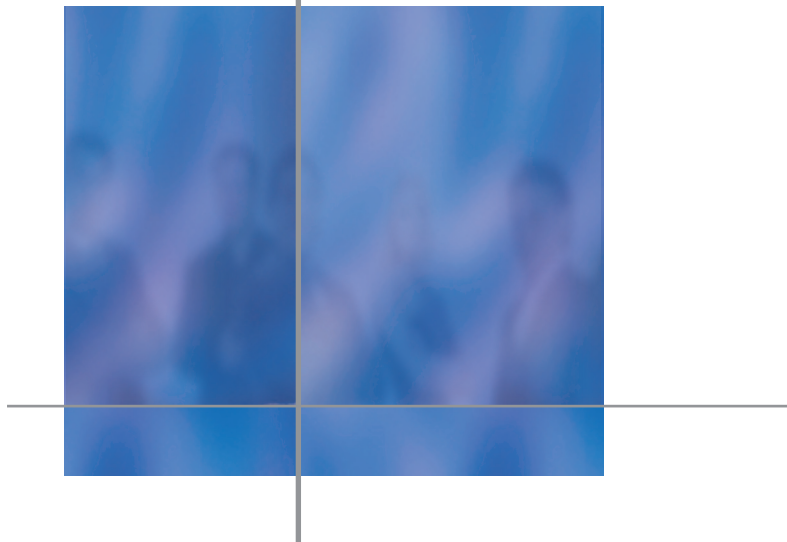


A bridge to the future

European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10

National policy report – France



This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. ReferNet is a European network of national networks providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. The report has been produced by ReferNet France as a contribution to Cedefop's fourth policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

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Cedefop is the initiator of this report and provided the template which is common for all EU member states.

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Preface



The «Copenhagen process» was launched as the contribution of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to the challenges identified in the Lisbon-Agenda. In the Copenhagen Declaration, approved on 30 November 2002, the ministers responsible for VET in 31 European countries (EU Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries), the European social partners and the European Commission agreed on enhanced European cooperation in VET.

This Policy Report forms part of the Cedefop ReferNet 2010 work programme. It provides information on France's progress in VET towards EU policy goals within the framework of the Copenhagen process and according to the policy priorities defined in the Maastricht Communiqué (2004), the Helsinki Communiqué (2006) and the Bordeaux Communiqué (2008). It considers measures taken in the context of the Education and Training 2010 programme since the Copenhagen Declaration. The report provides national examples/evidence under the different VET themes

The national ReferNet policy reports will be one of the main sources Cedefop will use to produce the 2010 review of the Copenhagen Process, in line with its mandate. They will feed into an analysis of policy progress which Cedefop will prepare for the informal meeting of Education Ministers to be held during the Belgium Presidency at Bruges on December 2010 as well as into a policy progress report which Cedefop will publish presumably in spring 2011.

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Socioeconomic challenges and priorities for future VET policy development

In 2008, the Bordeaux communiqué emphasised the relevance of global challenges for education and training and underlined the need for a strategic vision for European VET policies.

Main challenges include:

- globalisation (competition, global trade and foreign investments, social and economic permeability, interdependent financial markets, (intercultural) environments, offshore production);
- demographic change and migration;
- technological change.

VET policies need to take account of these challenges to ensure that VET systems are flexible enough to react and transform challenges into opportunities.

Early responses to these challenges with appropriate policies for education and training will provide a major contribution to securing proper employment for people and their full participation in society. Having the right skills for future labour market needs will help social inclusion as well as competitiveness of our economies.

The need for sustainable development and measures to mitigate climate change has become more urgent. Policy-makers by and large acknowledge the need for greener economies, which will provide new jobs, but which will also require new and changing skills.

1.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

None.

1.2 Impact of technological progress on VET

The entire field of training is being impacted by technological progress. This impact is reflected in training programmes and training techniques as well as by the trainers implementing these programmes.

Firstly, technological progress affects the vocational training programmes in high schools which must integrate all the developments transforming the trades and professions.

Teachers, too, are affected since they must implement

these programmes and adapt their teaching methods to new teaching environments such as for example Digital work spaces. In order to demonstrate that teaching staff have a good command of technological progress an ICT teacher's certificate (C2i – Certificat informatique et internet), certifying that they have the necessary skills for teaching within the context of the new technologies of information and communication has been created.

In vocational training in schools the use of new technologies is continuing to grow.

Several initiatives are underway to ensure this is achieved, to integrate research findings and to assist with the pedagogical changes brought about by new technologies, in particular those linked to priority projects:

- infrastructure and services,
- projects designed to bring them to teachers' attention and provide motivation by creating resource banks and disseminating usage examples by underlining their pedagogical interest,
- analysing the impact of new technologies on students' activities, the teaching group and the new relationship between students and teachers.

E.g. The digital work spaces (ENT – Espaces numériques de travail) and regional digital universities (UNR – Universités numériques en région).

These programmes stem from the Ministry of Education. They were launched in May 2003.

The goal is to generalise the use of digital work spaces for students and higher education establishment staff at regional level, and provide access for all students to digital services.

Funding is provided by the state, the universities and the regional councils.

Since 2003, a total of 11 projects have been chosen covering 67 establishments and 860,000 students.

Among the results of these programmes, the most visible outcomes are:

- A speeding-up of the deployment of wireless networks on higher education campuses,
- The provision to students of lap-top computers on loan or hire,
- The roll-out of Digital work environments in the universities.

For adult vocational training, the impact that technology is having can be seen above all in learning methods, in particular through open and remote training (FOAD – Formation ouverte et à distance) and e-learning.

This new situation means training providers are developing new skills, by analysing from a new angle their traditional methods of imparting knowledge.

Distance learning had been made easier allowing an increase in the numbers of trainees, travelling to be avoided by students and trainers alike as well as new teaching modules to be offered. The trainer or teacher becomes a guide, facilitator or tutor.

1.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

In 2007, France numbered 63.5 million inhabitants.

France is the European country with the highest fertility rate: two children per woman in 2007 compared to a European average of 1.5. However a fertility rate of 13 per 1000 inhabitants, as well as migratory flows, are not enough to stem the ageing of the population.

The number of elderly people, which increased by 3 million between 1970 and 2000, will grow to over 7 million by 2030. At the same time, France has one of the lowest proportions of the 55-64 age groups in work in the European Union: 37.3% in 2006. However, the so-called Lisbon strategy, defined in 2000 and reaffirmed at the Stockholm European Council meeting of March 2001 sets an ambitious aim: achieving an employment rate for the 55-64 year old age group of 50% by 2010.

Two consequences result from this for training:

- workers must be offered training programmes to maintain their skills at the necessary level for companies to remain competitive.
- tutoring must be developed so that skills are not lost.

The improvement in the employment rate of older workers is of major importance for France in terms of social cohesion and for the viability of its social protection systems. The public authorities and social partners have already done much work in this direction: a tightening up of the possibility of taking early retirement in the public sector, pensions reform in 2003 and a 2005-2009 health at work plan.

Since the 2009 social security finance act, a 1% penalty has been created on the wage bill for companies employing 50 or more people or belonging to a group of 50 or more employees that have not made an agreement or drawn up an action plan to promote the employment of older workers.

The agreements or action plans whose duration must be no longer than three years, will tackle at least three of the following areas:

- the recruitment of older workers into the company,
- forward-planning for professional career development,
- an improvement in working conditions and the prevention of arduous situations,
- skills development, qualifications and access to training,
- arrangements for ends of careers and a transition between working and retirement,
- the passing on of knowledge and skills and the development of tutoring.

The Law of 24th November 2009 on vocational training also includes several sections aimed directly at older workers:

- The creation of a second part of career interview at 45 years old to enable the worker to plan ahead for the second part of their working life.
- The setting up of financial incentives when tutors are older workers e.g. as part of work-study contracts.

E.g. National action plan for employment

In order to meet the older worker employment challenge, in 2006, the public authorities adopted a five-year national action plan for employment. The primary aim of this plan is to increase the rate of employment of 55-64 year-olds by around 2 per cent per year over the 2006-2010 period.

Through this action plan, the State intends to implement all the points of progress envisaged by the social partners and provide increased resources for the return to employment of older workers.

This plan is structured around five objectives arranged into thirty-one concrete measures to fight against age-linked discrimination:

- changing socio-cultural representations;
- promoting the maintenance in employment of older workers;
- promoting the return to employment of older workers;
- making arrangements for the ends of careers;
- ensuring long-term tripartite monitoring.

It is too early yet to assess this plan. However, it seems that employers remain little inclined to hire and train older workers. Companies have not responded well to the fixed-term older workers' contract launched in 2006.

Opening up professionalisation contracts to job seekers and workers' mid-career professionalisation periods, set out in the inter-professional agreement of 5th December 2003, shows a disappointing outcome: fewer than 2% of the professionalisation contracts in 2006 were for job seekers aged over 45 and the professionalisation period in 2006 only benefited 27% of workers aged 45 and over.

In respect of immigration, the State funds training as part of the welcome given to foreign workers (civic training, French language training etc).

The national agency for social cohesion and equal opportunities (Acsé – Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances), created by the equal opportunities law of 2006, organises initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of immigrant populations and those from the immigrant population residing in France.

E.g. The reception and integration contract

The reception and integration contract (CAI – Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration) has been mandatory since 1st January 2007 for all new arrivals wishing to settle in France permanently. Free of charge, this one-year contract enables its beneficiaries to receive certain civic and language training. It is presented to migrants by Ofii (the French immigration and integration office – Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration) at a collective information session.

The purpose of the language training is to enable the people taking the course to reach the level of spoken and written language required to pass the initial French language diploma (Dilf – Diplôme initial de langue française).

The maximum duration of the training course is, in principle, four hundred hours and begins as far as possible within thirty days of the signing of the CAI (Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration).

The cost of training is fully paid for by the State (including the teaching documents).

1.4 Impact of a 'greening economy' on VET

The greening of the economy is having several impacts on training. The ability of trainers to get training in new techniques is of great importance so that they can teach environmental standards. The question of trainers' training is therefore essential. In order to ensure their training, several problems must be dealt with:

- The updating of the training reference documents to ensure that training content adapts to include sustainable development;
- The adaptation of training content: programmes, possible creation of new diplomas, the training of teachers and trainers, the development of school and continuing vocational training to the green professions etc.
- The strengthening of the link with the employment market which must identify the sectors and professions impacted by the "greening" of the economy.
- The financing of some important and innovative projects.

In 2007, the Government launched a national consultation on environmental issues bringing together the State and representatives of civil society. The State, local authorities, employers' and workers' representatives and NGOs met to work out a road map to promote ecology, and sustainable development and urban planning.

In 2009, the Minister for sustainable development launched an initiative on the "green growth" professions which, at the end of January 2010, resulted in a national conference and the drafting of an Action plan, three parts of which include vocational training:

- Setting up a national strategy

A national watchdog has been created under the authority of the Ministry of Ecology.

An awareness campaign for career and training guidance professionals will be carried out in 2010.

The quality of school and continuing vocational training should be strengthened by the award of an official label.

Training modules for the acquisition of a common core of skills for different professionals should also be created.

The training of teachers and trainers will be a priority.

- The mobilisation of the sectors and trades

Adjusting workers' skills will be sought through a generalisation of some existing training courses (e.g. in the building sector for energy saving or sustainable development).

Employees' qualification as well as their retraining where necessary will be facilitated within the framework of measures of the "Development of Employment and Skills Commitment" type (Edec – Engagement de développement des emplois et des compétences), funded by the State (Ministry of Employment). The Edec agreements are aimed at industrial sectors such as for example the construction industry, car makers, waste processing and electricity.

Job seekers will be better informed of the opportunities offered by the green growth professions and work-study training courses for young people in these sectors will be encouraged.

- The mobilisation of the regions

The State has offered to sign an agreement with interested regions for a general regional approach involving all the stakeholders: the State, the regions, joint commissions for collective training (OPCA – Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés), trades, companies, the social partners, associations, training and education bodies etc. This agreement will include several tools which are common to all the regions:

- regional watchdogs of green growth professions operating in a network with the national watchdog,
- regional diagnoses of companies' requirements,
- an information resources and advice centre for professionals.

The State will provide funding as well as a support fund for innovative projects.

E.g. The FEEBat Programme

The aim of the FEEBat programme (Energy saving training for the construction industry – Formation aux économies d'énergie dans le bâtiment) is to provide information and training for professionals for building companies working in the energy refurbishment of existing buildings.

This programme was set up as part of a partnership between the State- the ministry of ecology, energy, sustainable development and sea and professionals, such as for example EDF.

This training programme aims to train a total of 50,000 professionals between 2008 and 2010. The training course comprises several modules including:

The identification of the key elements of a global energy improvement offer for buildings, and the command of the tools for implementing a global energy improvement offer for buildings

The initial aim of the training between 2008 and 2010 of 50,000 trainees (heads of companies, building tradesmen and workers) as part of the FEEBat measure will probably be reached by the end of 2010.

E.g. The Certiphyto certificate

A training initiative taking into account environmental needs. It lasts two days and is intended for professionals or users of phytosanitary products. Its aim is to provide training in the proper use of the various products.

1.5 Other challenges for VET

During its presidency of the EU, France focused on life-long career guidance and in particular was behind the European resolution of 21st November 2008 setting out 4 initiatives with concrete and practical objectives. This was reflected in the law of 24th November 2009 setting up a national public career guidance service and more especially the creation of an entitlement to information about professions and qualifications, an electronic career guidance service and creating a delegate for information and career guidance. For continuing vocational training, there are many future objectives:

- Better targeting vocational training funds to those who require it the most, such as job seekers and lowly qualified workers;
- Developing training in small and medium-sized companies;
- Getting young people into the jobs market by encouraging work-study contracts;
- Improving transparency and the funding circuits and better assessing vocational training policies;
- Simplifying and providing improved information, direction and guidance for workers and job seekers.

Economic crisis - VET policies as recovery measures

In response to a severe worldwide economic crisis the December 2008 European Council endorsed a European economic recovery programme. It called for an overall fiscal stimulus equivalent to 1.5% of EU-27 GDP, and underlined that priority should be given to structural reform measures.

Countries have taken relevant action across a broad spectrum of policy areas, including VET. VET policies play a central role in the efforts to overcome the crisis and balancing out weaknesses of the labour market.

To overcome the current economic downturn and recognising the crucial role of education and training in this context, education ministers called for targeted and coordinated action at European level.

The aim of the analysis in this section is twofold:

- to gain a better overview of the major consequences of the crisis on skills and VET policies - if possible differentiating between short- and medium-term effects (reduce/increase public and/or private expenditure for VET, reduce/increase the willingness of companies to provide work-based training, what groups of population are mainly affected, skills mismatches in specific badly hit sectors, etc.);
- to gain an overview of VET-focused policies and measures undertaken by countries to overcome the crisis (making a distinction between measures already planned as part of medium-term reform strategies, and measures which can be considered as a new response to the crisis).

NB: This input will update information already collected by the Swedish Presidency (May 2009) and Cedefop via ReferNet. Form and procedure for the update will be clarified with the Presidencies to ensure integration of complementary and up-to-date information.

2.1 Impact of the crisis on VET

In 2009, non-agricultural commercial salaried employment lost 451,000 jobs (after a loss of 145,000 jobs in 2008). In the first semester of 2010 the number of lost jobs comes to 126,000. The level of employment in the commercial sectors should recover in mid-2010 to that of mid-2003 (source: INSEE, economic outlook, December 2009).

As far as training is concerned, the crisis has had various

impacts and has given it back a function it had at the end of the 1970s: training as «a» and not «the» solution to unemployment.

Among these approaches, may be noted:

1) An increased use of vocational training during periods of company under-activity for workers on short-time working has been used to train workers to help them maintain and/or improve their qualifications (car sector etc). Therefore during these periods of short-time working, workers have been trained and have received a training grant, for example through the use of the individual training entitlement (DIF – Droit individuel à la formation).

2) Greater coordination between the training organisations, decision-makers and financiers (the State, Regional Councils, social partners, companies, public service job agencies etc) to mobilise the available funds and optimise their use This has been reflected in the setting up of an emergency employment plan.

3) Strengthened political will to promote apprenticeships and work-study training in general due to the rise in youth unemployment in particular. This has been reflected in the setting up of an emergency youth employment plan. Financial incentive grants encourage companies to recruit via work-study contracts.

4) The development of new tools in the law on vocational training: the creation of the joint funds for securing professional careers (FPSPP – Fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels), the transferability of the individual training entitlement, the strengthening of partnerships between the various players and better targeting of those receiving the training .

5) The setting-up of the Social investment fund (FISO – Fonds d'investissement social) in April 2009. This Fund is intended to coordinate the efforts to promote employment and professional training made by the State, the social partners, the national job agency, Pôle Emploi, and the Regional Councils.

6) Locally, other initiatives have been made. The French regions, as part of their competence in the field of vocational training have created, developed and backed various initiatives. Thus the Languedoc-Roussillon Region launched an «apprenticeship cheque», a measure encouraging the recruitment of apprentices through the financial assistance to companies.

7) Other initiatives may be undertaken with the sectors. For example, the State and the national centre for

automobile professions (CNPA – Centre national des professions de l'automobile), on 11th February 2010 signed a framework agreement, aimed at facilitating access to training, in particular in small and medium-sized companies.

E.g. The State-FUP emergency employment plan

The State and the social partners signed a framework-agreement on 21st April 2009 to mobilise (and pool) vocational education funds.

This agreement allows several sources of financing to be used, from the State, the social partners and the European social fund amounting to 360 million euros invested in this measure.

Training initiatives funded within this context are for priority

categories such as workers or job seekers with a low level of qualification, people who have not undergone training for several years and workers employed by small and medium-sized companies.

As part of this plan, the AGEFAFORIA (an approved joint fund collecting body of the agri-food sector) and the Unique fund of equalization (FUP – Fonds unique de péréquation) have come together to support and implement three types of initiatives co-funded by the European Social Fund (FSE – Fonds social européen):

- the training of workers who are the most exposed to the loss of employment*
- training and short-time working*
- the training of job seekers benefiting from the Personalised Retraining Agreement (CRP – Convention de reclassement personnalisé).*

Impact and implications of joint work on European principles and tools

The Copenhagen declaration initiated extensive joint work on European principles and tools aiming at increased transparency of qualifications and improved systems for recognition of competences and qualifications. This work has resulted in development of Europass, the European qualifications framework (EQF), the European credit system for VET (ECVET)⁽¹⁾, common European principles and guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning⁽²⁾, the Council resolution on Strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life⁽³⁾ and the Council resolution on Better integration of lifelong learning guidance into lifelong learning strategies⁽⁴⁾. Formally adopted between 2004 and 2009, all these instruments have now reached the implementation stage.

Work on principles and tools is based on a lifelong learning (LLL) perspective. VET is seen as an integral and interlinked part of an overarching education, training and learning system. Transparency and recognition is needed because individuals move between different parts of the education and training system, between education and work, and between sectors and countries. This effort needs to be seen also in the context of the European strategic goal to expand mobility for learners, teachers and trainers and to make periods of learning abroad the rule rather than the exception also in the VET sector.

The learning outcomes approach, shifting focus to knowledge, skills and competences, has been the common basis for the European tools.

3.1. Impact of joint work on European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments

France has integrated most of the training tools set up at the European level.

The National commission of vocational qualifications (Commission nationale des certifications professionnelles) (CNCP) has played a large part in implementing at the French level several European tools and concepts such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the transparency of qualifications.

The law of social modernisation of 17th January 2002 instituted the CNCP. It is made up of ministerial representatives, regional representatives, social partners, representatives of the chambers of commerce, agriculture and trades and qualified persons. Its mission is to identify the vocational qualifications offer and make information about these available to the public (internet portal of the National directory of vocational qualifications (Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles) (RNCP)⁽⁵⁾). The qualifications recorded in the directory are recognised over the entire national territory. Vocational diplomas and certificates issued by the State are automatically recorded. Other qualifications are recorded on request after a study and opinion by the Commission.

This directory also responds to the setting up of transparency for qualifications set in motion by the EU through an approach by competencies and a division of the qualifications into teaching modules (implementation of the LMD system [bachelor's- master's-doctorate] and construction of qualifications, including the vocational degree – as part of the ECTS system) and with reference to the employment that the holder may occupy. The description is based around the Europass framework.

The CNCP is the national coordinating point for the «EQF». It is in charge of the work relating to aligning the levels of the French qualifications' system with the levels planned by the European Qualifications Framework.

In respect of the EQF, the work has contributed to the debate over a recasting of the French classification for vocational qualifications which dates back to 1969. The national framework has been made more legible thanks to the work undertaken by the National commission

(1) Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European credit system for vocational education and training, 2009/C 155/02, OJEU 155, (8 July 2009).

(2) EQARF is covered by Theme 7 on quality in this questionnaire.

(3) Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening policies, systems and practices in the field of guidance throughout life in Europe, Brussels (18 May 2004).

(4) Council Resolution on Better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. 2905th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting Brussels (21 November 2008).

(5) www.cnpc.gouv.fr

of vocational qualifications (CNCP) which catalogues descriptions of the qualifications in a uniform way. In this context, discussion linked to the EQF in France which consists of matching the levels of the 1969 classification with the 8 EQF levels has contributed to an improved understanding of the French classification and is contributing to the work being done to revise this system.

As far as the «ECVET» mechanism is concerned, its development has been entrusted to the Europe Education Training France (Europe Education Formation France) (2e2f) agency. It has chosen to continue to concentrate on work also being pursued by the other Member States on the transparency of qualification and in testing out the ECVET system.

The goal is to promote worker mobility, transparency of qualifications, the recognition of all lifelong qualifications obtained and mutual trust between the States and their systems. Therefore, initially, the national agencies have wished to continue to work on testing out the ECVET system in the various States taking into account existing initiatives whether they are European, national or sectorial. E.g. the following calls for proposals «European governance of the ECVET system», «relationship between the European Certification Framework, the ECVET system and the Europass framework» or for new ECVET experimental projects.

E.g. The Europass portfolio

It is the Europe Education Formation France (2e2f) agency which is developing the Europass mechanism, in particular through information about its tools and the development of the European CV, Europass-Mobility (Europass-Mobility) and language portfolios.

France is the first country to have set up a document authentication system and the automated delivery for beneficiaries of the Leonardo and Erasmus programmes. The Europass mechanism is a new tool for training and professional mobility that could prove to be efficient.

The training passport modified by the law of 24th November 2009 will be aligned with the European EUROPASS model. Nearly 7,600 Europass-mobilities were issued in 2008.

Strengths and weaknesses of the European tools

The French system of vocational training in schools and continuing vocational education – has been gradually built up and is the end result of a long history. It involves many actors and partners (the State, local authorities, social partners, companies etc) and is based on many different mechanisms.

In this context, the European principles and tools have an influence on national policies but the application of some tools may require time in respect to the organisation already set up at the national level.

In particular, the following aspects should be considered:

- The requirement to find a way to make the pre-existing French systems and the European tools work together;
- The requirement for this to be achieved to involve all

the partners and stakeholders in the organisation and management of the system nationally;

- The requirement to find appropriate resources, in particular financial

3.2 Promoting geographical mobility of learners/apprentices and teachers/trainers in VET

There are several mechanisms which promote mobility. These mechanisms in particular concern young people and apprentices. Mobility is promoted by the public authorities (the State and regional councils, chambers of commerce etc) but the potential beneficiaries do not always view it as having an important role in their training curricula.

However, the Erasmus programme is one of the best known and widely appreciated European projects. It should be noted however that there is no information in respect of companies' participation in mobility.

3.2.1. Mobility in training undertaken at school

Young French students use the European programmes to facilitate their mobility. The most used remains the Erasmus programme and to a lesser extent the Comenius programme.

22,556 students went abroad to study in a European higher education establishment in 2007/2008, reflecting a slight fall (-1.85%). The new «work placement mobility» programme, taken up by 3,389 students for its first year in 2007/2008, brings the total number of Erasmus students to 25,945.

The beneficiaries still mainly go abroad during their first year of a master's degree course (35.47% of them) to Spain (23.41%), the United Kingdom (19.06%) and Germany (11.60%). The average duration of study mobility remains 7 months.

However, a new trend is appearing: the length of time students stay is decreasing. There were 16.48% who went away for 10 months in 2003/2004 compared with 12.45% in 2007/2008.

3.2.2. The mobility of apprentices

Among the persons undergoing vocational training who underwent mobility during their training, the most significant increase was among young apprentices.

The funding aimed at supporting apprentice mobility has risen since 2002 both for the lifelong learning programme (LLP) and other sources of financing.

For the LLP programme this allows mobility funding for around 2,600 apprentices.

Moreover, since 2005 the objectives and resources contracts (contrats d'objectifs et de moyens) (COM) entered into between the State and the regions for the development of apprenticeships have made European mobility of apprentices one of the funding priorities. The funds allocated by these COMs to mobility (which comes to nearly 20m euros) are supplemented by funding contributed by the regional councils.

Likewise, bilateral exchange programmes such as the Franco-German programme for exchanges of young people in vocational training, have seen the amount of apprentice mobility double between 2004 and 2009, increasing from 400 to over 800 beneficiaries on the French side.

The development of apprentice mobility and the increase in funding allocated to it are linked to the policies for developing this form of apprenticeship. Moreover, legal instruments aimed at securing apprentice mobility have been set up to facilitate this mobility (through the payment of social security charges and salaries in particular).

E.g. Euro start

Called «Euro Start», an experimental programme from the Paris Region involves 100 young people from the Paris region holding vocational Baccalauréats (Bac professionnel) and BTS diplomas (2-years after the Baccalauréat). These apprentices will be able to study in regions with which the Paris region has developed a special relationship: the Rhineland (Germany), Greater London (Great Britain), Brussels capital (Belgium) and Catalonia (Spain).

The programme's beneficiaries have vocational training trainee status. The Region would finance their salary and social charges whereas the European Union partly covers their training and accommodation costs.

E.g. The «depart» project

The Centre Inffo in collaboration with ONISEP (the body responsible for young people's career guidance) have produced different communication media aimed at promoting European mobility for apprenticeship schemes in companies and designated apprentice tutors, for young people – apprentices or young people wishing to go down the apprenticeship route – and the apprentice training centres (centres de formation d'apprentis) (CFA). The various awareness initiatives have shown that this mobility is possible and accessible for all and that it has a positive impact in the young person's training path, in their personal development in gaining independence and self-confidence, adapting to various working situations and overall for their future professional life.

3.2.3. The mobility of trainers

The Leonardo programme facilitates exchanges and good practice between those in charge of training and is also a prime lever for setting up new tools and training methods in order to extend their application at the European level.

The mobility of education and training professionals coming under the Leonardo programme stagnated between 2002 and 2008 (47 projects per year received on average) and fell by half in 2009.

This fall is linked to:

- a reduction in mobility allowances during the programming (2007)
- problems of replacing absent personnel
- a lack of consideration given to professional mobility in careers,
- mobility which is insufficiently utilised and fully exploited to promote the policy of the opening up of organisations.

Strengthening links between VET and the labour market

Europe is facing several socio-economic challenges which accelerate the pace of change in the labour market and skills requirements. To make sure that VET responds adequately, a key priority of European cooperation in VET is to forge better links between VET and the labour market (Bordeaux communiqué). It is essential to involve all labour market actors in VET development, including promoting workplace learning, and encouraging closer cooperation.

Partnerships between education and training institutions and employers have a particular role to play in improving learners' employability, developing their entrepreneurial potential and making them more familiar with the working world. Greater awareness of trends in the labour market can help to make learning more responsive to future needs and increase students' motivation by providing a clear context for learning. Cooperation with education and training institutions can also help to update skills and ensure professional development of staff⁽⁶⁾.

In this context, it is necessary to develop systems for early identification and anticipation of skill needs and mismatches to ensure that the skill needs identified are incorporated in VET on time, as advocated in the re-launched Lisbon strategy and the 'New skills for new jobs'⁽⁷⁾ initiative.

4.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

In order to reconcile as well as possible the economy and employment, the public authorities (the State and regional councils) and the social partners make efforts to forward plan economic, social and demographic changes.

For the forward planning of skills needs, various action is

(6) Conclusions of the Council and Representatives of the Governments of Member States, meeting within the Council, of 12 May 2009 on Enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and social partners, in particular employers, in the context of lifelong learning. 2941. Education, youth and Culture Council meeting Brussels (12 May 2009).

(7) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 'New skills for new jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs'. Brussels, European Commission, 2008 (COM (2008) 868 final).

taken in consultation with the public employment service, bringing together in particular the Employment Centre (Pôle emploi), the Association for adult vocational training (Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes) (AFPA) and more locally the local authorities (regions and départements), company groupings, employment areas, competitiveness clusters and the social partners.

4.1.1 the tools

a. at the national level

The work is co-realised by the study services of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Education.

They aim to define and identify the professions of the future, the profile of the qualifications and competencies required and the problems that companies and people will encounter.

E.g. Prospective studies contracts (contrats d'études prospectives) (CEP)

The aim of a CEP is to reach a diagnosis shared by the State and the social partners on the state of a sector and possible action that can be taken. Among the possible diagnoses are attractiveness or problems of recruitment, worker loyalty in a particular industrial branch, sector or region; the cost of such operations (consultancy fees), variable depending on their ultimate purpose is shared by the various partners.

CEPs are used by the State and the social partners, in association with the national collective employment commissions (commissions paritaires nationales de l'emploi) (CPNE) for branches of industry. Undertaking CEPs at regional or département level is encouraged.

CEPs are based on two principles:

- *a contract linking the social partners and the State which funds, on average, 50% of the costs for undertaking the work; this service is undertaken by operators who may be private consultants or public research bodies;*
- *the choice of operators is made jointly by the social partners and the State on the basis of specifications they have drawn up together. A tripartite steering committee oversees compliance with the specifications and time scales, ensures the monitoring of the work and approves the results.*

As far as the prospective stage of the interventions is concerned, in 2008 CEPs were mainly concerned with the following professional sectors: the mutual insurance sector, chemical industries, large retailers (end of work begun in 2007), sport professions, telecommunications and smart cards. Therefore, the increase in regional and département CEPs continued in 2008. The CEPs undertaken regionally concerned various sectors chosen for their importance in the local landscape or areas whose dynamic in employment and competencies is decisive.

b. at the regional level

This work is mainly undertaken by the Employment-Training observatories (Observatoires régionaux Emploi-Formation) (Oref), co-funded by the State and the Regional councils as part of the 2007-2013 project contracts. The OREF steering committee is generally tripartite (the State - Regions - social partners).

These are tools for assistance with decision-making that must express the analyses and forecast for school training, continuing vocational training and training within the companies. Their role is to set in motion, in respect of the economic changes and ageing of the active population, work for observing and analysing training and employment needs in order to develop the quantitative and qualitative vocation training offer».

The State-Region 2007-2013 project contracts emphasise the need for the Orefs to know how to «anticipate economic changes» and «organise the basic core of coherent action by the State, Regional council and economic actors», in order to promote the required qualification in liaison with the existing industry branch observatories.

E.g. New organisation of the Orefs

The national inter-professional agreement of 7th January 2009 sets out new operational methods for the observatories and the OREFs. It sets out the composition, role and duties of a joint steering committee for the observatory as well as the provisions for the participation by representatives of workers and employers' representative organisations on this committee. It also lays down the provisions for a periodic examination of the quantitative and qualitative development of the sectors of activity, employment, trades and professions and qualifications by the joint national employment committees (CPNE).

In order to promote work of a local nature, it is also designed that the observation work carried out at regional or local level may be entrusted, as part of a formal delegation, to an OPCA which is not of the branch or branches concerned, in particular inter-professional, or by agreement with a regional employment or training observatory (OREF) or to any other appropriate body.

c. work at the sectorial level

The work undertaken at the sectorial level is mainly carried out by the industry branch joint observatories. Certain sectorial ministries have also set up observatories: the civil service, health and social work.

The national inter-professional agreement of 5th December 2003 relating to access by workers to training throughout their professional life set out that each professional branch should set up a professions and qualifications forecasting observatory (OPMQ) before the end of 2004.

These observatories are intended to ensure forecasting watch on the development of the branch's professions at the national, regional, European and possibly international levels in order to plan ahead for their transformation, the emergence of new professions and even the disappearance of others.

E.g. Observatory of automobile trades

In order to implement the «branch policy» for the automobile sector, ANFA (the national association for training in the automobile sector) (association nationale pour la formation -dans le secteur- automobile) which is the official joint training funds collecting body for this branch set up a diagnoses and forecasting cell aimed at analysing and forward planning for the impact of economic, technological, regulatory and demographic changes on employment, the trades and training needs.

The agreement of 30th June 2004 entrusts the ANFA observatory with all of the studies on the trades and qualifications required for the Branch's social dialogue.

In order to improve visibility about changes to the sector and their repercussions on employment, the trades and training, the observatory is developing a diagnostic and forecasting analysis approach.

Thus, the observatory carries out studies which are published on its web site such as for example a study on the «Attractiveness of automobile trades for apprentices» .⁽⁸⁾

4.1.2 Strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and tools

The main problem is in cross-referencing regional and sectorial forecasts in highly complex fields (education – training – employment) where the policies are implemented at different levels (national, regional, local, inter-professional and sectorial).

Moreover, another problem is being able to put forward useful forecasting data for steering and adjusting policies.

Exchanges between branch observatories and regional observatories are still very infrequent but they are beginning to develop.

Branches encounter the same problems as the OREFs in the choice of indicators to use or in the analysis of the cross-functional trades.

The main strength of these mechanisms is to produce highly specialised and targeted data relating to particular sectors in particular employment areas. They may, secondly, be used in organising recruitment and training policies and above all in anticipating problems linked to the ageing of professionals within a sector.

4.2 Integrating changing skill needs into VET provisions

4.2.1 the mechanisms and measures

In the school vocational training field, the framework law on the future of schools of 2005 introduces «professional prospects linked to foreseeable requirements of society, the economy and the development of the country» as elements that should be taken into account alongside individual aspirations and abilities in relation to career guidance offered to school pupils.

(8) <http://www.anfa-auto.fr>

The law on guidance and lifelong vocational training of 24th November 2009, 'continuing vocational training', uses these same elements to constitute «quality» criteria with the prospect of awarding quality labels to future organisations which participate in the public service of lifelong careers guidance (a service that is currently being set up).

However, it is true that for several years various mechanisms have existed for promoting the integration of skills needs.

Thus the projects for the development of employment and skills (actions de développement de l'emploi et des compétences) (Adec) have as their purpose the forward planning of economic, social and demographic changes by taking concerted action in the regions to enable those in employment, in particular those working in small and medium-sized companies to deal with future changes. The Adecs have, in particular, as their specific goals the tackling in a general approach of the issues of employment and qualifications for a sector or a particular local area;

In practice, financial assistance is paid to a relay body to contribute to actions for skills development for whom employees or self-employed people (tradesmen, heads of small companies, farmers) are the target population.

In 2007, 80,000 employees and working people benefited from the Adecs of whom:

- 76% of people having an initial level of qualification (non-qualified workers, qualified workers and employees categories);
- 82% of employees hired in companies of fewer than 250 employees;
- 32% of people of 45 years old and over.

E.g. The training prior to recruitment initiative (Action de formation préalable au recrutement) (AFPR)

This is aimed at enabling an employer to meet their recruitment needs and contribute to increasing the chances of job seekers, in particular those with a low level of qualifications or without qualification or seeking redeployment finding work.

Open to all job seekers, it is managed and financed by the Employment Centre.

A trainee training plan is drawn up with the assistance of the Employment Centre and possibly the training body.

The employer undertakes to sign an employment contract with the interested person if they reach the level required for the position being offered.

Thus, assistance with the training course answers an identified skills need.

E.g. Training sponsored by the Employment Centre (Action de formation conventionnée) (AFC)

These are intended to develop the job seekers' skills, in particular those with a low level of qualification and/or undergoing redeployment in order to meet companies' recruitment needs.

Training may be collective to meet the qualification needs not covered by existing training arrangements. These training courses are complementary and subsidiary to the courses financed by the regional or département councils or any other local authority and by the OPCAs.

In practice the Employment Centre sends out a call for proposals to find a training organisation. The trainees on the training course receive remuneration paid for by the Employment Centre.

The identification of employment needs regionally and/or territorially is based, in particular, on the survey of labour needs (besoins de main-d'oeuvre) (BMO), studies by the regional employment and training observatories (Oref) and the work by the joint inter-professional regional employment commissions (Copire) and/or in the forward planning of recruitment needs (the forecasting of the setting up of new activities in the geographical sector for example).

This identification is also made in partnership with any locally recognised professional structure in liaison with the companies, the external services of the Ministry of Employment, Afp, Apec and organisations participating in public employment services.

4.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses

The difficult exercise of skills forward planning leads to fears that economic uncertainties in respect of the job prospects for a particular training course may cause future applicants to shy away from it excessively, even though they will only be concerned by the state of the employment market on completing their training.

A reticence towards transparency is therefore strong, in particular among the training establishments in respect to the qualifications they award and advise without providing subsequent hiring statistics.

The strength of these mechanisms is to group several actors (companies and employment centre) to work out the skills development policies together taking in account skills requirements. For this purpose the AFPR meets the expectations of the various parties particularly well.

4.3 Involving labour market actors in VET

4.3.1 Strong involvement by the social partners

Firstly the social partners are involved in training since they sit on a series of commissions:

- on the professional consultative commissions (commissions professionnelles consultatives) (CPC) of the various ministries which create the diplomas and certificates for technological and vocational training;
- on the national education commission for the creation of diplomas issued by the university technology institutes (2 years after the Baccalauréat level);
- on the national experts commission for vocational degrees (3 years after the Baccalauréat);
- on the national council of higher education and research (conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche) for all the higher education diplomas.

The Executive Committee of the Employment Centre includes representatives of the social partners and the State.

In 2008, the National employment council was created, chaired by the Minister of Employment and composed of the social partners, representatives of the State, representatives of local authorities and qualified persons. This Council is in charge of the strategic management of employment policies and supervises the coherence of the whole system.

Within the professional branches, the social partners must set out the priorities for the individual training right benefit as well as the objectives for professionalising the initiatives offered to employees. For this purpose, they can call on the professions and qualifications forecasting observatory.

Moreover, the social partners are negotiators and signatories of many agreements such as the National inter-professional agreement of 11th January 2008 on the modernisation of the employment market and the National inter-professional agreement of 14th November 2008 on the management of forecasts for employment and skills. Branch negotiations are an important job undertaken by the social partners. Thus, nearly 200 agreements have been signed out of the 317 existing branches.

Besides the social partners, the involvement of the other economic partners is more cyclical with a precise goal. Thus the Ministry of Education, professional organisations or companies of a national dimension have set up links to promote vocational training and strengthen partnerships between training organisations and companies in professional sectors such as metallurgy, construction, transport, food, large retailers, aeronautics and SME-SMI's etc.

The action undertaken by these partnerships is principally in the following fields:

- information about trades, vocational qualifications and their developments,
- the setting up of training projects,
- the creation of teaching tools, resource centres etc,
- discussions and ideas among the various training personnel: tutors, company-based tutors, teachers or trainers, experts etc,
- technological cooperation,
- the development of the accreditation of life experience,
- the organisation of long company placements for teaching staff,
- continuing vocational training for employees.

These partnerships are formalised in formal agreements or cooperation agreements. These agreements reached nationally may be adjusted to suit local conditions. Agreements at education authority level may also be entered into.

4.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses

The strength of all these agreements with the social partners or the economic sectors is to develop mechanisms taking account of the realities on the ground and involving those actors who will be directly affected by the mechanisms that are created and implemented.

The weakness comes partly from the time required for the consultation of several partners and partly from the multiplication of the number of different applications depending on the professional sectors of employment areas. Therefore inequalities in terms of salary or access to these mechanisms can be created.

4.4 Promoting workplace learning

The promotion of workplace learning is mainly reflected by the development of work-study contracts including improved acknowledgement of in-company tutoring.

There remain two large problems linked to work-study contracts: the number of places is limited and work-study training contracts sometimes have a negative image with their target audiences.

4.4.1 work-study at school

Vocational education in schools, i.e. in vocational high-schools also uses work-study contracts:

For students in vocational high-schools, the organisation and the content of the education aimed at obtaining a vocational qualification thus include: training periods in a professional environment. The duration of these periods varies depending on the type of diploma and the specialism. These training courses undergo evaluation (carried out jointly with the company) which is taken into account for the award of the diploma.

4.4.2 the apprenticeship contract

In 2005, the planning Law for social cohesion (18th January 2005) set the goal of increasing the number of apprentices from 350,000 to 500,000 in a few years.

The apprenticeship contract is a particular type of employment contract made between a young person and an employer from the private sector. It alternates education given in the apprentices training centre and training in one or more companies. The interest of the work-study programmes is to properly prepare the young person for the working world by giving them a job as soon as they start training. They also benefit from practical training and remuneration. The work-study program is a teaching method recognised for its effectiveness.

The number of apprentices rose by nearly 17% between 2004 and 2007. In the commercial sector nearly 284,000 new apprenticeship contracts were recorded

in 2007, i.e. +3% compared with 2006, + 15% compared with 2004.

4.4.3 the professionalization contract

Another form of work-study contract, the professionalization contract is open to young people but also to adult job seekers; this gives them a work/training course based on an employment contract.

Nearly 178,000 people signed up to a professionalization contract in 2008 (170,000 in 2007) i.e. an increase of +4%, in a markedly less favourable economic context. Between 2006 and 2007, the increase was 18%.

E.g. The professionalization period

In their national inter-professional agreement of September 2003, the social partners created periods of professionalization which allow employees faced with technological changes or in the second half of their careers to receive training by release periods.

The professionalization period thus enables the employer and the employee to construct a professionalization path financed by an Opcva.

Reserved for certain categories of workers on open-ended contracts with the purpose of keeping them in their positions, it allows the worker to obtain a qualification or to take part in a training course recognised as a priority by the social partners. Based on work/study programs, it links general, technological and vocational education and the workplace practice in relation to the sought qualification.

286,647 professionalization periods were funded by the approved joint bodies in 2008. 400,611 trainees benefited for an average cost of € 1,746 and an average duration of 93 hours.

4.4.4 tutoring

As far as tutoring is concerned, the law of 24th November 2009 encourages its development by authorising the payment of a part of the in-company tutors' remuneration out of the continuing vocational training funds (training plan).

Moreover, three-yearly branch negotiations must include the development of tutoring and the valorisation of the role of tutor, in particular the conditions it is carried out by employees aged over fifty-five.

Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship

The year 2010 is the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion. The priorities of the European Year include reducing disadvantages also in education and training, by focusing on the specific needs of groups at risk, for example early school-leavers, people with special needs, low skilled people and migrants.

The strategic framework Education and Training 2020 calls for education and training policies which will "enable all citizens, irrespective of their personal, social or economic circumstances, to acquire, update and develop over a lifetime both job-specific skills and the key competences needed for their employability and to foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue"⁽⁹⁾.

Supporting services, including guidance and counselling as well as access to information play a fundamental role for groups at risk.

5.1 Addressing equity⁽¹⁰⁾ in VET

Many measures have been taken within the French education system for over 25 years to prevent any pupils failing at school and to eliminate inequalities.

These measures take into account the principle of equality between the sexes and the inclusion of disabled pupils into schools and cover the education system very widely.

See too the measures in favour of older workers § 1.3.

5.1.1. Action against dropping out of school

The state education service has a so-called priority education policy consisting of strengthening public resources in the most deprived areas and where the school failure rate is the highest. This policy was re-launched in 2006 with the main goal of a command of the «common core» by all pupils at the end of compulsory education.

(9) Council Conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020") adopted on 12 May 2009. Brussels: Council of the EU, 2009.

(10) Equity is understood as the extent to which individuals can take advantage of education and training in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes.

a. The knowledge and competencies common core

Taking its cue from European thinking about key competencies, the framework law on schools of 2005 sets out a common core of knowledge and competencies which should be mastered by the end of compulsory education.

The 7 pillars of the common core are:

- A good command of the French language;
- The ability to use a modern foreign language;
- The main elements of mathematics and scientific and technological culture;
- A good command of normal information and communication techniques;
- A humanist culture;
- Social and civic competencies;
- Autonomy and initiative.

This core is defined as a set of knowledge, abilities and attitudes that a pupil must master in order to successfully complete their school education, continue with their training, build their personal and professional future and lead a successful life in society.

The key competencies are those required by any person for their own fulfilment and personal development, their civic citizenship, their social inclusion and their professional life. At the end of the compulsory period for education or training, young people should have acquired a key competencies level that will enable them to enter adult life. They should then develop them, maintain them and keep them up-to-date through lifelong learning.

b. Access to qualifications for over 16s who have dropped out of training

The National education general integration mission (mission générale d'insertion de l'Éducation nationale) has a mission for preventing young people leaving school without qualifications. Upstream it provides early warning of dropping out by anticipating the causes of pupils of 16 and over leaving school without any qualifications. Downstream, it identifies those young people who have left school less than a year before obtaining their first training level, meets with them, gets them back on a training path and lays down the bases for a qualification.

The actions for preventing a break in education and preparing for qualifications are undertaken in the schools. The management, teachers and careers guidance personnel are the main actors involved.

Action for re-motivating and preparing pupils who have already dropped out of education (for less than a year) for a qualification is carried out by staff at the school and by specific education coordination and educational engineering personnel.

E.g. The creation of coordinated action for monitoring unqualified school leavers

The law of 24th November 2009 relating to careers guidance and lifelong vocational training set out the organisation of coordinated action among the various actors concerned for monitoring young unqualified school leavers

The purpose therefore of this coordination between the actors in charge of training and those in charge of young people's social and professional integration is to provide training and assistance solutions or access to employment for unqualified school leavers.

Each secondary school and each apprentices' training centre sends the contact details of its former pupils or apprentices no longer enrolled on a training course or who have not a predetermined qualification level to people or organisations appointed by the representative of the State in the département as well as the competent local youth integration centre (mission locale) or failing this, the employment centre.

In each department, this mechanism is implemented and coordinated under the authority of the State representative.

5.1.2. Action in favour of the low skilled

a. renovation of vocational education

This began in 2009 aimed at raising the general level for obtaining qualifications and combating pupils giving up and leaving without obtaining a qualification; this renovation includes the development of individualised support.

In schools the vocational sector takes in 1/3 of young people leaving junior high-school.

The renovation of the vocational path is being undertaken by reducing the duration of the curriculum leading to the vocational baccalauréat (three years instead of four): this renovation aims to state the equal dignity of the vocational route compared with the general route - leading to the general baccalauréat - and with the technological route - leading to the technological baccalauréat (of equal duration). Implementing this renovation has been accompanied by new programmes for the teaching of general subjects and new organisational methods in the vocational high schools: new hours, a new personalised support mechanism etc. In particular, the personalised support enables the pupil's training path to be individualised.

It meets various objectives such as:

– improving pupils' levels in core subjects (e.g. written comprehension and writing in French);

– offering methodological assistance (e.g. learning how to take notes and practicing doing documentary research);

– preparing a new vocational path, studying a subject more deeply, giving pupils practice in passing exams including competitive exams and assisting them in strengthening their vocational project.

Vocational high-school students who need assistance with their training, those who wish to study another specialism or leave the vocational route to join the general and technological routes or those who wish to continue with higher education are concerned by these measures.

b. Continuing vocational training action

In France, as far as adults are concerned, intervention by the State is concentrated on those sections of the population who have great problems in finding work such as prisoners, disabled people or those who cannot read and write - see § 5.2.

However certain targeted measures may be deployed.

E.g. Priority population for professionalization contracts

The professionalization contract (see § 5.4.3) population has been widened to include those receiving social benefits or on an integration contract in line with the social partners' wishes in the agreement of 7th January 2009.

In order to take account of the specific nature of this new population, some of the provisions of the professionalization contract have been adapted. These particularities match those already set up for unqualified job seekers (not having validated the second stage of secondary education and who do not have a technological or vocational diploma). Thus, the minimum training duration can be extended up to twenty-four months for people who have left school with no professional qualification.

Specific funding has been set aside for this priority population.

5.1.3. Action in favour of the lowest skilled during the crisis

Also see chap. 3.

E.g. The assistance training contracts

The purpose of the support-training contracts is usefully to use the period of economic crisis to offer young people the opportunity of raising their level of qualification and adapting their skills to the requirements of the jobs market in order to take full advantage of the upturn.

50,000 support-training contracts are available to enable young people to increase their level of qualification and adapt their competencies to the needs of the market.

These contracts are offered to young people between 16 and 25 years old from level VI (no qualification) to 3-years after the Baccalauréat, registered at the employment centre or supported by the local youth integration centres. They include pre-qualifying and qualifying training initiatives for growth professions and work placements. The regions are involved in setting up these contracts.

5.2 Support services for group at risk

Also see § 5.1.

The State also contributes to improving access to qualifications for specific populations as part of national solidarity.

In particular it finances:

- the remuneration of job seekers not receiving unemployment benefits from the unemployment insurance scheme who are undertaking State-approved training, in particular disabled people training in vocational retraining centres;
- action against illiteracy;
- training for prisoners.

As far as action for acquiring key competencies in the European meaning of the term is concerned, this may attract funding either from the Regional councils or by the State or occasionally by co-funding from both as well as the national agency for combating illiteracy (agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme). (ANLCI: www.anlci.gouv.fr).

E.g. The second chance schools

The concept of the Second chance school is consistent with the principles set out in 1995 in the European Commission's White Paper: «Combating exclusion by investing in intelligence so that every person may construct their own qualification».

The second chance schools offer young people individualised training paths which are aimed at upgrading a person's general competencies, in particular in respect of the common core of knowledge and competencies and constructing a professional project through a work-study programme.

As part of a strengthened partnership with the regions, the government is aiming to be able to offer 12,000 places by 2010 in second chance schools to lowly qualified young people.

In order to achieve this, the State has committed itself to becoming a partner of the schools' network: it will fund them at the same level as the regional authorities, i.e. a third.

5.3 Active citizenship

5.3.1. National education

Vocational qualifications include within their syllabi general education about «humanist culture» and active citizenship: e.g. in association with the other general subjects and with the vocational education, the French syllabus contributes to the acquisition of a common culture. It is thus an expression of the Republican principle which assigns the School the role of social and cultural integration constructed around common values, references and language.

5.3.2. Continuing vocational training

Several mechanisms are aimed at participation in the social and political life of the country.

E.g. Economic, social and union leave (congé de formation économique, sociale et syndicale) (FESS)

This allows employees who wish to take part in economic and social training sessions or trade union training leave from work.

It is organised either by centres attached to employees' trade unions acknowledged as being representative nationally or by specialised institutes. The State provides financial assistance to employees' training given by the centres, institutes and bodies.

Any employee is entitled on their request and with no conditions of service to one or more FESS leave periods whether or not they belong to a trade union.

The total duration of FESS leave, totalled with the duration of some other leave is limited by an annual quota.

E.g. local elected representatives' training

Local elected representatives are entitled to training in line with their roles.

Municipal, département and regional councillors are entitled to this leave.

The duration of this leave is set at eighteen days per elected representative for the duration of their mandate and however many mandates they hold. This leave is renewable if they are re-elected.

The costs paid for by the municipality, Département or Region linked to taking up this training entitlement by elected representatives can only be granted if the body organising the training course or session has been officially approved by the Minister of the Interior.

Within three months following its renewal the municipal council, the Département council or the Regional council deliberates on the exercise of its members training entitlement. It determines the kind of training and budget available for it.

Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET

In the Education and training 2010 work programme, Member States agreed to make their education and training systems 'a world quality reference' by 2010. The objective to improve quality and attractiveness of VET systems is one of the pillars of the Copenhagen process.

The Council conclusions on Quality assurance in vocational education and training, adopted on 28 May 2004⁽¹¹⁾, and the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of a European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training, adopted on 2 April 2009⁽¹²⁾, are designed to support Member States in promoting and monitoring quality improvement in VET at different levels. The latter provides a common basis for further development of quality principles, reference criteria and indicators. Quality assurance is a prerequisite for common trust between countries or different parts of the education system. Moreover, fostering excellence in vocational education and training - understood as outstanding quality in VET - is of paramount importance.

Teachers and trainers safeguard quality of VET and drive VET reforms. They should receive high quality professional training to foster their continuous development.

Individuals should be able to move from one qualification to another. Horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems increases the attractiveness of VET.

6.1 Improving the quality of VET

Different initiatives have been taken at various levels. However the French State has instituted «Piloting» for implementing and funding public policies

Indeed, the institutional law of 1st August 2001 relating to the finance laws introduced «a culture of results» in order to spend more effectively and improve the efficiency of public action. The overall budget of the State is now

(11) 8950/04 EDUC 96 SOC 206.

(12) Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishment of a European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training 2009/C 155/01, OJ EU C 155 (8 July 2009).

split into Missions, Programmes and Actions. This new structure allows for performance indicators to be defined and attributed.

Moreover, the Department for conducting research, studies and statistics (Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques) (DARES), the Ministry of Employment, the Department for the assessment, forecasting and performance (Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance) (DEPP) for the Ministries of Education and Higher Education & Research, as well as the Céreq (Centre of studies and research on qualifications) produce statistics and studies which assess the efficiency of the policies implemented.

6.1.1. Training at school

The vocational sector of school education which takes in 1/3 of pupils leaving junior high-school – is undergoing widespread renewal, begun in 2007 by the state education system and whose deployment began in 2009. One of the focus areas of the renewal has concentrated on the development of the «vocational high-school» (lycée des métiers) quality label.

The «vocational high-school» concept dates from 2002. This quality label describes schools which offer a wide range of training and services, thanks in particular to an active partnership both with the economic environment and the local authorities.

The award of the label is intended to encourage switchovers – including with higher education – and the flow of the training paths. This also means strengthening the vocational identity of the schools.

6.1.2. Continuing vocational training

a. The assessment of the training mechanisms

The assessment of the training mechanisms is a concern shared by the actors of continuing vocational education. The law of 24th November 2009 relating to career guidance and vocation training brought about the introduction of a report and assessment by the National council of lifelong vocational training (Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie) (CNFPTLV).

From now on, each year, this body will also produce a report per employment area and per region of the

vocational training that has been undertaken by all of the organisations providing training of this kind. This report is drawn up on the basis of the assessments transmitted regionally by each regional coordination committee for employment and vocational training (comité de coordination régional de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle) (CCREFP).

b. Quality imposed by the partners

Moreover, several procedures exist, nationally and regionally to bring pressure to bear on the quality of the training offer through public procurement. Thus, contracts entered into by the State may set out specific demands in terms of training, and qualifications and references required for the trainers working for the organisations wishing to enter into contracts with the State.

Likewise, several continuous improvement measures leading to the signing of quality charters are also being used by some training funders. Thus, the FONGECIFs (individual training leave management funds) use a «quality procedure» for granting quality labels to their skills assessment service providers. The Ministry of Employment has participated in funding the quality label procedure initiated by the Federation of the Inter-institutional Skills Assessment Centres (Fédération des Centres interinstitutionnels de Bilans de compétences) (FCIBC).

E.g. A partnership of the Paris region Fongecif with its service providers

The Paris region Fongecif has set up a partnership with the training organisation for the most requested and financed training courses. This action is based on five criteria:

- the inclusion of the training organisations in an existing quality procedure recognised by the profession (ISO standards or NF Training Service, OPQF);*
- the appropriateness of the training offer to the CIF beneficiary's vocational project;*
- the trainee's follow-up during their training;*
- an assessment of the training's impact on the trainees;*
- the optimisation of the technical and accounting relationship between the training organisation and Opacif.*

c. The quality labels and standards in continuous vocational training

In response to the requests of training purchasers and lacking any regulations in this area, beginning in the 1980s training professionals began to use quality procedures. In France, 70 organisations are NF certified, 400 bodies were ISO certified in 2004 and 800 organisations have OPQF approval.

Moreover, standards and quality labels aimed at improving practice and procedures create a «quality» dynamic within the training organisation encouraging a formalisation of the work of trainers as well as management and organisational processes.

- the ISO 9001 standards (international) and AFNOR standards (French) may give rise to the issuance of certification (ISO 9001 or NF-Service certification);
- the quality labels:

- OPQF (Professional office for certifying training organisations (Office professionnel de la qualification des organismes de formation) created by the Vocational training federation). This certification is based on third-party accounts, the trainers' curriculum vitae and the time the organisation has existed (at least 2 years).

- Greta Plus (backed by the Ministry of Education);

- ICPF (Institute for the certification of training professionals (Institut de certification des professionnels de la formation) created by the Federation of trade union chambers of consultant trainers).

6.1.2. Strengths and weaknesses

The fragmentation of the continuing vocational training offer for adults, linked to the competitive context and the freedom to set-up organisations leads to a dispersion of the quality signals allowing clear identification of the training market.

6.2. Promoting excellence in VET

The law of 2009 sets out expressly that «lifelong vocational training aims at allowing each individual, independently of their status, to acquire and update their knowledge and competencies promoting their professional development as well as advancing by at least one qualification level during their working life».

6.2.1. The Accreditation of life experience

In order to assist in this objective, the accreditation of life experience – set up in 2002 – is a preferred tool for improving the level qualification of the lowest skilled: thus, the law aims to promote still further so-called «collective» accreditation of life experience. The aim is to strengthen the use of prior learning accreditation in making careers more secure through collective action targeted at populations with uniform characteristics (whether these are employees or job seekers) who hold lower levels of qualifications. The objective is to offer this group a relevant certification offer and to build tailor-made training paths where extra support will allow the applicant's chances of success to be increased.

Any person whose has been in work for at least three years can now have their experience recognised and have it «transformed» into a diploma, certificate or CQP (vocational qualification certificate) (Certificat de qualification professionnelle). The Accreditation of life experience is an official action through which the competencies acquired through experience are recognised by a certificate or a diploma. Above all it is a checking, assessment and certification procedure of the knowledge and competencies of the applicant by an independent panel.

E.g. Obligation of the Accreditation of life experience negotiation

The 2009 law sets out that the negotiation of the accreditation of life experience takes into account:

- the methods that information for the companies and employees for accreditation of life experience are deployed in order to obtain a qualification stated in the article;*
- the particular conditions for promoting access to employees, either collectively or individually to the accreditation of life experience;*
- the provisions for the financing of this by the approved joint training funds collection bodies for the costs relating to an employee's participation in an examination panel or for the accreditation of life experience.*

6.2.2. The development of apprenticeships

Law no. 2005-32 of 18th January 2005 for programming social cohesion made it possible for the State and for Regional councils to enter into objectives and resources contracts (COM) aimed at developing apprenticeships. The COMs purpose is to assist in reaching the objective of programme 3 of the social cohesion plan: having 500,000 apprentices in 2009. The apprenticeship re-launch plan in which the COMs are participating to a high degree has already enabled the number of apprentices to increase from 360,000 in 2004 to nearly 427,650 apprentices by the end of 2008.

6.3. Higher level qualifications in VET

None.

6.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems

In France all ways of acquiring a particular certification have the same effect, whether through school, apprenticeship, the accreditation of life experience or continuing vocational education. Thus each certification recognises a person's knowledge and competencies regardless of how they are obtained.

There is no switchover procedure to follow between school and continuing vocational training as far as the recognition of certifications is concerned since they are identical. The distinction between vocational training undertaken at school and continuing vocational training is that continuing vocational training is done at a later stage and is not funded in the same way.

However, the renewal of vocational education in secondary schools begun in 2007 by the National education system and which began to be implemented in 2009 supports the permeability and Development of switchover systems in schools.

6.4.1. Switchovers between the vocational route and other training routes

In school, switchovers now exist between all the available training routes after junior high-school (general route, technological route and vocational route) with changeovers between the vocational and technological and vice versa being the most frequent.

The role of these switchovers should be viewed as the means of meeting the requirement of pupils who judge they have made the wrong choice in their vocational path and who wish to join a training route that is more in line with their expectations and their profile.

In order for them to exercise their role efficiently, their use must therefore result from a properly thought-through decision by the pupils. Their development must be suitably controlled too, failing which there is a risk of triggering an imbalance in school study programmes leading to failure. This control requires action taken in respect of several aspects: the training offer and study programmes, assistance with building the study project, learning assistance etc.

6.4.2. Switchovers between the vocational high school and apprenticeships

Young people on a vocational training course in a high school can undertake their training as apprentices and vice versa. Mixed training paths are possible, in particular for studying for the vocational baccalauréat in 3 years.

6.4.3. Switchovers between the CAP and the vocational baccalauréat

In vocational high schools, students join a year 11 class to study for the vocational baccalauréat in 3 years or their first year of study for the vocational aptitude certificate in 2 years. Switchovers exist allowing them to transfer from studying for one diploma to the other diploma .

6.4.4. Switchover between apprenticeship and non-vocational education

The law of 24th November 2009 created a new mechanism for switching over from work-study contracts to non-vocational education. Apprentice training centres may take in, for a maximum of one year, pupils of at least 15 years old, enabling them to undertake, with school status, work-study training which enables them to discover a professional environment for which they have an apprenticeship project.

At any time, the pupil may either sign an apprenticeship contract, subject to them having reached 16 or having completed the first stage of secondary education, or go back to their education in a junior high school or high school.

The intention of the law is to allow for a cushioning of the often harsh transition between school education and apprenticeships. The measure is intended to act as a cushion during a key stage in an adolescent's life and contribute to combating dropping out at 16 years old through advance preparation for the end of compulsory education and the beginning of an apprenticeship.

6.5 Teachers and trainers

6.5.1. For school education

The recruitment of teachers in schools is governed by the rules of the civil service and by the particular regulations of the teaching body. The competitive exam is the normal method of recruiting teachers. Applicants to the competitive exam must hold a first degree (or a diploma equivalent to 3-years after the baccalauréat) in the subject they have chosen to teach. They must then pass one of the competitive teaching exams of the Ministry of Education or Higher Education.

Most of the applicant teachers are trained in the University institutes for teacher training (Instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres- IUFM). Created in 1990-1991, the IUFMs are in charge of training primary school, junior high school and high school teachers in general, technological, vocational or specialised teaching. The IUFMs currently number 30 in France, i.e. one institute per education authority.

Initial training takes place over two years: the first year is dedicated to studying for the recruitment competitive exam, the second work-study for those having passed the exam. At the end of the second year, the teacher becomes a permanent member of the profession but must undergo six weeks training during the first two years in the job.

E.g. Renovation of the Competitive examination for the recruitment of teachers of vocational and technical education
The recruitment examination for technological teachers is the Certificate of aptitude for technical teaching (Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement technique-

CAPET). The CAER-CAPET is reserved for teachers teaching in private schools.

The recruitment examination for teachers in vocational high schools is the Certificate of aptitude for vocational high school teaching (Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de lycée professionnel CAPLP).

The framework and programming law for the future of the school renovate the initial training of teachers. This initial training is based on the principles of work-study and continuity. According to the national guidelines for the training of teachers in 2007, teachers must acquire ten competencies set out in a reference document.

6.5.2. For continuing vocational training

Although the 2009 reform does not explicitly set out rules for the minimum training required for professionals of the sector, as the situations and jobs in this field are too diverse to enable a universal base, it is possible to state that the law now sets out greater transparency for the training beneficiaries (individuals and companies). Thus the programme and goals of the training, the list of trainers which states their qualifications or fields of expertise, (...) must now be given to the trainee before their definitive enrolment on a training course.

Each training organisation is autonomous in drawing up the rules dictating how its trainers must be trained. However, there are skills reference documents, defined by the national collective agreement for private training organisations which allow the competencies of the trainers' jobs to be classified into 3 sets describing what should be included in the training, its environment and the trainer's authority.

E.g. Recruitment to AFPA

AFPA – the association for adult vocational training (association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes) is one of the main vocational training providers for adults. It has set up a recruitment and training policy adapted to the requirement of its training courses.

Thus, the recruitment of AFPA trainers is based on the principle of assessing all the necessary prerequisites for being a trainer (teaching potential, professional competencies, ability to develop in and from the profession) prior to be taken on. An assessment of their teaching potential is carried out in order to identify their desire and ability to pass on their skills. Once recruited, the professionalization of the AFPA trainers results from a continuous process throughout their careers.

7.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

7.1.1. For school education

The consideration of transversal knowledge and competencies is made starting with education in school in particular through the acquisition of a common core of knowledge and competencies.

To combat failure at school and promote equal opportunities, the framework and programming law for the future of the school of April 2005 set out that the primary mission of Schools is to guarantee everyone the acquisition of a common core of knowledge and competencies, «indispensable for successfully completing pupils' education in school, continuing their training, building their personal and professional future and having a successful life within society». The core is made up of 7 competencies – see § 5.1.1 - of which «autonomy and initiative» – which are reflections of the key competencies set out at the European level (2006 recommendation). The core includes the ambition of offering everyone the means to develop all their faculties by encouraging all forms of intelligence and all aptitudes. Focus area 7 of the common core is devoted to the development of autonomy and initiative. In this respect, it states that every pupil must be aware of the economic environment of businesses.

As far as entrepreneurship is concerned, the programmes and reference documents for vocational diplomas include content about the creation of companies for the specialisms which enable holders of the diploma to occupy the positions of company director, technical manager etc. Thus, one of the objectives of the management economy programme of the vocational baccalauréat is the creation of a company or the taking over of a pre-existing one.

Certain teaching practices contribute to developing the spirit of entrepreneurship and creativity. These practices are different depending on the level of training and the status of the young people in training.

E.g. The pluri-disciplinary project of a professional nature (projet pluridisciplinaire à caractère professionnel - PPCP)
Set up at the beginning of the century, the PPCP consists in fully or partly completing an objective of production or service taking into account the characteristics of the professional sector concerned and the level of the diploma in question.

The process aims to develop abilities by requiring the taking of responsibility within a team, having a sense of organisation and time management, initiative and creativity.

E.g. The creation of a real-size project in junior high school and high school

The partnership between the Learning through Enterprise-France association (Entreprendre pour apprendre-France - EPA) and the Ministry of Education allows Mini-businesses to be created in junior high schools and high schools. The Mini-businesses bring together groups of young volunteers around entrepreneurial projects. Assisted by a teacher and professional advisor, they operate on the model of a company and develop a product or service with the aim of commercialising it. 450 mini-businesses were created in 2008. The EPA France association calls on its network of entrepreneurs who make themselves available to schools to support the setting up of the projects. A competition is organised within the education authorities and nationally. The best project then takes part in a European championship.

E.g. «Young initiative» prize

This national competition organised by the Ministry of Education rewards the best business creation projects. This event organised every year is an encouragement for the pupils undertaking projects and valorises the collective or individual initiatives. It participates in the development of the pupils' autonomy and spirit of initiative consistent with the knowledge and competencies which make up focus area 7 of the common core.

The «young people's initiatives» competition aims to promote creativity and develop the entrepreneurial spirit of pupils and apprentices by distinguishing the best projects for the creation of virtual or real businesses within vocational high schools, general and technological high schools both public and contractually-bound private ones, apprentice training centres and apprenticeship courses, whatever the area of activity concerned.

7.1.2. For continuing vocational training

There are several measures aimed directly at the business creation or the taking over of a pre-existing one in continuing vocational training.

a. The professionalization period

Reserved for employees on open-ended contracts whose jobs are considered to be fragile, among whom are employees who are considering the creation of a company or taking over an existing one. The professionalization period thus enables the employer and the employee to construct a professionalization path financed by an approved joint training fund-collecting body. It allows a qualification to be obtained

or participation in training recognised as a priority by the social partners. Based on work/study programs, it links general, technological and vocational education and the workplace practice in relation to the sought qualification. 286,647 professionalization periods were paid for by the approved joint fund-collecting bodies in 2008.

b. Leave for taking over or creating a business

Its aim is to encourage employees who wish to create or take over a business to maintain the possibility of returning to their job by benefiting, if necessary, from training on their return to the company and/or competencies review leave. Any employee who creates or takes over a business is entitled to leave during which the employment contract is suspended (or a period of part-time working), if they intend to create or take over and exercise the effective control of an industrial, commercial, artisanal or agricultural business either as an individual or as a company or workers' production cooperative.

c. AREF

A job seeker undergoing training prescribed by the Employment centre is entitled to ask for the ARE Training (AREF) and assistance with training. The employment centre can prescribe any training course useful for finding work, worked out in concert with the job seeker. In 2008, 3% of the intake to AREF was for business creation.

d. Social Integration Contract (Contrat d'Insertion dans la Vie Sociale - CIVIS)

Created in May 2005 as part of the programming law on social cohesion, this measure is aimed at assisting young low qualified jobless people to obtain permanent work. Priority is given to young people who have left the education system with no qualifications by setting up a so-called «strengthened CIVIS» mechanism which includes a strengthening of support towards and in employment.

Within three months of signing the CIVIS, the local integration centre referral staff member must plan a path for finding work with the young person. Extra support in creating a business provided by a placement organisation contributing to the public service for employment can also be provided.

e. Professional transition contract and business creation

Launched in April 2006 for a year, extended once and then a second time, the experiment of the professional transition contract (CTP) is part of the logic of securing careers. The CTP concerns employees for whom an economic redundancy procedure has been started either individually or collectively.

The CTP offers to those who enter into it, strengthened assistance, high indemnity, virtually 100% of their former net salary for twelve months and the possibility

of alternating assistance measures, training periods and working periods within companies during their contract. In exchange, the contracting party undertakes to be active in their job search or project for business creation. 9% of people having signed a CTP have created a business which is quite a high rate.

f. A monitored apprenticeship contract for creating or taking over a business

A person who has a project for creating or taking over a business which is dependent on them obtaining a diploma or certificate that they have completed training is not limited by age for entering into an apprenticeship contract. Small companies in diverse sectors of activity (plumbing, head-dressing) are concerned by this provision in the labour code and apprenticeship contracts are entered into with this objective of creating businesses.

7.2. Improving quality of teaching

Among the existing quality indicators, besides the «quality» labels and standards - see § 6.1.2.c - the OPQF, Professional Office for Training organisation certification (Office Professionnel de Qualification des organismes de Formation) issues a certificate for the professional qualification recognising the professionalism of training organisations (standard certification). It certifies the quality of the training teams based on third party testimonials, the curriculum vitae of the trainers and the time the organisation has existed (at least 2 years). OPQF certification is a measure for the professional recognition of continuing vocational training organisations set up in 1994 by the DGEFP of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Federation of Vocational Training (Fédération de la Formation Professionnelle), FFP, the professional association representing the branch.

Finally the Ministry of Employment has created a professional certificate certifying the competencies required for level III professional trainers to teach, design and support a training course.

See also § 6.5

7.3 Innovation-friendly VET institutions

7.3.1. For school education

a. teaching autonomy of local public teaching establishments (établissements publics locaux d'enseignement –EPLÉ)

EPLÉs have educational and teaching autonomy allowing them to organise the national guidelines locally to offer

the best chances of success to their pupils. This autonomy concerns all the types of EPLEs: junior high schools, general and technological high school and vocational high schools.

b. ICTs for pupils and students

In order to take into account the innovations and new technologies, the computing and internet first level certificate (brevet informatique et Internet) or B2i ® was created in 2000. At school, junior high school and high school, the internet first level certificate is a statement of the requirement for each future citizen to be given training that will ultimately lead them making good use of the technologies of information and communication, to see the possibilities and limits of electronic data processing, to be able to regard the results of this processing critically and to identify the legal and social restrictions by which these uses are bound.

In all subjects and in various circumstances, pupils use information and communication technologies which are tools used in support of activities. Obtaining the B2i certificate validates the competencies acquired during these activities.

It includes several levels of mastering ICTs, «primary school», «junior high school» and «high school» levels. At the high school level acquiring competencies in computing and internet is undertaken and validated through the three years at high school for level 3 (High school B2i). The high school B2i certificate is issued by the high schools (general education and technological high schools and vocational high schools). From the start of the school year 2006, the implementation of the High school B2i was systematised as part of plans to include it in the baccalauréat.

For higher education, C2i certifies competencies in a command of computing and networking tools. It has been set up with the goal of developing, strengthening and validating the command of information and communication technologies by students undergoing training in higher education establishments.

c. ICTs for teachers

Currently every new teacher must have the «teacher level 2» C2i which certifies competencies for the use of ICTs in teaching.

The «ICT training and support» programme aims to widen and systematise training and support for the ICTs for the education community as a whole: trainers, teaching and management personnel. The action is also aimed at young people with a generalisation of the Computing and internet certificate (the B2i) in school education and the setting up of a Computing and internet certificate (the C2i) in higher education. The expected results is a real inclusion of ICTs in teaching subjects and activities, requiring a command of the tools and the acquisition of specific competencies linked to new ways of working. In addition, the aim of this programme is the experimentation and promotion of new training environments.

7.3.2. For continuing vocational training

Several measures have been taken to take technological developments into account

E.g. the Internet navigation certificate (Certificat de navigation sur internet - NSI)

This initiation module, set up in 2001 by the Ministry of Employment allows beneficiaries to become familiar with navigating, communicating and searching for information on the Internet. At the end of the module, the beneficiary must be able, independently, to combine external resources (computer and Internet access) with internal resources (skills, information and working methods acquired during the training course), in order to navigate on the Internet to complete a project. There are three skills that need acquiring: navigating, communicating and searching for information on the Internet.

The initiation module also includes the learning of the necessary pre-requisites in terms of a minimum command of the computer and its various peripherals (mouse, keyboard, printer etc).

The internet initiation module is aimed at job seekers, continuing vocational training trainees enrolled on a course funded by the State and to people undergoing work integration for which the training is not the immediate project and other population groups.

In 2008, 27,700 people obtained a certificate. In all, since the Internet initiation module has been set up over 645,000 people have obtained this certificate.

7.4 Encouraging partnerships

For a number of years, the national education service has developed many cooperation initiatives with its professional partners aimed at introducing school pupils to the world of work and more especially to creativity, entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial spirit. The experience of leading a project aimed at developing the entrepreneurial spirit requires, unless it remains within a very educational context, the participation of experts or at least contributors with real practical experience.

Outside assistance is therefore very useful. It may come from the regional administrative authorities (education authority: an education authority cell responsible for developing school-business partnerships), professional environments (branches of industry, companies, chambers of commerce, entrepreneurs' associations or clubs) or experts on these matters (The French agency for business creation – Agence française pour la création d'entreprise – AFCE).

Measures have been taken to support the development of School-Business relations. They also enable the promotion and development of training centred on the entrepreneurial spirit. These are in particular:

- the organisation of national school-business conferences,
- the signing of national partnership agreements with professional branches or businesses; they may be organised regionally and locally

- the «Engineers for schools» (IPE) measure,
- the «school-enterprise» week.
- setting up local cells responsible for developing partnerships and school-business relations, in particular with the support of the IPEs,
- the organisation of local action as part of the school-enterprise week.

An example of an initiative: the «Engineers for schools» (IPE) measure

This consists of seconding from their company, temporarily, engineers and managers so that they can use their professional experience to the benefit of the education system. The goal is to promote closer ties between schools and businesses

and increase the opportunities for young people in finding work. This measure began in the 1994-1995 school year in three education authorities. It was then extended to other educational authorities. Currently, around fifty IPEs are spread over twenty-four education authorities.

An example of an initiative: the «school-enterprise» week

This is part of the annual calendar of events organised in partnership with the professional world. It is part of the framework-agreement of 19th July 2004 between the Minister of Education and the president of the French business confederation (Mouvement des entreprises de France - MEDEF). The centre of Young Business leaders (Jeunes Dirigeants) and the Young people and Business association (Jeunesse et Entreprise) are also associated with the operation. An annual event has been held every year since 2000.

8.1 Improving efficiency, equity and levels of VET funding

8.1.1. Financing of continuing vocational training

Amounting to some 28 billion euros in 2007, national expenditure on vocational training and apprenticeships increased by 5% compared to 2006 and by 25% compared to 1999. Since 2004, the country's training effort has stabilised at 1.5% of GDP.

See board below.

Investment is the great strength of the French training system. It allows the needs of businesses to be met to guarantee their competitiveness and deal with the problems of recruitment in shortage sectors by assisting employees to re-orient their careers and their professional development.

Employees remain the main beneficiaries of the continuing vocational training funds whereas expenditure for the training of job seekers has continued to fall back. Thus several studies have revealed the insufficiencies of the vocational training system:

- marked unequal access to training to the detriment of the least qualified and older groups, employees in the smallest companies and job seekers;

- funding which is insufficiently directed at those entering or leaving the employment market, in particular unqualified young people or job seekers.

a. Businesses

With an expenditure of 12 billion euros in 2007, i.e. a rise of 7% compared with 2006, businesses spend 42% of the total expenditure. The great majority of their expenditure (83%) is spent on their employees. The remainder finances in equal parts apprenticeships and other work-study programmes for young people.

All businesses have an annual obligation to participate in the financing of the continuing vocational training of their employees. The participation by businesses to continuing vocational training is an obligation of a fiscal nature. Indeed, if the amount spent by an employer is not at the same level as the amount of participation due, the employer must make a payment to the public purse equal to observed shortfall.

The rate of contributions which companies must pay is a minimum amount. Thus the obligation on companies employing fewer than 20 employees is 1.6% of their gross annual payroll costs (MSAB); however the average participation rate is greater than 3% of the MSAB.

b. The State (excluding public workers)

In 2007 State expenditure for its vocational training policy amounted to 4.3 billion euros (excluding the public

Expenditure by the end financers according to group of beneficiaries in 2007

	Apprentices	Young people in job integration	Job seekers	Private sector workers	Public workers	Total	In %
Businesses	1.04	1.03	-	9.91	-	11.98	42.2
State	1.49	0.63	0.89	1.25	2.89	7.15	25.2
Regions	2.04	0.71	1.21	0.29	0.16	4.41	15.5
Other local authorities	0.03	-	-	0.02	1.82	1.87	6.6
Other public administrations and Unédic	0.10	-	1.18	0.02	0.62	1.92	6.8
Households	0.23	-	0.20	0.66	-	1.09	3.8
Total	4.93	2.37	3.48	12.15	5.49	28.42	100

sector), i.e. 7% less than in 2006. It is strongly impacted by the gradual transfer to the Regions of the subsidised training credits implemented by the association for adult vocational training (Association nationale pour la formation des adultes – AFPA). 35% was spent on apprenticeships, 15% on young people's job integration, 28% on workers and 21% on job seekers.

c. The Regions

In 2007, the Regions contributed to the financing of continuing vocational training and apprenticeships for a total amount of 4.4 billions euros (12% more than in 2006). Apprenticeships with 43% of expenditure remain the main field of intervention for the regional councils, followed by job seekers (27% and 16% devoted to young people for their integration into their first job). Young people are the target population for the regions (with 62% of expenditure), mainly those in apprenticeships (46%); 27% being devoted to job seekers and 10% to private workers or public sector workers.

In 2007, the decentralisation of training continued. The State transferred the subsidised training credits to the Regions implemented by AFPA for job seekers.

E.g. The Career security joint fund (Fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels - FPSPP)

In order to promote funding for groups of the population who require it the most, the social partners entered into an agreement on 7th January 2009 for a national inter-professional agreement for the development of lifelong training, professionalization and the securing of careers.

Beginning with the observation of the partitioning brought about by the «status» approach, they created the Career security joint fund. This fund is officially able to receive certain resources including a percentage of the obligatory participation of employers to continuing vocational training, a complement provided by the State and a possibility of an additional contribution by the Regions.

The resources of the FPSPP allow a contribution to the financing of vocational training for the qualification and re-qualification of employees and job seekers (in particular through action for the operational preparation to employment open to job seekers for having access to a specific job offer for groups whose characteristics are set out by the framework-agreement between the State and the FPSPP.

The stated objective of the social partners in the ANI of 7th January 2009 is to double the number of these employees having access during a year to training, i.e. 500,000 additional employees and the increase of a third by job seekers benefiting from training within a single year i.e. 200,000 people.

8.2 Use of the Lifelong Learning Programme Funds

See also § 3.2.

The LLP has contributed to the construction of a European area for vocational training by ensuring an increased «porosity» of the various training systems through the Leonardo programme, both through the increase in the mobility of the actors and the dissemination of good

practice through partnerships. Nationally, this European programme has been able to contribute to improving the attraction of certain kinds of vocational training, such as for example the mobility of apprentices which contributes to creating parity of esteem between apprenticeships and other forms of education.

Moreover the objectives of this programme coincide with the national priorities including those from the law of 24th November 2009 which is an advantage for the development of vocational training partnerships aimed at creating common standards of quality, accessibility and transparency for the European training area closely linked with the Copenhagen strategy.

The Erasmus programme enabled 22,556 students to go abroad to study in a European higher education establishment in 2007/2008, reflecting a slight fall (-1.85%). The new «work placement mobility» programme taken up by 3,389 students for its first year in 2007/2008 brings the total number of Erasmus students to 25,945. 102 additional Erasmus university charters were issued in 2008/2009. The beneficiaries still mainly go abroad during their first year of master's degree courses (35.47% of them) to Spain (23.41%), the United Kingdom (19.06%) and Germany (11.60%). The average duration of study mobility remains 7 months. However, a new trend is appearing: the length of time students stay is decreasing. There were 16.48% who went away for 10 months in 2003/2004 compared with 12.45% in 2007/2008.

In 2007/2008, the contractualisation rate between the Europe-Education-Formation-France agency and the French higher education establishments was 180.56 euros per month. 42.11% of teachers spend 5 days abroad and receive a grant of 600 euros.

For the Leonardo programme, in 2008 331 mobility projects were funded in France to the rest of Europe, i.e. 6,500 Leonardo da Vinci grants. This enables a fixed travel grant to be received which contributes to the costs of linguistic and cultural preparation (a maximum of 500 euros) and for administration costs (a maximum of 300 euros).

8.3 Use of other EU funds

The European funds are used as a support for the reforms and funding of vocational training. There are many examples of the co-funding of training by the ESF. Thus, for example, since May 2008, the Burgundy (Bourgogne) region has decided to manage the ESF in the form of a global grant which constitutes an additional lever to the regional policies and real financial support for local projects linked to employment, training and job integration such as the «local plans for integration and employment» (plan local pour l'insertion et l'emploi - Plie).

As part of the programme for combating exclusion, the objective is to give an impetus to employment for people weakened by their situation of youth or adult unemployment by providing support to initiatives taken

as part of integration through work. This measure also seeks to promote local initiatives by targeting access to training or work for fragile sections of the populations distanced from the jobs market.

E.g. State-FUP Agreement (unique equalisation fund – fonds unique de péréquation) co-funded by the ESF

The agreement between the State and the unique equalisation fund (FUP) signed on 21st April 2009 is an exceptional training measure for employees, job seekers and companies made fragile by the economic crisis. It is aimed at supporting employment and developing the competencies and qualifications of the employees or job seekers in particular in sectors experiencing problems. Funding of 200 million euros is provided by the unique distribution fund and 160 million euros from the State of which 80 million euros comes from the European social fund.

130,000 employees and job seekers are concerned:

- 15,000 of the more vulnerable employees, in particular those who have not benefited from training for five years and those who work for very small and small businesses and those who are low-skilled (planned budget of 76 million euros);

- 30,000 employees affected by part-time working (54 million euros);

- 20 to 25,000 beneficiaries of the reactivation for 2009 of an end-of-training allowance for job seekers (160 million euros);

- finally, 60,000 employees made economically redundant benefiting from the personalised placement agreement (70 million euros);

This measure anticipated the setting up of the Career security joint fund (FPSPP – see § 8.1.1.).

8.4. Improving VET governance

Institutional changes in particular relating to training have been many in France.

Among the most interesting changes is that of decentralisation. Thus, continuing vocational training and apprenticeships historically are among the initial decentralised competencies attributed to the Regions. The Regional councils have acquired competence under ordinary law for continuing vocational training and apprenticeships. The Regional councils may allocate assistance funding in the field of apprenticeships and vocational training.

In 2007, the decentralisation of training continued. The State transferred the subsidised training credits to the Regions implemented by AFPA for job seekers. Decentralisation was set up to meet specific needs since local authorities are more able to know the requirements of their region than the State.

The reform of training resulting from the law of 24th November 2009 transforms the regional development plan for vocation training (plan régional de développement des formations professionnelles – PRDFP) in a contractualised instrument between the State and the Regional council with its implementation from 1st June 2011.

Progress in modernising european VET systems in the copenhagen process and priorities for future cooperation

9.1 Impact of European cooperation in VET on development of national VET policy

Cooperation in education and training at the European level has had a decisive role in the recent French reforms of continuing vocational training.

Tools created at the European level have been developed in France such as Europass: a document certifying training periods undertaken abroad. Nearly 7,600 Europass-mobilities were issued in 2008. Thus, the idea of a document describing competencies and qualifications and recording apprenticeship periods is very similar to the «training passport» which allows information about the employee's work and training and the acquisition of their expertise to be identified.

The accreditation of life experience scheme (VAE) falls within the framework of the directions set out at the European level to promote transparency, comparability and recognition of qualifications between countries whether acquired through experience or a training path. The VAE therefore falls directly within the Copenhagen European Council declaration on lifelong learning.

It should be noted that the gradual implementation of a qualifications and competencies recognition framework at the European level, the diversity of formal, non-formal and informal learning and the setting up of a transfer credit system for vocational training have contributed greatly to the setting up of the VAE measure in France.

9.2. Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level

France has participated in different European activities on training by taking part in various studies as well as exchanges of good practice with other countries of the European Union on training undertaken through the Leonardo programme.

France is present in all of the European networks in the education and training fields and thus contributes to the development of information and the development of the policies and practices relating to them.

France, during its presidency of the EU, made a large contribution to the development of action for lifelong career guidance. It was in particular behind the European resolution for lifelong career guidance of 21st November 2008.

9.3. External dimension of European cooperation in VET

Outside of the European Union, France has set up many training programmes in cooperation with other French-speaking countries and in particular with sub-Saharan countries and Quebec.

Thus, the International Centre for Educational Studies (Centre international d'études pédagogiques), a public organisation of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Research created in 1945, works closely with many national and international partners. It is recognised in France and abroad for its skills in expert reporting, training and assessment and for its ideas in the field of international cooperation in education. It has two missions: promoting French expertise abroad, participating in efforts to enhance France's attractiveness and the internationalisation of its education system.

For this purpose, teaching exchanges with Quebec are organised for primary school teachers (of 4/5-year-olds to 10/11-year-olds).

The overall goals of this programme are the following:

- allow teachers to discover a different education system and to put into greater perspective the specific features of their own system;
- make teachers aware of new content, methods and teaching tools which will enable them to enrich their own teaching and improve professionally;
- arouse the curiosity of pupils and enrich them through contact, firstly with a foreign teacher and secondly with a teacher open to other teaching and cultural realities.
- strengthen the international outlook of the school;
- create conditions which are favourable to the mobility of pupils and teachers;
- create or strengthen links between education communities and thereby encourage influences between the two countries;

– promote and multiply exchanges between the inhabitants of Quebec and the French to reinforce the historical links and cultural relationships between France and Quebec.

E.g. CODOFIL programme in Louisiana

As part of the linguistic and cultural cooperation agreements between France and Louisiana relating to education, the promotion of the language and cultural and audio-visual exchanges, the French Consulate in New Orleans, the Louisiana Education Department and the Council for the development of French in Louisiana (Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane - CODOFIL) are jointly overseeing the quality of French teaching given to the 70,000 French-speaking pupils and students of Louisiana.

In order to maintain and develop French in Louisiana, the various partners of the CODOFIL programme organise, among other projects, a teachers' exchange programme with the backing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International teaching studies centre (Centre international d'études pédagogiques - CIEP) and the Ministry of Education.

The overall goals of this programme are the following:

- contribute to the development of French in Louisiana;*
- allow the French primary school teachers to improve their level of English so that on returning to France they can undertake the teaching of English in primary schools;*
- enable holders of French as a foreign language teaching diplomas to extend their experience of teaching French as a foreign language;*
- give teachers the opportunity to experience a different civilisation and education system*

Moreover, France strove to launch the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) on 13th July 2008 and has worked hard in building a programme for the development of vocational training between the member countries of the UfM. The French government has created an inter-ministerial mission, «Union for the Mediterranean», under the control of the Prime Minister of which one of its goals is to make proposals for the development of vocational training (portal, VT itinerant university etc).

Finally, in October 2008, France set up the first world education and vocational training forum in partnership with Unesco. Its second meeting will take place in Shanghai in July 2010.

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Novembre 2008

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9.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level

La mobilité des apprentis en Europe, entre réticences et frilosités

Agathe Descamps

L'Inffo formation, n°760, 16-31 janvier 2010, p. 23

Crise et gestion des restructurations en Europe

Renée David-Aeschlimann

Inffo flash, n°746, 16-31 mai 2009, p. 24

http://www.astrees.org/fic_bdd/article_pdf_fichier/1234171701_Note_de_synthese_et_recommandations.pdf

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List of acronyms

AFC	Action de formation conventionnée Training sponsor by the employment Centre	DARES	Direction de l'animation, des études, de la recherche et de la statistique Department of conducting research, studies, and statistics
AFPA	Association de formation pour les Adultes Association for Adult Vocational Training	DEPP	Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective Department for the assessment, forecasting and performance
AFPR	Action de formation préalable au recrutement The training prior to recruitment initiative	DEUST	Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaire en Sciences et Techniques University Scientific and Technical Studies Diploma
ANCSSEC	Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances National agency for the social cohesion and the equality of opportunity	DIE	Dépense intérieure de l'Education Domestic Expenditure on Education
ANFA	Association nationale pour la formation dans le secteur automobile National association for training in the automobile sector	DIF	Droit individuel à la formation Individual training entitlement
ANI	Accord national interprofessionnel National Interprofessional Agreement	DOM	Département d'Outre-Mer Over sea department
ARE	Allocation d'aide au retour à l'emploi Back-to-work allocation	DNST	Diplôme National de Technologie Spécialisé Specialised National Technology Diploma
B2i	Brevet informatique et internet Computer and internet certificate	DUT	Diplôme Universitaire de technologie Technological University Diploma
Bac	Baccalauréats Higher secondary school diploma for economic and social (ES), literature (L) or scientific (S) studies	ENIC-NARIC	Centre national d'informations sur la reconnaissance académique et professionnelle des diplômes European Network of Information Centres National Academic Recognition Information Centres
BEP	Brevet d'Etudes Professionnelles Professional Studies Certificate	ENT	Espaces numériques de travail Digital work spaces
BP	Brevet professionnel Vocational Certificate	EPLE	Etablissement Publics Locaux d'Enseignement Teaching autonomy of local public teaching establishments
BT	Brevet de technicien Technician's Certificate	FCIBC	Fédération des Centres Interinstitutionnels de Bilans de compétences Federation of the Inter-institutional skills assessment centres
BTS	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur Higher Technician's Certificate	FFP	Fédération de la Formation Professionnelle Federation of Vocational Training
CAI	Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration Reception and integration contract	FISO	Fonds d'investissement social -social investment fund
CAP	Certificat d'Aptitudes professionnelles Professional Skills Certificate	FOAD	Formation ouverte et à distance Open and remote training
CCREFFP	Comité de coordination régionale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle Regional Coordination Committee for Employment and Vocational Training	FPC	Formation professionnelle Continue- Continual Vocational Training
CEP	Contrats d'études prospectives Prospective Studies Contracts	FPSPP	Fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels Career security joint fund
CERREQ	Centre d'études et de recherche pour l'emploi et la qualification Center of studies and research for the employment and the qualification	FSE	Fonds Social Européen European social fund
CESR	Conseil économique et social régional Economic and Social Regional Council	FUP	Fonds unique de péréquation Unique equalisation fund
CFA	Centre de formation d'apprentis Apprentice's training center	ICPF	Institut de certification des professionnels de formation
CIEP	Centre International d'études pédagogiques International teaching studies centre	INSEE	Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies
CIVIS	Contrat d'Insertion dans la Vie Sociale Social Integration Contract	IUT	Institut universitaire technologique Technological university institute
COM	Contrat d'objectifs et de moyens Objectives and resources contrats	Licence	Vocational Licence professionnelle
CNCP	Commission nationale des certifications professionnelles National commission of vocational qualifications	LP	Lycée professionnel Vocational high schools
CNESER	Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche National Higher Education and Research Council	MC	Mention Complémentaire Additional diploma
CNPA	Centre national des professions de l'automobile National centre for automobile professions	NSI	Certificat de navigation sur internet Internet navigation certificate
CNFPTLV	Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie National council of lifelong vocational learning	OFII	Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration French immigration and integration office
CODOFIL	Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane Council for the development of French in Louisiana	OPQF	Office professionnel de la qualification des organismes de formation Professional office for certifying training organisations
CP	Cours préparatoire First class	OPCA	Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés Approved Joint Collecting Bodies
CPC	Commission professionnelle consultative Professional Consultative Commission	OREF	Observatoires régionaux emploi-formation Regional Observatories for job and training
CPGE	Classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles Preparatory classes	PIB	Produit intérieur brut GDP-Growth Domestic Products
CPN	Commission pédagogique nationale National Pedagogical Commission	POE	Préparation opérationnel à l'emploi Operational preparation for employment
CPNE	Commissions paritaires nationales de l'emploi National collective employment commissions	PPCP	Projet pluridisciplinaire à caractère professionnel Pluri-disciplinary project of a professional nature
CPNFP	Comité paritaire national de la formation professionnelle Joint National Vocational Training Committee	PRDFP	Plan régional de développement de la formation professionnelle Regional plan for developing the vocational training
CQP	Certificat de qualification professionnelle Vocational qualification certificate	RNCP	répertoire national des certifications professionnelles National Directory of vocation qualifications
CRP	Convention de reclassement personnalisé Personalised Retraining Agreement	STS	Section de techniciens supérieurs Higher vocational section
DAEU	Diplôme d'Accès aux Etudes Universitaires Diploma to access to university's education	UNR	Universités numériques en région Regional digital universities
		VAE	Validation des acquis de l'expérience Accreditation of life experience

This policy report contains information on key areas of the VET policy framework since the Copenhagen Declaration and within Education and Training 2010. It is structured according to nine main themes linked to national policy development strategies, European policy aims and VET policy beyond 2010. They are:

- Progress in modernising European VET systems in the Copenhagen process and priorities for future cooperation
- Socioeconomic challenges and priorities for future VET policy development
- Economic crisis - VET policies as recovery measures
- Impact and implications of joint work on European principles and tools
- Strengthening links between VET and the labour market
- Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship
- Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET
- Enhancing creativity and innovation
- Financing VET

It was one of the main sources of information used by Cedefop to produce the 2002-10 review of the Copenhagen Process and the Lisbon-Agenda, in line with Cedefop's mandate.

The report which provides national examples/evidence under the different VET themes is complementary to information gathered on VET themes, such as the Education and Training 2010 thematic clusters as well as from other relevant European working groups.

The information feed into an analysis of policy progress which Cedefop prepared for the Ministerial meeting held during the Belgium Presidency (Bruges in December 2010) and a policy progress report which Cedefop published in early 2011. In preparing comparative progress, Cedefop drew also on findings of its studies, those of DG EAC and others from European/international sources.



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