

I am before you to shortly present the “French national plan for a mobilization of the industries and the territories toward a development of jobs and skills in a green economy”, that began at the end of last year and is carried on by the French ministry of ecology, energy, sustainable development, sea, climate change negotiations and eco technologies.

The consultant GHK worked for CEDEFOP on a survey about the French situation. I read the summary of this survey and it is excellent ; so you can refer to it if you notice a lack in my presentation.

I am glad to see, in ILO’s and CEDEFOP’s whole study, that France is supposed to be on the top of the list. We now have to accomplish what we wrote we would !

The origins

According to the French statistics there were about 400 000 jobs in the green field in France in 2008 ; the annual growth rate of these jobs is about 4,2%, to be compared with the global average rate of one percent.

Most of these jobs are now mature like those in water purification or waste treatment.

Others are recent or face a rapid increase in investments like energy performance in buildings or renewables. The educational and training system is not always ready to cope with this demand of skilled workers and professionals often have to take the lead during a period of adaptation.

A massive growth rate in green jobs would of course be warmly welcomed by governments and populations because it could be the indication that our economies have turned into green economies and reached the goal of green growth.

For these two reasons : needs of skilled workers and “needs of good news”, the theme of green jobs has been dealt deeper for 3 – 5 years by the public and private economic, labor, educational, training and employment services as by trade unions, enterprise associations or nongovernmental organizations.

There is also a third reason for our governmental mobilization, and the trade unions were often the first to make the move (see European trade union confederation and Syndex : “Climate change and employment on the horizon of 2030” issued in February 2007) : a green economy is liable to have also negative consequences for workers, enterprises and industries, at least during the transition period. That means that jobs could be lost, industries could be localized in other countries, workers could face either retraining programs or ... long term unemployment. In the worst scenarios French economy could fail in the green transition and loose competitiveness, for example if the working population’s skills were not adapted to the new challenges and technologies.

France’s main difficulty was that everyone was beginning to think, anticipate changes and design new diplomas or training plans on his side and the “Grenelle de l’environnement” process was accelerating the tendency.

The Plan

The secretary of State for the social concerns of sustainable development, Valérie Létard, who is placed beside the ministry of ecology, invited early October 2009 the representatives of the major local, professional, nongovernmental, labor and State organizations to work together at an agreed-upon transition.

We choose to study eleven fields, representing half of the working population, that we suppose will have to face the major changes in the coming years (or have begun to face them) :

- Agriculture and Forest
- Cars
- Building
- Water, wastewater, waste and air
- Electric construction and network

- Renewables
- Refining, biofuel and green chemistry
- Tourism
- Transportation
- Professions of the sea and the seaside
- Biodiversity and ecologic services provided by nature

We chose great experts or great professors of these fields, sometimes both, to conduct the studies, and they attracted a large network of very competent persons also.

For each of these fields we studied the gross evolutions in skills and job numbers and the way to manage the probable transitions. The first conclusions are already available. Their results can be summarized so :

- No massive green and greened jobs creations to await
- But a progressive and massive change in professional attitudes and skills, not only in new technologies but in all fields (f.e. green driving, green cleaning, bio cooking – industrial eco-design, corporate eco-management, etc.)
- For some fields like renewable or building the skilled professionals are already non-sufficient, the professors and trainers also
- And of course the reminder that a job in a green economy is supposed to be a GOOD job, which relates to the larger question of corporate social responsibility.

Now we have to implement massive evolutions in education, vocational training, policies for job-seekers, communication toward enterprises management and other stakeholders, etc.

We also want to focus more on educational, training and labor market instruments that will allow workers to skip from a job to another more easily, especially thanks to common, transverse skills that would be taught together. Examples : cross-skills in electric, electronic, building energy performance, low carbon vehicles fields ; in sea and seashore traditional activities, tourism, wind and tide energies, ship wrecks treatment...

Since the beginning of the process we notice a great and unexpected interest from all the stakeholders. My interpretation is that the challenges we face are new and scary and force leaders and experts to adopt a modest attitude based on mutual confidence : no one has the solution but everyone has a part on it. But at this very moment I must admit we fear an increase in wait-and-see attitudes because of public spending crunches and the growing anxiety in front of the deepening financial and economic crisis and the uncertainty of French, European and world scenarios toward a green economy.

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