirmed by studies conducted by Santé Publique France. These problems particularly impact young people and people in vulnerable social situations such as NEETs. The **labour market experienced unprecedented** momentum in 2022 with 12% of recruitment projects and a 74% increase in job vacancies in the last quarter compared to the previous year. This momentum has created greater employment prospects for all young people seeking employment, regardless of their support scheme. Finally, **the creation of France Travail** will lead to an overhaul of the entire organisation, governance and terms of the public employment service, which will have a major impact on the relations between local missions and the Pôle emploi (employment centre) network, far beyond the CEJ. The management, the cooperation methods of the stakeholders and even the scheme tools must therefore be adapted to France Travail and not the other way around.

### 2. The assessment of quantitative management: an unquestionable dynamic, inadequate dashboards and problematic assessment

[4] With 301,725 young people joining the CEJ at the end of January 2023, the overall volume is close to what was announced (300,000 at the end of December). The **dynamism is therefore undeniable** at this stage, partly due to the strong mobilisation of networks that have interpreted

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<sup>1</sup> For Not in Employment, Education or Training.

the government's "estimation" as a target. The composition of the audience is also in line with the expectations of the public authorities with a **significant overrepresentation of young graduates** (especially in local missions) without excluding the participation of young university graduates, although very much in the minority. Young people from priority areas designated in the government's urban policy (in local missions) and rural regeneration areas (in employment agencies) are also well represented. **Disabled jobseekers** are very slightly overrepresented, particularly within local missions, which represents an improvement compared to the youth guarantee. Although almost all of the beneficiaries of the CEJ in local missions receive the allowance (ACEJ), this is only the case for one in two young people in the Pôle Emploi.

[5] 70% of the CEJ beneficiaries were already monitored by the public employment services (PES). This shows that both networks are continuing their efforts to reach new audiences, but that the majority of beneficiaries are still young people who are already receiving support. From this point of view, **the question arises as to the capacity of the system to support all 900,000 NEETs**. The mission believes that the features of the scheme make it particularly suitable for a large proportion of them, but that **its own requirements - and its ambitions for short-term professional integration - probably make it less accessible to others**. The ongoing deployment of the At-risk Youth-CEJ scheme, which is more suited to audiences remote from the Public Employment Service (PES), should make it possible to meet this need, but it will be necessary to ensure that overall coverage meets the objectives pursued.

[6] The CEJ provides for **15-20 hours of "accompanied activity"** each week for each beneficiary and a **weekly interview** with their advisor. National dashboards indicate that despite an average activity of more than 15 hours, 40% of beneficiaries do not reach this alone and 20% are below 5 hours. The weekly interview is conducted in less than one in two cases. However, the field investigations and the additional work of the mission showed **the very low significance of these national aggregates** due to the great diversity of local practices (benchmarks, priorities, analysis of situations). Beyond a one-off improvement in the calculation of interviews (by chat via the dedicated application), the mission recommends **limiting this monitoring to the local level**, where it continues to be highly relevant, as these two markers refer to specific characteristics of the CEJ (enhanced support and beneficiary involvement), the **principle of which is not questioned** by the advisors and beneficiaries.

[7] **The Exit Tracking Dashboard is of even more limited relevance**. Information is not always available, some young people may fall into several categories (relocation, withdrawal, end of the CEJ, etc.) and the overall statement compares situations that ought not to be. In the end, it results in an "uninterpretable" table where, apart from the 30% to 40% of young people who have a sustainable job, the information is uncertain and questionable. In order to monitor the objective of professional integration, the mission recommends **monitoring the employment rate per cohort** entered into the CEJ, which has already been set up for beneficiaries registered with the Pôle Emploi. The mission therefore proposes refocusing the national dashboards on this indicator, on those relating to the **composition of audiences** and on monitoring the **use of internships in companies** and **structuring solutions**.

[8] The **assessment of the impact of the scheme** seems, however, a little premature. Employment rate indicators are incomplete (the beneficiaries monitored at local missions and not registered with the employment centre Pôle Emploi are missing) and above all **lack a baseline**: a high employment rate is not a guarantee of efficiency - and may be an indication of less efficiency - if the chances of obtaining a job are particularly high over the period. Deployment choices complicate the assessment, but the mission proposes several courses of action (using in particular the start date of the scheme and age limit) which are detailed in Appendix 2. The example of the

youth guarantee also shows that it **sometimes takes two years** to see a (very) significant effect. This latter example should also inspire possible adjustments of the CEJ as the work of the assessors tends to show the considerable efficiency of the scheme, at least at the time of its launch.

### 3. The consequences and necessary adjustments of a national deployment without a test phase by two separate networks

[9] The deployment of the CEJ by two different networks is an unprecedented development of the scheme, with the aim of enabling as many young people as possible to benefit from it. This initial choice undoubtedly contributed to the solid momentum observed, but it has significant consequences, not only on the CEJ itself but also on the relations between the Pôle Emploi network and local missions, especially since the choice of structure is not the prerogative of the public employment service but lies with the young person. Through the setting of separate quantitative targets deployed locally according to independent and uncoordinated methods, this choice has led to **competition among operators**, which has **undermined the cooperation work** carried out for several years, around the concepts of “reinforced partnership” and “co-contracting”. **The targeting of young jobseekers** towards the missions that took place in this context **fell by 38%** during 2022, and field interviews all confirmed a new difficulty, which only robust but one-off local initiatives were able to overcome. Although a strict segmentation of audiences seems unattainable in the current context, the mission recommends, as a minimum, ensuring that young people with peripheral barriers are directed or redirected to local missions. In order to mitigate the most negative effects of competition, it also recommends that territorial deployment be carried out according to coordinated and transparent programming, with shared criteria. Over the medium term, the establishment of France Travail must be an opportunity to guarantee this indispensable coordination effort.

[10] Deployment within the two separate networks has further consequences linked to some of their most radical differences, particularly in terms of organisation. Thus, while the “portfolios” of **CEJ beneficiaries per Pôle Emploi advisor** (all dedicated exclusively to the CEJ) are set nationally at **30 persons** for six-month contracts, **local missions** have made very different choices, with advisors accompanying **20 to 50 young people under the CEJ** but also, in some cases, a **hundred others** within the framework of the local missions’ own scheme (PACEA or others). These choices necessarily have an impact on the nature and importance of support, which can therefore differ fundamentally in a territory from considerations that are not always directly linked to the needs of the beneficiaries. The mission therefore recommends that **the various methods of organisation be assessed** and their adaptation to the public be integrated into the future **certification approach**, whose relevance is self-evident but which currently seems **premature**. Similarly, the information system for local missions (SI-MILO) and its governance, combined with the new monitoring requirements (see above), has led to a **significant administrative burden on local missions**, causing sometimes strong reluctances with regard to a scheme whose relevance in principle is nevertheless welcomed within the two networks. To resolve - in part - this problem, the mission insists on the importance of the planned deployment of the interfacing between the CEJ app and SI-MILO. As part of France Travail, the standardisation of tools and approaches among operators must enable significant progress with regard to problems that are not all specific to the CEJ.

[11] The other special feature of the scheme, compared to the youth guarantee in particular, was its **simultaneous deployment throughout the territory**. This choice, dictated by legal (the existence of a service prohibits gradual deployment) and political reasons (the principle of experimentation has been ruled out), had significant consequences on its launch, in particular on that of the two networks, which do not structurally benefit from national planning capacity. The

**friction observed in the field and the significant difficulties** encountered during the **first months of implementation** may be attributable to it. The structures were only able to benefit from the adjustment of practices, tools and organisations after a period of adaptation that was difficult to manage and had an impact, at least on orientation, if not on the support of beneficiaries. The modes of cooperation between the two networks which are still felt to be too embryonic and most likely fall short of the challenges of the service offers deserve to be better shared or even pooled, particularly in the field of **mental health** or mobility, for example.

[12] This rapid deployment has also left the state's regional services in an ambiguous situation where their role seems unclear and their action lacks global leverages. While the upcoming provision of France Travail should make it possible to clarify everyone's roles and **local governance** arrangements well beyond the CEJ, the mission already recommends the provision of tools for a more extensive integration.

#### 4. The first 12 months' proof-of-concept: lessons learned for a more qualitative deployment

[13] The satisfaction survey carried out under the aegis of the two networks and the DGEFP demonstrated the satisfaction of the scheme's beneficiaries. The interviews with the mission confirmed this satisfaction (although there was a selection bias connected with the act of responding to this type of survey or agreeing to meet an Igas member). The advisors interviewed also welcomed a scheme that focuses them on their "core business" but highlighted a significant downside related to the administrative burden on local missions (see *above*). The CEJ has therefore led to many innovations and adjustments, such as the collective periods of local missions (adapted from the youth guarantee and shortened). These initiatives and, more generally, the enhanced support provided by the CEJ seem particularly necessary for some beneficiaries who see themselves as lost and have high expectations of their advisor.

[14] The principle of support schemes such as the CEJ is to build or define a career plan leading ultimately to sustainable integration in the labour market. With this in mind, **an early work placement period (PMSMP) or contact with working life seems essential** and the Commission has already highlighted the late nature of such experiences in French schemes. In particular, by proposing to **refocus the monitoring of the** dashboards on this aspect, the mission recommends setting **ambitious objectives** in this area. To achieve this, corporate mobilisation schemes are potentially useful tools but the current impact of them is limited; the mission proposes at least to better follow the local variations of major national commitments but above all to intensify joint approaches between local missions and agencies.

[15] In order to achieve integration, the various "**structuring solutions**" highlighted in the CEJ can also play an important role. This diverse category (but defined by regulations) combines both training courses and support and assistance solutions with the same objectives as those pursued in the two networks, which may concern more or less restricted audiences. Contrary to expectations, the deployment of the CEJ has not been accompanied by a particular growth of these solutions outside of training. Their interest, availability and relevance for audiences accompanied by advisors are not always well identified, which raises the dual issue of establishing their local **mapping** and their **doctrine of use**. While these two tools seem to clearly emerge from France Travail's essential missions at national and local level, the mission already recommends starting work immediately between the two networks and the solutions providers to move forward on a better understanding of these tools, which alone will enable them to be used in the best possible way to promote the integration of young people into employment.

[16] Another “innovative” feature of the scheme is that the **penalty mechanism now appears inadequate and ineffective**, even though its principle is well accepted by the advisors. Not being monitored at national level - in particular due to a lack of local missions in the information system - it appears to be complex, too slow and has a narrow educational scope. Despite recent improvements, the mission proposes to make it quicker and more flexible and to allow a means of appeal to the State services in the event of exclusion. However, there are two important considerations that qualify this observation: beneficiaries who do not complete their monthly declaration of resources cannot receive the allowance - which is in practice the largest penalty - and support for the employment of young people in sometimes complex or very difficult personal situations requires the advisor ascertaining the most effective approach to achieve this: what is the prospect of the inclusion of a young NEET who has been excluded from the CEJ or who has withdrawn following a penalty? The answer to this question is crucial if we want to reduce the number of NEETs on a long-term basis. Finally, France Travail’s perspective should also encourage reflection on a reconciliation of the various penalty mechanisms, which are currently very inconsistent: how can we justify that a beneficiary of the CEJ who receives return-to-work assistance (ARE) does not incur the same penalties, on the basis of identical conduct, as another beneficiary who receives the CEJ allowance?

[17] In light of the experience of the first 12 months, the mission also proposes that this **CEJ allowance evolves** around two aspects: a conditional extension of the adult allowance to **minors** and **cumulation possibilities** that are more consistent with the integration objective, based on the rules of the Youth Guarantee.

## Conclusion

[18] On balance, the assessment of the CEJ one year after its launch is far from negative, but it is somewhat contrasting. Although it is still too early for an impact assessment, the dynamics of the scheme are undeniable and it benefits from positive feedback from young people and advisors, despite the administrative burden perceived as too high. Adjustments therefore appear necessary to simplify monitoring (simplification of dashboards), to adapt tools (especially IT), to reduce administrative procedures, but also to better mobilise companies and review the penalty and allocation system. However, it is in the cooperation between the two networks in charge of deployment that the most significant efforts have yet to be achieved. In order to put an end to the problems and frictions that this unprecedented choice may have caused, special efforts must be made, and more generally, the relationship between the various stakeholders must be reconsidered: the implementation of France Travail must enable an organisation that avoids the shortcomings observed. The last point that the mission feels should not be overlooked, is that this deployment demonstrates the importance, for a system of this scale and ambition, of having the means *ex ante* to correct design errors or inaccuracies, being equipped with the relevant tools and building a robust assessment framework.