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Third Annual Report of the Evaluation Committee of the National Strategy for the prevention and fight against poverty

PRESENTATION FILE

The third annual report of the Evaluation Committee of the National Strategy for the prevention and fight against poverty 2018-2022, chaired by Louis Schweitzer and led by France Stratégie, takes stock of the Strategy being implemented and opens perspectives for a Strategy 2023-2027.

The Evaluation Committee's work focuses on the rollout and impact of the 35 measures of the Strategy, the governance and territorial implementation of the Strategy, and the five-year "Housing first" Plan 2018-2022. The aim is to assess the effects - including unintended effects - of each of the 35 measures as well as to analyze the overall effect of the Strategy on poverty and thus its relevance.

The Evaluation Committee consulted, as it has done since the start of its work in autumn 2019, the "college" of persons in poverty or precarious situations (5th college) of the "Conseil national des politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale (CNLE)" (National council against poverty and social exclusion) and the panel of 30 citizens it has set up. It also relied on hearings with experts and people in charge of implementing the Strategy and the administrations and public bodies concerned by the Strategy.

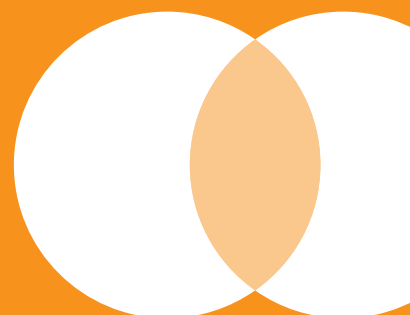
Poverty in France: some figures

According to INSEE, the monetary poverty rate in metropolitan France in 2019 was 14.6%, which equates to **9.2 million people** living with less than 1,102 euros per month for a single person.

After a 0.7-point increase in 2018 and a 0.2-point decrease in 2019, INSEE estimates that the income poverty would stagnate in 2020 at 14.6 percent. It would not have increased but would have intensified.

Nearly **two million people** in France live in extreme poverty: they live on incomes below 50% of the median income and are unable to cover at least 7 of the 13 daily expenses considered desirable or even necessary for an acceptable standard of living.

The French **overseas departments** are particularly affected by poverty.





UNEQUAL PROGRESS ACCORDING TO THE MEASURES

The Strategy has suffered two major shocks during its deployment: the Gilets jaunes movement and the coronavirus crisis. These events called into question the initial orientation of the Strategy, which was strongly inspired by the social investment perspective.

Since 2018, the ambitions of 9 measures have changed downward (3) or upward (6).

Of the 35 measures of the Strategy, the Committee notes that:

- Four measures have been fully implemented: the increase of the employment bonus (*prime d'activité*); the implementation of the complementary health insurance scheme (*Complémentaire santé solidaire* - CSS); the renewal of the complementary health insurance scheme for recipients of the guaranteed minimum income (*revenu de solidarité active* - RSA); and the deployment of 400 budget advice points.
- Two measures were abandoned, for example the two adults per kindergarten class in 60 priority districts for urban policy (*Quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville* QPV), merged with the Cités éducatives scheme.
- The 29 other measures (including the seven agreed under contracts with the departments) have been launched. For 5 measures, some of the objectives have already been achieved and their deployment is continuing e.g., the creation of places in temporary medical accommodation for the sick (*Lits halte soins santé* - LHSS). For the others, the state of progress is uneven.

In particular:

- The consultation work on the universal activity income (*Revenu universel d'activité* - RUA), which was suspended at the time of the first containment in 2020, did not resume afterwards;
- Territorial experiments aimed at creating a universal service offer within the framework of the Public Service for Integration and Employment (*Service public de l'insertion et de l'emploi* - SPIE) are still underway;

- The ambitious measure of training social workers, which was a pillar of the Strategy, has made little progress.

INCOMPLETE BUDGET INFORMATION

The committee does not have a clear picture of the volume of expenditures made in relation to the original budget.

- For the 16 measures for which it has information on spending from 2019 to 2021, the committee notes that they are three times larger than anticipated at the launch of the Strategy in 2018 (13.1 billion euros for an amount initially planned of 4.3 billion). This is explained by the expenses associated with the Strategy's main budgetary measure, the increase of the employment bonus (*prime d'activité*), which has seen its budget multiplied by four.
- The remaining 15 measures for which the Evaluation Committee has information cover expenditures of 1.35 billion euros, or 82% of the original budget for these measures.

AN IMPLEMENTATION IN THE TERRITORIES

- The organization planned to steer the Strategy has been put in place, despite some delays. The financial resources announced for the contractualization have been confirmed, thus making the State's commitment credible, particularly with regard to local authorities. However, the political support for the Strategy remains insufficient to give the Interministerial Delegation for the Prevention of and Fight against Poverty (*Délégation interministérielle à la prévention et à la lutte contre la pauvreté* - DIPLP), which is in charge of it, the means for interministerial coordination and steering to guarantee a level of implementation commensurate with the initial ambitions. The lack of monitoring tools also hampers the ability to steer and evaluate the strategy.
- In its evaluation report on contractualization, IGAS (*Inspection générale des affaires sociales/Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales*), while emphasizing

the significant contribution of the anti-poverty commissioners to the territorial deployment of the Strategy, points out that the territorial governance of the Strategy can be improved. The contractual framework with indicators, even if it can be improved, encourages performance evaluation, an important step in improving the service provided to the public.

- The specific local characteristics of poverty and governance in the overseas territories call for greater flexibility in adapting the agreements to these territories, strengthening the skills of actors and supporting local engineering.
- The shock of citizen participation sought in the Strategy has not been achieved.
- The field of social innovation reinvested by the DIPLP via the development and evaluation of experiments and projects in the territories has not yet allowed for the development of the desired evidence center.

EVALUATIVE RESULTS ARE STILL LIMITED

The committee assesses the impact of the Strategy in terms of three main objectives: avoiding the social reproduction of poverty; enabling people to move out of poverty through employment; and leaving no one in extreme poverty - this objective having been integrated by the committee.

It is still too early to know the full impact of the Strategy - either the impact is not yet tangible, or it is not yet measurable, or the data is not yet available.

However, it is possible to affirm, in view of the available studies, the significant effect of the revaluation of the activity bonus allowance, which led to a decrease in poverty in 2019 of around 0.6 to 0.7 point. However, this was offset by some measures outside the Strategy. On the one hand, some measures have led to a decrease in the standard of living of the poorest, such as the freezes and sub-indexation of benefits. On the other hand, some measures have increased median income and consequently the poverty line, such as the exemptions for overtime.

The available data do not allow us to estimate the effect of the Strategy on the evolution of poverty since 2019. However, the stability of income poverty in 2020 can be linked to the measures implemented during the health crisis. It is estimated that without these measures (widespread use of the partial activity scheme, exceptional support provided to low-income households), the monetary poverty rate would have been 0.5 point higher.

The main measures for the non-reproduction of poverty have not yet led to significant improvements in the quantity or quality of childcare. There is no evidence of an increase in the number of poor children in day care centers or the development of day care centers in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The Nursery promoting professional inclusion system (*crèches à vocation d'insertion professionnelle* - AVIP) seems to be achieving its objectives but remains very limited in scope. There is no evidence to assess the effects of the nutrition support programmes for kids, which were not initially designed to have a significant impact on the reproduction of poverty.

The complementary health insurance (CSS), the most important measure of the "Health" component of the Strategy, has been implemented. However, the data currently available do not allow us to measure its effects on access to complementary health care, the use of health care, or the health status of the poorest people.

The measures designed to identify "vulnerable" young people and not leave them "without a solution" seem to have led to more young people being directed towards employment and training (in particular through the Youth Guarantee). The number of recipients of minimum social benefits in support programs has also increased (in particular through the Activity Guarantee), although the volumes involved remain low.

Finally, experiments aimed at improving access to social rights (data mining, schemes as the 'extended entitlements appointments' trialed by the CNAF - France's family benefits authority - in 2017) seem promising.

At this stage, there has been no improvement in the inequality indicators for early childhood and educational



success. Labour market indicators have improved significantly over the period of the Strategy, particularly for youth. However, it is impossible to link these positive trends to the Strategy's actions alone. Finally, there is a lack of data to track changes in the overall indicators for housing, health and social rights since the launch of the Strategy.

The Evaluation Committee also underlines the limitations encountered in its evaluation mission (lack of quantified objectives for measures, unavailability of data for the selected indicators, impossibility of launching certain scientific studies).

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

THEME 1

Putting the fight against poverty in an ambitious and global approach

- **Recommendation 1**

Continue or even expand measures that have proven to be effective, discontinue or reconfigure measures that have not produced the expected effects, and complete the Strategy in areas that are not sufficiently covered.

- **Recommendation 2**

Maintain the multidimensional nature of the Strategy, strengthen its interdepartmental and collaborative dimension, and ensure that the Strategy is well articulated with all sectoral policies that target the same audiences (child protection, health, education, etc.).

- **Recommendation 3**

Ensure that a future strategy is consistent with other policies that may have an effect on poverty, in particular by measuring the expected effects on the poorest of the pension reform and the recent unemployment reform. To address the current crises, guarantee the purchasing power of the poorest people by indexing the support benefits dedicated to them (minimum social benefits, housing subsidies, means-tested family benefits) to inflation.

- **Recommendation 4**

Reaffirm the preventive dimension of the Strategy in addition to other public policies that are more focused on reparation. Strengthen the focus on the non-reproduction of poverty and integrate actions for young people aged 11 to 15 and for equal access to higher education, a major issue in the fight against the reproduction of poverty.

- **Recommendation 5**

To give ourselves the means to eliminate extreme poverty in France and to ensure decent living conditions for all those who live there in metropolitan and overseas France, without conditions. In addition, improve knowledge and data available on extreme poverty.

- **Recommendation 6**

Take into account the non-monetary dimensions of poverty (access to socialization, access to culture, integration of mental health, etc.) in anti-poverty policies.

THEME 2

Strengthen the priority areas for poverty reduction

- **Recommendation 7**

Intensify the fight against non-take-up, at a time when the all-digital world appears to be a barrier to access to social rights for the most disadvantaged. Mobilize the known levers that underlie the Strategy's measures, such as clarity, active outreach automated procedures, automatic opening of rights, identification of potential beneficiaries and offering several services in a single location. Publish the results of the evaluation of the "Territoire zéro non-recours" experiment provided for by the law and pursue the initiatives that work. Rapidly mobilize the possibilities opened up by Article 82 of the Law on the Financing of Social Security (LFSS) for 2021 for the exchange and processing of personal data between social protection organizations in order to identify the rights of potential benefit recipients. Maintain a physical presence in the various public services. Create users' committees in order to identify obstacles to accessing social rights in public services and unravel certain practices in the field that lead to non-take-up.

- **Recommendation 8**

Implement the universal activity income (RUA), whose postponement was seen as a step backwards in relation to the ambitions of the Strategy. To do this, the report submitted to the government at the beginning of 2022 must be quickly published and the consultation process resumed.

- **Recommendation 9**

Review the levers used to implement the "Housing First" plan and increase the amount of housing available for low-income groups. The lack of a decrease in the number of people in emergency housing is evidence of the difficulties encountered in implementing the "Housing First" plan. Moreover, the structural dimension of the housing component of the Strategy is too weak in view of the challenges.

- **Recommendation 10**

The youth commitment contract (*Contrat d'engagement jeune* - CEJ) and its component for young people who are in vulnerable situations (CEJ *Jeunes en rupture*) make it possible to improve the care of precarious young people and in particular NEETs, young people who are neither in employment, nor in studies, nor in training. However, **during the evaluation of the CEJ, attention must be paid to the risk of rupture at the end of a limited duration program (18 to 24 months, renewable for the most vulnerable young people) and to the situations of non-take-up that may arise** for young people who are furthest from employment, in connection with the contractual format of the CEJ. For the CEJ, as for other support programs, **special attention must also be paid to those who are furthest from employment**, who may be more difficult to reach and for whom the reinforcement of the logic of rights and duties favored in the support program may prove to be the most restrictive.

- **Recommendation 11**

Promote access to higher education for the most disadvantaged young people (reduce the disparity in investment between programs, create additional places, increase the amount of subsidized housing for the most disadvantaged students, etc.) **and strengthen financial support to the**

most precarious students. The objective of equal opportunity must also be fully taken into account in the mechanisms of educational guidance.

- **Recommendation 12**

Implementing a strategy with measures oriented towards specific groups that require dedicated policies in addition to universalist policies: isolated women, women victims of violence, people leaving prison, people living in emergency accommodation, etc.

- **Recommendation 13**

Pay particular attention to the fight against poverty in the Overseas Territories, where the poorest French departments are located - in 2017, the poverty rate reached 33% in Guadeloupe 34% in Martinique, 42% in Reunion, 53% in French Guiana, and 77% in Mayotte - and where a quarter of the people in extreme poverty reside.

THEME 3

Ensure local deployment adapted to the territories in a partnership and participatory logic

- **Recommendation 14**

In a context where the significant contribution of the anti-poverty commissioners is recognized, **clarify the roles in the implementation of the Strategy in the territories**, which today relies on two coexisting networks, each with their own logic and temporality, and thus avoid double administration.

- **Recommendation 15**

Rebalance the contractualization between the State and the departments in order to give more room to departmental initiative measures than to mandatory core measures. Clearly allocate responsibilities and ensure the availability of an information system that allows for accountability, comparability and evaluation.

- **Recommendation 16**

Continue to involve people experiencing poverty in the implementation of the Strategy, both at local and national level. Ensure that the material and organizational conditions for participation are guaranteed.



THEME 4

Develop the means to monitor and evaluate

- **Recommendation 17**

Clearly define the objectives of the policies being evaluated at the policy design stage against poverty and to match each of the objectives a quantified target. The evaluation must determine whether the objectives initially set have been achieved and whether the effects produced were those expected.

- **Recommendation 18**

Establish a national and territorial dashboard from the beginning of the implementation of the Strategy and **provide for a budgetary monitoring** document and implementation standards in order to monitor accurately and annually the implementation of the Strategy.

- **Recommendation 19**

Plan for evaluation from the design of the future Strategy and put in place the conditions for the production and collection of the data and indicators necessary for evaluation before the strategy is launched.

- **Recommendation 20**

To improve the information systems of the departments in order to strengthen the effectiveness of social action, make life easier for users and have the data necessary to evaluate public policies. To this end, the committee encourages a strategic dialogue between the State and the départements on the development, financing and objectives of information systems.

- **Recommendation 21**

Dedicate financial resources to evaluation in order to finance both scientific studies and the evolution of the information systems of data producers. As the committee has already proposed, dedicate 1% or 0.5% of the budget allocated to each measure to its evaluation.

- **Recommendation 22**

Develop the evaluation of social investment policies in order to assess the efficiency of these policies by comparing the monetary and social

benefits with the expenses. This requires scientific studies (cost-benefit analyses, literature reviews, impact evaluations, etc.), the matching of administrative data and the monitoring of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the measures over a long period of time.

- **Recommendation 23**

Involve research teams upstream of the implementation of a program in order to set up the necessary conditions for evaluation. The objective is to provide evidence of the success of a new program before it is scaled up or generalized, and thus to implement evidence-based public policies.

- **Recommendation 24**

Evaluate support towards employment programs, with respect to:

- 1 their effects on access to employment for its beneficiaries and on the overall level of return to employment;
- 2 their effects other than the return to employment, particularly in terms of access to rights and psycho-social effects for its beneficiaries.

The committee also suggests involving autonomous actors from the administration in the evaluation of the CEJ, such as the insertion commission of the *Conseil d'orientation de la Jeunesse* (COJ), which is already in charge of monitoring its implementation.



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