

The French Youth Experimentations Fund

By Martin Hirsch,
Former High Commissioner for youth
policies
President of the Agency for Civic Service

Cape Town , January 17, 2011

French social context (1)

- A comprehensive social protection system (universal health insurance; minimal income; numerous family allowances; generous pensions)
- Large range of public services including free education, access to university without fees
- Very high level of social expenditures (about one third of the national wealth)
- But...

French social context (2)

- A quite high level of unemployment (around 9% of the active population)
- 11% of the population living under the poverty threshold ($\leq 900\text{€}$ /per month for one single personne)
- Increasing deficits and increasing social expenditures

The youth situation (1)

- High level of unemployment in the youth population
- Many precarious jobs
- Almost 20% of the youth under the poverty threshold
- A very pessimistic feeling among the youth about its future

The youth population (2)

- Acute difficulties for young people living in the suburbs
- Massive difficulties for young people from immigrant families
- 15% of the young population without a diploma

Youth policies

- Very few proposals in political programmes about youth
- A shared responsibility between the government and the local authorities
- A demand for « autonomy »
- About 50 billions euros of public expenses for the youth (education, family allowances, tax credits)

The youth at the governmental agenda

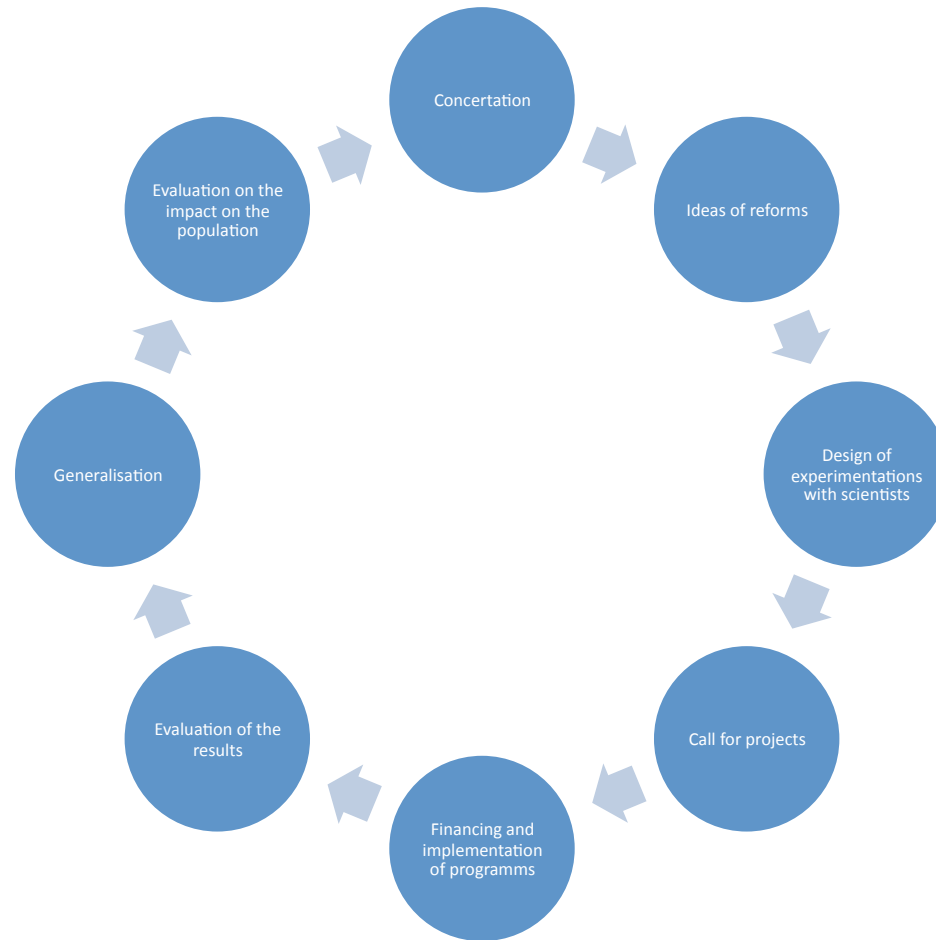
- In 2009, creation of a commission on youth policy, chaired by the High Commissioner, with all the stake holders;
- ... reaching a consensus around 50 proposals to improve the situation of the youth,
- Their implementation could be costly in a context of hard constraints.

The idea of experimentation

- Select the more cost/effective solutions
- Convince that it's possible to improve the situation
- Involve all the stake holders at local and national level
- Avoid to add benefits without increasing the level of employment and the level of qualification
- Avoid ideological endless battles

The idea of experimentation in french public policies

- A new concept
- A change in the constitutionnal law in order to authorize experimentations (2003) without any implementation before 2007
- The major part of the politicians reluctant to the idea
- No specific financing



Organisation of the experimentations

- Principle acted by law
- Budget 150 millions euros
- Private contributions 50 millions euros
- Management commission with all the ministers, local authorities, financiers
- Scientific committee
- Call for projects on specific themes
- 300 projects are selected
- 30% of the budget for evaluation

Exemples of issues tested

- How to reduce the proportion of student who give up their studies without diploma?
- Impact of financing driving licence on the insertion on job market?
- Should young people having a volunteer period increase their chance to find a job?
- Free access to care: overconsumption or better prevention?
- Efficiency of boarding school with reinforced support
- How to reduce discriminations for young people coming from immigration?

