

Developing apprenticeship

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN** **FRANCE**

Timeline

**ID number 28214**

Background

Apprenticeship programmes were offered for all qualifications registered in the National directory of professional qualifications (RNCP). The directory included all formal VET qualifications. Apprenticeship was accessible to young people aged between 16 and 25. Workplace training (up to 75% of the contract duration) was combined with training in an apprentice training centre (CFA). The policy for work-based learning in VET was faced with the challenge of bringing VET institutions and enterprises closer: there was still an insufficient number of apprenticeship places for the least qualified. In 2014, the Law on VET, employment and social democracy (Law No 2014-288 of 5 March) reforming continuing vocational training introduced subsidies for micro-enterprises (fewer than 11 employees) that recruited apprentices. The same year, the national EAfA commitments included a number of measures such as creating career paths for apprentices, also at regional level, and setting up a clear apprentice status including social rights as well as strengthening the capacity of apprentice training centres (CFA). An apprenticeship-relaunch plan was initiated in 2014, oriented to developing apprenticeship also in the public sector, with a target of 60 000 apprentices. The plan was supported by national advertising campaigns.

Objectives

A reform of apprenticeship contract had been initiated in October 2017. Its overall intention is to make the most of apprenticeship, regarded as an excellence training pathway, to ensure educational success and professional integration, in the respective interests of all: young people, businesses, local territories, and national economic and social development.

Description

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. The September 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future includes provisions regarding apprenticeship and work-based learning.

- (a) The opening of new apprentice training centres no longer requires administrative approval (previously issued by the regions). Sectors and businesses have, therefore, more room to create apprenticeship centres. Public funding allocated to CFAs will be based on the number of apprenticeship contracts they have signed.
- (b) The conditions applicable to apprenticeship contracts have been simplified: the age limit for entering apprenticeship has been extended to 29 (as opposed to 25 previously); the minimum duration of a contract has been reduced to six months (as opposed to one year previously); entry into an apprenticeship programme is now possible at any time of the year; international mobility of apprentices is facilitated, for instance through the newly-added possibility to suspend contracts during mobility.
- (c) Additional financial support for apprentices is introduced, in the form of a EUR 30 increase in monthly remuneration for apprentices under age 20 and EUR 500 allocation to apprentices preparing for their driving licence.
- (d) The financial support to SMEs offering training to young VET learners will be simplified in the form of a single allocation.

Efficient funding was looked for: a single tax to finance apprenticeship (as opposed to two currently); and introduction of the number of apprenticeship contracts signed as a criterion for the funding of apprentice training centres, to encourage the development of apprenticeships.

The reform increases the role of sectors in the funding of the apprenticeship system. Sectors now also play a greater role in the design of vocational degrees, training guidelines and examination rules, further supporting the learning outcomes approach. Ex-ante evaluation was carried out and outlined a range of possible benefits, including increased permeability and flexibility (through bringing closer formal education and apprenticeship); supporting diversity in education; and increasing the labour market relevance and attractiveness of apprenticeship.

Among the issues encountered is the reluctance of the regions to lose their power in the steering of the vocational apprenticeship system; they lose jurisdiction over shaping the geographic distribution of apprentice training centres (CFAs). Whereas the regions previously had the power to regulate the opening of CFAs, sectors or businesses may now set up one. However, the regions still have some financial leverage 'when territorial development and economic development needs so require'.

The main provisions of the law came into effect on 1 January 2019.

Apprentice European mobility periods abroad are foreseen through the Erasmus Pro programme in 2021-22.

2017 Approved/Agreed

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Implementation

The law of 5 September 2018 modifies the management, organisation and monitoring of training through apprenticeships.

For diplomas under the authority of the Ministries of National Education and Higher Education, the order of 25 April 2019 sets out the organisation and operation of the mission for the pedagogical monitoring of apprenticeship training.

The circular of 3 October 2019 defines the scope of the pedagogical monitoring, the pedagogical organisation of training in training centres and in companies: training content taught face-to-face or remotely in accordance with the programmes and guidelines; pedagogical positioning carried out before the adaptation of the duration of the training and the teaching provided; and contextualisation of professional activities, particularly on the technical platforms.

It may also concern the relevant methods and tools, particularly those for the teaching of work-study programmes, encouraging the development of the certifying skills included in the reference curriculum. The monitoring mission may also assess the

suitability of the teaching equipment and the tasks entrusted to the apprentice at the company for professional activity requirements and equivalent certifying skills included in the diploma reference curriculum.

The monitoring mission may also verify that the duration of training at the CFA is in line with that set out in the diploma regulations or the skills of the CFA instructors and apprenticeship supervisors. Where applicable, it will report any shortcomings to the skills operator (OPCO) and to the quality certifier.

In addition to conducting inspections, the mission also provides information and support to apprentice training centres for all pedagogical aspects, particularly during periods of diploma reform, as well as regulatory monitoring.

By virtue of the Law No 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on the freedom to choose one's professional future, which allows training organisations to offer apprenticeships, decree 2019-317 of 12th April 2019 integrates apprenticeships into the responsibilities of the GRETA (group of establishments), a network for national education continuing training.

A flat-rate government subsidy of EUR 500 to fund obtaining a driving licence has been offered to adult apprentices since 1 January 2019.

It is now possible to open a CFA (apprentice training centre) by making a simple declaration, upon which a company will be eligible to receive funds for apprenticeship from the skills operators (OCPO), giving companies the opportunity to open their own CFA.

An informational pamphlet published in 2020 by the Ministry of National Education and Youth promotes apprenticeship training.

2020 Implementation

For vocational qualifications administered by National Education (the certificate of professional aptitude/CAP, the professional baccalaureate, the professional certificate, the arts trades certificate/BMA, the additional distinction and the higher technician certificate/BTS), the minimum duration of training taking place in an apprentice training centre may be set as a proportion of the total duration of the apprenticeship contract (taking into account the initial level of the apprentice in terms of acquired skills). The Decree No 2020-624 of 22 May 2020 states that contract duration can now be adjusted by an agreement between the employer and the apprentice.

A historic number of new apprentices were recorded in 2020, with 525 600 new contracts signed (i.e. 42% more than in 2019).

2021 Implementation

The Ministry of Labour has published an apprenticeship summary, a guide for stakeholders that summarises all the new rules applicable to the apprenticeship contract and the apprentice training centres (CFAs). In 2021, 718 000 new apprenticeship contracts were signed (an increase of 37% in one year).

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 'A systemic reform of apprenticeship'.

Following developments relevant to the reform of the apprenticeship contract can be mentioned:

During 2022, 767 200 apprenticeship contracts had been signed, an increase of 14.1% compared to 2021. The objective set by the French President is to reach 1 million apprentices per year by 2027.

Special grants have been also extended throughout the year and will continue in 2023 with a flat rate of EUR 6 000 for all companies, for the first year of the contract, regardless of the age of the trainee. The aim is to encourage the hiring of trainees at baccalauréat level or below and to make the scheme more transparent.

A decision by France Compétences anticipates a reduction in the levels of support for apprenticeship contracts set by the various sectoral bodies. The first phase of this reduction of the levels of funding support took place on 1 September 2022.

The Court of Auditors produced an in-depth analysis of the effects of the 2018 apprenticeship reform: the rise in the number of apprenticeships and its financial consequences.

The Ministry of Labour, Full Employment and Integration provides apprentice training centres (CFAs) with supports to help them develop their skills in relation to their 14 areas of responsibility (Article L.6231-2 of the Labour Code). This initiative began with a survey conducted among CFAs and their network heads, in conjunction with the various Carif-Oref bodies (*Centres d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation* and the *Observatoires régionaux de l'emploi et de la formation*).

The regional interministerial support units established at the start of the 2020 school year, in order to bring together the various stakeholders (apprentice training centres, skills operators, employers) and the levers needed to match apprenticeship supply with demand, were deployed to support young people wishing to take up apprenticeships in the 2022 school year.

2023 Implementation

In January 2023, *France Compétences* published its first 'Report on the use of funds for vocational training', which assessed the costs and results achieved by the main vocational training schemes, including those involving apprenticeship. The report looks in particular at the exceptional growth in apprenticeships in 2020 and 2021, and the sharp increase in the CPF from 2021. It intends to be a decision-making tool, with the objective to provide stakeholders with a reliable picture of the links between the costs, quality and use values of training schemes, in order to shed light on the efficiency of the system.

By 31 December 2023, the apprenticeship training centers welcomed 1 021 500 apprentices, reflecting a +7.1% increase compared to 2022. This rise follows 3 consecutive years of historic growth, with increases ranging between 14% and 30%. Currently, 8.6% of individuals aged 16 to 29 are engaged in an apprenticeship programme. The number of apprentices in secondary education continues to grow, with a 2.2% increase after a 6.5% rise the previous year. The expansion of apprenticeships in higher education remains robust, showing a 10.3% increase after a significant 20.1% growth in 2022. Notably, one out of every fifteen secondary school learners chooses vocational training through an apprenticeship after completing grade 9. Public VET schools play a role in the development of apprenticeships, with 1 in 15 apprentices enrolled in a public local educational establishment (*Établissement public local d'enseignement, EPLE*, in the dedicated sections for apprentices, called *Sections d'apprentissage* or *Unité de formation par apprentissage*).

The pedagogical oversight of apprenticeship training ensures that the education provided facilitates the acquisition of the expected knowledge and competences outlined in the general education programmes and the respective reference framework. This oversight can cover various aspects, such as the pedagogical organisation of training at both the training center and the employer's location, the methods and tools used, training durations, and the qualifications of trainers and apprenticeship supervisors at the workplace. The circular of 19 June 2023 details the pedagogical control role in apprenticeship training, defining the scope of diplomas involved and the related procedures.

2024 Implementation

At the beginning of the school year 2024, there are 385 650 apprentices enrolled in

At the beginning of the school year 2024, there are 383 000 apprentices enrolled in secondary education under the Ministry of National Education. In 2024, significant enhancements in oversight and management of apprenticeship contracts are being implemented.

A number of initiatives have been taken, which reflect a concerted effort to improve the structure and accessibility of apprenticeship programmes in France, ensuring that financial support and resources are effectively aligned with the needs of both apprentices and employers.

- (a) a pivotal initiative is the decree n° 2024-631 of 28 June 2024, which focuses on strengthening financial control and the processing of apprenticeship and professionalisation contracts. This decree expands the verification points outlined in Article D. 6224-2 of the Labour Code, specifically addressing the financial support decisions made by competency operators regarding apprenticeship contracts;
- (b) additionally, decree n° 2024-628 of 28 June 2024 adjusts the conditions that competency operators must verify for cross-border apprenticeship contracts. This amendment pertains to financial support requests and the filing of contracts submitted by employers from neighboring countries, as well as requests from private and public employers within France;
- (c) the Portal for Apprenticeships has undergone a comprehensive redesign in the first half of 2024 to enhance user experience and accessibility. Furthermore, a new directive was issued to mobilise interministerial regional teams that assist young individuals seeking to enter an apprenticeship programme. This directive builds on efforts initiated in February 2021 and is designed to help young people find apprenticeship contracts or training opportunities at the start of each academic year. Notably, this updated version includes specific provisions for candidates with disabilities, enabling them to access adapted apprenticeship contracts and potentially secure permanent positions within the public service upon completion of their contracts.

In 2024, 392 000 young people were enrolled in upper-secondary apprenticeship programmes, a slight increase compared with 2023 (+6 400 apprentices). This overall rise masked contrasting trends: numbers fell in CAP (-2.6 %), vocational baccalaureate (-1.1 %) and *brevet professionnel* (-2.9 %), while increasing in other apprenticeship diplomas, notably under the Ministry of Labour.

In higher education, 657 900 apprentices were recorded in 2024 (+0.8 % compared with 2023).

The national education network contributed to this growth: in 2022-2023, 65 540 apprentices (6.4 % of all apprentices) trained in a public local education institution (EPLE), up 5.3 % year-on-year.

To facilitate entry into apprenticeship and make it more visible, schools organised forums, apprenticeship days and visits to CFAs in partnership with regions and professional organisations. The *Affelnet-lycée* application captured apprenticeship wishes expressed by grade 9 pupils and linked them to a catalogue of offers from the *Carif-Oref network (regional information centres & employment and training observatories)* databases and *labonnealternance.fr*.

In June 2024, 98 982 apprenticeship applicants expressed 132 274 wishes, up 6.3 % in one year, while the share placing an apprenticeship wish as first choice remained stable (40.2 %).

2025 Implementation

Apprenticeship was positioned as a key lever for success for all young people and businesses. The Ministry in charge of Labour called on employers to actively support apprenticeship through concrete actions to help recruit future alternants. Managed centrally by the Ministry for all ministries, the online platform *1jeune1solution.gouv.fr* provided young people with a personalised option, among those in offer (job offers, training programmes, guidance support, civic-engagement opportunities and other

support services).

Since 2021, regional prefects had been mobilised to support or complement the statutory support duties of apprentices training centres (CFAs). Regional support units helped deliver apprenticeship projects by identifying places in CFAs, improving the visibility of apprenticeship job offers in their territories, assisting young people seeking enrolment, and supporting employer searches.

A decree published in the Official Journal on 29 June 2025 introduced new reduction rules. When at least 80% of teaching in CFA was delivered through distance learning, the skills operators (*Opco*) reduced the funding rate by 20%. After this reduction, the level of funding paid by the Opco cannot be less than EUR 4 000. The reduction did not apply when all CFAs preparing for a given certification delivered at least 80% of teaching online. The measure entered into force on 1 July 2025 and applied to apprenticeship contracts signed from that date. Exemptions through a list of certifications were scheduled to take effect the day after publication of the relevant order and by 30 November 2025 at the latest. From 1 July 2025, employers of apprentices preparing a diploma at least equivalent to level 6 (bachelor degree) must contribute EUR 750 to training costs. CFAs thus become collectors of this legal obligation. This measure introduced a direct employer contribution inspired by the German apprenticeship model and aimed to improve financial sustainability.

A decree published in the Official Journal on 23 February 2025 amended the amount of hiring aid for apprentice employers. The aid was renewed but reduced: instead of EUR 6 000, enterprises with fewer than 250 employees received EUR 5 000 in the first contract year, regardless of the diploma prepared. Enterprises with 250 employees or more received EUR 2 000, again regardless of qualification level. The amount remained EUR 6 000 for hiring apprentices recognised as workers with disabilities. To qualify, larger enterprises (250+ employees) were still required to meet obligations regarding alternance recruitment.

In 2025, interministerial coordination of regional support units under the authority of prefects was renewed. These units brought together national education services, the national public employment service (*France Travail*), and regions to support young people without an employer at the start of the school year, whether coming from *Affelnet-lycée* (platform for VET school placement) or *Parcoursup* (national higher education admission platform).

Individual follow-up of apprentices was strengthened to ensure training continuity in case of contract termination. The apprenticeship dashboard, launched in 2024, covered over 80% of enrolments and tracked registration in training organisations and the signing of employment contracts.

The national education apprenticeship network continued to consolidate around academic CFAs and OFAs (apprenticeship training providers) or those attached to EPLEs (*établissement public local d'enseignement*, public secondary institutions with administrative and financial autonomy), often managed by groups of institutions. These structures, certified by bodies recognised by *France compétences*, developed secure and hybrid pathways combining school status and apprenticeship, reinforcing complementarity between the two training routes.

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

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers

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

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
Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

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

Sustainability - a green link in VET

European Education and Training Area and international VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Centres de Formation d' apprentis, CFA](#)

Law no 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 for the freedom to choose one's professional future

Labour Code - Section 7: International and European mobility of apprentices, Article L6222-42 created by Law No 2018-217

Order of 25 April 2019 setting the organisation and operation of the mission of pedagogical control of apprenticeship training

Official bulletin of the Ministry of National Education, 3 October 2019: pedagogical control of apprenticeships

Information leaflet 2020 on the new vocational high school

Decree No. 2019-317 of 12 April 2019 integrating apprenticeship into the missions of school groupings (GRETA) set up pursuant to Article L. 423-1 of the Education Code.

Official Journal of November 8, 2019, Decree No. 2019-1143 of November 7, 2019 relating to the specific provisions applicable to apprenticeship training centres and to the obligations of organisations providing skills development actions

2014 Law on continuous VET and employment

Decree No. 2020-624 of 22 May 2020 amending the provisions of the Educational Code relating to the duration of training in apprentice training centres for six vocational qualifications

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration (2021). Apprenticeship summary

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration (2021). Practical guide for apprenticeship training centres

Dares (2021). A significant increase in apprenticeship contract entries in 2020

Appendix to the 2023 Finance Law: vocational training:

Interministerial Instruction of 26 September 2022 on support for young people wishing to take up apprenticeships at the start of the 2022 academic year

France competences, 2023. Report on the use of vocational training funds: apprenticeship - what costs and results?

Information Note from DEPP, No. 24-28, July 2024, MENJ

Decree No. 2024-631 of June 28, 2024, on the Financial Support and Filing of Apprenticeship and Professionalization Contracts

Decree No. 2024-628 of June 28, 2024, on the Financial Support and Filing of Cross-Border Apprenticeship Contracts

Regional Units to Support Young People in Finding Training or Employment Opportunities

Related policy developments

1 young person, 1 solution - youth plan

The total budget of the youth plan is EUR 6.7 billion, with measures to support young people aged 16-25 after the COVID-19 crisis. It mobilises a set of tools: hiring assistance, training, support, financial assistance for struggling young people, etc. to respond to different situations.

 FRANCE

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 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:

 FRANCE

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET 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:

 FRANCE

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Training actions for jobseekers

In January 2016, the government launched a plan to create 500 000 training places for jobseekers (*Plan 500 000 formations pour demandeurs d'emploi*).

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 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.

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Strengthening apprenticeships in the public sector

A 2015 circular established conditions for apprenticeship contracts within the non-industrial and non-commercial public sector.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET



Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Developing apprenticeship: France. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28214>

