

## Novel way to cut unemployment: pay people to leave

### Level 2 • Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- Are there many unemployed people where you live?  
How easy or difficult is it for young people to get a job there?  
Do you know of any schemes to help jobless people?

#### 2 Key words

Read the definitions and match them to the key words. Find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

common sense  
discouraged

council  
mayor

despairing  
falter

1. the most important elected person in a town or city \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
2. an organization that provides local government in a city \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. the ability to use good judgment and make sensible decisions \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
4. feeling that a situation is so bad that nothing you can do will change it \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
5. feeling that it is useless to try to do something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 3)
6. to stop being effective or making progress \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)

annual income  
hire

burden  
incentive

dignity  
perplexed

7. the money you get every year from your work \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
8. respect that other people have for you or that you have for yourself \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
9. responsibility that you have to deal with, especially financial \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
10. something that makes you want to do something because you know that you will benefit by it \_\_\_\_\_ (para 9)
11. to pay someone to work for you \_\_\_\_\_ (para 9)
12. confused because you cannot understand something \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)

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#### Sardinian town finds novel way to cut unemployment: pay people to leave

Lizzy Davies in Cagliari  
23 September, 2014

- 1 Governments across Europe dream of finding a magic solution to rising unemployment. But, in the hardest-hit parts of the EU, unemployment continues to rise and the talk does little to reduce the number of people without work.
- 2 Now, in a corner of Italy, one mayor thinks he has found an answer to his town's serious lack of work. Valter Pisciotta, the mayor of Elmas, a small town near Sardinia's capital, Cagliari, wants to pay residents to leave. The council will pay for ten unemployed locals to take intensive English lessons, get on a cheap flight and look for jobs elsewhere in Europe.
- 3 "This idea is a result of common sense and experience," the mayor told the *Guardian*. "Over the past year and a half – especially in the past few months – I have been seeing young people, almost every day, who are despairing about their search for work. Some ask for help in finding it here. Others have tried everything and are so discouraged that they no longer want to stay and wait. And they want to go and gain work experience abroad; life experience, too.
- 4 "So, my idea was this: put everything in place so that those who want to gain experience abroad are able to," he said.
- 5 As the national economy continues to falter, Sardinia, along with much of southern and central Italy, is struggling with high unemployment. Unemployment was at 17.7% in the second quarter of 2014, according to Italy's National Institute of Statistics, Istat. More than 54% of people under 25 are out of work.
- 6 For the *Adesso Parto* (Now I'm leaving) programme, Elmas's council will give €12,000 on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants aged between 18 and 50. They just have to be out of work and have lived in the town for three years. They do not have to be university educated and their annual income must be no more than €15,000.
- 7 The idea of encouraging people to leave is sensitive at a time when huge numbers of Italians – many of them bright young graduates – are leaving their country every year. But Pisciotta, who belongs to the Democratic Party of the Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, believes that the people he is sending away might return "and give me back 100 times what they were given". More importantly, he wants the scheme to help those most in need.
- 8 "It's a programme for those with no other resource; it's the last-chance saloon. It will allow them the dignity of not having to ask a friend for money or put burdens on families," he said.
- 9 Earlier in 2014, he added, the council launched a scheme for businesses – they were given financial incentives to hire young workers from Elmas. "We advertised 20 of these positions," he said. "We got 120 applications."
- 10 In Elmas, the scheme has got mixed reactions. "The reality is that there is little work here," said Alessandro Macis. "The opportunity to go abroad to learn about the workplace and experience other cultures can be very worthwhile. The son of a friend of mine who didn't study much is in London and he's really finding his way. He started as a waiter. Now, he's a cook and he's learning English."
- 11 Others were perplexed. "I heard about it but I thought it was strange. If you have that money to pay for people to go away, why don't you use that money to keep them here?" said Consuelo Melis, who works behind the bar in a local café. On Twitter, one of many reactions was disbelief. "The state's admission of defeat," commented Marco Patavino. "Institutions are raising the white flag," remarked Carlo Mazzaggio.
- 12 Pisciotta, however, says of his online critics: "Probably, they are people that aren't in need ... Every day, I deal with people's problems and I have to do something to try to solve them. These people, if they had an alternative, they wouldn't be asking for help.
- 13 "The work I can create, as mayor, is temporary. I can have a piazza cleaned. I can have it cleaned again. I can have the streets cleaned. But these are all temporary things that give nothing beyond that little bit of money for a few months. I want to go beyond that."

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#### 3 Expressions

Find the following expressions in the text.

1. the areas that have the most problems (para 1)
2. set up so it can be used (para 4)
3. used for saying that, if you arrive before other people, you will be dealt with before them (para 6)
4. not having enough food, money, clothing or other things that are necessary for life (para 7)
5. a situation considered to be the final opportunity for success (para 8)
6. beginning to be successful, to know what he wants to do (para 10)
7. admitting defeat (para 11)

#### 4 Comprehension check

Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What percentage of people under 25 do not have a job?
2. How much financial help will the people on the scheme receive?
3. How old do the applicants have to be?
4. Do they need to have a university degree?
5. What does the mayor say the people on the scheme might give back if they return?
6. What can the applicants expect to gain by going abroad?
7. How many applications were there for 20 jobs offered as part of a different scheme?
8. What kind of work is the mayor able to offer unemployed people in the town?

#### 5 Easily confused words

Compare and contrast the meaning and the pronunciation of these easily confused words. At least one word from each pair can be found in the text. Check your answers in a dictionary. Then, write an example sentence for each word.

1. mayor – major
2. live – life
3. fly – flight
4. hire – higher
5. leave – leaf
6. raise – rise
7. residents – residence

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#### 6 Discuss and write

- a. What do you think about the mayor's programme?
- b. Imagine that the mayor of your town wants to introduce a similar programme. Write a letter to your local newspaper expressing your opinion about it.

#### 7 Webquest

Find more information about unemployment in Italy. Can you find any major differences between the north and south, the big cities and the islands.