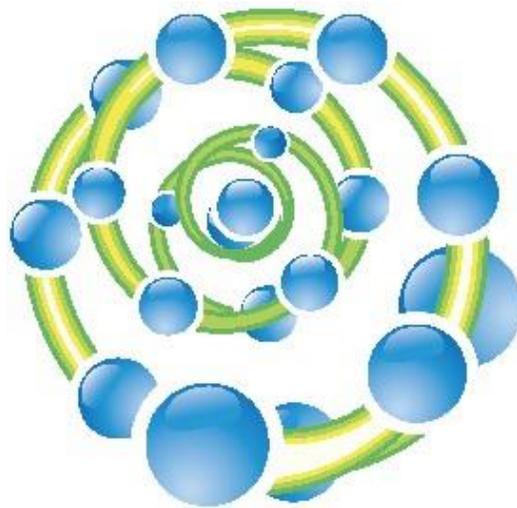


# Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

France



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## Contents

Introduction .....	2
A. Definitions, general information and statistics .....	4
A.1. Main data .....	4
A.2. Minimum education/qualification entry level required .....	4
A.3. Sectors/occupations covered.....	5
A.4. Funding arrangements .....	6
A.5. Guidance/selection arrangements and outcomes .....	7
B. Specific features of the above schemes/programmes.....	9
B.1. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering company placements.....	9
B.2. Enhance programme attractiveness and career guidance .....	10
B.3. National governance, regulatory framework and social partners' involvement .....	11
B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning and/or apprenticeship .....	13
B.5. Innovative or special apprenticeship initiatives .....	15
C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the above schemes/programmes .....	16
D. Conclusions.....	17

## Introduction

The French VET system offers several apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes, based on *alternance* schemes and both work-based and school-based learning.

However, there are two main apprenticeship schemes in France: the *contrat d'apprentissage* and the *contrat de professionnalisation*, both contracts signed between an employer and an employee.

### **Contrat d'apprentissage – Apprenticeship contract**

The *contrat d'apprentissage* is an employment contract that has been available in France since 1919. It was modified and redefined in 1971.

Its duration ranges from 1 to 3 years, depending on the target credential or diploma and the initial level of the employee.

Its objective is to enable young people aged 16 to 25 to follow a general education curriculum, both theoretical and practical, in order to acquire a professional qualification based on a diploma or a professional credential. This contract alternates periods of learning in training centres (*centres de formation par apprentissage* – CFA) and periods of work to develop 'know-how'.

The main laws regarding apprenticeship are in the sixth part of the French Labour Code.

### **Contrat de professionnalisation – Professionalisation contract**

The *contrat de professionnalisation* has existed in France since 2004. Prior to that, however, there was a rather similar scheme called the *contrat de qualification*.

The objective of the *contrat de professionnalisation* is to provide access to employment through the acquisition of a professional qualification (certificate, diploma, degree...) recognized by the State and/or a professional sector. The contract alternates periods of general and technological education with training providers, and periods working in an activity related to the qualification.

Since 2005, the French Government has sought to position apprenticeship as a remedy for mass youth unemployment and for the phenomenon of young people dropping out of school without qualifications. One of the most frequently used arguments is that young people who have undergone professional training are actually more successful on the labour market than young people with a general baccalaureate.

Several studies focused on the effect of apprenticeship on the salary and on the success on the labour market. For example one of these had shown that seven months after the end of their training course, the unemployment rate of the apprentice is 10 points below the one of the student who came from the mainstream general education <sup>(1)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> A synthesis of the results of those studies had been made by the IGAS (*Inspection générale des affaires sociales*): Rapport igas n° 2013-145r/ IGA No. 14-013/13-122/01  
<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/144000160/0000.pdf>

## A. Definitions, general information and statistics

### A.1. Main data

At the end of 2013, there were 385,000 apprenticeship contracts and 155,000 professionalization contracts, i.e. a total of 541,000 recipients, equivalent to almost one job in four in this age group (16-25). Many fewer young people took up these schemes in 2013 than in 2012: 413,000 entries as compared with 445,000 the previous year, i.e. a drop of 43,000 jobs from 2012. While the number of entries into professionalization contracts fell (143,000, i.e. 8,000 fewer than in 2012), the drop was particularly large in apprenticeship contracts (270,000, i.e. 24,000 fewer than in 2012) <sup>(2)</sup>. This is largely explained by the economic crisis and its primary consequence: lack of economic growth and rising unemployment.

### A.2. Minimum education/qualification entry level required

Apprenticeship gives access to all levels of professional certification, from secondary to higher education, by means of successive contracts or via bridges with school-based higher education courses. The target vocational certification must lead to a professional diploma or title included in the *Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* (RNCP – National Directory of Vocational Certifications).

Professionalization contracts also provide access to all levels of qualification.

The purpose of professionalization contracts is to help people acquire a professional certification:

- ✓ either a RNCP listed qualification; or
- ✓ a qualification recognised in the classifications of a national collective sectoral agreement; or
- ✓ a qualification granting entitlement to a *certificat de qualification professionnelle* (CQP – certificate of vocational qualification).

In principle, both apprenticeship and professionalization contracts are open to young people with or without professional certifications. Of course, educational rankings need to be maintained, so

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<sup>(2)</sup> Source: Insee Economic Outlook Report of 3 April 2014  
[http://www.insee.fr/fr/indicateurs/analys\\_conj/archives/F1\\_032014.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/fr/indicateurs/analys_conj/archives/F1_032014.pdf)

for instance, a person needs to hold a baccalaureate in order to enter higher education under an apprenticeship scheme.

As regards apprenticeship, young people with a baccalaureate or higher certification represent 37% of the entries. The proportion of entrants with no more than CAP-BEP (pre-baccalaureate secondary education) level is falling, but still stood at 63% in 2011. Finally, 52.3% of courses undertaken are aimed at apprentices at baccalaureate level or above <sup>(3)</sup>.

For professionalization contracts, young people with a baccalaureate or above accounted for 75.1% of entries in 2011, whereas 24.9% had sub-baccalaureate qualifications <sup>(4)</sup>. A majority of young people aged 16 to 25 were working towards a state diploma or qualification: 65%, i.e. a 2 percent fall in two years. This proportion is much higher for young people coming out of the school system (80%). Only 35% of entrants were aiming at a recognised sectoral professional certificate or qualification and only 25% of those holding a baccalaureate <sup>(5)</sup>.

### A.3. Sectors/occupations covered

Apprenticeship schemes cover all sectors. With 56% of entries in all, the service sector is the main user of apprenticeship contracts. It includes the hotel and restaurant sectors (12% of contracts), and the business services sector (7% of contracts). Retail and car and motorcycle repair account for 19% of contracts, industry 21%. Construction accounts for 20% of the contracts, where 89% of new apprentices are employed in small companies with fewer than 50 employees. Hairdressing and beauty care take 6% of the contracts.

Small companies with fewer than 50 employees remain the primary employers of apprentices, absorbing 77% of new contracts <sup>(6)</sup>.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Apprenticeship in 2011: rise in entries, especially in companies with at least 50 employees – Dares Analyses, No. 80, November 2012, 12 p. <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2012-080-2.pdf>

<sup>(4)</sup> Dares Analyses, No. 75, December 2013, 9 p. <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2013-075.pdf>

<sup>(5)</sup> Dares Analyses, No. 100, December 2012, 12 p.

[http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2012-100\\_-\\_Le\\_contrat\\_de\\_professionnalisation\\_l\\_insertion\\_des\\_beneficiaires\\_varie\\_surtout\\_selon\\_le\\_metier\\_prepare\\_.pdf](http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2012-100_-_Le_contrat_de_professionnalisation_l_insertion_des_beneficiaires_varie_surtout_selon_le_metier_prepare_.pdf)

<sup>(6)</sup> See note 2

Professionalization contracts also cover all sectors, but again the service sector is the primary user with 79% of new hirings, including the two largest tertiary sectors: retail, car and motorcycle repair (24% of new contracts) and business services (17% of new contracts). The construction sector accounts for 6% of hirings, while industry is responsible for 15% of new contracts <sup>(7)</sup>.

#### A.4. Funding arrangements

Apprentices receive a salary paid by the employer, which represents a percentage of the minimum wage (SMIC). The amount varies, largely depending on the length of the contract. For example, a 16-year-old in the first year of the contract is paid 25% of the SMIC (minimum wage). This is the lowest wage; older apprentices or those in their second year are paid more.

To encourage the use of apprenticeship contracts, multiple financial subsidies have been introduced. The main two are the *prime à l'apprentissage* (apprenticeship allowance) – a minimum of €1,000 paid by a local authority (the regional council) – and the apprenticeship tax credit, an amount of €1,600 per apprentice per year paid by central government. In addition to these subsidies, apprenticeship contracts are fully or partially exempt from social security charges, which are funded by central government. Finally, there are also more specific subsidies, notably for apprentices with 'disabilities'.

Unless more favourable conditions are granted under collective agreements or in the contract, employees on a professionalization scheme receive a salary from their employer, calculated on the basis of the guaranteed minimum wage. Here again, the amount varies depending on the recipient's age and educational level at entry, but the minimum is 55% of the SMIC. The approved joint collection bodies (OPCA) cover the costs of assessment, support and training initiatives. This cover is based on hourly costs set by the contract or under collective sectorial agreements. Once again, the employer is exempt from social security contributions.

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<sup>(7)</sup> Dares Analyses, No. 75, December 2013, 9 p. <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2013-075.pdf>

## A.5. Guidance/selection arrangements and outcomes

### A.5.1. Guidance

Apprenticeship-based training has historically suffered from an image problem.

However, in recent years, several information campaigns and a clear commitment on the part of the government and the French President to the development of the apprenticeship system have helped to change attitudes.

Similarly, by raising the profile of certain professions (in particular the catering sector in TV programmes), the media have helped to boost the image of apprenticeship.

Different internet portals have been set up to provide information on the system, on financial subsidies, on training and contract offers, etc.:

- a government-run portal, which offers the advantage of providing information on both apprenticeship and professionalization contracts: <https://www.alternance.emploi.gouv.fr>;
- portals run by almost every Region;
- also private platforms such as <http://www.lapprenti.com/>.

In addition, any career guidance structure must be able to provide information and advice on both apprenticeship and professionalization contracts.

## A.5.2. Outcomes

In February 2013, seven months after the end of their vocational training in CFAs, 65% of apprentices had jobs, 30% were unemployed and 5% were economically inactive. Almost a third of young employees got a job with the company where they were apprentices<sup>8</sup>. Certifications are always the determining factor in youth integration: more than three quarters of young people with a BTS (*Brevet de technicien supérieur* – higher technician certificate) were in work, as compared with one third of those leaving without qualifications (<sup>9</sup>).

For professionalization contracts, the qualification received was effective in 69% of cases. Two thirds of the beneficiaries were in employment from the end of their professionalization contract, almost three quarters with the same employer, 24% were unemployed, 7% economically inactive and 3% in training (<sup>10</sup>).

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(<sup>8</sup>) Source: Note d'information – No. 4, March 2014, 4 pages, <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid53598/en-fevrier-2013-65-des-jeunes-ont-un-emploi-sept-mois-apres-la-fin-de-leur-apprentissage.html>

(<sup>9</sup>) Source: Note d'information – No. 4, March 2014 <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid53598/en-fevrier-2013-65-des-jeunes-ont-un-emploi-sept-mois-apres-la-fin-de-leur-apprentissage.html>

(<sup>10</sup>) Source: Dares Analyses, No. 100, December 2012, 12 p. [http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2012-100\\_-\\_Le\\_contrat\\_de\\_professionnalisation\\_l\\_insertion\\_des\\_beneficiaires\\_varie\\_surtout\\_selon\\_le\\_metier\\_prepare\\_.pdf](http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2012-100_-_Le_contrat_de_professionnalisation_l_insertion_des_beneficiaires_varie_surtout_selon_le_metier_prepare_.pdf)

## **B. Specific features of the above schemes/programmes**

### **B.1. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering company placements**

#### **B.1.1. Apprenticeship mediators**

The public economic agencies run apprenticeship services to help find placements for young apprentices and to support companies in recruiting apprentices.

In particular, a mediator appointed by the public economic agencies may be approached to support the company or apprentice in implementing apprenticeship-related rules.

In addition, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry provide 100 apprenticeship developers who contact businesses and encourage them to recruit apprentices.

Between 2009 and 2012, for example, these developers contacted around 140,000 companies, resulting in 32,000 contracts. Their activity is targeted at jobs that require first level qualifications, companies that employ no apprentices and sectors where apprenticeship is poorly developed <sup>(11)</sup>.

#### **B.1.2. Online services**

To facilitate the recruitment of young people on apprenticeship and professionalization contracts, the Ministry of Labour's 'alternance' portal was launched on 14 October 2011, divided into three sections: employers, applicants and training bodies <sup>(12)</sup>. Several decision and contract support functions are provided to simplify the administrative formalities for future apprentices and their host companies.

There are also regional platforms which provide services such as contract offers, the option for young people to post their CVs, offers of training scheme places <sup>(13)</sup>.

In terms of administrative simplicity, it should be noted that the recent law of 5 March 2014 allows apprenticeship contracts to be managed entirely online, with the option of electronic signature and transmission to the public economic agencies.

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<sup>(11)</sup> Source: [Press release by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Professional Training and Social Dialogue, 14 February 2013](#)

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://www.alternance.emploi.gouv.fr>

<sup>(13)</sup> For example, the Poitou-Charentes Region platform: <http://www.poitou-charentes-alternance.fr>

## B.2. Enhance programme attractiveness and career guidance

Numerous initiatives have been introduced to boost the image of apprenticeship. At national level, the law of 28 July 2011 for the development of *alternance* and career security established the professional student card, which is available to young people on apprenticeship or professionalization contracts. This card gives its holders student status and therefore access to a number of price reductions (university restaurants, student social housing, cinemas, theatres and sports activities).

Other initiatives include:

- especially for career guidance, the organisation of regional job fairs (e.g. the Rhône-Alpes region), where potentially interested schoolchildren and their families can find out about careers, understand their prospects and choose training options <sup>(14)</sup>;
- personal stories by former apprentices or by professionals within CFAs (e.g. initiative by the social partners of the CGPME union).

There are numerous local actions, for example the Nancy-Metz education authority initiative to support third-form students interested in an apprenticeship, by organising visits to CFAs and companies, conducting interviews about their career plans and helping them to find an employer.

To improve the status of apprentices, the law of 5 March 2014 reinforced the activities of CFAs (training centres), notably with the addition of an apprentice support role. Its aim is, on the one hand, to help apprentices bring their plans to fruition, and on the other hand, to reduce the number of contract failures.

There are also plans for the CFAs to become involved in helping apprenticeship applicants to find an employer or to find a new employer in the case of a contract failure, in concert with the public employment agency.

Finally, the CFAs are involved in giving apprentices social support and professional backup. The aim is to prevent or resolve social and material difficulties that might threaten the smooth progress of the apprenticeship contract. Similarly, CFAs promote diversity within their structures by raising instructor awareness and encouraging international mobility for apprentices, in particular by drawing on European Union programmes.

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<sup>(14)</sup> <http://www.mondial-metiers.com/>

Several initiatives have also been implemented to attract more employers in offering apprenticeship contracts. For example, the campaign «+ d'apprentis = + de talents et - de charges» (more apprentice = more skills and less social contributions) aims at informing employers about financial incentive for apprenticeship, and the benefits of skills development of apprenticeship. The campaign was launched by the Ministry of Labour, employment, vocational training and social dialogue and it includes a brochure and a website <sup>(15)</sup>: Regions may also launch their own website <sup>(16)</sup>.

### **B.3. National governance, regulatory framework and social partners' involvement**

The governance of apprenticeship policy involves numerous players:

- ✓ central government, which sets the legal and educational framework for apprenticeship and contributes to its funding,
- ✓ the academic authorities, accountable to the Ministry of Education, which both monitor apprenticeship <sup>(17)</sup> and also run CFAs <sup>(18)</sup>;
- ✓ the regions, which are responsible for regional apprenticeship policy. They contribute to the funding of apprenticeship contracts through the 'apprenticeship allowance', and of the CFAs through subsidies. Similarly, they license and monitor the opening of CFAs and subsequently inspect their activity;
- ✓ the social partners, who promote apprenticeship through employment and training management tools in professional sectors and companies, by setting priorities and funding for the professionalization contracts. Professional sectors can also run CFAs.

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<sup>(15)</sup> [http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/employeur\\_alternance/](http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/employeur_alternance/)

<sup>(16)</sup> For example in Bretagne: [http://www.bretagne.fr/internet/jcms/preprod\\_81562/recrutez-vos-futurs-collaborateurs-en-apprentissage](http://www.bretagne.fr/internet/jcms/preprod_81562/recrutez-vos-futurs-collaborateurs-en-apprentissage)

<sup>(17)</sup> <http://eduscol.education.fr/cnraa/reseau-apprentissage/saia.php>

<sup>(18)</sup> For an example of an apprenticeship inspection authority: Academic CFA within the Poitiers education authority: <http://www.ftlv.ac-poitiers.fr/pied-de-page/le-cfa-academique-65996.kjsp?RH=ftlv&RF=1264780498457>

The following actors should also be mentioned for their role in apprenticeship:

- ✓ the OPCAs (approved joint collecting bodies) for professionalization: they monitor contract compliance and bear the costs of the contract and of training;
- ✓ the companies that recruit and train apprentices and fund their training via the apprenticeship tax (0.68% of the gross annual wage bill);
- ✓ the Consular Chambers, which notably contribute to placing young people in apprenticeships, for example by setting up alternance scholarships <sup>(19)</sup>, preparing apprenticeship contracts, drawing up statistical documents on apprenticeship; they also run CFAs;
- ✓ the career guidance organisations, in particular the local job agencies which, for example, provide workshops on finding an apprenticeship.

For the social partners and the Regions, the law of 5 March 2014 changes the process of collecting and redistributing the apprenticeship tax. The apprenticeship tax can now be collected by the approved joint collecting bodies (OPCA) responsible for collecting the contributions and then funding lifelong professional training. However, the OPCA will need to keep the activities separate, since it is forbidden to pool lifelong learning and apprenticeship funds. In future, there should be only one collecting agency per Region. If the company has not allocated the apprenticeship tax, the allocating is done by the OCTA (apprenticeship tax collecting body) in concert with the Region.

The role of the social partners is particularly important for the professionalization scheme. The contract is paid for in a one-off sum, the amount of which is set by an agreement within the professional sectors. Likewise, these agreements can alter the length of the contract, the duration of training activities, the level of salary. Agreements can also be made at national level. For example, the national interprofessional agreement of 11 July 2011 introduced compulsory tutoring <sup>(20)</sup>.

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<sup>(19)</sup> For example: <http://www.limoges.cci.fr/bourse-de-lalternance.html>

<sup>(20)</sup> [http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/files/files/Acteurs/CNML/Actu%20une/pdf\\_ANI\\_maintien\\_jeunes\\_emploi\\_2011-07-11.pdf](http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/files/files/Acteurs/CNML/Actu%20une/pdf_ANI_maintien_jeunes_emploi_2011-07-11.pdf)

With regard to partnerships, there are several instruments in place between the different actors, in particular the regional performance contracts and ‘apprenticeship’ performance and resources contracts (*contrat d’objectifs et de moyens pour l’apprentissage* – COMA). The primary objective for the COMA relates to the number of apprentices, with a national target of 500,000. The Region is responsible for drawing up the COMAs, which are then signed with other apprenticeship actors, including central government, the public economic agencies, and one or more organisations representing employers and employees.

Most of the contracts have set ambitious quantitative targets. The financial underpinning for the development of the COMAs consists of central government credits released on the signature of the COMA with the Region, on a principle of joint funding for new initiatives. Central government contributed to the efforts of the regions by allocating €1.4 billion over the period 2005-2010. The second generation of COMAs, for the period 2011-2015, was agreed in 2011 with central government committing €1.7 billion.

From their inception, the implementation of the COMAs was accompanied by sustained development of apprenticeship <sup>(21)</sup>. However, with the law of 5 March 2014, COMAs ceased to be compulsory, with all financial contribution from central government due to end in 2015.

There are also other partnerships, such as agreements signed by the national council of local employment agencies with professional sectors and large companies. The aim of these agreements is to develop work-based contracts and to help the local agencies expand their support for young people.

#### **B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning and/or apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship gives access to qualifications and diplomas registered in the RNCP (national directory of professional certifications), as does the professionalization contract, and to professional qualification certificates. The professional qualification certificates are created by joint national employment committees which, as their name suggests, are joint bodies.

This access to registered certification is an important aspect of quality assurance.

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<sup>(21)</sup> All the COMAs can be accessed on the following website: <http://www.regions-et-formation.fr>

The importance of the role of the apprenticeship supervisor – or the tutor in the case of professionalization contracts – needs to be emphasised. Every apprentice is supported by an apprenticeship supervisor whose role it is to contribute to the apprentice acquiring, in the work environment, the skills corresponding to the target qualification and the title or diploma sought. The tutoring function can be shared between several employees. In this case, a tutorship team is established, from which an apprenticeship supervisor is appointed with responsibility for coordinating the team and liaising with the CFA. The sharing of the tutoring function means that each person in the tutorship team is able to pass on specific know-how based on his or her function. Some collective agreements take account of the quality provided by the apprenticeship supervisor. They establish a specific training scheme, which includes a special bonus <sup>(22)</sup>. Furthermore, under the *Groupement d'employeurs pour l'insertion et la qualification* (GEIQ – Employers' groups for inclusion and qualification), several enterprises can create a group (specific legal status) which engages one tutor who can accompany several apprentices in these enterprises

The teaching documents used in the apprenticeship also contribute to the quality of the system. In particular, the liaison document which lists, allocates and articulates the training tasks and responsibilities between the company and the CFA. This enables instructors to link in their teaching with the apprentices' work, and to ensure that there is a learning match between the two training locations. It is specific to each qualification, generally established on a six-month basis. It is jointly approved and drawn up by the partners. For example, if the document is academic, it is drawn up by a working group consisting of professionals, teachers at the CFAs concerned, national education inspectors and public economic agencies. It is approved by the head of the local education authority, the representative of the regional professional body concerned and the chairman of the relevant regional chamber of commerce and industry or chamber of trade <sup>(23)</sup>.

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<sup>(22)</sup> For example, in the construction and public works sector: [http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/publications/bocc/pdf/2009/0013/CCO\\_20090013\\_0013\\_0005.pdf](http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/publications/bocc/pdf/2009/0013/CCO_20090013_0013_0005.pdf)

<sup>(23)</sup> Other CFA/Company liaison documents can be downloaded from the CNRAA website, 'Ressources' tab, then 'Pédagogie de l'alternance', 'Positionnement-suivi-évaluation'. For example: [http://eduscol.education.fr/cnraa/images/telecharg/Doc\\_de\\_liaison-BAC\\_PRO\\_Commerce.pdf](http://eduscol.education.fr/cnraa/images/telecharg/Doc_de_liaison-BAC_PRO_Commerce.pdf)

The 'apprenticeship' performance and resources contracts (COMA – see B.3. above) also contained incentive measures to improve the quality of apprenticeship.

### **B.5. Innovative or special apprenticeship initiatives**

There are special financial subsidies for disabled people. These subsidies go to the apprentice, the host training centre (CFA) during the apprenticeship contract, and to the employer. For the CFA, this support can concern:

- adapting educational materials and content to the apprentice's disability;
- if necessary, adapting access to the training premises;
- instructor training.

Company heads who accept apprentices with disabilities can receive an allowance designed to offset the costs or losses arising from training the person, as well as a subsidy for training the tutors.

Similarly, companies which sign professionalization contracts with people with disabilities can receive financial subsidies. A worker with disabilities in such a contract can also receive subsidies.

For private employers, all these subsidies are paid by Agefiph <sup>(24)</sup>.

In the case of a professionalization contract, the social partners can adapt a contract to a particular target group via a sectorial agreement. For example, the duration of training can be extended for recipients of basic welfare benefits, or for young people who have not completed the second phase of secondary education <sup>(25)</sup>.

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<sup>(24)</sup> Association de Gestion du Fonds pour l'Insertion professionnelle des Personnes Handicapés. Association of Management for the Fund for the Professional Integration of Disabled Persons. [www.agefiph.fr/](http://www.agefiph.fr/)

<sup>(25)</sup> For example, this kind of agreement has been made in the waste management sector: [http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/publications/bocc/pdf/2010/0051/CCO\\_20100051\\_0051\\_0020.pdf](http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/publications/bocc/pdf/2010/0051/CCO_20100051_0051_0020.pdf)

### **C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the above schemes/programmes**

Apprenticeship in France has multiple weaknesses. The first of these is the poor perception of apprenticeship among families, young people, sometimes even educators. There is also mutual distrust between young people and employers.

Despite multiple policies designed to enhance its standing, apprenticeship has failed to establish an educational image equivalent to that enjoyed by general education, and young people often enter it by default. There has perhaps been some change, but general education is generally perceived as the 'normal educational pathway', whereas apprenticeship is restricted to the 'manual trades' and seen as an alternative to school failure.

In addition, while apprenticeship exists in the public sector, the number of apprenticeship contracts is small. This can be ascribed to different factors, including the job ceiling in public service, the qualification conditions for apprenticeship supervisors, the cost to the employer, the lack of familiarity with civil service jobs, competition with other subsidised employment schemes.

However, apprenticeship would also seem to be a way of meeting the needs of companies for skills and qualifications. For higher education, in particular at university level, it brings contact with the business world. For apprentices, it ensures faster access to employment, a way of funding their studies and accelerated entry into the world of work. For people with low school achievement, it provides a way of acquiring qualifications offering strong potential for employment.

## **D. Conclusions**

Apprenticeship has existed since the 19th century, preceding lifelong learning, and has long constituted a 'real' pathway to qualifications as an alternative to school-based learning.

Its image suffered when the race for qualifications, and particularly higher education degrees, began in the second half of the 20th century.

Today, it would seem that this trend is not being reversed, but that the aim instead is to give apprenticeship or work-based training some of the aura that mainstream education enjoys.

As a result, not only is the current Minister of Labour, M. Rebsamen, relaunching work-based training, including apprenticeship, but the President of the Republic has recently proposed giving adult jobseekers access to apprenticeship contracts.