

# Reinforcing access for all to lifelong learning (the 2018 law)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 FRANCE

## Timeline



ID number 28229

## Background

The system before the 2018 law was felt to provide unequal opportunities to small businesses, employees not served by traditional training, the long-term unemployed, rural territories and certain sectors, and also in terms of the duration and type of training available (with or without certification). The law aims for better vocational training and apprenticeship distribution in order to raise the skills level of all people and within all organisations.

## Objectives

The aim of the 2018 legislation is to transform radically the French continuing vocational training system and apprenticeships to meet the needs of businesses, particularly those of very small and medium-sized enterprises, and to promote access to training for all workers, especially the least qualified.

## Description

The 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future provides for:

- (a) the creation of the agency France Compétences: continuing training in France is a shared responsibility between the State, the regions and the social partners. The new agency, France Compétences, brings together these three stakeholders. It will be in charge of regulating the quality and the price of training supply, and handling funding discrepancies across sectors;
- (b) reforming funding mechanisms to establish a disintermediated training system: the compulsory contributions of companies for continuing training (the rate remains unchanged), previously paid to *Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés* (OPCAs), joint bodies run by the social partners in charge of collecting and redistributing training funds for the continuous training of employees, will from now on be paid to the URSSAF, a network in charge of collecting and redistributing social security contributions on behalf of the State since 1960.

The 20 existing OPCAs are gradually being replaced by 11 skills operators (*Opérateurs*

*de compétences*, OPCOs) organised by professional sector. The skills operators will support SMEs in anticipating skill needs and developing skills development training programmes (*plans de développement des compétences*) for their employees. OPCOs will also be responsible for developing apprenticeships.

Changes in funding mechanisms also affect the personal training account scheme (*Compte Personnel de Formation*, CPF). The CPF has been in place since 2015. From 2019 onwards, the account will be credited in euros and no longer in hours: EUR 500 (800 for the low-qualified people) per year per person (up to EUR 5 000 or 8 000 over a period of 10 years). The current entitlements in hours should be converted at a rate of EUR 15 per hour. Account holders will directly enrol in a CPF-funded training course listed in a dedicated digital application (forthcoming).

In the previous system, private sector employees had to be funded by an intermediary body (one OPCA) for financing. In the new funding scheme, the cost of a CDP training course will be paid to training providers directly by a public body (Caisse des dépôts et consignations).

Developing career advice and guidance services for people in employment and jobseekers, using the recently established Career transition counselling (*Conseil en évolution professionnelle*, CEP).

The law broadens the definition of training action to include position tests, distance learning and on-the-job training (*Action de formation en situation de travail*, AFEST). It also includes new arrangements for the governance, financing and rules of apprenticeship: apprenticeship funding managed nationally, with a lump sum price defined for each qualification prepared through this route; an open right to create apprentice training centres; and lump-sum funding based on the number of contracts concluded per training centre. The aim is to develop a training system more reactive to business skill needs and create more opportunities for young people to engage in apprenticeship training.

The law also introduces quality certification for VET providers: it has put emphasis on transparency and efficiency through new obligations for all training providers using mutual funds to inform and monitor their training actions. The certification will be awarded by a nationally accredited body. Certification will be a condition for access to public procurement and training funds purchase. A reference framework including quality criteria, indicators and verification methods is being set.

Ensuring efficient funding was an objective of the changes in the funding mechanisms. Stakeholders were involved in the reform. The social partners, previously part of OPCA boards, expressed reservations about this aspect of the reform.

The activities of France Compétences and the skills operators (OPCO) are being implemented as of 2019. Transition from the old system to the new one is to be completed by 2021.

Implementing provisions into force in January 2019 (Decree No 14 of 8 January 2019, implementing provisions of the 2018 Bill (Chapter IV, Article 31) foresee that, from 2019 onwards, the levels of qualification in the national nomenclature (RNCP) are to be aligned with EQF.

## 2018 Approved/Agreed

### 2019 Implementation

2019 saw implementation of the main changes sought by lawmakers in 2018:

- (a) the empowerment of individuals through the monetisation of the personal training account (CPF) which had been funded in hours up until that point: now the account is credited with EUR 500/year up to a limit of EUR 5 000 (EUR 800 and EUR 8 000 for the least qualified individuals). This is accompanied by improvement in the quality of all organisations delivering all types of training actions, including apprenticeships, thanks to a national registered label, *Qualiopi*;
- (b) the clarification of governance through the creation of the new national public

- agency regulating vocational training and apprenticeships: France Compétences;
- (c) facilitating mobility through the transformation of the previous *individual training leave* scheme into a transitional personal training account for employees undergoing retraining or professional development, managed by the new regional inter-professional joint committees (CPIR);
- (d) the strengthening of the professional branches with the replacement of the 20 approved joint collecting agencies (OPCA) by 11 skills operators (OPCO), who will ultimately no longer collect funds;
- (e) the simplification of contributions, with a single contribution for training and learning.

## 2020 Implementation

The *France Relance* recovery plan strengthens a set of alternance schemes (the apprenticeship contract and professionalisation contract) and continuing training schemes, by increasing the number of places available and the dedicated funding for a period of two years (2020 and 2021).

In its activity report published in 2020, France Compétences provides an overview of the main projects carried out in 2019:

- (a) determination of rules and financial allocations;
- (b) organisation of a digitisation process for applications to register professional certifications to the national register of vocational/professional qualifications;
- (c) organisation of professional development advice for people in active employment;
- (d) issue of nearly 7 000 recommendations to professional branches.

The French skills ombudsman, whose functions were established in January 2019 to guarantee equal access to training for all users, published her first activity report in October 2020.

The Inspectorate General of Social Affairs (IGAS) and the Inspectorate General of Finance (IGF) have drawn up a report to establish the financial consequences of the reform of apprenticeship and vocational training, at the request of the Ministry of Labour and the Minister of Action and Public Accounts. Their report, made public in September 2020, makes a set of recommendations intended to ensure, in the short and medium term, the regulation and the financing of expenditure.

Following a national inter-professional agreement (ANI) signed by the employers' and employees' organisations, the joint interprofessional regional committees (*Commissions paritaires interprofessionnelles régionales* - CPIR), in charge of managing professional retraining schemes, was changed to *Associations Transitions Pro* - ATpro. ATpro will be managing the newly established the *CFP de transition* long duration retraining programme for career transition eligible for funding through the personal training account (CPF) scheme.

## 2021 Implementation

A very important step in the CVET and apprenticeship reform (2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future) is the transfer, on 1 January 2022, of the collection of statutory contributions for vocational training and apprenticeships paid by businesses, from the OPCOs (joint bodies managed by the social partners) to the URSSAFs, the unions for the collection of social security contributions and family allowances (*Unions de recouvrement des cotisations de sécurité sociale et d'allocations familiales*). The aim is to simplify the process for companies: one single document (*Déclaration sociale nominative*, DSN) is now used by them to declare the social data on which their social contributions for employees, as well as their contribution to training, is calculated.

Use of the personal training account (*compte personnel de formation*, CPF) continues to grow. Studies published in the last quarter of 2021 (DARES and Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations) show significant expansion, which increased to 984 000 training

courses in 2020 compared to 517 000 a year earlier. Between the end of 2019 (the start of the *Mon compte formation* platform) and the first half of 2021 the figures on the use of the CPF show that participation in training increased for young employees aged below 25 (+3%). It decreased for young job seekers (-8%), while the participation of all young people fell by 3%. In the other age groups, fewer people in the 40-49 age group attended training (-3%), while more people participated in training in the 25-29 age group (+2%) and those aged 50 years or older (+3%). The participation of women increased (from 45% to 50%), both in the employees' category (from 46% to 51%) and the job seekers' category (from 44% to 48%).

The possibilities of co-financing by the Regions, Pôle emploi, the professional branches and employers are gradually being used by these various co-financiers to contribute to the CPF budgets of those individuals choosing targeted training courses that correspond to those areas identified as of priority need (e.g. occupations experiencing shortages).

*France Compétences'* second activity report, covering 2020, outlines the increase of more than 44% in apprenticeship entries as well as the operation of the *Mon compte formation* platform, which reinforced the triggering of training actions at the initiative of individuals.

A national inter-professional framework agreement relating to vocational training was signed in October 2021 by the social partners (3 of the 5 inter-professional trade union organisations of employees considered to be representative at national level and 3 employers' organisations). It puts forward proposals to improve the 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future, aiming to influence its possible adjustment by a future government. For instance, it suggests:

- (a) the creation of a certification for apprenticeship tutors and the simplification of the process for submitting hiring contracts to the skills operators (OPCOs);
- (b) the possibility for companies and branches to purchase training actions on the *Mon compte formation* platform;
- (c) the implementation of tax incentives for some expenses linked to skills development;
- (d) a career development-centred use of the personal training account (CPF).

## 2022 Implementation

From 2022, this policy development is part of the national implementation plan (NIP), Measure 'Anticipating and facilitating ecological and digital transitions', Actions 'Top-up of the personal training account for training in strategic sectors' and also 'Aid for retraining'. It can be considered also as part of the NIP measure 'Contributing to equal opportunities in all areas', action 'The increase of the rights on the Personal Training Account for certain groups'.

In January 2022, a parliamentary mission published an assessment report on the 'Professional Future law', which gives a positive assessment of the reform, especially regarding the development of the personal training account (CPF), identifies existing funding difficulties and makes proposals on improvement of apprenticeships.

In February 2022, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Public Accounts convened the first ministerial steering committee responsible for combating abusive canvassing and fraud regarding Personal training accounts.

Law 2022-1587 of 19 December 2022 is intended to combat CPF-related fraud and to prohibit the soliciting of CPF account holders. For example, this legislation prohibits commercial solicitation of account holders by SMS but does not prohibit a training organisation from advertising to the general public. The legislation reinforces the power of the national CPF management body (the *Caisse des dépôts*) to recover sums that have been wrongfully paid out without involving judicial authorities. It introduces a pre-approval procedure for training bodies and regulates the conditions governing the use of subcontractors.

In addition, the purchasing process has been tightened up. It is now necessary for the account holder to be in possession of a recognised form of ID usable via the *FranceConnect* portal (a solution provided by the State to secure and simplify access to more than 1 400 online services).

Key figures as of 15 June 2022 include 16 624 training organisations having registered 1 active training course, 233 114 different training courses, 775 386 training sessions on offer out of which 174 757 are delivered remotely and finally 3 245 qualifications with an average price of EUR 2 129.

Regarding Career Guidance Counselling CEP, 148 849 employed workers availed of the CEP system in 2021 compared to 100 937 in 2020 (an increase of 47% or 37% if only new recruits are taken into account). At the end of the first phase (personalised counselling), 91% of beneficiaries were satisfied, while 85% expressed satisfaction at the end of the second phase (support with the actual training process).

## 2023 Implementation

*France compétences* launched the call for tenders to select the regional operators appointed to deliver Career Guidance Counselling (CEP) support to working people over the period 2024-27.

Since 1 September 2023, employees in challenging professions have benefited from strengthened rights to training and career conversion support schemes. These rights are accessible through the professional prevention account (*Compte professionnel de prévention*, C2P), which is one of the key outcomes of the pension reform. This new entitlement allow workers exposed to occupational risk factors to pursue a professional reorientation project with coverage for their salary and training expenses. The criteria for earning points have been modified, enabling more workers to benefit from this scheme: the thresholds for recognising certain risk factors—such as night work and alternating shift work—have been lowered, expanding eligibility. It is estimated that the C2P account will be utilised by additional 60 000 individuals each year.

Furthermore, a new points scale has been introduced: each point now provides an enhancement of EUR 500 to the personal training account (CPF), up from EUR 375 previously.

From May 2023, the personal training account (CPF) platform incorporates a pre-activated 'passport for orientation, training and skills' for all active workers, enabling them to create an online CV with pre-populated data certified by a trustworthy third party, the public body Caisse des dépôts, which manages the PTA platform. The Full Employment Law, enacted on 18 December 2023, regulated the extended data collection and storage, accessibility for employment network actors, the set of data included in the passport to encompass different types of learning pathways: initial and continuing education, professional pathways, and voluntary or community service activities that can aid individuals in maintaining or securing employment. Volunteer activities eligible for recognition are those that help earn rights recorded in the CPF through the citizen engagement account (as detailed in the amended Article L6323-8 of the labour code).

The Full Employment Law of December 2023 introduced a new governance for the employment network at national, regional, departmental and local levels. The purpose of this new governance is to ensure coordination, cooperation and co-construction between the players involved in employment and inclusion. The National Employment Committee defines national strategic guidelines and common assets. The Territorial Committees for Employment are the places where all local stakeholders work together, in particular, on departmental roadmaps. This network retains the responsibilities previously assigned to the national PES service (Pôle emploi, renamed France Travail), the Missions Locales, local guidance services which are the first point of contact for young jobseekers, the Cap Emploi network for people with disabilities, and various public services run by the State or local authorities (regions, départements, communes) which can meet the needs of jobseekers and employers.

## 2024 Implementation

The new employment network and France Travail, established by the Full Employment Act of December 2023, were rolled out in 2024. From January 2024, the public employment service Pôle emploi was replaced by 'France Travail', a new public operator. This transformation aims to improve support for jobseekers and strengthen cooperation between the various actors involved in employment, training and professional integration.

In October 2024, France Travail introduced the 'France Travail Pro' brand, aimed at making it more attractive to recruiters. Initiatives include the extension of opening hours, the introduction of a single number for business advisers and an increase in prospecting visits. The aim is to improve collaboration with businesses, particularly VSEs and SMEs, to facilitate the recruitment of jobseekers.

The Full Employment Act introduced measures to facilitate access to employment for people with disabilities. Since January 2024, referral to the ordinary workplace has become a universal right, with enhanced support provided by France Travail in collaboration with Cap emploi. In addition, the rights of workers through the ESAT scheme (*Établissements et Services d'Aide par le Travail*) have been extended, including in particular the right to strike and union membership.

The decree No 2024-394 of 29 April 2024, establishes a mandatory payment of EUR 100 for each beneficiary wishing to utilise their professional training account, with effect of 2 May 2024. This initiative aims to enhance the fairness and effectiveness of the training system, combat fraud, and align training with professional projects. The implementation of this financial contribution is designed to foster accountability among beneficiaries.

## Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour, Full Employment and Inclusion
- Delegate Minister for VET under the education and labour ministers
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration (until 2022)

## Target group

### Learners

Adult learners

Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

### Education professionals

Guidance practitioners

### Entities providing VET

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

VET providers (all kinds)

### Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

## Thematic categories

### Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Further developing national quality assurance systems

### **Modernising VET offer and delivery**

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

### **Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation**

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

## **European priorities in VET**

### **VET Recommendation**

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

VET promoting equality of opportunities

VET underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

### **Osnabrück Declaration**

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

## **Subsystem**

CVET

## **Further reading**

[The Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future \[LOI n° 2018-771 du 5 septembre 2018 pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel\]](#)

[The personal training account \(Compte personnel de formation, CPF\)](#)

[Ministry of Labour, page dedicated to the training reform \[Grands Dossiers: formation, je passe à l'action\]](#)

[Career transition counselling service \[Conseil en évolution professionnelle - CEP\]](#)

[Opérateurs de compétences - OPCO \[skills operators\]](#)

Ministry of Labour, DARES, October 2021 The personal training account in 2020 - an unprecedented increase in training entries

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Ministry of Labour - press release/presentation of the action plan against abusive canvassing and fraud on the personal training account (PTA).

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Ministry of Labour, Full Employment and Inclusion, 2022 - CPF frauds: beware of bogus "good deals"!

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Law 2022-1587 of 19 December 2022 aimed at combating fraud in the personal training account and prohibiting the canvassing of its holders

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Deposits and Consignments Fund (CDC) 2022 - My Personal Training Account: 2021 annual report - Accountancy, administrative and financial management

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France Compétences. 2021. Activity report, 3 years of work in support of training for the working population

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France Compétences. 2023. Report on the use of funds for vocational training and career development counselling

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France Compétences. 2023. Career development counselling for the working population. Launch of the call for tenders for the period 2024 - 27

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## Related policy developments

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### 2024 Implementation

#### France Relance: plan to relaunch activity, cohesion priority

France Relance has a budget of EUR 100 billion in total over two years, out of which 15 billion is for vocational training. The main measures in terms of education and vocational training offered in both IVET and CVET (excluding exceptional employment subsidies) are:

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##### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

##### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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### 2024 Implementation

#### Monitoring VET graduates

The 2016 Labour Law (Law No 2016-1088 of 8 August 2016 on labour, modernisation of social dialogue and securing career paths) created new obligations in terms of information to be provided by training institutions and apprentice training centres.

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Supporting apprenticeship mentors and tutors

In initial vocational education and training apprenticeship schemes, learners receive guidance and support during their in-company training by professionals in the company they work.

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## National qualifications framework

In the reporting period, work to adapt the current five-level structure of the French framework to the eight-level structure of the EQF was carried out.

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**

## Preparatory programmes for apprenticeship

The 2015 Success in apprenticeship initiative has put in place 142 projects in 20 regions, most involving the local youth employment and social integration centres (*Missions locales*) in partnership with apprentice training centres (*Centre de formation d'apprentis*, CFA).

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

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**2024 Implementation**
**Training actions in work situations (AFEST)**

In July 2018, a report was published detailing the results of a pilot initiative launched in 2015 that explored new approaches for work-based learning through scheduled and guided on-the-job training.



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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

CVET

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**2024 Implementation**
**Trades and qualifications campuses label**

In the reporting period, the initiative was further extended through labelling 95 campuses covering 12 growth and job-creating sectors: food and food-processing; chemistry and biotechnologies; creation, design, audiovisual; infrastructures, construction, eco-construction; materials, innovative ma



FRANCE

**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET CVET

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**2024 Implementation**
**Career guidance for IVET learners**

The Pathways for the future (*Parcours d'avenir*) measure, announced in 2015, has been in place in all lower secondary education schools since September 2015. It is available to all learners from lower to the end of upper secondary years (from *Sixième* to *Terminale*).



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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

IVET

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## 2024 Implementation

### IVET learners European and international mobility

Apprentice mobility was enshrined in the Labour Code (2017). New legal provisions have come into force, aimed at removing obstacles to long-term mobility in Europe for apprentices and trainees in alternance training schemes.

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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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## 2024 Implementation

### Developing apprenticeship

Social partners have been involved in the design of the reform, along with regional authorities, chambers of commerce, and experts. Stakeholder consultation lasted from November 2017 to January 2018.

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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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