



# **Skills Governance in Europe**

## France

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## 1 Labour Market Intelligence: production, transmission and use

### 1.1 Forecasting capabilities

In a recent Cedefop report, France was praised for having one of the most comprehensive sets of forecasting tools in Europe<sup>1</sup>. A wide range of stakeholders participate in anticipating skills needs are involved at all levels (local, regional and national) via three main instruments outlined below<sup>2</sup>.

#### 1.1.1 Research Centres

At the national level, two institutions regularly publish reports and studies aimed at forecasting needs in terms of occupations and skills: the **Centre for Strategic Analysis** (*Centre d'Analyse Stratégique* provide is a centre for expertise placed under the authority of the French Prime Minister)<sup>3</sup>, the Centre for Research on Qualifications' (**Centre D'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications** - Céreq).

The reports and studies provide (1) quantified trend projections on the macro-economic environment and labour market, (2) statistical studies on matching of the supply and demand of labour for each of the occupational groups, and (3) broad surveys of studies covering a number of themes, such as, work organisation, labour market adjustment mechanisms, possible trends within different sectors.

#### 1.1.2 Observatories (regional and sectoral)

France has a wide network of both Sectoral and Regional Observatories in occupational forecasting whose studies combine macro-economic projections and quantitative surveys with qualitative information. Their work covers a number of activities including: (1) compiling and analysing employment and training data, (2) analysing and anticipating the impact of economic, technological, regulatory and demographic trends on employment, occupations and training needs, (3) disseminating data to the sectoral stakeholders.

Since 1993, every region has set up a Regional Employment and Training Observatory ((**Observatoire Régional de l'Emploi et de la Formation OREF**), jointly financed by the State and the regional council. At the sectoral level, in accordance with the May 2004 Law on vocational training, social partners have been encouraged to create their Forward Observatories of Occupations and Qualifications (**Observatoires Prospectifs des Metiers et des Qualifications OPMQs**).

Both types of observatories primarily have an information function. Their annual work programmes are determined by public authorities, social partners, as well as arising sector- or regional- specific concerns of labour market actors.

At the sub-regional level, some Chambers of Trade and Chambers of Commerce and Industry have also established employment and occupational observatories. Similarly, at the local level, the 300 Job Centres (les Maisons de l'Emploi) also have a role of anticipation and adaptation of employment and training needs to specificities of the local labour market.

#### 1.1.3 Policy instruments (legal obligations and incentives)

Finally, policy instruments are the third element of France's forecasting framework, which include both legal obligations and incentives.

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<sup>1</sup> Cedefop 2008, Systems for anticipation of skills needs in the EU Member States, Working Paper No 1

<sup>2</sup> European Employment Observatory 2008, Improving the capacity to anticipate EU-wide labour market skills requirements France, contribution to the EEO Review: Autumn 2008, by Sandrine Gineste.

<sup>3</sup> Established by decree on 6 March 2006, the Centre's mission is to advise the Government in the creation and application of economic, social, environmental and cultural policy. It was the successor to the long-lasting Plan Commission (Commissariat général du Plan). See [http://www.strategie.gouv.fr/presentation\\_du\\_CGSP](http://www.strategie.gouv.fr/presentation_du_CGSP)

In France, a **GPEC (Prospective Management of Jobs and Skills – Gestion Prévisionnelle des Emplois et des Compétences)** is both a legal obligation for all French companies with more than 300 employees (since the Social Cohesion Law of 18 January 2005) and a tool for enterprise development. In practice, a GPEC is an agreement between social partners at enterprise level to anticipate the impact of external and internal changes on their future skill needs which will typically lead to a three-to-five year strategy aimed at meeting the company's needs in terms of employment and skills. Small and medium-sized companies, which have no GPEC obligations, usually make use of regional and sectoral observatories' studies in order to anticipate short- and medium-term skill needs and labour supply.

At the state level, since 1988, an incentivizing contractual policy enables companies and occupational groups to enjoy financial support from the state for anticipating skill needs and establish measures to meet them. At sector or territorial level, the **Forward Studies Contracts (Contrat d'Etudes Prospectives CEPs)** agreed between the state and the occupational and trade union organizations are aimed at carrying out a forward study of needs over the next five years<sup>4</sup>. These studies – which are usually carried out by private consultants – seek to identify economic, technological and social changes in a sector and to examine the impact of such changes on future job content and organisation as well as initial/continuing training needs. Ultimately, the study carried out as part of the CEP will lead to an operational phase, specifying the commitment of both parties to the training plan.

#### **1.1.4 National Occupational Profiles as a means of standardising labour market information systems and forecasting tools**

France's began de develop national occupational profiles in the mid-1980s, with the aim of unifying and standardising the various classifications developed by statisticians at the regional level. In building a national framework, a key objective was to bring together statistics in the area of employment, as well as data pertaining to offer and demand on the labour market. The first national "Nomenclature des familles professionnelles" was created in 1993 (the so-called FAP-1993), it was later revised in 2003 (FAP-2003) and more recently in 2009 (FAP-2009).

Today's framework (the FAP-2009) is made up of 22 professional domains and within these domains are 87 professional categories (which are further broken down into 225 detailed professional categories)<sup>5</sup>.

This nomenclature has been developed by working groups of DARES (the ministerial statistical office for Labour and Employment) which included contributions from many other bodies and labour market actors, including the Céreq, OREF, AFPA (*association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes*), ANPE (*agence nationale pour l'emploi*), DGEFP (*délégation générale à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle*), DRTEFP (*directions régionales du travail, de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle*), INSEE (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*), and the Ministry of National Education.

#### **1.1.5 The role of ESF funding**

In the previous programme period, ESF funds have been used to fund projects related to the production of labour market intelligence. The French national ESP Operational Programme (OP) for 2007-2013 (where the first priority was helping workers and enterprises adapt to economic change) included a number of actions aimed at enhancing the anticipation of labour market and future skills needs. Indeed, the OP states "the intervention of the ESF should help improve anticipatory measures and lead to better

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<sup>4</sup> A sectoral CEP will be concluded with the social partners at a national level. A CEP concluded at the regional level can apply to the various territorial levels and will focus on local labour market specificities. More information on the CEPs is available:

<http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/dispositif/contrats-etudes-prospectives-cep>

<sup>5</sup> [http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/FAP-2009\\_Introduction\\_et\\_table\\_de\\_correspondance.pdf](http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/FAP-2009_Introduction_et_table_de_correspondance.pdf)

management of economic change in France through social dialogue and by networking all the different stakeholders working in the field”<sup>6</sup>. While the ESF contributed to the strengthening of labour market intelligence in France, the size of ESF funding in this area remains relatively small when compared to national funding; thus ESF provided a supportive rather than a directional/critical role in this field. Among the actions implemented to attain these objectives, ESF funds supported the development of diagnostic analysis carried out together with the social partners, in order:

- to improve knowledge of jobs and the qualifications required in order to identify obsolete skills;
- to define the jobs and qualifications required in the medium term; and,
- to propose action plans to adapt skills and protect the jobs of the most vulnerable workers.

For instance, one of the main missions of the Job Centres (Maisons de l’Emploi, MDE) is to forecast the needs in human resources, on the basis of local indicators, shared by all the actors of the territory concerned. ESF funding supported the diagnostic analysis led by the observatories built up by MDEs (e.g. by a financial support of a maximum of 50 % of the expenditure, up to EUR 75 000)<sup>7</sup>.

Apart from diagnostic analysis, ESF funds supported actions dealing with the anticipation and management of economic change, awareness-raising measures, and actions of assistance, geared primarily for managers. For instance, in the Centre region, ESF supported an action aiming at implementing the GPEC in small and medium enterprises and industries.

As noted below, France has a comprehensive set of forecasting tools. Through a three-pronged institutional framework – of research institutes, observatories and policy instruments – all main labour market actors are included in the process of anticipating skill needs (national and local authorities, social partners, company heads, and the public employment services). While this multi-actor landscape forms an inclusive framework that ensures a reliable anticipation of skill needs based on a shared diagnosis, it also comprises a number of shortcomings. Indeed, the diversity of actors, methodological approaches, and research outputs hinders the emergence of a coherent policy line and makes the comparability of results more difficult.

## 1.2 Transmission and use of information

As detailed below, while a number of institutionalised transmission mechanisms have been put in place (Section 1.2.1), there appears to be a number of bottlenecks in the dissemination of skill needs and labour market anticipation data (Section 1.2.2).

### 1.2.1 Institutionalised transmission of skill needs projection data

A number of **institutionalised transmission mechanisms** have been set up to ensure that skill and labour needs projection data serve to orient public policy and support the decision-making of other stakeholders.

First, at the national level, the **Centre for Research on Qualifications’ mission (Céreq)** is a key actor in the transmission of skill needs projections towards the ministries in charge of formulating VET qualifications. Created in 1977, the Céreq is an autonomous public institution placed under the aegis of Ministry of National Education, High Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue. The Céreq conducts studies on employability of the labour force and on the evolution of certifications and competencies. Céreq’s field of study has progressively

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Regional competitiveness and employment’, National Operational Programme ESF France, February 2007

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Maison de l’Emploi Nîmes Métropole (in the Languedoc Roussillon region, the ESF support the building of the territorial observatory, providing EUR 75 000 of co-financing funds to the global amount of EUR 159 884).

expanded to all matters relating to initial and continuing vocational education and training: mobility, building competencies and skills throughout life, evaluating State aid systems for employment, observing transformations in training provision, analyzing the role of different actors of the education and training.

The Céreq works primarily to inform public authorities, economic and social actors on the construction and the provision of training (types of degrees, training modalities, etc.) in response to economic changes, employment conditions, work organization and technological evolutions.

As such, it plays an important role in the professional advisory committees, that is, **Commissions professionnelles consultatives (CPCs)** dealing with the evolution of French systems of initial vocational training and managed by the Ministries in charge of designing VET qualifications, so-called Certifying Ministries (*Ministères certificateurs*) (for instance, the Ministries of National Education, employment, agriculture, health, youth and sports, etc.)

Second, at the sectoral level, close ties exist between the OPMQs (French sectoral observatories) and social partners bodies charged with arranging/designing company training courses and delivering sector-specific vocational qualification certificates:

- The Branch Training Insurance Funds, that is, the '**Organisme Paritaire Collecteur Agréé (OPCAs)**'. The OPCAs are state registered private organisations, run both by corporate branches and trade unions. OPCAs help to arrange training through money they have collected from enterprises. They also inform the companies about their rights and obligations and support them in their training projects. Counselling and accompanying the company is becoming more and more important. The OPCAs analyse the needs in terms of employment, skills and training courses. They have specialised staff to help the company designing their training courses. They also have a close relationship with the training organisations to build together training courses. Finally, they follow-up the training courses and implement evaluation.
- The National Joint Committee for Employment and Training, that is, the '**Commission Paritaire Nationale Emploi Formation (CPNEF)**', responsible for designing and delivering sector-specific vocational qualification certificates, so-called **Certificats de qualification professionnelle (CQP)** (see section 3.1.1).

Third, regions have a general competence in vocational training and are responsible for enacting a multi-annual "contract establishing a regional plan for the development of vocational training" (**contrat de plan régional de développement de la formation professionnelle CPRDFP**) agreed between the State and the Region, in agreement with the social partners. Here, the Regional Employment and Training Observatories (*OREFs*) work in close collaboration with the regions to develop these contracts. Also at the regional level, universities, charged with design vocational higher education qualifications, will also use the work of the OREF to ensure a bottom-up logic in the design of their diplomas.

Finally, at the company level, through legal obligations and incentives, skill and labour market anticipation data feed directly into the design of skills development strategies at the company level – through the **GPEC** – and sectoral level – through the **CEPs**.

### **1.2.2 Weaknesses and bottlenecks in the transmission of skill projection results**

#### *Weaknesses in the transmission of skill projection results in the area of higher education*

While the transmission skill projections is relatively well institutionalised in the area of VET, most notably through the professional advisory committees (CPCs) informing the work of the certifying ministries, such institutionalised channels of transmission of data do not exist for higher education institutions (universities and associated technological institutes (Instituts Universitaires de technologie (IUT)).



Bottlenecks due to the great diversity of forecasting tools and stakeholder

Despite these institutionalised transmission mechanisms in certain areas, the great diversity of forecasting tools and stakeholders involved in producing skill and labour market projections **hinders the effective dissemination of results and their integration into the policy-making process.**

- The diversity of methodological approaches makes **cross-sectoral analysis difficult** since findings are not precisely comparable between sectors.
- The diversity of tools, outputs, actors and levels concerned, as well as the absence of machinery for producing a comprehensive overview, may **prevent the emergence of a coherent policy line** that public authorities should follow to promote the match of supply and demand in the labour market in the future.
- The **complexity of the forecasting system also raises the issue of accessibility** and the need to ensure that relevant actors are provided with clearly identifiable research products.
- Finally, the **reports and studies of national institutions and regional/sectoral observatories have no binding force**. Accordingly, the implementation of reforms long since recommended by these bodies may be hindered by the policy priorities of the day.

Reflecting on these bottlenecks, a 2008 European Employment Observatory report<sup>8</sup> set forth a number of **proposals for improving France's capacity** to anticipate labour market and skills needs and effectively transmit this information to relevant stakeholders, including:

- establishing a common methodological frame of reference (most notably for observatories) in order to enhance cross-sectoral analysis,
- creating a synthesizing procedure and/or space for exchange and pooling of information between the various levels involved in forecasting studies.

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<sup>8</sup> European Employment Observatory 2008, Improving the capacity to anticipate EU-wide labour market skills requirements France, contribution to the EEO Review: Autumn 2008, by Sandrine Gineste.

## 2 A national qualification framework with a strong labour market focus

### 2.1 National Qualifications Framework

The present day French national qualifications framework (NQF) was set up in 2002 and rests on the **Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP)** (National Register of Vocational Qualifications) and the **Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle (CNCP)** (National Committee for Professional Certification)<sup>9</sup>. France's NQF, as defined by the RNCP, is based on a five-level structure dating back to 1969. In recent years, voices have been raised to underline the need for a new more detailed structure. For instance, in 2011, the national Council on statistics (CNIS) commented on the need for a new level structure that "take[s] into account changes in the structure of qualifications and the links set up within European higher education"<sup>10</sup>.

**The RNCP focusses strictly on vocationally or professionally orientated qualifications**, at the same time, compared to many other European countries, the French NQF makes a much less clear distinction between VE and higher education. This suggests the **desire to promote vocationally and professionally orientated qualifications at all levels**.

The French NQF is characterised by a strong labour market focus since a learning outcomes approach applies to all qualifications newly included in the register. Since 2007, Universities have been obliged to reformulate their qualifications to include labour market relevance and learning outcomes, thus making skills, knowledge and competences important qualification descriptors. Such language is still rarely applied for general education at primary, lower and secondary level.

*The Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle (CNCP) as a regulator of both the quality and the offer of VET qualifications*

The CNCP is an overarching authority that both regulates the offer and ensures the quality of VET qualifications in France. The CNCP is a platform for cooperation and dialogue between all relevant stakeholders: ministries responsible for the design and award of qualifications (Ministries of Education, Higher Education, Labour, Social Affairs, Agriculture, Culture, Youth and Sports, Defence, Finance), the social partners and other relevant actors (chambers, etc.)<sup>11</sup>:

- *Regulating the offer of VET qualifications*: since 2009, certifying ministries must formulate a request (dossier d'opportunité) to the CNCP for each new VET qualification it wishes to develop. Only if the CNCP approves this request ('avis d'opportunité favorable') can the Ministry go ahead and submit the proposal to a CPC. The CNCP thus regulates the overall offer of VET qualifications and works to avoid replication and unnecessary proliferation of similar diplomas.
- *Ensuring the quality of VET qualifications of non-state actors*: While all VET qualifications formulated by certifying ministries (and approved by the CPCs) will be inscribed in the RNCP by law, the CNCP acts as 'gatekeeper' of the French framework for vocational qualifications formulated by non-state actors. All such qualifications need the approval of the committee before they can be included in the

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed review of France's NQF, see CEDEFOP 2012, Analysis and overview of NQF developments in European countries, Annual report 2012, pp93-101.

<sup>10</sup> Referencing of the national framework of French certification in the light of the European framework of certification for lifelong learning. <http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/uploads/file/Report-FR-NQF-EQF-VF.pdf> [accessed 24.04.2014].

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/commission>

official register<sup>12</sup>. Approximately 12 per cent of such qualifications are not be approved by the CNCP.

Following the 2002 Law on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning which recognises learning outcomes to be the basis for obtaining any kind of certified qualification, **all qualifications registered in the RNCP must be possible to acquire through validation of non-formal and informal learning** (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*) (VAE). This emphasis on validation serves to build bridges between education and employment and promote life-long learning.

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<sup>12</sup>For each VET qualification reviewed, a multi-stakeholder technical committee of 30 persons with examine the request. The applicant organisation will (as with the CPCs) submit a Référentiel des Activités Professionnelles (RAP) and a Referentiel de certification. For more information on the CNCP: <http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/qualificationsFramework>

### 3 Steering the education and training provision

In France, different ministries develop and award qualifications, university degrees and vocational credentials on behalf of the State. Similarly, VET qualifications can be created and awarded by non-state actors. In recent years, France has implemented a number of measures (policies/programmes and incentives) to ensure that the offer of (as well as demand for) education and training programmes is more closely aligned with projected labour market requirements and skill needs. A number of institutionalised arenas (committee, agencies) and processes (consultative, evaluative) have been put in place to ensure that newly designed qualifications are aligned with the skill projection data. The following section examines such measures, placing particular focus on VET and HE curricula.

These consultative and evaluative organs are expert bodies that qualifying ministries, higher education institutions, and social partners depend on to make informed decision about the content of a qualification's curriculum, with a view to ensuring that France's future workforce is well equipped to respond to the changing needs of a dynamic and competitive economy.

Yet, the design of curricula for country's next generation of workers is also an inherently political process. Consultative and evaluative organs constitute political arenas where different interests meet/confront each other. Transparency of these committees' and agencies', mandate, membership, processes and outputs is important in order to ensure that all stakeholders are given equal voice and footing in the design of educational and training provision.

#### 3.1 Government-Regulated VET Provision

##### 3.1.1 Types of VET qualifications and Public Authority in charge of awarding them<sup>13</sup>

###### 3.1.1.1 VET qualifications created and awarded by national ministries

The **Ministry of National Education** awards qualifications for general education and VET for levels V (European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 3) and IV (EQF level 4) of the French national qualification framework. The vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of National Education cover almost 450 specialisms, corresponding to different careers or fields of activity<sup>14</sup>.

The **Ministry of Higher Education** awards general and VET qualifications running from level III (EQF level 5) to level I (EQF level 7) in the French qualification scale. Since the 1970s, vocational courses and programmes have become an integral part of traditional universities' educational offer and the growing number of professional bachelor and master degrees have been the main reason behind the increase in the number of qualifications covered by the CNCP (National Committee for Professional Certification, see section 2.1) in recent years<sup>15</sup>.

**Other Ministries** (including Agriculture, Employment, Social Affairs, Youth and Sport, Health, and Culture) also award general and VET degrees on behalf of the State, both at the secondary school level and in the sphere of vocational higher education.

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<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive overview see CEDEFOP 2012, VET in Europe Country Report France, [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2012/2012\\_CR\\_FR.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2012/2012_CR_FR.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> The main qualifications at these level include, the CAP (Certificat d'Aptitude professionnelle – certificate of professional skills), the BEP (Brevet d'études professionnelles – vocational studies certificate), and the vocational baccalaureate.

<sup>15</sup> The vocational qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Higher Education fall into four main categories: the Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS – advanced technician certificate), the vocational Licence, the Vocational Masters, and finally the Diplôme Universitaire Technologique (DUT) delivered by Institut Universitaire de technologie (UIT).

### 3.1.1.2 VET qualifications created and awarded by non-State actors

**Other forms of VET schemes and qualifications can be created and awarded by players other than the State.** In France, the training market is free which means that training bodies are not obliged to make public the way they construct their courses and/or qualifications. In 2011, the Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP) (National Register of Vocational Qualifications) (See section 2.2), reported 6920 qualifications, of which 4529 were legally registered (those created by the State) and 2931 were self-registered<sup>16</sup>.

**Certificats de qualification professionnelle (CQP)** are sector-specific vocational qualification certificates that enable employees, job-seekers, or young people who are still in initial education or training to acquire an operational qualification<sup>17</sup>. They can be obtained through lifelong learning programmes; training is usually provided by a body created and managed by the branch in question. The CQP is recognised by the collective or branch agreement it relates to; it is created and issued within an industry sector by a joint industry body, usually a sectoral **Commission Paritaire Nationale Emploi Formation (CPNEF)** (National Joint Committee for Employment and Training)<sup>18</sup> that is composed of the social partners. In formulating CQPs, the CPNEF may draw upon labour market forecasts and sectoral training priorities identified by the sectoral Observatories (OPMQ). CQPs are not attached to a specific level of qualification but are categorised separately in the RNCP (National Register of vocational certifications) by sector of activity.

Similarly, possessing the **title of 'qualified engineer' (titre d'ingénieur diplômé)** is necessary in order to work as engineer in France. This title is protected and controlled by the CTI (commission des titres d'ingénieur – engineering qualification committee), and only institutions accredited by the CTI are allowed to award the title of "qualified engineer". Finally, 37 **business and management schools** are authorised to award 'State approved' diplomas which have the value of national qualifications. This approval is granted by the Ministry of National Education for a maximum renewable period of 6 years. These diplomas proved access the LMD cycle (Licence, Master, Doctorat).

### 3.1.2 Steering and Shaping VET Qualifications

In order to ensure that VET education and training programmes are aligned with skill needs projections, a number of bodies are involved – through a consultative role - in the design of VET qualifications at secondary and higher education level.

#### 3.1.2.1 VET qualifications created and awarded by national ministries

VET qualifications are produced by ministries on the basis of opinions by consultative bodies:

- The **Commissions professionnelles consultatives (CPC)**, or professional consultative committees (see below) despite their consultative status are **the key locus of decision-making** in the formulation of VET qualifications by certifying ministries.
- The **Comite interprofessionnel consultatif (CIC)**, or The Consultative Interprofessional Committee, is consulted on general issues relating to professional and technological qualifications as well as cross-cutting issues affecting all the CPCs. It is made up of the chairs and deputy chairs of the CPCs, the Ministry of National Education, government representatives, representative of employer organisations, representatives of employee unions and qualified individuals.

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<sup>16</sup> CNCP 2012, Rapport au premier ministre 2011 Paris: CNCP, Avril 2012, 26 p. <http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/webdav/site/cncp/shared/contents/documents/RapportPM2011.doc>

<sup>17</sup> For a good definition of the CQP, <http://formation.cqp.free.fr/spip/spip.php?article3>

<sup>18</sup> The website of the CPNE : <http://www.cpne-fcd.org/cpne/mission.php>

- The **Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation (CSE)**, or Higher Council for Education is consultative body charged with giving opinions on the objectives and operation of the public education service, programmes, examinations, and qualifications both for generalist and VET education and training. For vocational qualifications, its role is complementary to that of the CPC. Its memberships comprises the Minister of National Education or their representative, it is made up of representatives of teachers, parents, lycée pupils, students, local authorities and voluntary organisations.

*The Professional Consultative Committees (CPCs) as key actor in the conception and quality assurance of VET qualifications*

The CPCs are a locus of consultation for all vocational qualifications and bring together representatives of employers' organisations, workers' organisations, the government and qualified individuals<sup>19</sup>. CPCs exist for all major spheres of economic activity. Since the 'social modernisation' act of 17 January 2002, all ministries with an interest in training were invited to form CPCs. To date, 6 ministries have set up such committees (Employment, Education, Social Affairs, Agriculture, Youth and Sport, Culture). Each CPC reviews 2-3 qualifications per year on average.

The Ministry of National Education, which manages the highest number of certification processes, relies on 14 CPCs (the first of which was set up in the 1970s), corresponding to the main business sectors of the French economy<sup>20</sup>. Any plan to create a new VET qualification or update an existing one will be accompanied by an 'opportunity study', commissioned by the Ministry of National Education and undertaken by external research bodies. This 'opportunity study' will review economic and sectoral trends and identify existing and anticipated skill gaps as well as qualification needs (including skills outcomes, competences, and knowledge).

The revision or creation of a new VET qualification will be tasked to an education inspector (inspecteur de l'éducation nationale<sup>21</sup>) who will be responsible for collecting relevant studies and reports concerning skills projections in the area under consideration (effectively playing a centralising role). Moreover, the Certifying Ministries may – in the lead-up to a planned revision or creation of a new VET qualification – commission the Céreq to prepare a study on skills projections in the professional field under consideration.

Under the authority of the education inspector, a working group – made up of approximately 15 persons and reporting directly to the CPC – will be established. Its membership will include representatives of professional branches, as well as employers' organisations and workers' organisations<sup>22</sup>. **While CPC working groups are fundamentally expert bodies that ministries heavily rely on it designing VET qualifications, they are also political arenas** where different interests and positions are played out. The goal is to build consensus and elaborate a VET qualification that takes into account expert projections and political stances of how a specific profession should/will evolve in the future.

The working group will produce two standards (referential)<sup>23</sup>, on which each VET qualification will be based. These two standards are not technical "truths" but the result of discussion, negotiation and ultimately consensus among a variety of stakeholders:

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<sup>19</sup> Céreq 2004 « Certifications Professionnelles: les partenaires sociaux impliqués dans la construction de l'offre », available at <http://www.cereq.fr/cereq/b208.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://eduscol.education.fr/cid46815/cpc.html>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid1138/inspecteur-de-l-education-nationale.html>

<sup>22</sup> Céreq 2012, « Place et rôle des professionnels dans la conception des diplômes professionnels », available at: <http://www.cereq.fr/index.php/publications/Net.Doc/Place-et-role-des-professionnels-dans-la-conception-des-diplomes-professionnels>

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the French referential (standard):

[http://project-predict.eu.dd23306.kasserver.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/files/EQFpredict\\_bestpractice\\_FR.pdf](http://project-predict.eu.dd23306.kasserver.com/fileadmin/user_upload/files/EQFpredict_bestpractice_FR.pdf)

- A *Référentiel des Activités Professionnelles* (RAP)<sup>24</sup> which describes in detail the individual's activities in an occupational context in terms of goals, and work conditions and methods.
- A *Referentiel de Certification* is a regulatory document which describes the skills to be attained in a vocational field. The certification référentiel specifies the conditions, the indicators and criteria for the assessment of skills.

These standards (referentiels) will be reviewed every 5-10 years depending on the complexity of the VET qualification and the sector (certain are more prone to rapid change than others). However, in between these reviews, a certain flexibility in the provision of skills can be introduced into the curricula via a qualification's training programme (programme de formation), which can be updated in between the review of 'referentiels'. Skills or competences added to the training programme will not be able to be evaluated since only skills outlined in the "referentiel de certification" will form the basis of formal assessment.

### 3.1.2.2 VET qualifications created and awarded by non-State actors

As noted above, **Certificats de qualification professionnelle (CQP)** are sector-specific vocational qualification certificates created and issued within an industry sector by a joint industry body, usually a sectoral **Commission Paritaire Nationale Emploi Formation (CPNEF)** (National Joint Committee for Employment and Training) that is composed of the social partners. In formulating CQPs, the CPNEF may draw upon labour market forecasts and sectoral training priorities identified by the sectoral Observatories (OPMQ).

Compared to CPCs – which are the main decision-making organ in the decision of VET qualifications – CPNEFs are rather non-transparent expert bodies, both in terms of their memberships, functioning and outputs. As mentioned above, consultative organs charged with the design of the content of a qualification's curriculum are also political arenas. As such, a certain level of transparency is desirable to ensure the voice of all concerned actors is heard and feeds into the decision-making process.

## 3.2 Government-Regulated Higher Education Provision

### 3.2.1 Steering and Shaping Higher Education Provision

There is no standard model of Higher Education qualifications in France, meaning that content, duration, and methods for assessing students are not pre-defined. Rather, the HE system is regulated exclusively by an assessment process of the quality of the training content. Following a bottom-up process, each university is responsible for designing vocational Licence and Masters in line with the local labour market's needs (these will be approved by the Conseil d'Administration of the university). The Conseil National de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche (CNESER), which meets twice per year, approve the newly designed qualifications<sup>25</sup>.

The only exceptions concern the Brevets de Technicien Supérieur (BTS), which remain linked to a CPC and the Diplôme universitaire technologique (DUT) (Higher Technician Certificate and the University Technological Diploma) for which the University will rely on the consultation an expert advice of Commission Pédagogique Nationale (CPN).

Three national bodies are responsible for accreditation and assessment Higher Education programmes, depending on the education sector:

- The **AERES (higher education and research assessment agency)** for training programmes<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Typically involves 6 months of work and 4-5 working group meetings

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid53497/le-conseil-national-de-l-enseignement-superieur-et-de-la-recherche-cneser.html>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.aeres-evaluation.fr/>



- CTI (engineering qualification committee) for engineering courses and qualifications (the final decision to approve a qualification is taken by the CTI)
- Accreditation Commission of the Conference des Grandes Ecoles<sup>27</sup>
- Management training and qualification assessment committee for business management schools

Before the creation of AERES in 2007, responsibility for evaluation of higher education and research was distributed among different agencies. AERES, was conceived as a unified evaluation agency responsible for all fields of evaluation for higher education and research. AERES was given four missions:

- Evaluate higher education institutions (universities, *écoles*) and research agencies
- Evaluate operation and outcomes of research units
- **Evaluate teaching programmes and degrees**
- Validate the procedures for individual evaluation of academic and research personnel.

The evaluation of teaching programmes and degrees, just at the design of the VET qualifications, is both a political exercise and one which requires a high level of expertise. AERES evaluations are typically carried out by experts which are members of French or foreign universities<sup>28</sup>. Currently, in an effort to ensure transparency of the evaluation process, a database of 14,562 experts having carried out an evaluation is available online<sup>29</sup>. The choice of criteria on which to assess and the way in which judgement are expressed is controversial. The relevance of the course for the local Labour Market is assessed and supported by a number of statistical indicators, including the graduates insertion rate into the labour market.

Following the assessment carried out by AERES, the Ministry of Higher Education takes the final decision concerning the approval (no not) of a new or updated course. The approval is typically granted for a period corresponding to the frequency of the appraisal.

### 3.2.2 General Trends in the Reform in the Higher Education System

#### Reinforcing the links between higher education institutions, the labour market, the regions, and local stakeholders

In recent years, France's tertiary education system has witnessed a move to close the gap between HE and the work of work. Specifically, the 2007 Loi relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités requires universities to **improve their learning outcome descriptions** (both for employers and students). These outcome descriptions now form the basis on which higher education qualifications are approved by the CNCP, a process which is renewed every four years. The use of learning outcomes-based perspective have served to sensitise universities to the importance of designing their HE qualifications in line with Labour Market needs and to reflect on the (transferable and sector specific) skills that young persons are acquiring by obtaining a particular qualification. This is undoubtedly a step in the right direction in closing the skills gap between young persons' qualifications and the competences demanded by employers. However, further measures could be taken to ensure the mandatory use of skill projections analysis (which offers a view of possible skill gaps to come) in the design of HE qualifications.

The 2007 Law on Universities also introduced the **participation of two representatives of the local stakeholders in the governing body of each university** (conseil d'administration). It also envisages tax incentives to foster entrepreneurial investments in tertiary education, through the establishment of new foundations within universities (fondations universitaires or fondations partenariales).

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.cge.asso.fr/qui-sommes-nous/commissions>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.aeres-evaluation.fr/Agence/Organisation/Organisation-generale>

<sup>29</sup> [https://ged.aeres-evaluation.fr/guest.php?sole=Y&app=AERES\\_DIFFCV](https://ged.aeres-evaluation.fr/guest.php?sole=Y&app=AERES_DIFFCV)



Création of Instituts universitaires de technologie (IUT)

As in other European countries, the expansion of tertiary education has been accompanied by a diversification of provision in terms of institution types, educational offerings and new modes of delivery. Created in 1966, **Instituts universitaires de technologie or IUT** (translated as University Institutes of Technology) are an alternative to traditional universities<sup>30</sup>. As of 2008, there are 116 IUTs which are attached to 80 universities including the ones in the French Overseas Territories and Departments. IUT aim to meets the increasingly diverse needs of the labour market as well as respond to the need of local communities; accordingly, they tend to be employer-orientated and closely integrated with the labour market needs of each locality and region.

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<sup>30</sup><http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid21016/liste-des-instituts-universitaires-de-technologie-i.u.t.html>

## 4 Steering educational choices

In France, a number of ministries are responsible for the design and delivery of professional and vocational guidance: the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Employment, and Ministry of Youth and Sport.

### 4.1 Rethinking measures to steer education choices

#### 4.1.1 Growing importance on the national political agenda

Since 2009, reform of educational and professional guidance has been placed high on France's national policy agenda. That year, the right to information and guidance was inscribed in the Labour Code (Law on lifelong learning and guidance of 24 November 2009) ensuring the right of every person "to be informed, advised and accompanied" under the right to education guaranteed to everyone by Article L. 111-1 of the Education Code.

In 2009, a multi-stakeholder Commission on Youth Policy (*commission de concertation sur la politique de la jeunesse*) published a Green Paper containing 57 proposals to address a wide-variety of challenges that young people face in the areas of employment, education, housing, health, etc<sup>31</sup>; 4 proposals concerned the strengthening of educational and professional guidance<sup>32</sup>.

In 2008, the position of *délégué à l'information et à l'orientation* was created with the view to making proposals, establishing quality standards, and assessing national and regional policy in the area of professional and educational guidance and information provision<sup>33</sup>. A steering committee made up of representatives of various responsible ministries, regions and social partners supports his work. In 2012, a report was published providing an overview of activities and recommendations for improvement in the field<sup>34</sup>.

#### 4.1.2 Guidance counsellors and involving families at the secondary school level

In recent years, a growing body of research has aimed to shed light on the decision-making process surrounding a young person's education choices, with a view to designing more effective policies for supporting young persons in making informed decisions, steering demand towards specific subjects in high demand in the labour market<sup>35</sup>. A key finding emerging from this body of research is that, at secondary school level, the family is the main locus of decision-making and parents play an important role in steering a young person's educational and professional choices. Yet parents often do not have the necessary information to effectively guide their children and have negative preconceptions of VET, which is often seen as 'second-best' to general educational.

At the secondary school level, guidance counsellors (*Conseiller d'orientation et d'information*) charged with providing information and guidance to secondary school pupils have been - and still remain today - key actors in steering educational choices. However, their role has been challenged in recent years. At the heart of this debate the effectiveness of their work and the issue of whether they are well-qualified to provide such guidance.

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<sup>31</sup> For the full text : <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/094000308/>

<sup>32</sup> Proposition 4: Better prepare transitions, Proposition 5: Enhance the value of technological and vocational streams by improving the prospects they offer, Proposition 6: Guarantee the possibility of re-orientation during the course the academic year, Proposition 7: Create a booklet skills, support a positive orientation (author's translation).

<sup>33</sup> This newly created post was previous called *délégué interministériel à l'orientation* between 2008-2010.

<sup>34</sup> See [http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/Les\\_acteurs/29/9/DIO\\_Rapport\\_2012\\_219299.pdf](http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/Les_acteurs/29/9/DIO_Rapport_2012_219299.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> By the same token, effective educational guidance can serve to prevent early school leaving and reduce dropout rates. See: Céreq 2009, Bref, "La qualité de l'orientation en débat", Bref Céreq, N264, Mai 2009, <http://www.cereq.fr/index.php/publications/Bref/La-qualite-de-l-orientation-en-debat> ; Cereq 2013, « Le Cereq et la thématique de l'orientation », Note technique en date du 20 juin 2013. .

In parallel, a number of pilot projects have been launched that target parents. For instance, "la malette des parents" is currently being piloted by the academy of Versailles for the parents of 16-year old pupils with a view to helping parents support their child in his/her educational choice. Among the tools proposed to parents, is a "guidance simulator"<sup>36</sup>. A similar project is the "dernier mot aux parents" (last word for the parents) launched for the first time in 12 academies for the school year 2013/2014<sup>37</sup>.

#### **4.1.3 Involving employers**

With a view to closing the skills gap and better orienting young people, a growing trend in France has been towards establishing and improving channels of communication the employers and schools. A number of initiatives have multiplied in recent years (professional traineeships, discovery traineeships, short traineeships for 16-year old pupils, apprenticeships, training, and company visits/placements for teachers).

The proliferation of these initiatives, while laudable, is also challenging for employers since it can be confusing (as they have to communicate with multiple actors) and require significant resources (time, staff) to manage.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid53083/le-dispositif-mallette-des-parents.html>.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid75007/experimentation-du-choix-de-la-voie-d-orientation-par-les-parents-en-fin-de-troisieme.html>

## 5 Imbalances in the labour market

As noted above, despite the existence of a battery of robust tried-and-tested tools for the forecasting of employment developments and skills needs, the French skills governance system is failing to deliver. The French labour market is characterised by structural matching problems and bottlenecks, which can be captured by a battery of labour market and employment statistics.

The recently published study entitled 'Jobs in 2020' (Les métiers en 2020), conducted by DARES (the ministerial statistical office for Labour and Employment) and the Centre for Strategic Analysis is a good example of a comprehensive assessment of projected occupations developments and anticipated skills needs.

While demographic trends will ensure that there is no shortage of labour, recruitment difficulties are projected in certain sectors as demand for labour will become more polarised. A recent study published in 2012 by the State Planning Commission and DARES on quantitative projections of labour supply and demand by occupational category by the horizon 2020 underscored this projected trend.

The marked increase in the number of people retiring, which began in the early 2000s, is expected to continue as a faster pace in the coming decade. The study estimates that during the period 2010-2020, 6 million senior workers would exit the labour market, which is equivalent to 600,000 persons each year, compared to almost 400,000 during the period 1993-2001. Based on an estimated growth rate of 1.9 per cent for the period 2010-2020, 150,000 jobs are expected to be created each year. The two trends combined are projected to create 750,000 new job vacancies each year during 2010-2020.

However, the vacancies will be distributed differently across France's 87 professional categories. The occupations that will see the highest level of job-creation are managerial occupations (in the areas of administrative occupations, civil service, finance and banking, insurance) and low-skilled jobs in the service sector, most notably in the services to the elderly which is expected to experience the largest growth. By contrast, occupations in decline are unskilled manual work in industry, traditional self-employment (such as farmers) and middle-ranking administrative occupations.

Directing skills development towards the occupational growth areas remains a priority, in order to avoid a situation of high unemployment coexisting with recruitment difficulties. In view of the high unemployment levels among the low-qualified, demand for low skilled job may be met in the future, however, the challenge lies filling future vacancies in high-skills occupational categories.

Another interesting national report was published in 2013 on the Labour Market imbalances.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, an indicator on 'tensions within the labor market' compares the number of jobseekers and the job offers registered with the Public Employment Service (PES) (i.e. *Pôle Emploi*), including both the flow (inflow and outflow of jobseekers, job offers newly registered and closed) and stock (number of registered jobseekers and job offers recorded at the end of each month)<sup>39</sup>. This indicator on labor market tensions can be broken down by the 22 professional domains, 87 professional categories and the 255 detailed professional categories (see section 1.1.4), with a view to identifying in which professions major imbalances exist. The findings of the 2013 report<sup>40</sup> point to imbalances in different professions as well as trends during the period 1998-2012.

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<sup>38</sup> "Les tensions sur le marché du travail", available at <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/etudes-recherches-statistiques-de,76/statistiques,78/metiers-et-qualifications,83/les-tensions-sur-le-marche-du,2432/les-tensions-sur-le-marche-du,16998.html>

<sup>39</sup> A fiche explains the method of calculation and the main findings : [http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Indicateur\\_tensions\\_par\\_Fap.pdf](http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Indicateur_tensions_par_Fap.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> [http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Fiches\\_France\\_entiere.pdf](http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Fiches_France_entiere.pdf)

While valuable, caution should be taken when interpreting the 'tensions within the labour market' indicator. Indeed, comparisons between professions using this indicator will not provide pertinent results unless supplemented with a more in-depth analysis. This is due to a number of factors. For instance, the indicator is calculated on the basis on the administrative records of *Pôle Emploi* and accordingly does not account for the job offers that are not registered by employers with the PES, which will vary substantially among professions; different sectoral labour markets react more or less fast to economic downturns and upturns, recruitment difficulties in certain sectors can be due to their perceived "unattractiveness" (difficult working conditions, low pay) rather than a lack of skilled job seekers. The report notes:

*"A comprehensive analysis of labour market tensions for a given profession or territory would require that this indicator be interpreted within the broader context of working conditions, proposed salaries, the share of hires and internal promotions in the process of labour force renewal, and, above all, this analysis need to be seen in the socio-economic context of the observed territory"*<sup>41</sup>.

Another tool used to forecast skills needs is *Pôle Emploi*'s annual 'Enquête Besoins en Main-d'Œuvre' (survey on manpower needs)<sup>42</sup>. Each year, data on recruitment needs is collected via a questionnaire addressed to 1.6 million employers and broken down by sector, profession, and geographical territory. This information is used to: anticipate recruitment difficulties, direct job-seekers towards training or professions in line with labour market needs, inform job-seekers on the evolution of the labour market and professions where there is a high demand for labour. In 2014, for instance, the annual survey pointed towards 10 professions with the strongest recruitment trends, including, maintenance of premises agents, health care workers, kitchen staff, nursing assistants, IT engineers, and waiters.

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<sup>41</sup> Raport Dares (2013), "L'indicateur de tension par familles professionnelles", pp3

<sup>42</sup> <http://bmo.pole-emploi.org/>

## 6 National interviews

**Table 6.1 National stakeholders contacted for Skills Governance**

Name/Surname	Organisation/Contact details	Source contact	of	Contacted/Interview held
Chantal Labruyère	Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications (Céreq) Chargée de mission sur les partenariats nationaux, sur le volet gestion de l'offre de formations et de certifications <a href="mailto:labruyere@ceriq.fr">labruyere@ceriq.fr</a> Tel: 04 91 13 24 68	Internet search		Contacted 30 April Interview carried out 5 May
Claudine Romani	Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications (Céreq) Chargée de mission sur les partenariats nationaux <a href="mailto:romani@ceriq.fr">romani@ceriq.fr</a> Tel 04 91 13 28 15	Recommended by Chantal Labruyère		Contacted 6 May, interview carried out 7 May
Sandrine Javelaud	Mouvement des entreprises de France (MEDEF) Directrice de mission formation initiale du MEDEF et représentante du MEDEF auprès du CNCP <a href="mailto:sjavelaud@medef.fr">sjavelaud@medef.fr</a> Tel : +33 6 65 85 11 78	Internet search		Contacted interview 30 April,
Frederic Laine	Centre d'Analyse Stratégique Chargé de mission <a href="mailto:frederic.laine@strategie.gouv.fr">frederic.laine@strategie.gouv.fr</a> Tel : +33 1 427 56 506	Internet search		Contracted on 14 April
Maurice Pinkus	Maurice PINKUS Directeur Délégué Pôle "Relations Education Nationale - Enseignement supérieur" Direction Emploi Formation UIMM 56 avenue de Wagram 75854 PARIS cedex 17 <a href="mailto:mpinkus@uimm.com">mpinkus@uimm.com</a> Tel : +33.1 40 54 20 14	Recommended by Chantal Labruyère		Contacted 5th May
Jean-Marc Geib	Agence d'Evaluation de la	Internet search		Contacted 30 April

Name/Surname	Organisation/Contact details	Source contact	of	Contacted/Interview held
	<p>Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur (AERES)</p> <p>Directeur - Section des formations et des diplômes</p> <p><a href="mailto:jean-marc.geib@aeres-evaluation.fr">jean-marc.geib@aeres-evaluation.fr</a></p> <p>Tel: +33 1 55 55 96 63</p>			
Laure Omalek	<p>Ministère de l'emploi – DARES Département de l'Animation de la Recherche des Etudes et des Statistiques</p> <p>Responsable des projections d'emploi par métiers à la DARES</p> <p><a href="mailto:laure.omalek@dares.travail.gouv.fr">laure.omalek@dares.travail.gouv.fr</a></p> <p>Tel : +33 1 44382543</p>	Internet search		Contacted 30 April
Alexandra d'Agostino	<p>Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications (Céreq)</p> <p>Chargée d'études, Département Travail, Emploi et Professionnalisation (DTEP)</p> <p><a href="mailto:agostino@cereq.fr">agostino@cereq.fr</a></p>	Internet search		Contacted 30 April



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