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**READING COMPREHENSION**

**Fighting French unemployment - Mode d’emploi**

**Adapted from the Economist, 16 January 2016**

**François Hollande has one last chance to tackle rising jobless rates**

IN HIS New Year message President François Hollande declared a double state of emergency in France: one to fight terrorism, the other to **tackle** unemployment. In 2012 Mr Hollande was elected on a promise to control **joblessness** and make “youth” his priority. Yet unemployment has since climbed from 9.7% to 10.1%; youth unemployment is more than twice this, and still rising. On January 18th the government will reveal new plans to train young jobseekers and encourage job creation. But it looks likely to be too little, too late.

Neighbouring countries on Europe’s southern fringe have far higher absolute levels of youth unemployment than France. Yet since the start of 2014 a loosening of labour laws has helped to bring down joblessness among the under25s in both Spain and Italy. In France, by contrast, over the same period the figure has increased to 26%—an **all-time** record. Youth unemployment in France is now over three times the rate in Germany.

Not only do young people in France find it difficult to get work, but when they do it is often short-term. The labour market is divided into “insiders”, those with permanent, protected, fulltime jobs, and “outsiders”, whose work is insecure and temporary. In France only a fifth of **temps** are in permanent jobs three years later, compared with almost half in Britain, according to the OECD. For employers faced with the tiring rules governing permanent jobs (and the need to make a case to a labour tribunal before interrupting them), using temps and interns is a way to save some flexibility.

Psychologically, it can create a real **lack** of confidence as, if you don’t have a permanent contract, it’s impossible to rent a flat, or get a loan. “The fruitless search for permanent work leads to “a lot of disillusion”, says Kadija James, deputy director of Nos Quartiers ont des Talents, which uses mentors to help get jobseekers from the *banlieues* (the heavily immigrant outer suburbs) into work.

For years, the French left refused to link the country’s poor record on job creation to its overprotective labour law. But now, the labour code should be simplified, modifying the 35hour working week, promoting the training of 500,000 jobseekers through apprenticeships and other schemes, and deregulating in order to encourage firms to create jobs.

Given the amount of public money that France pumps into **subsidising** jobs, the doubt is that it has not reduced youth unemployment. But French rules on schemes like apprenticeships or subsidised job creation change fast.

“**Technically** we could cut the unemployment rate in half,” says Nicolas Bouzou, a French economist; “the difficulty is political.” Much of the French left regards ideas such as a lower minimum **wage** for younger workers, as Britain allows, to be exploitation, not a way into the job market—even though, by default, self-employed youngsters work for less than the statutory minimum.

**Glossary**

**Temps**: temporary workers

**I. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

# What is this article about?

# THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT THE FRENCH LABOUR MARKET AND UNEMPLOYMENT. HOLLANDE HAS BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT BUT NOT UNDER25 JOBLESSNESS. TEMPORARY JOBS MAKE THE MARKET MORE FLEXIBLE AND EASIER FOR EMPLOYERS BUT WORKERS CAN’T RENT OR BUY HOUSES OR MAKE PLANS. THEREFORE, THEIR CONFIDENCE IS NEGATIVELY INFLUENCED. OVERPROTECTIVE LABOUR LAWS NEED A REFORM WHICH HOLLANDE IS GOING TO PASS AND IMPLEMENT. ANOTHER WAY TO HALVE UNEMPLOYMENT IS THE INTRODUCTION OF MINIMUM LOW WAGES, BUT THE LEFT WING DOES NOT SUPPORT THIS IDEA.

# What are the main characteristics of the French labour market?

# FRANCE HAS MANAGED TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT BUT NOT TO IMPROVE THE JOB/LABOUR MARKET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. THIS MARKET IS CHARACTERIZED BY TWO TYPES OF WORKERS: “INSIDERS”, WITH PERMANENT, PROTECTED, FULLTIME JOBS, AND “OUTSIDERS”, WHOSE WORK IS INSECURE AND TEMPORARY. ONLY ONE FIFTH OF TEMPORARY JOBS BECOMES PERMANENT WITHIN 3 YEARS. THE LAW NEEDS TO BE LOOSENED AND A REFORM.

# What does 26% refer to?

THE INCREASE OF UNDER25 JOBLESSNESS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2014

# Why isn’t a minimum low wage well considered?

# THEY THINK THAT MINIMUM WAGE MEANS EXPLOITING WORKERS. HOWEVER, IT IS HIGHERE THAN THE REMUNERATION OF SELF-EMPLOYED YOUNG WORKERS

# II. TRUE OR FALSE

# Hollande’s priority is to reduce unemployment F

# Hollande’s government has managed to halve the number of young people searching for a job F

# Youth unemployment is increasing in Italy and Spain even more F

# Those with a temporary job have difficulties in finding a permanent job within three years T

# Internships and temporary jobs make the labour market more flexible T

# The French labour law needs a reform T

# LANGUAGE

# Find words in the text, which mean the same as:

# Deal with, face (v.) = TACKLE

# Unemployment (n.) = JOBLESSNESS

# Unprecedented, unsurpassed (compound adj.)= ALL-TIME

# Shortage, need (n.) = LACK

# Supporting financially, financing (v.) = SUBSIDIZING

# Theoretically, in principle (adv.) = TECHNICALLY

# Salary, remuneration (n.) = WAGE

# Give at least 2 synonyms of the verb CUT REDUCE, BRING DOWN