



Vocational education and training in France

Short description



Cedefop

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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference Centre for vocational education and training. We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice. Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

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‘Training unemployed people so that they can make a fresh start; developing alternative skills and opportunities in areas hit by job losses; taking the fight against illiteracy into the workplace; promoting vocational training for senior citizens – all these things could come under the heading of either employment or vocational training policy. There is no clear-cut division between the two, but what is very clear to me is this: an effective vocational training system is, in terms of both quantity and quality, the key to job creation.’

From an address by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic,
Melun, 16 May 2008

Foreword

Vocational training has been a major issue in France since the Middle Ages and the right to education and vocational training was included in its Constitution. Since 2000, major reforms to the vocational training system have been undertaken, including the introduction of a Certification Register in 2002 and the transferring of all responsibility for vocational training to the regions in 2004. Further reforms are in the pipeline and are due to be implemented in 2009.

As it takes over the presidency of the European Union, France, lying at the edge of Europe, is more inclined than ever to make vocational training a major part of its future policy. Its stated aim during its presidency is to examine all aspects of lifelong education and training and to seek to achieve the main objectives of the Copenhagen Process: improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union, facilitating access for all to education and training systems and opening education and training systems up to the wider world.

The French presidency will tackle the subject of greater openness through the mobility of students, young people in vocational training, young researchers and teachers. In regard to equity, France will be focusing on lifelong guidance and career security, which are nowadays an essential aspect of effective lifelong education and training.

European cooperation in the field of vocational training has produced a number of major tools providing greater mobility and transparency of qualifications. As they are based on a 'learning outcomes' approach and presuppose quality assurance mechanisms to provide mutual confidence, they have a major impact on national vocational training systems. The French presidency will highlight the importance of implementing the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) through appropriate methods and of ensuring coherence between the various instruments: EQF, ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training) and Europass. Finally, France will emphasise the role of universities in vocational training.

This report gives an insight into the French vocational training system by describing its main aspects. Published during the French presidency of the Council of the European Union (second half of 2008), it forms part of a series of reports regularly published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) on national vocational education and training systems ⁽¹⁾.

We hope that this report will contribute to a better understanding of vocational training in France.

Aviana Bulgarelli
Director of Cedefop

⁽¹⁾ These reports can be downloaded or ordered at www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publications.asp?section=22.

Further detailed information is also available from Cedefop databases regularly updated by ReferNet (Cedefop's European network of reference and expertise). Various descriptions of national vocational education and training systems (overviews, analyses, etc.) are also available on the Cedefop website: www.cedefop.europa.eu and www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/

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⁽²⁾ For more information, log on to www.centre-inffo.fr

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France



1. General policy context

1.1. Political and administrative structure

The institutions of the French (Fifth) Republic are governed by the Constitution of 4 October 1958, which introduced universal suffrage for the election of the President. The President of the Republic is elected for a term of five years. The Government is headed by the Prime Minister, who determines and conducts the business of the nation. The Prime Minister is responsible to the 577-member National Assembly. Together, the National Assembly and the Senate (with 331 senators) comprise the Parliament, which passes laws and supervises the work of the Government. Initial vocational training falls within the remit of the Minister for Education, while continuing vocational training is the responsibility of the Minister for Employment.

France covers a geographical area of 549 000 km². It has a three-tier administrative structure: the regions each comprise between two and six *départements* (counties), which are in turn divided into *communes* (municipalities). The State has retained this structure through successive rounds of decentralisation, creating a total of 26 regions that include four overseas regions/*départements* (Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique and Réunion), 96 *départements* and 36 000 municipalities. France also has three overseas territories (New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna) and two overseas communities (Mayotte and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon), which have their own specially adapted legislation in areas including vocational training, reflecting their respective socio-economic circumstances.

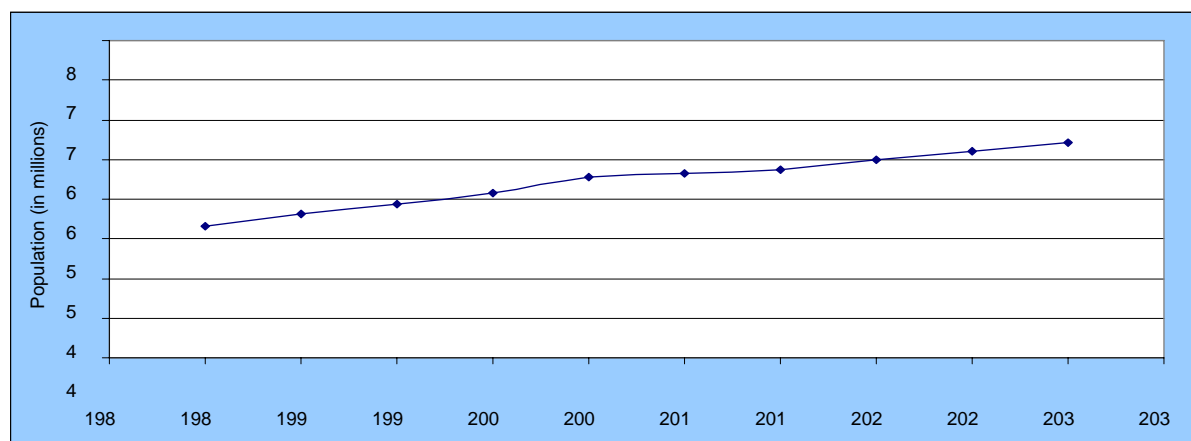
France is a republic, organised on a partially decentralised basis. Since the passing of the Decentralisation Act of 2 March 1982, certain State responsibilities have gradually been transferred to the *départements* and regions (see Annex 5). The regions, *départements* and municipalities are self-governing territorial communities administered by deliberative assemblies, known respectively as regional, general (i.e. *département*-level) and municipal councils, the members of which are all elected directly by popular vote. The locally based representatives of the State (regional and *département*-level ‘prefects’) are not involved in the work of these administrative bodies but they play an advisory and partnership role.

In the field of education, the State has retained responsibility for curricular content, examinations and teaching staff, while the *départements* and regions have been placed in charge of facilities and the running of schools as well as the recruitment and remuneration of non-teaching personnel. With regard to vocational training, regional councils are responsible for apprenticeships and vocational training for unemployed young people and adults. The State provides co-funding, with the regions, for certain forms of training provision for the unemployed and people in work and it has retained responsibility for the vocational training of specific groups: prisoners, illiterate people, people with disabilities and foreign workers.

1.2. Population and demography

In 2007, France (³) had a population of 63.5 million, including 1.8 million in the overseas *départements*. It thus remains the second most populous country in the 27-nation EU, after Germany (with 82.3 million) and ahead of the United Kingdom and Italy (with 60.9 and 59.1 million respectively). The French population accounts for slightly less than 13 % of the EU total.

Figure 1 Population change (1985-2005) and projections (2010-30)



Source: INSEE, population figures, 2008.

France has the highest short-term fertility rate in Europe, at two children per woman in 2007, as against a European average of 1.5. However, the birth-rate (⁴), at 13 per 1000 head of population, combined with migratory inflow, is not sufficient to counter the trend of population ageing (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 Population structure by age in 2005 and projections for 2030 (%)

	Under 20		20-59		60-plus		80-plus	
	France	EU-27	France	EU-27	France	EU-27	France	EU-27
2005	24.9	22.4	54.3	55.8	20.8	21.8	4.5	4.0
2030	22.6	19.1	48.1	49.3	29.3	31.6	7.2	7.1

Source: INSEE, 2008; Eurostat, Demographic Statistics, 2008.

Population ageing will be more marked by 2030 as the post-war 'Baby-boom' generation – born during the period known in France as the *Trente Glorieuses* (1945-1975) – reaches old age.

(³) Throughout the text, unless otherwise indicated, the term 'France' signifies mainland France and the overseas *départements*.

(⁴) The birthrate is the number of live births in a given year as a proportion of the average population in that year.

This will impact on training in two ways:

- retirement age will be raised and employees will have to be offered training in order to keep their skills at the level necessary for companies to stay competitive. Certain steps have already been taken by the State (with the ‘*Seniors*’ plan) and by workers’ and employers’ representative bodies (with special provision for employees aged 45 and over, including access to skills assessment and entitlement to professionalisation courses) (See Section 2.2.);
- the development of mentoring as a means of retaining expertise.

Since the 18th century, France has attracted immigration. The inflow today, however, is less than that in other European countries: a fifth of the corresponding figure for Spain, a third that of Italy and half that of the UK. Immigration ⁽⁵⁾ increased between 1994 (when 119 563 people entered the country) and 2003 (when there were 215 397 arrivals), and the rate then fell.

In 2007, the net migration balance in France was estimated at 71 000, down on the level of previous years when it had been close to 100 000. This figure represented just a fifth of total population growth, the main causes of which were natural. In the majority of European countries the reverse is true, with migration as the main cause of any population growth.

In March 2005, there were 4 959 000 immigrants (persons born abroad) living in mainland France; this figure represents 8.1 % of the population, a proportion that has scarcely changed since 1975. There is currently a balance between numbers of men and women within the immigrant population, as the years since 1974 have seen predominantly female immigration (for family reunification purposes), after a period when the majority of immigrants were men coming to France to work.

Between 1990 and 2005, the number of immigrants rose by 19 %. Substantial numbers of immigrants acquire French nationality after several years’ residence in the country. In 2005, almost two million people had done so, i.e. more than 40 % of the immigrant population.

⁽⁵⁾ Source: *Institut national d’études démographiques* (National institute for demographic studies) – *INED*: annual figures for entries to France calculated from Ministry of the Interior and International Migration Office data, in accordance with international recommendations.

1.3. Economy and labour market

Following three years of strong growth (1998, 1999 and 2000), the French economy has slowed down since 2001. In 2006 and 2007 the growth rate levelled out at 2.2 % but projected rates for 2008 and 2009 are lower. The economy has been hit by sluggish household spending – a response to high consumer prices and continuing increases in the cost of fuels, especially oil and oil-based products. A further factor is the failure of wages to keep pace with inflation. Overall there has been a significant fall in purchasing power (see Table 2 below).

Table 2 Real GDP growth rate in France and the EU-27, for 1998, 2000 and 2005-09 (% change against the previous year)

	1998	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009*
France	3.5	3.9	1.9	2.2	2.2	1.6	1.4
EU-27	2.9	3.9	1.9	3.1	2.9	2.0	1.8

(*) Projections.

Source: Eurostat, national accounting data, Eurostat database, 2008,

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=eb012>

Over the past ten years, employment has been further concentrated in the tertiary sector. In 2007, services accounted for 76.4 % of all jobs, compared with 72.7 % in 1997. Within the sector, the most marked growth has been in the field of personal services (see Table 3).

Table 3 Changing pattern of employment by sector from 1997 to 2007 (as % of total employment)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Services	72.7	73.2	73.8	74.1	74.4	74.8	75.2	75.6	75.9	76.1	76.4
Industry	22.9	22.5	22.1	21.9	21.8	21.5	21.1	20.8	20.5	20.4	20.3
Agriculture	4.4	4.3	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.3

Source: Eurostat, 2008.

The rate of employment remained stable in 2005 and 2006. In 2006, on average, more than 25 million people in the country were in work (see Table 4).

Between 2000 and 2007, the male employment rate stuck at around 69.2 % while the female employment rate increased steadily, reaching 60 % in 2007. Factors that may explain this situation include:

- the ever-increasing importance of jobs in the services sector, most of them held by women. It should be noted, however, that many of these jobs are low-skilled (in cleaning, for example) or insecure (part-time or on short-term or temporary contract) and very often paid at the legal minimum wage rate (the *SMIC*, or ‘minimum wage for growth’);

- ‘Baby-boomers’ reaching retirement age – most of the employed of this generation being men working in industry, a sector where recruitment has now dried up or been cut.

Table 4 Overall employment rate (%) by gender among people aged 15-64 in France and the EU, between 1995 and 2007

	France			European Union*		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1995	52.1	67.2	59.5	49.7	70.5	60.1
2000	55.2	69.2	62.1	54.1	72.8	63.4
2005	58.5	69.3	63.9	56.6	71.4	64.0
2006	58.8	69.0	63.8	57.6	72.1	64.8
2007	60.0	69.3	64.6	58.3	72.5	65.4

(*) European Union = EC6-1972, EC9-1980, EC10-1985, EC12-1994, EU15-2004, EU25-2006, EU27.

Source: Eurostat, European Union Labour Force Survey, Eurostat database, 2008.

The unemployment rate ⁽⁶⁾ in mainland France, at 7.9 %, is close to the European average. It has fallen steadily since 1995 (see Table 5).

Although the rate of unemployment among young people aged 15-24 fell significantly between 1995 and 2007, it remains high. While it is true that there are still more job-seekers than jobs on offer, the high rate is also explained by the large numbers of young people who enter the job market without qualifications: 10 % of school-leavers in a given year – i.e. some 150 000 teenagers – are in this category. At the same time, although practice is changing, recruitment remains largely based on certification, which is prioritised over skills.

⁽⁶⁾ The unemployment rate is the percentage of people in the labour force who are out of work.

Table 5 Overall unemployment rate (%) by gender among under-25s in France and the EU, between 1995 and 2007

	France				European Union *			
	Women	Men	Total	15-24	Women	Men	Total	15-24
1995	14.1	10.0	11.8	27.1	12.5	9.5	10.7	21.2
2000	12.2	8.5	10.2	20.6	9.9	7.2	8.4	16.1
2005	9.8	8.0	8.8	20.2	9.8	8.3	9.0	18.5
2006	9.6	8.1	8.8	21.3	9.0	7.5	8.2	17.1
2007	8.5	7.4	7.9	18.7	7.8	6.5	7.1	15.5

(*) European Union = EC6-1972, EC9-1980, EC10-1985, EC12-1994, EU15-2004, EU25-2006, EU27.

Source: Eurostat, European Union Labour Force Survey, Eurostat database, 2008.

The current pattern also means that the unqualified young people arriving on the job market need fresh training before they can function within companies. This will necessarily be delivered in a continuing-training context, although it is often described as ‘deferred initial training’.

In general, unemployment is more likely to affect people without qualifications: in 2006, on average, 14 % of labour force participants with few or no qualifications were out of work (see Table 6).

Table 6 Unemployment rate (%) by level of qualification between 2004 and 2006

Level of qualification	2004	2005	2006
Unqualified	12.9	13.5	14.0
Junior high school diploma, <i>CAP</i> (Certificate of professional aptitude) or <i>BEP</i> (Vocational education certificate)	8.4	8.5	8.6
Baccalaureate	8.5	8.5	8.6
Baccalaureate + 2 years study	5.7	5.9	5.6
Qualifications higher than baccalaureate + 2 years study	7.0	6.3	5.9

Source: INSEE, employment surveys from 1st quarter 2004 to 4th quarter 2006.

1.4. Educational attainment of population

The level of education among the French population is close to the European average (see Annex 1).

Table 7 Levels of education among people aged 25-64 (%), in France and in the EU-27, in 2007

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
France	31	42	27
EU-27	29	47	23

ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education

ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary education, primary education, lower secondary education, including ISCED level 3c short (preparatory vocational and vocational education of less than two years' duration)

ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary education, except ISCED level 3c short, and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education

Source: Eurostat, Population and Social Conditions, online database 2008.

Substantial progress has been made in the past 20 years. In 2006, 83.2 % of the population aged 20-24 was qualified to ISCED level 3, compared with 75 % in the EU-15 and 77.9 % in the EU-25 (Eurostat, 2007) (see Annexes 1 and 2).

2. Recent developments in vocational training policy

The French vocational training system has to address two major challenges: promoting access to qualifications and coping with demographic change. At the same time, it is developing a stronger focus on quality.

2.1. Promoting access to qualifications

Between 1980 and 2000, the number of unqualified young people leaving the education system was halved. Nonetheless, in 2005, 14 % of women and 19 % of men between the ages of 20 and 24 left school without any qualifications.

Table 8 Levels of qualification/education (%), by gender, among 20-24 year olds having finished their education, 2005

	Male			Female		
	1996	2000	2005	1996	2000	2005
Finished education with qualifications(*)	75	80	81	79	83	86
Finished education without qualifications, of which before the end of upper secondary education(**)	25	20	19	21	17	14
	10	8	9	10	8	7

(*) Tertiary education diploma, baccalaureate, vocational education certificate (*BEP*) or certificate of professional aptitude (*CAP*).

(**) *RERS* definition: upper secondary education (*second cycle*) represents three years in senior high school (*lycée*), following junior high school (*collège*).

Source: *DEPP-INSEE, RERS 2007*.

Vocational education was revamped in the 1990s with the creation of the *baccalauréat technologique* (technological baccalaureate) and the *baccalauréat professionnel* (vocational baccalaureate), the development of higher-level technical courses (*Bac + 2*) and the introduction of tertiary vocational diplomas (*Bac + 3*). In 2005, an Outline and Enabling Act on the future of schooling ⁽⁷⁾ established that the education system would aim to achieve the following:

⁽⁷⁾ Act of 23 April 2005 (see Annex 5).

- 100 % of students acquiring a diploma or recognised qualification by the end of their schooling;
- 80 % of students in a given year group reaching baccalaureate level;
- 50 % of students in a given year group achieving a higher education diploma.

The Government also decided to relaunch the apprenticeship system, to achieve a significant increase within five years in the number of young people obtaining a certified vocational qualification through apprenticeship. The Social Cohesion Plan adopted in 2005 set a target of 500 000 young people in apprenticeship by 2009 (see Section 4.3.2.).

To encourage both employers and young people to make greater use of the system, a Social Cohesion Enabling Act included provisions to improve the status of apprentices and, more generally, to develop and modernise apprenticeship ⁽⁸⁾.

Access to qualifications was further encouraged in 2002 with the establishment of a right to have vocational experience officially recognised in the form of the *validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE) system. This mechanism entitles any working person to have his or her experience and know-how taken into account in the process of obtaining a diploma or recognised qualification listed in a National Vocational Certification Register (*Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* or *RNCP* – see Section 8.1.). The register meets the EU requirement for transparency in relation to qualifications, with an associated emphasis on skills and on the breakdown of qualifications into study units – reflected in implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for the reformed three-cycle structure (bachelor/master/doctorate) of higher education and for newly developed courses including the tertiary vocational diploma.

Equality of access to training has also been encouraged with the creation – at the initiative of the social partners – of an individual entitlement to training (*droit individuel à la formation* or *DIF*). Under this mechanism, employees in the private sector have been able, since 2004, to build up a training-time entitlement (20 hours for each year of full-time employment, cumutable over six years); the scheme was extended to public-sector employees in 2007. The entitlement is activated at the employee's initiative, subject to the employer's agreement to the type of training selected (see Section 5.3.3.).

2.2. Coping with the demographic turnaround

The number of senior citizens ⁽⁹⁾ in France, which increased by three million between 1970 and 2000, will grow by more than seven million over the period to 2030. At the same time, the rate of employment among over-50s in France is one of the lowest in any EU country.

⁽⁸⁾ Act of 18 January 2005 (see Annex 5).

⁽⁹⁾ Persons aged 60 or over (*INSEE*).

However, the Lisbon Strategy – laid down in 2000 and confirmed by the Stockholm European Council in March 2001 – has established the ambitious target of a 50 % employment rate in the 55-64 age band by 2010.

For France, increasing the proportion of older people in work is a key challenge in terms of social cohesion, growth and the viability of social-protection systems. The authorities and the social partners have already invested much effort in this area and this has been reflected by a tightening of the criteria for early retirement in the public sector, the reform of retirement rules in 2003, a national multi-industry agreement on the subject ⁽¹⁰⁾ and a Lifelong Training Act; and a Health at Work Plan for 2005 to 2009 (see Annex 5).

In June 2006, in an effort to address the challenge of getting older people into work, the Government adopted a (five-year) national action plan for senior citizens' employment, with a view to clarifying and energising current policies, implementing all the new measures proposed by the social partners and providing additional resources to help people return to work in their later years. As a priority, the plan aimed to raise the employment rate in the 55-64 age band by approximately two percentage points annually in the years 2006 to 2010, in order to meet the Lisbon Strategy target.

Population ageing has also been taken into account in the ongoing reform of the continuing vocational training system, which was launched by the social partners in September 2003: measures have been introduced to develop access to vocational training for people aged at least 45, who have worked for 20 years.

Those eligible are entitled to an official assessment of their skills, provided they have worked for at least a year in the company where they are currently employed.

A new provision has also been introduced for employees on permanent contracts, in the form of the professionalisation course. The aim is to help keep these employees in work by enabling them to:

- obtain a diploma or vocational certificate, a vocational qualification established by the Joint National Employment Commission (*Commission paritaire nationale pour l'emploi* or *CPNE*) for the relevant sector, or a vocational qualification recognised under an industry-wide collective agreement (see Chapter 3);
- take part in training for a vocational purpose recognised by the *CPNE* for the sector concerned.

Responsibility for financing these measures rests with the bodies which collect mandatory company contributions towards the development of continuing vocational training (see Chapter 10).

⁽¹⁰⁾ National multi-industry agreement of 5 December 2003, on lifelong vocational training.

2.3. Enhancing the quality of vocational training

France has recently taken various initiatives to introduce ‘quality’ criteria for the vocational education and training system.

At the national level, the Outline Financial Legislation Act (*LOLF*) of 1 August 2001 introduced ‘a culture of results, of spending more wisely and making public action more effective’. The overall national budget is now broken down by missions, programmes and measures – rather than by ministry, as previously – so that performance indicators can be drawn up.

In addition, the Research, Surveys and Statistics Development Department (*DARES*) of the Ministry of Employment, the Evaluation, Forecasting and Performance Department (*DEPP*) of the Ministries of Education and of Higher Education and Research, and the Centre for Qualifications Studies and Research (*CEREQ*) all compile statistics and conduct studies to assess the effectiveness of the policies implemented.

At the regional level, the regional councils, which are now in charge of apprenticeships and vocational training for young people and adults, have adopted ‘quality charters’. These documents are co-signed by vocational bodies representing particular sectors, or by training organisations that enter into contractual agreements with the region.

They cover various aspects of training, for example:

- improving provision for apprentices, placing workers in jobs, and qualifications in specific sectors;
- enhancing the quality of services offered by training bodies, including the way trainees are treated on work placement, as well as training methods, follow-up and help with job finding.

At training provider level, a number of quality labels were introduced in France in the early 1990s, with a view to certifying the quality of training organisations and trainers.

The training of vocational education tutors, teaching methods and the range of courses available have all been overhauled and modernised, notably with the development of block-release training and new information and communication technologies (see Section 7.3.).

Establishment of the Research and Higher Education Evaluation Agency

Under the terms of a statutory Research Agreement ⁽¹¹⁾, France has undertaken a thorough updating of its evaluation system, with a view to adapting it to the European and international environment and creating a single, independent body responsible for evaluating both higher

⁽¹¹⁾ Research Enabling Act of 18 April 2006.

education and research on the basis of transparent, consistent criteria. It set up the Research and Higher Education Evaluation Agency (*Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur* or *AERES*) which has the task of evaluating research and higher-education establishments and their work, as well as higher-education training courses and diplomas and the procedures for staff assessment in research establishments.

3. Institutional framework

3.1. Administrative structure

3.1.1. National level

The Ministry of Education is responsible for education policy as pursued through vocational training in schools and through apprenticeships. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has a parallel responsibility for vocational training in agriculture. The Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Employment is in charge of continuing vocational training for young people and adult job-seekers and for the vocational training of employees in the private sector (it can thus make rules and regulations and set training fees, etc.). Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sport, are in charge of training and vocational diplomas in the areas for which they are responsible.

In 2004 the National Council for Lifelong Vocational Training (*Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie* or *CNFPTLV*) was set up ⁽¹²⁾. Its tasks are to:

- promote cooperation at national level among the various agencies involved;
- advise on legislation and regulations concerning lifelong vocational training and apprenticeship;
- assess regional policies for apprenticeship and continuing vocational training;
- compile an annual report to Parliament on the utilisation of financial resources earmarked for lifelong vocational training and apprenticeship.

The public employment service

The institutions responsible for helping the unemployed to find jobs and for advising them have recently been reformed. The public employment service is tasked with providing a facility for job-seekers, offering them advice and training, and placing them in work.

The National Employment Agency (ANPE) and the National Union for Employment in Industry and Commerce (UNEDIC) are due to merge in late 2008 to create a new structure, as yet unnamed, although ‘France Emploi’ has been suggested. This body will be responsible, from 2009 onwards, for registering and advising unemployed people and paying out their benefits ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ Act of 4 May 2004 and Order 2005-479 of 17 May 2005 on the composition of the *CNFPTLV*.

⁽¹³⁾ Act of 13 February 2008 on reforming the organisation of the public employment service.

3.1.2. Regional level

The decentralisation process of the 1980s created 26 regions, each run by a regional council comprising political representatives directly elected by popular vote. These are the public bodies primarily responsible for vocational training, particularly for young people in the 16-25 age bracket and for job-seekers. To implement their responsibilities in this regard, the regions have set up their own dedicated administrative services in the form of vocational training committees, departments or directorates.

With a view to coordinating vocational training policies and measures, regional employment and vocational training coordination committees (*Comités régionaux de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle* or *CCREFPs*)⁽¹⁴⁾ have been established. These committees – made up of regional representatives of the Government as well as representatives of the regions, trade unions and employers' organisations, and regional chambers of agriculture, commerce, industry and trades – are tasked with promoting cooperation among the different agencies involved in vocational training. They ensure better coordination of vocational training and employment policies at national level. Specifically their functions include policy analysis, research, monitoring and evaluation.

Lastly, regional economic and social councils act as consultancy bodies for the regional policy-makers. They are consulted in the preparation of regional plans for the development of vocational training.

The regions establish their own policies on continuing vocational training. Each region draws up a vocational training development plan (*Plan régional de développement des formations professionnelles* or *PRDFP*) in order to coordinate the various strands of vocational training provision: initial and continuing training for young people and for job-seekers. The plans are based on the concept of active partnership among all the players involved: the Government, employers' and trade-union organisations, education-authority chief administrators (*recteurs d'académie*) and employment insurance agencies such as *UNEDIC/ASSEDIC*. The regional vocational training development plans are based on prior analysis of the main employment and training problems on the ground, and of likely developments in the future. Because they take the specific regional context into account, they propose a range of solutions to vocational training issues at regional level. To carry out the necessary analyses, the regions rely on Regional Employment and Training Observatories (*Observatoires régionaux emploi-formation* or *OREF*).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Act of 17 January 2002 (see Annex 5).

3.2. Legal framework

(See Annex 5 for the main legislative provisions.)

3.2.1. Education and initial vocational training

In June 2000, all current legislation concerning education was consolidated in the form of an Education Code, which has essentially replaced the former education acts.

The Outline and Enabling Act on the future of schooling, of 23 April 2005, pursues a number of priorities intended to raise the level of education and training among French young people (see Annex 5). It sets out to modernise the national education system, focusing on three aims: greater respect for the values of the Republic, more effective organisation of schools and teaching and a better managed education system.

3.2.2. Continuing vocational training

For the last 38 years, this has been the subject of a distinct body of labour law. The relevant statutory and regulatory texts are to be found in a subdivision (known as a ‘book’) of the French Labour Code.

This book, revised on 1 May 2008 to constitute the sixth part of the code, is entitled ‘Lifelong vocational training’ (*‘La formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie’*) and includes the legislative provisions for apprenticeship.

There is a specific procedure for the adoption of rules on continuing vocational training: first, the social partners negotiate a national multi-industry agreement (*accord national interprofessionnel* or *ANI*) and then Parliament incorporates all or some of that agreement into legislation. The most recent *ANI* on continuing vocational training was concluded on 5 December 2003. Focusing on lifelong training, it amends and replaces a previous agreement of 3 July 1991. The main innovations are the following:

- establishment of an individual entitlement to training (*droit individuel à la formation* or *DIF*);
- greater scope for people in employment to train outside working hours;
- introduction of the professionalisation contract (*contrat de professionnalisation*), a single contract allowing employment to be combined with training, for both young people (aged 16-25) and adults;
- introduction of entitlement to professionalisation courses – giving people in jobs the time they need to acquire new skills;
- a significant increase in the level of company contributions to the development of continuing vocational training.

The Act of 4 May 2004 on lifelong vocational training incorporates most of the provisions of this national multi-industry agreement (see Annex 5).

Before determining the thrust of its policy for continuing vocational training and apprenticeship at national level, the Government consults interested partners, including the social partners represented on the National Council for Lifelong Vocational Training (see Section 3.1.1.).

Since 1984, workers' and employers' representatives from various sectors have been invited, in accordance with the Act and the national multi-industry agreement, to take part every three years in negotiations about the aims of vocational training and the resources allocated to it. In 2006, there were 186 specific sector-based agreements on vocational training ⁽¹⁵⁾. All aspects of the subject are addressed here, including apprenticeship, qualifications, projected monitoring centres or 'observatories' for trades and qualifications, the retention of vocational skills, financing for vocational training, training plans, professionalisation contracts and courses, the individual entitlement to training (*DIF*), and mentoring provision.

3.3. The social partners

3.3.1. Initial vocational training

The social partners meet in:

- vocational consultative committees attached to various ministries responsible for establishing diplomas and certificates for technological and vocational education;
- the National Pedagogical Committee, which establishes the certification system for tertiary technology colleges at the level of baccalaureate + 2 years study;
- the National Expertise Committee, responsible for tertiary vocational diplomas (*licences professionnelles*) at the level of baccalaureate + 3 years study;
- the National Higher Education and Research Council, responsible for all higher-education diplomas.

They are consulted by those ministries that have set up vocational consultative committees (i.e. for education, employment, youth and sport and agriculture) and can propose the creation of new diplomas or certificates or amendments to existing ones.

As regards apprenticeship, the social partners are represented on the boards of apprentice training centres (*centres de formation d'apprentis* or *CFA*). It is also mandatory for the bodies that collect apprenticeship charges to set up a committee comprising representatives of trade-union and employers' organisations (see Chapter 10).

⁽¹⁵⁾ All these agreements may be consulted online at: www4.centre-inffo.fr/v2/cpnfp/recherche.phtml

3.3.2. Continuing training for people in work

The social partners play a key role in the system of continuing vocational training. In addition to their decision-making powers (see Section 3.2.2.), they have a consultative function and are involved in the management of funding.

The social partners have set up two joint coordinating and regulating bodies:

- the Joint National Committee for Vocational Training (*Comité paritaire national pour la formation professionnelle* or *CPNFP*), responsible for the general smooth running of the vocational training system and for ensuring adherence to the terms of the relevant agreements on continuing vocational training between the two sides of industry;
- the Single Equalisation Fund (*Fonds unique de péréquation* or *FUP*), whose main function is to redistribute financial surpluses generated by accredited joint contribution-collecting bodies (*OPCAs*), allocating the money to those bodies which have a deficit (see Chapter 10).

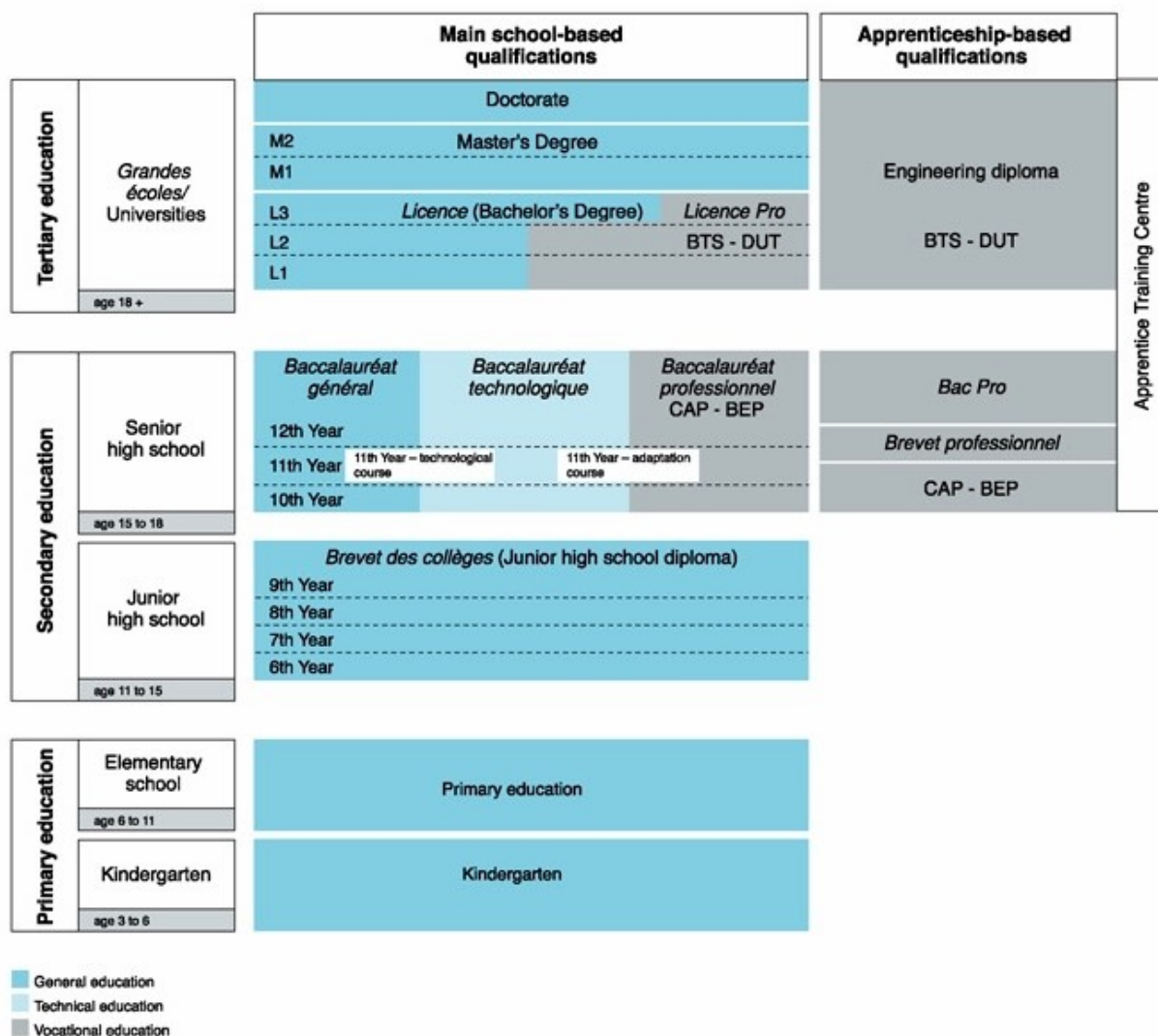
Other joint bodies comprising employers' and trade-union representatives play their part in ensuring that vocational training is taken into account in the definition of employment policies. These are:

- the Joint National Employment Committee (*Commission paritaire nationale pour l'emploi* or *CPNE*), at national, industry-wide, or multi-industry level;
- the Regional Joint Interprofessional Employment Committee (*Commission paritaire interprofessionnelle régionale de l'emploi* or *COPIRE*), at regional and multi-industry level.

The social partners are involved in the financing of continuing vocational training in two ways:

- they set up and run the accredited joint contribution-collecting bodies (*OPCAs*), which collect, share and distribute companies' mandatory contributions to the financing of continuing vocational training (see Chapter 10);
- they manage that portion of employment insurance funds (raised from employees' contributions) which is earmarked not for job-seekers' benefits, but for funding employment and training policies determined by the social partners. These monies are managed jointly by employers' and workers' representatives – at national level by *UNEDIC* and at local level by the *ASSEDICs* (see Section 5.2.).

Figure 2 The French education system



Bac Pro (= Baccalauréat professionnel)

Baccalauréat général

Baccalauréat technique

Baccalauréat professionnel

BEP

Brevet professionnel

BTS

CAP

DUT

Licence Pro

Secondary vocational diploma

Senior high school diploma – general

Senior high school diploma – technical

Senior high school diploma – vocational

Vocational education certificate

Professional certificate

Advanced technical diploma

Certificate of professional aptitude

Tertiary technical diploma

Vocational certificate/diploma

Source: Centre INFFO, 2008.

4. Initial vocational education and training

4.1. Overview

(See Figure 2)

In France, school attendance is compulsory between the ages of six and 16, although most children start nursery school when they are three years old. At the age of six they enter primary school, which they attend for five years. After that, normally at around age 12, all students go on to junior high school (*collège*). This covers four of the six years of secondary schooling – numbered, in reverse order, years 6, 5, 4 and 3. Within those four years there are three educational cycles:

- observation and adaptation to secondary level during the first year ('year 6');
- two core years ('year 5' and 'year 4');
- education/training orientation during 'year 3'.

At the end of 'year 3', students receive a national diploma (the *brevet des collèges*), based on their marks during that year and in a national examination.

On leaving junior high school, usually at age 15, students are steered towards either a general and technical senior high school (*lycée d'enseignement général et technologique*), to spend three years working for a general or a technical diploma, or else to a vocational high school, to study over two years for a certificate of professional aptitude (*CAP*) or a vocational education certificate (*BEP*), or over three years for a secondary vocational diploma (*Bac Pro*). These courses always include a work placement and they are designed to make the students directly employable. Students who choose the vocational route after junior high school can also continue their studies within the framework of an apprenticeship.

Repeating a year

The practice of repeating a school year – which can be done at nursery, primary or secondary levels – is becoming less prevalent in France, notably since the introduction of the policy of educational cycles. Thus, in 2000, the proportion of students finishing school late had fallen to 19.5 %, from 37.3 % in 1980 ⁽¹⁶⁾. Despite the decline, the incidence of repeating is still very high and it is regularly a subject of controversy.

⁽¹⁶⁾ *Dix-huit questions sur le système éducatif*, Éducatifs et formations, No 66, MEN, July-December 2003. Available from Internet: media.education.gouv.fr/file/27/1/5271.pdf

At tertiary level, students have a choice of both general courses and technical and vocational courses at universities or in the *grandes écoles*, which are centres of educational excellence managed by various Government ministries.

Students with special educational needs generally attend ordinary schools.

Schooling for children with disabilities

It has recently become law in France that children with disabilities must, insofar as possible, be educated in ordinary schools (Act of 11 February 2005). It is therefore part of the role of all schools to cater for children with disabilities, for whom personal education plans are prepared and support measures are available, subject to a decision of the ad hoc Committee on the Rights and Independence of Persons with Disabilities (Commission des droits et de l'autonomie de la personne handicapée).

In 2005, 83 % of young people aged between 20 and 24 had obtained a certificate at upper secondary level. Only 6 % had gone no further than lower secondary level or the first year of a *CAP* or *BEP* course ⁽¹⁷⁾.

4.2. Lower secondary level

Secondary-school courses comprise both compulsory and optional subjects, including exploration of vocational options.

No vocational education as such is delivered at lower secondary level (*collège*) but there are a number of courses aimed at introducing students to the world of work from 'year 5' onwards. Block-release work-and-school schemes are also available from 'year 4' onwards to give students experiencing difficulty at school some practical experience of a working environment and an introduction to different trades.

Students with particular problems of adaptation can be catered for in dedicated general and vocational sections within the junior high school.

4.3. Upper secondary level

On leaving junior high school, students can choose one of three routes: general, technical or vocational. Each has particular aims and characteristics. The general route aims to prepare the great majority of students who obtain their senior high school diploma for further studies.

⁽¹⁷⁾ *Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche: édition 2007: [RERS 2007] / Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Research; may be downloaded from www.education.gouv.fr/stateval*

The technical route, which is specifically French, prepares students on the basis of their vocational aptitudes for higher-level technical courses of at least two years' duration: for example, in an advanced technical unit, a university or a technical or specialised college (see Section 4.4.2.). The vocational route enables students to acquire skills and know-how in the work-orientated environment of a vocational high school run by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Agriculture or in an apprentice training centre. These studies can lead to a certificate of professional aptitude (*CAP*), a vocational education certificate (*BEP*) or a secondary vocational diploma (*Bac Pro*). In recent years, some 37 % of students in their final year of junior high school chose the vocational route (aiming for a *BEP* or *CAP*) – with 26.5 % going on to vocational high school, 3.7 % to agricultural high school and 6.7 % into apprenticeship – while the others continued general schooling.

Initial vocational education and training is the first stage in lifelong vocational training. It can take two forms:

- 'vocational education' inside the school system – delivered in a vocational or agricultural high school or a vocational training unit within a general and technical or multi-purpose (*lycée polyvalent*) high school;
- Apprenticeship – during which the apprentice, who has a contract of employment with a company, trains alternately in the workplace and in an apprentice training centre.

In the year 2006/07, more than 1 100 000 young people took level V and IV initial vocational courses (see Annex 2). The breakdown was roughly as follows:

- 720 000 students at the 1 700 vocational high schools or the 750 vocational training units within other schools;
- 300 000 apprentices in apprentice training centres (of which there are around 1 500) or apprenticeship units managed by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Agriculture;
- 90 000 students in agricultural education establishments.

4.3.1. Vocational education inside the school system

Vocational courses have certain characteristic features:

- they combine general education with a high level of specialised technical knowledge. Aiming primarily to prepare students for a trade, they also enable them to pursue further studies;
- they lead to the award of national diplomas, attesting to vocational qualification to levels V and IV (see Annex 2), notably the certificate of professional aptitude (*CAP*), the vocational education certificate (*BEP*) and the secondary vocational diploma (*Bac Pro*);
- they include compulsory periods of workplace training, for between three and 10 weeks annually, depending on the diploma and the specialism;

- students are able to switch between learning routes: they can move from general and technical education into vocational training or from vocational training into technical studies.

Certain vocational high schools may be designated, for five years at a time, as ‘trade high schools’⁽¹⁸⁾. These institutions offer technical and vocational training (from CAP to tertiary level) in a specific set of trades. They cater for learners of various kinds: teenage pupils, adults in continuing education, apprentices and students. They have close links with the working world and the social partners and thus offer high-quality training that can take students as far as ISCED level 5a (*Bac* + 3). In 2007, there were 372 designated ‘trade high schools’ and there are expected to be around 800 by 2010.

Agricultural education

Agricultural education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Students can enter agricultural trades after either initial training (at school or as apprentices) or continuing training. Depending on students’ abilities, the courses on offer can lead to qualifications in agricultural engineering, veterinary medicine or research (at doctoral level).

Agricultural education is delivered at 879 technical and vocational institutions, 26 tertiary colleges of agriculture, agronomics or agrifoods, veterinary or landscape studies, 163 apprentice training centres and 471 continuing vocational training centres. Young people may also opt to study at a Maison familiale rurale (rural family centre).

The Maisons familiales rurales

Introduced in 1937, the Maisons familiales rurales are educational or apprentice-training centres offering vocational courses at all levels (‘year 4’, ‘year 3’, CAP, BEP, secondary vocational or technical diploma, advanced technical diploma, etc.) in a wide range of trades, chiefly in agriculture.

Their aims are to train young people and adults, to support them in successful integration into jobs and working life and to promote the sustainable development of the geographical areas where they are located. Managed by associations, they have a distinct educational approach, in which general studies and vocational training are closely linked to the realities of a given area; students board and are divided into small groups; students receive personal supervision and guidance; parents and companies are involved; and individuals are encouraged to develop their own career plans. These institutions train more than 70 000 people (including 9 000 adults) every year.

⁽¹⁸⁾ See Ministry of Education circular 2005-204 of 29 November 2005, *Bulletin officiel*, No 45, 8 December 2005.

4.3.2. Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship involves a mix of training on an employer's premises and instruction delivered in an apprentice training centre (CFA).

Regarded as a form of initial training, it can prepare trainees for all the secondary-level certificates (CAP, BEP, Bac Pro, etc.) for tertiary-level qualifications (including advanced and tertiary technical, engineering and commercial college diplomas) or for vocational qualifications listed in the National Vocational Certification Register (www.cncp.gouv.fr).

Traditionally, it is the craft-based sectors that make most use of this form of training

The framework for apprenticeship is an employment contract between a young person aged 16-25 (the apprentice) and an employer. Funding for the apprenticeship system comes from the apprenticeship tax paid by private-sector employers (except those in the professional and farming sectors), and from contributions from the State and the regions (see Chapter 10).

Main features of the apprenticeship contract

Intended for: young people between the ages of 16 and 26 who have completed compulsory schooling

Employers: any craft, commercial or industrial company or any non-industrial and non-commercial public-sector company

Nature of the contract: a contract of employment:

- *for a fixed term of 1-3 years (as a rule 2 years) depending on the trade and the intended level of qualification;*
- *providing for a mix of theory-based learning in an apprentice training centre and occupational training on the employer's premises*

Pay: a percentage of the national minimum wage or the minimum specified in a collective agreement

Training: comprehensive vocational training delivered on a block-release basis:

- *between 400 and 750 hours of theory-based learning per year (depending on the qualification) will be delivered in an apprentice training centre (CFA), while the employer is required to give the apprentice practical training (some of which may, however, be carried out within another company), involving tasks that will enable him or her to complete an annual body of work stipulated in an agreement with the apprentice training centre;*
- *leading to the award of a certified qualification;*
- *supervised by an experienced apprentice master within the company.*

In 2006, there were 385 859 registered apprentices in France. Under the terms of the 2005 Social Cohesion Plan, the Government has sought to bring about a major increase in the number of young people achieving a certified vocational qualification through apprenticeship. A target of 500 000 apprentices has been set for 2009 while the provisional figure for 2008 is 480 000. The main aim of the policy is to raise the status of apprenticeship, which tends to be perceived as a route that young people do not take by choice.

In 2006, almost 60 % of apprentices were working towards the first level of qualification (*CAP* or *BEP*). There were 70 600 apprentices taking higher-level courses, half of whom were working for an advanced technical diploma (*BTS*) or an advanced agricultural studies diploma (*BTSA*). The number of apprentices in higher education other than *BTS* and *BTSA* students increased by a factor of 4.7 over the 11 years between 1995 and 2005 ⁽¹⁹⁾. The improvement was due mainly to the introduction in 2000 of tertiary-level vocational diplomas (*licences professionnelles*) and to the attraction of engineering diploma courses. Girls are still very much in a minority: only 30 % of apprentices are female.

Almost 66 % of apprentices with a level V qualification (*CAP* or *BEP*) are in employment. The employment rate among holders of a *BTS* is close to 81 %.

4.4. Tertiary vocational education

The grading and diploma structure at tertiary level is changing following implementation of what has been dubbed the *LMD* (*‘licence/master/doctorat’*) reform, bringing the French university system into line with that of other European countries on the basis of a three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate). Types of qualification are as follows:

- diplomas obtained after two years’ post-baccalaureate study, equivalent to 120 ECTS credits and including the tertiary technical diploma (*DUT*), the advanced technical diploma (*BTS*) and the general university studies diploma (*DEUG*), which is tending to be phased out;
- diplomas obtained after three years’ post-baccalaureate study, equivalent to 180 ECTS Credits and including the bachelor’s degree and tertiary vocational diploma;
- the *maîtrise*, an intermediate degree obtained after four years’ post-baccalaureate study and equivalent to 240 ECTS Credits, which is tending to be phased out;
- the ‘masters’, a degree obtained after five years’ post-baccalaureate study and equivalent to 300 ECTS Credits: a new vocational masters degree (replacing the specialised tertiary-studies diploma or *DESS*) prepares students directly for work, and a research masters degree (replacing the *DEA* postgraduate diploma) leads on to what is normally a three-year PhD course;

⁽¹⁹⁾ *Idem.*

- the doctorate, a post-masters qualification equivalent to 480 ECTS Credits.

4.4.1. Post-secondary training other than university courses

Many students, having passed their baccalaureate examination, opt to continue their studies in an ‘advanced technical diploma (*BTS*) unit’. These units, on senior high school premises, offer a two-year course leading to the *BTS* and that prepares students for direct entry to work.

In 2006, 155 340 candidates sat the *BTS* examinations and the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research issued 102 150 diplomas. More girls than boys took the exam, the majority in services-sector subjects, notably ‘trade and management’ and ‘communication and information’. In manufacturing-sector subjects, which attracted 23 % of the candidates, more than half took ‘mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering’.

Tertiary-level colleges of technology, which are part of the university system, select their students and offer them two-year courses leading to the tertiary technical diploma (*DUT*), which is designed as a direct preparation for entry to work.

In 2004/05, 45 799 tertiary technical diplomas were awarded in mainland France and the overseas *départements*; 27 562 (or 60.2 %) of these were in services-sector subjects and 18 237 (or 39.8 %) in manufacturing-sector subjects. The proportion of female recipients of the *DUT* in 2004/05 was 42 %.

Having completed a *BTS* or *DUT* course, young people may decide to work towards a tertiary vocational diploma (see Section 4.4.2.).

4.4.2. University studies

This section covers the education delivered in universities and public or private tertiary-level colleges, some of which are known as *grandes écoles*.

Universities accept students who hold a senior high school diploma (baccalaureate) or equivalent qualification: selection is not practised except for courses in medicine, dentistry and pharmaceutical studies and by university-equivalent colleges of technology.

At the start of the 2006 academic year, all French universities were operating the three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate) in virtually every discipline ⁽²⁰⁾.

⁽²⁰⁾ *La mise en place du LMD, Rapport*, [Report on implementation of the LMD], Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research No 2005-031, June 2005.

Table 9 *Changes in university student numbers by type of course, 2004/05*

	Bachelor	Masters	Doctorate	Total
2004/05	897 069	460 426	67 041	1 424 536
2005/06	900 196	453 333	68 190	1 421 719
2006/07	878 053	452 886	68 238	1 399 177

Source: *La mise en place du LMD, Rapport*, [Report on implementation of the LMD], Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research No 2005-031, June 2005.

The tertiary vocational diploma (licence professionnelle)

This diploma, necessitating three years of post-baccalaureate study, was introduced in 1999 as part of the policy of creating a European Higher Education Area (Bologna Declaration); it offers students a rapid means of obtaining a vocational qualification in response to specific needs and for specific trades. This university-level diploma's special feature is the way that it combines theory-based study with practical workplace experience (for 12 to 16 weeks) and the completion of a mentored project.

1 438 diplomas have been introduced by French universities, spanning a wide range of vocational fields. Since the qualification was introduced, the number of students obtaining a tertiary-level diploma has grown steadily – from 3 620 in 2001 to 23 874 in 2005.

University fees are not high and financial help is available to some students in the form of a means-tested grant, a bursary based on academic criteria (for the preparation of a thesis or in some cases as a competitive award) or an interest-free loan on trust.

Outside the university sector there are public and private tertiary-level colleges and institutions under the auspices of various ministries, which select their students and offer higher education with a vocational aim. These colleges, offering long, high-level courses, include, for example, political studies institutes, engineering colleges, colleges of commerce and management and veterinary colleges. Access to the most prestigious tertiary-level colleges – commonly known as *grandes écoles* – is by competitive examination, requiring two years of preparation in special classes. The term *grandes écoles* covers engineering colleges, colleges of commerce and management and teacher-training colleges (*Écoles normales supérieures*). In 2005, 27 600 engineering diplomas were awarded and the colleges of commerce and management issued 26 100 diplomas and other qualifications: these figures have been steadily increasing over the past five years ⁽²¹⁾.

⁽²¹⁾ *Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche*, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2007 (see Annex 6).

Experience with ‘virtual universities’

VITRA: five partners from four countries (France, Sweden, Italy and the Czech Republic) have developed the European VITRA project (a Socrates Leonardo Da Vinci pilot project) to safeguard, share and transmit the major European traditional glassmaking centres’ know-how and excellence. The VITRA multilingual training website (VIRtual TRAIning in glass art) currently offers 12 rare European techniques ⁽²²⁾.

The Université des métiers [Trades University] was launched by the Fédération compagnonnique des métiers du bâtiment [Building Trades Federation] of Limoges, the IUT [Technical Institute] of Limousin (Department of Civil Engineering), the University of Limoges, the Gaudi Institute of Construction in Barcelona and the Vocational College of Construction in Florence. Focusing on conservation and restoration, the partnership aims to promote recruitment to the building trades, and has created a tertiary vocational diploma in restoration and renovation.

⁽²²⁾ www.idverre.net/vitra/

5. Continuing vocational training

5.1. General background

The continuing vocational training system, introduced in the 1970s, depends on a number of partners: the State, the regions, companies and the social partners. It has its own distinct structure, in which collective bargaining plays an important role and people can access training in different ways depending on their individual status (job-seekers, employees) and their age (under 26, 26-45 or over 45).

Continuing vocational training is intended for people, both young and older, who are already part of the workforce or are embarking on working life. It aims to help them find or return to work, to remain in employment, to develop their skills and acquire different levels of vocational qualification, to enhance their earning power and to improve their cultural and social circumstances.

The social partners and the State have developed and implemented various schemes which fall into two categories: training for job-seekers and training for people in work (employees in the private and public sectors and self-employed people).

In February 2008 the Government began a process of reforming vocational training for private-sector employees and job-seekers. It reviewed various aspects of the system, focusing on certain core aims: to give individuals more secure career prospects, enabling them to find or return to work quickly; to overhaul the financing of training for people in work (reducing the number of bodies collecting contributions – see Chapter 10); to introduce a training ‘savings account’ based on the now-transferable individual entitlement to training (known as the *DIF*).

Transferability of the DIF

Employees would retain the right to cumulate their hours of training entitlement over a period of six years (see Section 2.1.). The reform would give them the right to use their accumulated entitlement throughout their working lives, even if they changed employer. The entitlement would thus attach to the individual and no longer solely to the status of company employee.

See social partners’ agreement of 11 January 2008.

5.2. Training providers

In order to provide continuing vocational training – i.e. to use the funding earmarked for it (a mix of corporate contributions and public financing, see Chapter 10), training organisations need to register with the Government administration responsible (*DRTEFP*). That formality apart, the market in training provision is open and competitive.

There are more than 45 000 registered training organisations but only 7 500 of them offer training as their main activity.

Public and semi-public training bodies comprise:

- establishments that report to the Ministry of Education: the *GRETA* (groups of establishments) and the National Centre for Distance Learning (*Centre national d'enseignement à distance* or *CNED*);
- bodies covered by other ministries: agricultural training and improvement centres, which report to the Ministry of Agriculture, and chambers of agriculture, commerce, industry and various trades;
- bodies run by the regions: the National Adult Vocational Training Association (*Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes* or *AFPA*). Regional management of the *AFPA* was introduced on a temporary basis, for those regions that wished to be involved, by an Act of 13 August 2004 ⁽²³⁾. The transfer of responsibility will be complete (and final) as of 1 January 2009.

Private training bodies include non-profit-making associations (as defined by the Act of 1901), private profit-making enterprises and self-employed trainers.

All of these bodies can train any of the groups requiring continuing vocational training: job-seekers, people in work, the self-employed and other individuals.

The National Centre for the Management of Territorial Public Service (*CNFPT*), which runs certain competitive examinations within the territorial public service, also provides initial and continuing training and preparation for examinations for public employees at municipal, inter-municipal, *département* [county] and regional level. In addition it encourages regional mobility in the territorial public service, notably through a web-based regional employment exchange ⁽²⁴⁾.

⁽²³⁾ See Annex 5.

⁽²⁴⁾ www.cnfpt.fr

5.3. Measures to help job-seekers

Responsibility for job-seekers' vocational training is shared by the State, the regions and the *ASSEDICs* (bodies managed by the social partners and tasked with the payment of benefit to job-seekers covered by employment insurance – see Section 3.3.2.).

As a result of successive waves of decentralisation in France since 1982 the regions are now the major funders of continuing vocational training for job-seekers. They were thus responsible for more than half the training courses undertaken in 2005 ⁽²⁵⁾.

The State has retained responsibility for training people with specific difficulties, who have been excluded from the job market due to social or physical factors, notably people with disabilities, foreign workers, illiterate people and prisoners.

The *ASSEDICs* purchase training for job-seekers who are covered by unemployment insurance.

Continuing vocational training for job-seekers takes two main forms: training courses (funded by the regions) and individual employment contracts with a training component.

5.3.1. Training courses

The situation of job-seekers with regard to vocational training depends on their status: i.e. whether or not they are covered by the unemployment insurance system.

If they have been in paid work for at least six of the previous 22 months, job-seekers come under the unemployment insurance system. This means that they receive a benefit payment for a limited period: namely, the return-to-work allowance (*allocation de retour à l'emploi* or *ARE*).

Throughout their period of entitlement to this benefit, job-seekers can undertake training courses financed by the *ASSEDICs*. In fact, insured job-seekers agree to participate in measures that will enable them to find new work. The measures in question are formally listed in a personalised access-to-work plan (*projet personnalisé d'accès à l'emploi* or *PPAE*). Training courses (which may or may not lead to certification) are crucial elements of the plan.

While in training under this system, job-seekers receive – in place of the *ARE* – a return-to-work training allowance (*allocation de retour à l'emploi-formation* or *AREF*), which is paid out by the *ASSEDICs* for the duration of the training.

⁽²⁵⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

Job-seekers not covered by unemployment insurance may nonetheless undertake vocational training and, in certain circumstances, may be funded by the region or the State for the duration of the training course.

5.3.2. Individual employment contracts

In the early 1980s, successive governments established types of employment contracts that become known as ‘specific’ contracts because they reflected the specific focus of State employment policy.

A number of such contracts are still in use today: the ‘pathway to careers in territorial, hospital and government service contract’ (*PACTE*), the ‘access to work contract’ (*CAE*), the ‘support in work contract’, the ‘future contract’ and the ‘integration/minimum wage contract’ (*CI-RMA*) ⁽²⁶⁾.

Two contracts of which companies tend to make particular use are the apprenticeship contract (see Section 4.3.2.) and the professionalisation contract. Although both these contracts are used for young people aged 16-25, under French law the former is part of initial training provision while the latter is associated with continuing training.

Another form of contract that may be offered to job-seekers is not a contract of employment but a support measure: the ‘Integration-into-society contract’ (*CIVIS*).

5.3.2.1. The professionalisation contract

This contract is available in two forms, depending on the age of the job-seeker for whom it is intended: 16-25 or 26 and over. It offers people the chance to obtain a qualification through a mix of work experience and training and personalised support.

The contract may be for a fixed term or open-ended and it will include a ‘vocational training action’ period of 6-12 months. Training time, of at least 150 hours, will account for 15-25 % of the duration of the contract.

5.3.2.2. The ‘Integration-into-society contract’ (CIVIS)

The ‘Integration-into-society contract’ (*CIVIS*) is intended for young people aged 16-25 who are experiencing particular difficulty in finding work and have a level of qualification not above that of the general, technical or vocational baccalaureate. It is also open to people who have been registered as job-seekers for more than 12 of the previous 18 months.

⁽²⁶⁾ See www.travail.gouv.fr/informations-pratiques/fiches-pratiques/

The aim of the *CIVIS* is to structure the steps the person concerned needs to take to obtain sustainable employment or to set up or take over a business. It may include provision for guidance and for obtaining qualifications or work experience. For example, a vocational training course might be proposed, including periods of in-company experience and extra help with job-seeking or the process of starting up a business.

5.3.3. Measures for people with specific training needs

While responsibility for the continuing vocational training of young people and job-seekers was being decentralised to the regions, the State retained the task of training certain groups of people with difficulties caused by social or physical factors. All such groups may avail themselves of the full range of general training provision, which is supplemented in their case by specific State measures ⁽²⁷⁾.

- People with disabilities

Specific forms of training provision may be offered to people with disabilities (courses in a vocational retraining centre, or a vocational-retraining contract, for example). The association that manages financing for the vocational integration of people with disabilities (*AGEFIPH*) supports this training policy ⁽²⁸⁾. In 2006, the State paid for 10 678 people to take courses in vocational retraining centres while *AGEFIPH* funded 12 253 trainees.

- Foreign workers

Foreign workers who meet the conditions for entry to and residence in France have the same entitlements as French workers. In addition, the State funds training (civic education and French language courses, for example) to help foreign workers integrate. These measures are delivered through the National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equality of Opportunity (*ACSE*) ⁽²⁹⁾.

- Illiterate adults

More than three million adults in France today are illiterate (57 % are in jobs and 11 % are seeking work). A State-funded programme to combat illiteracy has been in operation since 2002. It is known as *IRILL* – the letters stand for ‘*insertion, réinsertion, lutte contre l’illettrisme*’ [‘integration, reintegration and combating illiteracy’] – and is aimed primarily at people with poor or no qualifications and a lack of basic skills. In 2006, 200 000 people took general education catch-up and basic technical courses and 28 000 studied basic skills.

- Prisoners

⁽²⁷⁾ All the figures cited in this paragraph are taken from the *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State’s budget plan 2008].

⁽²⁸⁾ www.agefiph.fr

⁽²⁹⁾ www.lacse.fr

Combating illiteracy is the main focus of training provision for prisoners. In 2006, courses were provided for 10 700 learners.

5.4. Continuing training for people in work

The legislation on training provision for workers in the private sector dates back to 1970, the two main measures being the training plan and training leave. In 2004, however, the system underwent a thorough overhaul and an Act passed on 4 May of that year introduced two new forms of provision: the individual entitlement to training (*DIF*) and the professionalisation course. A reform implemented in 2007⁽³⁰⁾ harmonised the entitlements of public-sector workers with those in the private sector.

There are three ways in which employees can access continuing vocational training:

- at their employer's initiative, under a training plan drawn up by the employer;
- at their own initiative, using one of the forms of training leave available: individual training leave (*congé individuel de formation* or *CIF*), leave for validation of experience (*congé de validation des acquis de l'expérience* or *CVAE*) and skills-assessment leave (*congé de bilan de compétences* or *CBC*);
- at their own initiative, with their employer's agreement, under the *DIF*.

Either workers or employers can initiate use of the professionalisation course.

5.4.1. Training plans

The relevant regulations include no precise definition of a training plan, stipulating only that employers have a duty to help develop training by making a mandatory financial contribution (see Chapter 10). Employers are at liberty to introduce a range of training measures exclusively for their own employees.

In 2006, some 40 % of people in employment received training (for an average duration of 30 hours) under a training plan.

5.4.2. Training leave

Employees have a statutory right to training and may apply for leave to undertake forms of training of their own choice, irrespective of their involvement in training courses offered as part of a company training plan.

⁽³⁰⁾ Public Sector Modernisation Act of 2 February 2007 (see Annex 5).

The leave may be taken for different purposes: as individual training leave or for skills assessment or validation of experience. It is available to workers on both open-ended and fixed-term contracts, and the latter may take it either during their employment or when their contract finishes.

Training leave in the private sector is funded from compulsory contributions by employers. The contributions are collected by accredited joint bodies – the *organismes paritaires agréés au titre du conge individuel de formation* or *OPACIFs* – which are responsible for financing leave taken under the scheme (including full or part pay).

Funding for skills-assessment leave (*CBC*) or validation-of-experience leave (*CVAE*) has increased since 2005. Features of the training taken on these types of leave are described below (see Table 10):

- 30 % of courses last more than 1 200 hours;
- 68 % of courses lead to the award of a national diploma or a qualification listed in the National Vocational Certification Register;
- 10 % of courses lead to a qualification recognised in a specific occupational sector.

Table 10 Applications for funding for CIF, CBC and CVAE in 2006

Purpose of application	Total	Accepted
Individual training leave (<i>CIF</i>)	62 591	70 %
<i>employees with fixed-term contracts</i>	9 097	83 %
Skills-assessment leave (<i>CBC</i>)	29 005	98 %
<i>employees with fixed-term contracts</i>	642	97.5 %
Validation-of-experience leave (<i>CVAE</i>)	7998	96.5 %
<i>employees with fixed-term contracts</i>	452	95 %

Source: DGEFP, provisional figures for 2006.

5.4.3. Individual training entitlement (*DIF*)

All employees on open-ended contracts ⁽³¹⁾, who have worked for at least one year in the company where they are currently employed, are entitled to 20 hours' individual training per year. The annual entitlement may be cumulated for up to six years. If, at the end of these six years, the entitlement has not been fully or partly used, it will not increase beyond 120 hours.

Unlike other types of time off for training, the *DIF* is taken at the employee's initiative but with the employer's agreement. There will therefore be prior negotiation between the two,

⁽³¹⁾ In the civil service this applies to both civil servants and contracted employees.

which should result in a joint training plan. Training courses taken under the *DIF* scheme are financed by employers.

In the event of the employee's contract being terminated, he or she may apply to use the balance of hours accumulated under the *DIF*. Negotiations are currently under way with a view to enabling workers to use their accumulated entitlement even if they move to a different employer. The *DIF* would thus be 'transferable' (see Section 5.1.).

In 2006, 166 054 private-sector employees⁽³²⁾ trained under the *DIF* scheme – i.e. almost 4 % of the employed workforce. The numbers of both employees and companies involved in the scheme are growing: in 2006, 14 % of companies used it, compared with 6 % in 2005.

5.4.4. Professionalisation course

The purpose of the professionalisation course is to enable people to obtain a recognised qualification.

This scheme is open to the following five categories of workers:

- employees who need to be better qualified to keep pace with changes in technology and work organisation;
- employees who have been in work for 20 years or who, if they are aged under 45, worked for at least a year in the company where they were last employed;
- employees planning to set up or take over a business;
- women returning to work after maternity leave or people of either sex returning after parental leave;
- persons who benefit from employment quota rules, particularly workers with disabilities.

The professionalisation course combines general, vocational and technical learning with the acquisition of skills through experience within the company of one or more types of work related to the qualifications required.

In the private sector, professionalisation courses are funded from compulsory contributions by employers (see Chapter 10).

The accredited joint bodies responsible financed 400 038 professionalisation courses in 2006⁽³³⁾. Most of them were short-term (64 % entailing fewer than 40 hours of training)

⁽³²⁾ The figure for the public sector is not available because the reform extending the *DIF* scheme to public sector employees did not take effect until the implementing legislation was introduced in October 2007.

⁽³³⁾ The figure for the public sector is not available because the reform extending the professionalisation course to public sector employees did not take effect until the implementing legislation was introduced in October 2007.

although in 4 % of cases more than 300 hours were involved. More than 47 % of employees taking a professionalisation course worked for companies with a workforce of more than 500 (³⁴).

Self-employment

Access to training is also available to self-employed workers (craftspeople, farmers, members of the professions, tradespeople and freelancers). They are required to contribute to the cost of their training by paying a lump-sum contribution.

(³⁴) Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

6. Training teachers and trainers

Within the different vocational training routes and systems are different groups of teachers and trainers, for whom there are various recruitment, training and career structures.

‘Teacher’ is the general term for anyone who delivers instruction in the formal education system, whether at primary, lower or upper secondary or university level and spanning general, technical, vocational and special education.

‘Trainer’ is the generic term for all those involved in delivering continuing training. Trainers deliver vocational training within or outside companies and on the private training market generally. A trainer is a teacher of young people and adults who have left the school or university systems.

Certain individuals are also involved in vocational training as ‘facilitators’. These people, for whom training is a peripheral task rather than a job, include mentors and apprentice masters ⁽³⁵⁾ within companies, who – in addition to their own work – are responsible for training young learners (in cooperation with a training centre).

6.1. Teachers

6.1.1. Basic training

Recruitment of teachers in the public sector is governed by civil-service staff rules and staff rules specific to the various branches of the profession. The normal system of recruitment for primary and secondary-level teachers – as for all public employees – is by competitive examination. Successful candidates are assured of employment on completion of their studies.

Candidates must hold a bachelor’s degree (or a diploma at *Bac + 3* level) in the subject that they wish to teach. They then need to pass one of the competitive teaching examinations run by the ministries responsible for education, higher education or agriculture (if they wish to teach in the agricultural education sector).

Most aspiring teachers are trained in teacher-training colleges (*instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres* or *IUFM*). Established in 1990-1991, the *IUFMs* are responsible for training teachers to work at primary and lower and upper secondary levels, delivering general, technical, vocational and special education. There are currently 30 *IUFMs* in France – one for each education-authority (*académie*) area (including the five overseas areas).

⁽³⁵⁾ See Glossary.

Initial training takes two years: the first year is spent preparing for the competitive recruitment examination (see insert) and the second entails block-release training for those who pass the examination.

New teachers are qualified at the end of the second year but they have to undertake a further six weeks of training during their first two years in work.

Competitive recruitment examinations for teachers of vocational and technical subjects

The competitive recruitment qualification for teachers of technical subjects is the certificate of aptitude for technical education (certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement technique or CAPET). The CAER-CAPET is a certificate for teachers in the private education sector only.

The competitive recruitment qualification for teachers in vocational high schools is the certificate of aptitude for vocational high school teaching (certificat d'aptitude au professorat de lycée professionnel or CAPLP). The CAER-CAPLP is for teachers in private schools only, on individual or company contracts.

The requirements for the various options are published in the Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale No 42, 23 November 2000: www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2000/42/default.htm.

The Outline and Enabling Act on the Future of Schooling (³⁶) brought an overhaul of basic teacher training, which now combines theory-based approaches, practical work experience and an introductory economic and social component. Training is seen as a continuum from entry to university through to the end of the first two years in work. In accordance with the 2007 national stipulations on the content of teacher training, teachers need to acquire expertise in 10 officially defined areas (³⁷).

The 'Uses of ICT in education' programme

This programme aims to develop the use of ICT at all levels of the education system (primary, secondary and tertiary). It involves a range of measures to encourage the production, cataloguing and sharing of educational scenarios, to reflect the impact of research, to facilitate educational changes associated with the use of ICT, to raise awareness and motivation among teachers through the use of practical resource bases, and to analyse the impact of ICT on students' work and on classes, as well as the new relationships between students and teachers.

Teaching staff at university level are qualified teachers, lecturers or senior lecturers, recruited via national or college-based competitive examinations, or else unqualified teachers, mostly

(³⁶) Act of 23 April 2005 (see Annex 5).

(³⁷) Order of 19 December 2006 – *Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale* No 1, 4 January 2007.

on temporary contracts and recruited directly by the colleges concerned. The latter type of recruitment is widely used by vocational training units, the teachers in question being people who work in the relevant field (law or human resources, for example), who are recruited on a specific type of employment contract and paid by the hour.

Teachers in apprentice training centres (CFAs)

Recruitment of teachers to apprentice training centres (CFAs) is governed by the particular rules of the bodies hosting the apprentices: chambers of commerce or trade, or bodies managed by the sectors concerned. Teachers of technical subjects trained in IUFMs or practising technicians who wish to move into vocational training may teach in CFAs.

The regions, as the authorities responsible for apprenticeship, implement and finance training plans for CFA teachers. These plans are drawn up at regional level and vary from one region to another, according to policy aims and priorities determined by the regions themselves.

6.1.2. Continuing training

In the course of their careers, teachers receive continuing training, which for primary and secondary level is organised by the territorial education authorities and delivered by the *IUFMs* and universities.

Teachers in the public education system can take part in summer schools (seminars of one to two weeks' duration), which are organised nationally by the Ministry of Education, and in courses run within each education-authority area by the *IUFMs* and by territorial units for the training of public education staff (*missions académiques pour la formation du personnel de l'Éducation nationale* or *MAFPENs*).

6.2. Trainers

Trainers do not fall into a single category. For some (approximately 100 000), training is the main occupation but for others (more than a million) it is an occasional activity, carried out on a part-time basis within a company or training organisation which utilises the skills they have gained from their main job.

Trainers' status also differs depending on the type of organisation for which they work, namely:

- the *GRETA*, groups of establishments within the public education system that offer continuing-training services;
- the National Adult Vocational Training Association (*AFPA*), which reports to the regions;
- or a private organisation.

6.2.1. Trainers working for public bodies

6.2.1.1. GRETA trainers

In the *GRETA*, all staff who have a teaching role are classed as ‘trainers’, including those who provide training in general or vocational subjects, resource-centre staff, training coordinators and distance-learning support staff.

There are, however, two groups within this overall category:

- qualified, permanent teachers with public-employee status, whose salaries come from the *GRETA*s’ own budgets. Trainers in permanent employment are either qualified primary or secondary-level teachers or persons from outside the public service who have been recruited on the basis of their qualifications and experience;
- trainers employed on contract (who do not have a permanent post) or (on an occasional basis) as substitutes – who may come from a range of backgrounds. They may be people whose main employment is outside the *GRETA*, self-employed people or possibly people who have retired from public or private-sector posts.

Continuing training within the *GRETA*s takes the form of courses for the trainers, which are organised by education-authority continuing-training centres (the *CAFOCs*) in each authority’s area. Each of these centres prepares an annual training plan for all *GRETA* staff whether permanent or contracted.

6.2.1.2. AFPA trainers

AFPA trainers undertake 16 weeks or 80 days of basic teacher training with additional improvement of teaching skills throughout their careers. Training is their main job but they are also involved in recruiting and assessing trainees, preparing training plans, etc. They have other related functions, too, such as educational consultancy and external relations.

They have access to nationally run continuing-training courses, organised and delivered by the National Institute of Training Trades [*Institut national des métiers de la formation*] (www.inmf.afpa.fr), which is part of *AFPA*’s consultancy department.

6.2.2. Trainers in private training organisations

As trainers have no distinct official status, there is no specific basic training for continuing training trainers. There is no compulsory initial training course.

No formal background in training is needed to obtain work as a provider of continuing training within a training organisation or a company. Trainers are coopted to fill posts, chiefly on the basis of their specialised skills. They are, or have been, employees, self-employed people or possibly people who have retired from jobs in the public or private sectors. If necessary they may undertake continuing training after recruitment in order to develop teaching skills.

The continuing training available to trainers depends on whether they are employed or self-employed (see Section 5.3.).

6.3. Training facilitators

There is no mandatory basic training requirement for mentors within companies or for apprentice masters, except:

- in three *départements* in eastern France (Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle),
- in the agricultural sector, for supervisors of young people training on farms.

6.3.1. Apprentice masters

Apprentice masters are employees or heads of companies. Working in conjunction with apprentice training centres, their task is to help the apprentice to acquire within the company the skills needed for a particular level of qualification, certificate or diploma. The apprentice master is directly responsible for the apprentice's training.

Apprentice masters – who assume their role voluntarily – are selected from among a company's qualified employees, on the basis of their certified qualifications, their work experience (of at least three years) and a level of competence at least equivalent to that for which the apprentice is aiming.

The apprentice master's task is equivalent to that of a mentor – it simply has a different label. Apprentice masters may therefore undertake continuing training on the same basis as mentors (see Section 6.3.2.).

6.3.2. In-company mentors

The function of 'mentor' has no official status, and no training or certification is required to exercise it.

Mentoring is a task carried out by a member of staff, selected by the employer, in addition to his or her regular work. Mentors, who assume their role voluntarily, are chosen from among a company's qualified employees on the basis of their certified qualifications, their work experience and a level of competence at least equivalent to that which the mentored trainee aims to achieve.

The authorities strongly encourage employers to send mentors on training courses, which may attract public funding (from the Government and/or the region) or may be jointly financed – up to a level of 40 hours per year – by the occupational sectors concerned. Most commonly, such training involves familiarisation with the rules that govern block-release training, and understanding how to plan and assess a learning programme.

7. Skills development and innovative teaching methods

7.1. Anticipating skills needs

As part of its drive to achieve the best possible match between the economy and employment, the Government tries to anticipate economic, social and demographic change.

Various measures have been taken to this end in cooperation with the employment service – the partners involved include the National Employment Agency (*ANPE*), the National Adult Vocational Training Association (*AFPA*), the *ASSEDIC* unemployment insurance funds and, at territorial level, regional and *département* authorities, groups of companies, local labour-market areas, centres of competitiveness and the social partners.

Government initiatives to anticipate qualifications and skills requirements fall under two headings: prospective studies contracts on the one hand and employment and skills development activities on the other.

7.1.1. Prospective studies contracts

The prospective studies contract (*contrat d'études prospectives* or *CEP*) scheme enables the Government and the social partners to produce a joint analysis of the state of a given sector and measures that could taken there. The cost of the scheme is shared.

Two principles underpin the *CEP* scheme:

- a contract links the social partners and the Government, which covers on average 50 % of the expenditure entailed;
- the social partners and the Government jointly select the operators involved.

In 2006, prospective studies contracts were put in place for the following sectors: mutual associations, caretaking, dispensing chemists, construction, the chemical industry, entertainment, call centres and wholesale distribution ⁽³⁸⁾.

7.1.2. Employment and skills development activities

Employment and skills development activities (*actions de développement de l'emploi et des compétences* or *ADEC*) are intended to help people in jobs (waged or self-employed) to adapt and expand their skills and have them recognised, and to become more employable within or

⁽³⁸⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

beyond the company or sector where they are currently working. The main beneficiaries are workers who have become vulnerable due to changing employment patterns: blue-collar and white-collar employees with lower levels of qualification, experienced employees (aged 45 and over) who are in the latter half of their careers, and employees in companies with fewer than 250 staff, especially very small companies.

Employment and skills development activities take various forms: for example, supporting mobility within and beyond particular companies and employment sectors, assisting in the handover or takeover of businesses, matching jobs with skills (through skills assessment) and having vocational experience officially recognised.

The Government contributes funding to cover the costs of consultancy (designing and testing skills-development activities), associated work (in the form of information and communication), the implementation of the activities and, exceptionally, paying the participants.

In 2006, a range of sectors benefited from employment and skills development: struggling branches of industry (including textiles, clothing and leather and some branches of the metal-working industry), industries where certain trades are under strain (construction and public works, and personal services) or which employ older workers (IT and vehicle maintenance and repair) and service industries that are in the process of development or professionalisation (cleaning and associated services).

7.1.3. Observatories to monitor practice

Under planning agreements that have been concluded with the regions since 1989, Regional Employment and Training Observatories (*Observatoires régionaux emploi-formation* or *OREFs*) have been set up. Involving various services within a given region – the regional council, Government offices, offices of the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, Education Ministry services and, in some cases, chambers of commerce and industry and the social partners – their role is to collect available data about employment and training so as to inform prospective analyses of trades and qualifications at regional level.

Under the Act of 4 May 2004 the various vocational sectors are also required to establish prospective observatories of trades and qualifications at national, regional or territorial level, in order to help companies work out their training policies and help workers to plan their careers.

7.2. Innovative educational approaches

7.2.1. Initial training

The skills, capabilities and knowledge that students need are stipulated in the certification requirements for each vocational diploma, and in course programmes. Determining how the training is delivered is up to the trainers.

Certification requirements and course programmes include recommendations on educational approaches. They cover active teaching methods, target-based and project-based teaching, differentiation, and the concepts of aims and obstacles, problem situations and centres of interest. The focus throughout is on the learning process.

7.2.2. Continuing training

7.2.2.1. Play-based approaches

Play-based approaches are increasingly used in continuing vocational training for adults. They allow those involved to overcome blocks of various kinds, to address situations from a fresh perspective and to devise solutions.

Scenario-based games (life stories, career narratives geared to validating learning, dramatisation and role-play), in particular, are becoming ever more popular.

7.2.2.2. Open and distance training and e-learning

Innovation in open and distance training and e-learning takes the form of encouraging all those involved in a constructive learner-centred partnership to develop new skills and to analyse their familiar activities from a different perspective. The transmission of knowledge becomes a horizontal rather than a top-down process and the trainer or teacher becomes an advisor, facilitator or mentor.

7.3. Information and communication technologies

7.3.1. Initial training

The national education system plays its part in efforts to achieve an information society for all. Its role is to train people to use ICTs intelligently.

There are various national programmes to promote the development of ICTs in education and training:

- the ‘Infrastructures and Services’ programme supplies the educational community with infrastructure and services adapted to the spread of digitisation. The programme covers an area where responsibility is shared by many partners – including, in relation to education in schools, local and regional authorities. Three main types of project are undertaken, in the fields of infrastructures, digital services (computerised working environments) and user support;
- the ‘Digital Resources’ programme supplies pupils, students and educators with quality digitised learning content tailored to their expectations;
- the ‘ICT Training and Support’ programme aims to extend and structure ICT training and support provision for the educational community generally, including trainers, teachers and administrative staff. Measures directed specifically at young people include the popularisation in schools of the Informatics and Internet certificate (known as *B2I*) and the introduction of a tertiary-level Informatics and Internet certificate (*C2I*). The expected outcome is genuine integration of ICTs into different areas of study and educational activity, so that people can master them as a tool and develop the specific skills needed for new aspects of work. A further aim of the programme is to test and promote new training environments.

7.3.2. Continuing training

In 2002 the Government embarked on a drive to set up and develop ‘teletraining access points’ (*points d’accès à la téléformation* or *P@T*) ⁽³⁹⁾, equipped to enable users to undertake periods of distance training delivered by training bodies with which they had previously registered.

In 2003, 258 *P@Ts* were officially designated, mainly in small rural communities or sensitive neighbourhoods in major conurbations. Almost 10 500 people used the access points, for a total of 325 000 hours of training. In 2005, the majority of the users (57.2 %) were job-seekers while just 1.2 % were people in employment.

⁽³⁹⁾ www.espace-pat.org

8. Validation of learning

8.1. Validation of formal learning

Most qualifications in the French system of vocational certification are national diplomas issued under the authority of the State, the main issuing body being the Ministry of Education.

Stages in the process of creating or renewing a diploma are:

- the appraisal phase, in which the aim is to assess the usefulness or otherwise of establishing a new diploma (taking into account employment prospects and methods of recruitment);
- drawing up a reference schedule of occupational activities – a list of the main elements of jobs likely to be occupied by future holders of the diploma;
- drawing up a schedule of certification requirements, outlining the vocational skills ultimately required and the knowledge associated with them. It will stipulate expected levels of performance and arrangements for assessing the given skills.

Vocational diplomas break down into certification units. Each level of testing represents one or more units, and students can accumulate units over time.

Other ministries (for agriculture, health, culture and employment) have also created certificates and diplomas in their respective fields or for specific groups of trainees, notably job-seekers and workers in need of retraining. The examining boards are made up, as a rule, of teaching/training staff and people who work in the area in question.

Trade associations and certain private organisations, as well as the social partners and specific vocational sectors, may also create certificates and diplomas.

In 2002, in order to make the system easier to understand, the National Vocational Certification Register (*RNCP*) was created. It lists all certificates that are either registered automatically (i.e. State diplomas and other qualifications) or approved for inclusion following consideration by an ad hoc committee ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The register has been continually extended since its establishment as more standard descriptions of qualifications are added: diplomas and similar qualifications are classed by area of activity and level, while sector-based vocational certificates (*certificats de qualification professionnelles* or *CQPs*) are listed by area of activity. There are currently 4 121 entries in the register ⁽⁴¹⁾.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ National Vocational Certification Committee: www.cncp.fr

⁽⁴¹⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

The register is also a response to the EU aims of:

- developing the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) as a means of removing barriers to the free movement of people, skills and companies;
- facilitating the creation of a European qualifications framework (EQF).

Regulated trades

Certain trades in France are subject to regulation.

Apart from the seven jobs (doctor, nurse, vet, dentist, midwife, pharmacist and architect) for which European directives between 1975 and 2005 ⁽⁴²⁾ introduced a system of automatic recognition, there are certain trades that may be exercised in France only by holders of specific diplomas.

They include jobs in law (barrister, bailiff and notary, for example) and in the paramedical sector (speech therapist, podiatrist, dispensing optician, etc.), certain technical trades (surveyor, ambulance driver and ship's captain, for example) and some social and cultural occupations (primary and secondary school teachers and travel agents, for instance).

8.2. Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning

8.2.1. Recognition of skills and experience

Recognition of skills and experience is understood to cover all the practices and procedures that contribute at different times of an individual's life (specifically when he or she embarks on training, or enters or changes employment) to building and presenting a picture of his or her knowledge, expertise and potential, in some cases with a view to their validation.

Unlike validation of skills and experience, recognition is not an official procedure. There is, however, a specific tool that can facilitate recognition – namely skills assessment.

Any individual may undergo a skills assessment. The aim of these assessments – which are carried out by specialised organisations subject to various rules, including confidentiality with regard to the information they receive – is to enable people in or seeking employment to analyse their personal and work-related skills, their aptitudes and levels of motivation and to produce their own career plans, including training plans if need be.

⁽⁴²⁾ Directive 2005/36 of 7 September 2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

A standard three-way agreement has to be concluded between the employee benefiting from the assessment, the body making the assessment and the employer or other body financing it.

A skills assessment may be carried out at the initiative of either employee or employer, although in the latter case the employee's agreement is essential.

The skills assessment is always carried out by an external assessor, in three phases:

- in the preliminary phase the employee's commitment to the process is confirmed and he or she is informed about how the assessment will proceed and the methods and techniques that will be used;
- an investigation phase involves analysing the individual's professional and personal motivations and interests, identifying his or her professional and personal skills and aptitudes, and identifying options for vocational development;
- the concluding phase takes the form of personal interviews to familiarise the employee with the findings of the assessment in detail. At the end, he or she receives a summary document. The findings and the document are transmitted only to the person concerned, and the document may not be copied to the employer without the employee's agreement.

8.2.2. Validation of skills and experience

The aim of skills and experience validation procedures is to enable a competent authority (in most cases the Government) to issue an officially recognised diploma, qualification or certificate. Apart from those cases covered by the Act of 26 January 1984, setting out conditions for the validation of studies, work experience or personal expertise with a view to accessing various levels of higher education (see insert), skills and experience validation consists chiefly of validating skills with a view to certification.

Validation of skills and experience for the pursuit of studies

The purpose of the Higher Education Act of 26 January 1984 was to extend access to university education to people other than holders of the baccalaureate – the level of qualification normally required. People who have completed at least two years' relevant personal or work experience can move directly into various levels of higher education, subject to consideration of their application by a board comprising teachers and professionals. See also Order 85-906 of 23 August 1985.

In 1992, legislation was passed to enable persons in or seeking employment to have their work experience validated. The so-called Social Modernisation Act of 17 January 2002 established an individual entitlement to validation of experience (VAE), with the aim of enabling everyone to access the range of existing qualifications.

Four important changes distinguish the 2002 provisions from the Act of 1985:

- access is extended to all forms of vocational certification (qualifications, diplomas and the *CQP*);
- it has become possible for applicants to obtain full certification;
- the length of experience (continuous or otherwise) required in order to apply for validation of experience is reduced from five to three years;
- the core concept is extended from ‘vocational experience’ to ‘experience’, thus opening the procedure to volunteers and to the spouses of craftspeople or farmers who have contributed to their partner’s work.

Validation is an entitlement for all types of people – employees (on open-ended, fixed-term, temporary or other contracts), the self-employed, job-seekers, volunteers, public servants – irrespective of qualifications they may have obtained previously, at whatever level, if they can prove that they have work experience relevant to the content of the certification (diploma or other qualification) that they seek.

All working people are thus entitled to have their experience validated with a view to obtaining one of the following qualifications, provided it is listed in the National Vocational Certification Register (*RNCP*) (see Section 8.1.):

- a diploma or vocational qualification issued on behalf of the State;
- a qualification issued by a training body or a trade association (a chamber of commerce or industry, for example);
- a certificate created in a specific vocational sector (vocational qualification certificate or *CQP*).

There is a charge for validation of experience. The cost varies depending on the ministry responsible and the qualification sought. It may be covered by a body accredited to collect contributions under the individual training-leave scheme (*congé individuel de formation* or *CIF*).

Validation of experience may be carried out as part of a training plan, in the context of the individual right to training (*DIF*) or on special leave for the purpose (*congé de validation des acquis de l’expérience* or *CVAE*).

It comprises a number of stages:

- in an initial information, advice and guidance stage it is confirmed that validation of experience is relevant to the candidate’s career plans. The desired qualifications are identified. In practical terms, the candidate will obtain information from an advice point (*point relais conseil* or *PRC*) about his or her entitlements and how to select the most useful qualification to apply for;

- admissibility: in this stage the candidate makes an initial submission to the certifying body concerned, which confirms that the application can be considered;
- guided preparation: if the certifying body confirms that the application is admissible, the candidate can then undergo validation testing (which entails preparing a presentation file, detailing his or her experience or work situation, and possibly an interview), with guidance is available if necessary;
- validation by the examining board: the board checks and assesses the candidate's vocational skills, using set validation methods. An interview may be held at the request of either the board or the candidate;
- post-assessment follow-up: if validation is withheld or if only partial validation is offered, the candidate will be assisted to adjust his or her career plan or to identify the steps required to obtain missing credits.

In June 2006 the Government launched a plan to develop the validation scheme, and set a target of issuing 60 000 certifications. Since the scheme was introduced, a total of 67 000 candidates have successfully used it to obtain certification ⁽⁴³⁾.

In 2006, 26 000 candidates obtained certification across all levels and from all the certifying ministries – i.e. those responsible for education and further education, agriculture, health and social affairs, employment, youth and sport, maritime affairs and defence.

The scheme's rate of growth between 2005 and 2006 was 16 %, compared with 28 % between 2004 and 2005, and 65 % between 2003 and 2004.

⁽⁴³⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

9. Guidance and counselling

The French career guidance system has existed for many years, although until relatively recently guidance provision and structures were better developed in general education (for junior and senior high school pupils and students).

For a number of years now the labour market has been increasingly characterised by transition (with people moving from job to job or in and out of work) and by rapid socio-economic and technological transformation. As a result, people in jobs and those seeking them need to adapt to upheaval and change throughout their working lives. Numerous structures have been put in place to support people through these changes, with provision depending in most cases on the status of the individuals concerned. Lifelong career guidance has become the main theme.

The fact that France is hosting a conference on the subject in September 2008, in the context of the French Presidency of the EU, indicates its determination to make it a policy priority.

9.1. Strategy

9.1.1. Initial vocational training

In 2006, an interministerial director of guidance and counselling was appointed, who reports to the ministries responsible for education, higher education, and the vocational integration of young people. The purpose of the post is to respond to young people's needs for guidance about school and university education, and for assistance in preparing for work.

In March 2007 the interministerial director set out a national vocational guidance and integration plan, designed to coordinate Government provision in the areas of information about trades, and guidance both at school and in tertiary education and training. There are four main aims:

- to provide ongoing, personalised guidance so that young people can obtain qualifications;
- actively to guide people towards higher education as a preparation for employment;
- to coordinate information, guidance and integration measures nationally, regionally and locally;
- to bring fresh impetus to all the agencies concerned.

As a result, the ministries concerned put the following provisions in place at the start of the 2007/08 academic year:

- at junior high school level, a personal guidance interview in ‘year 3’, as a matter of course, and the extension to all junior high schools of the option of three hours a week of learning for work (*découverte professionnelle*) in ‘year 3’;
- at senior high school level, a personal guidance interview for all pupils in ‘year 1’ [the penultimate year] in general, technical or vocational streams. The aim of these interviews – conducted by the form teacher and a student counsellor – is to make the young people aware of the different routes they can take as they enter a new orientation phase, helping them to firm up the choices they will need to make in their final year at school. At this last level, various steps are taken:
 - a class council is held on the theme of career guidance, each student’s intentions with regard to registering for further education or training are noted and the class council’s opinion and advice are forwarded to the student in the form of a ‘dialogue document’ issued before he or she proceeds with registration;
 - in a general pre-registration phase, the students receive active guidance as detailed below ⁽⁴⁴⁾;
 - in the active guidance phase, all universities offer their prospective students individual assistance to plan their studies and careers;
 - a single higher-education access pack has been created and is to be introduced across the country from 2009, facilitating coordination and harmonisation of registration timetables.

At the time of writing, other measures were in the pipeline for the beginning of the 2008/09 academic year, notably:

- establishment of a scheme to give all secondary-level pupils from ‘year 5’ onwards an introduction to different jobs and forms of training: it will include ‘trade taster time’ and ‘focus time’ at all levels of schooling, thus making individual career guidance more meaningful;
- introduction of a common body of knowledge and skills (see Section 11.2.), including assessed learning of the skill of personal planning (part of the seventh of the eight European ‘key skills for lifelong learning’);
- introduction of a ‘Succeeding at University’ plan, adding an extra level of individualised support by assigning students to a specific member of the teaching staff as an advisor from the first year of university onwards.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The Universities’ Freedoms and Responsibilities Act of 10 August 2007.

Single higher-education registration pack

Accessible online (via a single portal), the registration pack system is designed to provide information to all candidates for tertiary studies, to receive all their applications, inform them of a final decision on admission to a course and support them through final registration - even through possible changes of direction up to the end of their first year at university.

See: <http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/N59.xhtml>.

9.1.2. Continuing vocational training

9.1.2.1. Guidance services

Recent years have seen the introduction of various guidance schemes for continuing vocational training, notably the skills assessment procedure for people in work or seeking it, support schemes for job-seekers (see *CIVIS*, Section 5.2.2.) and personal interviews (for workers in the private and public sectors).

Skills assessment is a procedure whereby an employee or job-seeker can carry out a stock-taking of his or her vocational skills, aptitudes and motivations. It is designed to help people to produce their own career or training plans. In the case of employees, the assessment may be carried out under a company training plan, or at the employee's own initiative, with provision for special leave for the purpose, which can be taken after five years in work. The assessment must be conducted by an external assessor on an individual basis.

Since 2004, many companies have been required to organise vocational interviews for staff with at least two years' service. The scheme was introduced as a decision of the social partners but it has not been enshrined in law. The aim of the vocational interview – to be held every two years – is to enable employees to review their career plans in the light of their own wishes for the future, their aptitudes and the company's needs. Training is a core element in the solutions that emerge from such interviews.

9.1.2.2. Guidance tools

Guidance tools take various forms and, with the development of digitisation, numerous relevant Internet sites and portals have been created.

The major (indeed only) national portal is the lifelong training guidance portal opened in 2006 at the initiative of the Government, the social partners and the regions – through the Association of Regions of France. Designed as a 'one-stop shop', the site is intended for everyone – including young people, people in jobs and job-seekers – to support them in accessing vocational guidance and lifelong learning⁽⁴⁵⁾. Implemented by *Centre INFO*, the

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Site address: www.orientation-formation.fr

project brings together for the first time information from *ONISEP* (see Section 9.2.), the *ANPE*, the various vocational sectors and the regions, the *CNFPT* and *Centre INFFO* itself. The portal was set up in response to a major demand for information about lifelong education and training.

9.2. Structures

The structure of French information, guidance and advice services is very mixed.

The Government provides most such services and plays a major role in funding them. The two ministries most particularly involved are those in charge of education and employment.

9.2.1. Initial guidance structures

Ministry of Education offices are responsible for responding to enquiries from, and providing information and advice to, people undertaking initial training. This is done primarily through 574 Information and Guidance Centres (*Centres d'information et d'orientation* or *CIOs*) countrywide, employing 4 300 managers and counsellors who work closely with training establishments, and also with those responsible for helping young people to find jobs. The work takes place either in schools and colleges or in the centres themselves – which also cater for adults.

The Ministry of Education is also responsible for an important organisation tasked with producing information about courses and jobs: the National Office for Information on Education, Training and Trades (*Office national d'information sur les enseignements et les professions* or *ONISEP*). With branches attached to the head offices of each education authority, *ONISEP* gathers at source information about types of training on offer and distributes it free of charge to every family at the different stages when vocational guidance is appropriate.

9.2.2. Guidance structures for adults

The offices of the Ministry of Employment are in charge of the enquiries/information/guidance system for adults who are seeking employment or wish to retrain, relocate or learn additional skills.

This provision is delivered by employment advisors through the countrywide network of National Employment Agencies (*agences nationales pour l'emploi* or *ANPEs*). The *ANPEs* cater for all adults irrespective of whether they are in or seeking employment, waged or self-employed.

The Managerial Employment Association (Association pour l'emploi des cadres or APEC)

A feature peculiar to the French system is the service for managerial employees provided by APEC, a jointly run nationwide association (with 45 centres): it offers guidance, assessment, help in finding a job; produces information and a journal; and provides online services.

See: www.apec.fr.

In 2005, the Ministry of Employment made improving the effectiveness of the public employment service a priority. This involved integrating new partners, including local authorities, into the service.

One delivery mechanism for an improved service to employers and job-seekers is the network of employment centres (*maisons de l'emploi*). In 2008, there are 300 such centres across the country. Their purpose is to help the various agencies involved (local authorities, the *ANPE*s and *UNEDIC*), work more closely together on the basis of an area plan ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Another body reporting to the same ministry is the national information centre for continuing training known as *Centre INFFO*. Its task is to disseminate information to all those who work in continuing vocational training in the broadest sense ⁽⁴⁷⁾. As the only national public body working in this field, *Centre INFFO* is in charge of the national portal for information on vocational guidance and initial and continuing training ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

At regional level, information about continuing vocational training is disseminated by training action, resource and information centres (*centres d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation* or *CARIFs*). These comprise a network of regional contact points for training professionals. Financed jointly by the Government and the regions, they have links with the social partners and with public and private bodies involved in vocational training, and they supply information to people who work in training, particularly to local enquiry/information/guidance points. The *CARIFs* maintain up-to-date documentation on training provision at regional level. They offer a forum where trainers in a given region can meet and exchange ideas, etc. In 2008, the 23 *CARIFs* formed a network with a view to exchanging experience, helping to improve the quality of information and managing shared tools such as the *métamoteur* (a database on continuing vocational training provision) ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

Local offices (*missions locales* or *ML*) and enquiry/information/guidance points (*permanences d'accueil, d'information et d'orientation* or *PAIOs*) have been established since 1982, as local authorities and the Government have sought to coordinate grassroots efforts to help young

⁽⁴⁶⁾ www.travail.gouv.fr or www.travail.gouv.fr/sous-dossiers.php3?id_rubrique=156&id_mot=379#

⁽⁴⁷⁾ www.centre-inffo.fr

⁽⁴⁸⁾ See above.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ www.intercarif.org

people in the 16-25 age band overcome barriers to social and vocational integration. Most of those who need help are unqualified or their qualifications are out of date.

Today these structures constitute a nationwide network with a specific role and a function in the public employment service, which are recognised in the Labour Code. Accordingly, since 2005 they have had the task of implementing the right to support for young people at risk of exclusion from the workforce, notably through use of the ‘Integration-into-society contract’ (*CIVIS*) (see Section 5.2.2.).

In 2006, the *MLs* and *PAIOs* saw 477 000 young people for the first time and assisted a total of more than 1 200 000 ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Other bodies also offer vocational guidance and advice:

- some training organisations include, as part of their work, guidance, advice and placement services. One such is the National Adult Vocational Training Association (*Association nationale pour la formation des adultes* or *AFPA*), which reports not just to the public employment service but also to the *GRETAs* (groups of establishments) network (see Section 6.2.1.);
- certain joint bodies that manage training-insurance funds – notably the Individual Training-Leave Management Fund (*Fonds de gestion du congé individuel de formation* or *FONGECIF*) – maintain a significant body of documentation, inform their members about their entitlements and advise them;
- trade associations have set up structures to develop guidance work;
- interinstitutional skills-assessment centres (*CIBC*) serve both employees and job-seekers who need to plan their careers.

The Paris Cité des métiers

The Cité des métiers is a forum for information and advice run by professionals with backgrounds in educational and vocational guidance, training, employment and job creation (in AFPA, ANPE, CIBC, CIO, etc.). The Cité des métiers concept is based on the principle of networking, which – while hard to implement in the French context of multiple decision-makers and players – is an effective one that appears to be more realistic than the ‘one-stop shop’. The name has thus become a ‘trademark’ and Cités des métiers can be found in a number of French regions (including Limoges and Marseille) and in other countries (Brazil, Canada, Spain and Italy, for example).

See: www.cite-sciences.fr/francais/ala_cite/metiers/global_fs.htm.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State’s budget plan 2008].

9.3. Staff

Of the 30 000 people who work in vocational guidance, 5 000 are psychologists: the *CIO* counsellors and managers and the occupational psychologists of the *AFPA*. Other staff have trained in a range of disciplines.

Services are offered not only by these vocational guidance specialists but also by people whose main work is in another field: teachers, sociocultural facilitators, and specialist social workers, for example. Most of these staff have received no special training in vocational guidance. In the case of teachers, however, vocational guidance is included in new stipulations on the content of basic teacher training and there are many training courses available for head teachers.

10. Investing in human resources

10.1. Overview

In 2005, France invested:

- EUR 117.9 billion (6.9 % of GDP) ⁽⁵¹⁾ in initial vocational training within the school system ⁽⁵²⁾ – the main funders being the Government and local government, particularly the regional authorities (whose investment was directed at senior high schools including vocational high schools);
- EUR 25.9 billion (1.5 % of GDP) in continuing vocational training ⁽⁵³⁾ – the main funders being the Government (which financed training for specific groups of people, as described in Section 5.2.3., as well as support for companies, etc.), the regions (funding training for job-seekers) and companies (financing training for their employees).

10.2. Financing initial vocational training

10.2.1. Initial vocational training within the school system

Decentralisation has radically reshaped the respective remits of the State and local government. While the State has retained responsibility for the smooth functioning of the public service and for a cohesive education system, the decentralisation laws ⁽⁵⁴⁾ have given local government a larger part to play.

The State provides the lion's share of funding for initial vocational training within the school system, notably by footing the bill for the salaries of teachers, school counsellors and guidance staff, while local government is in charge of investment and of the work, recruitment and remuneration of other staff (see Figure 3).

The regions pay for construction and reconstruction, extensions and major repairs as well as the equipping and functioning of public senior high schools, agricultural colleges, special

⁽⁵¹⁾ *Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche*, 2007 edition [RERS 2007] / Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Research; may be downloaded from www.education.gouv.fr/stateval

⁽⁵²⁾ The French budgetary system makes no distinction between general and vocational basic education and training.

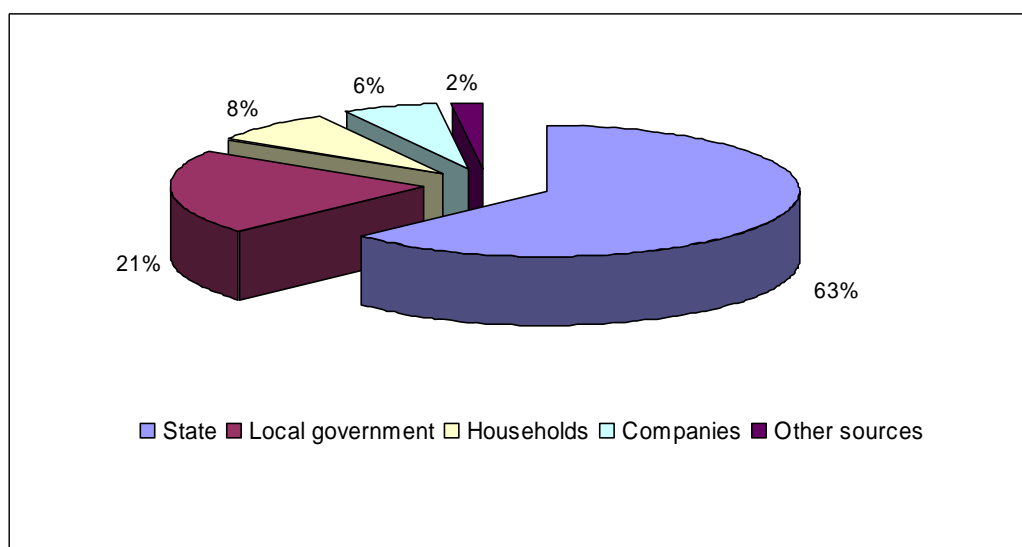
⁽⁵³⁾ Figure includes apprenticeship. Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Notably the Acts of 2 March 1982 and 7 January 1983 and the Local Freedoms and Responsibilities Act of 13 August 2004.

schools and schools of maritime studies and aquaculture within their areas. They can also give investment grants to private technical colleges (technical and vocational senior high schools).

To carry out the responsibilities transferred to them by central Government, the local and regional authorities receive specific monies, known as ‘decentralisation appropriations’. The bases on which the authorities redistribute these funds to schools are set out in law.

Figure 3 Financing of initial vocational training in schools: breakdown by source of funding (EUR 117.9 billion in 2005, or 6.9 % of GDP)



Source: Ministry of Education.

10.2.2. Initial vocational training under contract of employment

10.2.2.1. Apprenticeship

Funding for apprenticeship comes chiefly from companies (46 %), the regions (23 %) and the Government (22 %). Each partner’s contribution targets a specific aspect of apprenticeship:

- 69 % of the total contributed by companies goes to paying apprentices. Companies also pay an apprenticeship charge (23 % of their contribution), most of which helps to pay for apprentice training centres (CFAs);
- 63 % of the regions’ spending is on grants to the CFAs;
- 80 % of Government spending goes to cover exemptions from social security contributions for companies that employ apprentices ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ CNFPTLV, *Une première approche du financement et des effectifs de l’apprentissage en France, données 2004, décembre 2007*. Can be downloaded from: www.cnfptlv.gouv.fr/publ/index.htm

10.2.2.2. Professionalisation contracts and courses

Block release training is funded from a specific contribution payable by all companies. The level of contribution varies according to the size of a company's workforce. A business with fewer than 10 employees will pay 0.15 % of its total wage bill, while one with a workforce of 10 or more will contribute 0.50 %. Companies pay their contributions to an accredited joint collecting body (*organisme paritaire collecteur agréé* or *OPCA*).

In 2006, the *OPCA*s collected EUR 1 840 million to finance training (from all contributing companies) ⁽⁵⁶⁾. The monies collected are pooled in a special account (see below).

From the companies' contributions, the *OPCA*s finance:

- absences for training taken by young people employed on professionalisation contracts;
- training for the mentors placed in charge of the young people;
- expenses associated with the mentoring function;
- the cost of providing information about block-release training;
- apprentice training centres' operating costs.

10.3. Financing continuing vocational training

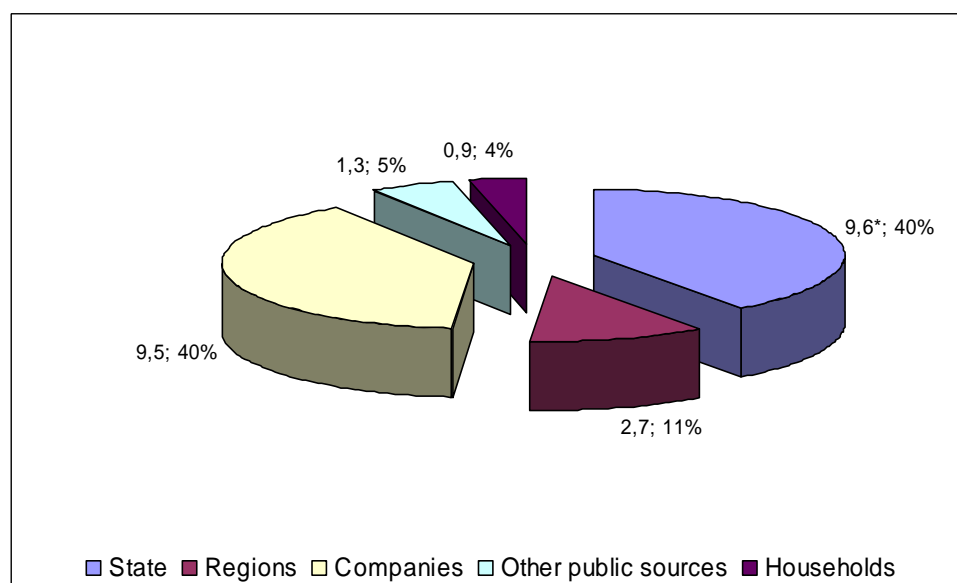
Companies cover most of the cost of continuing vocational training for people in work. In 2006, they spent EUR 8.6 billion ⁽⁵⁷⁾ in this area. The Government and regions are in second place, although there has been a shift in the weight of their respective contributions. In 2005, State spending on vocational training, other than training for public employees, totalled EUR 4.4 billion, down 3 % from the level in 2004. By contrast, the regions' spending, at just under EUR 4 billion was up 17 % from 2004 ⁽⁵⁸⁾. The growth in regional spending since 2004 reflects the ongoing decentralisation of vocational training.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Apart from apprenticeship.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

Figure 4 *Financing of continuing vocational training (EUR 24 billion in 2004; 1.46 % of GDP)*



* including EUR 5.1 billion for training public employees.

Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

10.3.1. Financing of continuing vocational training for people in employment

10.3.1.1. Financing by companies

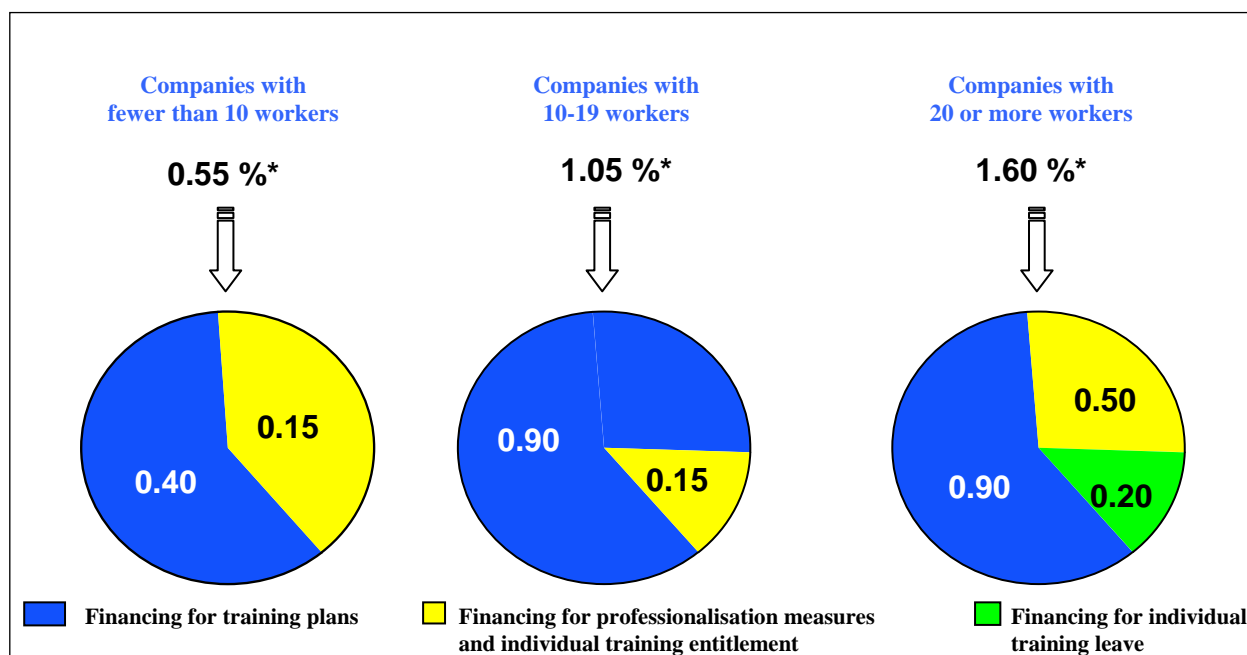
A particular feature of the French funding system for continuing training is the existence of mandatory contributions – reflecting a legislative will to encourage company training of employees. All private and public-sector companies thus help to develop continuing vocational training.

In the case of private-sector companies, the contribution amount and the method of calculating it vary according to the size of the company workforce.

Statutorily required contributions to continuing vocational training are equivalent to:

- 1.6 % of the total wage bill of companies with a workforce of 20 or more;
- 1.05 % of the total wage bill of companies with a workforce of between 10 and 19;
- 0.55 % of the total wage bill of companies employing fewer than 10 people.

Figure 5 Company contributions to continuing vocational training of people in work (since 2005)



* Percentage of company's total annual wage bill.

Source: Act of 4 May 2004 on lifelong vocational training.

The contributions of private-sector companies are collected in some cases by bodies which are set up under collective agreements and accredited by the authorities: these are the *OPCAs* (accredited joint collecting bodies). The monies collected by the *OPCAs* are pooled, and a company's borrowing entitlement is not linked to the amount it has paid in. A company that has paid its contribution to an *OPCA* may thus obtain from it, in return, financial aid totalling more than the contribution it has paid.

10.3.1.2. Government funding

Training of public employees

Each year the Government is required to allocate the following amounts for the training of people in State employment:

- a contribution equivalent to 3.8 % of the total wage bill to fund training plans;
- a contribution equivalent to 0.20 % of the total wage bill to fund vocational training leave.

To fund training for local government employees, local and regional authorities are required to make a contribution equivalent to at least 1 % of their total wage bill. These contributions are payable to the National Centre for the Management of Territorial Public Service (*CNFPT*).

Hospitals are required to devote a sum at least equivalent to 2.1 % of their total wage bill to a training plan and, since the Social Modernisation Act was passed in January 2002, to contribute 0.20 % of the total wage bill to a Vocational Training-Leave Management Committee. In addition, a further contribution has been required of public health establishments ⁽⁵⁹⁾ in order to fund research into employees' career development. This contribution was fixed at a level of 0.20 % of the total wage bill in 2007, 0.40 % in 2008 and 0.60 % in 2009.

Assistance to companies

Since 2006 – with the introduction of the 'Commitment to employment and skills development' (*Engagement de développement de l'emploi et des compétences* or *EDEC*) – the Government has pursued an agreement-based employment and skills policy that aims to help anticipate and manage the impact on employment of economic, social and demographic change.

The *EDEC* scheme is one of the incentive tools available to the State to help industries and companies (particularly small and medium-sized businesses) take measures to anticipate change and avoid the risk of their employees (especially poorly qualified and older workers) being unable to cope with new types of work.

The scheme has a research strand (prospective studies contracts or *CEP*) as well as an operational strand concerned with employment and skills development activities (*Actions de développement de l'emploi et des compétences* or *ADEC*).

In 2007, EUR 51.8 million ⁽⁶⁰⁾ was allocated to the agreement-based employment and skills policy.

10.3.2. Financing continuing vocational training for job-seekers

Continuing vocational training for job-seekers in France is essentially financed from three sources: the State, the regions and the social partners (through *UNEDIC*).

10.3.2.1. State involvement

State spending in this field takes the form of targeted intervention. Groups of people who need training are identified – they tend to be people who have great difficulty finding work as a result of social handicaps such as illiteracy, for example – and programmes are put in place to meet their training needs where it is considered useful to do so. The measures in question are 'category focused'. State intervention is thus concentrated on combating unemployment where it results in exclusion (among long-term job-seekers and people with social and physical disabilities, for example).

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Order 2005-406 of 2 May 2005.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Source: *Projet de loi de finances 2008: annexe formation professionnelle*, 2007 [State's budget plan 2008].

In 2005, the Government spent EUR 4.4 billion on continuing vocational training for young people, job-seekers and workers in the private sector.

10.3.2.2. Involvement of the regions

The regional authorities are mainly involved in remunerating trainees on accredited courses. The regions are primarily concerned with training as a tool for the integration or reintegration of job-seekers (including people seeking their first job or people hampered in job seeking by a lack of qualifications or inappropriate qualifications).

The regions implement continuing vocational training policies which have been established in cooperation with the relevant agencies at regional level and are set out in a regional vocational training development plan (*Plan régional de développement des formations professionnelles* or *PRDFP*) (see Section 3.1.2.).

Within this framework, a region may develop its own original methods of promoting access to qualifications, and some such methods – although they lack a statutory basis – have become widespread. Examples are ‘springboard job’ and training-voucher schemes.

‘Springboard’ jobs

Under ‘springboard job’ schemes, regions fund voluntary-sector employers to pay and train personnel whom they recruit on open-ended contracts. Recruits must be drawn from one of the ‘target’ groups – as a rule, people who have great difficulty finding jobs. They may include young unemployed people aged between 16 and 26 who have poor or no qualifications, job-seekers aged 45-plus and people with disabilities.

Training vouchers

Training vouchers are a form of payment for courses. The region buys training from organisations that provide it, then – via the vouchers – makes it available free of charge to potential trainees. The voucher scheme enables trainees to choose the theme of their training and the day when they take it.

Different regions have different versions of this scheme, under different names: training vouchers, language vouchers, second-chance vouchers, for example. Through the scheme, the region covers the cost of the training, any associated validation of experience and the use of IT resources, etc.

Training vouchers have three aims: to facilitate access to training or support schemes; to enable training to be tailored to individuals’ needs; and to promote training in languages and new technologies.

10.3.2.3. UNEDIC

The unemployment insurance system also has a role in training inasmuch as it enables insured job-seekers to claim benefits while they are training and it will also cover training and associated costs. *UNEDIC* spent EUR 1 167 million on training in 2005.

11. European and international dimensions

France is proceeding with implementation of the EU's Lisbon, Copenhagen and Bologna processes to strengthen the role of education and training in society: it has overhauled its university system, introducing the three-cycle (bachelor/master/doctorate) structure for university diplomas, and has established the National Vocational Certification Register ⁽⁶¹⁾, thus making for greater transparency between French qualifications and those of other European countries and the European Qualifications Framework.

It has set up a national agency to implement the lifelong education and training programme ⁽⁶²⁾, thus encouraging mobility for training purposes (by high school pupils, apprentices, workers, job-seekers and trainers, for example) as well as use of the Europass system.

France also receives EU cofinancing from the European Social Fund and the Regional Development Fund, as its four overseas regions (formerly Objective 1 regions) continue to qualify for aid under the convergence criteria.

11.1. Realisation of a European Lifelong Learning Area

Lifelong education and training are core priorities which have informed recent legislation in France in the fields of education and initial vocational training (the Outline and Enabling Act on the future of schooling, passed in April 2005) as well as continuing training (the Act of 4 May 2004 on lifelong vocational training and the Local Freedoms and Responsibilities Act of August 2004, providing for responsibilities in area of continuing vocational training to be transferred from the State to the regions) ⁽⁶³⁾.

The practical objectives adopted by the Lisbon European Council have served as reference points for reform of the French education system with the Outline and Enabling Act on the future of schooling, of 23 April 2005.

That law is seen as a tool for raising the quality of education and training to the highest possible level for all, promoting recognition of learning and skills throughout the European Union, and enabling people of all ages to access education and training throughout their lives.

Informed by European thinking on key skills – which has since resulted in adoption of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning – the Outline Act establishes a common body of knowledge and skills to be mastered by the end of compulsory schooling.

⁽⁶¹⁾ www.cncp.fr

⁽⁶²⁾ *Agence Europe Education Formation France (agence 2e2f)* www.europe-education-formation.fr

⁽⁶³⁾ See Annex 5.

Diversification of school courses and options, upgrading of the vocational route and emphasis on a new approach to career guidance all echo commitments within Europe to combat early school leaving.

One of the major challenges for vocational policies is to help people achieve career security. This aim reflects not only the national expectation of lower unemployment rates, especially among more vulnerable members of society (unqualified young people and long-term job-seekers, for example), but also the Lisbon objectives (including full employment, a reduction in periods of unemployment and the validation of skills and experience). The Act of 4 May 2004 on lifelong vocational training thus establishes an individual right to vocational training (the *DIF*) and to professionalisation courses (see Section 5.3.).

11.2. Implementation of the work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems

France is continuing to implement the work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe ⁽⁶⁴⁾ against the background of the Lisbon process.

11.2.1. Improving language teaching (Objective 3.3)

The Outline and Enabling Act on the future of schooling (2005) includes stipulations on language learning as part of a European approach:

- a foreign language is to be taught at all primary schools;
- in May 2006, a plan was implemented to overhaul the teaching of modern languages. It reflected the EU objective that students should master two languages apart from their mother tongue. All pupils are to be taught two languages between ‘year 6’ (first year of secondary level) and ‘year 3’ (fourth year) and those in general and technical streams are to continue learning two languages throughout their final three years at secondary level. In the case of students who opt for the vocational route after ‘year 3’ – working for a *BEP*, *CAP* or *Bac Pro* in a vocational high school or an apprentice training centre – only one foreign language is compulsory (very often English);
- a French Language Diploma (*diplôme d’études en langue française* or *DEL F*) for school pupils, which has been available since 2005 for non-francophone students, draws on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (see insert 11.2.2.).

⁽⁶⁴⁾ *Mise en œuvre du programme de travail Éducation et Formation 2010*. French national reports on the implementation of the 2010 work programme, up to 2008:
ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/nationalreport_en.html

11.2.2. Developing key skills (Objective 1.2)

The Outline and Enabling Act on the future of schooling (2005) defines a common body of knowledge and skills, two aspects of which, namely ‘social and civic skills’ and ‘autonomy and spirit of initiative’ correspond to ‘interpersonal, intercultural and social skills and civic competence’ and ‘entrepreneurship’, two of the eight key skills for lifelong learning recommended by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

The Act provides for a three-yearly evaluation of how the common body of knowledge and skills is being integrated into curricula and how pupils are performing in respect of it throughout their compulsory schooling.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all people with disabilities have access to the best possible education and training, from nursery-school through to university level, until they join the workforce (see Section 5.2.3.).

A ‘priority education’ policy is being implemented throughout the country for pupils who, as a consequence of social (and often cultural) difficulties, face a heightened risk of failure at school: the proportion of children in this category is almost one in five. The key aim is to anticipate and prevent problems, thus improving results.

Schooling for disadvantaged foreign children

A coordinated action plan for disadvantaged foreign children has been implemented jointly by several ministries, and an Interministerial Committee on Integration (Comité interministériel à l'intégration or CII) has been established to draw up an annual plan of measures, some of which supplement the re-launch plan for priority education. The aims are:

- to improve provision and guidance for children newly arrived in France;*
- to develop a system of merit-based grants for pupils who perform particularly well in terms of results or progress in the final year of junior high school;*
- to facilitate access to higher education for children from priority education schools;*
- to facilitate the integration of foreign students – to this end, since 2005, a version of the French Language Diploma (diplôme d'études en langue française or DELF) has been available for non-French children attending State or private schools. Based, like the main DELF on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the diploma is an effective tool for integration in the European context.*

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key skills for lifelong learning, November 2005. See Annex 6.

Between 2005 and 2006 a re-launch plan for priority education was implemented. It lays down a common aim of success for pupils to whom priority education applies, and sets a common level of expectation for all children in the national school system (www.educationprioritaire.education.fr).

At the start of the 2006/07 school year, efforts were focused on 249 ‘Aim to succeed’ networks, comprising the same number of junior high schools and 1 714 primary and nursery schools. In pursuit of the principle of equality of opportunity, classroom staff numbers in these schools were increased through the appointment of 1 000 additional teachers and 3 000 teaching assistants, and each school was assigned a deputy head and school nurse.

11.2.3. Strengthening links with the world of work – improving the quality of vocational education (Objective 3.1)

The establishment of trade high schools (*lycées des métiers*) is a response to both these objectives. Offering a range of technical and vocational training courses from *CAP* to tertiary level in a specific trade or set of trades, these schools cater for all kinds of learners: teenage pupils, apprentices, young people and adults on block release courses or in continuing training. They have been the subject of a quality drive, with a designation procedure based on rigorous criteria (see Section 4.3.1.).

11.2.4. Enabling universal access to ICTs (Objective 1.3)

ICT infrastructure has been developed and various technologies have gradually been introduced as part of new primary and secondary curriculums.

The Informatics and Internet certificate (known as *B2I*) is intended for both school pupils and adults: it certifies that the holder can use ICTs independently and intelligently to read and produce documents, seek information and communicate by e-mail.

France has increased open-learning and distance-learning provision at tertiary level by creating 10 digital campuses – accessible since the start of the 2001/02 academic year to students in initial and continuing education and training – and by supporting the establishment of educational multimedia companies.

A catalogue of distance-learning courses offered by tertiary-level colleges in France includes more than 2 500 entries covering 300 areas of study (see www.formasup.education.fr/). The catalogue is maintained by the *CERIMES* centre, which reports to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. It lists tutored courses, i.e. those run by staff of public higher-education establishments in all the education-authority areas: universities including those which belong to the Inter-university Distance Learning Federation, (*FIED*), colleges and institutes, the National Centre for Distance Learning (*Centre national d’enseignement à distance* or *CNED*) and the National Conservatory of Arts and Trades (*Conservatoire national des arts et métiers* or *CNAM*).

11.2.5. Developing mobility

The development of mobility in higher education has entailed harmonisation of university course structures in Europe on the basis of the common bachelor/master/doctorate three-cycle system, within the framework of the Bologna process which France launched in 1998. The breakdown of tertiary-level qualifications into units (in line with the European Credit Transfer System) is also contributing to convergence in higher education provision in Europe.

France has created tertiary-level vocational diplomas (*licences professionnelles*) (see Section 4.4.2.) and the master's diploma. At the start of the 2006/07 academic year, the reformed bachelor/master/doctorate structure had been put in place in all French universities and the great majority of other tertiary-level colleges. It is to be implemented gradually throughout the higher education system by 2010.

The Leonardo Mobility programme chiefly benefits apprentices. It is little used by people in work or job-seekers.

The Europass mobility scheme has proved increasingly successful in France: 3 835 Europass Mobility records were issued in 2005, 4 441 in 2006 and 8 182 in 2007 (the second highest number in any EU country). France is the first country to have put in place an automated document-authentication and document-issuing system for beneficiaries of Leonardo and Erasmus programmes ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

There are also a number of regional and national schemes in France which promote mobility within Europe.

These schemes work by awarding various types of grants and individual assistance from public funds. Such aids include State-funded bursaries, notably the *compléments Erasmus* available to all Erasmus students, the Ministry of Education 'France mobility awards', available to grant-aided students on the basis of social criteria, and travel grants financed by regional councils.

The grant-awarding system encourages mobility among young people from less-well-off backgrounds and thus helps to democratise mobility for students and apprentices as well as people in or seeking work.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ See detailed Europass Mobility 2007 report on the site of the *Agence Europe Education Formation France*: www.europe-education-formation.fr/europass.php

Annex 1 Population aged 25-64 by level of education (%) in the EU-27, 2007

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6		ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6
EU-27	29	47	23	Lithuania	11	60	29
Belgium	32	36	32	Luxembourg	34	40	26
Bulgaria	23	55	22	Hungary	21	61	18
Czech Republic	9	77	14	Malta	73	14	13
Denmark	24	42	31	Netherlands	27	42	30
Germany	16	60	24	Austria	20	63	18
Estonia	11	56	33	Poland	14	68	19
Ireland	31	34	31	Portugal	73	14	14
Greece	40	38	22	Romania	25	63	12
Spain	50	21	29	Slovenia	18	60	22
France	31	42	27	Slovakia	11	75	14
Italy	48	39	14	Finland	20	45	36
Cyprus	28	39	33	Sweden	15	53	31
Latvia	15	62	23	United Kingdom	25	40	30

ISCED: International standard classification of education.

ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary education, primary education, lower secondary education, including 3c short (preparatory vocational and vocational education of less than two years duration).

ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary education without 3c short, post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, population and social conditions, online database, 2008.

Annex 2 French classification of education levels and the International Standard Classification of Education

National classification of education levels fixed by the National Commission for Statistics on Vocational Education and Social Advancement

Level VI: leaving school after lower secondary education (i.e. after three years at secondary level) or after a one-year pre-vocational course (*CEP*, *CPPN* or *CPA*)

Level V bis: leaving after four years of general secondary education, or after three or four years in a technical stream or leaving a short upper secondary course before the final year

Level V: leaving after the final year of short-cycle vocational training or dropping out of a long upper secondary course before the final year

Level IV: leaving after the final year of a long upper secondary course or dropping out of post-baccalaureate studies before reaching Level III

Level III: leaving with a diploma a course at the baccalaureate + 2 years level (e.g. *DUT*, *BTS*, *DEUG* or college courses in health and social care)

Levels II and I: leaving with a diploma from a second or third-cycle university course, or from a *grande école*.

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)

ISCED 1: primary education

ISCED 2: lower secondary education

ISCED 3: upper secondary education

ISCED 4: post-secondary non-tertiary education (virtually non-existent in France)

ISCED 5: first and second stages of tertiary education

ISCED 6: third stage of tertiary education (research doctorate)

Designed by UNESCO in the early 1970s, the ISCED classification system was revised and approved in 1997, following widespread international consultation. It enables comparable education and training statistics to be produced for all countries and facilitates breakdowns of educational staff, qualifications awarded, and human and financial resources, on the basis of a common scale of educational attainment. It also permits a breakdown of levels of education among the population generally. Studies taken into account for the purposes of the system are those successfully completed and recognised by certification: thus, in France people qualified to ISCED level 3 or higher possess at least a *CAP*, a *BEP* or a baccalaureate.

Source: *L'État de l'école*, p. 76, available online in French at: <http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/05/5/7055.pdf> (also exists in English and Spanish).

Annex 3 Acronyms and abbreviations

<i>ADEC</i>	<i>Action de développement de l'emploi et des compétences</i> Employment and skills development activity
<i>AFPA</i>	<i>Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes</i> National Adult Vocational Training Association
<i>AGEFIPH</i>	<i>Association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion professionnelle des handicapés</i> Vocational Integration of Disabled People: Fund Management Association
<i>ANFH</i>	<i>Association nationale pour la formation hospitalière</i> National Hospitals Training Association
<i>ANI</i>	<i>Accord national interprofessionnel</i> National multi-industry agreement
<i>ANPE</i>	<i>Agence nationale pour l'emploi</i> National Employment Agency
<i>APEC</i>	<i>Association pour l'emploi des cadres</i> Managerial Employment Association
<i>ARE</i>	<i>Allocation d'aide au retour à l'emploi</i> Return-to-work allowance
<i>AREF</i>	<i>Allocation d'aide au retour à l'emploi-formation</i> Return-to-work training allowance
<i>ASSEDIC</i>	<i>Association pour l'emploi dans l'industrie et le commerce</i> Industrial and Commercial Employment Association
B2I	Informatics and Internet certificate
<i>Bac</i>	<i>Baccalauréat</i> Baccalaureate – senior high school diploma
<i>Bac Pro</i>	<i>Baccalauréat professionnel</i> Senior high school diploma - vocational
<i>BEP</i>	<i>Brevet d'études professionnelles</i> Vocational education certificate
<i>BTS</i>	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur</i> Advanced technical diploma

<i>BTSA</i>	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur agricole</i> Advanced agricultural studies diploma
<i>CAFOC</i>	<i>Centre académique de formation continue</i> Education authority's continuing training centre
<i>CAP</i>	<i>Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle</i> Certificate of professional aptitude
<i>CARIF</i>	<i>Centre d'animation et de ressources de l'information sur la formation</i> Training action, resource and information centre
<i>CBC</i>	<i>Congé de bilan de compétences</i> Skills assessment leave
<i>CCREFP</i>	<i>Comité de coordination régional de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle</i> Regional Employment and Vocational Training Coordination Committee
<i>CEFRL</i>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<i>CEP</i>	<i>Contrats d'études prospectives</i> Prospective studies contract
<i>CEREQ</i>	<i>Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications</i> Centre for Qualifications Studies and Research
<i>CESR</i>	<i>Conseil économique et social régional</i> Regional Economic and Social Council
<i>CFA</i>	<i>Centre de formation d'apprentis</i> Apprentice training centre
<i>CIBC</i>	<i>Centre interinstitutionnel de bilan de compétences</i> Interinstitutional Skills-assessment Centre
<i>CIF</i>	<i>Congé individuel de formation</i> Individual training leave
<i>CII</i>	<i>Comité interministériel à l'intégration</i> Interministerial Committee on Integration
<i>CIO</i>	<i>Centre d'information et d'orientation</i> Information and Guidance Centre
<i>CIVIS</i>	<i>Contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale</i> Integration-into-society contract

<i>CNAM</i>	<i>Conservatoire national des arts et métiers</i> National Conservatory of Arts and Trades
<i>CNED</i>	<i>Centre national d'enseignement à distance</i> National Centre for Distance Learning
<i>CNFPT</i>	<i>Centre national de la fonction publique territoriale</i> National Centre for the Management of Territorial Public Service
<i>CNFPTLV</i>	<i>Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie</i> National Council for Lifelong Training
<i>COPIRE</i>	<i>Commission paritaire interprofessionnelle régionale pour l'emploi</i> Regional Joint Interprofessional Employment Committee
<i>CPNE</i>	<i>Commission paritaire nationale pour l'emploi</i> Joint National Employment Committee
<i>CQP</i>	<i>Certificat de qualification professionnelle</i> Vocational qualification certificate
<i>CVAE</i>	<i>Congé de validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> Validation-of-experience leave
<i>DARES</i>	<i>Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques</i> Research, Surveys and Statistics Development Department
<i>DEA</i>	<i>Diplômes d'études approfondies</i> (Postgraduate) further-studies diploma
<i>DELF</i>	<i>Diplôme d'études en langue française</i> French Language Diploma
<i>DEPP</i>	<i>Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance</i> Evaluation, Prospective Analysis and Performance Department
<i>DESS</i>	<i>Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées</i> Specialised tertiary studies diploma
<i>DEUG</i>	<i>Diplôme d'études universitaires générales</i> General university studies diploma
<i>DGEFP</i>	<i>Délégation générale à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle</i> Employment and Vocational Training Department

<i>DGT</i>	<i>Direction générale du travail</i> Labour Department
<i>DIF</i>	<i>Droit individuel à la formation</i> Individual entitlement to training
<i>DUT</i>	<i>Diplôme universitaire de technologie</i> Tertiary technical diploma
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit Transfer System in Vocational Education and Training
<i>EDEC</i>	<i>Engagement de développement de l'emploi et des compétences</i> Commitment to employment and skills development
<i>ENS</i>	<i>École normale supérieure</i> National Teacher-training College
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESC	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
<i>FNDMA</i>	<i>Fonds national de développement et de modernisation de l'apprentissage</i> National Fund for Apprenticeship Development and Modernisation
<i>FONGECIF</i>	<i>Fonds de gestion du congé individuel de formation</i> Individual Training-Leave Management Fund
<i>FUP</i>	<i>Fonds unique de péréquation</i> Single Equalisation Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
<i>GRETA</i>	<i>Groupement d'établissements de l'Éducation nationale</i> Group of establishments (within the public education system)
<i>INSEE</i>	<i>Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques</i> National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
<i>IUFM</i>	<i>Institut universitaire de formation des maîtres</i> Teacher-training college

<i>IUT</i>	<i>Institut universitaire technologique</i> (Tertiary-level) technical institute
<i>LMD</i>	<i>Licence-master-doctorat</i> Bachelor/master/doctorate (three-cycle university system)
<i>MAFPEN</i>	<i>Mission académique pour la formation du personnel de l'Éducation nationale</i> Education-authority unit for the training of public education staff
<i>MEN</i>	<i>Ministère de l'éducation nationale</i> Ministry of Education
<i>OCTA</i>	<i>Organisme collecteur de la taxe d'apprentissage</i> Apprenticeship-Charge Collecting Organisation
<i>OPACIF</i>	<i>Organisme paritaire de gestion du congé individuel de formation</i> Joint Individual Training-Leave Management Body
<i>OPCA</i>	<i>Organisme paritaire collecteur agréé</i> Accredited Joint Contribution-Collecting Body
<i>OREF</i>	<i>Observatoire régional de l'emploi et de la formation</i> Regional Employment and Training Observatory
<i>PAIO</i>	<i>Permanence d'accueil, d'information et d'orientation</i> Enquiry/information/guidance point
<i>PPAE</i>	<i>Projet personnalisé d'accès à l'emploi</i> Personalised access-to-work plan
<i>RNCP</i>	<i>Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles</i> National Vocational Certification Register
<i>UNEDIC</i>	<i>Union nationale pour l'emploi dans l'industrie et le commerce</i> National Union for Employment in Industry and Commerce
<i>VAE</i>	<i>Validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> Validation of experience

Annex 4 Glossary

Académie: Ministry of Education administrative division [translated here as ‘education authority’]. One *académie* will typically cover one or more *départements* [counties]. Since the passing of Order 96-1141 of 26 December 1996, France has had 30 *académies* (*Bulletin officiel de l'Éducation nationale*, No 3, 16 January 1997).

Apprentice master: A term specific to the apprenticeship system, designating the person responsible for an apprentice’s practical training. The apprentice master – working effectively as a mentor, in conjunction with an apprentice training centre – helps the apprentice to acquire the necessary skills for a desired form of certification (see introduction to Chapter 6).

Apprenticeship: Block-release system of initial training for young workers aged between 16 and 25, enabling them to obtain a vocational qualification recognised by the award of a vocational or technical diploma, an engineering certificate or another certificate listed in the National Vocational Certification Register. Apprenticeship entails a mix of theory-based learning in an apprentice training centre and job experience with an employer.

Baccalaureate: Certification obtainable at the end of secondary schooling (i.e. on leaving senior high school). There are three types of baccalaureate: general, technical and vocational (see Figure 4). Obtaining this certification enables students to access higher education. Only the vocational baccalaureate is directly useful for entry to the labour market. In 2007, 621 532 candidates sat the examination and the pass rate was 83.3 % (which broke down as 87.6 % in general subjects; 79.5 % in technical subjects; and 77.9 % in vocational subjects). Sixty-five percent of young people in that age group thus possess a baccalaureate.

Certification: A process which includes verifying that a person has mastered a body of vocational skills and knowledge, as well as the result of the verification. The act of certification is an assessment of the person’s competence to do a given job. The result is the diploma, certificate or other vocational qualification obtained.

Common body of knowledge and skills: A set of cultural and civic reference points for the content of compulsory education, setting out the seven skills that pupils need to master by the end of their compulsory schooling. The common body of knowledge and skills is the major innovation of the Outline and Enabling Act on the Future of Schooling, of 23 April 2005.

DIF (*Droit individuel à la formation* or ‘individual training entitlement’): A new form of access to training, introduced as part of a reform package in 2004, in addition to the training plan and the individual training-leave scheme. It is a joint training initiative negotiated between an employee and an employer. Training, for which either pay or an allowance is available, may take place either within or outside working hours.

Diplomas and certificates: Forms of certification verifying that a person is capable of exercising a specific occupation with a given level of responsibility and autonomy. They constitute an assurance that the holder possesses the required knowledge and skills.

They are written documents which entitle the holders to access certain jobs or training courses, to enter certain competitive examinations or to pursue their studies.

Illiteracy: The concept of an individual's difficulty with reading and writing. Most people who are illiterate have undergone previous instruction in reading and writing but have either failed to master, or have lost, the skills. A person capable of identifying the words in text but incapable of grasping the meaning will be classified as illiterate.

Mentor: A skilled professional who passes on his or her knowledge and expertise to a young person or colleague in training, ensuring that the training is progressing properly (see introduction to Chapter 6).

Professionalisation: A set of measures intended to structure a vocational activity or improve the work performance of an individual or an organisation. There are various approaches to professionalisation, which is deemed an essential part of building a professional identity.

Professionalisation contract (*Contrat de professionnalisation*): This contract, for young people aged 16-25 and job-seekers aged 26-plus, enables them to obtain a vocational qualification through block-release training with pay, over 6-12 months, and helps them to find or return to work.

Qualification: Recognition of mastery of the skills required to exercise a trade or occupy a job.

Recognition may be afforded on an individual basis, with an assessment procedure to verify that the candidate possesses all the knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills necessary for the post he or she seeks. The assessment may take place at the end of a continuing vocational training course or as part of a validation-of-experience procedure.

Qualification may be acknowledged by the delivery of vocational certification in the form of a diploma or other vocational certificate. Such recognition has a value on the labour market, which is assured if the particular form of certification is included in the National Vocational Certification Register.

Qualification may also be recognised collectively. In this case, various levels of qualification are classified in table form. The table will typically be associated with a collective agreement in a particular vocational occupational sector. This form of recognition has social value, applying in all the companies within a given sector and, in some cases, across other sectors.

Skills: A combination of aptitude, knowledge and expertise, which an individual deploys in the practical performance of an activity, particularly a vocational one. In a working environment, distinctions are drawn between the core technical skills of a specific trade, cross-cutting skills useful in different activities, and interpersonal or managerial skills.

Social partners: Organisations (including trade unions) that represent employers or workers. These organisations, which defend different interests, become social partners when, for example, they negotiate collective agreements or manage joint organisations (*ASSEDICs*, *OPCAs*, etc.).

Training bodies: Public or private-sector agencies that deliver training. They may be involved in initial training or apprenticeship, in finding jobs for young people or in continuing vocational training.

VAE (*Validation des acquis de l'expérience* or validation of experience): A scheme whereby any individual (whether in a job or seeking work, self-employed or in public employment) can have his or her experience validated in order to obtain vocational certification (in the form of a diploma or other qualification).

Vocational guidance: A range of activities and services designed to help people of all ages and all career stages to take informed, realistic decisions about education, training and work. Vocational guidance optimises people's management of their personal and working lives. It is seen nowadays as an ongoing process to support people throughout their lives as they make and implement personal and career plans. It helps them to clarify their aspirations and put their skills to use.

Vocational interview: The vocational interview, introduced by the social partners in 2003, is an opportunity for a worker to discuss career ambitions and training needs with his or her employer. The interviews take place every two years.

Annex 5 Legislative references

All the legal references can be consulted on the French Official Journals site: www.legifrance.gouv.fr

Act of 13 February 2008 on reforming the organisation of the public employment service.

Act of 10 August 2007 on universities' freedoms and responsibilities.

Act of 2 February 2007 on modernisation of the public sector.

Act of 23 March 2006 on wage equality between women and men. To accelerate women's and girls' access to vocational training and apprenticeship, this Act encourages both sides of industry to promote a gender mix in the sectors concerned.

Outline and Enabling Act of 23 April 2005 on the future of schooling. This Act implements a number of priorities with a view to raising levels of education among young people in France, namely: to ensure that all pupils succeed; to improve the situation with regard to language teaching; to do more to ensure equality of opportunity; and to promote young people's integration into work and employment.

Act of 11 February 2005 promoting equality of entitlement and opportunity, participation and citizenship for people with disabilities. This Act reinforces the rights of people with disabilities, particularly in relation to access to schooling and vocational training.

Enabling Act of 18 January 2005 promoting social cohesion. This Act reforms the system of collecting apprenticeship charges and allocating the monies received, as well as reforming apprenticeship itself (particularly the status of the apprentice).

Act of 13 August 2004 on local freedoms and responsibilities. This Act provides for transfers of responsibility in the field of continuing vocational training from the State to the regions.

Act of 4 May 2004 on lifelong vocational training. This Act establishes an individual right to training, as well as the professionalisation contract and the professionalisation courses; it also requires the various sectors of industry and commerce to set up national, regional or local observatories to anticipate trends in trades and qualifications.

Act of 27 February 2002 on devolved democracy. This Act provides for transfers of responsibility in the field of apprenticeship from the State to the regions.

Act of 17 January 2002, known as the Social Modernisation Act, and containing a range of provisions on vocational training. It establishes an individual entitlement to validation of experience (VAE), with the aim of enabling all labour force participants to access the range of existing qualifications, thus facilitating the use of training routes, making experience evident and transferable and encouraging people to better themselves.

Five-yearly Act of 20 December 1993 on work, employment and vocational training.

Act of 20 July 1992 on the validation of vocational skills and experience for purposes of issuing diplomas, which contains a range of provisions on public education.

Act of 26 January 1984, known as the Savary Act, on higher education.

Decentralisation Act of 7 January 1983 on the division of responsibilities among the municipalities, *départements* and regions of the State.

Decentralisation Act of 2 March 1982 on the rights and freedoms of municipalities, *départements* and regions.

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Annex 7 Main organisations

Ministries

Ministère de l'agriculture et de la pêche

[Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries]

78, rue de Varenne

FR-75349 Paris SP

Tel.: (33) 1 49 55 49 55

www.agriculture.gouv.fr

Ministère de l'économie, de l'industrie et de l'emploi

[Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Employment]

139, rue de Bercy

FR-75572 Paris

Tel.: (33) 1 40 04 04 04

www.minefe.gouv.fr

Ministère de l'éducation nationale

[Ministry of Education]

110, rue de Grenelle

FR-75007 Paris Cedex

Tel.: (33) 1 49 55 10 10

www.education.gouv.fr

Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche

[Ministry of Higher Education and Research]

21, rue Descartes

FR-75005 Paris

Tel.: (33) 1 55 55 10 10

www.recherche.gouv.fr

Délégation générale à l'emploi et à la formation

professionnelle (DGEFP) [Department of

Employment and Vocational Training]

7, square Max-Hymans

FR-75741 Paris Cedex 15

Tel.: (33) 1 44 38 38 38

www.travail.gouv.fr

Trade association networks

Association des chambres françaises de

commerce et d'industrie [Association of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry] (provides information on all colleges run by its network of chambers of commerce and industry)

46, avenue de la Grande Armée

FR-75017 Paris

Tel.: (33) 1.40.69.37.00

Fax: (33) 1.47.20.61.28

www.acfci.cci.fr

Assemblée permanente des chambres

d'agriculture (APCA) [Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Agriculture] (provides information about training for work in agriculture)

9, avenue George V

FR-75008 Paris

Tel.: (33) 1 53 57 10 10

Fax: (33) 1 53 57 10 05

paris.apca.chambagri.fr/apca/default.htm

Assemblée permanente des chambres des métiers [Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Trades and Crafts (provides information about training for craft-based jobs)

12, avenue Marceau
FR-75008 Paris
Tel.: (33) 1.44.43.10.00
www.apcm.com

Public training establishments and training bodies

Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes (AFPA) [National Adult Vocational Training Association] (offers certified vocational courses – 400 qualifications)

13, place du Général de Gaulle
FR-93108-Montreuil Cedex
Tel.: (33) 1.48.70.50.00
www.afpa.fr

Centre national d'enseignement à distance (CNED) [National Centre for Distance Learning]
BP 60200 - 86980
Futuroscope Chasseneuil Cedex
Tel.: (33) 5 49 49 94 94
www.cned.fr

Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM) [National Conservatory of Arts and Trades] (public higher-education college offering 500 courses leading to diplomas or industrial and other third-level qualifications)
292, rue Saint-Martin
FR-75003 Paris
Tel.: (33) 1 40 27 23 30
www.cnam.fr

Groupement d'établissements de l'Éducation nationale (GRETA) [Group of establishments within the public education system] (prepares students for the 700 technical and vocational diplomas awarded by the Ministry of Education)
www.eduscol.education.fr

Enquiry, advice and information services

Centre de développement de l'information sur la formation professionnelle (Centre INFFO) [Centre for the development of vocational training information]
4, avenue du Stade de France
FR-93218 Saint-Denis-La Plaine Cedex
Tel.: (33) 1 55 93 91 91
www.centre-inffo.fr

Centres régionaux d'animation et de ressources d'information sur la formation (CARIF) [Regional training action, resource and information centres]
www.intercarif.org

Office national d'information sur les enseignements et les professions (ONISEP)
[National Office for Information on Education, Training and Trades]
12, mail Barthélémy Thimonnier
FR-77437 Marne la Vallée Cedex 2
Tel.: (33) 1 64 80 35 00
www.onisep.fr

National portal for guidance on initial and continuing training
www.orientation-formation.fr

The social partners (the main representative organisations recognised at national and inter-professional level)

1. Employers' organisations

Confédération générale des petites et moyennes entreprises (CGPME) [General Confederation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises]
10, Terrasse Bellini
FR-92806 Puteaux Cedex
Tel.: (33) 1 47 62 73 73
www.cgpme.org

Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles (FNSEA) [National Federation of Farmers' Unions]
11, rue de La Baume
FR-75008 Paris
Tel.: (33) 1 53 83 47 47
www.fnsea.fr

MEDEF (mouvement des entreprises de France) [French Business Confederation]
55, avenue Bosquet
FR-75330 Paris Cedex 07
Tel.: (33) 1 53 59 19 19
www.medef.fr

Union professionnelle artisanale (UPA) [Professional Crafts Union]
53, rue Ampère
FR-75017 Paris
Tel.: (33) 1 47 63 31 31
www.upa.fr

2. Trade-union organisations

Confédération française de l'encadrement – Confédération générale des cadres (CFE-CGC) [French Management Confederation – General Confederation of Management Staff]
59, rue du Rocher
FR-75008 Paris
Tel.: (33) 1 55 30 12 12
www.cfecgc.org

Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT) [French Democratic Labour Confederation]
4, boulevard de la Villette
FR-75019 Paris
<https://www.cfdt.fr>

Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens (CFTC) [French Confederation of Christian Workers]
13, rue des Écluses-St-Martin
FR-75483 Paris Cedex 10
Tel.: (33) 1 44 52 49 00
www.cftc.fr

Confédération générale du travail (CGT)
[General Labour Confederation]
263, rue de Paris
FR-93516 Montreuil Cedex
Tel.: (33) 1 48 18 80 00
www.cgt.fr

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Vocational education and training in France

Short description

Lifelong education and training have traditionally been one of France's main priorities and the continuing vocational training system introduced in the early 1970s was in fact based on existing adult education provision.

Vocational training is now governed by well established principles, with the regions playing a central role in both initial and continuing vocational training. This devolved decision-making ensures that vocational training matches as closely as possible the realities and requirements of both the economy and the individual. The role played by both sides of industry is another special feature of the French system: involved in both initial and continuing training, labour and management are key players in vocational training.

Although diplomas still occupy an important place in the education and training system, vocational training is moving towards a skills-based qualification system. The vocational training contract, an increasingly successful new way for job-seekers, young and old, to find work, is an example.

Looking at the system as a whole, this report examines the main mechanisms and innovative practices used in vocational training.



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