

Training actions in work situations (AFEST)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 FRANCE

Timeline



ID number 28222

Background

The on-the-job training (*Action de formation en situation de travail*, AFEST), a pilot followed by its recognition as a modality of training action by law in 2018, targets employees who are not served by traditional schooling (employees who are uninterested in or unsuited for classroom learning), and small companies (who struggle to give employees time off for training).

Objectives

The policy aims to:

- (a) reduce inequalities in access to training for low qualified workers and ease (re)training and skills acquisition;
- (b) support the transformation of companies, building employee loyalty and improve risk prevention.

Description

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. This pilot involved collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and stakeholders such as social partners, the National Employment, Training and Vocational Guidance Council (CNEFOP), the National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions (ANACT), and training funds (OPCAs). The initiative aimed to develop training actions in real work situations (*Action de formation en situation de travail*, AFEST), specifically targeting low-skilled employees in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By 2018, the pilot had established 21 projects that involved 11 of the 20 OPCAs across the country.

Following the 2018 Law on the freedom to choose one's professional future (reforming

continuing vocational training) and based on the pilot carried out from 2015 to 2018, a 2018 decree set out the conditions for training actions in work situations (AFEST). By including on-the-job training (AFEST) as a new educational method to be funded by pooled funds, the legislators recognised that work can act as a training modality. Certain conditions apply:

- (a) prior analysis of the work activity in order to adapt it for pedagogical purposes, where necessary;
- (b) prior appointment of a trainer able to perform a tutoring function;
- (c) implementation of reflective phases, distinct from work situations and intended to use the lessons learned from the work situation for pedagogical purposes, so that those involved can identify and analyse any gaps between expectations, achievements and outcomes, in order to consolidate and explicitly set out what has been learned;
- (d) evaluation of the learning outcomes to conclude the action.

2015 Pilot
2016 Pilot
2017 Pilot
2018 Approved/Agreed
2019 Implementation Continued deployment of AFEST as a training method: AFEST in companies with fewer than 50 employees can be financed using funds pooled by the skills operators (OPCO).
2020 Implementation The measures are operational and run as regular practice.
2021 Implementation The Ministry of Labour is following a number of pilots relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) the interaction of AFEST/professionalisation contracts;(b) how the on-the-job training pedagogy (that has a broader scope than the AFEST framework, which defines a category of training actions) can support apprenticeship provision, such as the Adapted training in work situations for apprentices with disabilities scheme developed (in the CFAS Occitanie Ouest and the 2APH Network) within the 2021 skills development call for proposals of the Association for the management of funds for the professional integration of people with disabilities (<i>Association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion des personnes handicapées</i>, AGEFIPH). <p>The Ministry of Labour supports AFEST projects in the professional branches through its dedicated commitment to develop employment and skills (<i>engagements de développement de l'emploi et des compétences</i>, EDEC), which are contracts signed between the State and some businesses to support their HR capacities.</p> <p>Some qualifications relating to the tasks of AFEST counsellors for companies and individuals have been included in the national register of professional certifications (RNCP) and the specific register (RS): counsellor for VAE and AFEST pathways (RNCP); advice/support to companies; implementing and making an AFEST/AFEST advisor; guidance and support for AFEST beneficiaries (RS).</p> <p>During the COVID-19 crisis, many AFEST projects in companies were postponed.</p> <p>Finally, the 2021 report on collective bargaining lists 10 agreements that explicitly mention support for the introduction of on-the-job training.</p>
2022 Implementation

From 2022 this policy development is part of the National Implementation Plan (NIP), measure 'Develop all forms of training and particularly work-based training', action 'Legal recognition of on-the-job training'.

The public employment service operator *Pôle Emploi* is launching a new service package dedicated to on-the-job training scheme, in order to promote this new approach to learning which focuses on 'learning by doing' directly in the individual's future workplace. As part of the plan to tackle hiring difficulties in VSEs and SMEs, the AFEST initiative is aimed primarily at long-term jobseekers in five target areas: industry, retail, construction, care giving and corporate services. More specifically, *Pôle Emploi* advisors recommends that companies use AFEST as part of their pre-employment training.

A brochure, *An exploration of work-based training in Europe and elsewhere*, has been produced as part of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) activities, as well as a flyer entitled 'What is work-based training?', which includes resources for business leaders, especially those running SMEs and VSEs, who in many cases have no HR department.

2023 Implementation

3 workshops were dedicated to AFEST at the winter vocational training conference (UHFP, organised by *Centre Inffo* in January 2023 in Cannes, event which attracted 1 500 participants, policy makers, stakeholders and business professionals).

2024 Implementation

A regional example of this initiative is found in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, which has extended its call for projects until 2025. The objective is to support businesses in their recruitment efforts by training job seekers directly at the workplace, thereby facilitating the acquisition of skills that meet the immediate needs of employers. The primary beneficiaries of this program are individuals with low qualifications residing in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, particularly those living in priority neighborhoods or rural areas.

On a sectoral level, the skills operator OPCO Uniformation, in the social sector, provides its member employers with a range of services to facilitate their AFEST projects. This includes organising thematic webinars, offering a list of recognised experts, financing a diagnostic assessment of the AFEST project, and providing access to 'turnkey' training offerings tailored to specific industries and the size of the organisation. Additionally, OPCO Uniformation supplies a comprehensive kit that includes practical guides, detailed methodological sheets for each step, and downloadable tools.

A feedback report published by *Aract Nouvelle-Aquitaine* analysed implementation of on-the-job formal training (*Action de formation en situation de travail, AFEST*) in three work-integration social enterprises (*Structures d'insertion par l'activité économique, SIAE*) in Charente-Maritime. The study highlights AFEST's potential as a lever for improving quality of life and working conditions (*qualité de vie et des conditions de travail, QVCT*).

AFEST emerged both as a tool for competence development and as a driver of sustainable employability for employees on integration pathways, while strengthening organisations' capacity to fulfil their role as employers. By combining practical learning, individualised support and reflective analysis of work, the scheme professionalised teams and consolidated human-resource management in social and solidarity-economy structures.

2025 Implementation

In April 2025, the National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions (ANACT) launched a national call for projects, "AFEST (on-the-job formal training) to sustainably develop individual and collective competences at work". It supports innovative, experimental projects to refine methodological conditions for AFEST that, beyond

upskilling beneficiaries, also act on other dimensions of a company's economic and social performance. Addressing real work, its conditions and discussion thereof is a lever for issues such as attractiveness, onboarding, retention, accident prevention and prevention of work strain.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Labour, Full Employment and Inclusion
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration (until 2022)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment
Low-skilled/qualified persons

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs
Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

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

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible
VET

Subsystem

CVET

Further reading

[Decree n° 2018-1330 of 28 December 2018 on training actions and personal skills audits](#)

[Report of the pilots of training actions in work situations](#)

[The Ministry of Labour, December 2019, On-the-job training for jobseekers: developing a reference framework report](#)

[Erasmus+ France & Education Training Agency, January 2020, AFEST's short guide for everyone](#)

[The AFEST framework - publication in the form of a review and symposium co-organised by the journal Education permanente No 227 June 2021, the CNAM, in association with Centre Inffo, the ARACT network and the Ministry of Labour](#)

[Training in enterprises: new evidence from 100 case studies](#)

[AEFA, Agence Erasmus+ France Education & Training Agency, 2023 - 'An exploration of on-the-job training, in Europe and elsewhere'](#)

[Pole Emploi, 2022 - Launch of the AFEST initiative: on-the-job training](#)

[Aract Nouvelle-Aquitaine. \(2024\). L'AFEST : accélérateur de QVCT ? Retour d'expérience SIAE Charente-Maritime AFEST: a QVCT accelerator? \[Feedback from SIAE Charente-Maritime \]. Bordeaux/Poitiers/Limoges: Aract Nouvelle-Aquitaine.](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Tackling illiteracy in work situations

In 2015, social partners created a professional certificate which recognises basic knowledge and skills needed for the workplace (*Certificat de connaissances et de compétences professionnelles*).

 FRANCE

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

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

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

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28222>