



THEMATIC OVERVIEW

The French vocational education and training (VET) system

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0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The institutions that make up the Republic of France (Fifth Republic) are governed by the Constitution of 4 October 1958, later completed by the 1963 Referendum, which instituted the election of the President of the Republic by universal suffrage. The President of the Republic is elected for a five-year term. The government is directed by the Prime Minister, who determines and steers the nation's affairs. He is held to answer for his actions before the National Assembly. Within the government, the Minister in charge of Education is responsible for initial vocational training; the Minister in charge of Labour, meanwhile, has powers where continuous vocational training is concerned.

Departments have been created since the French Revolution (1789) and Region in 1959 but have got a real administrative power since 1982.

Region can consist of 2 to 7 departments except for overseas regions which have only one department.

Presidence of departments and regions are elected by direct suffrage.

Concerning IVET and CVET, the departments are mainly in charge of social security benefits, buildings of first level secondary school (*collèges*).

The regions are in charge of apprenticeship, CVET and building of second level of secondary school (*lycées*).

The French nation is a unitary nation. Since the adoption of Decentralisation Laws, on 2 March 1982 and 7 January 1983, the Five-Year Law of 20 December 1993, the Law on Social Modernisation of 17 January 2002 and the Law on Local Democracies of 27 February 2002, some of the State's duties have gradually been transferred to the departments and regions.

Regarding Education, the centralised State has kept responsibility over the content of the instruction, examinations and employees, while the Departments and Regions have been given powers regarding how the schooling establishments are equipped and run.

As relates to vocational training, it is now the regional councils who are in charge of apprenticeships and vocational training for unemployed youth.

Along with the Regions, the State jointly funds certain programmes intended for the unemployed and the working.

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0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Mainland France covers 543.9 million square kilometres.

As of 1 January 2004, the total population of France amounted to 61.7 million.

Number of inhabitants (as of 1 January 2004) in millions

MAINLAND	DOM -TOM	TOTAL
59.9	1.8	61.7

Source: INSEE

With demographic growth of 4.9% in 2003, France ranks fifth in the European Union, behind Italy, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal and The United Kingdom. Over the next thirty years, it is expected that this growth will slow down. According to the forecasts produced by INSEE, the population of mainland France will be 64 million inhabitants in 2030.

POPULATION Ageing (between 2000 and 2030) Forecast (%age)

0-19		20-59		+60	
2000	2030	2000	2030	2000	2030
25.6	21.3	53.8	47.6	20.6	31.1

Source: INSEE

The number of elderly people in France, which had increased by 3 million between 1970 and 2000 will rise by over 7 million people until 2030.

The reform of the CVT system, initiated by the social partners in September 2003, and confirmed by the law of 17th May 2004, takes into account the ageing of the population, by instituting measures that facilitate access to VT for people who:

- have 20 years of job experience,
- or have reached their 45th birthday.

Such employees are recognised as being entitled to a skills review, provided they have at least one year of service with the enterprise for which they work.

Moreover, a new system has been offered to employees under permanent contracts, and is known as the Professionalisation Period. It is intended to foster job retention for those employees by giving them the opportunity to:

- earn a diploma or a degree with vocational aim, a vocational qualification set out by the social partners of sectors, or a vocational qualification recognised in the social partners agreements' official listing.
- or take part in training with a vocational purpose, as defined by the social partners of sectors to which the company reports.

These initiatives are funded by the organisations that collect the dues required of enterprises by law to cover the costs of CVT development.

France is a country with a long-standing history of immigration.

In 2003, migrants accounted for 57 000 people, as compared to total natural population growth of 232 300; together, these two forces made for total growth of 289 300 people.

In March 1999, 4 310 000 immigrants (people of foreign descent, born abroad) were residing in mainland France, making for 7.4% of the population. This percentage has remained stable since 1975. Since 1990 and 1999, the number of immigrants has increased by 145 000 (+3.4%), at the same rate as the population as a whole. After a few years of residency, a substantial number of immigrants have been able to acquire French nationality. In 1999, this was the case with 1.56 million people, or one out of every three immigrants.

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0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

After three years of significant growth (+3.4% in 1998, +3.2% in 1999 and +3.8% in 2000), economic activity in France experienced a slowdown in 2001 +2.1%, 2002 (+1.2%) and 2003 +0.5%. The slowdown came at the same time as the one experienced at the world-wide level.

Evolution of GNP and consumer prices

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003

GNP	1.9%	3.4%	3.20%	3.80%	2.10%	1.20%	0.50%
CONSUMER PRICES	0.7	0.4	0.1	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.1

Source : INSEE

ECONOMIC COMPOSITION BY SECTORS

The proportion of service employments in France is higher than the average of UE and has constantly increased during the last ten years and has declined in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

Economic composition by sector

	1992	1997	2003
AGRICULTURE	5.4%	4.7%	4.1%
MANUFACTURING	26.1%	23.3%	21.7%
SERVICES	68.4%	72%	74.3%

Source: Eurostat

EMPLOYMENT RATE

The women employment rate has increased rapidly since 1995, by 5.1 points , while that of men was only increasing by 2.2 points and has remained constant during the last 3 years. This trend is part of a long-term increase in female employment.

Employment rates

	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
WOMEN	52.1	55.2	56	56.7	57.2
MEN	67.2	69.2	69.7	69.5	69.4

Source: Eurostat

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Total unemployment, as defined by the ILO, amounted 9.4% in 2003. After the steady decrease recorded between 1997 and 2001, the situation has worsened since 2002.

The unemployment rate of women remain much higher than that of men. The unemployment rate of young people under 25 has declined since 2000, due to a specific employment policy, but remains higher than the EU average.

Unemployment rates

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
MEN	10.1	9.5	9	7.6	7	7.9	8.5
WOMEN	13.3	12.9	12.2	10.9	10	10	10.5
YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 25	28.4	25.6	23.4	20.1	19.4	20	21
TOTAL	11.8	11.4	10.7	9.3	8.5	8.8	9.4

Source: Eurostat

EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Since 1990, the share of education expenditure in GDP saw a variety of changes. From 1990 to 1993, it rose markedly to 7.8 % , because of the efforts made by regional authorities and because of the re evaluation of teachers salaries. Since 1993, the share of DEE in GDP has seen sustained decline, from 7.8 % to 7.1%.

In 2003, the domestic expenditure on education and training reached 7.1 % of the gross domestic product.

Percentage of GDP expenditure on education and training

1999	2002	2003
7.6	7.2	7.1

Source: the state of education , n° 14, ministry of education. DEP, october 2004
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0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

Educational attainment of the french population is nearly the same as european average.

Educational attainment

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3	ISCED 5
FRANCE	35%	41%	23%
EU	32%	46%	20%

Source: Eurostat

Nevertheless, important progresses have been accomplished during the last 20 years. In 2002, nearly 80 % of the french population aged 25-34 years old had an ISCED 3 diploma. This rate is 30 points higher than that of the 55-64 years old generation.

Proportion of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

2000	2002	2003
13.3	13.4	13.3

Source : the state of school - Ministry of education - 2004

Concerning the young population with at most lower secondary education, the french proportion is lower than that of the european average.

In 2002, 7% of school leavers did not have any qualification. This proportion has declined continuingly over the last 30 years: 35% in 1965, 14% in 1985, 7 % in 2002.

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02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

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0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

In order to deal with the high unemployment rate posted in the 1980s, in particular that of young people and those lacking qualifications, the last few years have witnessed the adoption of many measures designed to better suit initial training offers to the needs of companies.

A large-scale undertaking to improve the image of vocational training was launched in the 1990s, through the creation of technological and vocational Baccalaureates, as well as instruction intended for advanced technicians (2 years above Baccalaureate level) and the newly-introduced vocational licence (a diploma equivalent to 3 years of post-Baccalaureate training). From 1980 to 2000, the number of young people who exited the educational system without qualifications has fallen by 50%.

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXITED THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM :	1980 (EN %)	1990 (EN %)	2000 (EN %)	2002 (EN %)
WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS	15	12.8	7.3	7.8
WITH HIGHEST DIPLOMA (BACCALAUREATE OR MORE)	31	47	59	62

Source : Reperes et references statistiques- Ministry of Education - 2004

Starting in 1984, alternating work-study contracts, which balance out coursework and on-the-job experience, were set up, and could be found in the form qualification contracts, adaptation contracts and orientation contracts. The social partners who had created these contracts decided to stop its (national inter professional agreement on December 5th, 2003) and to replace its by the only contract - the contract of professionalisation intended not only for the young people but also for the adults job-seeker, and which contains a sandwich course and/or a support programme.

At the same time, the apprenticeship system modernised in 1987, makes it possible for young people to sign a series of several contracts and thereby earn a diploma above the professional

certificate of capacity level (Level 2). Thanks to this, the number of apprentices in France increased by over 24% between 1995 and 2000. However, for two years the number of new apprenticeship contracts, does not stop putting off. That is why the government tries to boost it through the implementation of a tax credit for quite hiring in apprenticeship and others advantages (law of programming for the social cohesion on January 18th, 2005). The government hopes to reach the number of 500 000 contracts before 2009.

NEW CONTRACTS	1990	1995	2000	2002	2003
APPRENTICESHIP	131 000	173 569	237 876	236 826	232 835

Source: Budget plans – 1997, 2002 et 2005

In order to address the needs of young people between 16 and 25 with several difficulties and often no qualifications, the law of programming for the social cohesion on January 18th, 2005 set up a strengthened vocational preparation. The objective is to accompany 800 000 young people before 2009. The access to the contract "young people" and to the contract of insertion in the social life (CIVIS) will be facilitated for the beneficiaries of this vocational preparation.

The social partners signed an agreement on vocational life long learning, on December 5th 2003. That agreement has been ratified by a law on May 4th, 2004.

They provide for :

- a individual right to training for employees,
- the possibility for employees to attend training courses outside working hours,
- a work contract described as a "professionalisation's contract" for young and adult job seekers providing for sandwich courses or programs which facilitate integration (i.e. : validation of learning or vocational skills analysis).

They increase the levels of contributions of the firms (from 1,5 to 1,6 % of the firm's gross annual wage bill, for the companies with a minimum of 10 employees, and from 0,25 to 0,55 % for the companies with less than 10 employees).

The law relative to the liberties and to the local responsibilities on August 13th, 2004 strengthens the role of regional councils by widening the Regions' responsibilities in the vocational training of the unemployed adults. Henceforth Regions define and implement the regional policies of apprenticeship and vocational training, not only for young people, but also for unemployed adults.

The first part of the law of programming for the social cohesion on January 18th, 2005, concerns the employment and in particular:

- the creation of "employment houses" (like the English "job centers"),
- the opening of the market of the employment to the competition,
- the creation (or the revision) of subsidized work contracts.

Finally, the Ministry of Education presented a bill " about orientation for the future of the School ". The main objective is the success of all the pupils that is to lead:

- 100 % of the pupils in the acquisition of a diploma or a recognized qualification, at the end of their compulsory education,
- 80 % of an age group at the level of the high school diploma,
- and 50 % of an age group to a diploma of the higher education.

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0301 - ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

1 - AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The Ministry for National Education, Higher Education and Research is responsible for making educational policy governing vocational training in schools and through apprenticeship. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Rural Affairs is similarly responsible for professional agricultural training.

The Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Cohesion oversees vocational training for young people employed through alternating work-study contracts as part of workforce re-entry programs as well as for private-sector employees.

These ministries are organised into various departments, offices, and directorates whose mission is to ensure that vocational training-related policies are implemented.

Actually, there is no centralised national authority in the area of vocational training. However, two specific authorities, which report to the Prime Minister, have been created:

- The Interministerial Committee on Vocational training sets policy priorities in the area of vocational training and takes the necessary measures to co-ordinate programs planned by the different government offices.
- The National Vocational training, Social Advancement and Employment Advisory Board evaluates and recommends the appropriate action to take in order to ensure better co-operation between government organisations, professional organisations, and unions. The Board also gives its opinion on vocational training policy with regards to economic needs and employment perspectives.

However, according to the law relative to the liberties and to the local responsibilities on August 13th, 2004, these two bodies will disappear when all the legislation will be modified. They will be both replaced by the National Vocational Lifelong Learning Board. It :

- evaluates the regional vocational life-long learning and apprenticeship policies,
- gives its opinion on future vocational life-long learning and apprenticeship legislation,
- writes annual reports on vocational life-long learning and apprenticeship uses of fundings,
- controls the good using of these fundings.

State, local, and regional authorities are responsible for training their staff.

2 - THE REGIONS

The decentralisation process, which began in the 1980s and was stepped up in the 90s, resulted in the 26 Regional Councils (regions) taking on a central role in vocational training, particularly for young people between the ages of 16 to 25, vocational training interns, and young people working under apprenticeship contracts.

The last law of this process, relative to the liberties and to the local responsibilities of August 13th, 2004 strengthens the role of regional councils by widening the Regions' responsibilities in the vocational training of the unemployed adults. Henceforth Regions define and implement the regional policies of apprenticeship and vocational training, not only for young people, but also for unemployed adults.

In order to carry out their new mission, the regions have had to set up their own administrative structures. Each region now has its own vocational training commission, department, or directorate.

In order to promote the co-ordination of vocational training policy and action, French laws 2002-73 dated January 17, 2002 and 2002-92 dated January 22, 2002 instituted regional employment and vocational training co-ordination committees. These committees are made up of state representatives in each region, regional assemblies, management and labour organisations, and regional chambers of agriculture, commerce, industry, and trade. Their mission is to promote co-operation between the many organisations involved in vocational training in order to ensure better harmonisation of vocational training and employment policy.

[Outline no 1](#)

0302 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1 - THE LAWS

EDUCATION

In June 2000 all laws governing education were compiled, forming a single Educational Code, which, for the most part, has taken the place of all previous educational laws. The code contains general and common provisions as well as provisions that apply to different educational levels.

On February 27, 2003, the Youth Affairs, Education and Research Ministry issued a circular highlighting vocational high schools as a key element in promoting vocational and technical education.

In December 2004, the Ministry of Education presented a bill " about orientation for the future of the School ". The main objective is the success of all the pupils that means, for example, to lead 100 % of the pupils in the acquisition of a diploma or a recognized qualification, at the end of their compulsory education.

CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

For the past 35 years, continuing vocational training has been considered an independent area of labour law. In 1973, the French law dated July 16, 1971 was codified, becoming the ninth and last book of the French Labour Code. Legislative and regulatory provisions related to continuing vocational training have subsequently rounded out the new book of the Labour Code.

The most recent laws related to vocational training are as follows:

JULY 17TH, 2001	This law includes various social, educational and cultural (DDOSEC) provisions that lay the legal foundation for the implementation of back-to-work assistance programs included in the unemployment insurance agreement dated January 1, 2001.
NOVEMBER 16TH, 2001	This anti-discrimination law protects employees against all forms of discrimination affecting training (i.e :access to recruitment procedures or in-company training)
JANUARY 17TH, 2002	The "social modernisation" law includes several provisions related to vocational training mainly in the area of obtaining job experience validation (la validation des acquis de l'expérience or VAE), funding for apprenticeships, determining what training is to be made available, and creating regional employment and vocational training co-ordination committees.
MAY 4TH, 2004	The law reforms the French VET for the employees of the private sector.
AUGUST 13TH, 2004	The law relative to the liberties and to the local responsibilities strengthens the role of regional councils by widening the Regions' responsibilities in the vocational training.

Concerning the continuing vocational training for the private sector's employees, the framework in which regulations are negotiated is specific. First, labour organisations negotiate interprofessional agreements at the national level, and then legislators incorporate all or part of these regulations into a law.

Main examples

	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
SOCIAL PARTNERS AGREEMENTS	July 9, 1970	October 26, 1983	July 3, 1991	December 20, 2003
LAWS	July 16, 1971	February 24, 1984	December 31, 1991	May 4th, 2004

2 - THE AGREEMENTS

Continuing vocational training has been subject to negotiation between the French social partners (trade unions and employers organisation) since 1971.

NEGOTIATION AT THE INTERPROFESSIONAL LEVEL

At the national level, labour organisations negotiate interprofessional regulations, particularly when they feel reforms are needed.

The most recent National Interprofessional Agreement (in French : accord national interprofessionnel or ANI) was concluded on December 5th, 2003. This agreement, which focuses on vocational life long learning, modified the previous interprofessional collective agreement related to continuing vocational training (July 3rd, 1991 agreement). The principal additions included in the agreement concern:

- a individual right to training for employees,
- the possibility for employees to attend training courses outside working hours,
- a work contract described as a "professionalisation's contract" for young and adult job seekers providing for sandwich courses or programs which facilitate integration (i.e. : validation of learning or vocational skills analysis).
- the increase of the levels of contributions of the firms.

Most of the provisions in this agreement were incorporated into the French law dated May 4th, 2004.

NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PROFESSIONAL BRANCHES

Since 1984 legislation and the National Interprofessional Agreement have made it possible for representatives of professional organisations to participate in negotiations regarding vocational training goals and resources.

The "five-year law" dated December 20, 1993 and the National Interprofessional Agreement of December 5th, 2003 have strengthened professional branches' power to take initiatives, in particular by allowing them to take action (adapted to the needs of each professional branch and company) in a wide variety of areas such as the implementation of mechanisms to raise funds for vocational training.

The French law dated January 17, 2002, known as the "social modernisation law," includes provisions related to interprofessional negotiation of continuing vocational training priorities, goals, and resources. These negotiations must now also include training programs implemented to ensure that employees are able to adapt to changes in their jobs, the acquisition of new skills, and the objective-based upstream management of positions within the company.

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0303 - ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

1 - AN ADVISORY ROLE

1-A INITIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Labour organisations consult with:

- the Professional Consultative Commissions (commissions professionnelles consultatives or CPC), with the various ministries responsible for the creation of diplomas and technological and professional certificates,
- the National Pedagogical Commission for the creation of diplomas awarded by university-level technological institutes (for two-year programs of study beyond the high school level),
- the National Expert's Board for Professional Licensing (for three-year programs of study beyond high school),
- and the National Higher Education and Research Council (conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche or CNESER) for all higher education diplomas.

Labour organisations may, acting in a consultative capacity, express their opinions to the various ministries that have implemented Professional Consultative Commissions (National Education, Employment, Youth and Sports, Agriculture) on the creation or modification of diploma or title programs.

1 – B CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES

When the state sets priorities for continuing vocational training and apprenticeship policies on a national level, it must first consult with its partners, including labour organisations, within the framework of the National Vocational training, Social Advancement and Employment (FPPSE) Council.

The regions establish their own continuing vocational training policies. Each region draws up a regional training development plan in order to co-ordinate the different areas of vocational training for young people, both initial and continuing, at a regional level. The plan is based on an active partnership between all concerned parties. The president of the regional council is responsible for setting up consultation meetings with employer and employee unions, among other organisations.

2 - DIRECT INVOLVEMENT THROUGH LABOUR-MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

2 – A AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

There are two joint labour-management authorities in charge of co-ordinating and regulating training-related issues:

- The National Joint Committee for Vocational training (le Comité paritaire national pour la formation professionnelle or CPNFP) is in charge of ensuring that vocational training programs run smoothly and that collective agreements are duly applied within the framework of agreements related to continuing vocational training
- The Unique fund of adjustment (le Fonds unique de péréquation or FUP) co-ordinates issues related to individual training leave and is in charge of financial regulations related to sandwich courses funds.

2 – B AT THE PROFESSIONAL BRANCH LEVEL

Joint authorities such as the Joint Employment Commissions (commissions paritaires nationales de l'emploi or CPNE) are cooperative authorities uniting management representatives and labour unions. They promote training issues when employment policies and policies governing Individual Training Leave are created.

Approved Joint Collection Organisations (organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés or OPCA), which are managed by labour organisations, collect, pool, and allocate mandatory contributions by companies within the framework of their continuing vocational training plan.

3 - THE ROLE OF LABOUR ORGANISATIONS IN TRAINING JOB SEEKERS

A portion of unemployment insurance funds is allocated not to direct benefits for the unemployed, but rather to managing employment and training policies. This is the case for the training that are part of personalised action plans for job seekers receiving back-to-work training funds (allocation d'aide au retour à l'emploi-formation or AREF).

These funds are managed jointly by management and labour representatives, at the national level by Unédic, and locally by Assédic (1). The new unemployment insurance agreement concluded by labour organisations and approved by the state in December 2000 took effect on July 1, 2001 and includes important provisions for the training of job seekers.

4 - DIAGRAM

Diagram of Education System in France

The levels of education/training in France

LEVEL	DEFINITIONS
I AND II	Personnel performing jobs that usually require a level of education equal to or greater than a university or engineering school degree.
III	Personnel performing jobs that usually require a level of education equal to higher-grade technical diplomas, diplomas awarded by university technical institutes, or first-cycle higher education studies.
IV	Personnel performing skilled jobs or who have a level of education equal to a technical school-leaving certificate, technician qualification, or vocational lower grade school technical certificate.
V	Personnel performing jobs that usually require a level of education equal to a vocational school-leaving certificate or by assimilation, an adult vocational training certificate (CFPA1 er degré).
VI	Personnel performing jobs that do not require any training beyond mandatory schooling.

SGFP Circular no. 1630 dated June 25, 1979 (BL 79/4).

(1) Assédic at the local level and Unédic at the national level have managed the unemployment rolls and unemployment and solidarity benefits since 1997.

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04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

Education System in France

This table has no legal value. He allows only a first comparison.

FRENCH TRAINING LEVELS STRUCTURES <i>CIRCULAIRE N° 1630 - 25.6.79 DU SGFP</i>		EUROPEAN TRAINING LEVELS STRUCTURES <i>EUROPEAN COUNCIL DECISION N° 85/368 - 16.7.85 (JOCE L. 199/56 DU 31.7.85).</i>	
LEVEL V BIS & VI	Person occupying a position of lower secondary education level, having left school prior to obtaining a diploma. Person occupying a position that requires no other training than compulsory schooling.	LEVEL 1	Training providing access to this level: compulsory education and professional initiation. This professional initiation is acquired at an educational establishment, in an out-of-school training programme, or at the undertaking. The volume of theoretical knowledge and practical capabilities involved is very limited. This form of training must primarily enable the holder to perform relatively simple work and

			may be fairly quickly acquired.
LEVEL V	Person occupying a skilled position or possessing a qualification equivalent to the level of a technical or technician 's secondary education examination and of the technician 's diploma.(BAC).	LEVEL 2	Training providing access to this level: compulsory education and vocational training (including, in particular, apprenticeships). This level corresponds to a level where the holder is fully qualified to engage in a specific activity, with the capacity to use the instruments and techniques relating thereto. This activity involves chiefly the performance of work which may be independent within the limits of the relevant techniques.
LEVEL IV	Person occupying a position normally requiring the level of training of the higher technician 's diploma or of the diploma from a university technological institute and the end of the first cycle of higher education. (BAC +2).	LEVEL 3	Training providing access to this level: compulsory education and/or vocational training and additional technical training or technical educational training or other secondary-level training. This form of training involves a greater fund of theoretical knowledge than level 2. Activity involves chiefly technical work which can be performed independently and/or entail executive and coordination duties.
LEVEL III	Person occupying a position normally requiring a level of training that is equivalent to that of the vocational studies diploma (BEP) or of the vocational skills certificate (CAP)	LEVEL 4	Training providing access to this level: secondary training (general or vocational) and post-secondary technical training. This form of training involves high-level technical training acquired at or outside educational establishments. The resultant qualification covers a higher level of knowledge and of capabilities. It does not generally require mastery of the scientific bases of the various areas concerned. Such capabilities and knowledge make it possible in a generally autonomous or in an independent way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities.
LEVEL II & I	Person occupying a position requiring a level of training equal or superior to a Master 's Degree or an engineering school degree. (BAC +4). Person occupying a position requiring a "licence"(undergraduate degree) level of training. (BAC +3).	LEVEL 5	Training providing access to this level: secondary training (general or vocational) and complete higher training. This form of training generally leads to an autonomously pursued vocational activity - as an employee or as self-employed person - entailing a mastery of the scientific bases of the occupation. The qualifications required for engaging in a vocational activity may be integrated at these various levels.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN FRANCE

In France, the school system is the responsibility of the *Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale* [Minister for National Education]. School is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 but all children attend nursery from the age of three. At six, they enter primary school which lasts for five years and results no later than the age of twelve in entrance to *collège* [lower secondary school] which is the sole point of entry for pupils leaving primary school. Secondary school lasts four years, unless a year needs to be repeated. This consists of Year 7, Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10. When leaving *collège* [lower secondary school], pupils at 15 (unless they repeated a year) attend either a *lycée d'enseignement général et technologique* (general education and

technological school) to study for a general or technical *baccalauréat* in three years, or to a *lycée professionnel* to study for a *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP) or a *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP) in two years, and then in some cases, a *baccalauréat professionnel* over two additional years.

The *baccalauréat* represents the end of secondary school process and qualifies pupils for higher education.

Higher education offers general education as well as technological and professional education, at universities and *grandes écoles*, centres of excellence run by various different government ministries: the *Ministère de L'Education Nationale* for universities and some engineering schools with the remainder of these schools being run by the *Defence, Industry, Transport and Agriculture Ministries*.

In 2001, 23.4% of the working population had no qualifications, whilst 7.5% had a BEPC or a *brevet des collèges* (a qualification obtained at the end of the second phase of secondary education), 29.1% a CAP or a BEP, 14.4% a *baccalauréat* or equivalent and 25.7% a qualification higher than the *baccalauréat*.

France has a long tradition of pre-primary education. It is optional for children between the ages of 2 and 5. 99.9% of children of age 3 are in the school system. In 2001/2002, the proportion of 2-year-olds in education amounted to 34.7%.

Public pre-primary or nursery schools are the responsibility of the *Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale* and are free. At private schools, attended by 1.5% of children, parents pay some of the school fees.

Nursery school is equal to the initial education phase. As a general rule, children are grouped by age into three sections: small section (3-year olds), medium section (4-year-olds) and big section (5-years-olds). The main educational points of the activities contribute to the child's overall development and as a preparation for primary school.

Primary education is free of charge in State schools and compulsory for all children from the age of 6 onwards. The schooling period lasts 5 years up to the age of 11. 85.3% of children are educated in public schools. Primary schools provide the child with fundamental elements and instrument of knowledge: verbal and written expression, reading mathematics as well as lessons in history, geography, civic education, science and technology, living language, physical, sports and artistic education.

The school process consists of two phases: the fundamental learning phase which starts in the big section of nursery school and continues over the two first years of primary school (preparatory course - "CP" - followed by a 1st year primary course - "CE 1"), then the improvement phase covering the last three years (CE 2, then average classes 1st and 2nd years) before starting secondary school. The time spent by pupils in each of the phases may be increased or reduced by one year in order to reflect the child's rate of learning.

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0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

Lower secondary education (*collège*) is attended by all children after primary school no later than the age of 12, apart from:

- children with severe handicap which does not allow them to be educated in an ordinary school. Those children attend specialist establishments, called *établissements régionaux d'enseignement adapté* (Special General and Professional Education Institutes), managed by the Ministry of National Education or the Ministry of Health.
- children who experience serious learning difficulties after primary school. Those children attend sections *d'enseignement général et professionnel adapté* (Special General and Professional Education Institutes) (SEGPA) within the *collège* structure

Lower secondary schooling at *collège* lasts four years, covering school years 7 to 10. Education is organised into three educational phases:

- the adjustment phase which consists of school year 7;
- the central phase which includes the school years 8 and 9;
- the orientation phase in school year 10, with the option of technology classes.

At the end of the school year 10, pupils sit the *brevet* examination which is obtained from the exam results and the grades achieved in school years 9 and 10.

For some years now, measures have been taken to give a better reflection of the diversity of the school population and to encourage children who encounter difficulty to perform successfully, this involves: catch-up classes for small group of pupils; supervised studying; support aids; insertion classes in school year 10, which combine school lessons and training in a professional environment.

The recent introduction into the central phase of "*itinéraires de découverte*" (discovery programmes), enables pupils to go into more depth in some compulsory lessons, as a result of their own research.

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0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

When leaving *collège*, pupils aged 15 (unless they have had to repeat a year), either attend a *lycée d'enseignement général et technologique* (LEGT), or a **lycée professionnel** (LP).

At the LEGT, schooling is organised over a three-year period: year 11, upper sixth and lower sixth, which lead to the *baccalauréat* exam.

It is not until the end of Year 11, called the determination year, which is common to all pupils, that they need to choose the type of *baccalauréat* they wish to sit: of the three general categories (economics and sociology, literary or scientific) or one of the seven technology categories. The *baccalauréat* exam is taken at the end of the upper-sixth year but in certain disciplines, pupils take their exams at the end of the lower sixth year

The *lycée professionnel* prepares for the first level of professional qualification over a two-year period: called the *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP) or *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP). These qualifications are designed to give pupils direct access to employment. However, pupils who want to can then study over a two-year period (in the professional lower and upper sixth years) for a *baccalauréat professionnel*, in one of the 48 specialisations offered.

The reference points for professional qualifications issued by the Ministère de l'Education Nationale are still drawn up in partnership with the appropriate sector of industry within professional consultative commissions. To obtain these qualifications, a period of training in industry is always required. The existence of a procedure to validate professional expertise, where applicable, exempts the candidates from some of the exams.

Number of candidates, qualifications obtained and candidates who have passed in technological and professional education
Mainland France - Session 2001

QUALIFICATIONS STUDIED FOR	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES
CAP candidates admitted Candidates who have been received	99 884 81%
BEP candidates admitted Candidates who have been received	152 250 74.5%
Brevet de technicien admitted Candidates who have been received	1 593 77%
Technology BAC candidates admitted Candidates who have been received	143 475 78.4%
Professional BAC candidates admitted Candidates who have been received	89 468 77.7%

Source: Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective (DEP). Ministère de la Jeunesse, de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche.

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0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Apprenticeship offers alternating training provided by both a company and an apprentice training centre (*centre de formation d'apprentis, CFA*). Considered to be a form of basic education, it prepares for all professional qualifications. Since 1987, the qualifications studied by apprentices were for level 2 to level 5. Nevertheless, in 2002-2003, 64 % of apprentices studied for a first level manual worker qualification (ISCED 2).

Apprenticeships are offered within a framework of an employment contract, between the 16-25 year-old (the apprentice), and an employer registered for this purpose with the government. The apprenticeship is financed by all private employers (except for liberal and agricultural professions) through an apprenticeship tax, by the State and the regional public authorities.

THE APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACT

The apprenticeship contract is a contract of employment of a particular type which is governed by the *Code du Travail* [Employment Act]. The purpose of the contract is to provide the young person with general theoretical and practical training in order to obtain a professional qualification for which a diploma or professional certificate is issued.

In order to conclude an apprenticeship contract, employers must prove that they will take all the necessary actions to organise the apprenticeship and appoint a person, called the *maître d'apprentissage* [apprenticeship supervisor], who is directly responsible for training the apprentice, performing the role of tutor. In small companies, the employer is generally the apprenticeship supervisor.

Typical age of apprentices is between 16 and 22 years old.

The normal term of the contract varies between one and three years - 75% of apprenticeship contracts signed, are for a period of between one and two years. It may be modulated according to the profession and the young person's skills.

The broad segments that traditionally train apprentices are hairstyling, specialised retail stores, construction, automobile sale and repair, hotels and restaurants and small-scale food shops.

TRAINING

Training takes place both within the company (75% of the total time) and at a *Centre de Formation des Apprentis, CFA* [Apprenticeship Training Centre] 25 % of the total time. The employer is required to conduct the apprentice's practical training, notably by giving him to carry out tasks that comply with the annual progression, drawn up by mutual agreement with CFA.

The employer is required to register the young person at the CFA that offers the required courses for the training stated in the contract. The CFAs are created by an agreement with a regional authority or with the State and the CFA's managing body. It may be a private educational establishment - professional trade union, company or any other legal entity or individual (51% of apprentices or public body 12.5%; a chamber of commerce and industry 10.5%; a Chamber of Trade 22.5% or of Agriculture or a local authority 2.5%). CFAs are subject to the educational supervision of the State (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*) and the technical and financial supervision of the State or the region.

The training given by the CFA may not be less than an average of 400 hours per year.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On February 2001, seven months after leaving a CFA, 7 out of 10 apprentices (with all types of qualifications) were in employment. Amongst them, 65.6% were in unassisted employment, 7.2% were in assisted employment - Of the remainder, 18.6% were looking for work, 2.6% were on a course, 3% were unemployed and 3% were doing their national service.

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0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Some programmes are specifically tailored to facilitate the integration of young people aged 16 to 25, without or with inadequate qualifications.

For the last 20 years or so, considering the high level of unemployment for young people, alternative job-study programmes have been organised. Those are organised either as part of a work contract, or as part of an internship. In the former case, the young people have employee status, while in the latter, they are interns in vocational training.

Alternative job studies fulfil three priorities:

- offer a remedy to unemployment amongst young people with few or low qualifications
- foster their entry in the job market
- enhance their vocational profile (job suitability, access to qualifications).

Until September 2004, three different programmes were offered to young people, depending on their needs. In 2002, 186 600 young persons were hired through these contracts. As of October 2004, a new contract the "professionalisation contract" has replaced the three previous contracts.

CURRICULA

Once is signed the professionalisation contract, the employer has to provide to the young person a job for the specified time (from 6 months up to 24 months) and training that will help him to gain a "recognised vocational qualification": vocational studies diploma, nationally recognised or certifications recognised by sectors.

The general, vocational or technological courses must account at least 15% of the total contract time. This percentage may be adjusted up to 25 % upon agreement of the work sectors.

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0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

Senior technical sections in *lycées* offer courses over a two-year period in the *brevet de technicien supérieur* (BTS), which is designed to give access to employment.

In addition, technology university institutes attached to universities also offer two-year courses to obtain a professional qualification called the *diplôme universitaire de technologie* (DUT).

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0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Higher education is available at universities or public or private higher education colleges, some of which are called *grandes écoles*.

Universities accept students without any selection process - except for medical, dental and pharmaceutical disciplines and technological university institutes - who have obtained the *baccalauréat*, a *diplôme d'accès aux études universitaires* (Access to University Studies Diploma)(DAEU) or an equivalent qualification. Studies are split into semesters and course units for which the student is awarded credits. A degree is awarded to students who obtain 180 credits, normally over a period of three years; 300 credits are needed - or 120 more than for a first degree over two additional years study to obtain a masters degree. There is a professional masters degree leading to employment, and research masters which open the way for studying for a doctorate normally over a three-year period.

Technology university institutes attached to universities have a student selection process and prepare them in two years for a *diplôme universitaire de technologie* (DUT) designed to provide entry into working life. However, holders of these qualifications are increasingly offered the option of studying for a further one-year period at the IUT or university to obtain a professional degree, a new qualification created in 1999 under the Bologna Declaration, the policy for building a European higher education area.

"Registration rights" in the university sector are limited and some students can obtain financial assistance in the form of grants based on social criteria, grants based on university criteria (for masters and some competitions) or interest-free loans on trust.

The non-university sector includes public and private higher education colleges and institutes supervised by the various ministries, who have selective entry procedures and provide higher education for professional purposes. These establishments offer short forms of education: in technology, business and paramedical disciplines etc, or a high level long-term education: political studies institutes, engineering schools, business and management schools, veterinary schools etc. Private establishments must be issued with a legal declaration of opening. These establishments are highly diversified and have in common a rigorous entry selection policy.

Entry to the most prestigious higher education colleges, known as "grandes écoles" is by competition prepared in two years in *grande école* preparatory classes (CPGE).

Numbers in higher education in 2003-2004
Mainland France and overseas *départements*

TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT	UNIVERSITIES	IUFM	STS	CPGE	ENGINEERING SCHOOLS	BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCHOOLS	OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS	TOTAL

NUMBER	1 425 665	85 808	234 195	72 053	66 146	80 619	290 378	2 254 864
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Source : ministry of Education, DEP, RERS 2004

The role of the *Instituts de Formation des Maîtres* (IUFM) (Teacher Training Institutes), attached to universities, is to train for primary and secondary school teachers.

STS are advanced technicians departments, located in upper secondary schools (lycées) which leads to BTS higher technician's certificate, level 5 B.

"Other higher education establishments" notably cover private higher education establishments, paramedical and social schools, law and administrative schools and schools for artistic and cultural disciplines.

EXAM PASS RATES DURING FIRST PHASE OF UNIVERSITY

In the 2000 session, over three out of four students obtained their DEUG, an intermediate diploma normally delivered at the end of two years at university: almost half in two years and one quarter in three years.

The highest pass rates are in arts and sciences. The DUT pass rate is 86% achieved over two or three years.

	CUMULATIVE PASS RATE	IN 2 YEARS	IN 3 YEARS	IN 4 YEARS
DEUG	77.6%	45.7%	21.8%	8.0%
DUT	86.2%	66.6%	19.6%	

Source: Ministry of education, DEP

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05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

The framework proposed to deal with the authority concerning VT doesn't allowed us to describe in a relevant way the French VT system.

We can only make the following observations :

- concerning quality assurance, please see 050103 Evaluation
- concerning target groups and provision, you can confer 0501 continuing vocational education and training, 050103 Evaluation or 0503 Background
- concerning providers, please see 050302
- concerning access, we have no data because it depends on the type/programs

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0501 - BACKGROUND AND MAIN TYPES OF CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

In France, Continuing Vocational training (*formation professionnelle continue or FPC*) concerns those already in the workforce, whether they are young people or adults; those who wish to ensure their ability to adapt to future changes in working conditions and techniques, and those who aim to maintain or improve professional qualifications or to promote their social and professional advancement. Continuing vocational training is a significant sector of the economy representing 1.7% of France's GDP.

Continuing vocational training as we know it today was implemented in the early 1970s and involves the state as well as companies, local communities, public institutions, public and private educational institutions, professional organisations, unions, and family organisations. Continuing vocational training has a unique structure that allows for collective negotiations and provides for a variety of means of access to training programs depending on individual needs.

Legal provisions related to continuing vocational training came about due to state initiatives in the form of laws and decrees, industrial partners contributions through collective agreements

(national interprofessional agreements), agreements by professional branch or economic sector, and company agreements.

State and regional authorities share responsibility for implementing continuing vocational training programs. The regions have been granted overall authority in this area and are free to design their own continuing vocational training policies. The state's powers in this area are limited by the law to certain areas such as training in prisons, training for the handicapped or for other disadvantaged populations.

In order to maintain consistency and harmony between state and regional programs a co-ordination committee, The Regional Apprenticeship and Vocational training Co-ordination Committee, was created at the national level. Companies play a dual role. They are both the preferred location for implementing training programs and, in concert with the state and the regions, companies are a major source of funding for continuing vocational training.

Professional organisations and unions play a role in drawing up provisions related to continuing vocational training and work towards implementing them through creating and managing joint labour-management organisations. These joint organisations essentially play a consultative role in their relations with government officials, but in the field they co-ordinate, regulate, co-operate, and manage many issues related to vocational training.

Individual access to training depends on status and any specific training-related problems encountered. Industrial partners and the state have created and implemented different systems for job seekers and those already in the workforce (private-sector employees, civil servants, the self-employed).

Training for job seekers falls into two main categories: internships and special employment contracts such as orientation contracts, training contracts, or adaptation contracts. For those already in the workforce, training is either decided upon by the employer as part of a company training plan or requested by the employee as part of the training leave program, which most often takes the form of an individual training leave.

The final type of provision regarding continuing vocational training is the possibility of earning job experience validation. These programs give individuals, whether they are employed, seeking employment, or volunteers, the opportunity to earn credit for experience gained over a minimum period of three years. Credit earned can be applied (in lieu of formal diploma or certificate studies) toward obtaining an official or nationally recognised qualification.

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0502 - PLANNING AND ORGANISATION OF LEARNING

Legislative provisions related to continuing vocational training are now part of the Labour Code. Continuing vocational training has, for the past 30 years, been considered a new area of labour law. At the impetus of industrial partners, training is now subject to collective bargaining at the national interprofessional level.

The state, the regional councils, local governments, companies, the unemployment insurance system, and households all contribute to funding for adult continuing vocational training.

The decentralisation of government programs has granted general authority over training issues, particularly for young people, to the regions.

Employee training programs are funded through mandatory employer contributions calculated as a percentage of their payroll.

The state unemployment insurance system finances training for job seekers.

According to a survey conducted by The French Centre for Research on Education, Training and Employment (*CEREP*) in 2000, 28 % of the population aged 15 and over had participated in some type of training program over the course of the year. A higher proportion of men than women had access to training (29% vs. 26%) and those under age 50 had greater access than senior citizens.

Distribution of training participants by age and sex

AGE	ALL PARTICIPANTS			POPULATION AGED 15 AND UP
	MEN	WOMEN	ALL	

	Number of trainees	Percentage access	Number of trainees	Percentage access	Number of trainees	Percentage access	Total number	%
15 - 24	368 467	35	315 475	32	683 942	33	2 045 567	100
25 - 39	2 175 860	36	1 852 404	30	4 028 264	33	12 296 768	100
40 - 49	1 314 889	32	1 288 595	30	2 603 484	31	8 398 177	100
50 +	852 786	18	849 847	17	1 702 633	18	9 641 978	100
TOTAL	4 712 002	29	4 306 321	26	9 018 323	28	32 382 490	100

Source: Survey, "Formation continue 2000," The French Centre for Research on Education, Training and Employment.

Furthermore, the level of access to training varied significantly according to occupational category. In the private sector, unskilled workers had a 16.1% access rate, skilled workers had a rate of 28.2%, regular employees had an access rate of 31.2%, technicians and other skilled personnel had a rate of 53.7%, and engineers and professionals had a rate of 52.1% (source: Céreq).

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0503 - DELIVERY MECHANISMS AND PROVIDERS

DELIVERY MECHANISMS

In order to facilitate access to training for the unemployed, different measures have been put into place. Some, such as state or regionally approved internships that provide trainees with a stipend, concern all job seekers. Job seekers receiving back-to-work benefits (*allocation d'aide au retour à l'emploi* or *ARE*) may participate in training programs and continue to receive benefits within the limits of the law. Industrial partners run the office that manages unemployment insurance funds (Unédic), which is in charge of managing and distributing unemployment benefits. Furthermore, job seekers facing difficulties related to retraining for a new occupation may conduct an in-depth skills survey in order to better focus their professional goals and establish a strategy for re-entering the workforce.

The state is responsible for training specific populations. These populations include the handicapped, who have access to all employee training programs (training plans, individual training leave) and programs for job seekers (internships and assisted employment contracts). Nevertheless, in order to compensate for the disadvantage this population faces in terms of social and professional integration, public authorities have implemented specific training-related measures (professional rehabilitation programs, professional rehabilitation contracts, etc.). Benefits from the Fund Management Association for the Professional Integration of Handicapped Persons (*AGEFIPH*), which runs back-to-work and professional support programs for the handicapped, may be received in addition to state benefits.

Legal immigrants also have access to all training programs open to workers with French nationality. In addition to benefits available to all, the Social Action and Support Fund for Integration and the Fight against Discrimination (*FASILD*) runs specific programs including training and professional integration programs (language training and social integration programs that facilitate access to training and employment).

Employee training is primarily funded through mandatory contributions from private companies. In this way, training can be requested and funded by the employer as part of a training plan or by employees through several training leave programs such as the union training leave program or the young workers' leave program. The most common program is the Individual Training Leave (*congé individuel de formation* or *CIF*).

Training methods vary. Direct teaching is the most frequently used, but other distance learning techniques such as correspondence courses (for example programs offered by the National Distance Learning Centre or *CNED*) or e-learning are also used.

Training in the workplace is difficult to evaluate. It does exist, but companies are not eligible to use their vocational training contributions in order to fund workplace training. Therefore, there is no statistical information available for this type of training. The only exception is the possibility of hiring employees through special employment contracts that allow for periods of theoretical training at a training centre interspersed with periods of on-the-job training in the company.

TRAINING PROVIDERS

Two types of organisations offer services in the area of continuing vocational training: training organisations and organisations that perform skills surveys.

In the year 2000 there were more than 45,000 training organisations offering services on this free market, including nearly 7,500 whose main business is providing training services. The status of organisations that offer training services can vary as follows:

- The public system
- Systems associated with the professional branches
- Consular or semi-public systems (Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Agriculture, Chambers of Trade)
- Independent private organisations doing business in a wide variety of sectors with equally varied legal status)

Public and semi-public training organisations are overseen by the ministries. For example, the National Education Ministry is in charge of *GRETA* organisations, which pool training resources from several institutions; the Ministry for Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity oversees the National Association for Adult Training (*AFPA*), and other ministries oversee organisations such as professional agricultural promotion and training centres. Consular organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Agriculture, and Chambers of Trade also oversee training programs.

Private organisations include associations (non-profit organisations), for-profit organisations, and individual trainers.

Characteristics of the 7,485 training organisations by status in the year 2000

Skills surveys are designed to give employees and job seekers the opportunity to evaluate their professional and personal skills, aptitudes, and motivations. The purpose of conducting a skills survey is to define professional goals or a training plan.

Skills survey organisations (there were 921 such organisations in 2000) must meet certain requirements, particularly in terms of methodology and ethics. These organisations must register with an approved collection organisation for the individual training leave program or obtain the approval of the local prefect who serves as representative of the state in each region. In the year 2000, 78,800 skills surveys were performed: 71.9% for job seekers, 19 % were carried out at the employee's initiative and financed by the employer, 8.4 % at the employer's initiative, and 0.7% resulted from individual initiatives.

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0504 - ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRAMMES

TRAINING FOR JOB SEEKERS

All job seekers may, under certain conditions, participate in paid training programs.

Particular provisions have been set up depending on the population involved: young people over the 16 to 25 age group, unemployed workers, and specific populations such as the handicapped, immigrants, and prisoners.

Job seekers are eligible to participate in training programs. Under certain conditions they may participate in training programs while continuing to receive unemployment benefits such as back-to-work benefits (*ARE-training*) financed by Unédic, the joint organisation that manages unemployment insurance. Some training programs are state or regionally funded. These programs have the necessary approval to pay trainees. The goal of such programs is to help participants enter the workforce, facilitate access to jobs requiring qualifications, or prepare them for new professional activities. These programs can also include a period of on-the-job

training in a company. During the training period, trainees may receive payment, which can vary depending on the individual's situation. Training costs are not always fully covered by state and the regional organisations.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

The main characteristic of the French continuing vocational training system is the fundamental distinction between individual training leave, which is taken at the employee's initiative, and the training plan, which is established at the company's initiative. In addition to these two major components, the system also includes other, less common programs.

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING LEAVE

Employees with a certain level of seniority in their company or professional branch are eligible to take time off work through the Individual Training Leave program (*congé individuel de formation* or *CIF*). The length of leave taken corresponds to the length of the training program and is legally limited to one year for continuous training or to 1,200 hours for periodic training schedules. Except in particular cases provided by the law, an employer cannot refuse an employee's request for training as part of the Individual Training Leave program. State approved joint collection organisations (*OPCA*) are responsible for the implementation and funding of this program. There are particular clauses governing the use of Individual Training Leave by employees with temporary employment contracts and for temporary workers.

Training programs under the Individual Training Leave program are most often long programs resulting in formal qualifications (899 hours on average in 2001), which contrasts sharply with training carried out as part of company training plans.

COMPANY TRAINING PLANS

French employers are not required to train their employees, but they are legally obligated (a strong incentive) to contribute funds to continuing vocational training. Establishing a training plan is one way in which employers may fulfil their legal obligations. The training plan may be made up of all training and skills surveys conducted for employees (with the exception of Individual Training Leave) in order to further the company's own development objectives. These training programs are provided under the employer's authority and at the employer's expense (maintaining salaries, training costs, etc.). Training provided as part of company training plans tends to be short-term (25 hours on average) and does not tend to result in the employee obtaining formal qualifications.

SYSTEMS COMMON TO EMPLOYEES AND JOB SEEKERS

All individuals are eligible for the skills survey. Employees may request a survey as part of the training leave program, employers may request the survey as part of the company training plan, and counsellors at the National Employment Agency (*ANPE*) may recommend the survey for job seekers.

The last system to undergo reform has been the job experience validation program. All individuals, whether they are employees, job seekers, or volunteer workers, may earn credit for experience gained over a minimum of three years in the workforce. Credit can then be applied in lieu of formal diploma or certificate studies toward nationally recognised official qualifications.

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0505 - BRIDGING INITIAL AND POST INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Some 775,000 young people completed initial training programs in 2001 in mainland France. The number of young people completing initial training has remained stable since 1997 but this level is high compared to the two previous decades. Young people entering the workforce today are more highly qualified than previous generations. The number of students completing initial training without qualifications has declined sharply over the past two decades. Only 12% were lacking qualification in 2000 compared to 21% in 1990.

There are a variety of systems in place to help unqualified young people and adults to re-enter the education and training systems.

INITIAL ENTRY TRAINING

Initial entry training programs include apprenticeships and work-study programs for people aged 16-25. Since 1983, three types of employment contracts have been created at the industrial partners' initiative.

Orientation contracts are designed to facilitate entry into the workforce by helping young people to set professional goals through direct experience in companies.

Adaptation contracts for those under the age of 26 aim to provide training that prepares young people for a specific job or type of job. Training is usually provided in the form of work-study contracts combining general, professional, and technological coursework provided by training organisations and the acquisition of professional skills through direct experience with one or more jobs in the workplace.

Training contracts (also for those under the age of 26) are designed for young people who wish to round out their initial training with a vocational training program either because they are lacking recognised qualifications or because the qualifications they have obtained do not meet the requirements of the job market.

Throughout the duration of these contracts young people have employee status and are paid a salary set at a percentage of the minimum legal wage (30 to 75 %) and according to their age.

WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Work-study programs for young people between the ages of 16-26 are designed to help job seekers by giving them the status of intern in a vocational training program while allowing them to receive benefits from the unemployment insurance system or the state.

Since 1999, responsibility for work-study programs and authority over the resulting qualifications have been in the hands of the regions. The goal of work-study programs is to provide young job seekers under the age of 26 with training leading to a level V qualification (vocational school leaving certificate). These programs are designed for young people who either do not have a professional plan, whose plan is incompatible with the job market, or who do not have the skills needed to pursue their plan. The length of this type of training can vary according to the time each young person needs to obtain a recognised level V qualification.

DIPLOMA/TITLE REFORM

All professional diplomas at levels V to III (from the vocational school leaving certificate to higher-grade technical diplomas) overseen by the National Education Ministry have been reorganised into units valid for a period of five years. Certain units are common to more than one diploma and can therefore be applied toward another diploma at the same level. Diplomas can now be obtained in a variety of very different ways. Students can obtain diplomas through schooling, the duration of which can be adapted to suit individual students' needs, through continuing training programs, or through earning credit for experience. The ways in which professional titles are awarded by the Employment Ministry have also changed in order to provide access to such titles through the job experience validation program or by accumulating enough units through other programs of study.

Personalised educational workshops (*ateliers pédagogiques personnalisés* or *APP*) are designed to ensure that anyone no longer in the school system has access to basic general and technological training. The workshops constantly respond to requests in an individualised manner by offering short training programs (300 hours on average). In 2001 400 such workshops provided training for 170,000 people.

REGIONAL COUNCIL TRAINING VOUCHERS

Several regional councils have started training voucher programs. The vouchers are designed for individuals belonging to specific populations such as young people, apprentices, and job seekers. The vouchers are distributed in the form of booklets and each coupon is worth one or several hours of training.

ADULTS AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

More and more adults who wish to go back to school are enrolling in universities. In 1999 public institutions of higher education (*conservatoire national des arts et métiers* or *CNAM* network, other universities and affiliated schools) provided services to 410,000 trainees including 125,200 company employees as part of continuing training programs. Universities also trained 40,300 job seekers and 226,700 people who enrolled at their own initiative. The possibilities created by the credit for professional experience program (since 1985) and by the job experience validation program (since 2002) have contributed to the increase in enrolments.

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0506 - RE-EDUCATION AND RE-TRAINING NEEDS DUE TO LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENTS AND MOBILITY

Certain training programs have been set up in order to facilitate entry or re-entry of the unemployed into the workforce. State or regionally financed training programs and programs funded through the unemployment insurance system are available as is individual counselling until the job seeker returns to work.

Job seekers facing difficulties adapting to a changing job market are eligible for a comprehensive skills survey in order to better define their professional goals and plan a back-to-work strategy.

Company access internships allow job seekers to respond to job offers through a training program negotiated between the company and the National Employment Agency.

Unemployed professionals facing specific problems re-entering the workforce are eligible for specific training programs including periods of teaching and internships.

Lastly, job seekers formerly employed under permanent contracts may under certain conditions be eligible to take individual training leave.

Other measures have been put in place exclusively for the jobless who face particular challenges in re-entering the workforce.

Job seekers who have been registered with the National Employment Agency for at least three months, who are over the age of 50, who have been receiving welfare benefits and have been unemployed for over one year, single mothers, and others may be eligible for the following benefits:

- workforce re-entry job training programs
- special employment contracts through a non-profit organisation or local community government
- childcare assistance for women re-entering the workforce

Young people between the ages of 16-25 who have left school without obtaining qualifications are eligible to participate in specific training programs organised either by the National Education Ministry or by the regional councils.

A variety of paths have been created in order to encourage adults to resume studies:

the National Ministry for Education has offered, since 1983, a "recurring education" system, which allows people having exited the educational system to resume a course of study by re-entering a public secondary school. There is no age limit.

The National Educational System's Permanent Centres offer adults training sessions organised by subject, preparing participants to earn credit toward diplomas. Each participant is allowed to set out his own programme, according to his degree of training and the time available to him. Each credit earned toward a diploma is valid for five years.

Several towns offer night courses, most notably the City of Paris. The training programmes offered are either general or technical, and some prepare participants for diplomas or competitive examinations to enter civil service.

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06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

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0601 - GENERAL BACKGROUND

Various types of teachers and trainers correspond to the various streams and systems of the french vocational training system, and their recruitment, training and career paths will differ according to the relevant activity. As a first step and with a view to greater clarity, the terminology applicable to the French context will be explained:

in initial vocational education,

- the teacher (or lecturer) is an educator working in the formal education system: the school (primary and secondary school) and university environment, whatever the level of teaching concerned.
- The apprentice master is an employee responsible for training a young apprentice within the company.

in continuing training,

- the trainer is a professional engaged in vocational training activities, inside or outside the company and, in general, in the private training market. More precisely, he/she is an educator of adults. Other players are involved in the training process: consultants, training managers in training centres or within a company, tutors within a company, and other "facilitators". Their status is not covered by the regulations, and is primarily a question of private law.

For the most part (90%), teachers are civil servants, and their status and rank is determined by national entrance examinations for admission to the profession. Teachers then teach the same discipline throughout their career. There are two categories of teachers:

- teachers in mainstream education. Their entrance examination is based on academic knowledge in a particular discipline (such as history, mathematics, French, etc.).

- teachers in vocational and technical education. Their entrance examination is based on their professional knowledge and on previous professional experience in the relevant trade (accounting, hotel management, cabinet-making, etc.).

TRAINER

There is no national regulation governing the status of trainers or other training professionals. A large majority of trainers are private contractors, working full- or part-time. They are selected on the basis of their qualifications and/or skills and professional experience in a particular sector.

THE AVERAGE AGE OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN INITIAL TRAINING

The population is tending to age. The average age is 43 years. There are 186,893 male teachers and 244,876 female teachers in vocational secondary schools and in general and technical secondary schools.

Teachers in higher education are older, on average aged 45. There are 49,244 men and 25,637 women.

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0602 - TRAINING OF TEACHERS/TRAINERS IN EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR IVET TEACHERS

Most teachers are trained in the University Teacher Training Institutes (IUFM), as well as by distance learning (CNED) or in one of the four '*écoles normales supérieures*' (ENS) or in certain universities or private institutions. Nevertheless, the established of the IUFM in 1991 has led to uniformity in the training of all teachers, regardless of the level of education they are undertaking.

TRAINING AT IUFM MAY LAST TWO YEARS:

The first year covers preparation for the external or internal recruitment examination, with admission based on case file and interview.

If successful in the examination, the second year covers, alternately, professional, theoretical and practical training, at the end of which the student teacher receives a certificate and becomes a civil servant

The minimum level of qualification required before taking the vocational and technical education entrance examination is Bac + 3, although Bac + 5 is preferred. A university doctorate is the equivalent of Bac + 8, and is sufficient for teaching at a University.

IN SERVICE CONTINUING TRAINING FOR TEACHERS RELATES TO ACADEMIC SKILLS

- in initial training, can take part in "Summer Universities" (one or two week seminars) arranged at national level by the Ministry and in training courses organised in each academy by the IUFMs (University Teacher Training Institutes).
- Since 1998, the IUFMs who have signed a contract of agreed objectives with the rector organise the continuing training of teachers, by means of internships of specific sessions, 5 days a year throughout their time in service.
- It is possible to take a sabbatical for training, but this is rarely used.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR IVET TRAINERS AND OTHER LEARNING FACILITATORS

There are few trainers who provide initial training (scarcely 10%) and they are mainly selected on the basis of specific qualifications that are suffering from a shortage of qualified teachers.

Professionals are therefore contracted in areas such as accounting or civil engineering, as well as in the arts, applied arts and design.

Very often they come directly from their area of activity, with no prior training before they take up their posts.

INITIAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR TRAINERS.

There is no legal requirement. Each outside participant decides on his/her own training.

In-service, continuing training for IVET trainers and others learning.

There is no specific continuing training for trainers and facilitators working in initial training. Nonetheless, they can take advantage of training programmes for qualified teachers.

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0603 - TRAINING OF TRAINERS/TEACHERS AT THE WORKPLACE (APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING AND CVET IN ENTERPRISES)

TEACHING IN APPRENTICE TRAINING CENTRES

Often ex-tradesmen and women, experts in the field they are teaching (baker, engineer), they may be employed on a contract (full- or part-time) in the Apprentice Training Centre, or they may be self-employed.

They must have a certificate of “non-opposition to teaching”, issued by a national apprenticeship inspector.

THE APPRENTICE MASTER

The status of “apprentice master” is not governed by law, and no specific training or qualification process is required (including the title of “confirmed apprentice master” created in 1997). It is a function performed by the employer (in a very small company), which is secondary to his/her usual occupation, or else by an employee appointed by the employer. The apprentice master is chosen from volunteers among the qualified employees, according to their diplomas, professional experience, and a level of qualification at least equivalent to that for which the apprentice is being prepared. He/she is directly responsible for the apprentice’s training, and provides a link to the apprentice training centre. He/she must be at least 18 years old, and must provide full character references.

THE TUTOR IN THE WORKPLACE

The function of tutor does not have any equivalent in law, and requires no training or qualification. It is a function carried out by an employee appointed by the employer that is secondary to his/her usual occupation. The tutor is chosen from volunteers among the qualified employees, according to their diplomas, professional experience and a level of qualification at least equivalent to that for which the apprentice is being prepared.

TUTORS AND APPRENTICE MASTERS

Workplace tutors and apprentice masters are not obliged to undertake any training, except:

- in three areas in Eastern France (Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle), where special regulations require apprentice masters and tutors to take three days’ training before they take up their responsibilities;
- in the agricultural sector, for those responsible for training young people preparing to work in agriculture.

However, given the vital role played by tutors in the quality of alternating training, the public authorities strongly encourage employers to send tutors for training: tutor training can then be financed by the public authorities (state or regional), or jointly funded by the occupational groups, up to a limit of 40 hours. This training mainly consists of providing an understanding of the regulations governing alternating training, and providing the basis for the development of a training programme and its evaluation.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN APPRENTICE TRAINING CENTRES

The regions are responsible for apprenticeship and they establish and fund teacher training programmes for Apprentice Training Centres, especially in relation to the management of placements in the workplace. These training plans are developed at the regional level, and vary from region to region depending on the objectives and priorities determined by the regions.

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0604 - TRAINING OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING (OUTSIDE ENTERPRISES)

TRAINERS IN CONTINUING TRAINING

Those involved in continuing training in France are far from constituting a uniform body.

Trainer is the generic term for anyone involved in continuing training.

The trainer is a teacher who operates in the field of continuing training. He/she trains young people and adults who have left the school or university system, in a training centre or in the workplace. There are very few trainers who only work with young people: the relevant centres tend to mix the user groups for training, and bring people together according to their level of training rather than their age.

Indeed, many of them work as casual trainers in companies or training centres on the basis of the expertise they are able to provide due to their principal activity.

FULL-TIME TRAINERS

Since there is no specific status for the trainer except for that provided by the AFPA, there is no specific initial training for trainers in continuing training. Bodies or enterprises who employ them may nonetheless arrange specific training.

For example, AFPA arranges basic 4 to 12 week modules, for all its trainers, to enable them to learn to teach their own subject area, using reference bases.

The major private training networks, profit- or non-profit making, also have an internal training facility that aims to provide both familiarity with the culture of the institution as well the attainment of specific skills.

Certain large companies arrange internal training for their trainers, focusing more on specific professional teaching aspects to supplement their technical expertise.

CONTINUING TRAINING OF TRAINERS

It is difficult to provide a national overview of the continuing training available for trainers: the major institutions that dispose of a national trainers' network (Education and Agriculture ministries, the AFPA, private education federations, large companies, private adult training networks) fund a national programme for training of trainers for their own staff. These programmes are not very well known, as they involve only the staff of these institutions. They are often supplemented by training courses organised at the regional level, for adaptation or development of trainers according to local needs. Further information can be obtained from each of the institutions concerned.

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07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

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0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

France has implemented a number of programmes to anticipate needs in the areas of qualification and skills:

- The General Planning Commission depending on the Prime Minister, carries out studies to gauge developments in trade areas and qualifications.

It is intended to anticipate what types of qualifications the economy will need, at the macro-economic level (at national and sectorial levels) in the medium term (5 to 10 years).

- **Forecast Research Contracts by sectors**

They provide an overview of the economic, technological and social changes that a given sector might undergo.

They are used to anticipate what kinds of qualifications will be required within each sector. The State, the representative organisations within a trade sector and one or more external operators take part in the study, which is intended to help better anticipate changes.

Since 1988, over 50 such contracts have been signed in industry and the services sector, with the latest covering fisheries, the non-profit social and medical-social sector, aeronautics and plastic-works.

In most cases, they lead to changes in existing qualifications or entirely new certifications that fulfil the requirements of each sector.

- The Regional Observatories on Employment are equipped to analyse training programmes and jobs within their region. They enable the Regional Councils (which, since the 1982-1983 Decentralisation Laws, establish the priorities for initial and continuing vocational training) determine which programmes of study need to be developed in order to meet the needs of the region's enterprises.

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0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

France has set up numerous measures to bridge different types of levels of education such as dividing diplomas into credits, setting up a professions-based secondary school, and establishing partnerships between the schools and the enterprises or trade branches.

Since September 2002, the CAP, the most frequently awarded vocational diploma, has been set up units, like the vocational Baccalaureate, the vocational certificate and the advanced technical certificate. Some units can be shared by several different CAPs. The system is now such that it allows exemption from certain tests for those who want to work toward an additional diploma at the same level.

Specific schools established since 2001 "trade secondary schools", offer all of the various training paths connected with a given trade or set of related trades, from level 2 to higher education, and are open to all types of students (those still in the educational system, apprentices, young people, adults working under alternating work-study contracts, and continuing trainees).

A large number of partnerships have been launched between the professional bodies and the trade branches or enterprises, to further continuing training.

Specific actions have been carried out as part of this effort, including: the creation of a new forecasting tool on training programmes leading toward diplomas in the food industry; the establishment of a resource centre on automobile trades; and exchanges between teachers and professionals from the construction industry. 71 "engineers for a new approach to schooling" were sent out from their enterprises on assignment to run over 100 projects in 18 school districts (on such topics as technological platforms, preparation for entry into the job market, ICTs, etc.)

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0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

A NEW WAVE OF CURRICULA

The main ministries that award vocational diplomas or certificates have set up advisory vocational commissions, in charge of looking into how new certifications can be created or overhauled. These commissions call upon the advice of professionals, while also basing their work on forecasting studies carried out in their respective sectors.

The advisory vocational commissions (*commissions professionnelles consultatives, CPCs*), bring together all of the industrial partners from a given sector to create new certifications or overhaul existing ones.

The CPCs are composed of for collegiate bodies: employers, employees, public authorities and qualified eminent figures.

The diploma design or overhaul process includes:

- An analysis phase, during which studies are undertaken to determine whether it would be appropriate to create a new diploma.
- The elaboration of reference guidelines on the trade activities, intended as a 5-year forecast on the main activities involved in jobs that are likely to be performed by the future diploma-holders.

Since school year 2000, **information and communications technologies** have been gradually introduced into the curricula at the primary and secondary levels.

- Changes in pedagogy: 1 700 pilot establishments and schools are described in a database with multi-criteria search functions at (<http://www.educnet.education.fr/pilotes>), thus allowing readers to learn more about innovative ways of using ICTs and promoting widespread use of these technologies in teaching.
- The new programmes designed to introduce a variety of knowledge acquisition modes for students (multi-disciplinary activities in lower secondary school, individual practical work in secondary school, multi-disciplinary vocational projects in vocational secondary schools) rely greatly on the use of ICTs.
- The newly-established computer sciences and Internet certificate (B2i): This certificate attests to the fact that its holder knows how to use ICTs in an independent and reasoned manner to read and produce documents, look up information that can be of use to him and communicate using an electronic mail system. The school-based B2i currently consists of a Level I, intended mainly for elementary users in lower secondary school. Established in 2000-2001, it was extended to all lower secondary schools in 2002 and will be offered in all schools as early as 2003. A GRETA B2i (offered by groups of national establishments under the national education system open to adult trainees) has also been designed for adults, and an ICT skills certificate is currently being prepared for higher education.
- Training for teaching staff and supervisory staff. An "ICT Emergency Plan" was put into effect in 1998 in all IUFMs (University Institutes for Teacher Training). Based on a 2-year development plan and equipped with substantial resources - FRF 60 million (EUR 9.15 million) and 100 positions (half in training, the other half in engineering) and 200 young PhDs, it made it possible to equip and network all of the said institutes and speed the progress of ICT integration into initial training.
- Distribution of digital and audio-visual resources: a large number of agreements were signed or are currently being negotiated in order to free up copy and representation rights in the school environment, so as to give students and teachers access to digital and audio-visual resources under legal conditions that are suited to the needs of educational establishments. The ultimate objective is to establish a European digital teaching area that would offer free access for teachers and students to data that is essential to education and research. Meanwhile, Canal U

(<http://www.canal-u.education.fr>), the Web TV channel set up by French universities, was created in order to broadcast scientific and cultural news, as well as training programmes at the higher education level.

- Developing France's offering in open or remote higher learning - Digital campuses: In order to support and structure France's offering in the area of open and remote training, the Ministry of National Education launched two calls for project offers in 2000 and 2001. Since school year 2001-2002, 10 digital campuses have been opened and can be accessed by students in initial or continuing training, in particular in the fields of science, technologies, law, management and medicine.

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08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

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0801 - VALIDATION OF FORMAL LEARNING: GENERAL CONCEPTS AND SCHEMES

France's vocational certification system stands out for the predominance of national diplomas awarded under the State's responsibility, primarily through the Ministry for National Education. The Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Culture, Defence, the Sea and Labour have also established certificates and diplomas in their respective fields, or to satisfy the requirements of specific stakeholders, in particular job-seekers or employees looking to enter a new trade, where the latter is concerned. The juries presiding over the examinations are composed mainly of teachers and professionals.

It should be added that diplomas can also be created by consular bodies and by certain private establishments.

Lastly, vocational qualification certificates are established by the industrial partners in each of the trade branches.

In order to make the system easier to understand, one of the components called for by the Law on Social Modernisation is a national register of vocational certifications, listing all of the certifications that will either be automatically included in the system, or integrated into the list based following scrutiny of a fully-documented request by an ad hoc committee.

In France, some professions are covered by regulations. Aside from the seven professions included in the European Community's 1975 Directive (doctor, nurse, veterinarian, dentist, midwife, pharmacist and architect), which established an automatic recognition system, France limits entry into certain regulated professions to those who hold specific diplomas. This is true of legal professions (lawyer, bailiff, notary, etc.), professions in medically-related sectors (speech therapist, podiatrist, optician, etc.), certain technical trades (expert surveyor, ambulance driver, ship captain, etc.) or socio-cultural trades (schoolteacher, professor, travel agent, etc.). In the above cases, those who hold foreign diplomas must have their qualifications recognised by the relevant Ministry. A compensatory measure, a training session or an examination may be offered to them if the length and content of their training or studies are not similar to those in France.

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0802 - VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The "social modernisation law" dated January 17, 2002 established a system of job experience validation (*validation des acquis de l'expérience* or VAE). This system allows any person with a minimum three-year employment history to obtain official recognition for professional skills acquired.

All professional diplomas, titles, and certificates are included in a National registry of professional certifications (RNCP). The following types of qualification may be obtained through the job experience validation program as long as they are part of the National Registry and provided that there is no regulation forbidding use of the program (for health, safety, or national defence reasons, in particular) for a particular qualification.

- Diplomas or professional titles awarded by the state
- Diplomas awarded on behalf of the state by institutions of higher education
-
- Titles conferred by consular or private training organisations
-
- Sector's vocational qualification certificates

Skills eligible for credit include all professional skills acquired through paid, unpaid, or volunteer work provided the individual seeking credit has relevant work experience, either uninterrupted or not, of at least three years. The accreditation jury then evaluates the professional nature of skills acquired and their relationship to the skills required by the course of study corresponding to the desired diploma or certificate. The jury may also consider higher education-level studies done abroad.

The processes in the validation and recognition of non formal and informal learning are :

- initial guidance and information,
- preparation of a dossier or portfolio,
- For some vocational diplomas, work place assessment at the work place or simulated,
- assessment and if appropriate certification,
- if necessary, "top up training".

A number of systems have been established to recognise and validate professional or non-professional experience, acquired informally.

RECOGNITION OF EXPERIENCE

Recognition of experience is understood to be all practices and procedures that contribute, at various points in an individual's life (entry into training, entry into the job market, professional mobility), to taking into account the knowledge, know-how and potential of that individual, as well as the explicit understanding and expression of those, often in order to obtain validation.

Skills review and skills portfolio procedures are considered part of this.

Since the 3 July 1991 interprofessional agreement and the 31 December 1991 Law, the Labour Code recognises that all workers have the right to request skills review. These reviews are carried out by specialised centres that must comply with certain rules, including confidentiality on all information gathered. The reviews are intended to allow employees or job-seekers to take stock of their personal and vocational skills, aptitudes and motivation. The results of the review cannot be shared with a third party unless the person has given prior consent. In 2000, 921 skills review providers produced 78 800 reviews, three-fourths of which were intended for job-seekers.

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09 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

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0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

France's situation where information, guidance and counselling are concerned is characterised by a great deal of variety and complexity in the services offered to its users.

The large number of information, guidance and counselling services has its roots in the different types of groups targeted (school-aged students, young people, adults, the unemployed, women, the handicapped), the types of services offered (individual counselling, skills reviews, group or individual services, training, information), the qualification levels of the practitioners (counsellors, psychologists, teachers, informers, social workers) the type of status held by the structure (public, private, associative, commercial, professional), and the type of funding used (national, local, joint employer-employee organisations, enterprises, users).

Nonetheless, even though the State currently tends to delegate, outsource and entrust other parties (the semi-public sector, the associations and even the private sector) with some of these actions, it still handles the bulk of information, guidance and counselling activities and plays a large role in their funding.

Two of the Ministries are particularly involved, namely those in charge, respectively, of education and employment. The Ministry of National Education's services are targeted mainly toward the school-aged population (students of lower and upper secondary schools as well as university students). Its activities take place inside schooling establishments, but also in information and guidance centres (CIO). The services are offered mainly by specialists - psychologist-guidance counsellors - but are also handled by non-specialists, namely the students' main teachers. In addition, the Ministry is responsible for a major organisation in charge of producing information on studies and professions - the National Office for Information on Instruction and Professions (ONISEP).

The services offered by the Ministry for Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity are involved more with adults actively seeking work, entry into a new field, mobility or training. Its activities are based in the various national agencies for employment (ANPE), which cover the whole of the

country and are staffed by employment counsellors. In addition, the Ministry is responsible for an organisation that provides information on continuing training: Centre INFFO.

Alongside the two Ministries, a large number of public and semi-public organisations, private organisations and associations of all kinds have come into being over the last twenty years. The standing reception, information and guidance centres (PAIOs), and the local missions (MLs) for young people between ages 16 and 25 with difficulties entering the mainstream and the job market were set up by the public authorities. Other organisations include the inter-institutional skills review centres (CIBCs) for employees and job-seekers looking to define their career or training development plan, funded partially by the State; and the private organisations, like "L'Etudiant", which informs secondary school and university students.

Employer organisations play a minor but growing role in the information and counselling landscape. That being said, they participate indirectly in the schemes through the charges they pay to the various unemployment subsidy funds, as well as through funding for continuing training, the apprenticeship tax and the leave time granted to employees who wish to undergo skills review or benefit from training to foster mobility.

Consular organisations also play a role: these include the chambers of commerce and industry, the chambers of trade (craftsmen), the chambers of agriculture, and the private enterprises that build up information and counselling services. Some of the more noteworthy efforts including the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry's guidance service, the national information and vocational guidance bureaus (BIOPs) and centres that assist in decision-making on alternating work-study programmes and apprenticeships (CAD).

Employee labour organisations play a very limited role in organising and funding information, guidance and counselling services.

They act only as an advisory body on career management and salary levels for professionals involved in guidance.

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0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

- Information and guidance centres (CIOs) mainly address students in lower and upper secondary schools, as well as university students, but are also open to adults,
- The National Agency for Employment (ANPE) is open to adults, regardless of whether they are job-seekers or employed,
- The local missions and the PAIOs are qualified to assist young people from 16 to 25, who have left the school system without qualifications or with obsolete qualifications.

For the purposes of the French employment market, "adults" are defined as those who are above age 26 and who have exited the initial training system.

Public employment services, with ANPE as its centrepiece, are by far the main provider of information services for adults. ANPE has modernised over the last five years in order to standardise its "service offerings", move closer to fulfilling its "customers" requirements, and approach enterprises to present customer profiles (in particular to assist job-seekers with no qualifications).

Larger continuing training organisations might include guidance, counselling and positioning services all in one. For instance, the National Conservatory for Arts and Trades (CNAM), which operates as a public educational service and, most of all, the National Association for Adult Vocational Training (AFPV), are both considered part of public labour services, and work psychologists can offer people applying for vocational training sessions a situational review at one of the organisations before guiding them in a given direction.

The employer-employee structures that manage insurance funds for training, in particular the Individual Training Leave Management Fund (FONGECIF), manage a large body of documents, inform their members of their rights and advise them on the steps to take.

France's system stands out in that it has developed a special service offering for managers, run by the Association for Managerial Employment (APEC), a joint employer-employee association, throughout the country (45 centres): the association offers counselling, personal reviews, assistance in re-entering the job market, information, a journal, and online services, to name but a few.

Certain associations, like "RETRAVAILLER" (RE-ENTERING THE JOB MARKET), originally founded to help female job-seekers also offer help through guidance and market-entry techniques.

A more marginal initiative is that of the CIOs (Information and Orientation Centres) and CIDJs (Information and Documentation Centres for Young People), which are also open to adults looking for information or counselling.

Experiments of limited geographical scope, bringing together services from several institutions on a "walk-in" basis are currently developing: these include special "houses" offering information on continuing training and employment (MIFE) and Paris' Trade Metropolis (*Cité des métiers*), an information and counselling area run by professionals in guidance for students and workers, training, employment and entrepreneurship (AFPA, ANPE, CIBC, CIO, etc.). Paris' *Cité des métiers* is based on the network concept which, though difficult to implement within the French environment, especially taking into account how many different players are involved, seems to be better suited to reality than a "single-counter" system.

Commonly-used methods:

- Tests, questionnaires,
- Trade forums,
- Guidance groups,
- Individual interviews,
- Resource centres: CIO, documentation and information centres (CDI) (in schooling establishments), information and documentation centres for young people and youth information stands (PIJ), SCUIO,
- Training sessions in the workplace
- Assistance from local figures (on a case-by-case basis).

Methods being developed:

- Educational methods in guidance,
- Documents on CD-Rom to carry out a personal review and begin a job search,
- Software to help in guidance.

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0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

In France, 217 300 people work in the administrative, technical, educational, coordinating and security fields in secondary-level establishments, alongside the instructors. The vast majority of this group (74%) is tenured and was hired on the basis of a competition, whether workers, secretaries, nurses, headship staff, educational counsellors, research technicians, etc.

Some of them take part in special training. For instance, once they have passed a competitive exam, psychological guidance counsellors take part in a two-year training internship, which leads to a national diploma in psychological guidance and advising, through an establishment approved by the Ministry for National Education.

Out of the 30 000 positions held by people responsible for guidance counselling, 5 000 are statutorily psychologists: the psychologist-guidance counsellors and the directors of public education service Information and Guidance Centres; and work psychologists from the Association for adult vocational training (AFPA), within the public education service.

The other counselling professionals are from varying professional backgrounds.

In addition to the work carried out by personnel specialising in guidance counselling, occasional services are provided by people whose main job is not in this area. These can be professors, socio-cultural personnel, specialised instructors, etc. Most of them have not received specific training in counselling. Lastly, volunteer workers from associations can also offer their services.

In France, three main types of training in guidance counselling professions can be distinguished:

- Higher full-time university instruction that is specific to a single profession: training for psychologist-guidance counsellors who wish to work in public guidance services,
- Higher alternating instruction specific to a single profession: this is the type of training offered to counsellors who wish to work at the National Agency for Employment,
- University training that leads to employment opportunities in the field of guidance for workers and human resources, as in the *Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées* (Advanced Specialised Studies Diploma): Psychology and vocational guidance practices, offered by INETOP. Research is also part of the coursework for the *Diplôme d'études approfondies* (In-Depth Studies Diploma): the psychology of work and transitions, offered at CNAM/INETOP, and

integrated into the Multi-Partner Doctoral School "Enterprises, Labour and Employment" (CNAM/Université de Marne-la-Vallée). This DEA can lead to a Doctorate in Psychology.

Alongside these three forms of instruction, there exist continuing training actions and tutorial-based training programmes, or training offered by public organisations like AFPA, an association that operates under the Ministry of Labour or the CAFOCs (the Ministry for National Education's Academic Centre for Continuing Training) or private organisations.

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10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

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1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

FUNDING SOURCES

INITIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

INITIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING UNDER THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

This type of training is funded by the State, and in particular the Ministry for Youth, National Education and Research, as well as by the local administrative units, as part of the decentralisation process.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING UNDER WORK CONTRACT

Funding for apprenticeships is covered by the apprenticeship tax (paid by the enterprises), the State (through exemptions from labour charges and grants for hiring), as well as by the Regions. The current phase in decentralisation is intended to transfer all responsibilities related to funding toward the regions.

So-called "alternating" training programmes (the guidance contract, the qualification contract and the adaptation contract) are funded by enterprises, depending on their total payroll, the Regions and the State (which grants exemptions from labour charges).

QUALIFYING TRAINING PROGRAMMES

These programmes, which are open to young first-time job-seekers with no qualifications, are funded jointly by the State and the Regions.

The 1993 Five-Year Law regarding employment and vocational training, called for a transfer of powers from the State to the Regions. As of 1 July 1994, powers over qualifying training programmes targeting young people were transferred to the Regions and, on 1 January 1999, all "actions preparing for qualification", along with the corresponding reception, guidance and information system, were also transferred to the Regions.

CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

TRAINING FOR ACTIVE WORKERS

Training for employees of the private sector is funded through a variety of mandatory contributions required of enterprises, and equal to a percentage of their total payroll. Training for civil servants is paid for by the State, the local administrative units and the hospitals.

TRAINING FOR JOB-SEEKERS

A large number of training actions have been set up by the public authorities (with funding from the State and/or the Regions), and the industrial partners who manage the unemployment insurance scheme (Unédic - Union nationale pour l'emploi dans l'industrie et le commerce [National Union for Employment in Industry and Trade]) in order to foster re-entry into the job market for job-seekers.

REGULATION RULES

The law sets out guidelines and a general framework for vocational training, as established in Book IX of the Labour Code. However, the industrial partners are also deeply involved in determining the rules that govern funding of training for active workers and job-seekers, with the agreements negotiated at the interprofessional level often coming as a stepping stone toward the elaboration of any laws.

Employer and employee unions negotiate national interprofessional agreements on vocational training (ANIs) on a regular basis. The representatives of the various trade branches are also invited, by the law and the ANIs to take part in the negotiations that lead to the establishment of objectives and resource levels for vocational training, every five years.

Through Unédic, the industrial partners also play a significant role in financing training for job-seekers.

DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

One of the significant developments in funding for initial and continuing vocational training resides in the continuing decentralisation of organisational and funding powers for measures enacted.

FUNDING FOR IVT UNDER THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

As part of the revisions of the Constitution, voted by the Congress on 17 April 2003, the Regions are going to be entrusted with more responsibilities where "lifelong" training is concerned. This reform is expected, in particular, to transfer to the local administrative units all powers regarding the management of the national educational system's technical civil servants, some 110 000 people.

As regards initial vocational training under work contract, the move launched by the 1993 Five-Year Law is still continuing. The 27 February 2002 Law regarding the decentralisation of democratic processes calls for the regions to be given responsibility, starting on 1 January 2003, for all subsidies to enterprises that hire and train apprentices.

FUNDING FOR CVT FOR ACTIVE WORKERS

The government has announced its desire to create "employment insurance". The scheme would involve setting up a personal training account, in conjunction with the job experience validation procedure. The account, nothing less than a truly individual right to training, would allow employees, and especially those working for small companies, access to training of all kinds: to adapt to the new market, earn additional qualifications, or set off in a new direction. Meanwhile, in January 2003, the industrial partners revived negotiations at the national inter-professional level, after a one-year break. The employers are now suggesting that the legally required participation in CVT funding be removed and replaced by a contribution whose minimum level would be set out in an agreement with the industrial partners (through a national interprofessional agreement).

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1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IVT UNDER THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Powers are divided as follows: all expenses relating to building, rebuilding, repairs, equipment and functioning (except for staffing expenditure) are the responsibility of the local administrative units (regions, departments and communes).

The regions contribute to functioning costs in secondary schools, agricultural secondary schools, special education institutions, and sea or water schools. They can also give investment grants to help private technical instruction (technological and vocational secondary schools).

The breakdown on total funding in 2001 was as follows:

	2001 (IN BN EUR)	IN %
STATE	10 128.26	76.3
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	1791.73	13.5
OTHER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	47.41	0.4
TOTAL PUBLIC	11 967.40	90.2
ENTERPRISES	280.05	2.1
HOUSEHOLDS	1018.66	7.1
TOTAL PRIVATE	1 298.71	9.8

TOTAL	13 266.11	100.00
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Source: Planning and Development Division - Ministry for Youth, National Education and Research

IVT FOR VT TRAINEES

As regards qualifying or pre-qualifying training sessions, the 30 December 1993 Five-Year Law has set out the terms for a gradual transfer of powers from the State to the regions.

In 2001, the total amount covered by the transfers came out at EUR 726.85 million (EUR 293.62 million of which went to qualifying actions, and EUR 424.40 million of which went to preparatory actions and support measures for young people) (source LFI 2001).

Although the Regions' efforts are supposed to focus mainly on people with low levels of qualification, significant differences do exist between the regions. More than 3 out of every 4 young people who enter a training programme funded by the Regions in 2001 claimed to have a level of training equal or below Level V (European Level II) upon starting the session.

ALTERNATING WORK-STUDY PROGRAMMES

Mainstreaming contracts that combine work and study are funded by a mandatory contribution from enterprises, deducted from their total payroll.

The State also takes part in funding these training programmes by offering exemptions on the employer labour charges that enterprises must pay on the salaries paid out to the young people (with the exception of the adaptation contract).

The collection rules on this specific tax are dependent on staffing levels:

	ENTERPRISES 10 EMPLOYEES +	ENTERPRISES - 10 EMPLOYEES
ENTERPRISES SUBJECT TO AT	0.40%	0.10%
ENTERPRISES NOT SUBJECT TO AT	0.30%	no

The total contribution from enterprises for alternating work-study, on the basis of funds collected in 2001, amounted to EUR 1 136.38 million (source: General Delegation on Employment and Vocational training - National Inspection Group).

The funds collected by the OPCAs are pooled. Enterprises that pay contributions to an OPCA can, in exchange, obtain financial grants from that body to organise programmes and training for young people, the price of which can exceed the amount paid.

APPRENTICESHIP: THE APPRENTICESHIP TAX (AT)

Apprenticeship tax is intended to bring employers into the funding process for technological or vocational training.

Enterprises that are subject to AT can make direct payments to the various training centres, or fulfil their duty by making a payment to the collection agencies that have been approved at the national or regional level.

According to the relevant equalisation system, the funds collected must be devoted, first and foremost, to the CFAs that do not have access to a minimum amount of resources and which offer training to young people at Level V (European Level II).

In 2000, 62% of overall spending for young people under 26 was devoted to apprenticeship programmes. The funding was provided according to the following split:

	2000 (IN M EUR)
STATE	600.34
REGIONS	832.83
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	10.21
OTHER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS	31.71
TOTAL PUBLIC	1475.10
ENTERPRISES	521.99
HOUSEHOLDS	98.02
TOTAL PRIVATE	620.01
TOTAL	2095.11

Source: DARES, functioning costs and related costs, excluding remuneration and exemption from labour charges.

OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Two programmes have been set up, one under the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity, and the second under the Ministry for Youth, National Education and Research.

TRACE PROGRAMME

The TRACE programme was established by the 29 July 1998 law regarding the battle on exclusion. It was intended to foster entry and lasting participation on the job market for young people who had left the school system with no diplomas or few qualifications.

The programme is built on a number of mainstreaming and training actions implemented by the State and the local administrative units. As a result, there is no specific financing for the programme, which relies mainly on the existing network. It involves mainly local missions for mainstreaming young people and standing reception, information and counselling centres (PAIO). These reception and counselling structures are intended to guide young people in their job search. They provide young people with personalised support.

Part of the reception network operates on resources provided by the State and the ESF. In 2002, resources amounted to EUR 101.21 million, as compared to EUR 85.98 million in 2001, EUR 79.91 million of which came from the State and EUR 21 million of which came from the ESF. Within that pool of resources, the funds allotted to TRACE by the State amounted to EUR 22.57 million (source: Draft Finance Law on vocational training 2003).

92 000 new entries into the programme are expected in 2003. The TRACE programme will become part of the future "integration into society contract" programme (CIVIS), which will be set up for young people with less training and substantial difficulties.

NOUVELLE CHANCE [ANOTHER CHANCE]

This programme, which was set up in May 1999, was designed to foster the entry of young people into society and the working world by establishing personalised routes for each student

in the school system in danger of exiting the educational system early (circular n° 99-071 of 17 May 1999).

This programme is considered part of IVT and, as such, most of its actions are financed mainly by the State.

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1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEE TRAINING

STATE-FUNDED GRANTS

GRANTS TO ENTERPRISES FOR TRAINING

The State has set up a grant system to further the objectives set out in its vocational training policy. Such actions are designed, in particular, to develop consulting to trade branches on the developments in particular trades and qualifications (Forecasting study contract, engineering, for instance) and to promote training in enterprises with fewer than 250 employees (*Engagement de Développement De la Formation, EDDF* -- Commitment to expand training).

The funds used in 2001 toward such actions were split along the following lines:

- EUR 0.60 million on forecasting (CEP),
- EUR 38.47 million toward commitments to expand training (EDDF),
- EUR 2.44 million toward engineering.

The State uses some of these grants as instruments to carry out its statutory policy on employee training; in that case, it defines specific criteria or priority actions to that end.

TAX INCENTIVES

The tax credit for training programme offers a decrease in taxes for a set period to enterprises that agree to increase their spending on training from year to year. This measure is intended to foster the expansion of vocational training, in particular to help employees who hold the least qualified positions.

Tax credit is offered to enterprises that increase their spending on training, whatever their business sector, staffing levels or legal status.

In 2000, according to the enterprises' declarations, gross positive tax credit amounted to EUR 73.83 million.

REGION-FUNDED GRANTS

Since 1983, the decentralisation process has been shifting general powers over CVT to the Regions. As a result, alongside the public grants given for training within enterprises, which can be funded jointly by the State and the region (CEP, EDDF), the Regions have sovereign powers over special grants to enterprises (e.g., specific measures to fight illiteracy, grants for job-seekers in training programmes through language vouchers, partial coverage of training costs, scholarships, loans at zero interest rates, etc.).

CORPORATE FUNDING

Corporate funding for training is covered by:

- the mandatory financial contribution required of enterprises,
- partial or full collection of the said contribution by organisations established and run by the industrial partners,
- the State and the Regions, through the public grants they offer,
- the employees themselves, as they can be asked to contribute to funding their own training.

PRIVATE-SECTOR ENTERPRISES

Where private sector enterprises are concerned, the amount of the contribution and the calculation methods used vary depending on the type of enterprise involved and its staffing levels. The law requires that companies with ten employees or more provide 1.5% of total payroll, while those with fewer than ten employees are asked to provide 0.25% of their payroll. In 2001, the average contribution rate for enterprises amounted to 3.16% of total gross payroll.

The financial participation of companies with more than ten employees is divided up as follows:

- one payment toward financing the training plan,
- one payment intended to cover market-entry alternating work-study (this contribution is covered in a presentation in Part 2 (IVT),
- one payment intended to fund individual training leaves.

As regards the financial participation of companies with fewer than ten employees, it is divided into:

- one payment to fund the training plan,
- one payment to cover market-entry alternating work-study.

Developments in spending for private-sector enterprises

YEARS	TOTAL CORPORATE SPENDING (M EUR)
1996	8 489
1997	8 266
1998	8 533
1999	8 934
2000	9 290

Source: DARES - Ministry for Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

Like companies from the private sector, public administration offices are required to set aside resources to fund training for their employees.

As regards national civil servants, the amount to be contributed is negotiated by the Ministry for Civil Service and the representative labour organisations within civil service. A three-year framework agreement establishes the minimum level of the contributions owed by each administrative office, under the training plan and training leave programme.

Public hospital and healthcare establishments are also required to participate in funding CVT for their workers. The contribution is set at a minimum of 2.1% of total payroll.

Expenditure for training of national civil servants * in 2000 (M EUR)

MINISTRY WORKERS	3500
OF WHICH NATIONAL EDUCATION	1950
WORKERS IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	86.1
HOSPITAL WORKERS (NON-MEDICAL)	465

LA POSTE	228.8
FRANCE TELECOM	230
TOTAL	45 09.9

* Excluding the military

Source: Head Division for Administration and Civil Service - Statistics, Research and Assessment Office

THE TRAINING PROGRAMME JOINTLY FUNDED BY UNEDIC AND THE STATE

Job-seekers who receive subsidies in the form of unemployment insurance are eligible for remuneration should they decide to participate in training, as a special subsidy is offered to them throughout the training period. The said subsidy is funded by the unemployment insurance scheme (UNEDIC). The State takes part in funding this measure by reimbursing part of the expenses paid out by UNEDIC under this programme.

The amount of aid paid out by ASSEDIC under this programme amounted to EUR 110 million (from 1 July to 31 December 2001).

Lastly, a flat remuneration is paid to job-seekers who are not eligible for the conventional unemployment insurance programme, when they participate in State- or regionally-funded training programmes or are eligible for measures funded by the FNE.

Alongside UNEDIC's funding, the Regions contributed 11% of spending for job-seekers in 2001.

THE MAINSTREAMING PROGRAMME

Mainstreaming programmes, including one or more training periods, have been set up as part of general employment policy. These are programmes involving either training in the workplace, or special work contracts. These actions are funded mainly by the State and can include some extent of training.

Structure of expenditure for job-seekers in 2000 (M EUR)

	2000
STATE	11 976
REGIONS	2 380
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	0
OTHER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS (INCLUDING UNEDIC)	6 637
TOTAL PUBLIC	20 993
ENTERPRISES	0

HOUSEHOLDS	805
TOTAL PRIVATE	805
TOTAL	21 798

Source: DARES - Ministry for Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity

PROGRAMMES TARGETING SPECIFIC GROUPS

These actions are intended to foster access to training and qualification for certain groups, namely the handicapped, the illiterate, inmates and refugees.

Such actions are funded by the State, the Regions and the ESF. In 2001, the breakdown on funding for such actions was as shown below (in M EUR):

GROUP	STATE	REGIONS	ESF
HANDICAPPED	225*		16
INMATES	6.36	-	4,24
BATTLE ON ILLITERACY	8.86	1.5	5,97
REFUGEES	2.36		-

* remuneration for trainees, including social charges

Source: Draft Finance Law on training 2003

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1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

THE TRAINING PROGRAMME JOINTLY FUNDED BY UNEDIC AND THE STATE

Job-seekers who receive subsidies in the form of unemployment insurance are eligible for remuneration should they decide to participate in training, as a special subsidy is offered to them throughout the training period. The said subsidy is funded by the unemployment insurance scheme (UNEDIC). The State takes part in funding this measure by reimbursing part of the expenses paid out by UNEDIC under this programme.

Since 1 July 2001, the law stipulates that if the job-seeker agrees to participate in training under the personalised action plan, he can be eligible for AREF subsidies (for people in training with the aim of returning to the job market). The subsidy is equal to that paid to job-seekers as unemployment insurance.

Total subsidies paid out under the AFR programme amounted to EUR 629 million in 2001 (until 30 June), as compared to EUR 757 million in 2000. The State's participation rate in AFR spending is limited to 41%. This means that the reimbursements paid to UNEDIC by the State amounted to EUR 297.8 million in 2001, as compared to EUR 348 million in 2000.

Starting from 1 July 2001, AFR was done away with and was replaced by the AREF programme (grant toward job market re-entry). This newer system broadens and simplifies access to training for job-seekers already receiving compensation.

The amount of aid paid out by ASSEDIC under this programme amounted to EUR 110 million (from 1 July to 31 December 2001).

Lastly, a flat remuneration is paid to job-seekers who are not eligible for the conventional unemployment insurance programme, when they participate in State- or regionally-funded training programmes or are eligible for measures funded by the FNE.

Alongside UNEDIC's funding, the Regions contributed 11% of spending for job-seekers in 2001.

4.2. THE MAINSTREAMING PROGRAMME

Mainstreaming programmes, including one or more training periods, have been set up as part of general employment policy. These are programmes involving either training in the workplace, or special work contracts. These actions are funded mainly by the State and can include some extent of training.

Structure of expenditure for job-seekers in 2000 (M EUR)

	2000
STATE	11 976
REGIONS	2 380
LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	0
OTHER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS (INCLUDING UNEDIC)	6 637
TOTAL PUBLIC	20 993
ENTERPRISES	0
HOUSEHOLDS	805
TOTAL PRIVATE	805
TOTAL	21 798

Source: DARES – Ministry for Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity

4.3. PROGRAMMES TARGETING SPECIFIC GROUPS

These actions are intended to foster access to training and qualification for certain groups, namely the handicapped, the illiterate, inmates and refugees.

Such actions are funded by the State, the Regions and the ESF. In 2001, the breakdown on funding for such actions was as shown below (in M EUR):

GROUP	STATE	REGIONS	ESF
HANDICAPPED	225 (*)		16
INMATES	6.36	-	4,24
BATTLE ON ILLITERACY	8.86	1.5	5,97
REFUGEES	2.36		-

(*)remuneration for trainees, including social charges
Source: Draft Finance Law on training 2003

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1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES

No data available

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11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

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1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

Following the Lisbon Summit held in March 2000, work began on three main European projects:

- building a European open area of lifelong education and training;
- implementing the programme of work for monitoring the objectives of education and training systems in Europe, including enhanced cooperation in the area of vocational training;
- developing the mobility of pupils, students teachers and researchers (this project was initiated by France as part of its presidency in 2000).

France's undertakings support the European strategy in favour of mutual recognition of diplomas and qualification.

Recognition of diplomas for academic purposes (applicants with foreign diplomas who wish to continue their studies in France) is offered on a case-by-case basis by the educational authorities and universities, where Universities are concerned, and by the Ministry of Agriculture, where its own diplomas are concerned. As regards recognition of diplomas for vocational purposes, employers are free to hire whomever they wish, except where the aforementioned regulated professions are concerned. Nonetheless, many obstacles remain (translation problems and lack of familiarity with diplomas from other countries, for instance).

A variety of initiatives have been set up by the Commission so as to improve the transparency of the qualification systems implemented in France.

- A national register of vocational certifications (RNCP), set up in line with the 17 January 2002 law, will be available in 2003. It will include, in particular, "descriptive summaries of certifications" on all vocational diplomas and certificates in France. These summaries will be very similar in content to the European Commission's "descriptive addition on the certificate".
- Europass training can be offered in France under a variety of alternating vocational training programmes of all levels, as long as they are organised in such a way that they allow a truly European training pathway and that they build toward either technological or vocational diplomas, officially-recognised diplomas, or by a professional qualification recognised by the industrial partners of the relevant trade branch.

- France is part of the implementation of the Ploteus project, a European portal that will allow, in particular, access to information regarding the types of training offered and the educational and training systems in each of the countries of the Union.

The foundation stone for constructing a European open area of lifelong education and training is the transparency of qualifications in this area. The recognition of non-formal and informal training also constitutes a key theme of the memorandum (2000).

In France, the system of work-experience validation (VAE) - derived from law No. 2002-73 of 17 January 2002 relating to "social modernisation" - which develops and expands the arrangements in place for awarding diplomas covering the validation of professional experience, created in 1992, has been established with this goal in mind.

The VAE system constitutes an individual right entitling any person engaged in employment to acquire all or part of any diploma, vocational qualification or certificate of competence appearing on a list compiled by the joint labour-management committee overseeing a particular field of activity, by having his professional experience validated; this experience may have been acquired through paid, unpaid or voluntary work, but must cover a minimum period of three years. A national register of vocational certifications (RNCP) is being set up by law, logging all certifications classified by sphere of activity and by level, in a common database. Certificates and diplomas eligible for validation will have to be logged in this national register. A national vocational certification committee (CNCP), reporting to the Prime Minister, will compile and update this RNCP register. The ESF, in accordance with its vocation to provide support with structural innovations, has enabled a spectacular development to take place in the arrangements in place covering work-experience validation: 2002 marks a significant stage in the process of opening up the arrangements covering certification of national education systems to all types of users.

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1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A number of these 13 objectives have already been addressed by actions and measures taken within the French system:

- **Improving language teaching - objective 3-3:** a language-teaching plan has been introduced, seeking to ensure that all pupils speak at least 2 foreign languages: since autumn 2001, the teaching of two languages has been compulsory in lycées [secondary schools] providing all types of general and vocational education and training, and the Certificat de compétence en langues de l'enseignement supérieur (CLES) [higher-education certificate of competence in languages], modelled on the Council of Europe's common framework, is being tried out on an experimental basis.
- **Developing basic skills** (including for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds: young people who have abandoned their education) - **objective 1-2:** pursuing priority education and "New Opportunities" to reduce the number of young people experiencing problems with their schooling and/or leaving the education system early, with no qualifications.

Priority education (covering approximately 900 priority zones and networks, and nearly 1,700,000 pupils) constitutes an experimental vehicle for initiatives generated by the education system in response to the difficulties faced by pupils, by setting up centres of excellence that help to enhance the standing of schools' identity, and give pupils a sense of the value of their work. At the present time, 19 out of 28 regional education authorities have their own resource centre for providing priority education.

Work is continuing on the "New Opportunities" programme: children aged under 16 who are escaping the obligation to receive compulsory schooling are attending six pilot sites where they are being educated; 230 intermediary facilities were in operation at 1 January 2002, including 1 boarding school, and these were attended by 3,220 pupils.

STRENGTHENING LINKS WITH THE WORLD OF WORK - ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING - OBJECTIVE 3-1

The setting up of lycées des métiers ['vocational secondary schools'] meets these twin aims. These schools group together different study and training courses around one particular or a number of related vocational specialisations, from the CAP vocational training certificate through to higher education, and are attended by all types of students: school pupils, apprentices, and young people or adults taking sandwich courses and continuing vocational training courses. A quality initiative has also been introduced, as part of an official status-awarding procedure governed by tight requirements.

The partnership established with players in industry has resulted in 54 framework agreements being signed with particular fields of activity and individual companies. The services of 71 "engineers sent to college" have been made available to 18 regional education authorities; these engineers have been seconded by companies to supervise over 100 projects (technology platforms, preparation for integration into professional life, use of information and communication technology etc.).

This programme is also supported by the ESF.

- **Ensuring everyone has access to information and communication technology - objective 1-3-:** The infrastructure has been developed and communication and information technology has gradually been introduced into the new programmes covering primary and secondary education. The Brevet Informatique et Internet (B2I) ['Computing and Internet Diploma'] qualification has been introduced for school students and adults: this demonstrates that the student is capable of using information and communication technology rationally and without assistance, in order to read and produce documents, search for useful information and communicate via e-mail. France has boosted its open and distance-learning offering at higher-education level by setting up ten digital campuses, aimed at students taking initial or continuing training courses, which have been accessible since the start of the autumn 2001 university term, and by supporting the creation of educational multimedia companies. A European Residence dedicated to educational technologies, known as the "Villa Media" was opened in 2002, in the Grenoble Alps Métropole conurbation.
- **Improving teacher training - objective 1-1:** A number of actions are in progress, aimed at teachers, supervisory and inspection staff, and technical staff, with a view to supporting the development of information and communication technology in school-teaching and higher education. The training programme for those involved in setting up the digital campuses is extremely sophisticated.

DEVELOPING MOBILITY

The challenge of developing mobility assumes a Europe-wide harmonisation of university degree courses, based on a common degree architecture (bachelor's degree - master's degree - doctorate), within the framework of the so-called "Sorbonne-Bologna" process, initiated by France in 1998.

France has created vocational bachelors' degrees and its own master's degree. It is also striving to develop the system of European university course-credit transfers (ECTS); it is anticipated that this system, which has already been adopted by a number of engineering colleges, will gradually be implemented across all study courses.

In the 98/99 academic year, 16,800 French students took part in the ERASMUS programme.

The impact of Europeanisation/internalisation on education and training

The "sustainable professionalisation" initiative taken by France in the field of professional teaching has been the subject of an intergovernmental agreement reached between 9 European countries, and the various bodies of the European Commission: it has enabled the common reference systems of two vocational diplomas at BAC+2 level [i.e. 2 years' higher education], to be worked out on an experimental basis, in the car industry and hotel and catering sectors.

The EUROPRO certificate of accreditation, attached to a vocational diploma (CAP, BEP, vocational BAC, BTS, *mention complémentaire* ['additional mention']) provides for validation of students' professional experience at the end of a professional training programme that includes on-the-job training in a European country as required by the diploma. Candidates will report on the European dimension of their particular vocational specialisation during an oral presentation. The requirements will be graduated from level V to level III.

The creation of European summer schools corresponds to a desire to promote mobility among students and teachers at European level. These arrangements involved 5,000 students and 100 universities in 2002. A number of universities are now committed to issuing ECTS credits.

Exchanges have been arranged with various European Union countries in order to promote transnational mobility. The following initiatives may be cited in particular, from among many:

- the Franco-German Secretariat for vocational training exchanges (French acronym: SFA) is involved in organising 110 exchanges for apprentices, pupils and adults taking initial and continuing vocational training courses. 2,800 young French and German students are involved

in these exchanges, which last for a period of 3 weeks. The SFA, which is based in Saarbrücken, is financed on a 50/50 basis by the two Governments.

- With Greece, a joint cooperation programme is being initiated in the field of information and communication technology for educational purposes (French acronym: TICE).
- With the Netherlands, a Franco-Dutch network for cooperation in higher education has been established. Within the framework of these arrangements, the plan is to federate the cooperation networks already existing between the two countries at higher-education level (47 agreements between universities, and 88 agreements between *grandes écoles* and engineering colleges). The University of Utrecht, on the Dutch side, and the Lille-Nord-Pas-de-Calais European University Pole, on the French side, have been designated by higher-education conferences as the network heads in France, and by their Dutch counterparts, the *VSNU* and *HBO-Raad*.
- With the United Kingdom, an initiative embarked upon in autumn 2001, in collaboration with the Technology College Trust, has allowed 60 twinning arrangements to be established between French colleges and lycées [secondary schools] providing general and vocational education, and which have a European section, and British language colleges (specialising in the teaching of modern languages).