

Adoption : la France veut combler son retard

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Le bureau des adoptions de Pékin. Crédits photo : Maro KOURI/IML Image Group-REA

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Thanks to the funding of humanitarian projects, the USA, but also Italy and Spain, host many more children from abroad

Paris prepared itself to copy their more efficient methods.

Everyone starts doing it. In respect of Intercountry Adoption, competition is rife among the receiving countries in recent years. With some delay, France is preparing to change its methods after a decline of 20.5% last year, with only 3 162 foreign children adopted by French couples.

Nadine Morano and Rama Yade, respectively secretaries of State for Family and Foreign Affairs, today present their plan to revive adoption (see below). Other countries, thanks to a very proactive policy, succeeded in reversing the declining numbers of international adoptions. France, despite all being in the top three of receiving countries, is thus far behind the USA and has been overtaken by Spain where the number of adoptions has quadrupled in less than ten years. While there are several possible reasons for this decline: growth of domestic adoption in countries like China, slowing adoption procedures to adapt to the Hague Convention, which regulates the practices... But in this context , Italy has still seen its international adoptions jump by 9%.

Competition can be played within orphanages. In its bilateral agreements, Vietnam, for example, requires funding for a humanitarian project. "For a project, the French

agencies approved for adoption (OAA) can give about 15 000 euros. The Americans will have an envelope at least twice as large. Their adoption agencies operate like private businesses, "says someone from Doctors of the World. "The orphanages say that children are not assigned based on money received, but there is a principle of reality that we can not ignore," he yet deplors.

The financial weight of the USA, which generates more than half of international adoptions, can not be ignored. "France, can invest in major works such as construction of a hospital but did not provide money for projects to link more directly with children and adoption," another OAA regrets.

Italian families less demanding

Projects that sometimes flirt with the limits of the framework imposed by the Hague Convention. "When agencies are working on programs to prevent abandonment and are also doing adoptions, how do you know if everything is done for a mother to keep her child? Especially if there is a financial issue behind "asks Stephanie Romanens-Pythoud, a lawyer at the International Social Service.

In terms of humanitarian projects, Italy, for its part is illustrated by an effective policy, with funding from the central authority. Actions which are also valued by diplomatic channels. "The State finances the full cost of Italian OAA – offices, local correspondents - which leaves them the money to build research teams," says Gilbert Bayon, president of Children of Queen of Mercy, which operates Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. "These research teams criss-cross the country to find small orphanages not identified by authorities hosting adoptable children." Even if it is then the Government of Burkina Faso that "assigns" the children in hosting families, "this aid for the census weighs heavy, "points out Gilbert Bayon.

But "good" results of Italy have another cause: the host families have understood that they had to be less demanding. In France, only 23% of adopted children are more than five years. In Italy, this figure exceeds 50%. However, this practice has been directly encouraged by the Italian authorities. In Peru, the "Angel che guardan" programme was created to boost the adoption of already big children. Finally, the good implantation of Italian nuns in orphanages in countries of origin would also favours assigning children to their compatriots. The Spanish enjoy the same advantage.