



## VET in France

France has a long tradition in vocational education and training (VET); the foundations of continuing VET were laid in the early 1970s. Initial VET is mainly regulated by the Ministries of Education and Higher Education. Different ministries develop VET qualifications and certificates valid nationally. Vocational training for adults is under the remit of the Ministry of Labour. *France compétences* (2019) is the national public institution implementing vocational training and apprenticeship policies.

The vocational training system reform (2018) aims to improve VET attractiveness and responsiveness to the labour market by restructuring its governance, funding mechanisms, and apprenticeship provision.

### Initial VET (IVET)

#### VET at upper secondary level

On leaving lower secondary school, generally at age 15, students are steered towards three main upper secondary paths (*lycée*):

- general and technological (ISCED 344) three-year programmes leading to an EQF level 4 general or technological baccalaureate, providing access to tertiary education. The first year is common to both paths, with technological studies being vocationally oriented in the last two years;
- a vocational programme (ISCED 354) leading to a vocational baccalaureate (EQF level 4) in three years or a professional skills certificate (EQF level 3 - CAP) in two years. Both qualifications provide direct access to employment, and the training always includes in-company internship. Access to tertiary-level VET programmes in related fields is also possible.

Upper secondary education is governed and financed largely by the Ministry of Education and partly by other ministries (including agriculture and industry).

#### VET at tertiary level

The *lycée*-based higher technician curricula provide a two-year programme leading to the higher technician certificate (BTS, EQF level 5). Universities offer a two-year technological university diploma (DUT, EQF level 5) designed for entry into the labour market. Students can also decide, on completion, to go on to a vocational bachelor programme to acquire a vocational qualification (EQF level 6) and progress to master level (EQF level 7). Higher education provides general courses and technical and vocational courses within universities and public or private higher colleges of excellence (*grandes écoles*).

#### Apprenticeship

This pathway can lead to all vocational certifications registered in the national directory of professional qualifications; it includes all secondary or higher education certifications as well as vocational qualification certificates (CQP), created by the professional branches. IVET learners on an apprenticeship contract (from six months to three years) are considered employees and receive a salary. The course takes place both in the workplace and in an apprentice training centre (CFA). The system is mainly governed by the State (legislation) and the social partners (management

of the CFAs). Its funding comes from the State, which exempts enterprises from employer contributions for the amount of each apprentice salary, and from companies (apprenticeship tax), sometimes from regional councils (contribution to CFA funding for land-use planning and economic development needs).

### Continuing VET (CVET)

CVET applies to those entering the world of work or already in work, both young and adults. It aims to promote professional (re-)integration; maintaining people in work; and upskilling. The training market is open.

Access and funding procedures for courses vary according to individual status: jobseekers or people in employment (private sector employees, public servants, self-employed workers).

Training of jobseekers is managed by the regions, and partly by the national agency for employment. Employers (private or public) and the social partners are responsible for training people in employment.

## Distinctive features of VET

Right to education. The State ensures the principles of equal opportunities and the right to education; public education is free of charge and secular.

#### Role of the social partners

The social partners have an essential role in regulatory, political and financial aspects of lifelong learning programmes. They manage different bodies that fund apprenticeship and vocational training schemes for small companies, as well as the unemployment insurance system for job-seekers.

#### Obligation to contribute financially to CVET

Compulsory contributions are allocated to a particular purpose: to encourage companies to train their staff. The rate is set by law, with some professional branches applying rates above the legal minimum.

#### Recognition of 'individual rights' to training

The policy intention is to promote social progress and reduce inequalities in access to training. The personal training account (CPF) scheme, accessible to all (employed and unemployed), gives every individual a credit of EUR 500 to 800 per year (throughout professional life, up to EUR 5 000 to 8 000 in total) to buy (through a secure personal space) training sessions in the CPF dedicated online platform.

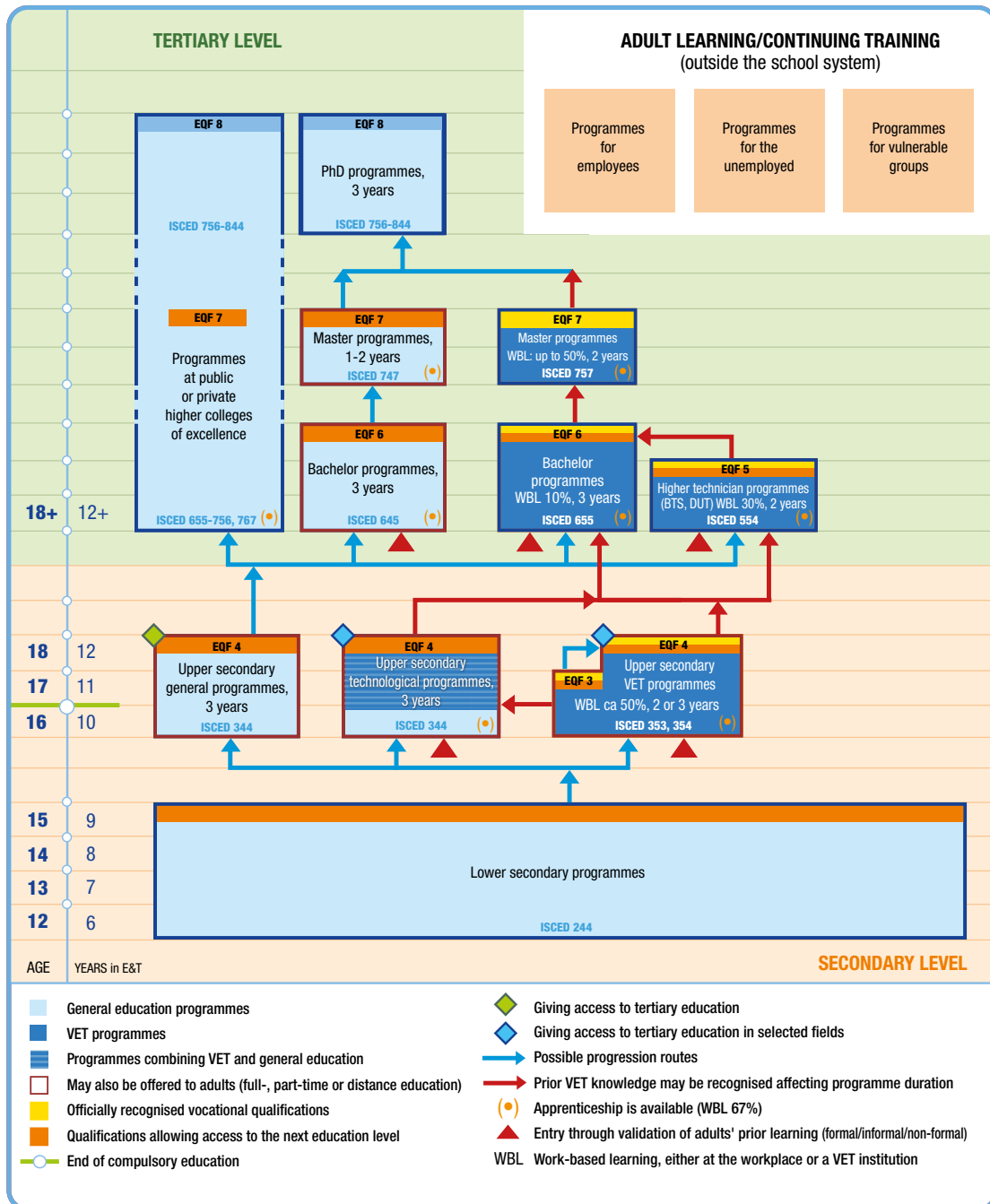
#### Decentralisation / leadership role of regions

Regions have full authority over vocational training (except apprenticeship), career advice and coordinating job support policies: they develop training policies adapted to their needs; define and manage territorial public policies and can articulate their strategies on VET and economic developments.

## Challenges and policy responses

### Promoting youth education and training

To support the at-risk young in gaining a qualification, a training obligation for all those aged 16 to 18 is in place as of 2020-21.



NB: ISCED-P 2011. The French qualification framework is not linked to European qualifications framework levels 1 and 2.  
 Source: Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2020.

This obligation can be met by several means: schooling, apprenticeship, continuing training courses, civic service, support for social and professional integration.

**System responsiveness to training needs**

Driven during the 2020 pandemic lockdown, pedagogical continuity has been ensured both for initial and continuing training, and apprenticeships. IVET and CVET providers have created and continue to develop digital learning offer.

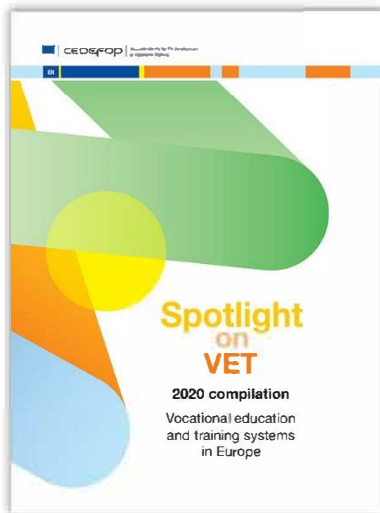
**Revitalising the economy**

The 2020 *Plan de relance* aims to bring the economy to pre-crisis levels by 2022. Youth employment is a major challenge:

nearly EUR 15 billion is for 750 000 new entrants to the labour market. Measures foreseen include recruitment aids, support for sustainable integration into the workplace and support for training (200 000 additional training places on ecological and digital transition jobs).

**Upskilling low-qualified young people and the unemployed**

The Investment in skills plan (PIC) aims at training and supporting the access to employment of one million young people and one million jobseekers. It is funded up to EUR 15 billion for the period 2017-22. The plan links skills needs, analysis and innovation with the provision of new training paths.



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