



Spotlight on VET France



Principles

The right to education and to vocational training has been included in the French Constitution since 1958. The main principles of vocational training (VET) in France are as follows:

- the State plays a key role in the initial VET policy and system: programmes and certification, funding, personnel;
- since 2004 the regions have been responsible for designing and implementing their own VET policies for unemployed young people and adults;
- the social partners help to define and implement VET policies and to fund the training of employees and jobseekers;
- access to VET and to certification is a right: principle of access to initial training free of charge, individual right to training, validation of experience;
- VET must be good quality: culture of results, assessment, quality charters;
- account taken of skills acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

Structure

Initial vocational training (VET)

- **IVET in schools:** on leaving junior high school (*collège*), usually at aged 15, students are steered either towards a general and technical senior high school (*lycée d'enseignement général et technologique*), to spend three years working for a general or a technical diploma (*baccalauréat général* or *baccalauréat technologique*), or else towards a vocational high school (*lycée professionnel*), to study over two years for a certificate of professional aptitude (*certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*, CAP) or a vocational education certificate (*brevet d'études professionnelles*, BEP), or over three years for a secondary vocational diploma (*Bac Pro*). CAP, BEP and *Bac Pro* offer direct access to employment and always include a work placement.
- **Tertiary education** provides students with a choice of general, technological and vocational courses in universities and *grandes écoles*, which are centres of educational excellence. The **advanced technical units** (*sections de techniciens supérieurs*), established in senior high schools, prepare students in two years for the advanced technical diploma (*brevet de technicien supérieur*, BTS), designed for entering working life. The **tertiary-level colleges of technology** (*instituts universitaires de technologie*), which are part of the university system, prepare students in two years for the tertiary technical diploma (*diplôme universitaire de technologie*, DUT). Having completed a BTS or DUT course, young people may prepare for a **tertiary level diploma** (*licence professionnelle*), a diploma which allows them to improve their level of vocational qualification.
- The **apprenticeship**: this prepares trainees for all the secondary-level certificates (CAP, BEP, *Bac Pro*, *brevet professionnel*, etc.), for tertiary-level qualifications (BTS, DUT, engineering and commercial college (*école supérieure de commerce*) diplomas, etc.) as well as for vocational qualifications registered with the National Vocational Certification Register (*Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* – vocational qualifications issued on behalf of the State, certificates of training organisations or chambers of commerce or trade) and certificates created by specific vocational sectors (*certificats de qualification professionnelle* or CQP). The apprentice has the status of employee. Training takes place both within the enterprise and in an apprentice training centre (*centre de formation des apprentis* or CFA). Duration: one to three years.

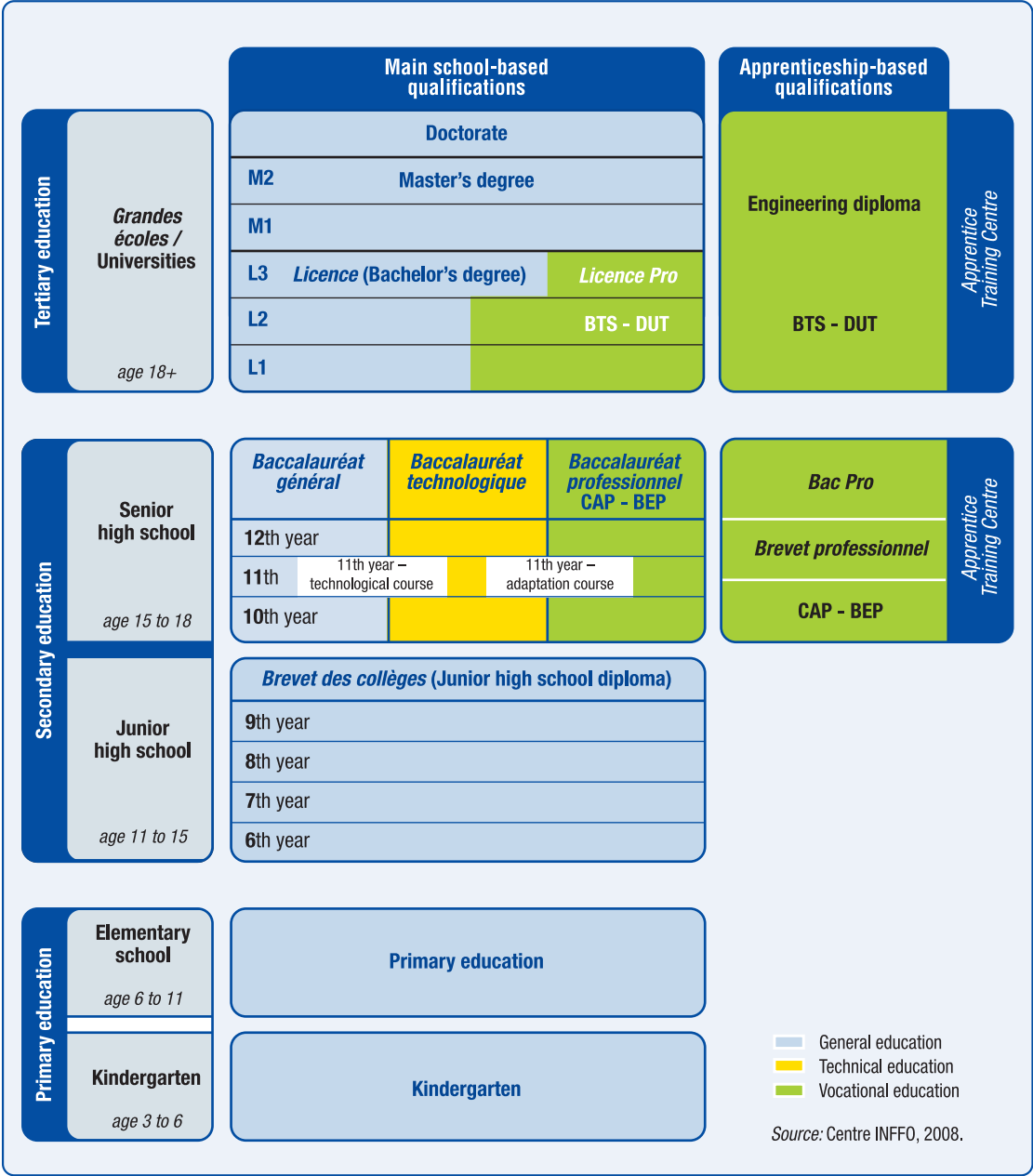
Continuing vocational training (CVET)

The objectives of CVET are many: to help people find or return to work, to remain in employment, to develop their skills and acquire different levels of vocational qualification, to enhance their earning power and to improve their cultural and social circumstances. The responsibility for training as well as means of access and funding differ according to the status of those concerned: jobseekers or people in work (private-sector employees, civil servants, self-employed persons).

The training of jobseekers is essentially the responsibility of the regions, with the State intervening purely for target groups (prisoners, illiterate persons, foreigners, and people with disabilities). Employers (private or public) and the social partners are responsible for training employees.

Validation of experience: this has the aim of enabling all working people (employees, jobseekers, volunteers) to access the range of existing qualifications, thus facilitating the use of training routes, making experience evident and transferable.

The French education system



Bac Pro *Baccalauréat professionnel*
CAP Certificate of professional aptitude
BEP Vocational education certificate
BTS Advanced technical diploma
DUT Tertiary technical diploma

Baccalauréat général
Baccalauréat technique
Baccalauréat professionnel
Brevet professionnel
Licence Pro

Senior high school diploma – vocational
Senior high school diploma – general
Senior high school diploma – technical
Professional certificate
Tertiary vocational diploma

**Training
in figures**

**Rates of access to continuing vocational training in 2005
(by sex and size of enterprise)**

	10 to 19 employees	20 to 49 employees	50 to 249 employees	250 to 499 employees	500 to 1999 employees	2000 employees and more	Total
Men (%)	59.2	59.9	60.1	59.5	59.7	64.3	61.4
Rates of access to training – men	12.0	20.8	36.2	45.8	53.5	58.1	42.1
Women (%)	40.8	40.0	39.8	40.5	40.3	35.7	38.6
Rates of access to training – women	14.4	21.6	33.0	40.7	48.3	48.8	38.1
Rates of access to training – M and W	12.9	21.1	34.9	43.6	51.3	54.4	40.4

Source: Déclarations n° 2483 – processed by Céreq.

The percentage of employees who went on at least one course in 2005 was steady at around 40 %. There was a marked increase in the access rate for women (38.1 % in 2005 compared with 36.5 % in 2004), as there was for men (42.1 % in 2005 compared with 40.7 % in 2004), but the rate for women remained below that for men. This may be explained by the gender-based structure of jobs, with access rates increasing in line with qualification. Access opportunities by sex still vary with the size of the enterprise.

**Rates of access to continuing vocational training in France and various EU countries,
1999-2005 (% of employees in all enterprises)**

	EU	CZ	DE	FR	IT	AT	PT	SE	UK
1999	40	42	32	46	26	31	17	61	49
2005	33	59	30	46	29	33	28	46	33

A training participant is a person who has been on one or more CVET courses at one time or another during the reference year. Participants are counted once, regardless of the number of courses followed.

Source: Eurostat (CVTS), 2008.

**Level of education achieved by the population aged 25-64 in France and various
EU Member States in 2008 (%)**

Country	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6	
Czech Republic	9	76	14	ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 0-2: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education ISCED 3-4: upper secondary and post-secondary education ISCED 5-6: tertiary education The countries are listed by the percentage of their population educated at least to level 3.
Sweden	15	53	32	
Germany	15	60	25	
Austria	19	63	18	
United Kingdom	26	41	32	
EU-27	28	47	24	
France	30	42	27	
Italy	47	39	14	
Portugal	72	14	14	

Source: Eurostat, Population and social conditions, online database, 2009.

The level of education of the French population is around the European average.

Characteristics

- **Right to education:** since the 1980s, four priorities have been defined to raise the level of education and training among French young people: encourage success at school, improve language teaching, do more to guarantee equality of opportunity and promote young peoples' integration into work and employment.

**78.7% of people who passed the *baccalauréat* in 2006
signed up for tertiary education the very next academic year.**

- **Decentralisation:** apprenticeship and vocational training of unemployed young people and adults are the responsibility of the regions. The dynamic created by decentralisation is a vital part of the general strategy for lifelong training: it helps improve the efficiency of public action by bringing the decision-making and managerial bodies and local realities closer together.
- **Role of social partners:** the social partners can establish their own qualifications for specific occupational sectors. They also manage the various bodies that collect compulsory contributions from enterprises for apprenticeships and vocational training, as well as the system of unemployment insurance for jobseekers.
- **Obligation to contribute financially to CVET:** the French system of CVET provides for mandatory contributions, the allocation of which is targeted. The introduction of these contributions reflects a legislative will to encourage company training of employees; their rate is fixed by law but some professional sectors have provided for amounts greater than the legal minimum.
- **Recognition of 'individual entitlements' to training:** individual entitlements are intended to encourage social advancement and reduce inequalities in access to training. The most familiar are:
 - **individual training leave (*congé individuel de formation* or CIF):** this allows employees to apply for financing for all or part of a training course, whether or not job-related;
 - **individual training entitlement (*droit individuel à la formation* or DIF):** DIF provides every employee with a training credit of 20 hours a year, which can be accumulated for up to six years. The employee takes the initiative to begin training by choosing the training in agreement with the employer. The decision to grant it and the amount of funding are the responsibility of the funding body.

Challenges

- To encourage senior workers to remain in employment, a five-year national action plan for employment was put in place in 2006. It aims as a priority to increase the employment rate for those aged 55-64 by approximately two percentage points annually in the years 2006 to 2010;
- various initiatives have been undertaken to reduce the number of school-leavers with no qualifications and school dropout rates: setting up individual support mechanisms for pupils experiencing difficulties, diversification of school careers, upgrading of the vocational route, integration of guidance into education careers;
- to help bring school and enterprise closer together, various mechanisms have been implemented, such as the option of learning for work (*découverte professionnelle*) in '9th year', together with partnerships between the Ministry of Education and large enterprises, aimed at promoting information campaigns, block-release and occupational integration training intended for pupils and students;
- the CVET system is being reformed. The four aims of the reform are to strengthen the link between training and employment, build a fairer system, increase its efficiency and make individuals actors in their own careers;
- lifelong guidance has been institutionalised within CVET by introducing new tools (vocational interviews, Europass training) and strengthened within initial vocational training (guidance interview, experimentation with an active guidance procedure, interministerial director of guidance and counselling).

Sources of information

- Cedefop. *Vocational education and training in France – Short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2008. (Cedefop Panorama series). Available on the Internet: www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=511 [cited on 5.4.2009].
- *Fiches pratiques de la formation continue 2008*. Saint-Denis-La-Plaine: Centre INFFO, 2008. Available on the Internet: <http://www.centre-inffo.fr/Les-fiches-pratiques-de-la.html>
- Eurydice. *Eurybase – The Information Database on Education Systems in Europe – The Education System in France 2007/08*, European Commission, 2008. Available on the Internet: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/ressources/eurydice/eurybase/pdf/section/FR_EN_C4_9.pdf

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www.recherche.gouv.fr	Ministry of Higher Education and Research
www.agriculture.gouv.fr	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
www.diplomatie.gouv.fr	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
www.travail.gouv.fr	Department of Employment and Vocational Training (<i>Délégation générale à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle</i> – DGEFP)
http://eduscol.education.fr/	ÉduSCOL: the pedagogical site of the Ministry of Education
www.orientation-formation.fr	National portal on initial and continuing training guidance
www.edufrance.fr	EduFrance: information on higher education for foreign students
www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/information_resources/NationalIVET	Detailed information on European vocational training systems (Cedefop)

We wish to thank Valérie Michelet and Régis Roussel (Centre INFFO) for their valuable contribution.

This brochure focuses on some of the main aspects of vocational education and training in France and does not claim to be exhaustive.

For further information, please contact Sylvie Bousquet, project coordinator.



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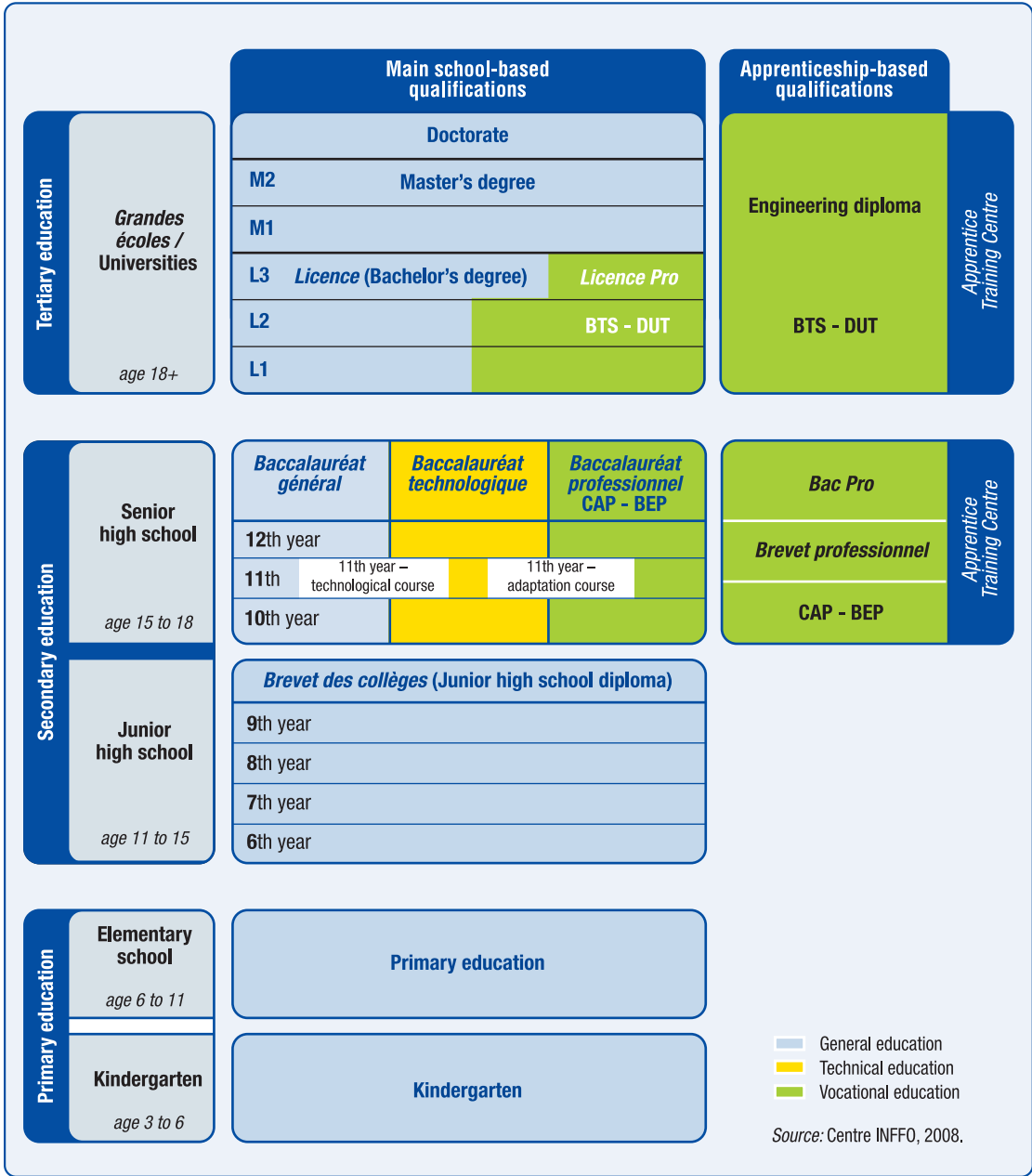
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