SERVICE CIVIQUE: THE FRENCH NATIONAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE
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“A LITTLE REPUBLICAN MIRACLE...”

ABBÉ PIERRE, founder of Emmaüs. It is false to say that the young have lost the sense and taste of sacrifice [...] If governments in each country are not capable of daring to call up, that is to say, making an appeal for voluntary Service, similar to Military Service, to accomplish peace-building tasks [...] what's the use of talking about justice, reason or faith? –JEAN-MARC AYRAULT, Deputy and Mayor of Nantes, Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris, 16th February 2010. “Service Civique” is an act of trust in the young, in the words of Jean Jaurès.

An act of trust, what an extraordinary thing! An act of confidence! That is extraordinary! We often talk about the problems. Sure, there are problems, but there is still hope, which resides in the young people themselves, their generosity, and their commitment. –FRANCOIS BAYROU, Deputy, May 2008. It is not an accessory or subsidiary program, but one of the key elements of a project for our society.

– JEANETTE BOUGRAB, Secretary of State for Youth and Community Life. Through Community Service, France expresses all the confidence it places in its youth. With this program, the State encourages, accompanies, and values a decisive stage towards civilian and professional life for its youth.

– LUC CHATEL, Minister of Education, Youth and Community Life. “Service Civique” is an ambitious program that we created supports and fosters commitment among our youth. [...] I am pleased that, thanks to them, “Service Civique” stimulates community life, not only by allocating important means, but also by providing a breath of fresh air.

– YVON COLLIN, Senator, Senate debate. June 10th, 2009. By way of a symbolic reminder to citizens of the rights and duties towards their country, the expression of “Service Civique” perfectly translates the bond between the concept of citizenship and that of a civic spirit.

– GÉRARD COLLOMB, Senator and Mayor of Lyon. The town is committed to “Service Civique”: Our objective is to combine the creation of innovative social-utility programs intended to children and the elderly with a civic commitment, through which the volunteers acquire new skills.

– JEAN-FRANÇOIS COPÉ, Deputy and Mayor of Meaux, 2011. I am in favour of a four-month mandatory Community Service for all people between 18 and 25. The objective being that each young person commits himself/herself to others and their country.

– BERTRAND DELANOË, Mayor of Paris. I wanted Paris to be the pioneer among the local authorities to allow young Parisians to share a unique training experience at the service of others. The Town of Paris offers a large host of assignments to build new solidarities between Paris’ inhabitants and various generations.

– CHRISTIAN DEMUYNCK, Senator and Mayor of Neuilly-Plaisance, June 2011. In Seine-Saint-Denis, we wanted young people in difficulty to be able to enroll. They left for Madagascar to look after a dispensary and a maternity ward. When they returned, they were no longer the same.

– MICHEL DESTOT, Deputy and Mayor of Grenoble. “Service Civique” is not a “second-rate job”. A springboard into landing a job or a training, a manner of opening to the world and playing a key part in it. A true win-win contract.

– MICHEL DINET, President of General Council for Meurthe-et-Moselle. “Service Civique” presents a positive challenge and confidence to our collective future. Through multiple commitment and
creativity places opened in Meurthe-et-Moselle, the general council affirms that “to act is to become.”

“Service Civique” is a genuine independent program which gives liberty and flexibility to the communities [...] and which gives a chance to our young people! — JEAN DIONIS DU SÉJOUR, Deputy and Mayor of Agen. "Service Civique" is a duty for local authorities. We are responsible for our young people. We need strong initiatives. “Service Civique” makes it possible for young people to discover what professional life is about, and to carry projects through a successful conclusion. — CLAUDE GREFF, Deputy, National Assembly.

This involvement in civil life is a moral obligation and a way of learning about society and national cohesion. This “win-win” approach must be developed and developed so that the young can train themselves while serving our country. — FRANÇOIS FILLON, Prime Minister.

Volunteer work is often about beautiful stories of men and women off to discover the world and at the same time, their own destiny. [...] I want to say how much I believe in this inner willingness to serve our fellow-citizens with passion, as opposed to the mandatory nature of this Service. — JANINE GUINANDIE, Vice-President of the Charente General Council.

To me, “Service Civique” proceeds from the principle of solidarity. In committing to this voluntary and civil initiative, each young person has the possibility of giving a little, but most importantly, of receiving a lot! — CLAUDE GREFF, Deputy, National Assembly.

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LAW OF 10th MARCH 2010
The National Assembly and the Senate have adopted, The President of the Republic enacts the law of which content follows:

ARTICLE 7 – ART. L. 313-8. The Code of Education—
The public service for lifelong guidance and all organizations that participate in it on a regional and local level agree to enable all young people aged between 16 and 18, without initial training diplomas or employment, to enroll in a training course, to assist or to exercise an activity such as community work enabling him/her to prepare their professional career.

ARTICLE 8 – ARTICLE L. 120-1. -i. “Service Civique” aims at reinforcing national cohesion and social diversity and offers the opportunity provides to all volunteers the opportunity to uphold the values of the Republic and to get involved in a collective project by participating in a community work assignment with an approved legal entity. In the framework of Community Service, the missions carried out may have a philanthropic, educational, environmental, scientific, social, humane, sporting, family or cultural nature, or may contribute to civil security and defense assignments, to the prevention and promotion of the French language and the French-speaking culture or to raising awareness of French and European citizenship.

“II. “Service Civique” is a voluntary commitment whose duration can be from six to twelve months, with a State-provided allowance, open to people aged between 16 and 25, where the community work assignments are recognized as a national priority. The assignment is carried out with approved legal entities [...]
The approved legal entity is a French non-profit-making organization or a legal body governed by public law. Organizations that are religious, political, congregational, company foundations or workers unions cannot receive approval to organize “Service Civique”.

“iii. At the end of the assignment the state awards a “Service Civique” certificate to the volunteer and a document which describes the activities that were carried out and evaluates the skills, the knowledge and the competences acquired throughout “Service Civique”. [...]

“Service Civique” is promoted in the secondary school curriculum and in establishments certifying the successful completion of a training program leading to a higher education diploma in accordance and within the terms laid down by Decree.

ART. L. 120-2. – A “Service Civique” Agency shall be established and entrusted the following missions: 1° defining strategic organizations and priority assignments [...]; 2° ensuring management of approved legal entities and the financial support allocated by the State [...]; 3° promoting and develop “Service Civique” [...]; 4° ensuring equal access to “Service Civique” for all citizens; 5° facilitating connection for interested individuals [...]; 6° controlling and evaluating the implementation of “Service Civique”; 7° implementing and monitoring the conditions ensuring social diversity of “Service Civique” volunteers. [...]

ART. L. 120-18. [...] If a commitment is made to “Service Civique”, an allowance is paid on a monthly basis to the volunteer on behalf of the “Service Civique” Agency.
On 22nd February 1996, the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, announced his decision to professionalize army and to suspend national service, a decision which becomes effective as of the following year and by the law of 28th October 1997. In 1998, the Preparation and Call to Defense Day (JAPD) was established. It was addressed to all young girls and boys from 16 to 18 years of age.

President Chirac’s initiative marked the end of the century-old tradition of mandatory conscription, on the basis of which laid the organization of national defense. In many French minds, this universal conscription had contributed to national cohesion and social and cultural diversity, in making young people feel part of the nation and to a political community life, awareness of national and state membership to a political community of citizens.

But over the years, the social diversity which was deemed to make national service a republican melting pot, and a founding phase for citizenship, became hardly more than theoretical. The “Conscripts” who had studied did not carry out their service in the same conditions as those who left school without any qualifications or diplomas. Exclusively reserved for boys, the national service was sometimes regarded as a useless obligation, leading some to express their need for an alternative solution. This started progressively, initially at the end of the Algerian War, in 1963, with the law that introduced the concept of conscientious objection, authorizing young people to carry out an alternative service to the army. Then, in 1994, three young women who referred to the American a volunteer service – AmeriCorps created an association named Unis-Cité to develop a volunteer service in France. It took another fifteen years before “Service Civique” was included in the Code of National Service.

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In the “SERVICE CIVIQUE” REPORT that Luc Ferry gave to the President of the Republic, he recommends implementing voluntary “Service Civique”, to be progressively available to sixty thousand young people, with the following three objectives: “to re-evaluate our sense of duty, […] to encourage social diversity […] to offer a passionate and useful experience, developing personal talents and the meaning of community work for each individual.”

Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic, presents the “ACTING FOR THE YOUTH” PROGRAM, in Avignon. The creation of “Service Civique” is one of the pillars for guidance and reform, for accessibility to the RSA (active solidarity subsidy or earned income supplement from the government) for young people below the age of 25 and the tenth month grant payment for students.

During the second round of the presidential election, 100% of the electors vote for “Service Civique”, since it is on the program of both contenders.

The Green Book “Recognize the value of the young”, this is the fruit of the hard work and cooperation of the Consultative Commission chaired by Martin Hirsch, who was previously the High Commissioner for Youth. He proposes to set up “a Service Civique on a voluntary basis, where the vocation is intended to regard 10% of a certain age bracket within a five-year time period and perhaps becoming systematized later”.

The proposal for a law issued by Yvon Collin, the RDSE Senator of Tarn-et-Garonne, is adopted at the Senate with a large consensus.

Since the law of March 10th 2010, more than 22,000 young people have already volunteered for “Service Civique”.

PROMULGATION OF THE “SERVICE CIVIQUE” LAW. Creation of a “Service Civique” for young people aged between 16 and 25 which harmonizes the different existing programs and introduces the Defense and Citizenship Day which replaces the JAPD (Preparation and Call to Defense Day).

Creation of the “SERVICE CIVIQUE” AGENCY.
“‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ was a bridge between my studies and a professional experience. If I had do it again, I would definitely.”

THE VOLUNTEERS
“Service Civique” is a voluntary commitment. Its aim is to reinforce national cohesion and social diversity. The volunteers choose to carry out a community work assignment for at least six months; they are at the service of others. In return, they receive an allowance and is recognized as having a certain number of rights, one being, social security paid for by the State. “Service Civique” is accessible to everyone from 16 to 25. Since the 10th March 2010 law was enacted, there have been six thousand volunteers in 2010 and fifteen thousand in 2011. This year, twenty-five thousand young people will be able to volunteer; there could be as many as seventy-five thousand in 2014.

A great diversity of assignments
The assignments proposed by “Service Civique” can be accomplished in many fields: in sectors like solidarity, social issues, humanitarian action, health, environmental protection, popular education, dissemination of sciences, culture, defense, civil security, the promotion of Francophone and European citizenship…

Assignments beyond national borders
Since 2010, the assignments that were offered to the volunteers have mainly been carried out in Metropolitan France. However, today, more and more assignments are taking place abroad, and many young volunteers applying for a foreign experience. Globally, since 2010, several hundreds of volunteers have chosen to commit themselves in more than fifty countries.

IN TWO YEARS, UNDENIABLE RESULTS WITH REGARD TO DIVERSITY

Successful diversity is ensuring that the volunteers represent an image of the French youth in all its diversity, be it age, sex, social origins, level of education, place of residence and that they can meet around common projects and share their experiences.

“I WAS A CHILD WHO WAS ALWAYS DOING STUPID THINGS, WAS ALWAYS FIGHTING. THROUGH BOXING, I LEARNT THAT FIGHTING WAS COMPLETELY STUPID AND GOT YOU NOWHERE. YOU CAN LEARN A LOT DURING ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’. YOU CAN BECOME A GOOD PERSON.”
JAOUAD, 17

“For all the year, I dedicated my time to share and give, to change environments, to see something else.” THIBAULT, 23.

“The association ‘Clownenroute’ offers clown-theatre workshops for people with a handicap. I am there to assist the presenter and to make sure that everything goes as planned. I am accompanied by professionals. It is an very enriching experience.”
SIMON, VOLUNTEER WITH THE LEAGUE OF EDUCATION FOR THE ‘CLOWNENROUTE’ ASSOCIATION.
“WHEN I READ THE ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ VOLUNTEERS CHARTER, I HAD THE IMPRESSION, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THAT I WOULD BE ACCEPTED FOR WHAT I AM. I THOUGHT TO MYSELF THAT I WAS GOING TO BE GIVEN A CHANCE.”
BOYE, 19.

THE CHARTER OF “SERVICE CIVIQUE” VALUES

EXTRACT

Article 1: respect – listening – sharing

“I believe in the virtues of respect, listening and sharing. Through the diversity of situations and individuals that I met, I am learning how to share my knowledge with everyone and to get to know each individual. In my everyday life, I promote these values with energy and conviction”.

Respect, listening, solidarity, enrichment, diversity, willingness, initiative, recognition, citizenship, reciprocity, direction, commitment, confidence...

In 2011, at their request, about thirty volunteers drafted a charter of “Service Civique” Values. In order to encourage the widest possible adhesion for the charter of values, the text was published online. The charter is sent to all the volunteers at the beginning of their assignment so that they develop the sentiment of belonging to “Service Civique”, whatever their host organization.
A majority of the population is feminine
Exempt from military service, female volunteers have now become involved since the creation of “Service Civique”, they represented 57% of the volunteers in 2011. This slight over representation of females is often noticed in activities which involve altruism and commitment.

“No one should be left aside
Everyone can enroll as a volunteer whatever their education or qualification level, whether they have just left university or dropped out of school, if they want to re-orientate themselves or have a break to think about their future. It is a fundamental principle of “Service Civique”.

59% of the young volunteers in “Service Civique” have an education level equivalent to or lower than the baccalaureate (A levels). This rate is strictly comparable with that of young people in the whole of the French population. This distribution underlines the fact that “Service Civique” arouses interest in young people having had very varied types of schooling. All parties involved in “Service Civique” development

“... I BECAME MORE RESPONSIBLE AND MATURE, YOU RECEIVE AS MUCH AS YOU GIVE.” TOBIAS, 18.

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All parties involved in “Service Civique” development

— THE VOLUNTEERS

LEARN LIFE-SAVING TECHNIQUES
For all volunteers, a first aid course is included during the training for “Service Civique”, and it must be offered systematically by all the host organizations.

The level 1 (PSC1) - Prevention and Assistance training which takes approximately ten hours was entrusted to firemen in 2011. In a country where few adults are trained in first aid, all former members of “Service Civique” have received this training.

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CINDY, 23 YEARS, HOLDER OF A DEGREE IN BIOLOGY OF ORGANISMS AND ECOSYSTEMS: VOLUNTEER WITH THE “VOL DE PIAF” ASSOCIATION.

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have committed themselves to continuing their efforts in making progress for volunteers who stopped their schooling before the baccalaureate. For these young people, “Service Civique” must represent a means of access to acquire vocational training and knowledge.

In this way, “Service Civique” distinguishes itself from programs focusing on young people without opportunities or, on the contrary, on young people with diplomas or a first working experience.

**Volunteers are present throughout the French Territory**

The number of volunteers by department is proportional to that of the young people from 15 to 24 years of age, including rural areas. In highly populated urban areas, like Ile-de-France, one observes an inferior proportion of young volunteers present in these departments. At the same time, many volunteers have enrolled in French overseas departments. In 2010, they were particularly mobilized in Martinique and Guadeloupe in the fight against breakbone fever. They will soon be participating in the reforestation of the Réunion National Park.

"**L’ESCALE IS A MEETING PLACE WHERE FAMILIES CAN GATHER. WHILE THEY DO, WE LOOK AFTER THEIR CHILDREN. IT GIVES THEM A LITTLE RELAXING TIME. WE ALWAYS WORK AS A TEAM, AND WE LEARN HOW TO WORK TOGETHER. I DON’T WAKE UP FOR NOTHING ANYMORE. AFTER A DAY IN THE SOCIAL GROCERY SHOP, I FEEL GREAT. I FEEL HAPPY TO HAVE BEEN HELPFUL.**"  

THIBAULT, 18, CAP IN ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING, VOLUNTEER FOR "UNIS-CITÉ" WITH THE SOCIAL GROCERY SHOP "L’ESCALE", SAINTE GENEVIÈVE-DES-BOIS.

"**I AM NOT A SOLDIER; I DO NOT WEAR A UNIFORM BUT AN ARM-BAND. I GO TO SCHOOLS AND TO SKATE PARKS TO DISCUSS. MY APPROACH TOWARDS INDIVIDUALS IS FAR BETTER WITHOUT A UNIFORM AND THERE IS A CERTAIN COMPLICITY BECAUSE OF MY AGE.**"  

SYLVAIN, 24.
Access to “Service Civique” for disabled young people must be encouraged. This objective, listed in the “Service Civique” strategic guidelines in 2011, was reaffirmed by the Prime Minister. To encourage it, the law provides that the “Service Civique” allowance may be cumulated with the allowance for handicapped adults. Thus, “Service Civique” allows young people to help disabled people and the young person with disabilities can contribute on the same basis as the others to community work activities.

“I WANTED TO GET INVOLVED, TO BE USEFUL, AND TAKE THE TIME TO THINK THINGS THROUGH.”
HUGO, 23

“What I liked most about ‘Service Civique’ was the commitment. The idea of being a volunteer, an ambassador, and someone helpful to others. Before that, I was labelled as a ‘job seeker’. Now, I feel thoroughly integrated in society, I have objectives.”
LYTINA, 23, BACCALAUREATE IN MEDICO-SOCIAL SCIENCES, SUFFERING FROM BRITTLE BONE DISEASE, VOLUNTEER WITHIN THE “GROUPEMENTS DE CRÉATEURS EN SEINE & MARNE” ASSOCIATION
IN 2 YEARS, OVER 22,000 VOLUNTEERS

DISTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEERS BETWEEN GIRLS AND BOYS

- Girls: 57%
- Boys: 43%

A VERY POPULAR EXPERIENCE

- 90.7% of the volunteers have a very positive or positive opinion of "Service Civique".
- 88.7% of the volunteers would recommend "Service Civique".

Satisfaction survey conducted on young people having accomplished their "Service Civique" since July 2011.

DISTRIBUTION OF "SERVICE CIVIQUE" ASSIGNMENTS IN 2011

- Solidarity: 27.9%
- Education for all: 18.4%
- Culture and leisure: 14.9%
- Environment: 12.5%
- Sport: 8.3%
- Remembrance and citizenship: 7.7%
- Health: 5.6%
- International development: 2.4%
- Emergency Services: 2.3%

VOLUNTEERS EDUCATION LEVEL

- Below baccalaureate level: 24%
- Above baccalaureate level: 41%
- Level equivalent to the Baccalaureate: 35%
DISTRIBUTION OF THE 3,000 APPROVED ORGANIZATIONS BY NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS RECEIVED

“SERVICE CIVIQUE” ABROAD SINCE 2010


EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS IN “SERVICE CIVIQUE” BETWEEN 2006 AND 2009

CUMULATIVE EVOLUTION GROWTH FOR NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS IN “SERVICE CIVIQUE” BETWEEN 2010 AND 2012

DISTRIBUTION OF THE 3,000 APPROVED ORGANIZATIONS BY NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS RECEIVED

Only one volunteer
Between 2 and 5 volunteers
Between 6 and 20 volunteers
Between 21 and 100 volunteers
Between 101 and 1000 volunteers
More than 1,000 volunteers

19 — THE VOLUNTEERS
“I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WAS GOING IN LIFE. I WAS SEARCHING FOR MY IDENTITY, ON A PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LEVEL. ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ GAVE ME THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING A BREAK AND BROADENING MY HORIZONS.”

THE PARTNERS
“Service Civique” was created by the law. However, in its history, elaboration, management and development, it relies on a close relationship numerous partners and revolves around the State, which supports the volunteers’ allowance, social protection and civic training, while calling on its various bodies and services for the approval and control of the host organizations which recruit young Community Service volunteers.

Commitment from the non profit organizations

Associations provide the greatest part of the assignments offered to young volunteers; nearly three quarters since 2010. They can be small local associations which take on one or two young people (sporting clubs, cultural associations in rural environments, local community centers …) or larger organized associative networks capable of managing hundreds of volunteers.

More than three thousand associations were approved in two years; “Service Civique” volunteers find their place which is distinct from that of the employees and other voluntary workers. These volunteers often pursue their voluntary work after the term of their mission, which contributes to the renew of associative life; they can be called back associations when there are opportunities of paid employment.

Sometimes, associations, like “Unis-Cité” or the “Ligue de l’Enseignement” (League of Education), develop their own intermediation partnership entrusting their volunteers with assignments within local confiding assignments with local authorities or small associations to their volunteers.

In certain programs, associations from the same sector join forces to offer common training to volunteers participating on the same subject or topic: for example, this is what enables social workers to gather hundreds of volunteers to support homeless people (with the “Red Cross”, “Emmaüs”, “Les Enfants du Canal” and the ‘Secours Catholique’ in particular).

Associations participate actively in the work of “Service Civique”, civic training, and regional meetings with “Service Civique” volunteers.

“YOUNG PEOPLE IN ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ REPRESENT A UNIQUE HUMAN RESOURCE FOR ALL THESE STRUCTURES WHO STRUGGLE EVERY DAY FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF ALL. THEY GIVE THEIR TIME, THEIR ENERGY, THEIR CREATIVITY, DURING SEVERAL MONTHS OF THEIR LIFE. THEY CAN SOMETIMES CAST A DOUBT OR QUESTION A CERTAIN PRACTICE THANKS TO THEIR “YOUNG” NON-PROFESSIONAL OUTLOOK. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVE THEIR USUAL ENVIRONMENT AND LIVE THE EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE OF BEING USEFUL TO OTHERS. THOSE WHO HAD LOST ALL SELF-CONFIDENCE BECAUSE THINGS DID NOT GO AS PLANNED AT SCHOOL REGAIN IT AS IF BY MAGIC, AND THEY REALIZE WHAT HUGE CAPACITIES THEY HAVE. THEY LEARN HOW TO ADAPT TO (SOMETIMES DIFFICULT) ENVIRONMENTS, AND TO INTEGRATE A TEAM, AND FOLLOW THEIR COMMITMENT RIGHT THROUGH TO THE END.”

MARIE TRELLU-KANE, PRESIDENT OF UNIS-CITE

“A LOT OF YOUNGSTERS FIND THEY ARE FAIRLY REMOTE FROM VOLUNTARY WORK, IN PARTICULAR BECAUSE OF FAMILY CULTURE, BUT WOULD STILL LIKE TO ENROL. ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ GIVES THEM THE OPPORTUNITY OF DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS AS WELL AS HUMAN AND SOCIAL SKILLS.”

CAROLINE SOUBIE, DIRECTOR FOR THE FRENCH RED CROSS YOUTH SERVICE

“RIGHT FROM THE START, WE WANTED TO LET YOUNG PEOPLE DO AN ASSIGNMENT WITH HOMELESS PEOPLE. IT IS A VERY EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE. THIS ASSIGNMENT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TRULY DISCOVER A SECTOR OF ACTIVITY AND TO GIVE DIRECTION TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREER BY GUIDING THEM TOWARDS PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE. THE APPROACH TOWARDS THE OTHERS CHANGED THE VOLUNTEERS’ OUTLOOK ON SOCIETY AND MADE THEM FEEL LIKE AN ACTUAL PART OF IT.”

CHRISTOPHE LOUIS, DIRECTOR, “LES ENFANTS DU CANAL”
The Institute of “Service Civique” was conceived to accelerate the recognition of “Service Civique”. It brings together higher educational establishments (universities, business schools, professional schools...), companies and foundations to guarantee access to training courses, employment or creation of their own activity for applicants from the institute.

In 2012, the very first promotion will comprise from 100 to 150 graduates. The ambition of the Institute of “Service Civique” is to help volunteers each year gain access to responsibilities in the civil, economic and social life of our country whilst using the skills they demonstrated during their “Service Civique”. For more information:
www.institut-service-civique.fr
Commitment from Local Authorities

The local authorities can receive approval to host young people. The big cities are gradually increasing the number of assignments entrusted to volunteers and are diversifying the responsibilities they are entrusted with.

Regions and general councils can set up programs for young people in “Service Civique”, sometimes in an original manner, by encouraging them to present their own personal projects, which they define and develop within the framework of a local approved authority.

Regions, departments and communities are increasingly numerous in supporting young people in “Service Civique”, giving them reductions for transport, grants at the end of their “Service Civique” or even access to vocational training. They can also accompany associations when developing and preparing their projects. Iconic programs were created in Agen, Bordeaux, Évry, Grenoble and Tourcoing, to help young people define and plan their own matured projects, while welcoming volunteers with no qualifications or coming from so-called rough neighbourhoods.

Commitment from Universities and Higher Education Establishments

The law provides the obligation for higher educational establishments to take into account “Service Civique” as part of the students’ course. This recognition of “Service Civique” ardently wished for by the legislator, still needs to become reality in every establishment. But some are already pioneers: this is the case of the HEC Business School (Hautes Études Commerciales, Paris, France) with the SolidariFrance program or establishments who are partners of “Service Civique” Institute.

Commitment from companies

“Service Civique” cannot be carried out within a company in order to avoid that volunteers, who are mainly supported by the State, replace employees. Commitment from companies may take other forms: some are partners with the “Service Civique” Agency and offer volunteers advantages such as fare...
privileges (telephone, house insurance, health insurance…) throughout the period of their appointment. Others mobilize their employees to take part in teaching young people and to take into account experience acquired during “Service Civique” in their recruitment policy.

Commitment from International Partners
Requests for assignments abroad are very high. We were able to develop these further thanks to the privileged partnership with “France Volontaires”, who is a member of the “Service Civique” Agency and based in many countries. Conventions with the France-German Youth Office, the Quebec-France Youth Office and the Agency for French Teaching Abroad benefit to a growing number of young volunteers every year. The possibility of reciprocal agreements was experimented with exchanges between volunteers from France, Tunisia and South Africa.

Young French people who commit themselves through the European Voluntary Service or the International Volunteer for Solidarity, or the Economic International Volunteers can now develop this experience in the same conditions as those who performed their “Service Civique”.

“WITH THE ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ PROGRAM SOLIDARIFRANCE, STUDENTS CAN ACQUIRE PRICELESS OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE. AT A TIME WHERE BUSINESSES AND ASSOCIATIONS ARE GETTING MORE AND MORE LIKE, WITH THE FIRST INTEGRATING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY ISSUES AND THE SECOND ADOPTING VIABLE BUSINESS MODELS THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH COMPANIES, THIS DOUBLE CULTURE TURNS OUT MORE THAN NECESSARY.”
ELOI Peyrache, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE HEC

“GDF SUÉZ SUPPORTS ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ AND ENCOURAGES YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE CIVIC INITIATIVES, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY, BUT ALSO BY FOSTERING THE INTEGRATION OF VOLUNTEERS INTO THE WORLD OF WORK.”
JEAN-PIERRE HERVE, DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS FOR GDF SUÉZ

“IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREER, THE YOUNG REAP REAL BENEFITS OF THE SKILLS THEY ACQUIRED DURING THE MISSIONS THEY CARRIED OUT AS PART AS THEIR COMMUNITY SERVICE.”
YVES DESJACQUES, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR CASINO GROUP

“THROUGH THE PROGRAM ‘PASSEURS DE MÉMOIRE’, SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIAL ACTION OF MALAKOFF MÉDÉRIC, ‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ MAKES AN ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS.”
HUGUES DU JEU, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL ACTION - MALAKOFF MÉDÉRIC
“‘SERVICE CIVIQUE’ HELPED ME OVERCOME MY SHYNESS AND GAIN SELF-CONFIDENCE. IT WILL TURN USEFUL FOR THE FUTURE.”
BECOMING A VOLUNTEER

To become a volunteer in “Service Civique”, you must be between 16 and 25, have French nationality – or nationality from a Member State of the European Union or European Economic Area - or justify legal residence in France of more than one year.

The applicants often hear about “Service Civique” from the radio or the internet, sometimes by close relations and, more and more often, from former volunteers. They search for the necessary information on the “Service Civique” site or enquire for details from their local mission or Youth Information Point. They have access to a lot of suggested assignments (four thousand assignments available online on average). Those who register on the website join the “Service Civique’ community” (more than one hundred and ten thousand young people in February 2012) and regularly receive a newsletter which informs them about the assignments available in their area. They can then decide to submit an application form and apply directly online with an organization. They apply for one or several missions, even without having a diploma. For most of the assignments, motivation and social skills are what count.

ONCE YOU ARE A VOLUNTEER

When the volunteer is recruited, the individual signs a contract with the organization that is hosting him/her. This contract stipulates the place, the working hours and tasks which will be performed during the mission. It is not a work contract. The relationship between the volunteer and the host organization is
a relation of collaboration, not subordination. The volunteer discovers the assignment which can last from six to twelve months and will devote at least twenty-four hours per week to it. As is the spirit of “Service Civique”, the assignment must be the volunteer’s principal activity, even if he/she is allowed to have additional activities (studies, employment, etc.). The volunteer receives an allowance of €559 per month, including €103 financed by the hosting structure and is entitled to complete social protection (illness, retirement, etc.) paid for entirely by the State. In this way, a year of “Service Civique” gives the same pension rights as one year of work. If the volunteers’ family receives the RSA (active solidarity subsidy or earned income supplement from the government), or if a different grant is attributed, the individual can, in certain cases, receive an additional €103. The individual receives a “Service Civique” card designed with the collaboration of the volunteers, and the Charter of “Service Civique” Values.

THE HOST ORGANIZATION

Recruitment of the volunteer takes place within an organization approved by “Service Civique” Agency or its regional representatives. It can be an association, a recognized public-community/utility foundation, a public service establishment, or a local government authority. In order to host volunteers for the “Service Civique”, the organization needs to obtain a two-year approval period from the “Service Civique” Agency, the regional prefects, or local organizations. The organization must take into consideration the diversity of profiles of the young people it recruits. It must appoint a tutor to ensure the preparation of the assignment and to assist the volunteer in fulfilling the assignment. It must also provide civic training for the volunteer and accompany the candidate in the development of his/her future project. All these obligations are frequently and regularly monitored by the “Service Civique” Agency and its regional correspondents. Finally, the host organization must allow the volunteer to take part in meetings organized on a local or national level. In 2011, more than ten events (Chambéry, Arles, Mont-de-Marsan…) were organized which means that several thousands of volunteers were able to cross paths and exchange experiences about voluntary work.

WHEN THE MISSION IS COMPLETED

In order for “Service Civique” to be validated, the assignment must have lasted at least 6 months. The volunteer receives a certificate by post from “Service Civique” a month before the end of the assignment. It includes a document which describes the activities, aptitudes, knowledge and skills acquired during the assignment. At the end of the assignment, the host organization has the responsibility of assessing the volunteer and guiding and assisting the candidate in achieving his/her goal.

“SERVICE CIVIQUE” MANAGEMENT

The “Service Civique” Agency has determined, since its creation, and in agreement with its board of direction and the strategic committee, the main direction and major programs. These are implemented in close connection with local referents from the “Service Civique” Agency, with Local authorities for sports and social cohesion (DRJSCS) and the interdepartmental Directorate Department for Youth. In the continuation of traditional activities by the State Services for youth, who are constantly involved in popular education, “Service Civique” has become one of their most emblematic missions.

From the creation of the “Service Civique” Agency in May 2010 to the 20th March, the Strategic committee, which brings together the host organizations, decentralized departments, members of Parliament and the volunteers, will have met eight times. The Board of directors has met thirteen times. The “Service Civique” Agency team consists of about twenty people.
The impact of “Service Civique” is goes way beyond statistics. Throughout these pages, we have endeavored to share the idea that this is not just another program; it is, above all, a state of mind.

Life without commitment is a life without salt, risk, cause, challenge. The young have a spontaneous need for commitment. Young people need to feel useful, to discover other horizons, to gain experience, to take part in joint projects. In short, they need to be fully-fledged citizens.

“Service Civique” was created to make commitment easier and and help it gain recognition for the values it conveys.

It can be achieved with or without a diploma, between studies or before seeking employment, in France or abroad, but always for the community and for the benefit of others. It is a project that involves the whole society. Designed beyond political differences, it unites the State, the local authorities and associations who mobilize volunteers, voluntary workers, employees and pensioners.

After two years, testimonies already prove that it features many advantages and that it has a vital role to play. Today, we have the responsibility of shaping “Service Civique” so that it can meet with the expectations it brought about.

Plan for the next fifteen years

On the first floor of a country restaurant. The table was booked by a group of forty year olds full of happiness to be present at these gathering every year, preserving friendships that have been forged during their “Service Civique”, or from the regiment or the circles of former marine commandos. Diversity as well! In the refreshment bar in Parliament. Among the deputies, there are already fifty who have accomplished “Service Civique”. Their friendship club will have more members than the Tintin Club or Cigar Friends club soon. Their political commitment came about after their period as volunteers.

In the office of a Director of Human Resources for a large company. This is one of the first applicants of the “Service Civique” Institute. Since then, the Group recruits five each year. Two of them chair the management committee.

In an emergency service. The doctors comment on the decrease in sudden deaths of adults. This is due to the first aid education program taught each year by two hundred young people in “Service Civique”. They teach the actions to be used in case of emergency and how to operate a cardiac defibrillator.

In Port-au-Prince. The program has never been interrupted since the earthquake. There are around a hundred volunteers each year who participate in the “Service Civique” program in Haiti.

From now on, the Haitian and French volunteers work together in the schools and training colleges.

The Education Authority. Outcome of the program against dropping out of school is even better than last year. Half of the “dropouts” resumed studies after accomplishing “Service Civique” at 16. There are a lot amongst the apprentices and first year university students.

Daily Newspaper Headlines. A publisher has unearthed the results of an investigation in 2011 and compares it with mischievousness to his own survey. From now on, the general public associates youth with “good citizenship” and “commitment”, referring to an era that is now over, of when the young scared the rest of the French society...

On the Champs-Elysées. On the 14th July, the “Service Civique” volunteers will march behind the university graduates, or maybe in front ...

At the Community Life Conference. The average age of volunteers has decreased by 15 years as the majority of volunteers in “Service Civique” continue their commitment in another form in different associations. For a number of years, these no longer deplore a voluntary work crisis.

In a recruitment firm. Here, taking a year off for a commitment is no longer an anomaly, a peculiarity, or something seen as suspicious or eccentric, but as easy as breathing. It’s simply an advantage.

The “Service Civique” is vulnerable as it is still young and new. But the values which it conveys will give it a strong future.

**MARTIN HIRSCH**, President of the “Service Civique” Agency.
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YOU AND "SERVICE CIVIQUE"