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France

VET in Europe – Country report

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## Editorial

In France, people can access education as part of a process of lifelong learning. In 2010-2011, 87% of young people aged 2-22 were in education, i.e. almost 15 million schoolchildren and students. In 2011, one in three employees participated in a training programme.

Lifelong learning gives everyone a chance for education, either at school or university for pupils and students, or through vocational education and training for all working people, of whatever age.

The resources provided for vocational education and training accounted for 1.5% of France's gross domestic product in 2011.

Vocational education and training in France consists of two elements, which are relatively independent of each other:

- (a) initial vocational training, which applies to young people in full-time education and to apprentices;
- (b) continuing vocational training, which applies to young people who have left or completed initial education and to adults on the labour market.

In France, education extends to all ages, and includes opportunities for vocational and alternate training, whether within a school context or under an employment contract. In recent years, cooperation between schools and business has increased significantly. The links between them have multiplied.

The educational sector is also undergoing substantial development within the framework of EU policy.

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## CHAPTER 1.

# Introduction

### 1.1. Political and administrative background

France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. Its institutions are currently governed by the Constitution of 4 October 1958, called the Constitution of the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic <sup>(1)</sup>. Legislative power is held by Parliament, which consists of two chambers, the National Assembly and the Senate. Parliament draws up and passes laws, and monitors government <sup>(2)</sup>.

Executive power is shared between the President of the Republic (Head of State) and the government. The President of the Republic, elected for five years by direct universal suffrage, appoints the Prime Minister (head of Government) and the members of the Government, heads the Council of Ministers, promulgates laws and is the head of the armed forces <sup>(3)</sup>.

The government decides and conducts the national policies. Each member of the Government heads a ministerial department <sup>(4)</sup>. Within this system, primary and secondary education are the responsibility of the Minister of National Education; higher education the responsibility of the Minister of Higher Education and Research; and finally, continuing vocational training is the responsibility of the current Minister of Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue.

Currently in France, there are three levels of decentralised authorities: the *communes* (municipalities) (36,681 in mainland France as of 1 January 2013) (DGCL - Direction Générale de Collectivités Locales, 2013); the

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<sup>(1)</sup> La Constitution du 4 octobre 1958 <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958/la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958.5071.html>

<sup>(2)</sup> La France en un coup d'œil <http://www.france.fr/paris-et-ses-alentours/fiche-didentite/la-france>

<sup>(3)</sup> Les institutions de la Cinquième République <http://www.elysee.fr/la-presidence/les-institutions-de-la-cinquieme-republique/>

<sup>(4)</sup> Présentation synthétique des institutions françaises <http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/role-et-pouvoirs-de-l-assemblee-nationale/les-institutions-francaises-generalites/presentation-synthetic-des-institutions-francaises>

*départements* (counties) (96 excluding overseas departments) <sup>(5)</sup> and the *regions* (regions) (22 in mainland France), plus 3 overseas departments and regions. They enjoy legal and financial autonomy and are administered by councils elected directly by universal suffrage and by executive bodies generally drawn from the public service <sup>(6)</sup>.

The Government is also represented at departmental and regional levels by prefects. For this reason, the organisation of decentralised government services is based on the same territorial divisions <sup>(7)</sup>.

The status of French overseas territories can differ. Some of them, like Guadeloupe, La Réunion and Mayotte, are *departments* and *regions*. Others have the status of Overseas authorities, with varying degrees of jurisdiction and autonomy <sup>(8)</sup>. Since the 1980s, local authorities at regional, departmental and municipal level have had responsibilities in ensuring implementation of national policies, in particular relating to vocational training and management of school premises (Eurydice, 2013).

## 1.2. Population

France is the European Union's biggest country, with a total surface area of 675,417 km<sup>2</sup>. Most of its territory (543 965 km<sup>2</sup>) and population are situated in Western Europe, but it also includes several regions and territories spread around the Americas, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

As of 1 January 2013, the population of France was 65.8 million, with 63.7 million living on the mainland, and 1.9 million in overseas *departments* (excluding Mayotte): that is ten million more people than 30 years ago and twenty million more than 50 years ago. With the 803 000 people living in overseas territories and Mayotte, the population of the French Republic is estimated at 66.2 million (INSEE, 2011b). With 13% of the population of Europe, France is the

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<sup>(5)</sup> Quelles sont les différentes catégories de collectivités territoriales? <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/institutions/collectivites-territoriales/categories-collectivites-territoriales/qu-est-ce-que-departement.html>

<sup>(6)</sup> Qu'est-ce qu'une collectivité territoriale ou collectivité locale? <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/institutions/collectivites-territoriales/categories-collectivites-territoriales/qu-est-ce-qu-collectivite-territoriale-ou-collectivite-locale.html>

<sup>(7)</sup> L'organisation territoriale de la France [http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/fiches\\_synthese/fiche\\_11.asp](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/fiches_synthese/fiche_11.asp)

<sup>(8)</sup> Que sont les départements et les régions d'outre-mer? <http://www.vie-publique.fr/decouverte-institutions/institutions/collectivites-territoriales/categories-collectivites-territoriales/que-sont-departements-regions-outre-mer.html>

continent's second most populous country (behind Germany 16%) and ahead of the UK and Italy (INSEE, 2011b).

France's demographic dynamism is primarily based on a high birth rate and a still relatively low death rate. The natural surplus, estimated at 251 000, is nevertheless slightly below last year's level (INSEE, 2011b). In France in 2012, the fertility rate was 2.01 children per woman: within the European Union, only Ireland has a higher fertility rate, with 2.05 children per woman (INSEE, 2011b).

The migratory balance, estimated at +54 000 in 2012, also contributes, though to a lesser degree, to the increase in the French population (INSEE, 2011b). In 2009, there were 5.9 million immigrants living in France, 8.4% of the population, of whom 42.7%, i.e. 2.31 million people were from an African country. The proportion of immigrants from the European continent remains large, though falling: it stood at 37.7% in 2009, as compared with 50% in 1990. 14.2% of France's immigrants are from Asia (INSEE, 2011b).

As people live longer, population continues to age. People aged 65 or more represent 17.5% of the population (compared with 16% ten years ago), and more than half are aged 75 or over. The number of people aged 60 or more has grown by 23.4% in 10 years, and their proportion in the French population as a whole is almost the same as that of young people aged under 20 (respectively 23.4% and 24.7%) (INSEE, 2011b). According to INSEE's 2013 demographic projections, the proportion of the 60+ age group in the population should continue to increase steadily until 2035, when it is expected to reach around 30% (INSEE, 2013).

### 1.3. Economics

In 2012, France's gross domestic product (GDP) stood at €2 032.3 billion (INSEE, 2013a), making it the world's fifth ranked economic power, behind the USA, China, Japan and Germany, and ahead of the United Kingdom <sup>(9)</sup>.

Between 2000 and 2007, France's GDP grew by an average of 2.1% a year. In 2008, and especially 2009, the French economy suffered from the effects of the world financial crisis: its GDP shrank by 0.2% in 2008, then by 3.1% in 2009, an unprecedented contraction since the Second World War (INSEE, 2013b). In 2012, gross domestic product (GDP) in constant euros stagnated, after rising 1.7% in 2010 and 2.0% in 2011. However, because of the sovereign debt crisis in

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<sup>(9)</sup> World Economic Outlook Database  
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/weodata/index.aspx>

the Eurozone, the OECD predicts a significant slowdown in French growth, which is not expected to exceed 0.8% in 2014 (OECD, 2013).

The French economy depends primarily on the tertiary sector: indeed, services (commercial and non-commercial) accounted for almost 80% of the gross added value generated nationally in 2012, way ahead of industry (12.5%), construction (6.3%) and agriculture (2%). Within the tertiary sector, the main branches of activity are real estate (13.2%), wholesale and retail trade (11.2%), services to enterprises (12.4%), non-market services (22.6%). Wholesale and retail trade is the branch with the largest number of enterprises. In fact, 29.85% of the 3.6 million enterprises listed in France in 2012 (excluding agriculture and non-commercial activities), belonged to this sector. This was followed by 'Professional, scientific and technical activities and administrative and support service activities' (16.93%), construction (13.51%) and 'Public administration, education, human health and social work activities' (13.44%). According to the same source, the majority of French companies are very small enterprises: 67.1% have no employees and 27.21% of them have between 1 and 9 employees <sup>(10)</sup>.

#### 1.4. Labour market

In 2011, working population of mainland France was estimated at 28.4 million people aged 15 or more, indicating an employment rate of 56.5%. As has occurred every year since 1976, working population grew in 2011 (by 136 000) exclusively as a result of the increasing participation of seniors in the labour market. Trends in the working population also depend on changes in working behaviour, for example the growing female participation in the labour market or the increasing participation of seniors in the labour market.

On average in 2011, the employment rate in the 15-64 age bracket was stable at 70.5% and the respective rates by gender was 75% for men and 66% for women in employment. With a dynamic on work study training, employment rates in the 15-24 age group increased for women (+0.4) and stagnated for men in 2011, respectively to 66.4% and 74.7%. Conversely, employment rates in the 55-64 age group grew for the third consecutive year (up 2.8 points in 2011).

According to INSEE's 2013 projections for the working population, the employment rate is expected to rise strongly until 2025, and then stabilise. It is

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<sup>(10)</sup> Unités légales selon le nombre de salariés et l'activité en 2012  
[http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=NATTEF09203](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=NATTEF09203)

then projected to resume its rise from 2035 onwards, if fertility rates remain at the high level observed in recent years. Because of population ageing, it is predicted that there will be only 1.5 people in employment for each non-working person over the age of 60 by 2060, as compared with 2.1 in 2010 (INSEE, 2013b).

For the last 30 years, France has been characterised by a high level of unemployment: from only 3.5% in 1975, the French unemployment rate rose to 5.4% in 1980, then to 9% in 1985, to remain at a high level for the last 20 years, close to 10% of the working age population <sup>(1)</sup>. In addition, the unemployment rate in France is generally higher than that of its neighbours: between 1998 and 2009, with the exception of 2001 and 2002, the average unemployment rate in the European Union was always lower than that of France (CAS - Centre d'Analyse Stratégique, 2011). On average at the end of the year 2011, almost 2.7 million people were unemployed in mainland France, signifying an unemployment rate of 9.3% of the working age population. In France in general, relatively fewer women than men are affected by unemployment: in 2011, the unemployment rate among women was thus 0.5 points higher than that of men in mainland France (9.6% compared with 9.1%) (INSEE, 2013b).

Another feature of the French labour market is that both young and older people are relatively disadvantaged in unemployment terms. Young people experience lasting problems in finding work and frequent periods of unemployment. Older people find it hard to remain in work and, when they leave the labour market (unwillingly), face a high level of long-term unemployment (CAS - Centre d'Analyse Stratégique, 2011). On average at the end of 2011, the unemployment rate in the 15-24 age bracket was 22.3%, in the 25-49 bracket 8.6%, and amongst population aged over 50s more than 6.4%. Although the rise in unemployment in the second half of 2011 affected all age brackets, it affected young people the most: over this period, the unemployment rate in the 25-49 age group grew by 0.2 points and among population aged over 50s by 0.2 points, whereas youth unemployment grew by 0.5 points (INSEE, 2013b).

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<sup>(1)</sup> As defined by ILO. Unless otherwise specified, valid for all references to the unemployment rate in this text.

## 1.5. Educational attainment

Education attainment level plays a decisive role when entering the labour market for the first time: independently of the economic circumstances employment prospects of post-secondary and tertiary education graduates are markedly better than those of young people with a secondary level qualification (ISCED 3A-3B: CAP-BEP, baccalaureate or equivalent) or people leaving education with a basic (ISCED 2A) or no qualification at all. In 2012, 10.3% of post-secondary and tertiary education graduates were unemployed, as compared with respectively 24.1% (ISCED 3-4) and 46.9% (ISCED 2 or below). The situation of low-skilled young people in the labour market is markedly worse: it takes them longer to find a job, and uncertainty throughout their work life is higher: after five years on the labour market, the unemployment rate amongst low-skilled workers is between 20% and 30%, as compared with an across-the-board rate of 10% for people who have been on the labour market for the same length of time (rates measured over the period 2003-2012) (INSEE, 2013a).

Until the mid-1990s, education attainment level was growing strongly. On average, in 2007, 2008 or 2009, 42% of young people were post-secondary and tertiary education graduates, 41% had a secondary school qualification and 17% left school with less. The equivalent percentages for people leaving education at the end of the 1970s were respectively 16%, 44% and 40%. The qualification levels of youngsters leaving initial education stabilised in the 2000s.

Obtaining an upper secondary school qualification corresponds to the minimum qualification threshold set by the European Union (identified in the Lisbon strategy's reference criteria). In 2011, in mainland France, 16% of young people aged 20-24 had not achieved this level (INSEE, 2013a).

According to the 2011 employment survey, 22% of people aged 25-64 had undertaken a training course in the previous 12 months, whether for professional or personal reasons. Amongst working age people, the unemployed undertake less frequent training but follow courses that are longer on average than those for people in work. The majority of courses taken by job-seekers is funded by the Regions, which target their interventions at young people. Amongst people in work, the self-employed take fewer courses than salaried employees. Managers and technicians have more access to training than other employees, with 36 % of them in 2011 stating that they had taken a course in the previous 12 months. Fewer unskilled workers had been on courses (21%). Overall, 'training goes to the trained', insofar as access to training rises with educational achievement. Amongst those aged 25-64, one third of graduates have been on a training course, compared with only 9% of people without qualifications.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

Provision of lifelong learning is an obligation of the state. It includes initial training (including apprenticeship) and continuing vocational training for adults and young people already engaged in working life.

Vocational training in schools and through apprenticeship falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is similarly responsible for vocational training in agriculture and the Ministry of Higher education for VET in HE (see also 1.1).

Since 1982, the 26 regional councils (decentralised authorities at regional level) are responsible for defining and implementing CVT policies at local level, particularly for young people aged 16-25, vocational training interns, and young people working under apprenticeship contracts.

Social partners are main actors in the field of French VET. They take part in the negotiation of agreements, having a consultative role vis-à-vis national or regional institutions.

## 2.1. Main characteristics of the national education and training system

Initial education and training in France has traditionally been centralised. Nevertheless, since the 1980s local authorities have been playing an increasingly significant part in governance.

There are three main routes in the French education system (general, technical and vocational). At the end of each route students prepare for a national examination in order to obtain a diploma (there are some 18 000 identified certifications).

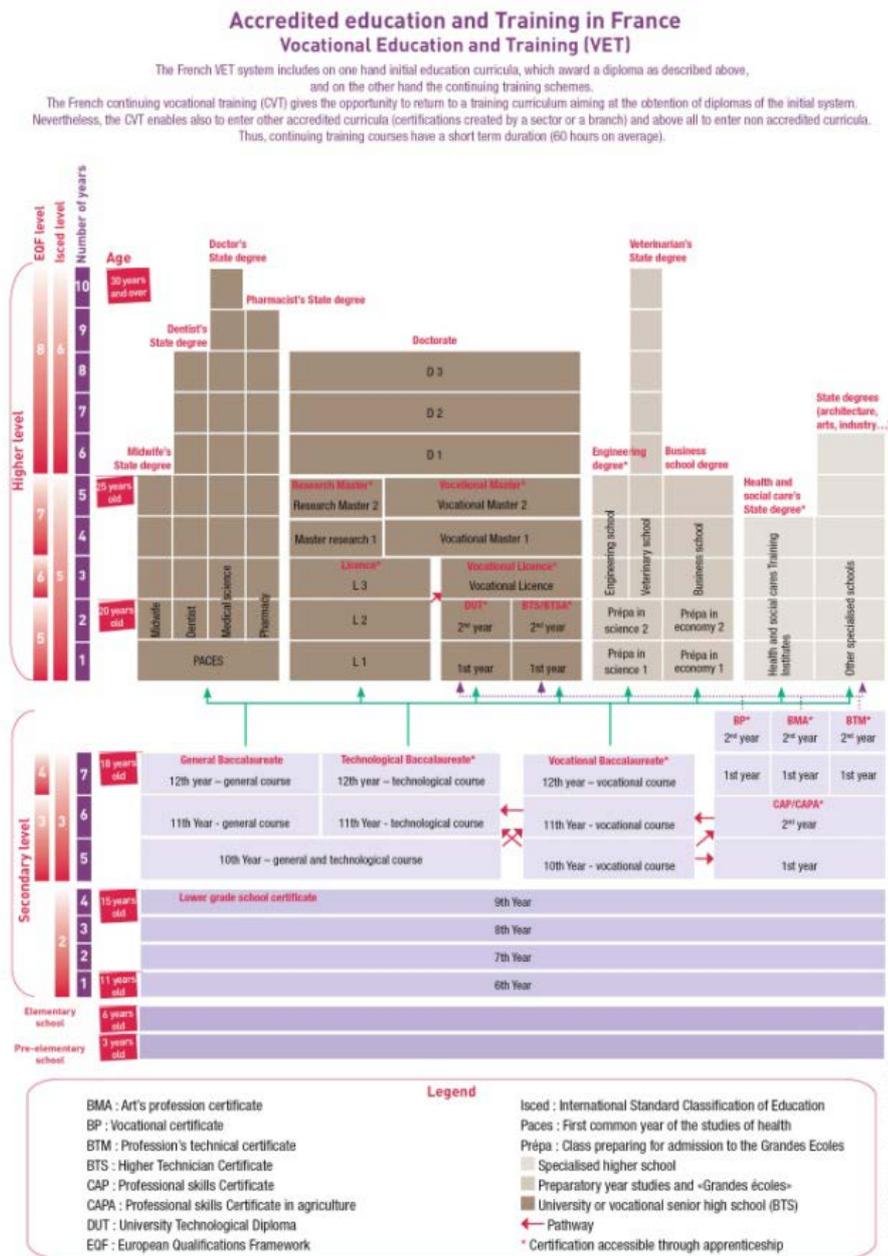
Initial vocational education and training is offered from upper secondary school level till tertiary education. Lifelong vocational training is intended to young people and adults, entering the labour market or already employed.

In lower secondary education, the *Brevet des colleges* is the lower grade school certification. With or without this certification, there are several opportunities to go on to upper secondary level then to higher learning but after that, just a few gateways exist between these pathways. Studies at higher level

include the possibility of a university course which leads to qualifications at different levels including doctor's state degree. They also include other courses offered by other training providers, such as business schools, health and social establishments as well as the 'Grandes écoles'.

All upper secondary level studies lead to the respective higher education level and certifications which may be obtained either via IVET or CVET.

Figure 1. Diagram of the national education and training system



Source: Refernet.

### 2.1.1. Initial education and training in France

Initial education and training is structured into three levels:

- a) pre-primary (optional, but in practice attended by all children aged 3-6) and primary (compulsory) education for children aged 6-11;
- b) lower and upper secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3 levels respectively); and
- c) higher education (ISCED levels 5-6).

Lower secondary education is compulsory and it is provided in *collèges* (junior high schools) for 4 years (age 11 to 15). A national diploma (the *brevet des collèges*) assessing the knowledge and skills of *collège* students is awarded at the end of lower secondary education. This qualification is not a condition for access to following education levels.

Upper secondary education is provided in *lycées* (senior high schools) for 3 years (age 15 to 18) in three different paths: general *lycée*, technological *lycée* and vocational *lycée*. The national *baccalauréat* diploma marks the end of secondary education through general and technological *lycées*, as well as through the longer curriculum of the vocational *lycées* and at the same time opens up access to higher level studies.

Two systems are in place in higher education:

- a) universities which are public institutions having an open entry system; and
- b) the non-university sector, notably consisting of the *classes préparatoires* (Classes preparing for admission to the *Grandes Ecoles*) and *Grandes Ecoles*, entrance to which is based on a highly selective entry examination.

The courses provided by these different types of institutions have different aims and conditions for admission; nonetheless, most of them are structured into three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate) and into ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits, in line with the principles of the Bologna Process (Eurydice, 2012).

There is a free public education system, and a private education system; in the latter, school teachers are paid by the State, according to bilateral agreements (contracts) between the private school and the state. The majority of pupils attend public schools (90.1 % in primary education and 69.1% in secondary schools). The proportion of pupils in private schools has remained stable over several years (1 student in 6) <sup>(12)</sup>. Alongside school-based education, there is also an apprenticeship system based on alternate training offering to young people aged 16 to 25 general, theoretical and practical education leading

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<sup>(12)</sup> National summary sheet: France  
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/France:Overview>

to a professional qualification. Vocational qualifications are available from upper secondary level (Professional skills Certificate – CAP *Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*) till tertiary education. During an apprenticeship contract, the learner has the status of an apprentice, i.e. is both an employee of a company and a student in an Apprentice Training Centre (CFA - *centre de formation d'apprentis*) (Centre Inffo - Centre pour le développement de l'information sur la formation permanente, 2013a). Funding for apprenticeship comes essentially from:

- companies, which in addition to the salary they pay the apprentice, participate directly by paying the lifelong learning tax;
- the Regions, which provide funding for the CFAs, on top of the lifelong learning tax they collect, by paying a balancing subsidy <sup>(13)</sup>.

In 2011, France's initial education and training system educated around 15 million pupils, students and apprentices (representing around 23% of the country's population), and had a total budget of €134.7 billion (the equivalent of 6.9% of gross domestic product) (Eurydice, 2012).

### 2.1.2. Continuing VET in France

Continuing vocational training is targeted to young people who are no longer in the initial education system and adults. It helps them return to learning and/or pursue professional and personal development.

The French lifelong education and training system encompasses:

- informal and non-formal educational initiatives, such as self-training;
- training initiatives associated with the Citizen Education movement, designed to help everyone, through the spread of knowledge, to become more effective citizens, and therefore to enhance democracy;
- continuing vocational training (CVT) initiatives as defined and regulated in the labour Code.

CVT remains the most widely used solution. It covers people already in employment (employees in the private sector, civil servants, self-employed workers) or seeking employment.

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<sup>(13)</sup> Financement des établissements de formation  
[https://www.alternance.emploi.gouv.fr/portail\\_alternance/jcms/tomcatleader\\_9918/la-relation-avec-les-services-de-l-etat/le-financement-des-etablissements-de-formation?cid=pa\\_5015](https://www.alternance.emploi.gouv.fr/portail_alternance/jcms/tomcatleader_9918/la-relation-avec-les-services-de-l-etat/le-financement-des-etablissements-de-formation?cid=pa_5015)

### **2.1.3. Funding of lifelong vocational learning**

In France, €31.5 billion were spent on CVT in 2010. Funding comes mainly from the State (35%), companies (41%) the regions (14%) and also from other public institutions and households (10%).

#### *2.1.3.1. Government funding*

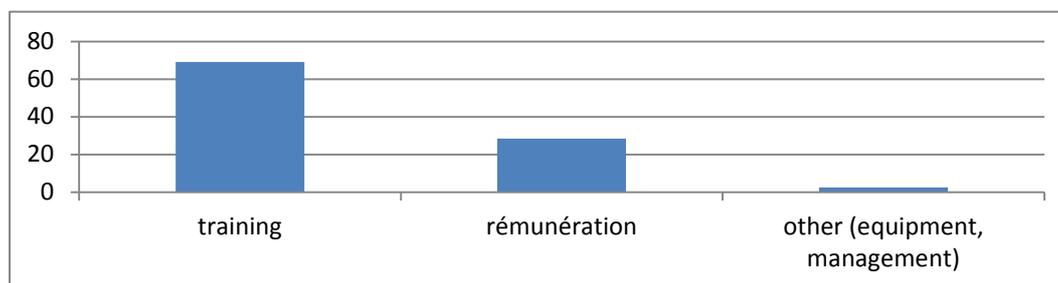
Central government funding for CVT programs amounted to a total of €3481.66 million covering:

- (a) exemptions from social security contributions for apprenticeship contracts: 1 249 ME;
- (b) decentralisation allowances: 1 452 ME.
- (c) actions targeted to particular target groups (the illiterate or people in prison): 7.20 ME
- (d) access to "key competences" training: 54 ME euros - 40 000 training;
- (e) financing of vocational training centres, 22.82 ME ;
- (f) salaries of trainees (including job seekers) 257 ME;
- (g) actions of strategic workforce planning: 60 ME (Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2013)

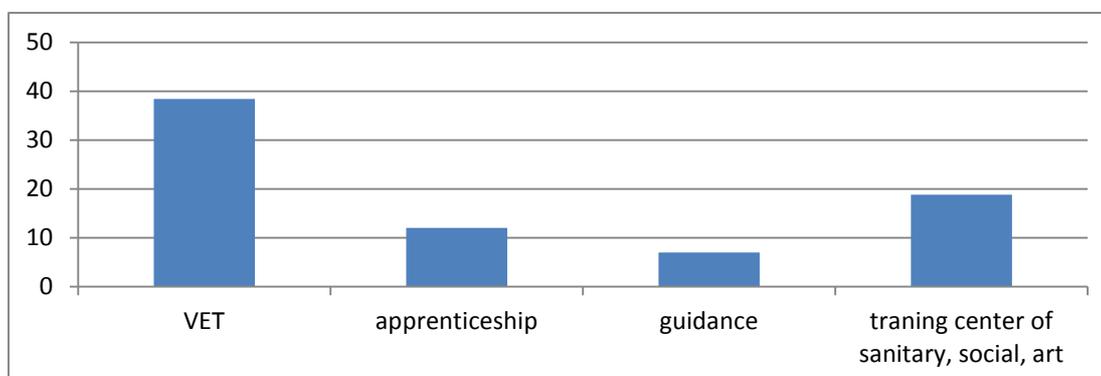
#### *2.1.3.2. Regional funding*

Each Regional Council finances CVT programmes in line with the specific regional priorities it has set under contracts promoting vocational training at regional level (*contrat de plan régional de développement de la formation professionnelle* - CPRDFP). The Regions can also co-finance specific measures on an ad hoc basis; for example, actions to tackle the economic crisis (Centre Inffo, 2013a).

Most regional funds are dedicated to continuing training (about 38% of expenditures for job seekers training).

**Figure 2. Regional spending for VET**

Source: Appendix to the finance White Paper 2013 – Vocational training. Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2013

**Figure 3. Regional spending for lifelong learning 2011**

NB. Percentage data, for a total of 5,093.00 ME

Source: Appendix to the finance White Paper 2013 – Vocational training. Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2013

#### 2.1.3.3. *Financing by companies*

Public and private sectors' employers have a legal obligation to contribute to the professional training for employees. Since 2005, in the private sector, this funding has been at least:

- 1.6% of the wage bill for companies employing 20 people or more;
- 1.05% of the wage bill for companies employing 10 to 19 people;
- 0.55% of the wage bill for companies employing fewer than 10 people.

Funding is made up of different contributions. Companies' contributions in some cases are paid to accredited joint collecting bodies (OPCA – *organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés*). OPCA are jointly managed and organised at national or regional level per professional sector or at inter-professional level (Centre Inffo, 2013a).

#### 2.1.4. Schemes and beneficiaries

CVT schemes differ depending on the beneficiary's status: private sector employees, civil servants, self-employed persons or job-seekers.

##### 2.1.4.1. *Private sector*

Vocational training of employees in the private sector is financed directly or indirectly by the employer. A number of funding options is available:

- Company's training plans: employees enrolled in one of the training schemes drawn up by the employer are on professional assignment paid by the company. If training takes place outside working time, special payment benefits are provided;
- Training leaves granted to all employees: the most important form is the individual training leave (CIF – *Congé individuel de formation*). Training can be taken entirely or partly during working time. Employees' salary is paid by the accredited joint collecting body for the training period. Other forms are the skills assessment leave (CBC – *congé de bilan de compétences*) and the Validation-of-experience leave (CVAE – *congé de validation des acquis de l'expérience*);
- The individual training right (DIF – *droit individuel de formation*): All employees are entitled to training credit of 20 hours a year, up to a maximum of 120 hours within the limits of 6 years. Training can take place during or outside working time, depending on procedures agreed at sectoral level;
- Professional upgrade training programmes: these schemes offer a combination of theoretical and practical approaches. They aim to help employees on permanent contracts to maintain their jobs, in particular those who have been working for 20 years or are under the age of 45 and have worked for a minimum of one year for their most recent employer. This also applies to people employed under an individual integration contract (CUI – *contrat unique d'insertion*);
- Personal training account (CPF-*compte personnel de formation*): Created in 2013, the personal training account facilitates access to continuing training for people entering the labour market, regardless of status (employed, unemployed, job seekers). The CPF is not yet implemented but it will be recorded in hours, and mobilized by the person (employee or job seeker) to have access to training.

All public service institutions (government bodies, regional and local authorities and public hospitals) offer to civil servants training options similar to those in the private sector:

- (a) the training plan covers all the training courses provided for civil servants. Time spend on training is consisted working time and the employee receives a full salary;
- (b) the training leave is an individual right. Public employees on training leave receive a salary;
- (c) the individual training right, a training credit of 20 hours a year, up to a maximum of 120 hours within the limits of 6 years to undertake vocational training.

#### 2.1.4.2. *Self-employed*

The self-employed (farmers, artisans, freelancers, shopkeepers, professionals) contribute to the funding of their training by paying a contribution to a State-accredited collecting agency.

For young people aged 16-25, training can be undertaken within the framework of:

- (a) a special type of employment contract, such as the professional upgrade contract, financed by the company and exempt from social contributions. It provides access to a sandwich course leading to a recognised professional certification;
- (b) training initiatives financed by the Regional Councils.

#### 2.1.4.3. *Job-seekers*

Job-seekers can receive training within the framework of:

- (a) employment contract combined with compulsory training schemes (professional upgrade contract) or optional training schemes (individual integration contract);
- (b) training initiatives financed by the Region or the State;
- (c) training initiatives financed by the unemployment insurance system (Centre Inffo, 2013a).

Under certain conditions, job-seekers can receive payment for training.

#### **2.1.5. Lifelong vocational training bodies**

In 2010, lifelong training bodies (16 731 in total) earned €7.9 billion. 95% of the trainers are private bodies (for-profit companies, non-profit organisations and self-employed trainers): They earned three quarters of the total income and trained more than 81% (9 million) of individuals who undertook training. Private

profit-making providers represent the largest private training body (41% of training providers in 2010). Alone, they trained 42% of people on training and generated 40% of revenues. For their part, private, non-profit organisations (associations, unions, cooperatives, foundations etc.) represent a quarter of training providers but 30% of the market in terms of revenues and client numbers. Individual training providers represent 31% of the total, almost as much as the for-profit sector. However, they deal with only one in ten trainees, and earn only 3% of revenues in the sector.

Public and semi-public bodies represent 5% of providers. However, they trained 19% of people on courses and earned 18% of revenues in the sector <sup>(14)</sup>. The main public or semi-public bodies involved in lifelong learning programmes are:

- (a) The GRETA (*GRoupements d'ETAbissements* –groups of establishments) created by the Ministry of National Education.
- (b) The CNAM (National Conservatory of Arts and Trades - *Conservatoire national des arts et métiers*): a public institution that falls within the remit of the Ministry of Higher Education.
- (c) The CCI consular schools, which are attached to the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, themselves attached to the Ministry of Economics. Operating in the field of vocational higher education, the consular schools notably include 29 higher business schools, 25 schools of management and commerce and 10 engineering schools <sup>(15)</sup>.
- (d) The AFPA (national association for adult vocational training - *association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes*). Courses provided by the 232 AFPA centres are mostly targeting job-seekers. They are financed by regional or State funds and they lead to professional qualifications issued by the Ministry of Employment (AFPA, 2012).

In addition, it should be noted that all French universities have a lifelong learning department, which offers adults access to most of the higher education sectors. In France, the lifelong vocational training bodies, whether public or private, all operate in a competitive market.

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<sup>(14)</sup> Appendix to the finance White Paper 2013 – Vocational training, Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2013

<sup>(15)</sup> CCI de France: Choisir votre cursus  
<http://www.cci.fr/web/enseignement-superieur/choisir-votre-cursus>

### 2.1.6. Validation of experience

Since the social modernisation act of 17 January 2002, validation of work experience (VAE-*validation des acquis de l'expérience*) has offered a third means of access to (professional) qualifications, alongside initial education and lifelong learning. The VAE is a means of obtaining, totally or partially a qualification or certificate based on professional experience. (DARES, 2012b). The applicant (self-employed, employees or volunteers) must submit a dossier and in some cases undergo an interview with the jury for the relevant qualification, which then decides whether to award the chosen qualification fully or partially (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2013).

## 2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

The VET schemes regulated (and managed) by the State are primarily about access to qualifications. The State remains the only body capable of developing qualifications that can be accessed through initial education (see figure 1). There are other qualifications created by different bodies (see 2.3), which can be obtained via training programmes. All the qualifications created by the State can also be accessed via lifelong learning.

In France, different ministries develop and award recognised and permanently valid qualifications, university degrees and vocational certificates, i.e. the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, but also the ministries responsible for Agriculture, Employment, Social Affairs, Youth and Sport, Health and Culture <sup>(16)</sup>.

### 2.2.1. VET and the Ministry of Education

Vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Education stand at levels V (EQF level 3) and IV (EQF level 4) in the national scale. These qualifications cover almost 600 specialties, corresponding to different careers or fields of activity. They all require the acquisition of both professional and general skills and knowledge, including acquisition of 'key competences' (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2013).

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<sup>(16)</sup> Procédure d'enregistrement de droit au Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles <http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/site/cncp/Accueil35701/Enregistrement-de-droit>

2.2.1.1. *The main qualifications: EQF levels 3 and 4*

**CAP (*Certificat d' aptitude professionnelle* –professional skills certificate) – EQF level 3**

CAP is the oldest vocational diploma. It demonstrates a first level of qualification to its holder as qualified worker or employee. CAP encompasses more than 200 specialties relevant to small-business, production and service sectors<sup>(17)</sup>. In initial vocational training, studies last two years after the end of *college*. Focusing on the acquisition of practical know-how in a given trade, it provides direct access to employment and/or to upper secondary vocational studies, in order to prepare for a vocational baccalaureate (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2013) after 2 additional years of studies.

**BEP (*Brevet d'études professionnelles*–Vocational studies certificate) –EQF level 3**

BEP is given as a first level of vocational qualifications. Relatively broad-based, BEP usually focuses on acquiring standard skills for a single area of employment. There are currently 48 BEP specialties<sup>(18)</sup>. In initial vocational training, studies last two years after the end of *collège*. Since the 2009 reform of the Education Code, referred to as the 'Reform of vocational education', BEP has become an intermediate qualification offered exclusively as part of the curriculum that leads, 3 years after *collège*, to the vocational baccalaureate at EQF level 4<sup>(19)</sup>.

**Vocational baccalaureate - EQF level 4**

This demonstrates the holder's ability to carry out a highly qualified professional activity. The vocational baccalaureate offers 102 specialties in a wide variety of sectors (retail and wholesale trade, services, catering, maintenance, secretarial, accounting, construction, agriculture etc.), and in highly specialised sectors (watch making, jewellery, fashion etc.). In initial vocational education, since the 2009 reform, preparation for this qualification takes three years after *collège*. The main purpose of the vocational baccalaureate is entry to the job market.

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<sup>(17)</sup> List of all CAP:  
<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid47637/le-certificat-d-aptitude-professionnelle-cap.html>

<sup>(18)</sup> List of all BEP:  
<http://eduscol.education.fr/pid23236-cid47638/le-brevet-d-etudes-professionnelles-bep.html>

<sup>(19)</sup> La voie professionnelle au lycée  
<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid2573/la-voie-professionnelle-au-lycee.html>

However, as with any baccalaureate in France, it also entitles one to move on to higher education <sup>(20)</sup>.

#### 2.2.1.2. *The different methods of accessing qualifications*

IVET qualifications are accessible via studies in a vocational *lycée*, or as apprentices in an Apprentice Training Centre (CFA).

The Vocational *Lycée* (senior high school) programme includes general subjects, theoretical and practical vocational training, project work and internships. The professional skills certificate (CAP) programme comprises 2 300 hours of learning time over two years, including 420 to 560 hours (12 to 16 weeks) in an internship. The vocational baccalaureate diploma course consists of 3400 to 3500 hours over three years, of which 770 hours (22 weeks) are spent in an internship.

The apprenticeship combines training with an employer and training at a CFA. The apprentice spends 60% to 75% of his or her time in a company. Apprentices are supported by an apprentice supervisor, who is responsible for passing on knowledge and expertise and assigning jobs. The period of training in a CFA is at least 800 hours for the two-year CAP and at least 1850 hours for the three-year vocational baccalaureate. The curriculum is organised by the CFAs. Two thirds of the course focuses on general and technical training. The remaining third is set aside for practical education.

The vocational qualifications offered by the Ministry of National Education can also be acquired through lifelong learning schemes, by employees in the private sector, public servants, self-employed workers or job-seekers. In the public sector, preparation for these qualifications under lifelong learning schemes is essentially provided by the *GRETA* (public groups of establishments– see 2.1.2.3). Private training bodies can also provide courses leading to vocational qualifications regulated by the Ministry of National Education.

Finally, as with all vocational qualifications developed by the State, these same national qualifications can be obtained through accreditation of work experience (VAE).

#### **2.2.2. VET and the Ministry of Higher Education**

Apart from qualifications in general or technological education, the Minister of Higher Education and Research offers vocational qualifications running from level III (EQF level 5) to level I (EQF level 7) in the national qualification scale.

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<sup>(20)</sup> Les diplômes professionnels  
<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid47633/les-diplomes-professionnels.html>

2.2.2.1. *The main qualifications: levels 5 to 7 of the EQF*

**Advanced technician certificate (BTS – *Brevet de technicien supérieur*, EQF level 5)**

BTS is a 2-year higher education level programme (120 ECTS credits equivalent) accessible after the baccalaureate (or equivalent) diploma and takes place at *lycée* premises. It is accessible via school-based or apprenticeship programmes. BTS offers specialised training courses accompanied by one or more internships and prepares for an advanced technician professional qualification (an advanced technician has a management support role reporting to an engineer or head of department). BTS holders can enter immediately into working life, or follow the LMD (*Licence-Master-Doctorat* – Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) HE path towards a higher vocational degree. In September 2013, there were 120 BTS specialties, covering all fields of activity <sup>(21)</sup>.

**Vocational Bachelor's degree (*Licence professionnelle*) –EQF level 6**

Created in 1999 to enable professional integration of young people, it proposes a qualification corresponding to clearly identified labour market or trade section needs in 1 620 specialties and 46 national categories covering all sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary) of economic activity. Studies take 1 year (2 semesters) after an EQF level 5 qualification (BAC+2 certificate), such as the BTS. It consists of a combination of university-based courses and practical experience, including a 12-16 week-long internship and completion of a mentored project. It allows access to next university level studies, in particular to vocational Master's degree <sup>(22)</sup>.

**Vocational Master's degree –EQF level 7**

National Master's degree was created in 2002 at the time of the so-called 'LMD' (*Licence-Master-Doctorat* – 'Bachelor-Master-Doctorate') reform, designed to bring the national higher education system in line with European policies. Main Master paths include one vocational-oriented, one research-oriented and an undifferentiated one. Programmes last two years and are equivalent to 120 ECTS credits obtained through modules taken over 4 semesters (ECTS credits are

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<sup>(21)</sup> Brevet de technicien supérieur (B.T.S.)  
<http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid20183/brevet-de-technicien-superieur-b.t.s.html>

<sup>(22)</sup> La licence professionnelle  
<http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid20181/licence-professionnelle.html>

accumulated to those of a Bachelor's degree – 300 ECTS credits in total at the end of Master studies).

Master's programmes include academic, methodological and applied (vocational) training, internships as well as introduction to scientific research (master thesis or other personal research work).

Admission to a first year Master's degree (M1) is usually automatic for graduates with a Bachelor's degree in the same field as the Master. Admission to a second-year Master's degree (M2) is more selective and depends on the student's results, notably completion of the M1, and a positive assessment by the Master's programme director.

Structure of the course varies between institutions and specialties. For example, a Master's programme may have a core component in M1 and then divide into 2 branches in M2, one with an immediate vocational focus, the other focusing more on research and subsequent Ph.D. studies. In certain Master's programmes, it is only in the final semester of M2 or during the M2 internship, that the purpose of the course is defined <sup>(23)</sup>.

In France, there are currently more than 2 500 vocational Masters specialties, and more than 1 800 non-specific Masters specialties <sup>(24)</sup>.

#### 2.2.2.2. *The different routes to qualifications*

BTS degree (EQF level 5 vocational qualification) is accessible via *lycées*, via apprenticeship scheme in an apprentice training centre, through adult learning schemes in the Greta public groups of establishments or in private training centres or through accreditation of work experience (VAE).

Vocational Bachelor and Master diplomas (EQF levels 6 and 7) are degrees that can be awarded only by bodies legally authorised by the State, the EPSCPs (scientific, cultural and professional public institutions - *établissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel*) <sup>(25)</sup> or by private institutions having a partnership agreement with an EPSCP. They are accessible through universities or full-time degree programmes within at EPSCPs combined

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<sup>(23)</sup> Master: le point sur l'inscription, l'organisation et la validation  
<http://www.onisep.fr/Choisir-mes-etudes/Apres-le-bac/Filieres-d-etudes/Reussir-en-master/Master-le-point-sur-l-inscription-l-organisation-et-la-validation>

<sup>(24)</sup> Les diplômes professionnels  
<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid47633/les-diplomes-professionnels.html>

<sup>(25)</sup> EPSCP consist of universities and some 50 other establishments (mainly public engineering schools)

with one or more internships, via an apprenticeship scheme through a sandwich course, partly at the EPSCP and partly within a company or through VAE.

### **2.2.3. VET and other ministries**

Whilst Ministries of National Education and Higher Education are the main two bodies that award degrees on behalf of the State, they are not the only ones. There are also other ministries involved in education and more particularly in vocational education.

#### *2.2.3.1. Main vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Agriculture*

Public agriculture education is a complete system of education and training that offers a variety of general, technological or vocational courses, going from third-year high school to Ph.D. An education in agriculture prepares students for jobs in food and farming, the environment, sustainable development, landscape, human services, veterinary medicine, leisure and the wholesale and retail trades.

At secondary school level, the Ministry's vocational qualifications have a similar structure to the one of the Ministry of National Education: the CAPA (professional certificate of agricultural aptitude – *Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle agricole*), the BEPA (professional diploma in agricultural studies- *Brevet d'etudes professionnelles agricoles*) and the vocational baccalaureate.

At vocational higher education level, the Ministry of Agriculture mainly awards the BTSA (*Brevet de technicien supérieur agricole* – advanced agricultural technician diploma). In addition, it should be noted that the public engineering schools that report to the Ministry of Agriculture award, in their own name, Master's level engineering degrees. These degrees are awarded in the name of the Ministry of Agriculture and not in the name of the state (see section 2.3).

Vocational agricultural qualifications can be accessed through school, through apprenticeship, through lifelong learning programmes and through accreditation of work experience. Studies for the secondary level qualifications and BTSA take place in public or private agricultural *lycées* (senior high school). In general, the public agricultural *lycées* have a CFA (apprentice training centre *Centre de formation d'apprentis*) where they can teach apprentices, and CFPPA (agricultural vocational training and promotion centres - *Centre de formation professionnelle et de promotion agricole*) where they can train adults under lifelong learning programmes (DGER, 2010).

### 2.2.3.2. Vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Employment

The 'Vocational Qualification' (*Titre professionnel*) is a professional accreditation awarded, on behalf of the State, by the Minister of Employment. It confirms that its holder possesses the skills, capacities and knowledge required to exercise qualified professional activities. It is helpful to people wishing to advance their careers or returning to work<sup>(26)</sup>. There are at present approximately 300 professional qualifications running from EQF levels 3 to 5, in most professional sectors (DGEFP, 2011). Professional qualifications are aimed at anyone who is no longer in education, and is already on the labour market, whether they are in a job or looking for work.

A 'vocational qualification' can be acquired through vocational training or through recognition of work experience. Courses generally include time in a company. These qualifications can be awarded following a full time vocational training course or by participating in modular courses over time. To obtain a qualification, the applicant must prepare a work experience summary (*dossier de synthèse de pratique professionnelle*) and pass the tests required to meet the qualification criteria.

The training course must take place in a training centre approved by the Minister of Employment (actually there are more than 800 approved centres) or on an AFPA (national association for adult vocational training) campus. At present, AFPA is the only training body legally authorised to award all the Ministry of Employment's vocational qualifications, with no limit on duration.

A 'vocational qualification' of this type can also be obtained by accreditation of work experience (VAE).

### 2.2.3.3. Vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Social Affairs

The Ministry of Social Affairs awards vocational qualifications, called 'State qualifications', for the social work professions. These professions are divided into four areas of operation:

- a) social, economic and cultural support for people and families (social worker, family counsellor, family support worker, career).
- b) specialist education for individuals with particular physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities or social needs (special-needs worker, childcare worker, technical special-needs worker, special-needs support worker, occupational therapist).

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<sup>(26)</sup> Titres professionnels <http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/dispositif/titres-professionnels>

- c) Homecare for young children and the elderly, people with disabilities (nursery assistant, family assistant).
- d) team management, institutional management or social valuation <sup>(27)</sup>.

Each of the qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Social Affairs is for a specific job. These qualifications have very much structured jobs in the sector, to the point that the job very often has the same name as the qualification (*Ministère des Affaires sociales, de la Santé et des Droits des femmes*, 2010). Focusing strongly on the development of practical skills, training for social work qualifications consists very largely of workplace-based learning, through job placements and internships.

Social work qualifications can be accessed through standard education (including apprenticeship), through lifelong learning programmes and by accreditation of work experience (VAE). Specialised institutions (around 460) that provide training for these qualifications are present across France and are mostly managed by non-profit organisations (*Ministère des Affaires sociales, de la Santé et des Droits des femmes*, 2010).

#### 2.2.3.4. *Main vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Health*

The Ministry of Health awards 12 qualifications providing access to certain jobs in the paramedical sector. Ministry of Health qualifications provide training for a single profession, and are in fact often compulsory in order to work in that profession. Training courses for these qualifications are generally accessible by examination, and some are highly selective. Focusing strongly on the development of practical skills, training for health work qualifications consists largely of workplace-based learning, through job placements and internships. The main qualifications awarded by the Minister of Health are:

- (a) State degree for ambulance drivers (EQF level 3),
- (b) DE-AP State degree (childcare assistant – EQF level 3),
- (c) DE-AS State degree (assistant nurse – EQF level 3),
- (d) State degree for physiotherapists (EQF level 5),
- (e) State degree for nurses (EQF level 6).

Eleven of the 12 qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Health are accessible through the initial education system, including all the qualifications listed above; nine are accessible through lifelong learning programmes, including

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<sup>(27)</sup> Panorama des diplômes et des formations  
<http://www.social-sante.gouv.fr/espaces,770/affaires-sociales,793/dossiers,794/travail-social,1962/le-dossier-complet,1973/panorama-des-diplomes-et-des,12614.html>

the qualifications for ambulance drivers and physiotherapists; five are accessible through apprenticeship, including the ambulance driver, DE-AP and DE-AS qualifications, and the degree level qualification for nurses; and four are accessible through VAE, including the DE-AS and DE-AP qualifications.

Courses for Ministry of Health qualifications are generally provided by non-profit specialised training institutes, both public and private.

#### 2.2.3.5. *Main vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Culture*

The Ministry of Culture primarily awards qualifications in higher education, running from EQF levels 5 to 7, in the fields of architecture, plastic arts, performing arts, cinema and audiovisual.

The main qualifications awarded by the Minister of Culture are:

- Bachelor's degree in architecture (EQF level 6),
- Master's degree in architecture (EQF level 7),
- DN-AT (National diploma in arts and techniques – EQF level 6),
- DN-AP (National diploma in plastic arts – EQF level 6),
- Higher national degree in artistic expression (DN-SEP), Masters level (EQF level 7), and
- Higher national professional qualifications (DN-SP), in four specialties: music, dance, theatre and circus arts.

Depending on the field, training for these qualifications can be carried out in public education establishments such as national and regional advanced art schools (for the plastic arts), advanced national schools of architecture, advanced national conservatories of music and dance. It can also be done in private institutions, generally non-profit ones. The Ministry's qualifications are not generally accessible via apprenticeships (with the exception of the DN-SEP and the DN-SP). Access through lifelong learning programmes is possible for certain qualifications (DN-SEP, State architectural diploma, DN-SP) and not for others (architectural studies diploma, DN-AT, DN-AP, DN-SEP). Accreditation of work experience is always possible, when implemented, except for the State architecture qualification. Finally, all Ministry of Culture qualifications are accessible through the standard initial education and training

## 2.3. Other forms of VET

Alongside the diplomas, university degrees and vocational qualifications awarded on behalf of the State, there are also vocational training schemes that can either deliver qualifications developed and awarded by players other than the State, or

that can meet specific needs for the acquisition or development of professional skills.

### **2.3.1. Vocational qualifications**

In France, the training market is free; this means that training bodies have no obligation to make public the way they organise their courses and/or qualifications. Nevertheless, in 2012, the RNCP (National Register of vocational qualifications - see 3.3) had 7 710 qualifications, of which 4 848 (those created by the State) were legally registered and 2 862 were self-registered (CNCP, 2011).

#### **Vocational qualification certificates- CQP (*Certificats de qualification professionnelle*)**

Vocational qualification certificates enable employees to acquire a qualification recognised by the collective or branch agreement it relates to (*qualification opérationnelle*). A CQP is developed and issued within an industry sector by a joint industry body, usually the CPNE (National Joint Employment Committee) <sup>(28)</sup>. It should be noted that CQPs are not attached to a level of qualification, but are classified separately in the RNCP (see 3.3), by sector of activity <sup>(29)</sup>. They can only be accessed through lifelong learning programmes and training is usually provided by a body created and managed by the branch in question.

#### **Title of ‘qualified engineer’**

Acquiring a ‘qualified engineer’ title (*titre d’ingénieur diplômé*) allows a person to work as an engineer. Studies required for reaching this level generally last 5 years after baccalaureate (EQF level 7) in public or private engineering schools. In France, the title of ‘qualified engineer’ has both an academic and professional quality, is protected and controlled by the CTI (engineering qualification committee - *commission des titres d’ingénieur*) and can be awarded only by institutions accredited by the CTI <sup>(30)</sup>.

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<sup>(28)</sup> Définition du CQP <http://formation.cqp.free.fr/spip/spip.php?article3>

<sup>(29)</sup> Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles (RNCP)  
<http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/site/cncp/Accueil35701/Repertoire>

<sup>(30)</sup> La reconnaissance des diplômes d’ingénieur et la certification [http://extranet.cti-commission.fr/frontend.php/fr/fond\\_documentaire/document/6/chapitre-element/257](http://extranet.cti-commission.fr/frontend.php/fr/fond_documentaire/document/6/chapitre-element/257)

### **Business and management qualifications**

Sixty business and management schools are authorised to award 'State approved' qualifications. These *grandes écoles* are generally private structures managed by professional organisations. Approval is a recognition procedure conducted by the Ministry of National Education which gives the diploma the value of a national qualification. It is granted for a maximum renewable period of 6 years. A State approved qualification provides access to the LMD cycle (*Licence-Master-Doctorat*), whether in France or abroad <sup>(31)</sup>.

#### **2.3.2. Training schemes without qualifications**

Since 2010 France promoted the acquisition of key competences and career management skills in VET.

There is a certain number of training schemes managed by the State or other public bodies, which do not award qualifications. The purpose of these schemes is generally to facilitate integration or reintegration into work for certain categories of people facing difficulties in getting a job. There are many measures of this kind, four of which are presented as example.

#### **The 'early school leavers' scheme**

National authorities have an obligation to support young people aged 16 to 18 without a diploma who are out of education and are unemployed. The aim is to keep them in education and training and provide guidance and support in improving their employability.

Beneficiaries have a personalised interview to assess their needs, skills and level of education, and receive training offers so that they can return to vocational education and training. A tutor of National Education accompanies them during the training course.

By September 2013, this new scheme had helped about 14 000 young early school leavers. The goal for 2013-2014 is to assist more than 20 000 young people facing the same situation.

#### **The 'key competences' scheme**

The 'key competences' scheme consists of tailored training modules designed to help people develop one of the five 'basic' skills (written comprehension and

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<sup>(31)</sup> Les écoles de commerce et de gestion  
<http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid70660/les-ecoles-commerce-gestion.html>

expression, initiation to a foreign language, mathematics and basic scientific and technological skills, numeracy, the ability to develop knowledge and skills). The aim is to facilitate access to employment, a work study contract or training for qualifications, success in an examination or professional advancement. Such schemes can take place in parallel with a subsidised contract or training for a qualification. The 'key skills' scheme is primarily aimed at the following groups: job-seekers; young people aged 16-25 who are unemployed and no longer in education, and employees in work reintegration schemes or in subsidised contracts. It comes in addition to the employer's training obligations <sup>(32)</sup>.

### **Schemes in favour of detainees and people in prison**

Broadly speaking, these vocational training schemes form part of integration processes designed to give qualifications to people in prison, and prepare them for release and return to working life. The prison administration is responsible for analysing needs, designing and implementing training programmes, and monitoring and assessing their effectiveness in its own establishments. In 2011, as a result of funding from the European Social Fund, the Government, the Regional Councils, the National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equality of Opportunity (ACSE – *agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances*), 25 437 detainees were able to take advantage of vocational training schemes and initiatives implemented in and out of prison (*Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances*, 2013).

### **Schemes in favour of people with disabilities**

Labour Law requires from the State to take part in the establishment and implementation of agreed regional policies for the training of people with disabilities in order to foster greater consistency between training schemes and to guarantee an appropriate response to the needs of individuals and companies. In 2011, the Government funded 29 381 training initiatives for people with disabilities, for a cost of €182.5 million. The other funding structures for vocational training for people with disabilities are primarily the Regional Councils and Agefiph (fund management association for the professional integration of people with disabilities) (*Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances*, 2013).

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<sup>(32)</sup> Compétences clés <http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/dispositif/competences-cles>

## CHAPTER 3.

## Shaping VET qualifications

In France, ‘professional certification’ refers to the act of assessing an individual’s professional skills against a given criterion (CNCP, 2010) and also to the document, obtained by an individual following a set procedure, which confirms these professional skills and refers to a precise description and a set of standard descriptive documents (descriptive forms, criteria).

Professional certifications include vocational qualifications and diplomas awarded on behalf of the State by certain ministries, but also those developed by other bodies (see 2.3.1) such as:

- (a) the vocational qualification certificate CQF (*certificat de qualification professionnelle*) created by the social partners of a branch (see 3.2);
- (b) the title of ‘qualified engineer’ (*titre d’ingénieur diplômé*) created and controlled by CTI (engineering qualification committee) (see 2.3.1);
- (c) the vocational certificate (*certificat professionnel*) created by public or private training providers such as
  - consular schools placed under the aegis of the chambers of trades and crafts, the chamber of commerce and industry,
  - the CNAM or the AFPA (see 2.1.5);
  - private establishments awarding vocational qualifications and diplomas in their own name.

These certifying structures have set up specific organisations and procedures to develop their certifications. Most of them are included and classified in the National register of vocational qualifications.

### 3.1. Development of certifications awarded on behalf of the State

Certifications developed by ministries are created on the basis of opinions by consultative bodies, which may be:

- (a) professional consultative committees (CPC - *Commissions professionnelles consultatives*) for the Ministries of National Education, Employment, Social Affairs, Agriculture, Youth and Sport, and Culture; or
- (b) national bodies responsible for assessing training courses on behalf of the Ministry of Higher Education.

### 3.1.1. Preparation of certifications in ministries with a Professional Consultative Committee (CPC)

CPCs are made up of representatives of employers, employees, the government and qualified individuals, and are divided into major fields of economic activity. They are a compulsory locus of consultation between the social partners for all vocational qualifications. This role was reinforced by the so-called ‘social modernisation’ act of 17 January 2002. All ministries with an interest in training were invited to form CPCs. So far, six ministries have set up such committees (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2004). The Ministries of Social Affairs, of Agriculture, of Youth and Sport and of Culture each have a CPC. The Ministry of Employment has seven CPCs in the following fields: construction and public works; wholesale and retail trade; industry; management and data processing; tourism, leisure, hotel and restaurant sector; transport and logistics; and ‘other services to businesses, local authorities and individuals’ (CEREQ, 2012b).

The Ministry of National Education managing the largest number of certification processes relies on 14 CPCs which correspond to the main business sectors in the French economy<sup>(33)</sup>. It was the first ministry to set up a CPC already in the 1970s and to make publicly available its certification processes in two guides (CEREQ, 2012b)<sup>(34)</sup>. These processes include studies to analyse economic data and sectoral trends and to define needs for developments in jobs and qualifications, and further research that can be also outsourced. As soon as the relevant CPC reaches a decision, a directory of professional activities is drawn up on the basis of an analysis of actual jobs and job trends, together with a certification directory which defines the expected skills outcomes, associated knowledge and assessment and approval procedures.

Moreover, any plan to update or create a National Education qualification is submitted to other official consultation bodies:

- (a) the Higher Council for Education (CSE – *Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation*): made up of representatives of the Ministry (chair), teachers, parents, *lycée* pupils, students, local authorities and voluntary organisations. It is a consultative body giving opinions on education-related issues<sup>(35)</sup>;

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<sup>(33)</sup> Les commissions professionnelles consultatives  
<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid46815/cpc.html>

<sup>(34)</sup> ‘Guidelines for the development of professional qualifications’, and ‘Guidelines for members of the Professional Consultative Committees’

<sup>(35)</sup> Organismes consultatifs  
<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid56490/organismes-consultatifs.html>

- (b) the Advisory Interprofessional Committee (CIC – *Comité interprofessionnel consultatif*): CIC is consulted on general questions relating to professional and technological qualifications. It also works on future trends in education (general, technical and vocational). CIC also works on crosscutting issues affecting all the CPCs. CIC is made up of chairs and deputy chairs of the CPCs, the Ministry of National Education, government, employer organisations' employee unions' representatives and qualified individuals. For vocational qualifications, its role is complementary to that of the CSE.

### 3.1.2. Development of higher education certifications awarded on behalf of the State

With the exception of the BTS (Advanced Technician Certificate) and the DUT (Technological University Diploma - *Diplôme universitaire technologique*) degrees, vocational higher education diplomas in terms of courses' description (content, duration) or assessment procedures are not standardised. The system is exclusively regulated by an assessment of the quality of training programmes in terms of aims and objectives, level of education, quality of the education teams, job prospects of students, etc.

Initially, training or qualification plans of training institutions are assessed by different national bodies, depending on the educational sector:

- (a) the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education for training programmes provided by universities and certain schools <sup>(36)</sup>;
- (b) the CTI (engineering qualification committee) for engineering courses and qualifications <sup>(37)</sup>;
- (c) the management training and qualification assessment committee for business and management schools <sup>(38)</sup>.

In the next phase and on the basis of this assessment, the decision on whether or not to approve a course is taken by the Ministry of Higher Education, after an appraisal by scientific advisers working with the Director General Higher Education and Employment. Appraisal takes into account a number of criteria, notably link with research, relevance of the course to the establishment's overall training opportunities and subsequent professional opportunities.

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<sup>(36)</sup> La recherche en France  
<http://extranet.inserm.fr/informations-juridiques/la-recherche-en-france>

<sup>(37)</sup> CTI (Commission des Titres d'Ingénieur) <http://www.cti-commission.fr/>

<sup>(38)</sup> Commission d' Evaluation des Formations et Diplômes de Gestion (CEFDG)  
<https://www.cefdg.fr/>

With regard to engineering qualifications, a 'decision' is taken by the CTI (engineering certifications committee) for private engineering schools and a notice is given for state engineering schools.

Generally speaking, approval is given for a period corresponding to the frequency of the appraisal. The decision is published in the Official Journal of Higher Education and Research.

Finally, it may be said that the assessment of training programmes and qualifications, at several levels and by several bodies, constitutes the 'quality assurance procedure' of the French higher education system (CNCP, 2010).

### 3.2. Development of certifications in the professional sectors

To create their own certifications, professional bodies generally rely on work done by:

- (a) the joint employment and vocational training committees (CPNE-FP - *Commission paritaire nationale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle*);
- (b) the qualifications and employment perspectives' observatories (OPMQ - *Observatoires prospectifs des métiers et des qualifications*)

#### 3.2.1. Joint employment and vocational training committees (*Commissions paritaires nationales de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle* - CPNE-FP)

CPNE-FPs were created by employers and unions under the National Interprofessional Agreement on job security of 10 February 1969. Initially, their role was to work on the redeployment of employees made redundant for economic reasons, but their scope rapidly widened to vocational training. Today, the role of the CPNE is:

- (a) to produce recommendations on employment and training;
- (b) to study quantitative and qualitative trends in employment. For this purpose, they generally rely on work by the Employment and Qualifications Observatories;
- (c) to make decisions on identifying priorities for training and defining specific sectoral qualifications <sup>(39)</sup>. Certain branches have delegated to their CPNEs

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<sup>(39)</sup> CPNEF-SV Commission Paritaire Nationale Emploi Formation Spectacle Vivant  
<http://www.cpnefsv.org/nav:cpnefsv-missions>

the responsibility for creating, if necessary, their own Vocational Qualification Certificates (*Certificats de qualification professionnelle*- CQP) (Ministère du Travail, de l' Emploi et de la Santé, 2012). It should also be noted that it is CPNEs, not the professional branches that can request that a CQP should be registered with the RNCP (see 3.3) <sup>(40)</sup>.

### 3.2.2. Qualifications and employment prospective's observatories (OPMQ)

The 4 May 2004 law on lifelong learning and social dialogue makes the creation of a 'qualifications and employment prospective's Observatory' (OPMQ) compulsory for every industrial sector. These bodies generally produce three main types of output:

- (a) studies on topics associated with the management of jobs and skills in the sector (diversity and gender equality, training, aged employees management, skills replacement etc.);
- (b) statistical databases (on sectoral economics, jobs and workforce, basic or lifelong training etc.);
- (c) job maps or directories (job descriptions, job lists etc.).

The purpose of OPMQs is:

- (a) to help companies define their training policies and employees to draw up their career objectives; and
- (b) to provide CPNEs with research they can use to investigate qualitative and quantitative trends in employment and qualifications, in order to decide training priorities. This is the framework within which the work of OPMQs can be used by the Professional Consultative Committees (CPC) or the Joint Employment and vocational Training Committees (CPNEs) to identify the branch's qualification development requirements (CEREQ, 2012c).

Professional organisations are free to implement the method that suits them best in developing their qualifications. However, in March 2012, the Joint National Committee for vocational training (CPNEFP) published a 'Methodological guide for use by CPNEs' for the creation of Professional Qualification Certificates (CQP). The proposed approach is to:

- (a) conduct a study to confirm the relevance of creating the CQP;
- (b) to draw up activity and qualification (and possibly training) lists;
- (c) to develop tools and procedures for assessing applicants;
- (d) to formalise the process for implementing the different stages leading to the acquisition of the CQP (CPNFP, 2012).

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<sup>(40)</sup> Procédure de demande d'enregistrement au RNCP  
<http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/site/cncp/Accueil35701/Enregistrement-sur-demande>

### 3.3. The National Register of Vocational Qualifications

Since 2002, all professional qualifications recognised by the State and the social partners, at national level, have been registered in the National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP- *Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles*). As a single reference source, the RNCP provide individuals and companies with up-to-date data on vocational private or public professional qualifications. It does not include though general qualifications such as the national *brevet*, general baccalaureates or doctorates (CNCP, 2010). The RNCP is managed by the National Committee of the Vocational Certification (CNCP - *Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle*), a body accountable to the Ministry responsible for Vocational Training <sup>(41)</sup>. The RNCP includes three categories of certification:

- (a) vocational qualifications and degrees awarded on behalf of the State, developed by ministries with the support of Joint Consultative Committees (CPC). These qualifications are legally registered in the RNCP;
- (b) certificates of professional qualification (CQP), developed by and under the responsibility of the social partners. Qualifications are not automatically registered in the RNCP. The professional body concerned must make a request (file an application form), which is subject to CNCP approval;
- (c) other vocational qualifications, described as 'qualifications voluntarily registered with the RNCP', produced by training organisations, professional bodies and ministers without CPC backing. The registration of qualifications in the RNCP is subject to approval by the CNCP.

Qualifications in the Register are nationally recognised. Vocational qualifications and diplomas are classified by field of activity and qualification levels. It should be noted that private training organisations have no obligation to register their professional qualifications in the RNCP, provided that they do not use terms in the description such as '*licence*', '*master*' or '*diploma d'État*'.

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<sup>(41)</sup> Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle (CNCP)  
<http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/commission>

## CHAPTER 4.

# Promoting participation in vocational education and training

At national level, education and training policies are supported by a set of policies that reflect three priorities:

- (a) providing professionals and the public with the resources/tools they need to make decisions about their education and career choices;
- (b) giving every citizen, whatever their age and status, clear, objective and accessible information about careers and training opportunities; the qualifications they need to access these careers; and the organisations that provide such training;
- (c) promoting the development of vocational training, jobs and skills by offering specific financial incentives to companies and professional organisations.

### 4.1. Lifelong career guidance

Guidance is an important stage in deciding one's career priorities. The framework training law of 24 November 2009 included the principle of a universal and lifelong right to career guidance and created the public career information and guidance service (SPO - *service public de l'orientation*). Today, everyone has the right to career information, advice and guidance. SPO service has two main components:

- (a) an online 'guidance for all' service at [www.orientation-pour-tous.fr](http://www.orientation-pour-tous.fr) combined with a telephone scheme (single national number 08 11 70 39 39) and
- (b) the establishment of local career information and advice services based on regionally approved partnership agreements backed by the Regional Council.

The right to career guidance is addressed by different organisations and instruments, depending on age and individual status.

#### 4.1.1. Career guidance for young people

Several schemes are in place in initial vocational training, providing information on the professions and on training leading to them and the business world.

Throughout secondary education, an individualised vocational guidance service is offered to every student. The law of 8 July 2013 on reforming school foresees the implementation in 2015 of a new information and guidance tool (*Le*

*parcours individuel d'information d'orientation et de découverte du monde économique et professionnel*) presenting the labour market to lower secondary education students.

In order to provide career guidance service for young people, there are some dedicated structures such as Onisep (National office for education and career information - *Office national d'information sur les enseignements et les professions*-) or CIDJ (Youth information and documentation centre- *Centre d'information et de documentation*).

#### **4.1.2. Career guidance for adults**

The public lifelong career guidance service is mandated to guarantee universal access to free, full and objective information on careers, training, qualifications, outlets and pay scales and to high-quality, network-based career advice and support services.

To guarantee this right to career information and guidance for everyone, systems are provided both within and outside companies: compulsory professional development interviews every two years in companies, career development interviews, career assessment reports, appraisals, etc., all of which are used to evaluate career prospects. These career guidance services are provided by career information and guidance bodies such as local support services, career advice institutions, employment and training centres, the Pôle emploi, the joint collecting bodies, etc.

A new 'professional development counselling' service (CEP – *conseil en évolution professionnelle*), established in 2013, provides information and advice to employees working in the private sector on skills assessment, trades, skills development, training possibilities. It aims to help them improve their existing or acquire new qualifications.

## **4.2. Information on employment and training**

Career guidance assumes the availability of clear, comprehensible, accessible and objective information on jobs, the qualifications required, the training courses available to access them, the bodies that provide such training, the recruitment needs of companies. Lifelong access to such information, both nationally and locally, is a key factor in the success of each person's career experience. This information is provided by numerous public and private structures.

#### 4.2.1. At national level

##### **Job related information**

Public bodies produce quantitative and qualitative studies on employment and training: the Center for Strategic Analysis (CAS - *centre d'analyse stratégique*) ; the Center of Studies and Research on Certifications (Céreq - *centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications*) ; the Center for Employment Research (CEE - *Centre d'études de l'emploi*); the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research (INSEE - *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*) and the Research and statistics Management Department (Darès - *La direction de l'Animation de la Recherche, des Études et des Statistiques*). The purpose of this research is to elucidate the activity of government departments and social stakeholders in the development of policies on employment, labour market, vocational training and corporate technologies. (See also the qualifications and employment observatories (OPMQ – 3.2)

The national online 'career guidance for all' platform ([www.orientation-pour-tous.fr](http://www.orientation-pour-tous.fr)) is run by the Centre Inffo in partnership with the main support, information and guidance providers, i.e. different ministries, regions, professional bodies, CARIF-OREF, Pôle emploi, Onisep or CIDJ. With real-time data, this platform provides information on careers, jobs, training courses, events, and includes videos and personal stories. It offers more than 2 000 job descriptions, 200 000 basic education and lifelong learning courses, a directory of approved structures, practical information on schemes, entitlements and procedures.

##### **Information on training sources**

Such information is subject to new requirements for clarity and visibility. Since May 2012, the Government has published a list of registered and approved training structures <sup>(42)</sup>. Similarly, the OPCA are obliged to publish the list of providers with whom they work.

Finally, in 2011 the Government commissioned Centre Inffo to implement a national information system on training provision. The purpose of this database, called DOKELIO, is to list all training providers and their services, to elucidate their methods of financing and to identify the dates and availability of training. This system will be gradually rolled out starting first half of 2014.

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<sup>(42)</sup> Portail officiel de la liste publique des organismes de formation  
<https://www.listeof.travail.gouv.fr/>

#### **4.2.2. At regional and sub-regional level**

##### **Carif – Training management, resource and information centres**

Present in each region, these Centres provide information on training options and entitlement and access to training; they assist local information providers in their role of providing information, guidance and support and training. By producing, collecting and sharing useful information on employment and training, they help the public, as well as training providers and operators, to understand and implement the right tools and systems for each situation.

##### **Oref – Regional employment and training observatories**

These organisations 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 partners, they conduct research and provide expertise in order to anticipate economic changes and adjust skills to the employment needs of tomorrow. Their scope of observation relates to training needs, job trends, the link between employment and training, sectoral approaches, professional mobility, economic development.

### **4.3. Financial and support incentives**

Development of training is also fostered by public and private initiatives that seek, either through direct support or through financial measures, to support evaluation, forecasts and initiatives relating to training processes.

#### **4.3.1. Public subsidies**

The French government provides public subsidies for companies, primarily small and very small companies, and for professional organisations, to promote training, employment and skills. The purpose of these subsidies varies:

- (a) direct subsidies can be granted to companies to fund the cost of a consultant to assess and/or advise the company on its human resource management policies and training plans, and to facilitate future management of jobs and skills;
- (b) direct subsidies can be given to companies aiming either to support a particular and exceptional educational effort designed to resolve an identified employment problem or a mismatch of skills, or to provide equal access to training and employment;
- (c) subsidies can also be granted to professional or interprofessional bodies in order to anticipate and support a change in jobs and skills.

Some companies may also receive tax deductions that offset loss of income caused by the time a top executive spent in training and thus encourage such training.

In addition, there are numerous regional or government subsidies to encourage work study contracts, a major priority of public youth employment policy. The three main subsidies are:

- (a) a one-off lump sum payment made by the region, under certain conditions, to employers who take on an apprentice;
- (b) the *Bonus alternance* offered since 2005 to companies that employ apprentices,

In addition to these subsidies, apprenticeship contracts are fully or partially exempt from social security charges, the costs of training apprentice supervisors are included in the legal training costs, and specific subsidies are granted for the recruitment of apprentices with disabilities.

#### **4.3.2. The role of OPCAs**

Since 2009, the approved joint collecting bodies (OPCA –*organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés*) have been granted new tasks:

- (a) to administer the internship bonus, a subsidy granted to companies employing 250 people or more, which go beyond the minimum threshold for employees on work study contracts;
- (b) to contribute to the development of professional training;
- (c) to inform, educate and support companies in defining their vocational training needs;
- (d) to contribute to the identification of skills and qualifications that companies require and to the definition of collective and individual needs.

To carry out these roles, OPCAs provide locally services to small and very small companies. They can contribute to the funding of qualification management and cover the costs of assessing training needs.

All these policies and measures are designed to give young people and adults a strong basis for training and employment decisions and reflecting on their long-term life needs. They also help constructing a society of dynamic knowledge within the framework of the Lisbon strategy for economic development, efficient employment markets, professional and geographical mobility, and social cohesion and equity.

## List of abbreviations

ACSE	Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances [National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities]
AFPA	Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes [National association for adult vocational training]
Bac général	General Baccalaureate
Bac professionnel	Vocational Baccalaureate
Bac technologique	Technological Baccalaureate
BEP	Brevet d'études professionnelles [Vocational studies Certificate]
BEPA	Brevet d'études professionnelles agricoles [Professional diploma in agricultural studies]
BMA	Brevet des métiers d'art [Art's profession certificate]
BP	Brevet professionnel [Vocational Certificate]
BTM	Brevet technique des métiers [Profession's technical certificate]
BTS	Brevet de technicien supérieur [Advanced Technician Certificate]
BTSA	Brevet de technicien supérieur agricole [Advanced agricultural technician diploma]
CAP	Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle [Professional skills Certificate]
CAPA	Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle agricole [Professional skills Certificate in agriculture]
Carif	Centre d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation [Training management, resources and information centre]
CBC	Congé de bilan de compétences [Skills audit leave]
CEC (EQF)	Cadre européen de certification [European Qualifications Framework]
CEREQ	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications [Centre for Qualifications Studies and Research]
CFA	Centre de formation des apprentis [Apprentice Training Centre]
CFPPA	Centre de formation d'apprentis. Centre de formation professionnelle et de promotion agricole [Agricultural vocational training and promotion centres]
CIDJ	Centre d'information et de documentation jeunesse [Youth information and documentation centre]
Cite (Isced)	Classification internationale type de l'éducation [International Standard Classification of Education]
CNCP	Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle [National Committee of Vocational Qualification]
CPC	Commission professionnelle consultative [Professional Consultative Committee]

CPNE	Commission Paritaire Nationale de l'Emploi [National joint employment committee]
CPNE-FP	Commission paritaire nationale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle [National joint employment and vocational training committee]
CPRDF	Contrat de plan régional de développement de la formation [Regional planning contract for the development of training]
CQP	Certificats de qualification professionnelle [Certificates of professional qualification]
CTI	Commission des titres d'ingénieur [Engineering qualification committee]
CUI	Contrat unique d'insertion [Single integration contract]
CVAE	Congé de Validation des acquis de l'expérience [Work experience accreditation leave]
DARES	Direction de l'Animation de la Recherche, des Études et des Statistiques [Ministerial statistical office for Labour and Employment]
DE	Diplôme d'État [State degree]
DIF	Droit individuel de formation [Individual training right]
DN	Diplôme national [National degree or diploma]
DUT	Diplôme universitaire de technologie [University Technological Diploma]
EFP	Éducation et Formation professionnelles [Vocational Education and training]
EPSCP	Établissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel [Public scientific, cultural and professional establishments]
INSEE	Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques [National institute for statistics and economic studies]
OPCA	Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés [Approved joint collecting bodies]
OPMQ	Observatoires prospectifs des métiers et des qualifications [Qualifications and employment prospective's observatories]
Oref	Observatoire régional de l'emploi et de la formation [Regional employment and training observatories]

Paces	Première année commune des études de santé [First common year of the studies of health]
RNCP	Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles [National Register of Vocational Qualifications]
SPO	Service public de l'orientation [Public utility of lifelong guidance]
VAE	Validation des acquis de l'expérience [Prior experience accreditation]

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