



Vocational education and training in France

Short description

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The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

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Foreword

France holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first semester of 2022, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to reverberate and create a need to secure education continuity, training and jobs. The presidency motto 'recovery, power and belonging' is setting the scene for action in a period of technological, economic and environmental challenges triggering changes in the labour market landscape of skills and jobs. During the Presidency, several intervention areas are to be considered, in line with the EU strategic guidelines for vocational education and training (VET) during 2021-30. Increasing investment in school education and the teaching profession, as well as increasing mobility opportunities within the Erasmus programme for VET learners, young apprentices and teachers are key priorities. The Presidency will contribute to the skills agenda by following closely the work towards a Council recommendation on individual learning accounts, as enabler of lifelong learning. There will also be initiatives for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce in response to the twin (digital and green) transition and the globalisation of the economy. The Presidency will also promote initiatives for inclusive recovery, boosting social resilience and employability for all – notably for the young by mobilising the reinforced Youth Guarantee – and social protection policies (proposal for a Council directive on minimum wages, initiative on platform workers). France will follow the implementation of the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration and developments related to the Council Recommendations on microcredentials and on education for environmental sustainability.

Initial education and continuing training in France operate as a continuum in the national system of lifelong learning. They aim to help citizens acquire skills relevant for personal and professional development and ensure social integration of young people and adults. Around one third of learners in upper secondary schools follow the vocational path that builds on personalised support, reinforced career guidance for successful transition to further studies or the labour market and diversification of the learning offer: more than 400 VET diploma specialisations are offered in different sectors of the economy.

Apprenticeship training centres offer an alternative route to school-based education for young people up to age 29 to combine learning with work and gain a qualification and/or employment; private bodies and businesses may set up their own apprenticeship centre and offer training for skills in demand in their sector. A record number of apprentices was recorded in 2020, equally balanced between those targeting a medium-level vocational qualification and those preparing for a qualification at European qualifications framework (EQF) level 5 or higher. Promoting excellence in VET in emerging sectors is pursued through the new generation of trades and qualification campuses. The State assumes a formal obligation to provide training opportunities to the low-qualified aged 16 to 18 and no longer in education and improve their employability. This can be via an apprenticeship, continuing training or learning schemes in civic service, and support for social and professional integration.

Participation in lifelong learning is among the 10 highest in the EU-27 (13% in 2020). Upskilling the least qualified is a major national priority, materialised through several programmes: the 2018-22 Investments in skills plan, aligning training to company and emerging needs, such as digitalisation and distance learning; the 2020 Youth plan, providing short-term backing in response to the pandemic; and the National resilience and recovery programme, offering long-term investments for social and economic prosperity. The continuing training and apprenticeship system assigns a central place to the online personal training account (*compte personnel de formation*, CPF) scheme, an individual right to training offering personalised access depending on the beneficiary's learning profile. End-users use their learning credits to enrol in training actions to acquire skills for jobs and nationally recognised qualifications. In 2 years, 18 million learning profiles have been activated and 2.7 million training actions followed, one third of them achieved by jobseekers.

This short description, drawn up in collaboration with Cedefop's national ReferNet partner, aims to offer an insight into the national vocational education and training system, its distinctive features, and the challenges of the broader socioeconomic country context. Published on the occasion of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, it forms part of a series of publications produced by Cedefop on national VET systems in the EU ⁽¹⁾. It aims to contribute to better understanding of VET systems and the role of VET as enabler for economic growth and attractive path for young people and adults,

⁽¹⁾ [Short descriptions of vocational education and training systems](#), Spotlight on VET [flyers](#) and animated [videos](#) presenting the national vocational education and training systems in the Member States.

encouraging learner and teacher mobility and promoting cooperation among Member States. We hope that it will serve as a useful source of information for researchers, policy-makers and VET providers, and be an informative reading for the European and international audience.

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France



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Area	633 186.6 km² ⁽²⁾
Capital	Paris
System of government ⁽³⁾	Semi-presidential republic with a head of government – the Prime Minister – appointed by the President who is the directly elected Head of State
Population (2020) ⁽⁴⁾	67 422 241
Real GDP per capita (provisional data, 2020) ⁽⁵⁾	EUR 33 270
Legislative power ⁽⁶⁾	Parliament of the Republic

⁽²⁾ Eurostat, demo_r_d3area [extracted on 26.2.2021].

⁽³⁾ European Union's website ([country profile: France](#)).

⁽⁴⁾ Insee, 2021a.

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, sdg_08_10 [extracted on 23.9.2021].

⁽⁶⁾ République Française, 2020.

CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET



1.1. Demographics

On 1 January 2021, the population in France was 67 407 241: 48.3% males and 51.7% females ⁽⁷⁾. Population increased by 1.3% from 2015 ⁽⁸⁾, mainly due to natural growth. France had the highest fertility rate in the EU, 1.86% in 2019 ⁽⁹⁾. In 2020, one 10th of the population in the country were immigrants (6.8 million), of which 2.5 million acquired French citizenship in the same year; the total non-native population, including those born in the country with foreign nationality, was 5.1 million ⁽¹⁰⁾.

In France, as in most EU countries, the population is ageing. During 2010-20, the share of those aged over 65 increased by 3.8 percentage points (+3 percentage points in the EU-27). In 2020, the total age dependency ratio (62.1%) is the highest in the EU (55.5% in the EU-27). In the same year, France recorded the second highest share of young people aged 0 to 14 in the total population (17.9%, against 15.1% in the EU-27 in 2020) ⁽¹¹⁾.

The old-age dependency ratio is expected to increase from 33.9 in 2021 to 51.4 in 2060 (Figure 1). National statistics (2019) show life expectancy gains concentrated in the age group over 70. The 2020 demographic report reflects a negative impact of the pandemic on life expectancy at birth which dropped by 0.4 years for women and 0.5 for men compared to 2019; there was a significant fall of the number of marriages (-34%) compared to the previous year ⁽¹²⁾. Mortality increased in the first 5 months of 2021 in comparison to the same period in 2020; the same was true of 2020 compared to 2019, also due to the impact of the pandemic ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ Insee, [population per sex and age group](#) [extracted on 9.7.2021].

⁽⁸⁾ Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_19ndbi [extracted on 30.6.2021].

⁽⁹⁾ Eurostat, demo_frate [extracted on 9.7.2021].

⁽¹⁰⁾ Insee, 2021b; 2021c.

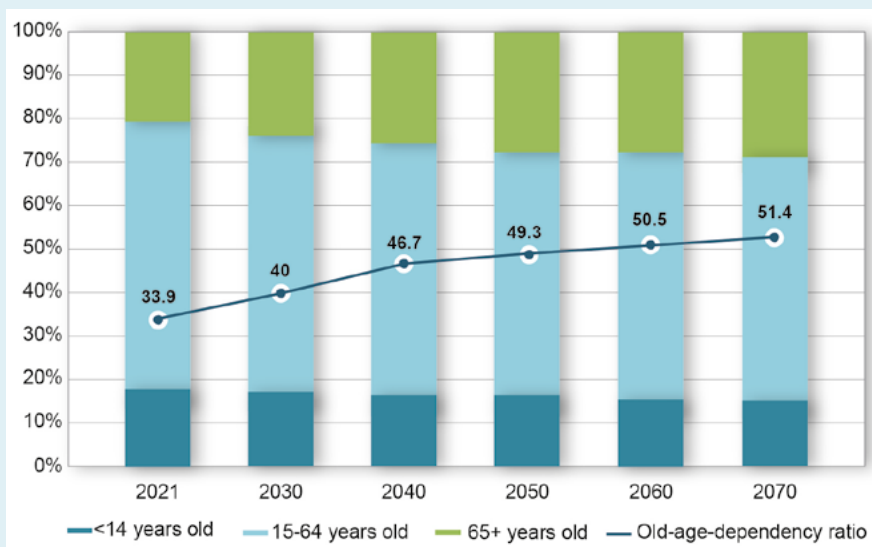
⁽¹¹⁾ Eurostat, population structure and ageing.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing [extracted in June 2021, accessed 10.7.2021, planned article update June 2022].

⁽¹²⁾ Insee, 2021d [accessed 10.7.2021].

⁽¹³⁾ Insee, 2021e [accessed 10.7.2021].

Figure 1. Population forecast by age group and old-age-dependency ratio



Source: Eurostat, proj_19ndbi [extracted on 30.6.2021].

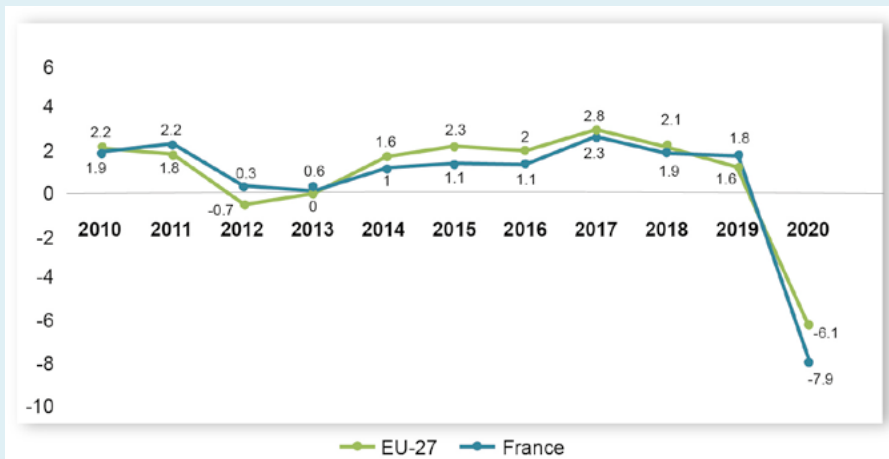
Educational attainment has increased over time; in 1985, the proportion of baccalaureate holders in one generation was 29%, compared with 80% in 2019. More young people continue their studies at tertiary level than in the past. There has been a steady increase of the number of vocational baccalaureate holders (share among all graduates in 2020 was 22.8%, compared to 18% of technological and 46.3% of general baccalaureate holders) (DEPP, 2021a), but there are fewer young people with medium-level technical qualifications (*certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP) or equivalent, Section 2.2.3) than in the older generations ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Demographic changes and trends in initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET) may have an impact on the composition of the labour force and on skill supply and demand in the national economy.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Insee, 2020a, pp. 226-227 [accessed 10.7.2021].

1.2. Economy and labour-market indicators

Figure 2. Real GDP growth rate (percentage change on previous year)



NB: France, provisional data in 2019 and 2020.

Source: Eurostat, tec00115 [extracted on 10.7.2021].

In the last decade, the variation in national gross domestic product (GDP) growth has been following the EU trend recovering from the economic crisis, although at a slower pace. In 2019, it almost reached the EU average. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted national economies in Europe, as well as in France, which experienced a decline of -7.9 percentage points in 2020 in relation to the previous year (-6.1 percentage points in the EU-27) (Figure 2).

Economic activity loss in 2020 has been the largest in France since 1949; household consumption dropped by 7% and salaried employment, with 284 000 places lost, returned to mid-2018 levels ⁽¹⁵⁾. In the same year, the number of training places offered by companies fell by 22% in relation to 2019 in all sectors except the health sector; young people below 20 were those mostly affected by this (Dares, 2021a). Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, at national and regional levels, support measures have been put in place to ensure continuity in employment (solidarity fund for businesses, flexible short-time working arrangements) and in provision of training in apprenticeship training centres and other continuing training programmes (distance learning, training subsidies) (Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2020a; Insee, 2021f).

⁽¹⁵⁾ Insee, 2021f; 2021g [accessed 10.7.2021].

Shifting vocational training delivery to distance learning, where possible, helped ensure continuity. The vast majority (95%) of continuing training schemes for jobseekers in place in autumn 2020 were maintained, at least partially; only 3% were interrupted compared to programmes delivered at the start of the crisis in spring 2020 when one third of programmes were interrupted (Dares, 2021b). Following the recent reform of the continuing training financing system, the number of apprenticeship contracts concluded in 2020 increased by 40% in relation to the previous year (Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion, n.d.-a), allowing more people to train and acquire a vocational qualification. Due to flexible arrangements in place for the examination session 2019/20 of the vocational baccalaureate (completion rate was 90.4% against 82.4% in 2019) more candidates, especially those in distance education and individual candidates, could take the examination session in September (DEPP, 2021a).

Vocational education and training will play an important role in securing employment, especially for the young generation. Within the major recovery plan for the economy (*France Relance*) with a total budget of EUR 100 billion, EUR 15 billion are dedicated to vocational training actions (Section 1.4).

1.2.1. Structure of the economy

In 2018, there were 3.9 million companies running in the commercial non-agricultural, non-financial sector. Alongside big multinational firms and other large companies (*grande entreprise*, GE) operating in the industrial or commercial sectors in 2018 (0.01%) and employing 34% of the national workforce, the vast majority is composed of micro-enterprises with fewer than 10 employees (*très petite entreprise*, TPE 96%), the other categories are small and medium-sized enterprises (*petite et moyenne entreprise*, PME <4%), and intermediate-sized companies (*entreprise de taille intermédiaire*, ETI <1%) ⁽¹⁶⁾.

The economy depends primarily on the tertiary sector; main sectors and branches of activities contributing to the added value generated in 2020 are shown in Table 1. The sectors most in decline since 2019 were accommodation and food service activities (-28.9%), transport (-17.3%) and the construction sector (-14.5%) (France Stratégie, 2021a).

⁽¹⁶⁾ The types of businesses in France are defined by law based on their workforce, annual turnover and total balance sheet calculated annually (Insee, 2020b).

Table 1. Added value per sector (2020)

Sector	Billion EUR, current prices	(%)
Commercial services	1 158.20	56%
Main branches of activities:		
Technical and scientific; administrative and support service activities	291.20	25%
Real estate	276.20	24%
Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	215.10	19%
Non-market services	480.6	23%
Manufacturing industry, extractive industries and others	272.0	13%
Construction	106.7	5%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	36.8	2%
Total	2 054.3	100%

Source: Adapted from Insee, 2021h [extracted on 8.11.2021].

Despite the health crisis, the number of new businesses increased in 2020 by 4% in relation to 2019; this was especially due to the increase in individual businesses under the micro-entrepreneur regime, while the creation of traditional individual businesses is declining. The sectors contributing the most to new business creation are transport and warehousing activities (+22%), commerce (+9%) and real estate activities (+10%) ⁽¹⁷⁾.

In 2020, most (66%) apprenticeship contracts ⁽¹⁸⁾ were concluded by businesses with fewer than 50 employees (micro-companies and small and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs). Figures for the other categories were 15% (>1000 employees), 11% (50-249 employees) and 8% (250-999 employees). Contracts were concluded for all levels of vocational education and training (VET) qualifications: *CAP/brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP) (26%); the vocational baccalaureate (level 4, 16%); and tertiary level qualifications (22% for programmes requiring 2 years of study, 17.5% for 3 or 4 years and 18% for bac+5) (Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion, 2021a).

⁽¹⁷⁾ Insee, 2021i.

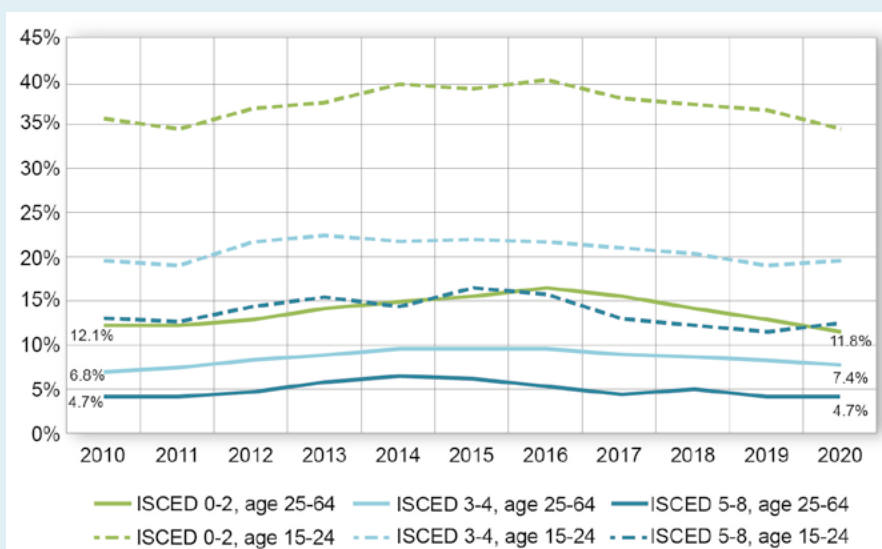
⁽¹⁸⁾ *Contrat d'apprentissage*, aimed for young learners in apprenticeship training centres.

1.2.2. Employment and unemployment

In 2020, total unemployment ⁽¹⁹⁾ in France was 6.8% (compared with 6.2% in the EU-27), a fall of 1.8 percentage points since 2016 ⁽²⁰⁾.

The economic crisis had less impact on the evolution of unemployment rates of those with medium- and high-level qualifications than for those with low qualifications. However, the unemployment rate of people with medium-level qualifications, including most VET graduates (international standard classification of education (ISCED) levels 3 and 4) remains higher than in the pre-crisis years (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2010-20



NB: Data based on international standard classification of education (ISCED) 2011; breaks in time series.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

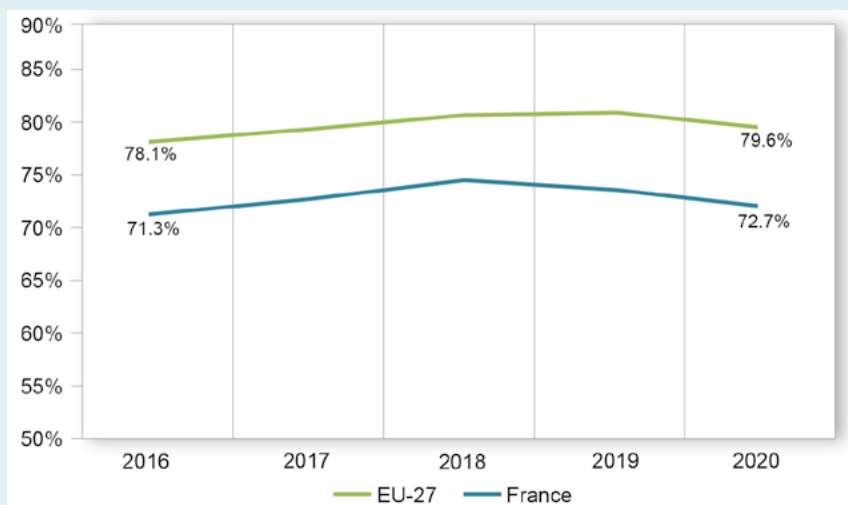
Source: Eurostat, lfsa_urgaed [extracted on 30.6.2021].

Unemployment among young people (15 to 24 year-olds) with low- and medium-level qualifications increased sharply at the beginning of the economic crisis and is still almost three times higher than the general working population (Figure 3).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Percentage of active population, aged 25 to 74.

⁽²⁰⁾ Eurostat, une_rt_a [extracted on 30.6.2021].

Figure 4. Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 year-olds, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series, EU-27 series does not include data for Iceland.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted on 30.6.2021].

Employment for 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates with medium-level qualifications increased between 2016 and 2018 and has been decreasing since (Figure 4). The overall increase in 2016-20 (1.4 percentage points) is half the rate of the increase of employment of all ISCED level graduates 20 to 34 year-olds in the country in the period 2016-20 (2.8 percentage points).

However, the increase in employment of VET graduates matches the average increase in employment in the EU-27 (Table 2).

Table 2. Total employment rate of VET graduates (aged 20-34 ISCED levels 3 and 4)

	France	EU-27
2016	71.3%	78.1%
2020	72.7%	79.6%
Change 2016-19 (percentage points)	+1.4	+1.5

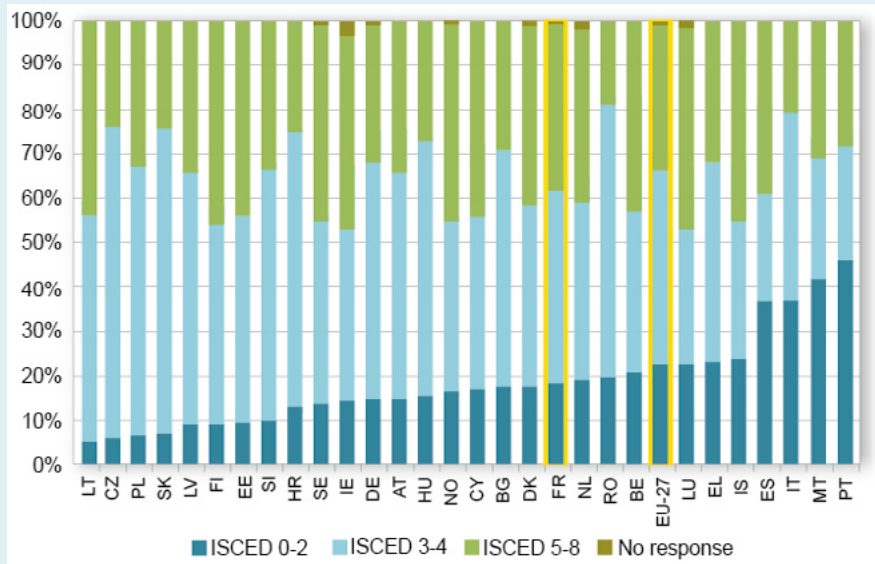
Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted on 30.6.2021].

The pandemic impact on employment has been more acute for young people, who are more frequently recruited on short-time contracts. The employment rate of young people aged 15-24 fell in 2020 by 1.2 percentage points against only by 0.4 points for those aged 25-49 (Dares, 2021c).

1.3. Education attainment and lifelong learning

In 2020, most people in the age group 25-64 had medium-level qualifications (41.7% in France, against 46.1% in the EU); tertiary education attainment is significantly higher than in the EU-27 (39.6% against an EU average of 32.7%). France is below the EU average (18.5% and 20.9% respectively) in terms of people with no or low qualifications but is still among the 10 highest in the EU-27 (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2020



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Low reliability for 'no response' in Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

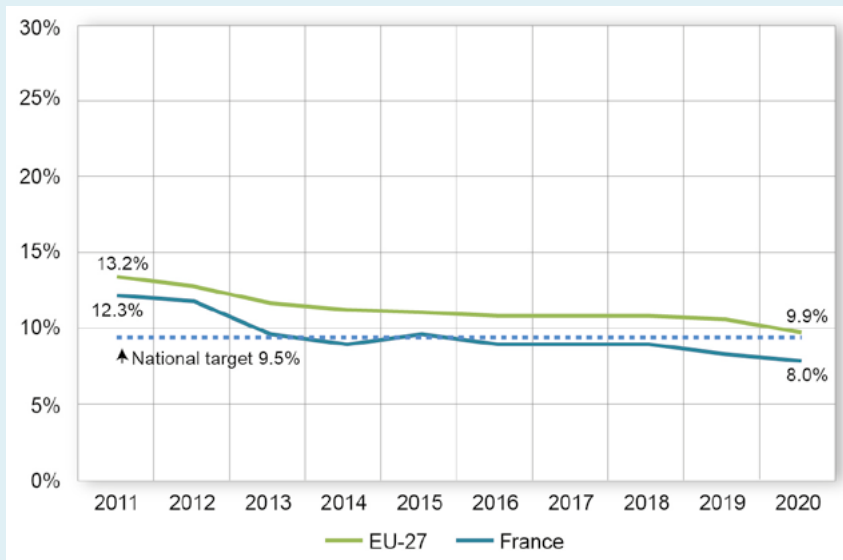
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, ifsa_pgaed [extracted on 30.6.2021].

In the period 2011-20, the share of early leavers from education and training fell by 4.3 percentage points in France (-3.3 percentage points in the EU-27). The national target of 9.5% (more ambitious than the Europe 2020 headline target of less than 10%) was reached 7 years ago, and early leaving is steadily decreasing (Figure 6). Following the general trend in the EU-27, early school leaving rates are higher for men and the foreign-born population (European Commission, 2020).

Figure 6. Early school leavers (age 18-24), 2011 and 2020, France and EU-27 (%)



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_14 [extracted on 30.6.2021].

National authorities have a legal obligation to support young unemployed people with no qualifications to return to education; a dedicated scheme not leading to qualifications is in place to support reintegration of early leavers from education and training. It includes a personalised interview to assess learning needs and level of skills and propose a training offer and personalised support (a tutor) throughout the training course. All young people aged 16 to 18 have a right to education to qualify and reach employment ⁽²¹⁾ (Section 1.4).

⁽²¹⁾ Articles L-122 and L-144 of the Education Code.
See also Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019.

In initial education, the national network *Formation Qualification Emploi* (Foquale) brings together all education actors to prevent and tackle early leaving from education in line with education and training policies. Different back-to-school structures (micro-lycées, second chance schools and others) exist for early leavers aged 16 to 25 to prepare for a general, technological or vocational upper secondary baccalaureate or a professional certificate included in the national register of vocational and professional qualifications (*répertoire national des certifications professionnelles*, RNCP) ⁽²²⁾. Several national employment policies target low-qualified unemployed young people, which includes early leavers. A training scheme for teachers and school staff (*mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire*, MLDS) in place in upper secondary schools aims to equip them with the necessary skills and strategies to prevent dropout. It leads to certification (MLDS certificate) that most teachers and staff in upper secondary VET school possess.

The share of people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) among all young people aged 15-34 in France (15.1%) is similar to the EU average (15%) but still among the 10 highest ⁽²³⁾.

Participation in lifelong learning has been steadily above the EU average (18.6% against 10.1% in the EU in 2015) and among the highest in the EU countries. In 2020, participation fell in France compared to 2019, more radically than in the rest of the EU (Figure 7).

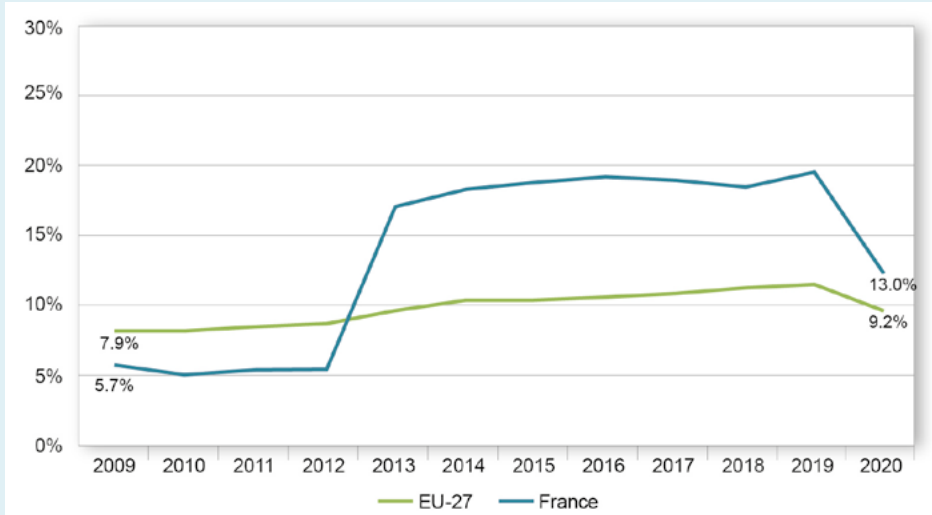
Adult education is an integral part of lifelong learning (*formation tout au long de la vie*). It is a national obligation of the State to enable all workers, including (self-)employed and jobseekers, to adapt to technological changes and new working conditions, facilitate professional (re)integration and skills development, and ensure access to all levels of professional qualifications for social advancement. All actors contribute to these goals: the State and local authorities; education and training institutions, both public and private; and social partners and family organisations ⁽²⁴⁾.

⁽²²⁾ More information: Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving. [Back-to-school structures \(SRE\)](#) [in English]; [Prise en charge des jeunes en situation de décrochage scolaire](#) and [Lycéens décrocheurs: les établissements pour reprendre des études](#) [in French].

⁽²³⁾ Eurostat, edat_ifse_20 [extracted on 13.7.2021].

⁽²⁴⁾ Law No 71-575 of 16 July 1971 on the organisation of continuing vocational training within the framework of continuing education.

Figure 7. Participation in lifelong learning in 2009-20



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64, participating in education and training.

Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted on 30.6.2021].

The system of lifelong learning encompasses initial education and training (general, technological and vocational education and training, including apprenticeships) and all forms of vocational training and all types of activities that allow citizens to acquire new skills ⁽²⁵⁾:

- (a) vocational training for adults and young people already engaged in working life;
- (b) professional activities and participation in civic and non-profitable services;
- (c) guidance and skills assessment schemes;
- (d) support actions to access employment;
- (e) validation of non-formal and informal learning.

⁽²⁵⁾ The national continuing training system was radically transformed in 2018 in terms of governance, funding mechanisms and apprenticeship provisions to offer more possibilities to train, especially for the low-qualified (Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2019a).

1.4. Employment policies influencing VET

Upskilling low-qualified young people and the unemployed is a policy priority; there is a national obligation to provide education and training within or outside formal education to allow them to qualify and access employment. A significant number of young learners leave the school system with low or no qualifications and face difficulties accessing employment in their transition from education to working life.

To support young people most at risk of leaving education and training early and without qualifications, the 2019 Law for a school of trust ⁽²⁶⁾ brings a training guarantee (*obligation de formation*) to age 18 and extends the definition of training (*formation*) beyond vocational education and training to other forms of training: employment, civic service and support schemes for social and professional integration ⁽²⁷⁾. At regional level, coordination of this training guarantee for unemployed 16 to 18 year-olds is ensured by the network of *missions locales*, guidance and orientation services of the public employment service, cooperating with education institutions (including second-chance schools and schools for early leaver reintegration) and information and guidance centres to provide adequate support and training offer to young people aged 16 to 25 (Cedefop, 2020a).

The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional integration, in collaboration with the regions, runs a major 5-year investment plan 2018-22 (*plan d'investissement dans les compétences*, PIC). It is led by a high commissioner for skills and implemented through calls for projects. Within the total funding, EUR 15 billion are allocated to training actions for skills development to support the access to employment of 1 million jobseekers with low or no qualifications and 1 million young people without qualifications; there is a special focus on the disabled and those in priority urban (*quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville*, QPV) and rural (*zone de revitalisation rurale*, ZRR) areas. The national Youth Guarantee scheme (*garantie jeunes*) is integrated within the PACEA (*parcours contractuelisé d'accompagnement vers l'emploi et l'autonomie*) support scheme for social and professional integration of young people, financed through the PIC; additional funding is foreseen through the youth plan in place in 2020 (Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion, 2020).

⁽²⁶⁾ Puts emphasis on inclusive education through an integrated approach from pre-primary to upper secondary, including apprenticeships.

⁽²⁷⁾ Law No 2019-791 of 26 July 2019 for a school of trust.

In response to the unprecedented social and economic problems caused by the COVID-19 health crisis, a major 2-year recovery plan (*France Relance*) of EUR 100 billion was launched in September 2020 to boost the economy, maintain and support job creation, especially for young and vulnerable people. Among its priorities (environment, competitiveness and cohesion) EUR 15 billion are targeted for IVET and CVET training programmes and apprenticeships: recruitment aids, support for training (200 000 additional training places on ecological and digital transition jobs) and for sustainable integration into the workplace.

The youth plan *One young person, one solution (1 jeune, 1 solution)*, part of the recovery plan, is in place since mid-2020 for the training and professional integration of young people aged 16-25, particularly vulnerable to the economic and social effects of the health crisis (Gouvernement, 2020). It has a budget of EUR 6.7 billion for financing vocational career guidance and (re)training schemes, including apprenticeships, under three priorities (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2021):

- (a) facilitating entry into working life through increased or additional financial incentives to businesses to recruit young people (EUR 4 000) and apprentices (EUR 5 000/apprentice below 18, EUR 8 000/apprentice above 18); training opportunities in the civil service (6-12 months paid) and sport sectors to acquire work experience;
- (b) increasing vocational guidance and training into professions/sectors of the future:
 - (i) retraining schemes for low-qualified;
 - (ii) training for professions in the health sector, digital training, personalised pathways for early leavers, more training places for technicians (CAP/*brevet de technicien supérieur*, BTS);
 - (iii) new training places for the low-qualified through the investment in skills plan (PIC);
- (c) supporting long-term unemployed young people to gain employment through tailored training pathways adapted to their needs:
 - (i) professional inclusion schemes: *parcours emploi compétences* (PEC); *centre d'information et de documentation* (CID);
 - (ii) support schemes (Youth Guarantee; PACEA; *accompagnement intensif jeunes*, AIJ);
 - (iii) training in the sports sector (*Sésame vers l'Emploi dans le Sport et l'Animation pour les Métiers de l'Encadrement*, SESAME).

A retraining scheme for career transition (*transitions collectives*, Transco) has been elaborated jointly between the Ministry of Labour and the social partners and is running in 2021, financed through the recovery plan. Company employees can retrain, while still in employment, before moving to a new job needed in the local economy. Participating companies are reimbursed depending on their size: micro-companies and SMEs (100%), companies with fewer than 1 000 or more than 1 000 employees (respectively, 75% and 40%).

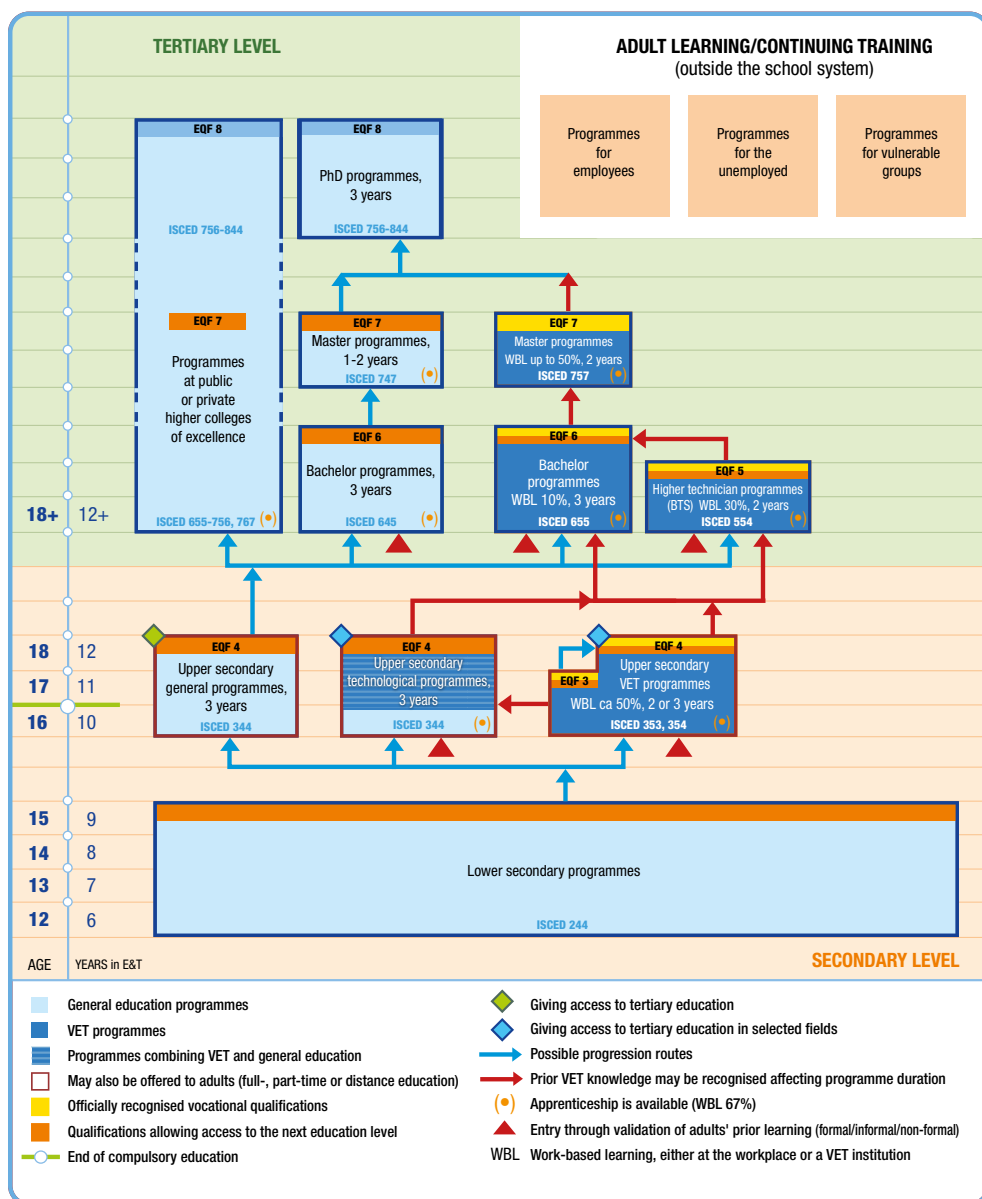
The national public employment service (Pôle Emploi) is running a multitude of financial aids for training actions for the professional integration of jobseekers (young people, older persons, people with special needs): assisted contracts, hiring aids, apprenticeship contracts and professionalisation contracts.

CHAPTER 2.

VET provision



Figure 8. VET in the French education and training system in 2021/22



NB: ISCED-P 2011. The French qualifications framework is not linked to European qualifications framework level 1; vocational qualifications have not been established at level 2.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2021.

2.1. Education and training system overview

Initial education and training covers general, technological and vocational programmes, including apprenticeships. It is part of the overarching lifelong learning (*formation tout au long de la vie*) system (Section 1.3) and comprises:

- (a) pre-primary (ISCED level 0);
- (b) primary education for children aged 6-11 (ISCED level 1);
- (c) lower secondary education for learners aged 12-15 (ISCED level 2);
- (d) upper secondary education for learners aged 16-18 (ISCED level 3);
- (e) tertiary (ISCED level 5) and higher education (ISCED levels 6 to 8).

Compulsory education comprises pre-primary education ⁽²⁸⁾, 5 years of primary education and 4 years of lower secondary general education (ages 6 to 16). Learners with special education needs generally attend ordinary schools (in dedicated sections in place from primary to upper secondary (*sections d'enseignement général et professionnel adapté* (SEGPA), *établissements régionaux d'enseignement adapté* (EREA), *unités localisées pour l'inclusion scolaire* (ULIS)).

In the last year of lower secondary (*collège*), learners take an exam to acquire the end of lower secondary education certificate (*diplôme national du brevet*); however, this is not a prerequisite to enrolling in further studies. Since 2019, interested pupils in the last year of lower secondary can opt for a career orientation scheme (*troisième prépa-métiers*) to discover several trades and be guided in their decision to continue in upper secondary VET studies or prepare for a vocational qualification in an apprenticeship training centre.

In upper secondary, all three pathways (general, technological and vocational) lead to a final exam to acquire the nationally recognised upper secondary school leaving baccalaureate diploma. The general education baccalaureate gives access to higher education academic and technological studies. Technological baccalaureate holders usually move on to tertiary undergraduate or professional bachelor programmes (Sections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5). In the vocational pathway, it is possible to acquire a first qualification in 2 years and enter the labour market or to complete a 3-year programme that awards the vocational baccalaureate, opening up tertiary-level studies to acquire the undergraduate technician certificate (Section 2.2.4). Integrated studies in technology institutes (*instituts universitaires de technologie*, IUTs) lead to a University Bachelor of Technology

⁽²⁸⁾ Law No 2019-791 of 26 July 2019 for a school of trust.

in years, with the possibility to acquire an undergraduate certificate of technology in the second year (Section 2.2.8).

Professional bachelor (European qualifications framework (EQF) 6) and master (EQF 7) programmes are offered in parallel to higher education academic studies (EQF levels 6 to 8). There is a diversified landscape of higher education institutions (established by law) offering bachelor, master and doctorate degree programmes, as well as short-cycle higher education programmes. The tertiary sector includes public and private universities, technology institutes attached to universities, other public or private higher colleges of excellence (*grandes écoles*) and higher education schools offering specialised studies (*écoles spécialisées*) in the fields of communication, art, industry, tourism, commerce, transport, social sciences and paramedical studies.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

The national register of vocational and professional qualifications is the backbone of the national initial and continuing training system. It lists all the certifications recognised by the State and the social partners and attests to the capacity to exercise a job activity or a profession (Section 3.2). Vocational and vocationally oriented qualifications are provided in initial education, in apprenticeship and can be prepared through different training forms in continuing vocational training (Section 2.3).

2.2.1. Initial vocational education and training

In initial education and training, each pathway prepares learners for an exam to obtain a qualification. Vocational and vocationally oriented programmes are delivered in upper secondary schools and tertiary education institutions, with compulsory training periods in companies. Work-based learning (WBL) covers theoretical vocational subjects and practical training (courses, practical work in workshops, indoor and outdoor), a practical project assignment and internships in companies. The share of practical training varies depending on the type and education level of the programme.

Technological and vocational qualifications (EQF levels 3 to 7) delivered in initial education (*formation initiale*) can also be prepared in apprenticeship, in continuing training (*formation continue*) or acquired through validation of non-formal and informal learning.

2.2.2. Upper secondary technological programmes

Vocationally oriented, 3-year school-based technological studies combine general education (grade 10) and specialised technological subjects (grades 11 and 12) organised in different sectors (*séries*) and activity fields. Following examination, learners obtain the end of upper secondary technological baccalaureate at EQF level 4 (*baccalauréat technologique*, BTn). Holders of the BTn usually enrol in professional bachelor programmes or undergraduate higher technician studies.

2.2.3. Upper secondary vocational programmes

Upper secondary VET, delivered in public and private schools, offers flexible paths to acquire a first qualification that leads to employment and/or VET studies at higher levels. The 2018 vocational school reform modernised programme delivery to align it better with skill needs in the economy and reinforced career orientation and guidance schemes. Programmes combine general education (maths, history and geography, sciences, French and English) with VET subjects (at least 50% of the whole programme) and a work placement of 12 to 22 weeks, depending on the intended qualification. In the first year, basic skills (French language and maths) are assessed to identify learning needs, while vocational subjects are structured around a set of skills common in a professional area within 14 trades (*familles des métiers*) with selection of the specialisation only at the end of the year. Learners follow a dedicated career guidance scheme for professional integration (*projet d'avenir*) in the second year and elaborate a project-based individual or collective multidisciplinary assignment (*chef d'oeuvre*) applying vocational and other social or soft skills and making a first contact with the local communities.

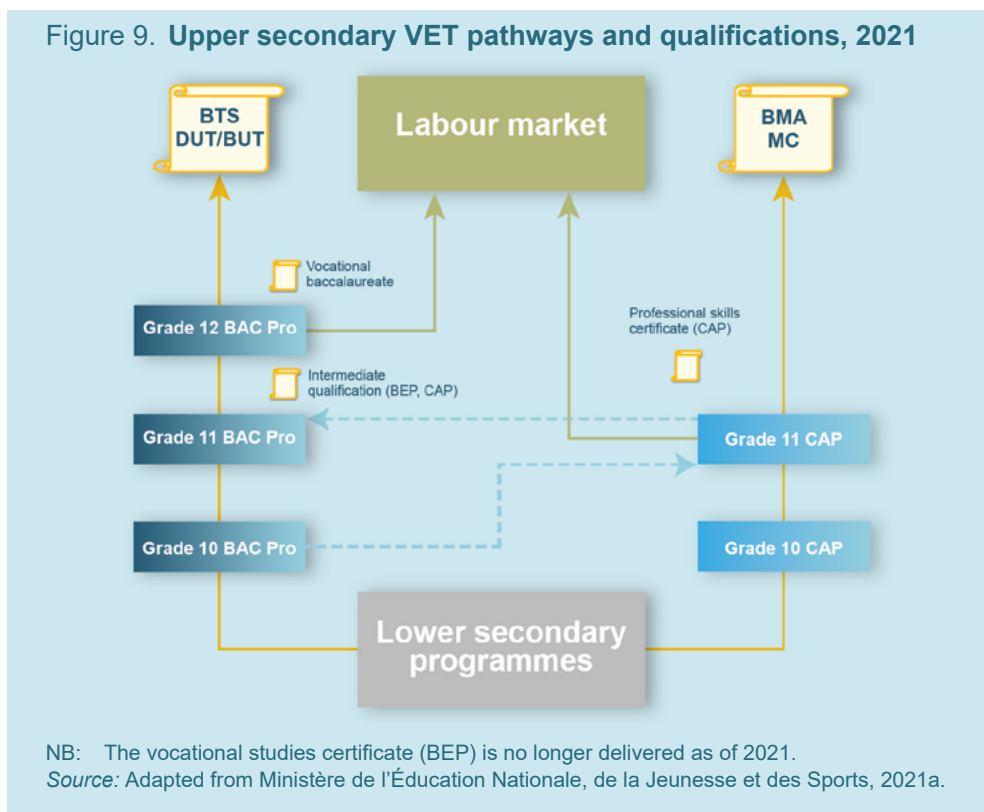
Horizontal and vertical progression between VET paths (Figure 9), as well as with the general and technological upper secondary paths, is possible. The 2-year programme leads to the EQF level 3 professional skills certificate (*certificat d'aptitude professionnel*, CAP) certifying its holder as qualified worker or employee in 180 specialities in the industrial, commercial and service sectors and nine in the agricultural sector. In the 3-year programme, learners prepare for the EQF level 4 vocational baccalaureate (*baccalauréat professionnel*, Bac Pro) that qualifies its holders to exercise a profession (100 specialities) and opens access to advanced technician programmes (Section 2.4.4).

Holders of a CAP or Bac Pro may follow a 1-year programme to acquire a specialisation certificate (*mention complémentaire*), at EQF level 3 in one of 20 specialities or level 4 in one of 30 specialities respectively. CAP holders may also enrol in a follow-up 2-year programme to acquire the EQF level 4 applied

arts certificate (*brevet des métiers d'arts*, BMA), attesting to specific skills in traditional techniques in more than 20 specialities, or move to the second year of the 3-year programme.

All vocational qualifications in upper and post-secondary are structured in units/blocks of assessable competences ⁽²⁹⁾. Since 2020, learners who have failed their vocational examination can validate one or more blocks. Figure 9 presents an overview of upper secondary vocational paths and qualifications.

An optional transnational mobility period available within the work placement module of the vocational baccalaureate (*EuroMobipro* certificate) has been replaced by a new scheme (*MobilitéPro*) for international mobility and extended to the CAP programme and BMA programmes (Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2020b). The COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on its implementation in 2020 and 2021.



⁽²⁹⁾ France compétences, 2021a.

2.2.4. Higher technician programmes

Two-year higher technician programmes provide specialised education and training in more than 100 specialities in the service and industrial sectors and include compulsory internship. They are delivered in the advanced section of upper secondary vocational schools and attract mainly vocational baccalaureate graduates ⁽³⁰⁾. Programmes lead to the higher technician certificate (*Brevet de technicien supérieur*, BTS, EQF level 5) designed for immediate entry into work and structured in units/blocks of competences. BTS holders may also continue studying, particularly towards a professional bachelor. In 2020/21, the number of learners enrolled in the advanced section increased by 1.1% in comparison to the previous year.

2.2.5. Professional bachelor programmes

Professional bachelor (*licence professionnelle*, EQF level 6) programmes are delivered in universities; their aim is to provide learners with vocational skills for immediate integration into the labour market. There are 173 specialisations (*mentions*) in most sectors, including agriculture, industry and the tertiary sector (trades, transport, market or social services). Programmes combine theoretical and practical subjects, an internship and a supervised individual or collective assignment (*projet tutoré*) covering at least one third of the total credits of the programme.

Previously offered as 1-year short higher education programmes to those with an EQF level 5 or equivalent qualification listed in the national register of vocational and professional qualifications (RNCP), they were reformed by the Decree of 6 December 2019 and are currently accessible to general and technological EQF level 4 baccalaureate holders in a 3-year programme ⁽³¹⁾. Higher education pathways can be personalised ⁽³²⁾. Students in professional reorientation may have their previous learning recognised when enrolling in a professional bachelor programme and complete it in 1 or 2 years, depending on the organisation of the adapted programme (60 or 120 ECTS points). Learners obtaining a professional bachelor degree may also continue to a master degree in the same field of studies.

⁽³⁰⁾ Since 2018, a special preparatory course of flexible duration is available for those not likely to be admitted, to consolidate knowledge and skills necessary for entering the BTS programme in an advanced technician section.

⁽³¹⁾ 180 ECTS (European credit transfer and accumulation system) points.

⁽³²⁾ Decree of 30 July 2018 for the delivery of the national bachelor, professional bachelor and master degrees and Decree of 30 July 2018 relating to the national bachelor degree (licence).

University Bachelor of Technology (*Bachelor universitaire de technologie*, BUT, EQF level 6) programmes were introduced in 2021/22 as part of the reform of the professional bachelor pathway ⁽³³⁾. They belong to the public higher education sector and deliver the national grade of bachelor (in the national scheme of *licence-master-doctorat*). Delivered in technological institutes (IUTs) established nationwide, they are accessible through a selection procedure to holders of the general and technological baccalaureates. Programmes are two-thirds defined by national framework curricula; one third can be adapted to social and local economy environment and the student's profile (learning needs and individualised pathways). They are oriented to entry into the labour market, with 600 hours dedicated to a project assignment and an internship of 22 to 26 weeks. An intermediate degree, the undergraduate technology certificate (*diplôme universitaire de technologie*, DUT, EQF level 5, previously offered as stand-alone programme) is integrated in the bachelor programme offered in the same 24 specialisations in the production and service sectors. After completion of the first 2 years of the bachelor programmes, learners may acquire the DUT and move on to other higher education programmes. The new structure eases progressive specialisation, individualised pathways for bachelor or BTS graduates in professional reorientation to enter the programme and vertical progression (learners make one selection procedure after the baccalaureate and acquire two degrees without intermediate admission and selection procedures). Graduates can move on to professional master programmes.

Bachelor programmes in business and management are offered by different types of business schools, mostly higher colleges of excellence (*grandes écoles*) or in apprenticeship. They follow the national LMD model (*licence-master-doctorat*, structured in ECTS points) and are accessible to learners with a baccalaureate EQF level 4 qualification and learners selected from those having followed a 2-year preparatory course (*classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles*, CPGE, Section 2.2.6). Programmes lead to a degree or certificate in business (*diplôme ou certificat d'école de commerce*) and allow access to the labour market or master studies.

2.2.6. Professional master programmes

The grade of master is regulated by law and can only be awarded by the State. National master degree studies require the acquisition of 120 ECTS credits, spread over four semesters. They are open to those with a bachelor degree or through validation of prior learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*

⁽³³⁾ Order of 27 May 2021 relating to the national programmes of the professional bachelor 'University Bachelor of Technology'.

(VAE), Section 3.3). Programmes cover theoretical, methodological and applied elements and one or more internships, as well as initiation in scientific research (completion of a dissertation or other original research work). Learners must also demonstrate good knowledge of a modern foreign language. The master degree (EQF level 7) provides access to high-level jobs requiring 5 years of education following the baccalaureate and access to PhD studies; holding a master is required in some regulated professions, i.e. those which can only be exercised with certain qualifications.

Professional master degree programmes are delivered by public universities and other public or private higher education institutions in engineering, business and management. There are two entry routes, either through competition after the end of secondary education in an integrated 5-year programme or, more often, after successful completion of a preparatory, highly selective and eliminatory 2-year programme (CPGE).

Qualified engineer (*titre d'ingénieur diplômé*) programmes are run by public or private engineering schools in higher colleges of excellence or in apprenticeship. The profession of engineer is not regulated by law; the title of qualified engineer has an academic and professional quality, is recognised by employers and is controlled by the engineering qualification committee (*commission des titres d'ingénieur*, CTI). Only accredited engineering schools⁽³⁴⁾ can award the title of qualified engineer. In addition to apprenticeship and validation of prior learning processes to acquire the title of qualified engineer, accredited schools organise exams for issuing the *titre l'ingénieur diplômé par l'État* (DPE), conferring master degree, in 23 specialities⁽³⁵⁾. Bachelor graduates and excellent candidates/holders of a higher technician certificate EQF level 5 can enrol in the 3-year programme. Individualised (shorter) pathways are possible for learners in or with master level studies in public universities. Holders of the qualified engineer degree can enter the labour market. In 2018, master degrees in engineering represented around two thirds of all master degrees in science and technical studies issued in higher education.

⁽³⁴⁾ By the Minister for Higher Education, based on the opinion/recommendations of the CTI.

⁽³⁵⁾ Order of 31 May 2018 on the accreditation of schools to organise the exam leading to issuing the title of graduate engineer by the State;
Order of 26 May 2015 setting the list of specialities in which the title of engineer graduated by the State can be issued.

Business and management (State-labelled) master programmes were in place in more than 150 higher education institutions (*grandes écoles*) in early 2021, mainly in private institutions managed by professional organisations. The list of institutions offering Master in Business and Administration is available through the national office for information on studies and professions (*office national d'information sur les enseignements et les professions*, ONISEP). Among these qualifications, only those registered to the national register of vocational and professional qualifications (RNCP) are accessible through validation of non-formal and informal learning.

2.2.7. Alternance training in apprenticeship training centres

Programmes are aimed at people aged 16 to 29 ⁽³⁶⁾ and consist of alternating periods in an apprenticeship training centre (*centre de formation d'apprentis*, CFA) and a company under an apprenticeship contract (*contrat d'apprentissage*). The contract duration may vary from 6 months to 3 years, depending on the intended qualification. The apprenticeship programme curriculum is organised by the CFA. About one third covers general and vocational theoretical subjects depending on the level and duration of the programme delivered in the training centre. The other two thirds cover practical training in the company with a tutor (*maître d'apprentissage*) who is responsible for passing on knowledge and expertise and assigning tasks. Learners have employee status, their salary is calculated in proportion to the minimum wage, the intended diploma (for the total duration of the programme including the time spent in CFA), the age group and year of contract execution (Tables 3 and 4).

CFA apprentices can prepare for all State-recognised IVET qualifications at EQF levels 3 to 7, as well as all professional qualifications listed in the national register of vocational and professional qualifications, such as the professional certificate (*brevet professionnel*, BP) or professional certificates/titles (*titres professionnels*) issued by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration.

⁽³⁶⁾ Under certain conditions of Law No 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 for the freedom to choose one's professional future (Article L6222-1 of the Labour Code), people over 29 may also conclude apprenticeship contracts. These conditions cover tertiary-level qualification programmes delivered in successive apprenticeship contracts, programmes for disabled workers and elite sportsmen/women, and breach of contract for reasons beyond the learner's control.

Table 3. **Apprentice salary (*) per age group and year of contract execution**

	People under 18	People aged 18 to 20	People aged 21 to 25	People aged 26 and over
Year 1	27%	43%	53% (**)	100% (**)
Year 2	39%	51%	61% (**)	100% (**)
Year 3	55%	67%	78% (**)	100% (**)

NB: (*) As a percentage of the growth-indexed minimum wage (*saire minimum de croissance*, SMIC).

(**) As a percentage of SMIC or the standard minimum wage for the occupation/job.

Source: Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion, n.d.-b; 2021b.

Training provision has been liberalised, so private companies can also create a CFA to train their apprentices. The 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future defined the same obligations and quality standards (Qualiopi certificate, Section 3.4.2) and the same legal status for apprenticeship training centres as for other training centres; new governance and a new per capita funding model to ensure funds for all apprenticeship contracts were also included.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, special conditions apply in 2020-21 to allow apprentices to finalise the practical part of the training programme in companies; dedicated funds have been allocated to support the delivery.

Table 4. **Apprenticeship programme duration (hours) per qualification type**

EQF level	Title of the qualification	3-year programme	2-year programme	1-year programme
3	Professional skills certificate (CAP)	-	800	400
3, 4	Specialisation (MC)	-	-	400
4	Vocational baccalaureate (Bac-Pro)	1 850	1 350	675
4	Professional certificate (BP)	-	800	400
4	Applied arts certificate (BMA)	-	1 350	675
5	Higher technician certificate (BTS)	-	1 350	675

Source: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, 2021b.

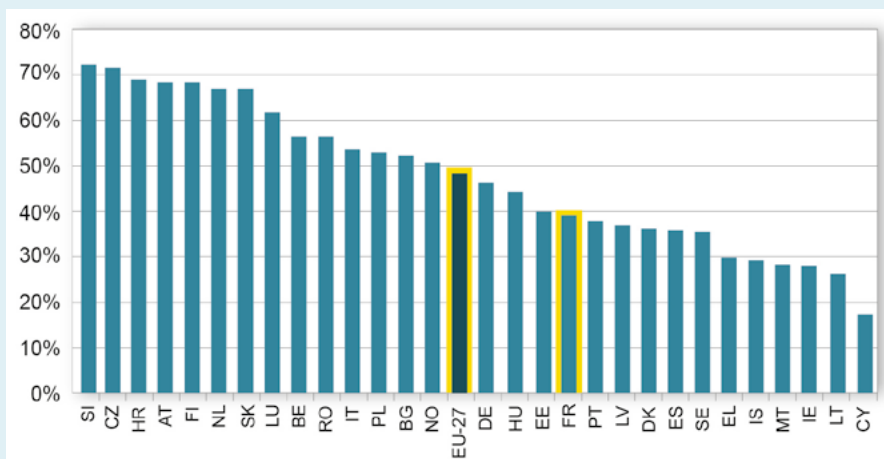
Professional certificate (*brevet professionnel*, BP) programmes

Learners can enrol in a 2-year EQF level 4 programme provided by CFAs, usually after the acquisition of the professional skills certificate (CAP) in the same or relevant specialisation, often with the aim to start their own business (for example dental technician, florist). Such programmes exist in more than 50 BP specialisations. A professional certificate can also be acquired in continuing training programmes for adults or through distance learning. The qualification is structured in units/blocks of competences ⁽³⁷⁾.

2.2.8. VET learners

More than one third (39.3%) of all upper secondary learners follow vocational programmes in 2019; the share of VET learners has fallen by 2.2 percentage points since 2015 and was below the EU average of 48.4% in 2019. The share of VET learners in post-secondary education fell by one percentage point in the same period (Figure 10 and Table 5).

Figure 10. Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2019



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted on 30.6.2021].

⁽³⁷⁾ Decree No 2020-726 of 12 June 2020.

Table 5. Share of learners in VET by level

	2015	2019
Upper secondary	41.5%	39.3%
Post-secondary	53.5%	52.5%

Source: Eurostat, educ_uae_enrs01, educ_uae_enrs04 and educ_uae_enrs07 [extracted on 30.6.2021].

In 2017, 2018 and 2019, a total of 743 000 learners completed initial education and training. The share of those with a vocational or vocationally oriented qualification, compared to all graduates per qualification acquired, is as follows:

- (a) professional master in engineering or business (EQF level 7): 10%;
- (b) vocational EQF level 5 qualifications (BTS, DUT): 11%;
- (c) technological baccalaureate (EQF level 4): 6%;
- (d) vocational baccalaureate or equivalent (EQF level 4): 16%;
- (e) professional skills certificate (CAP) or equivalent (EQF level 3): 9%.

In 2019, among all learners graduating from upper secondary with or without a qualification, 24.4% had completed vocational baccalaureate programmes and 9% an EQF level 3 vocational programme (DEPP, 2021, p. 253).

2.3. Continuing vocational training

Continuing vocational training (*formation professionnelle continue*) is intended for adults and young people already engaged in working life; together with initial education (Section 2.2), it is part of the overarching national lifelong learning system (*formation tout au long de la vie*). The aim of continuing training is to support people to acquire a qualification leading to employment and skills aligned to the short- and long-term needs of the economy. The 2018 law reformed the governance and financing of continuing vocational training and apprenticeship⁽³⁸⁾ and facilitated access to State-funded training actions, putting in central place the personal training account scheme (a universal right to training for employed, jobseekers, self-employed; *compte personnel de formation*, CPF) and apprenticeships. An overview of CPF-funded and apprenticeship training schemes leading to State-recognised qualifications listed in the national qualifications framework registers (Section 3.2) is presented in Table 6.

⁽³⁸⁾ Law No 2018-771 of 5 September 2018.

Table 6. Continuing training schemes and qualifications targeted

Training scheme/ type of qualifications	RNCP qualifications awarded by the State	Units/blocks of competences of RNCP qualifications	RS qualifications	CQPs – CQPIs awarded by the branches (RNCP or RS)
Alternance training				
Apprenticeship contracts	yes	no	no	no
Professionalisation contracts	yes	no (yes, pilot) (*)	no (yes, pilot) (*)	yes
Pro-A	yes (**)	no	no (yes, Clea)	yes (***)
Continuing training				
CPF-eligible schemes	yes	yes	yes	yes (if registered in the RNCP or RS)
CPF-career transition	yes	yes	yes	yes (if registered in the RNCP or RS)

NB: Pro-A: retraining apprenticeship schemes for employees.

(*) On an experimental basis until the end of 2023, the contract may define a tailor-made training course not necessarily leading to RNCP or RS qualifications.

(**) If foreseen in the collective bargaining agreement of the sector.

(***) If registered with a qualification level at the RNCP and foreseen in the collective bargaining agreement of the sector.

Source: Centre Inffo, 2021.

The 2018 Law broadened the legal definition of training action (*formation*) to include position tests, distance learning and on-the-job training (*action de formation en situation de travail*, AFEST). Four main types of training are recognised by legislation⁽³⁹⁾:

- (a) continuing training programmes provided by public and private training providers (*formation continue*) (Section 2.3.2);
- (b) apprenticeship schemes (*action de formation par apprentissage*) (Section 2.3.1);
- (c) skills audits (*bilan de compétences*) (Section 2.4.4);

⁽³⁹⁾ Articles L6313-1 and L6211-2 of the Labour Code.

(d) a national scheme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*) (Section 3.3).

Training is mostly financed by employers' contributions (Section 2.5.2) and courses are mostly free for beneficiaries or taken using learning credits from the CPF individual right to training.

A qualification acquired in continuing vocational training has exactly the same value as the (same) one obtained in initial education (Sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.7). Individuals may also acquire State-awarded professional qualifications issued by the Ministry of Labour and professional qualifications created by the sectors.

Professional certificates/titles (*titre professionnel*, TP) awarded by the Ministry of Labour certify that the holder has mastered the skills, abilities and knowledge necessary to perform a job. They certify the acquisition of specific professional skills to support employability and professional development of workers. They can be acquired as part of an apprenticeship, through VAE and in continuing training. There is a variety of training schemes, mostly targeting jobseekers and employed people, provided by semi-public and public training providers, like the national association for adult vocational training (Association Formation Professionnelle des Adultes, AFPA) or the consortium of local public education institutions (Greta). TP qualifications cover most sectors (building, human services, transport, catering, commerce, industry) and are structured in units/blocks of competences (*certificats de compétences professionnelles*, CCP) ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Professional qualification certificates (*certificats de qualification professionnelle*, CQPs) are sector-specific or industry-level qualifications, created and recognised by the professional branches, attesting to the mastery of competences related to a job. Interprofessional CQPs may be developed for two or more branches for transversal or related job activities. CQPs can be acquired through a variety of programmes designed for different learner groups (the unemployed, employees, the self-employed, specific groups), mostly targeting jobseekers and employed people ⁽⁴¹⁾. Up to 2018, CQPs were not attached to a level of qualification, but were classified separately in the national register of vocational and professional qualifications, by sector of activity. From 2019 onwards, CQPs

⁽⁴⁰⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/formation-professionnelle/certification-competences-pro/titres-professionnels-373014>

⁽⁴¹⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/formation-professionnelle/certification-competences-pro/article/certificat-de-qualification-professionnelle-cqp>

may be associated with a level of qualification and included in the RNCP register or registered in the RS without a level ⁽⁴²⁾. France compétences, running the RNCP and RS, is in charge of the process (Section 3.2). Only training programmes leading to CQPs registered in the RNCP or RS, thus valid nationally, are eligible for funding through the personal training account scheme (Table 6).

2.3.1. Alternance training schemes in continuing training

Alternance training schemes combine periods of theoretical training in a training centre and practical training in a company through a fixed-term (*contrat à durée déterminée*, CDD/*contrat à durée limitée*, CDL) or permanent (*contrat à durée indéterminée*, CDI) employment contract. In continuing training, apprenticeships are possible through a professionalisation contract or with a new retraining scheme for employees, the Pro A.

The professionalisation contract scheme targets young people aged 16 to 25 and jobseekers over 26 ⁽⁴³⁾. The training programme takes place either at the company (if it operates as a training centre) or in an authorised training centre. The amount of the wage depends on the learner education profile and age (Table 7). Under the scheme, learners can acquire State-recognised qualifications included in the national catalogue of vocational and professional qualifications, certificates of professional qualifications created by the social partners of a branch; and vocational qualifications recognised in the classifications of a national collective agreement. The targeted youth plan *One young person, one solution*, includes financial support for companies recruiting staff under a professionalisation contract.

⁽⁴²⁾ Law No 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 and Decree No 14 of 8 January 2019, implementing provisions of the Law (Chapter IV, Article 31).

⁽⁴³⁾ More information [in French]:
<https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F15478>

Table 7. Apprenticeship salary (*) by age group and level of education

Age of beneficiaries	People with no qualifications or at most an IVET EQF level 3 qualification	People with at least the national EQF level 4 baccalaureate diploma
Under 21	≥ 55%	≥ 65%
21 to 25	≥ 70%	≥ 80%
Over 26	≥ 100% SMIC or 85% of standard minimum wage for the occupation/job	

NB: (*) As a percentage of the growth-indexed minimum wage (SMIC).

Source: Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion, n.d.-b.

Retraining apprenticeship schemes for employees (Pro-A) were introduced by the 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future. Pro-A aim to facilitate upskilling and reskilling of employees for career development imposed by technological changes transforming jobs and the economy. Skills operators (*opérateurs de compétences*, OPCOs, Section 2.4.3.2) finance all or part of the pedagogical costs and transport and accommodation costs at a fixed amount set by the professional branches. Depending on the extended branch agreement, the employees' remuneration can be financed up to the minimum wage. The duration of training is from 6 to 12 months; it can be extended depending on the qualification aimed at (up to 24 months) or the education profile and age of learners (up to 36 months). Beneficiaries and qualifications offered by the scheme are defined by the professional branches ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

2.3.2. Lifelong learning training and support schemes

Within the national obligation of the State to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all citizens, employers contribute financially to continuing training and employees have the right to train within working hours. Professional development and training schemes for employees aim to support acquisition of new skills, including by recognising competences acquired at work; they also facilitate career change in line with the evolution of jobs and professions and are as follows:

- (a) skill development training plans elaborated in line with the company needs (*plan de développement des compétences*);
- (b) all training and support actions eligible for funding through the personal training account (CPF) scheme (Section 4.2.1);

⁽⁴⁴⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/formation-professionnelle/formation-en-alternance-10751/pro-a>

- (c) career transition plans offered through a dedicated scheme of the personal training account (CPF-*projet de transition professionnelle* or Transition Pro);
- (d) skills audits (*bilan de compétences*) are taken outside the company by external providers (Section 2.4.4) and may be financed by the employer, public funds or mutual funds;
- (e) validation of non-formal and informal learning (VAE) is accessible to all workers, jobseekers, employed, or civil servants. It can be initiated at the employer's request (within working hours) or by the employee (through a paid VAE leave or outside working hours for those with fixed-term employment contracts);
- (f) retraining apprenticeship schemes for employees (Pro-A);
- (g) reskilling programmes for employees whose jobs are threatened (*transitions collectives*, Transco) for career transition in jobs needed in local economies.

Employees may also benefit from a free career guidance and counselling service offered by regional CEP (*conseil en évolution professionnelle*) operators (Section 4.4.2) to define training and career needs and aspirations, which may be discussed with their employer during the regular company interview on professional development (*entretien professionnel*) taking place every 2 years.

Self-employed persons (farmers, artisans, self-employed and liberal professions) can enrol in training through contributions to collecting bodies pulling together the funds and through the personal training account scheme.

Jobseekers can use a free CEP service to define their needs in terms of competences to develop and mobilise training actions through their personal training account scheme, have their professional competences recognised through VAE or by accumulation of units/blocks of competences to acquire a recognised vocational or professional qualification.

Specific guidance and support schemes exist for people in need of personalised social or professional support (*périodes de mise en situation en milieu professionnel*, PMSMP; *préparation opérationnelle à l'emploi collective*, POEC) ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The regions jointly fund, together with the State (social partners can also be involved), training courses for jobseekers (in some cases open to employees) for professional development, social and professional integration or acquisition of a vocational qualification, as well as courses for jobseekers run by local job centres (professional development, job adaptation, acquisition of a qualification).

⁽⁴⁵⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/formation-professionnelle/formation-des-demandeurs-d-emploi/>

2.4. VET governance

Vocational training in France is a matter of shared responsibilities among the State, the regions and representatives of the business world. Initial VET and continuing vocational training are managed by different ministries that develop nationally valid vocational qualifications and certificates. There are qualifying requirements for VET teachers and trainers (Section 2.6) and different funding sources and schemes depending on the scope of the training actions and group of learners targeted (Section 2.5) (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

2.4.1. Governance of initial VET

At State level, initial VET is mainly regulated by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports (upper secondary VET) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (tertiary VET); other ministries are in charge of VET qualifications and programmes within their remit (ministries responsible for social affairs, agriculture, culture, defence, finance and health). Ministries develop standards for VET qualifications in consultation with business representatives, define examination regulations, and issue/award VET qualifications and diplomas. They also deliver school-based VET programmes in their institutions; recruit, train and pay VET teachers; and monitor quality of training, results and resources used.

Regions are responsible for the planning and coherence of vocational training in their territories, except for apprenticeship provision. They define their policies according to local economic and social priorities, in consultation with the State and the social partners. Since 2019, they provide career guidance and information to vocational schools and higher education institutions on learning, training and career opportunities in their territories (Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2020c).

Social partners are systematically involved in VET implementation. They contribute to the elaboration of qualifications in line with labour market needs; participate in examination boards; offer in-company training; and contribute financially to IVET provision (technological and vocational training programmes) by paying the apprenticeship tax. The national commission for collective bargaining (*Commission nationale de la négociation collective, de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle*, CNNCEFP) issues opinions on draft legislation (laws, decrees, ordinances) for employment policies, guidance, IVET and

CVET policies, and training actions financed through calls (in French, *plans de formation*) organised by the State ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

2.4.2. IVET providers

IVET is offered from upper secondary to higher education in public and private establishments. The Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports is in charge of secondary level VET; the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation is in charge of tertiary VET. Agriculture education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and offered in public education establishments or in agricultural education apprenticeship centres (*maisons familiales rurales*) open to learners as from grade 8 (third year of lower secondary) and in higher education institutions (DEPP, 2020, p.13).

In 2020, vocational programmes were running in 1 362 (800 public and 562 private) vocational upper secondary schools (DEPP, 2020, p.24). The teaching staff specialise as upper secondary teacher (general path), technological path teacher and VET teacher. Multi-purpose upper secondary schools (*lycées polyvalents*) offer general and technological programmes with a vocational training unit. Vocational education is also provided in apprenticeship training centres (Section 2.2.7).

The landscape of the higher education system covers a great variety of institutions whose legal status is defined in the French Code of Education. Higher education is free: only the State may issue nationally recognised university degrees and diplomas. A State-approved qualification is a label of quality and provides access to the LMD model (Section 2.2.5) which offers bachelor, master and doctorate degrees (*grade*, in French), recognised nationally and internationally. Private higher education institutions can deliver bachelor and master degree-level qualifications if they are accredited (State-labelled) through the national commission for evaluation of programmes and qualifications in management (*Commission d'évaluation des formations et diplômes de gestion*, CEFDG) (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019). The list of higher education institutions delivering VET programmes is presented in Table 8.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/ministere/instances-rattachees/article/cnncefp-commission-nationale-de-la-negociation-collective-de-l-emploi-et-de-la>

Table 8. Types of higher education institutions offering technological and vocational programmes

Institution type	Description
Public universities (EPSCPs)	Programmes are accessible to holders of an EQF level 4 national baccalaureate general or technological diploma. These are scientific, cultural and professional public institutions (<i>établissements à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel</i> , EPSCPs), public universities and some 71 other establishments, mainly public engineering schools. They may award bachelor and master (LMD model) degrees. It is possible for private universities to issue degree-level qualifications if they have signed a partnership agreement with an EPSCP.
IUTs (*)	University technology institutes attached to universities.
A non-university sector	Public and private tertiary education institutions and higher colleges of excellence (<i>grandes écoles</i>), operating in the fields of science and engineering, humanities and business administration, commerce, management, accessible via a competitive and selective admission procedure following a 2-year preparatory classes programme ⁽⁴⁷⁾ .

NB: (*) See Section 2.2.5.

LMD: The *licence-master-doctorat* model offers programmes expressed in ECTS points and provides bachelor, master and doctorate degrees which are recognised nationally.

Source: Centre Inffo.

2.4.3. Governance of continuing vocational training

The aim of continuing VET is to secure professional careers and access to employment. There is a great variety of public and private institutions (Section 2.4.4), offering lifelong learning programmes with different training objectives (Section 2.3.2). Governance and financing of continuing vocational training and apprenticeships is coordinated by France compétences (Section 2.4.3.1). Financing mechanisms in place and financing bodies vary depending on the group targeted (employees, jobseekers, young people, self-employed, civil servants) (Section 2.5.2). Training providers, including apprenticeship training centres, have to be quality certified by 2022, if they offer training financed by public and mutual funds (Section 3.4).

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Baccalaureate holders, selected according to their school profile and grades, undertake preparatory classes in a 2-year programme in upper secondary establishments with eliminatory examinations at the end of each year.

The continuing training system and national apprenticeship policies are developed and implemented through a four-party system with shared responsibilities and distinctive roles for the State, the regions and social partners (employers and trade unions):

- (a) at State level, national policy setting is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration. The 2018 reform of continuing training established new governance and funding mechanisms for continuing vocational training and apprenticeships, coordinated by France compétences. The Ministries of National Education, Youth and Sports and of Higher education, Research and Innovation operate lifelong learning networks of public institutions (Section 2.4.4);
- (b) regions ⁽⁴⁸⁾ ensure coordination of national job support policies and develop their own continuing training policies in their territories implemented by:
 - (i) regional directorates of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and professional integration (*directions régionales de l'économie, de l'emploi, du travail et des solidarités*, DREETS), established in 2021 as reference points on employment policies for social inclusion and professional integration as well as continuing training policies;
 - (ii) local agencies of the national public employment service (Pôle Emploi) for jobseekers;
 - (iii) *missions locales*, local services supporting people aged 16 to 25 with social and workplace integration difficulties;
 - (iv) the national network for employment for disabled persons (Cap emploi) (Cedefop, 2020a).

Regions coordinate, fund and implement regional training and guidance services in collaboration with regional committees on employment, vocational guidance and training (*Comité régional de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles*, CREFOP), to support local employment and economic growth (Section 2.5.2). Since 2019, regions are no longer in charge of the management of apprenticeship training, which has been taken over by France compétences and the social partners;

- (c) social partners have an essential role in regulatory, policy and financial aspects of lifelong learning programmes in CVET. They sign inter-professional agreements which are used in shaping reforms and are reflected in legislative and regulatory documents. They manage the skills operators (Section 2.4.3.2), organised by professional sector, and participate in examination boards (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Since the 2014 decentralisation, the regions ensure implementation of national policies in their territories.

2.4.3.1. France compétences

France compétences is a national public institution, implementing vocational training and apprenticeship policies, created by the 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future (Article 36). It is a single, four-party public institution under the supervision of the Minister in charge of vocational training. It replaced and absorbed several national bodies on VET implementation and financing ⁽⁴⁹⁾. Its main responsibilities ⁽⁵⁰⁾ are to:

- (a) establish and ensure the labour market relevance of vocational and professional qualifications to be included or updated in the national register of vocational and professional qualifications, and the specific register of other certifications (Section 3.2);
- (b) allocate the mutual funds between the different training schemes and ensure their redistribution and the equalisation of apprenticeship funds to skills operators (OPCOs, Section 2.4.3.2) and the regions (Section 2.5.2, Table 9);
- (c) run a professional development career guidance and counselling service for private-sector employees (CEP, Section 4.4.2);
- (d) act as lead institution for quality-related issues alongside the European Union, select and accredit the certifying bodies that can award the quality label *Qualiopi* to CVET training providers (Section 3.4);
- (e) run a free mediation service between beneficiaries of the *Transitions Pro* (Section 2.3.2) and CEP (Section 4.4.2) professional career development schemes and the operators providing these services.

2.4.3.2. Skills operators

Established in 2019, 11 skills operators (*opérateurs de compétences*, OPCOs, former OPCA) are joint bodies organised by professional sectors, managed by social partners and supervised by France compétences. They distribute funds for training, including for alternance training schemes (Section 2.5.2), support skills anticipation in SMEs, by helping them define their training and skill needs, and provide technical support to professional branches in designing training programmes and professional qualifications. Among their tasks, skills operators

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Namely, the national inter-professional committee for employment and training (*Comité paritaire interprofessionnel national pour l'emploi et la formation*, Copanef), the national council for employment, vocational training and guidance (*Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelle*, Cnefop), the joint fund for professional career security (*fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels*, FPSPP) and the national commission for vocational and professional qualifications (*Commission nationale de certification professionnelle*, CNCP).

⁽⁵⁰⁾ More information [in French]: <https://www.francecompetences.fr/>

can help the SMEs employing fewer than 50 persons benefit from mutual funds to develop training programmes for their employees ⁽⁵¹⁾.

2.4.4. CVET providers and support centres

The training market in France is free: any natural or legal person can provide training. Those who do are formally registered by the competent services of the labour ministry (DREETS, Section 2.4.3) and a daily updated list is publicly available online; there are more than 48 000 public and private training providers (*organismes de formation*).

Private providers offer 80% of the training; the remaining part is offered by public and semi-public training institutions. Companies may offer training actions to their employees if they operate an internal training service or use the services of external providers. Since 2019, any private company may also create its own apprenticeship training centre (Section 2.2.7).

Public and semi-public training providers are listed below:

- (a) Greta, public educational establishment groups operating under the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, are among the main public providers of lifelong learning programmes. In 137 Greta established nationwide, learners can prepare for vocational qualifications (CAP, vocational baccalaureate, BTS), either in classroom-based settings or through a professionalisation (apprenticeship) contract ⁽⁵²⁾. Programmes are usually financed through company training schemes for their employees or, for jobseekers, by the regions or regional public employment services;
- (b) universities through their continuing training services (*services de formation continue*);
- (c) the national agency for adult vocational training (AFPA) is a quadripartite agency (the State, regional councils, social partners) with 158 training centres in the country offering training to jobseekers to (re)qualify and access employment, and to employees for career development;
- (d) the National Conservatory of Arts and Trades (*Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*, Cnam) is a public higher education institution coordinating 20 regional centres and some 200 training centres in the country. They offer continuing vocational training and apprenticeship programmes, including online courses (massive open online courses, MOOCs), technological and research programmes and scientific and technical culture activities;

⁽⁵¹⁾ More information [in French]:

https://www.cereq.fr/sites/default/files/2021-03/T%26E%20150_0.pdf

⁽⁵²⁾ Greta can also deliver apprenticeship contracts in IVET.

- (e) training institutions, under the Ministry of Agriculture, offer training for career transition, and acquisition of transversal or occupational competences.

Apart from public bodies, schools (*écoles consulaires*) under the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI) operate 186 training centres offering different training courses, including in commerce, business and management. Different CCIs propose tertiary level technical courses and entrepreneurship programmes.

Support schemes are in place for employed and unemployed people wishing to be guided in establishing a training and career plan or validating their skills, such as vocational career guidance schemes (*démarches d'orientation, accompagnement vers l'emploi*), skills audits (*bilans de compétences*) and validation of prior experience (VAE):

- (a) skills audit centres (*centres de bilan de compétences*) offer the possibility to any person engaged in working life (employees, civil servants, self-employed, jobseekers, disabled persons) to reflect on their skills and aspirations to follow training, start a process for validation of prior experience (VAE) or establish a career development plan. The service is financed by public funds or mutual funds, depending on the financing scheme used by the beneficiary;
- (b) VAE centres (*centres d'accompagnement à la validation des acquis de l'expérience*) offer information, guidance and counselling to people wishing to undertake a VAE procedure aiming for certification. Information and counselling services for VAE operate at regional level for different groups ⁽⁵³⁾. Guidance services on qualifications and certification processes (*services d'accompagnement*) may be provided either by the awarding body, including institutions to which it has delegated the authority to issue its own qualifications or any other provider;
- (c) CEP operators offer career guidance and counselling services for the professional development of the working population (Section 4.4.2).

⁽⁵³⁾ Regional PES services (jobseekers), *missions locales* (young people with low qualifications), CNDIFF centres (promoting equal opportunities and professional and social autonomy of women), etc.

2.5. Financing VET

2.5.1. Initial education and training

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP is above the EU average (5.1% in France, 4.6% in the EU-27 in 2019) but remains below pre-crisis levels (5.7% in France in 2009). Although in the period 2010-18, funding of secondary education fell by 7% (-1% EU average), it was higher in France than the EU average in 2018 (39.7% and 37.1% respectively) (European Commission, 2020).

Education funding includes:

- (a) teaching and training (including in apprenticeships);
- (b) administration and educational research;
- (c) catering and lodging;
- (d) counselling and medical service;
- (e) transportation, purchase of books and other educational materials.

Total expenditure was estimated at EUR 160.5 billion (2019), from which:

- (a) 86% for general, technological and vocational education;
- (b) 7.2% for catering and lodging;
- (c) 2.1% for general administration expenses;
- (d) 1.9% for school supplies and textbooks;
- (e) 1.6% for school transport.

The State is the major funding body of initial education and training (54.9%, with most funds allocated by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (51.7%) and other ministries (3.2%). This is followed by the regions (23.1%), households (11.3%), companies (9%) and other public bodies (1.6%) (DEPP, 2021b, pp. 334-335).

2.5.2. Continuing vocational training

The main funding source of continuing training and apprenticeships is companies' contributions to joint collective bodies and from the apprenticeship tax. In 2018, the share of company expenditure among all CVET financiers was 31.2%, marking an increase of 7.7% in relation to the previous year. Other contributions come from the regions (16%, +8.6%), the State and other territorial bodies (15%, +2.9%), the national public employment service (PES) and other public administrations

(9.2%, -11%) and individual spending (5.5%). Public administration expenses for training its own staff was 23.1% and increased by 2.7% ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

France compétences coordinates the collection of funds, and ensures their redistribution and the equalisation of apprenticeship funds to skills operators and the regions (Table 9). It evaluates the actions carried out by skills operators (OPCO, Section 2.4.3.2), the evolution of costs, and can alert the State to possible malfunctions.

Table 9. Mutual fund envelopes redistribution

%	Targeted training scheme	Funding institution of body
64-72%	Alternance schemes: apprenticeship and professionalisation contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills operators (OPCO) • The regions
10-20%	The personal training account scheme (CPF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Caisse des dépôts et consignations</i>
5-10%	Scheme for career transition (CPF <i>de transition professionnelle</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint inter-professional regional committees (Transition Pro)
8-13%	Support schemes for SMEs with fewer than 50 employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills operators (OPCO)
1-3%	Free career guidance service for career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and regional CEP operators

Source: Centre Inffo based on France compétences, n.d.

Skills operators redistribute funds (collected by France compétences through different bodies) for the financing of apprenticeships; there are 329 professional branches assigned to 11 OPCO (nine sectoral and two interprofessional).

The regions finance two schemes with the aim to adapt the training offer to their economic and social needs, programmes for the development of vocational guidance and training (*contrat de plan régional de développement des formations et de l'orientation professionnelles*, CPRDFOP) and skills investment pacts (*Les pactes régionaux d'investissement dans les compétences 2019-22*).

Professional branches support microenterprises and SMEs to identify their future needs in skills and human resources through a dedicated forecasting scheme (*gestion prévisionnelle de l'emploi et des compétences*, GPEC).

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Annex of the draft finance Law on vocational training 2021, p. 26.

Transition Pro are joint interprofessional regional committees (*commissions paritaires interprofessionnelle regionales*, CPIR) administered by the social partners and approved by the State. They develop and finance career guidance schemes for professional transition (*projets de transition professionnelle et de reconversion*); analyse skills needs in local economies and inform the public on the activities run by the regional professional development counselling service (CEP, Section 4.4.2); and promote acquisition of inter-professional certificates, in particular the *Cléa* certification programme attesting to proficiency in basic knowledge and vocational skills, including digital skills.

Employers finance continuing vocational training and apprenticeships, mainly through the apprenticeship tax (0.68% of the company payroll) and the continuing vocational training contribution (1% of the payroll, 0.55% for micro-companies with fewer than 11 employees) paid in a single instalment. An additional contribution on apprenticeship (*contribution supplémentaire à l'apprentissage*, CSA), applicable to companies with more than 250 employees and less than 5% of apprentices in their workforce, and a specific contribution to the personal training account financing scheme for training actions targeting employees in fixed-term contracts. They may also directly finance training actions for their own employees ⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Training programmes for the young (mainly apprenticeships) are an important investment, followed by training schemes for employees in the private section, civil servants and jobseekers (Table 10).

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Law No 2018-771 of 5 September 2018, Article 37, I.2.

Table 10. Overall CVET expenditure by beneficiary group, 2018

	2017 (EUR million)	2018 (EUR million)	Structure 2018 (%)	Change in 2018 (%)
Training programme for the young (*)	7 540	7 583	29.1	0.6
IVET apprenticeships	5 604	5 686	21.8	1.5
CVET apprenticeships	948	1 039	4.0	9.6
Other training programmes	988	858	3.3	-13.2
Programmes for jobseekers	5 896	5 479	21.0	-7.1
Programmes for private-sector employees	6 281	6 602	25.3	5.1
Programmes for civil servants (**)	5 866	6 025	23.1	2.7
Investment (infrastructure, equipment) (***)	369	379	1.5	2.6
Total	25 952	26 066	100.0	0.4

NB: (*) Part of the expenditure in this category is classified with private-sector employees or jobseekers.

(**) Outside investment.

(***) Including investments for civil servants.

Source: Annex of the draft finance Law on vocational training 2021, p. 32.

2.6. Teachers and trainers

VET teachers and trainers fall into the following categories:

- VET school teachers;
- apprenticeship general courses teachers;
- apprenticeship technical, theoretical and practical courses teachers;
- in-company apprenticeship mentors (in-company trainers).

2.6.1. VET school teachers

A national entrance examination has been set up for teachers wishing to work as vocational teachers in upper secondary vocational programmes (*lycée professionnel*). To participate, candidates must demonstrate either a level of qualification in the subject to be taught or a number of years of professional practice in the relevant profession.

2.6.2. VET teachers in apprenticeship training centres and in-company trainers

There is no national examination to become a teacher in apprenticeship; candidates may apply directly to each apprenticeship training centre which does its own recruitment. Since 2019, the requirements to perform the tasks of in-company trainer, called apprenticeship mentor (*maître d'apprentissage*), must be defined in a collective agreement of the branch the company belongs to⁽⁵⁶⁾. In the absence of such agreement, the conditions set in the Labour Code (Article R.6223-22) apply: an apprenticeship mentor should have a relevant qualification in the same professional area that is at least at the same level as the qualification the apprentice seeks or 2 years of professional experience in the relevant speciality.

2.6.3. Continuing professional development of teachers and trainers

In IVET, teachers may benefit from continuing training schemes. Every year, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports prepares a national training plan (*plan national de formation*, PNF), which sets out guidelines for continuing training of State education staff. The roadmap 2019-22 for continuing professional development (CPD) of teaching and pedagogical staff focuses, among other priorities, on familiarisation of the staff with the reformed upper secondary technological and vocational programmes; and the acquisition of new skills in line with the evolution of professions and staff mobility. Reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational practices, the annual plan for 2021/22 proposes flexible training forms: in person, distance learning and hybrid training programmes (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, n.d.).

Trainers (apprenticeship mentors) may benefit from dedicated training programmes for their continuing professional development (pedagogy adapted to adult education, design and management of training actions, skills development). These are accessible through main CVET training schemes: the skills development plan at the initiative of the employer and the personal training account (CPF) scheme at the initiative of the employee. Adequate professional skills and participation of their staff in continuous training actions is a criterion required for the quality accreditation of the training providers so that their programmes can be funded by the main CVET funding bodies (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Companies can create their own apprenticeship training centre, Section 2.2.7.

The following qualifications recognise the role and skills of in-company trainers:

- (a) an interprofessional certificate awarded by some professional branches (*certificat de qualification professionnelle inter-branches (CQPI) tutorat en entreprise*);
- (b) a professional certificate awarded by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (*certificate de compétences en entreprise (CCE) tutorat en entreprise*);
- (c) a certificate awarded by the Ministry of Labour (*certification relative aux compétences de maître d'apprentissage/tuteur*) ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/formation-professionnelle/certification-competences-pro/certification-matu>

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications



3.1. Anticipating skills needs

At national level, skills anticipation is conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional integration, mainly through its Directorate for research, studies and statistics coordination (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques*, Dares) and by France Stratégie, an autonomous institution under the Prime Minister. The Ministry of Labour partly funds research at sectoral and regional levels through prospective studies contracts.

The Centre for studies and research on qualifications (*centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications*, Céreq) ⁽⁵⁸⁾ and France Stratégie conduct survey-based studies on trends in the sectors and publish reports annually. Céreq runs a survey on the impact of the health crisis on the labour market, access to training and training schemes for the employed, as part of actions funded within the multiannual PIC plan. In 2021, France Stratégie and Dares jointly conduct a forecasting exercise on skill needs and the dynamics of jobs, training and qualifications needed in the labour market by 2030 (*Jobs and skills in 2030*) (France Stratégie, 2021b). Through their involvement in the employment and skills network (*réseau emplois compétences*, REC) run by France Stratégie, the State, social partners, the regions and observatories of professional branches work collectively on job needs and skills anticipation.

France compétences contributes to the identification and analysis of skill needs in the sectors by publishing and promoting the work of the observatories of trades and qualifications, run by the professional branches (*observatoires prospectifs des métiers, et des qualifications*, OPMQ, Section 3.2.2); it establishes each year the list of emerging or rapidly evolving jobs (*métiers émergents ou en forte évolution*) (France compétences, 2021b).

Skills operators (Section 2.4.3.2) support skills anticipation in the labour market by helping companies and professional sectors build forward-looking management of jobs and skills, assisting professional branches in the design of qualifications. They provide support to companies in planning apprenticeship training and help SMEs define their skill and training needs.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ A public institution under the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration.

Regional employment and training observatories (Carif-Oref) ⁽⁵⁹⁾ provide regionally based systems for analysis and research on the relationship between employment, training and qualification requirements. Using data provided by their national and regional VET stakeholders, they conduct research and provide expertise to anticipate economic changes and skills for the future. They focus on training needs, job trends; links between employment and training; sectoral approaches and professional mobility and economic development (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

3.2. Designing VET qualifications

Within the lifelong learning system, encompassing both initial education and training and continuing training, acquisition of vocational and professional qualifications is based on certification. The certification process refers to a description of skills, abilities and knowledge associated with a qualification that are necessary to exercise a profession, job or professional activity. The result of the certification is a document obtained by an individual following a set procedure, confirming these professional skills according to given criteria (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

A new, eight-level structure national framework of vocational and professional qualifications (*cadre national des certifications professionnelles*) was adopted in 2019 ⁽⁶⁰⁾; it was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area in February 2021. It covers all levels and types of vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications and the national baccalaureate – general, technological and vocational – giving access to higher education (France compétences, 2021a; Cedefop, 2021).

The framework aims to align State-recognised qualifications better with European and international qualifications and serves as a basis for ministries and awarding bodies to design their qualifications and certificates. The framework is supported by two registers managed by France compétences (Section 2.4.3.1), as part of its mandate to coordinate national policies on continuing training and apprenticeship: the national register of vocational and professional qualifications associated with a level (*repertoire national des*

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Training management, resource and information centres (*centres d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation*, Carif) at national level; regional employment and training observatories (*observatoires régionaux de l'emploi et de la formation*, Oref).
<https://reseau.intercariforef.org/>

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Decree No 2019-14 of 8 January 2019, Articles D6113-18 – D6113-20 of the Labour Code.

certifications professionnelles, RNCP) and the specific register of accreditations and certifications for qualifications complementary to a profession (*répertoire spécifique des certifications et des habilitations*, RS).

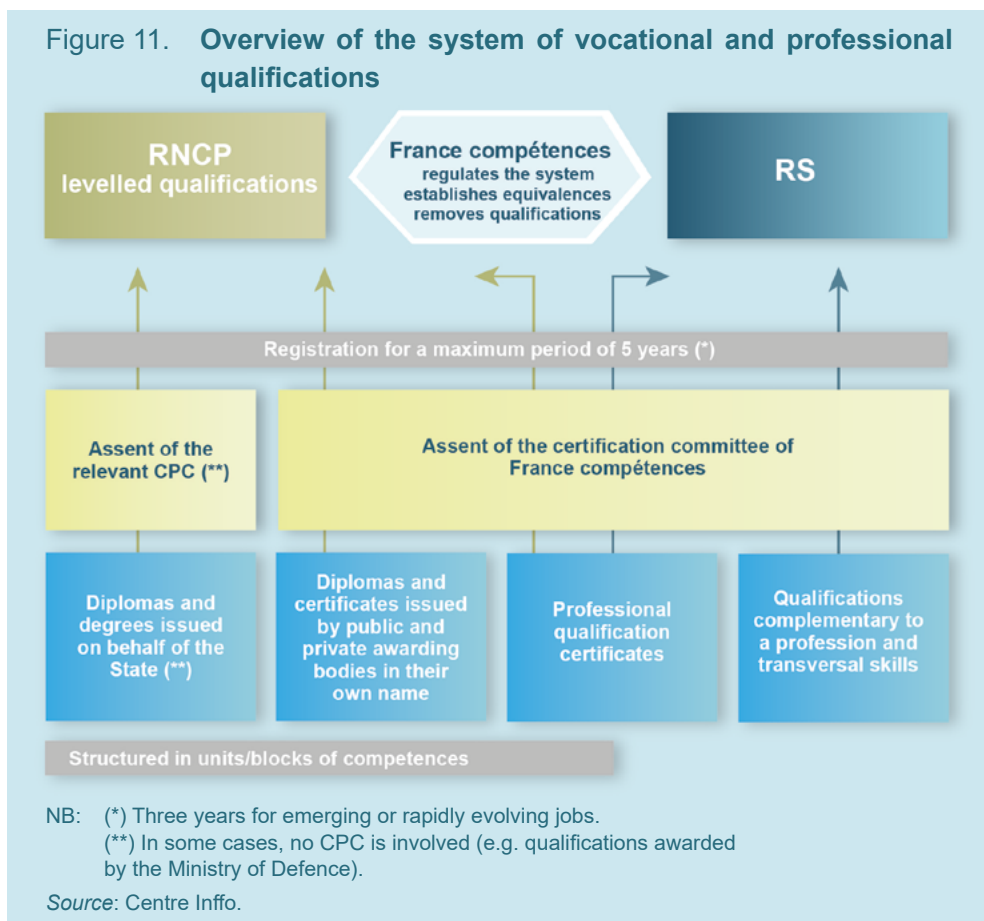
The criteria for inclusion in the registers were reviewed in line with the new national qualifications framework and aim to ensure transparency, relevance and visibility of qualifications, facilitate horizontal and vertical progression, and create equivalences between qualifications offered in the same sector and/or by different awarding bodies (Section 3.4.3). Qualifications included in the two registers are valid nationally.

The RNCP lists qualifications that allow holders to exercise a job or profession. They are classified by field of activity and level of qualification recognised by the State and the social partners and defined in line with specific (competence, occupational and assessment) standards. However, there is no legal obligation for training organisations to include their qualifications in the RNCP; they may issue them under their own responsibility. RNCP qualifications are structured in units/blocks of competences (*blocs de compétences*) (Cedefop, 2021), which allows creating equivalences and bridges between them. A block is a minimum, homogeneous and coherent set of competences, contributing to the autonomous exercise of a professional activity that can be accumulated towards acquisition of a qualification (it is not a partial qualification); it can be assessed through VAE. As a result of the increased requirements for registration, the removal of obsolete qualifications and the restructuring of higher education qualifications, the number of active qualifications in the RNCP decreased from 10 000 in the previous system to around 5 000 (France compétences, 2021b).

The RS includes qualifications not attached to a level of qualification that certify the acquisition of competences complementary to a profession, transversal skills (for example the *Cléa* certificate of basic competences or language certificates) and other certificates resulting from a legal obligation in the exercise of a profession (for example the safe-driving aptitude certificate). RS qualifications are not structured in blocks of competences, though the law allows to establish correspondences, where applicable, between RS certificates and blocks of competences included in RNCP qualifications. In 2021, there were more than 2 500 certificates listed in the specific register.

Vocational qualifications, certificates and degrees created by the Ministries are registered in the RNCP by law (*enregistrement de droit*) after receiving the assent of the inter-ministerial advisory committees (Section 3.2.1). Qualifications issued by other public and private bodies and the professional branches can be registered on demand (*enregistrement sur demande*) in either register,

after examination by the certification committee established within France compétences (*commission de la certification professionnelle*, CCP) and composed of representatives of different ministries, regional councils and social partners ⁽⁶¹⁾. An overview of the registration process, coordinated by France compétences, is presented in Figure 11.



3.2.1. Qualifications issued on behalf of the State and by higher education institutions

Ministries design and create State-issued vocational qualifications, issued following assent from inter-ministerial advisory committees (*commissions*

⁽⁶¹⁾ However, there is no obligation for public and private bodies to include their qualifications in the registers, they can issue them under their own responsibility.

professionnelles consultatives, CPCs) ⁽⁶²⁾. Each committee examines all vocational qualifications, issued by different awarding authorities in the sector of its responsibility, and delivers assent for the creation, update (with or without modifications) or removal of a qualification, in line with a biennial forecast programme set for all CPCs. Depending on the ministry concerned, other bodies may be consulted, such as the higher council for education (*Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*, CSE) for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, or the national council for higher education and research (*Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche*, CNESER) for the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is represented in all the committees; it manages the largest number of certification processes ⁽⁶³⁾. Usually, the creation of a new vocational qualification awarded by the ministry, is preceded by a study, analysing economic data and sectoral trends to define future needs in jobs and skills.

The higher education qualification system follows the Bologna process and the ECTS credit system. It is regulated by assessment and quality assurance, conceived as an evaluation of the quality of training content in terms of aims and objectives, the level of education, the quality of the education teams, and the job prospects of students. Assessments are carried out by the high council for the evaluation of research and higher education (*Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*, Hcéres) for training programmes provided by universities and certain schools; the engineering qualification committee (CTI) for engineering courses and qualifications; and the national commission for evaluation of programmes and qualifications in management (CEFDG) for business and management schools (*grandes écoles*). The decision establishing a (new) qualification is published in the official Journal of Higher Education and Research. For engineering qualifications, a decision is taken by the CTI for private engineering schools, and a notice is given for State engineering schools (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

3.2.2. Design of sector-specific qualifications

Professional sectors may create their own qualifications through two main bodies:

⁽⁶²⁾ From 2019, 11 CPCs are in place: agriculture, agri-food and space planning; arts, entertainment and media; social cohesion and health; commerce; construction; industry; sea and inland waterway transport; mobility and logistics; business services; consumer products and services; sport and entertainment (Decree No 2019-958 of 13 September 2019).

⁽⁶³⁾ In 2021, 600 vocational qualifications were offered under its remit.

More information [in French]: <https://eduscol.education.fr/774/les-diplomes-professionnels>

- (a) the joint employment and vocational training committees (*Commission paritaire nationale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle*, CPNEFP);
- (b) the observatories of trades and qualifications (*observatoires prospectifs des métiers et des qualifications*, OPMQ).

Joint employment and vocational training committees were created by employers and trade unions in the framework of national inter-professional agreements to support the redeployment of employees whose jobs were made redundant; through time, their scope widened to vocational training. The committees identify priority areas in the sectors using quantitative and qualitative data on trends in employment, often relying on the technical work of the OPMQ observatories, and produce recommendations on employment and training needs. Branches may delegate to joint employment and vocational training committees the responsibility to create sector-specific professional certificates (CQP, Section 2.3) recognised within a branch, as well as inter-professional certificates for transversal or comparable job activities (CQPI), created by one or more joint employment and vocational training committees.

Observatories of trades and qualifications are established in each industrial sector by one or several branches, with the majority (85%) operating within one branch. They offer technical support to companies to define their training policies and help employees develop their skills through an individual professional project (*projet professionnel*). They also produce thematic and sector-specific studies on topics associated with the management of jobs and skills in the sector in the medium/short term (training, ageing management, diversity and gender equality, skills replacement), as well as statistical databases on sectoral economics, jobs and workforce. Most (80%) perform job analysis (*étude métiers*) within one or more branches, focusing on their labour market relevance, evolution, qualitative and quantitative assessment, job activities and related competences and necessary training. They prepare job maps, job descriptions (*fiches métiers*), occupational (*référentiels métiers*) and assessment standards (*référentiels de certification*) ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

There is no fixed or mandatory methodology for establishing sectoral qualifications. A 2012 methodological guide, produced by CPNEFP for the development of certificates of professional qualifications/CQPs, suggests:

- (a) conducting a study on the need for a new qualification;

⁽⁶⁴⁾ More information [in French]: <https://www.cereq.fr/observatoires-prospectifs-des-metiers-et-des-qualifications-lage-de-la-maturite>

- (b) listing the set of competences and skills (and, if possible, relevant training content) a learner should possess to be awarded a vocational certificate for a given sector;
- (c) developing assessment tools and processes;
- (d) defining the process for implementing relevant training (including apprenticeships).

The results from OPMQ studies are used by both the inter-ministerial advisory committees and the joint employment and vocational training committees, to identify training needs and sectoral skills requirements (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

3.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation of prior learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*, VAE) has offered since 2002 ⁽⁶⁵⁾ a third route to qualifications and vocational certificates (alongside classroom-based initial education and training and apprenticeship/continuing training schemes), through the identification and recognition of prior learning and professional experience. Among different mechanisms for the identification and assessment of prior learning ⁽⁶⁶⁾, the national VAE system is the only one that is associated with the national qualifications system and may give access to a full qualification listed in the RNCP.

VAE is open to every person engaged in active life (employed, self-employed or engaged in voluntary activities) wishing to obtain a qualification without undergoing a training programme. The main condition is that they have at least 1 year of experience in the field of activities linked to the intended qualification; training periods carried out in professional environments are also considered professional experience, for example practical training linked to an apprenticeship or professionalisation contract. The process has two steps:

- (a) the preparation and submission of a well-documented application;
- (b) an interview with a jury for the relevant qualification, which then decides whether to award the chosen qualification fully or partially.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ VAE was initiated by the Social Modernisation Act of 17th January 2002 and has been integrated into the Labour and Education Codes; VAE procedures are defined by legislation, which ensures consistency across sectors (Cedefop, 2019).

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Other schemes for the recognition of prior experience include the VAPP (*validation des acquis professionnels et personnels*, also called VAP 85) mechanism in higher education for those wishing to be admitted in a programme through exemption from formal requirements; skills audits (*bilan de compétences*) for those wishing to recognise their competences without targeting a certification; and other competence portfolios without a validation procedure (Cedefop, 2021).

The interview allows the jury to check the authenticity of the file, the level of proficiency of all the skills required to obtain the (partial) qualification (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

Acquiring an RNCP qualification by combining training periods with validation processes is possible, except for regulated professions. The system is being piloted until the end of 2021 (Article 9 of the 2018 Law). During the COVID-19 pandemic, special conditions apply to support those in partial employment who initiate a VAE process.

In 2019, the number of VAE applicants (first step of the validation process) interested in acquiring a VET qualification (levels 3 to 5) declined by 11% compared to the previous year, and was the lowest since 2004. Most of those undergoing the interview (second step) were successful: 61% received full and 26% partial validation. In terms of the public involved, women represent two thirds and employed people three-quarters of all applicants. The vocational qualifications most targeted through VAE are BTS, the vocational baccalaureate, CAP and the professional bachelor (*licence professionnelle*). Participation in VAE processes has further declined during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic crisis (DEPP, 2020; DEPP, 2021b).

3.4. Quality assurance

A long-standing national quality assurance approach is in place in both initial and continuing vocational education and training, including apprenticeship (Cedefop, 2020b). Reforms introduced in recent years ⁽⁶⁷⁾ contributed to strengthening the quality assurance framework in education and training and the overarching national qualifications system.

3.4.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in initial education and training

Initiated in 2016, *Qualéduc* is a quality tool, developed in line with the principles and the methodology proposed by the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), with the aim to establish and reinforce quality assurance mechanisms in initial education and training. It is in place in the management of schools and it is integral to education reforms. It is used for the quality labelling of the vocational schools of trades (Section 4.1.2), the trades and qualification campuses and campuses of excellence (Section 4.1.1), and

⁽⁶⁷⁾ The reform of the upper secondary vocational path (Section 2.2.3), the reform of the governance and financing of continuing vocational training and apprenticeships (Section 2.3) and the review of the national qualifications framework and updated process for the registration of qualifications in its supporting registers (Section 3.2).

the EDUFORM quality label for providers offering VET programmes for adults. The latest *Qualéduc* guide, issued in 2020, includes 31 thematic areas touching upon the reform of the upper secondary vocational path, teaching methods and pedagogies and the school environment.

The EDUFORM label is a quality process, accessible to public and private CVET providers that offer vocational education and training, apprenticeship programmes and VAE ⁽⁶⁸⁾ for the acquisition of vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It is issued for a period of 3 years by the ministry, following a national labelling audit and favourable recommendation of the national labelling committee. It offers visibility of the training offer to beneficiaries and automatic awarding of the *Qualiopi* certification issued by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration (Section 3.4.2).

The council for the evaluation of schools (*Conseil d'évaluation de l'école*), established in 2020, acts as an independent public body to ensure consistency between national and international assessments in education. It produces the methodological framework for the self-assessment and external assessment of schools (including vocational schools) and collates a synthesis report of different assessment exercises on learner achievements, education systems and institutions.

In the higher education sector, programmes follow the Bologna process and the ECTS credit system. The design and update of training programmes and qualifications, delivered by a diversity of institutions (universities and other higher education public or private schools and institutes of technology) has an internal quality assurance mechanism (Section 3.2.1). Quality assurance has been strengthened by embedding in legislation (Article D 6113-27 of the Labour Code) the role of the different committees to be consulted during the design, update or removal of higher education qualifications registered by law in the RNCP (France compétences, 2021a, p.42).

3.4.2. Certification of training providers

The reform of the continuing training system and apprenticeships ⁽⁶⁹⁾ aimed for more transparency and system efficiency and introduced new obligations for all training providers using mutual funds to inform and monitor their training actions. All VET providers (including apprenticeship training centres and natural persons) offering training leading to the acquisition of new competences have

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Apprenticeship training centres and other public interest groups for continuing education and professional integration (*groupements d'intérêt public – formation continue insertion professionnelle* GIP FCIP), such as the Greta (Section 2.4.4).

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Law 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 for the freedom to choose one's professional future.

to be quality certified by 1 January 2022 if they provide training actions funded by public or pooled funds ⁽⁷⁰⁾. Such training forms are set by legislation: training actions, skills audits, VAE processes and apprenticeships (Section 2.3).

The flagship of the quality assurance system for training providers is the certification *Qualiopi*, set up by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration. The certification has a double role: to guarantee the quality of the training offer and its transparency for both companies (contributing to training actions for their employees) and beneficiaries.

The *Qualiopi* brand name is awarded for 3 years by certification bodies accredited or authorised by the French accreditation committee (*Comité français d'accréditation*, Cofrac), following a national reference framework covering seven criteria ⁽⁷¹⁾ and 32 indicators, ensuring for all providers the same quality standards. France compétences, according to legislation, may also recognise certification bodies (*instances de labellisation*). Training institutions or natural persons make a request of a certification body, sign a contract with that body, and undergo two audits during the period of validity of the label for monitoring and renewal.

3.4.3. Quality assurance within the national qualifications system

France compétences monitors the national qualifications system and the implementation of quality arrangements for inclusion of qualifications in the RNCP and RS. It absorbed the functions and responsibilities of the national quality assurance national reference point ⁽⁷²⁾, in charge of the functioning of the RNCP since 2014 (Cedefop, 2021).

Irrespective of the learning route or process used to acquire a vocational and professional qualification or certificate, its inclusion in the RNCP and the specific register is a sign of nationwide recognition of the labour market relevance and quality of a given qualification. The registration process, following assent from inter-ministerial advisory committees (CPCs), ensures consistency between qualifications issued by different ministries in the same professional sector (France compétences, 2021a, p. 42).

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Article 6 of the 2018 Law.

See also: <https://www.francecompetences.fr/qualite/>

⁽⁷¹⁾ The seven criteria of the national reference framework: training offer is publicly available and accessible to all audiences; training offer is adapted to the group of beneficiaries targeted; learners are supported at each step of the training process; attractive and favourable training environment; teacher training; links with the local economies; and continuous improvement of services (France compétences, 2021a, p. 32).

⁽⁷²⁾ The national council for employment, vocational training and career guidance (Cnefop).

Qualifications issued by other public or private bodies can be registered on demand ⁽⁷³⁾, after being examined by the certification committee established within France compétences (*Commission de la certification professionnelle*), where representatives from the ministries, regional education councils and social partners work together. Nine criteria apply for registration on demand:

- (a) sufficient number of jobs in the occupation targeted;
- (b) impact analysis in terms of providing access or re-entry to the labour market and in relation to other qualifications in similar or related occupations;
- (c) quality of the qualification, assessment and occupational standards;
- (d) providing a monitoring procedure for all assessment tests;
- (e) taking into consideration all legal and regulatory constraints;
- (f) accessibility of the qualification through VAE;
- (g) consistency between the units/blocks of competences of the given qualification and assessment methods used;
- (h) where applicable, consistency of (partial or full) equivalence with similar qualifications offered at the same level and with their respective blocks of competences;
- (i) for sector-specific qualifications (CQPs), involvement of the joint employment and vocational training committees in the drafting or approval of the qualification standards (France compétences, 2021a, p. 43).

The maximum registration period is 5 years (three for rapidly changing or evolving qualifications), so that the training offer remains responsive to the needs of the economy.

Certifying bodies must provide, at least every 2 years, statistical data on the professional integration of holders of RNCP qualifications and inform France compétences on any training, assessment or awarding tasks/responsibilities they delegate to other organisations.

⁽⁷³⁾ However, there is no legal binding; any public or private body may issue and guarantee the quality of the qualifications they offer under their name.

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting VET participation



4.1. Supporting attractiveness and excellence in VET

4.1.1. Trades and qualifications campuses

The label *Campus des métiers et des qualifications* is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, reflecting the need to respond to existing skill demands and future trends for new skills emerging in the labour market. Trade and qualification campuses bring together secondary and higher VET institutions, companies, apprenticeship centres and research centres, working in a given economic sector, to promote synergies and collaboration for innovation and job creation in local economies.

Since its launch in 2014, 95 campuses have been established in all regions of mainland France and overseas departments in 12 growth and job-creating sectors (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019). The label is awarded for a period of 5 years by a committee composed of representatives of regional education authorities and of the association of the regions of France (*Association des régions de France*, ARF), as well as representatives from the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Recovery.

As part of the reform of the continuing training system in 2018, a new excellence label for trades and qualifications campuses was created, focusing on issues faced by a specific economic sector at national level and on internationalisation of the training offer (five of the 11 labelling criteria reflect the excellence category); 45 excellence campuses were in place in 2021. The measure is financed by the future investments programme (*programme d'investissements d'avenir*, PIA).

4.1.2. The school of trades label

Vocational and technological upper secondary schools can receive the school of trades label (*lycées des métiers*). The initiative aims to foster partnerships with the local economy, regional education (*académies*) and employment authorities, regional PES services and career guidance services (*missions locales*) and promote VET as an attractive, quality learning pathway in initial education. The label is awarded by the rector of the regional *académie* for a period of 5 years. In 2020, 957 vocational and multipurpose (*lycées polyvalents*)⁽⁷⁴⁾ secondary institutions in 30 *académies* received the label. Schools of trades offer a variety

(74) Upper secondary general and technological schools with a vocational training unit.

of options to train and acquire a recognised qualification, from school-based IVET programmes, apprenticeships, continuing training programmes for people engaged in working life to validation of non-formal and informal processes.

4.2. Incentives for learners

4.2.1. The personal training account

In place since 2015, the personal training account scheme (*compte personnel de formation*, CPF) enables the workforce, throughout working life, to use their individual right to training and qualifications ⁽⁷⁵⁾. Each individual in active employment receives yearly training credits to use when applying for training actions.

Since 2019, following the reform of continuing training governance and financing, the scheme has been digitalised and is credited in euros (previously, in hours). Users can access and activate their personal training account through a mobile app and an online platform (*mon compte formation*), be informed on their credits ⁽⁷⁶⁾ and on training programmes and schemes available to them ⁽⁷⁷⁾. More than 18 million profiles have already been activated among the accounts created. Part time employees ⁽⁷⁸⁾ have the same training rights as full-time employees and may also use training credits during periods of unemployment.

The amounts, funding methodology and CPF-eligible schemes are established by legislation. All vocational guidance and training schemes that support (re) integration into the labour market are eligible for funding through the scheme ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Under this right, established in 2009, the (self-)employed and jobseekers may select a training action that enables them to progress in their career by at least one level, through acquiring a qualification corresponding to the short- or medium-term needs of the economy.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Up to EUR 500 per year of employment; entitlements are higher for people with low or no qualifications to up to EUR 800 per year and cumulable up to EUR 5 000 (8 000).

⁽⁷⁷⁾ Private-sector employees, self-employed and jobseekers have access to the same CPF-eligible training schemes; different conditions apply for civil servants.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ More than 50% of full working time.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Training to acquire State-recognised qualifications included in the national qualifications system registers (RNCP/RS), and certificates attending acquisition of units/blocks of competences of RNCP qualifications, skills audits and VAE processes, training to obtain the driving licence, entrepreneurship career guidance and support schemes, as well as programmes for firefighters and for those engaged in civic action and volunteering (within the *compte d'engagement citoyen* scheme).

In 2020, individuals using their CPF aimed mainly for the acquisition of a recognised professional certificate (*formation certifiante*) (around three quarters of all training actions); the remaining ones concern the driving licence certificate (15%), entrepreneurship training (*formation à la création ou à la reprise d'entreprise*) (8%); skills audits (<2%) and VAE process (<1%) (Centre Inffo, 2021a).

The CPF for career transition ⁽⁸⁰⁾ (*CPF transition professionnelle*) is a specific mechanism that enables employees to access long-duration retraining actions for career change or transition and benefit from special leave, if such training is carried out, in whole or in part, in working time. Applicants, selected by a joint interprofessional regional committee (Transition Pro, Section 2.5.2), enrol in a training action using their CPF credits, complemented by funding from Transition Pro. While the employment contract is suspended during the training period, the time spent in training is assimilated to actual working time for the calculation of paid leave and seniority. Remuneration of the beneficiary during the training period is maintained (partly or not, depending on the contract) and paid either by the employer who is then reimbursed by the respective Transition Pro (companies with at least 50 employees) or paid directly by the regional joint body (companies with fewer than 50 employees).

4.2.2. Training aid for jobseekers

The national public employment service (Pôle Emploi) regularly buys training places in different training organisations. It selects and finances training programmes that support skills development at local level, in targeted sectors of the economy where there is insufficient demand for employment (jobs in tension) (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019). Jobseekers receive, within the limits of their unemployment compensation rights, a training allowance from Pôle Emploi ⁽⁸¹⁾ or from the regional Council ⁽⁸²⁾ and, under certain conditions, aid for childcare and transport.

There are many kinds of training aid for jobseekers wishing to initiate (finance) and carry out training, job mobility and career development plans or take up an entrepreneurship project. Financial aid for training schemes leading, or not, to certification include:

- (a) the individual training aid (*aide individuelle à la formation*, AIF) that can be combined with CPF-eligible training actions;

⁽⁸⁰⁾ It replaced the earlier individual training leave scheme (*congé individuel de formation*, CIF) while its scope and access rights have evolved in line with continuing training policies.

⁽⁸¹⁾ Training allowance for returning to work (*allocation de retour à l'emploi formation*, AREF), training allowance for securing employment (*allocation de sécurisation professionnelle formation* (ASSF), *rémunération de formation de Pôle Emploi* (RFPE), *rémunération de fin de formation* (RFF)).

⁽⁸²⁾ *Rémunération des stagiaires de la formation professionnelle* (RSFP).

- (b) VAE processes and skills audits and other programmes not eligible for CPF funding;
- (c) programmes approved by PES to acquire skills needed in the labour market and regain employment (*action de formation conventionnée par Pôle Emploi, AFC*);
- (d) training courses offered by regional council services (CPF-funded or not) to improve existing skills;
- (e) other aids to undergo training to acquire specific competences before taking up duties and not leading to qualifications (*action de formation préalable au recrutement, AFPR, préparation opérationnelle à l'emploi individuelle, POEI*)⁽⁸³⁾.

Targeted support schemes and tailored pathways for the professional integration of long-term young unemployed people below 26 (below 30 for disabled people) are in place within the framework of the youth plan *One young person, one solution* (Section 1.4)⁽⁸⁴⁾.

4.2.3. The student-entrepreneur national status

This scheme aims to promote innovation and entrepreneurial culture in higher education and is jointly run by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Bpifrance Création⁽⁸⁵⁾. Holders of the national baccalaureate diploma and/or higher education students below 28 years of age can undertake an entrepreneurship project under the status of student in one of the 33 innovation and entrepreneurship hubs in France and overseas departments (*pôles étudiants pour l'innovation, le transfert et l'entrepreneuriat, PEPITE*). Depending on the scope of the project, it can be recognised by a qualification (*diplôme d'établissement étudiant-entrepreneur, D2E*) and sometimes in ECTS points,

⁽⁸³⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://www.pole-emploi.fr/candidat/en-formation/mes-aides-financieres/laide-aux-frais-pedagogiques.html>

⁽⁸⁴⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/le-ministere-en-action/relance-activite/plan-1jeune-1solution/article/accompagner-des-jeunes-eloignes-de-l-emploi-en-proposant-des-parcours-d>

⁽⁸⁵⁾ Since 2019, Bpifrance Création has integrated the missions of the national entrepreneurship agency (Agence France Entrepreneur, AFE), as well as those of the *Caisse des Dépôts*, in coordinating and financing regional entrepreneurship projects, including those focusing on priority (underdeveloped) areas. Bpifrance Création promotes and finances entrepreneurship (particularly youth), through partnerships with local authorities, and provides analysis through its observatory (*Observatoire de la création d'entreprise, OCE*). <https://bpifrance-creation.fr/bpifrance-creation>

and substitute the internship module included in higher education technological and vocational programmes ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

4.3. Incentives for enterprises

4.3.1. State subsidies for companies

Various public subsidies, with different aims, support the capacity of businesses, especially small and micro-companies, to provide training to their employees. National credits can be granted from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration to companies for encouraging and helping SMEs to anticipate their human resources management needs, and for public employment service support to jobseekers in accompanying economic change and securing career paths (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019).

The national employment fund (*fonds national de l'emploi*, FNE-formation) provides State aid to companies for training employees in partial employment (*plan de formation*) to adapt to new jobs, due to technological innovation and changes in the production sector. To anticipate the effects of the COVID-19 health crisis, additional funding from the national recovery plan was allocated, to increase the range of companies eligible for State aid and secure training delivery and access to qualifications (République Française, 2021a, p. 7). As from 2021, financing objectives and methods are restructured to cover longer duration programmes (up to 12 months), flexible training modalities (in person, distance learning or on-the-job); eligibility of all costs linked to the training process (pre-formative and summative assessments, training and certification costs); and all sectors, especially those most affected by the crisis (Centre Inffo, 2021b).

Training aids for companies exist for the professional integration and up-skilling of disabled workers, accessible through the association for the management of funds for the professional integration of disabled workers (*association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion professionnelle des personnes handicapées*, Agefiph) (République Française, 2021b).

⁽⁸⁶⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid79926/statut-etudiant-entrepreneur.html>

4.3.2. Support for apprenticeships

Regional or government subsidies encourage apprenticeship contract take-up, which is a major priority of public youth employment policy. There are financial incentives for companies to engage in apprenticeship:

- (a) full or partial exemption of apprenticeship contracts from social security charges;
- (b) the costs of training apprentice supervisors are supported by the skills operators;
- (c) companies employing 250 people or more receive a complementary financial incentive, an internship bonus, which is granted if they go beyond the minimum threshold for employees on alternance training contracts (Cedefop and Centre Inffo, 2019);
- (d) a one-off subsidy (*aide unique*) is available for small businesses, with fewer than 250 employees, which recruit a young person under an apprenticeship contract, if this prepares for certification up to baccalaureate level (IVET qualifications EQF level 4 or lower). The aid covers contracts signed in 2019 and 2020 and as from 2022;
- (e) increased support (*aide exceptionnelle*) through the youth plan *One young person, one solution*, for companies concluding apprenticeship contracts.

4.4. Guidance and counselling

The public service of lifelong career guidance is a shared responsibility between the State and the regions. The State defines the policy setting and runs a national service (*service public de l'orientation*, SPO)⁽⁸⁷⁾ and career guidance schemes in public education, while the regions implement guidance policies within their remit through local guidance networks (*service public regional d'orientation*, SPRO). The national reference framework of shared responsibilities between the State and the regions on career guidance for pupils, students and apprentices, details the new responsibilities of the regions in terms of information and career support services to (VET) learners in public education (Régions de France, 2019).

4.4.1. Career guidance for young people in initial education and training

The *parcours avenir* is an individualised vocational guidance service for secondary education learners (grades 6 to 12) to inform and guide their education

⁽⁸⁷⁾ Web portal www.orientation-pour-tous.fr and a single national number: 08 11 70 39 39.

choices and ensure smooth transition from lower to upper secondary education. It presents an integrated approach to career education and management, assisting learners to develop gradually the skills needed for setting up an individual career orientation project (*project d'orientation scolaire et professionnel*). Different schemes are in place:

- (a) interdisciplinary practical courses offered as of grade 6 (*enseignements pratiques interdisciplinaires*, EPI);
- (b) a preparatory vocational guidance subject (*troisième prépa-métiers*) to raise awareness of the upper secondary vocational pathway and/or apprenticeship opportunities offered;
- (c) a compulsory company visit in grade 9 (*stage de 3e*);
- (d) a support service (*pôles de stage*), run by the academies/local education districts, to ensure enough places in local companies for learners;
- (e) promotional events elaborated through local partnerships, guided projects, information sessions, etc.;
- (f) a 2-week guidance scheme, dedicated to the transition from upper secondary to higher education studies (*les semaines de l'orientation*);
- (g) InerJeunes, a career information and guidance scheme for VET learners;
- (h) a guidance/counselling scheme (*les cordées de la réussite*), promoting equal chances in education for learners from disadvantaged or priority areas, offering continuous support (grades 8 to 12 and beyond) to ensure successful transition to further studies or entry to the labour market.

The regions, as part of their mandate to implement career guidance in their territories, coordinate the Discovery of sectors and professions guidance scheme for the entry to labour market of young learners in public education and in apprenticeship training centres.

Career guidance services in initial education and training ⁽⁸⁸⁾ are provided by:

- (a) information and guidance centres (*centres d'information et d'orientation*, CIOs) managed by the education ministry and operating in each decentralised education district (*académie*);
- (b) the *parcoursup* online system for applicants to higher education programmes, which provides information on the training offer and guidance throughout the registration, pre-selection and final selection of a training programme;
- (c) university information services (*services communs universitaires d'information et d'orientation*, S.C.U.I.O. I.P.);

⁽⁸⁸⁾ More information [in French]:

<https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-lieux-d-information-de-l-orientation-4274>

- (d) the national office for information on studies and professions (ONISEP, operating under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) that collaborates with the regions in the planning, development and distribution of career guidance material to young learners;
- (e) the Youth information and documentation centre (*centre d'information et de documentation jeunesse*, CIDJ);
- (f) the network of *missions locales*, a guidance, orientation and career support service of the public employment service for young people aged 16 to 25, which also cooperates with the *académies*.

Career information and guidance for the young on training and employment opportunities within the national youth plan 1 young person, 1 solution 2020-21 is accessible online through a dedicated website.

Within the national training obligation 16-18 (Section 4.5.1) to support the young at risk, to remain in or return to education and training, comprehensive information on training opportunities and support schemes are available online from ONISEP.

4.4.2. Career guidance for adults, employees or jobseekers

The right to public lifelong career guidance, established in 2009, guarantees universal access to free, comprehensive and objective information on professions, training and qualifications, job opportunities and income levels. The policy aim is to ensure high-quality, network-based career advice and support services.

The national system of continuing vocational training and apprenticeship operates within a free training market of public and private providers, delivering a diversity of lifelong learning programmes accessible through different funding schemes for specific groups of beneficiaries (young people, jobseekers, employed). In this setting, an opinion survey conducted in early 2021, highlighted the importance of career guidance and counselling services, particularly for low-skilled workers needing to access training, upskill and remain employable in times of economic change and the COVID-19 pandemic (Cedefop and ReferNet France, 2021).

The major schemes supporting lifelong guidance, both within and outside companies, are:

- (a) compulsory professional development interviews at least every 2 years in each company (*entretien professionnel*), during which employees are also informed on their right to validate and recognise their prior learning (VAE, Section 3.3);
- (b) the personal training account (CPF) scheme (Section 4.2.1);

- (c) the professional development counselling service (CEP);
- (d) other career development interviews, career assessment reports or appraisals for career planning, change or transition.

These career guidance services are provided by local support services, career advice institutions, employment and training centres and by the national public employment service (Pôle Emploi).

At national level, a professional development counselling service (CEP) for the workforce is implemented by national networks of CEP operators, addressing different target groups:

- (a) Pôle Emploi for jobseekers;
- (b) Cap emploi for disabled people;
- (c) *missions locales* for young early leavers;
- (d) the executive employment association (*association pour l'emploi des cadres*, Apec) for graduates and executive staff.

Since 2020, these services are supplemented for private-sector employees by 18 regional CEP operators, selected through open calls and financed by France compétences. Beneficiaries are entitled to free and personalised support, adapted to their profile and training needs, and to individual guidance/counselling services. CEP services take place outside working hours, unless foreseen within a collective sectoral agreement, and can be linked with the objectives of the company professional development interview (France compétences, 2020).

4.4.3. Career guidance services at national, regional and local levels

A national online platform (*orientation pour tous*) provides real-time data on careers and jobs, training courses, events, videos and personal stories. It offers more than 2 000 job descriptions, 200 000 basic education and lifelong learning courses, a directory of approved training providers, and practical information on schemes, entitlements and procedures. It is run by Centre Inffo, in partnership with the main career information and guidance providers at national and regional levels (the ministries and the regions, the professional bodies, the Carif-Oref, Pôle Emploi, ONISEP, CIDJ).

The network of Carif-Oref collects information on continuing training and apprenticeship programmes and ensures its wide dissemination among all interested publics: young people, employees, jobseekers and people in career change. Its online portal (*offre-info*) is a national reference for training centres and programmes.

4.5. Challenges and development opportunities

4.5.1. Strengthening youth initial education and training

Vocational education and training has been at the heart of major reforms in recent years, as with the transformation of the vocational path in upper secondary education and the overall governance and financing reform of continuing training and apprenticeships. Strengthening youth education and training, especially to support young people at risk of leaving education without qualifications and young adults facing difficulties in entering the labour market, is addressed by several initiatives rolled out in the country.

After the end of compulsory education at the age of 16, national and regional VET authorities are formally obliged (*obligation de formation 16-18*) to offer young people under 18 adequate training options to gain the skills needed for transition from school to working life. Introduced in the academic year 2020/21, this obligation can be met by several means: schooling, apprenticeship, continuing training courses, civic service and other support schemes for social and professional integration.

Building on the results of a consultation process with all education actors, completed in 2021 (*grenelle de l'éducation*), upcoming changes in the education system focus on the continuous development of the teaching profession. They emphasise new pedagogical approaches to developing the socio-behavioural competences of learners considered a key factor for educational success, building self-awareness and learning-to-learn skills for career planning.

Increasing apprenticeship opportunities, especially for low-qualified young learners, and strengthening European and international apprentice mobility in initial VET were among the aims of recent reforms establishing aid for companies recruiting apprentices and a new regulatory framework supporting longer apprentice mobility periods abroad on equal footing with school-based VET.

The *One young person, one solution* youth plan, financed by the national recovery plan (Section 1.4), offers targeted financial incentives to businesses and learners to complete or initiate an apprenticeship. This resulted in a record number of apprenticeship contracts (for young apprenticeships or adults in continuing training) signed during the first year of the pandemic. A new online apprenticeship campaign is running through the dedicated website of the youth plan.

4.5.2. Revitalising the economy and post-crisis job creation

Unemployment, especially for the young generation, is a major challenge. That is why nearly EUR 15 billion for training for jobs have been allocated from the 2-year national recovery plan, launched in 2020, to anticipate the effects of the pandemic on the national economy.

Targeted funding from the 2021 national recovery and resilience plan will be directed until 2026 to training programmes for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce and investments in lifelong learning, as well as to secure jobs and training for young people, including in the higher education sector (European Commission, 2021).

Job creation is expected to rise (up to 150 000 new posts) in view of the organisation of the Olympic Games 2024 being hosted in France. The national employment service and the regions are working on skills anticipation in the sectors concerned (hospitality and catering, tourism, construction, maintenance, security) to offer training for jobs in demand with the aim to create and maintain employment for those furthest from the labour market and NEETs⁽⁸⁹⁾. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Professional Integration and social partners are examining possible scenarios for the future of State aids for recruiting young people and for the delivery of professional retraining schemes after the end of the pandemic.

4.5.3. Upskilling low-qualified young people and the unemployed

An ambitious 5-year investment in skills plan (PIC) is running until 2022 to provide training to 1 million low-qualified young people and 1 million jobseekers to reach employment. Funded up to EUR 15 billion, it links skill needs analysis with innovation to modernise the training offer and meet the needs of businesses.

One in 15 individuals in the country has insufficient level of basic skills (reading, writing and numeracy), which creates obstacles in their personal and professional lives. A new survey on illiteracy is planned for 2022 to measure the extent of the needs and to monitor follow-up actions. The national agency for literacy (*agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme*, ANLCI) is running a project to create in each region, in collaboration with local actors, solutions tailored to the needs; implementation is foreseen through ESF funding. A literacy diagnostic digital tool for companies is in the pipeline and will be funded by the Investments in skills plan⁽⁹⁰⁾.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ More information [in French]:
<https://www.paris2024.org/fr/heritage-jeux-emploi/>

⁽⁹⁰⁾ More information [in French]:
<https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/actualites/presse/communiqués-de-presse/article/prevention-et-lutte-contre-l-illettrisme-le-gouvernement-s-engage>

Moving forward with the implementation of the retraining scheme for career transition (Transco, Section 1.4) elaborated by the labour ministry and the social partners, some 100 projects have been submitted for the creation of information and coordination hubs (*plateformes territoriales*), where businesses facing difficulties in keeping their staff and employees in jobs under threat can find a company willing to offer training for employees in career transition. The initiative has attracted a variety of economic actors (professional branches, social partners, local authorities, companies, skill operators) that run these partnership platforms within a sector, at interregional or regional level.

Acronyms

AFC	<i>action de formation conventionnée par Pôle Emploi</i> [aid for training action approved by PES]
AFE	<i>Agence France Entrepreneur</i> [national entrepreneurship agency]
AFEST	<i>action de formation en situation de travail</i> [training action in work situations]
AFPA	<i>Agence nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes</i> [national agency for adult vocational training]
AFPR	<i>action de formation préalable au recrutement</i> [pre-recruitment training aid]
Agefiph	<i>association de gestion du fonds pour l'insertion professionnelle des personnes handicapées</i> [association for the management of funds for the professional integration of disabled workers]
AIF	<i>aide individuelle à la formation</i> [individual training assistance]
AIJ	<i>accompagnement intensif des jeunes</i> [employment support scheme for young jobseekers]
ANLCI	<i>agence nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme</i> [national agency for literacy]
Apec	<i>association pour l'emploi des cadres</i> [executive employment association]
AREF	<i>allocation de retour à l'emploi formation</i> [training allowance for returning to work]
ARF	<i>Association des régions de France</i> [association of the regions of France]
ASSF	<i>allocation de sécurisation professionnelle formation</i> [training allowance for securing employment]
Bac-Pro	<i>baccalauréat professionnel</i> [vocational baccalaureate]
BEP	<i>brevet d'études professionnelles</i> [vocational studies certificate]
BMA	<i>brevet des métiers d'art</i> [applied arts certificate]
BP	<i>brevet professionnel</i> [professional certificate]

BTn	<i>baccalauréat technologique</i> [technological baccalaureate]
BTS	<i>brevet de technicien supérieur</i> [higher technician certificate]
BUT	<i>Bachelor universitaire de technologie</i> [University Bachelor of Technology]
CAP	<i>certificat d'aptitude professionnelle</i> [professional aptitude certificate]
Carif-Oref	<i>centres d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation-observatoires régionaux de l'emploi et de la formation</i> [training management, resource and information centres-regional employment and training observatories]
CCE	<i>certificat de compétences en entreprise</i> [professional certificate for in-company trainers]
CCI	<i>Chambre de commerce et d'industrie</i> [Chamber of Commerce and Industry]
CCP	(a) <i>certificats de compétences professionnelles</i> [certificates of professional competences] (b) <i>commission de la certification professionnelle</i> [certification committee]
CDD	<i>contrat (de travail) à durée déterminée</i> [fixed-term employment contract]
CDI	<i>contrat (de travail) à durée indéterminée</i> [indefinite-term employment contract]
CDL	<i>contrat (de travail) à durée limitée</i> [limited-duration employment contract]
CEFDG	<i>Commission d'évaluation des formations et diplômes de gestion</i> [national commission for evaluation of programmes and qualifications in management]
CEP	<i>conseil en évolution professionnelle</i> [professional development counselling service]
Céreq	<i>centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications</i> [centre for studies and research on qualifications]
CFA	<i>Centre de formation d'apprentis</i> [apprenticeship training centre]
CIDJ	<i>centre d'information et de documentation jeunesse</i> [youth information and documentation centre]
CIE	<i>contrat initiative emploi jeunes</i> [youth employment initiative contract]
CIOs	<i>centres d'information et d'orientation</i> [information and guidance centres]
Cnam	<i>Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers</i> [National Conservatory of Arts and Trades]

CNCP	<i>Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle</i> [national commission for vocational and professional qualifications]
Cnefop	<i>Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles</i> [national council for employment, vocational training and guidance]
CNESER	<i>Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche</i> [national council for higher education and research]
CNNCEFP	<i>Commission nationale de la négociation collective, de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle</i> [national commission for collective bargaining, employment and vocational training]
Cofrac	<i>Comité français d'accréditation</i> [French accreditation committee]
COPANEF	<i>Comité paritaire interprofessionnel national pour l'emploi et la formation</i> [national inter-professional committee for employment and training]
CPCs	<i>commissions professionnelles consultatives</i> [inter-ministerial advisory committees]
CPD	continuing professional development
CPF	<i>compte personnel de formation</i> [personal training account]
CPGE	<i>classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles</i> [preparatory courses for higher colleges of excellence]
CPIR	<i>commissions paritaires interprofessionnelle régionales</i> [joint interprofessional regional committees]
CPNEFP	<i>Commission paritaire nationale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle</i> [joint employment and vocational training committee]
CPRDFOP	<i>contrat de plan régional de développement des formations et de l'orientation professionnelles</i> [contract for regional projects for the development of vocational guidance and training]
CQP	<i>certificat de qualification professionnelle</i> [professional qualification certificate]
CQPI	<i>certificat de qualification professionnelle inter-branches</i> [interprofessional qualification certificate]
CREFOP	<i>Comité régional de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles</i> [regional committee on employment, vocational guidance and training]
CSA	<i>contribution supplémentaire à l'apprentissage</i> [additional contribution on apprenticeship]
CSE	<i>Conseil supérieur de l'éducation</i> [higher council for education]
CTI	<i>commission des titres d'ingénieurs</i> [engineering qualification committee]
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
D2E	<i>diplôme d'établissement étudiant-entrepreneur</i> [student-entrepreneur certificate]
Dares	<i>Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques</i> [Directorate for research, studies and statistics]

DEPP	<i>Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance</i> [Directorate for evaluation, forecasting and performance]
DPE	<i>titre d'ingénieur diplômé par l'État</i> [professional diploma in engineering with master degree awarded by the State]
DREETS	<i>directions régionales de l'économie, de l'emploi, du travail et des solidarités</i> [regional directorates for the economy, employment, labour and solidarity]
DUT	<i>diplôme universitaire de technologie</i> [undergraduate technology certificate]
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
EPI	<i>enseignements pratiques interdisciplinaires</i> [interdisciplinary practical courses]
EPSCP _s	<i>établissements à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel</i> [scientific, cultural and professional public institutions]
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European qualifications framework
EREA	<i>établissements régionaux d'enseignement adapté</i> [regional establishments of adapted education]
FCU	<i>formation continue à l'Université</i> [continuing education in universities]
FNE-formation	<i>fonds national de l'emploi</i> [national employment fund]
Foquale	<i>Formation Qualification Emploi</i> [national network of education institutions of the education ministry to support young dropouts]
FPSP	<i>fonds paritaire de sécurisation des parcours professionnels</i> [joint fund for professional career security]
GDP	gross domestic product
GIP FCIP	<i>groupements d'intérêt public – formation continue insertion professionnelle</i> [public interest groups – continuing education professional integration]
GPEC	<i>gestion prévisionnelle des emplois et des compétences</i> [employment and skills forecast]
Greta	<i>groupements d'établissement public locaux pour adultes</i> [consortium of local public education institutions for adults]
Hcéres	<i>Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur</i> [high council for the evaluation of research and higher education]
IAE Jeanes	<i>insertion par l'activité économique jeunes</i> [professional integration through youth economic activity scheme]
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IUT	<i>instituts universitaires de technologie</i> [university technology institutes]
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LMD	<i>licence-master-doctorat</i> [bachelor-master-doctorate]

MLDS	<i>mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire</i> [mission for the prevention of early school leaving]
MOOCs	massive open online courses
NEET	not in education, employment or training
OCE	<i>Observatoires de la creation d'entreprise</i> [Business creation observatories]
ONISEP	<i>office national d'information sur les enseignements et les professions</i> [national office for information on studies and professions]
OPCOs	<i>opérateurs de compétences</i> [skills operators]
OPMQ	<i>observatoires prospectifs des métiers et des qualifications</i> [observatories of trades and qualifications]
PACEA	<i>parcours contractualisé d'accompagnement vers l'emploi et l'autonomie</i> [contractualised support scheme toward employment and autonomy]
PEC Jeunes	<i>parcours emploi compétences jeunes</i> [youth employment skills path]
PEPITE	<i>pôles étudiants pour l'innovation, le transfert et l'entrepreneuriat</i> [student hubs for innovation, transfer and entrepreneurship]
PES	public employment service
PIA	<i>programme d'investissements d'avenir</i> [future investments programme]
PIC	<i>plan d'investissement dans les compétences</i> [skills investment plan]
PMSMP	<i>périodes de mise en situation en milieu professionnel</i> [guidance and support schemes for people in need of personalised social or professional support]
PNF	<i>plan national de formation</i> [national training plan]
POE	<i>préparation opérationnelle à l'emploi</i> [operational employment preparation]
POEC	<i>préparation opérationnelle à l'emploi collective</i> [training aid for preparation for collective employment]
POEI	<i>préparation opérationnelle à l'emploi individuelle</i> [training aid for preparation for individual employment]
QPV	<i>quartiers prioritaires de la politique de la ville</i> [priority urban areas]
REC	<i>réseau emplois compétences</i> [employment and skills network]
RFF	<i>rémunération de fin de formation</i> [allowance at the end of training]
RFPE	<i>rémunération de formation de Pôle Emploi</i> [PES training allowance]

RNCP	<i>répertoire national des certifications professionnelles</i> [national register of vocational and professional qualifications]
RS	<i>répertoire spécifique des certifications et des habilitations</i> [specific register of accreditations and certifications]
RSFP	<i>rémunération des stagiaires de la formation professionnelle</i> [aid for VET learners]
SCUIO-IP	<i>services communs universitaires d'information, d'orientation et d'insertion professionnelles</i> [university information services]
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SMIC	<i>salaire minimum de croissance</i> [growth-indexed minimum wage]
SPO	<i>service public de l'orientation</i> [public guidance service]
TP	<i>titre professionnel</i> [professional certificate/title]
Transco	<i>transition collectives</i> [reskilling programmes for career transition]
VAE	<i>validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> [validation of prior learning]
WBL	work-based learning
ZRR	<i>zone de revitalisation rurale</i> [rural revitalisation area]

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Vocational education and training in

France

Short description

This publication contributes to better understanding of vocational education and training (VET) in France and how it operates within the socioeconomic context. It provides an overview of key characteristics, system developments and challenges.

Lifelong learning aims to secure access to training, skills for jobs and social advancement. A main feature is that State-issued vocational qualifications can be acquired in initial education but also in apprenticeship and through continuing training that makes it easier to progress at an individual pace.

The State caters for the under-18 low-qualified and promotes adult learning through an individual training credits system and common quality standards for nationally recognised qualifications. Social partner involvement in regulatory and financial aspects of national lifelong learning policies is another key aspect, as is the role of the regions, implementing territorial continuing training and career guidance schemes and national job support policies.

France's response to challenges, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, aims at more jobs for young people studying and working and increased investment in education and training towards the digital and green transitions and social resilience.

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