



HELP IN FRANCE

Assistance for British people moving to or living in France

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The FROG's NEWSLETTER #13 October 2008



Well, we don't need to look too far these days to find 'doom and gloom' articles on the current world economic situation which is why this month's newsletter is all about the opportunities that are now becoming available for small businesses in France. ☺

Could good news be on the way for small businesses in France?

The French Government is currently working on a new law aimed at simplifying the procedure for setting up a 'micro enterprise' business in France. The law is due to come into effect on 1st January 2009. The plan will create a new legal business status of 'auto-entrepreneur',

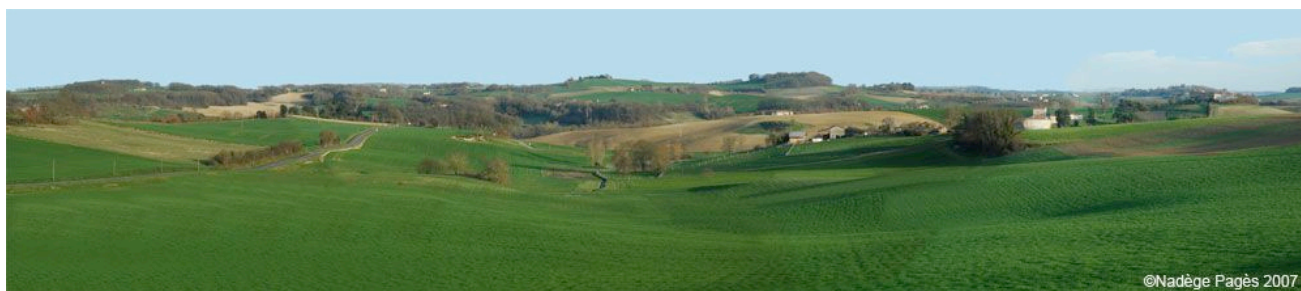
The new system should make it much cheaper, easier and quicker for individuals to start up a small business in France.

Proposed advantages include :

- All new auto-entrepreneurs will be exempt from 'taxe professionnelle' (French business tax) for three years.
- Only when a business starts to generate sales will it need to make payments to the French social security system.
- Businesses whose activity is mainly 'service' based (consulting, workshops, private lessons) will pay 23% of their turnover in charges and taxes and those whose activity is mainly 'commercial' (e-commerce, shops, crafts) will pay 13% (for those who don't know, small businesses like ours (sniff !!) "kindly" donate at present 60 % of their income for social charges and tax).
- The 'auto-entrepreneur' setting up a micro enterprise will be able to choose to pay fiscal and social charges on a monthly or quarterly basis according to actual turnover.

The SOHO SOLO project :

Settling as Self-employed in the Gers



What does SOHO SOLO mean?

SOHO: Small Office Home Office: a project designed for self-employed persons who work at least partially from home.

SOLO: self-employed persons of all nationalities, working in the country.

Thus, SOHO SOLO refers to self-employed people and home-based workers who want to settle in The Gers.

Why SOHO SOLO?

The goal of the SOHO SOLO project, an initiative of the Chamber of Commerce of the Gers, is to make the department the ideal destination for a new generation of e-business people, by providing them with all the support services they need.

Situated in the heart of South West France, near the Pyrenees and not far from the Atlantic Ocean, the Gers is one of those special places where many people dream of living.

The Gers Chamber of Commerce has recently created a particularly interesting and dynamic initiative designed especially to help new foreign, self-employed entrepreneurs in the Gers Department to start their business through the use of information and communications technology. The project is also geared toward helping the English to feel most welcome in the department.

“Soho” stands for “Small Office Home Office” and covers a wide category of home-based workers and above all self-employed people (including free agents, e-lancers, telecommuters, or other independent professionals) who work at least partially from home.

The Concept

Opting for a better quality of life and greater independence, an increasing number of people are choosing to move to and work in the countryside... Thanks to modern technology, these individual entrepreneurs are able to work partially from their homes. They are SOHO SOLO workers.



Soho Solo was a European project co-financed until 2006 by INTERREG IIIB ‘Atlantic Area’ whose main objective was to attract new working population to rural areas using information and communications technologies in their work. Bringing with them new skills and technologies, the SOHO SOLO workers contribute to the wealth of the local economy and help to vitalise rural areas. With the support of the General Council of the Department of Gers and the Midi-Pyrenees Regional Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and

the CEEI (European Business and Innovation Centre) of Gers have been directing the project to encourage this new generation of entrepreneurs who run their businesses independent from their customers' locations to settle in the countryside, and facilitate their integration through support services.

The Services Provided by SOHO SOLO

All people working in "solo" and who are already established in the Gers and would like to promote their activity, or who are planning to settle in the Gers and become a SOHO SOLO worker, can benefit from any or all of the following services:

- an experienced team to assist their start-up or help develop their business: consulting, mentoring and information services
- "welcome committees" in more than thirty villages to facilitate their relocation and integration in the Gers, where they can find information on available accommodation and local services
- access to the SOHO SOLO intranet: about 200 people are registered in its network (www.soho-gers.net);
- the SOHO SOLO Passport, providing easy access to a service network
- free access to 8 telecentres and their facilities (computers, broadband, telephone, fax, photocopier) – the telecentres can also be used as meeting rooms
- free inclusion in the SOHO SOLO online directory targeted at local and national businesses
- participation in regular SOHO SOLO meetings (Club SOHO SOLO) and regular newsletters

If you are interested in relocating to the countryside, in finding a better way to work and a better quality of life, far from urban stress, don't hesitate to contact the SOHO SOLO team! The Gers really wants to help individual entrepreneurs in their businesses and in their lives.



More information at:
www.soho-solo-gers.com
Contact: Franck Cazalas
Gers Chamber of Commerce:
contact@soho-solo-gers.com
Tel: 05 62 60 16 12 or give us
a toll-free call at 0800 000 132

French property owners could benefit from Britain's credit crunch

By Joanna W Simm

Credit crunch Britain

The credit crunch has hit Britain, and there is hardly a soul left in the country who hasn't felt the pinch. Even those of us who have left the motherland for French pastures can't fail to be aware of the financial problems that are undermining the economic foundations of the UK at the moment. Supermarket prices have risen, petrol prices rocketed, and everyone is having to cut back on the little luxuries of life. Fewer Britons are taking exotic holidays, and more and more people are taking the bus. Many people in the UK are no longer able to pursue home improvements to properties whose value is falling daily, with the predictable outcome that the businesses who depend on this work, the builders, the engineers and electricians, the swimming pool and spa manufacturers, the landscape gardeners and plant hire and sales companies, are left wondering how to survive in a world that simply can't afford their services any longer.

Crisis or opportunity?

For many, it spells the end. They shut their doors, put their affairs in the hands of the receivers and sign on the dole. For others, though, the Chinese philosophy that crisis equals opportunity holds sway. They are joining an increasing band of enterprising British businessmen who are battering down the traditional boundaries between the UK and 'abroad' and facing up to the fact that if the work won't come to them, they must go to the work. Big businesses have begun the trend, on the advice of their highly paid and skilled analysts, and now the small companies are getting in on the act. Both France and Portugal are now attracting the attention of the astute British businessman.

Why France?

France is the first and most obvious choice for a British business which wishes to extend its activities abroad. Its proximity and ease of access is a major factor, especially when you consider the costs and logistics of shifting not just manpower but also machinery and equipment abroad. There are a lot of British people living there too, many of whom are far from fluent in the French language and who prefer, if possible to deal with English speaking craftsmen. A vast majority of property owners in France have chosen to renovate old country properties, and hence the need for the aforementioned craftsmen is created.

The new legislation regarding French properties has a part to play too, with particular reference to the swimming pool security laws that require every 'in ground' pool to be fitted with an alarm, or to be behind secure fencing or walls. Even houses that were renovated some years ago may need these additions to their pools to comply with the law, and heavy penalties are levied on those who do not put these safety features in place. Then there is the new legislation on Fosse Septiques, the sewage and other wet waste disposal systems so common in rural France. A huge number of households will have to renew their septic tanks completely in the very near future, and the potential demand for this service is staggering.

But hasn't 'le crunch' hit France?

The answer is that it has, up to a point, but nowhere near as hard as it has hit Britain, America and Spain. France's well documented predilection for home grown goods has kept its costs down a little, and although petrol and wheat prices have risen, the effects have

been generally less severe across the channel. There is still a market in France for home improvement, not least by some reasonably well off Brits, and even by the less well off who have little choice but to continue renovating the crumbling châteaux, 'mas' or 'maison de maitres' they call home unless they want to sleep under the stars forever. Although the property market has slowed, it is still relatively buoyant without showing the massive price tumbles seen in the UK recently. In fact, there are signs that Britons unable to obtain a mortgage in the UK due to the current situation, or unwilling to buy into such an uncertain property market, are regarding French property as a more appealing option.

The Brits are coming

It's yet another invasion of France by the British. Following on from the Hundred Years War and the influx of Brits coming to France to live or to holiday, France is now beginning to see the advance of British artisans. Michael Bryan, of 'G. Bryan Plant Hire and Groundworks', a small construction contractors firm based in Co.Durham in the north-east of England, says: 'There's very little work in England for us now. From having a full diary we have seen business almost grind to a halt in recent weeks. France represents a great opportunity for us and we are already handling enquiries for septic tank system installations, swimming pool excavations and foundations for new build projects.' Time will tell, and it is early days yet, but the signs are encouraging. The months ahead could see a flood of British businesses heading for the ferries.

What's in it for French property owners?

It may seem to go against the grain to employ a British craftsman when you have chosen to live in France. A little disloyal even? Many beg to differ. There is no disputing the fact that French and French based businesses are subject to crippling social charges, pushing costs and hence prices sky high. A French businessman, for example who employs a worker on the minimum wage, currently around 8.70 Euros per hour, actually faces charges of 12.50 per hour to his own pocket, as he has to pay the social charges for the employee on top of the wage. British employers do not face this problem, and accordingly, costs and prices tend to be lower. The new laws, particularly those for the septic tanks, have also stretched the relative French service providers to breaking point, with those able to carry out the works fully booked for anything up to several months ahead. The market is wide open, ready for a firm such as Bryan's to step into the gap. French property owners can only reap the benefits if these services come to France.

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THE HELP IN FRANCE NEWSLETTER

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