

Novel way to cut unemployment: pay people to leave

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

What is the rate of unemployment where you live?

How easy or difficult is it for young people to get a job there?

Do you know of any schemes that are available locally to help jobless people?

2 Key words

Read the definitions and find the words in the article. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. new or unusual _____ (title)
2. the number of people who do not have a job and who are receiving money from the government _____ (two words, para 1)
3. the ability to use good judgment and make sensible decisions _____ (two words, para 3)
4. the process of thinking about something in an intelligent, sensible way in order to make a decision or form an opinion _____ (para 4)
5. stop being effective or making progress _____ (para 5)
6. struggling _____ (para 5)
7. allowed by rules or laws to do something or to receive something _____ (para 6)
8. people who have university degrees _____ (para 7)
9. respect that other people have for you or that you have for yourself _____ (para 8)
10. responsibilities that you have to deal with, especially financial _____ (para 8)
11. things that make you want to do something because you know that you will benefit by it _____ (para 9)
12. confused because you cannot understand something _____ (para 11)
13. continuing to do something even though people do not support you _____ (para 12)

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Level 3 • Advanced

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

Left-wing mayor of Elmas will pay for ten unemployed locals to take English lessons and look for jobs elsewhere in Europe

Lizzy Davies in Cagliari

23 September, 2014

- Governments across Europe dream of finding a magic solution to rising unemployment. But, in the hardest-hit parts of the EU, joblessness rates continue to creep up and the rhetoric does little to shorten the dole queue.
- Now, in a struggling corner of Italy, one mayor thinks he has found an answer to his town's chronic lack of work – although, rather than a solution, it appears to some to be more of an admission of defeat. Valter Pisciotta, the centre-left 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, board a cheap flight and look for jobs elsewhere in Europe.
- "This is, above all, an idea born of common sense and experience," he told the *Guardian*. "Over the past year and a half – especially in the past few months – I have been receiving young people, almost every day, who are despairing about their search for work. Some are looking here and ask for a hand 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.
- "So, my reasoning was this: put everything in place that the council administration can put in place so that those who want to gain experience abroad are able to," he said.
- As the national economy continues to falter, Sardinia, along with much of southern and central Italy, is grappling with high unemployment, with the overall joblessness rate 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.
- For the *Adesso Parto* (Now I'm leaving) programme, Elmas's council has allocated €12,000 on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants aged between 18 and 50. As long as they are out of work and have lived in the town for three years, they are eligible. They do not have to be university educated and their annual income must be no more than €15,000.
- The idea of encouraging people to up sticks is sensitive at a time when floods 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, denies he is facilitating a brain drain and believes that the people he is sending away may well return "and give me back 100 times what they were given". More importantly, he wants the scheme to give a leg-up to those most in need.
- "It's a programme for those with no other resource; it's the last-chance saloon. It's about allowing them the dignity of not having to ask a friend for money or place burdens on families that cannot do it," he said.
- Earlier in 2014, he added, the council launched a scheme whereby businesses were given financial incentives to hire young workers from Elmas. "We advertised 20 of these positions," he said. "We got 120 applications."
- In Elmas, the scheme has provoked 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 has ended up in London and he's really finding his way. He started as a waiter. Now, he's a cook and he's learning English."
- 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.
- Pisciotta, however, is undeterred, remarking of his online critics: "Probably, they are people that aren't in need ... Every day, I deal with

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Level 3 • Advanced

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 phrases that mean the following in the text.

1. reduce unemployment (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. to leave the place where you have been living (para 7)
5. a situation in which a country's most intelligent people, especially scientists, go to another country in order to make more money or to improve their living or working conditions (para 7)
6. very probably (para 7)
7. to help people to make progress, especially in their career (para 7)
8. a situation considered to be the final opportunity for success (para 8)
9. beginning to be successful, to know what he wants to do (para 10)
10. admitting defeat (para 11)

4 Question writing

Below are the answers – write the corresponding questions, using information from the text.

	question	answer
1.		more than 54%
2.		€12,000
3.		between 18 and 50
4.		€15,000
5.		100 times what they were given
6.		work and life experience
7.		120
8.		temporary work only

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5 Easily confused words

- a. Compare and contrast the meaning and the pronunciation of these words. At least one word from each pair can be found in the text.
1. mayor – major
 2. board – bored
 3. live – life
 4. hire – higher
 5. council – counsel
 6. raise – rise
 7. residents – residence
- b. Can you think of any other easily confused words?

6 Discuss and write

- a. What are your thoughts and opinions about this scheme? Discuss them with a partner.
- b. Imagine that the mayor of your town has decided to introduce a similar scheme. Write a letter to your local newspaper expressing your opinion about it.

7 Webquest

Find out more about the unemployment situation in Italy. Are there any major differences between the country's regions, including the larger islands?

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KEY

2 Key words

1. novel
2. dole queue
3. common sense
4. reasoning
5. falter
6. grappling
7. eligible
8. graduates
9. dignity
10. burdens
11. incentives
12. perplexed
13. undeterred

3 Expressions

1. shorten the dole queue
2. put in place
3. first come, first served
4. up sticks
5. brain drain
6. may well
7. give a leg-up
8. last-chance saloon
9. finding his way
10. raising the white flag

4 Question writing

(suggested answers)

1. What percentage of people under 25 are out of work?
2. How much has Elmas's council allocated to the programme?
3. How old do the applicants have to be?
4. What must their maximum annual income be?
5. What might the people on the scheme give back, if and when they return?
6. What can the applicants expect to gain by

7. going abroad?
8. How many applications were there for 20 jobs offered as part of a different incentive?
9. What is the mayor able to offer unemployed people in the town?

5 Easily confused words

a.

1. mayor /meə/: the most important elected official in a town or city
major /'meɪdʒə/: important, serious, large or great
2. board /bɔ:d/: to get onto a ship, aircraft, train or bus
bored /bɔ:d/: feeling impatient or dissatisfied, because you are not interested in something or because you have nothing to do
3. live /lɪv/: to have your home in a particular place
life /laɪf/: the events and experiences that happen to people in general
4. hire /'haɪə/: to pay someone to work for you
higher /'haɪə/: farther up
5. council /'kaʊnsəl/: the elected officials who govern a local area such as a city or county
counsel /'kaʊnsəl/: to give someone advice and help with their problems, especially as your job
6. raise /reɪz/: to lift something
rise /raɪz/: to increase
7. residents /'rezɪdəns/: people who live in a particular place
residence /'rezɪdəns/: a house or other place where someone lives

b. (possible answers)

- advise – advice
affect – effect
queue – cue
draw – drawer
envelop – envelope
practise – practice
principal – principle
sight – site
stationary – stationery
storey – story