



CAISSE D'ÉPARGNE

 PRESS RELEASE

The French savings banks launch an account service package specifically designed for *auto-entrepreneurs*

(Paris, May 25, 2009) --- The Caisses d'Épargne are launching the *Auto-entrepreneur account service package* specifically designed for people wanting to take advantage of the new status for self-employed business creators introduced by the French "modernization of the economy" law enacted on August 4, 2008. In line with the spirit of the new act, this offer provides entrepreneurs with a simple and inexpensive service package to help them start up their business activities and forge a relationship with a banking institution.

This new account package is available at a uniform rate of €6 per month and includes a full range of services designed to meet the needs of the small business creator: check book, monthly account statement, access to online banking services, payment method insurance, interest-bearing current account. The package is exempt from account charges and turnover commission. This offer draws inspiration from the advantages of the new *auto-entrepreneur* system, namely: simplicity and fluidity.

By choosing this service package rather than a personal account, the *auto-entrepreneur* enjoys the added advantage of being put in contact with one of the 1,000 advisors – specifically devoted to professional customers and given special training on this new status – in one of the 4,700 branches of the Caisse d'Épargne network. Self-employed customers will be given support and advice when they first launch their activity and throughout the growth of their business regarding questions related to everyday management (ensuring the security of online payment, cash flow requirements, etc.) and access to financing solutions.

Available since January 2009, this new simplified system regarding the entrepreneur's tax status and social security contributions is already enjoying considerable success with almost 150,000 entrepreneurs registered so far, compared with the 200,000 initially expected for the entire year and 400,000 by 2010.

Groupe Caisse d'Épargne at a glance

With the networks of the Caisses d'Épargne, of Crédit Foncier, Banque Palatine, Financière Océor and its specialized subsidiaries, Groupe Caisse d'Épargne (GCE) is one of the largest retail banking institutions in France.

With more than 51,700 employees and a strong local presence throughout France, GCE pursues a full range of activities in the banking, insurance and real estate sectors. The Caisse d'Épargne has clearly expressed its determination to accompany its professional customers and to provide an innovative, high-quality range of services capable of satisfying their various needs. In this market, with 160,000 professional customers using the French savings banks as their principal banking partner, the Caisse d'Épargne enjoys a penetration rate of almost 10%. The network is also being reinforced with 1,000 account managers dedicated to self-employed customers and 1,500 branch managers specifically trained to meet the needs of this type of clientele.

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