



A RIGOROUS SELECTION

The French Savings Banks finance a significant number of projects across the country. To ensure coherence, they operate a selection on the basis of strict criteria. The actions they choose to support, within general interest activities, must comply with the following principles :

- incorporate values of security, proximity, transparency in reporting and a dimension of financial education
- favour long term projects likely to generate business creation
- make sure that efficiency, social impact and economic results can be assessed
- avoid duplication of public subsidies
- give preference to local impact
- avoid recurring provision of subsidies covering operating expenses

The French Savings Banks implement activities of general interest in their field of competence in partnership with others involved in social cohesion. Through their commitment to local and social economic development, they are producing their distinctive trademark contribution to social responsibility.



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The involvement of the French Savings Banks in general interest activities

Our keys to solidarity



The reforming law passed in June 1999 provides the French Savings Banks with a clear mission statement in terms of social responsibility : they are to fight all forms of social exclusion and thereby play a decisive role in the implementation of social responsibility principles.

By entrusting the French Savings Banks with general interest activities, this law reinforces a deep rooted tradition. For nearly two hundred years, the French Savings Banks have unfailingly coupled their economic role with a strong social commitment to local development and a better life for all.

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FINANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LOCAL AND SOCIAL BUSINESS PROJECTS

As of 2001, the Savings Banks started to allot part of their profits to local and social business projects (LSBP's). As a result, they now provide direct financial contributions to local initiatives fostering job creation, economic development, efficient regional management as well as environmental protection.

Primarily, LSBP's are implemented to create conditions allowing individuals to gain or re-gain access to a decent position in their social environment. In most cases, the Savings Banks finance the implementation of these projects on the basis of formal partnerships or contracts with appropriate operators. The money provided can take the form of subsidies, loans or contributions in capital. The idea is always to finance a project rather than the corresponding structure.

A DOUBLE FOCUS

Considering the core business of the Savings Banks as well as their expertise and experience in projects of general interest, the French Federation of Savings Banks has chosen to focus on two lines of action :

- Solidarity in finance and business creation
- Solidarity through civic and social commitment



Solidarity in finance and business creation : becoming a reference in socially responsible banking

A great many actions of general interest can be carried out in the day to day exercise of the Savings Banks core financial activities, extending to services of training and information on banking and financial operations. Clearly, the development of small-size, socially integrated businesses has an increasing impact on job creation as well as on local economic development. In addition, it provides social integration for individual entrepreneurs. Stimulating this type of business creation has therefore become a priority for the French Federation. Where usual commercial practices

appear inadequate to respond to certain situations, the Savings Banks exercise their expertise and social responsibility to provide innovative financial solutions and services. Their concern is to support both the entrepreneurs and the accompanying operators.

Three types of projects prevail :

- financial support and advice to entrepreneurs
- support to the operators involved
- fostering access to financial information for every citizen.

Solidarity through civic and social commitment : providing a distinctive contribution towards social cohesion

Social exclusion manifests itself in all sorts of ways and actions in favour of social cohesion can combine a variety of approaches. The French Savings Banks have chosen to concentrate on the following :

- facilitate the acquisition of basic skills such as reading and writing ; provide education on fundamental rights and information on social services available to everyone (access to medical care - health, old age and other social benefits) ; support training in information technologies
- encourage the autonomy of the elderly, the sick or handicapped by being particularly

responsive to projects allowing the implementation of structures or methods conducive to autonomy for these people

- support social integration through employment by financing structures specialising in vocational training and acquisition of job qualifications
- satisfy fundamental needs by developing access to food and housing for everyone
- produce social integration through culture and sports by promoting local events encouraging wide participation of the people in a community
- enhance natural and cultural heritage through operations of rehabilitation traditionally handled on a local level.