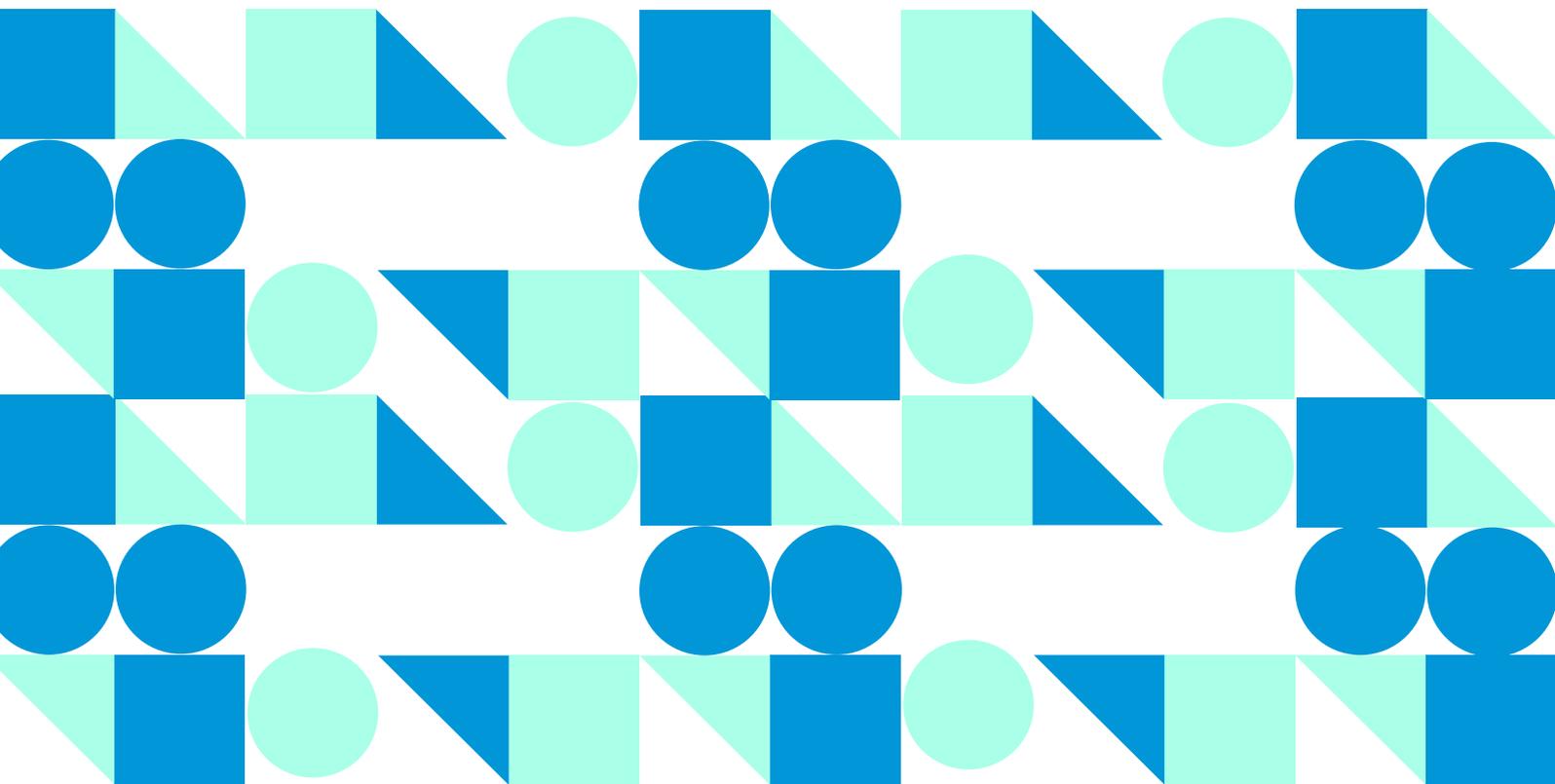




Research paper

Thematic country review on upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults in France

Key findings of the first research phase





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Foreword

Every adult deserves lifelong opportunities to update and acquire new skills, to thrive in their life and career. This is even more relevant for adults with low skills, a group that, according to estimates, accounts for almost half of the population of the EU-27 Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. Low-skilled adults often accumulate several vulnerabilities and are furthest away from the labour market or are in precarious jobs and at risk of unemployment, yet they benefit the least from upskilling and re-skilling opportunities.

The [European Council 2016 Recommendation on upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults](#) puts low-skilled adults into the spotlight of EU and national policies and encourages Member States to offer upskilling and reskilling opportunities for the low-skilled adult population. The Recommendation is a turning point in the way upskilling and reskilling is understood, organised and delivered. Developing adults' skills not only refers to training but also to services such as outreach, career guidance, validation of non-formal and informal learning and the removal of obstacles, which together constitute the pathway to employment, to a higher qualification and to more and better skills. All of these services together support the Recommendation's push for individualised pathways.

From the final user's point of view (low-skilled adults), it is not an easy task, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, to be conversant with their own training needs and available training options. They are often out of touch with anything that might resemble training, have little motivation, are unaware of their skills (even if they are obsolete) and, often, of what can be offered to them. For this group, the first step is to (re)kindle self-esteem, a capital of self-belief that enables them to commit to one or more short/medium-term upskilling and career projects. Outreach and guidance become central services leading towards forms of comprehensive support for the individual, interconnecting public action fields (training, medical and social services, housing, companies, transport, childcare).

As part of Cedefop's thematic country reviews on upskilling pathways (TCR on UP) project, this report summarises the first insights into how France has responded to the 2016 Council Recommendation on upskilling pathways. The French response to the UP Recommendation is a complex one, grounded in the 2018 comprehensive vocational training reform and the overarching [Skills investment plan](#). Unsurprisingly, the focus of the TCR on UP for France, as decided by the national stakeholders, is on outreach and guidance and on the crosscutting dimensions of governance and financial and non-financial support in relation to these two focus areas.

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Executive summary

Cedefop's work on the thematic country reviews (TCRs) on upskilling pathways (UP) aims at supporting Member States in the development of systematic, coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. The aim is to undertake in-depth reviews of countries' national approaches to the implementation of the UP Recommendation, with the support of key national stakeholders. France and Italy, in 2021, were the first two countries that undertook this TCR exercise. Its implementation is expected to last until the end of 2023.

Implementation of the TCRs on UP is based on the close cooperation between Cedefop and the ministry/ies responsible for the implementation of upskilling pathways. It is carried out through an interactive and cooperative process with a steering group of national stakeholders, endorsed with a formal mandate. The steering group brings the strategic direction to the TCR, gives feedback on the documentation produced and validates the intermediate and final outputs, including the policy recommendations.

This report summarises the outcomes of the first phase of the TCR on UP in France. The next two phases of the research, to be rolled out in 2023, will build on these results and will eventually lead to the formulation of proposed solutions and recommendations for the country to tackle the challenges identified. A final report will be published in 2024.

The TCR on UP for France focuses on outreach and guidance for low-skilled adults and on the crosscutting dimensions of governance and financial and non-financial support for these two areas. The research investigates the extent to which the actors who offer financial and non-financial support coordinate with each other, articulate their services and develop innovative, concerted and adapted strategies and methods. Their aim is to reach out and provide learning guidance ⁽¹⁾ to low-skilled adults in the logic of building an individualised and seamless or continuous learning and/or employment pathway ⁽²⁾.

The TCR steering group for France chose to narrow the focus of the research to: (a) low-skilled unemployed adults, paying particular attention to outreach and guidance pathways that integrate work-related training activities and (b) to low-skilled workers in the private sector at risk of skills obsolescence and job loss. Both

⁽¹⁾ Guidance is a learning process.

⁽²⁾ A seamless or continuous pathway means that the users benefit from the necessary means, conditions, organisations and partnerships that avoid (non-voluntary) breaks and disruption to individual pathways, and makes the transition from one stage of the pathway to the next (from outreach, to guidance, to training) smoother.

target groups will focus on the people who are sometimes referred to as the invisibles, those who are furthest away from the upskilling services, who are off the radar of the institutions or other traditional actors (the situation of invisibility may, in some way, have been created by those institutions or traditional actors) and who may suffer from multiple vulnerability factors. The TCR for France will also consider the grey area where many low-skilled adults are to be found, either due to their frequent changes of economic status (mainly in-between employment and unemployment) or to their precarious, unstable professional pathways.

Since both regional and local levels are of relevance for the TCR, three French regions (out of the 13 that make up the territory of France, excluding regions overseas) were selected for the study: Bourgogne Franche Comté (BFC), Nouvelle-Aquitaine (NA) and Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (PACA).

In France, there is a clear dichotomy between the upskilling strategies and ecosystems for the unemployed and for the employed. Thus, the TCR has two areas of investigation, one for each of the selected target groups:

- (a) low-skilled unemployed adults, will be the focus for the regional skills investment pacts (*Pactes régionaux d'investissement dans les compétences*, PRIC) ⁽³⁾;
- (b) low-skilled employed adults will be the focus of, the Career Development Counselling Service (CEP), which targets people working in the private sector ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽³⁾ PIC is a 5-year investment plan (EUR 15 billion) that aims at building a society of competences. The main objectives are: to train one million low-skilled young people who are outside the labour market and one million low-skilled and long-term unemployed adults; to speed up the transformation of the national vocational training system starting by identifying current and future skills needs and innovative teaching/learning methods and tools; to meet the recruitment needs of companies, especially for promising occupations ⁽³⁾. PIC is based on three strands: accompanying and securing professional pathways; ensuring core competences; meeting the skills needs of companies and upskilling the workforce. PIC is a governmental initiative and a large financial lever for reinforcing or launching national measures and bringing in additional resources to regional measures. Indeed, part of PIC is implemented through the agreements signed between the State and the Regions (as the local authorities have a mandate to organise and finance the regional vocational training and guidance services, especially for jobseekers). Those agreements are called regional skills investment pacts (*Pactes régionaux d'investissement dans les compétences*, PRIC).

⁽⁴⁾ The CEP service is defined as a support and guidance service enabling individuals to take stock of their professional situation and, if necessary, to build and implement a strategy for professional development. It is a free service that any active person can access, regardless of age, sector of activity, economic status or level of education. Even though the CEP service for people working in the private sector is not specifically designed for low-skilled workers, it appeared interesting to look at the extent to which low-skilled workers access this service, benefit from appropriate counselling and use it to build and implement UP.

For its first phase, the TCR collected data on the CEP service in the three selected regions, whereas for the PRICs, data were collected through three outreach and guidance schemes:

- (a) DAQ 2.0 covered by the BFC PRIC;
- (b) Mobilisation-Formation covered by the NA PRIC;
- (c) Axe 2 covered by the PACA PRIC.

The three selected PRIC schemes were chosen because they aimed to encourage cooperation between different kinds of actors to promote seamless or continuous pathways, and to improve and/or to innovative in reaching out, supporting and providing learning guidance to low-skilled adults (who are the group furthest away from employment, training activities and even the Public Employment Service (PES)).

The data collected reflect the points of view of both the participants/users of the schemes and services and of the professionals who are involved in carrying out the services.

Even though the nature and the scale of these schemes and services are not the same, even though not all of them are dedicated only to low-skilled adults, and even though they are part of larger strategies, the micro phase of the TCR on UP in France highlights several solutions, challenges or obstacles (to be further discussed in the next phase of the TCR) to reaching out and providing learning guidance to low-skilled adults in the logic of building an individualised and seamless or continuous learning and/or employment pathway.

Unemployed low-skilled adults furthest away from upskilling services

Local actors closest to the potential beneficiaries and word-of-mouth have proved to be important means of recruitment for outreach but building, maintaining and developing local partnerships is a question of time and resources.

Reaching out for guidance support offers is highly challenging for those individuals who are furthest away from the upskilling services and who are off the radar of the institutions or other traditional actors. New actors have emerged in organisations located in the local communities and close to target populations. These local actors include social mediators, neighbourhood associations, social centres, departmental social services, medical support professionals (work medicine) and temporary employment agencies. The institutions managing the schemes are able to create an ecosystem of differentiated actors who have the capacity to reach out to the individuals. Once the scheme is established, word-of-mouth proves to be an important means of recruiting new people to the scheme.

The outreach goal is clearly dependent on the efficiency of the managing institutions to build, maintain and develop local partnerships and on their ability to bring their services as close as possible to the potential beneficiaries. Nonetheless, the advisers, the people referenced and coordinators who were interviewed, mentioned the time constraints inherent in developing efficient communication and partnerships for outreach, which is a task that must be combined with the other duties specific to the provision of guidance services and the overall management of the scheme on site.

The key to outreach work lies in the capacity of the mediator/adviser to listen to people and to allow them to talk about themselves as they seek solutions to their daily or urgent problems; the first contact with people furthest away from upskilling services is rarely directly connected with training/employment issues.

The analysis strongly suggests that the invitation to enrol on a specific guidance scheme should be based on a request from the individual and not be driven by the available existing scheme provision or the need to fulfil scheme vacancies. The topics related to training and employment do not immediately come up in the preliminary discussions with potential beneficiaries. This is why the new/innovative strategies to reach out to the most disadvantaged target audience (e.g. the organisation of sports sessions and information tours in the most disadvantaged areas of the city, promoting collective craft/artistic/ludic activities) seek to establish a personal connexion with the potential beneficiaries to enable discussion, thus helping people to regain confidence and gradually bringing them back into the field of work reactivation.

Access to guidance schemes is often based on other drivers, such as the need to reactivate oneself, to get out of one's home, to enter or re-enter the sphere of interpersonal relations or to develop an interest in a practical activity, enabling individuals to rebuild their self-confidence. Findings clearly show the importance of personal motivation, which is difficult to (re)build for people who are often discouraged, long-term unemployed and feel themselves abandoned by public support services.

The need to remove the external barriers and financial obstacles to enable people to attend guidance programmes and initiate upskilling pathways leads to a range of comprehensive support for the individual.

The external barriers and financial obstacles are external to the training/employment objective but not external to the person who is likely to participate in the scheme (and perhaps who is not yet a jobseeker in the strict sense of the term since employment is not the most urgent issue for many of these people). The difficulties encountered by a large proportion of participants in the

guidance schemes selected (all schemes combined) are numerous: financial, housing and family issues, and difficulties linked to geographical mobility, insecurity, addiction problems and psychiatric disorders. These are situations that are widely addressed in the schemes studied, in partnership with specialised services or internally by specialised staff. This is the reason why practices developed for this target group are progressively shifting towards forms of comprehensive support for the individual.

The great heterogeneity of scheme beneficiaries within the groups, in age, social situation and external barriers encountered, shows the complexity of achieving the schemes' objectives.

The schemes should not cater for homogeneous groups with similar problems, but for a plurality of profiles to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis according to the logic of individualised support.

The individualisation of guidance support lies, first and foremost, in its development, which is centred on the construction of a work (and life) project for the person, considering his/her previous experience and aspirations.

Field experience shows that making the aim of individualisation possible presents some challenges and shortcomings:

- (a) lack of time and sufficient human resources to assure appropriate individual follow-up for each participant, particularly for those who are the least autonomous;
- (b) limited number of staff, resulting in less time for individual support and a shift towards group meeting formats;
- (c) a sometimes unclear distribution of roles between the scheme's coordinators, careers counsellors and trainers.

For the upskilling/learning provision component within the scheme, large groups of participants require the rationalisation of means which, in turn, leads to setting up pre-established sets of upskilling activities (i.e. refresher courses, basic skills training, workplace visits and short work placements).

The learning nature of the guidance is highlighted as a central value of the scheme: the objective being that the people targeted learn to master their own remobilisation (motivation), discover (inner) resources and use them to be actors in their own labour market re-insertion pathway.

The ultimate goal of guidance is to help beneficiaries to be autonomous in their search for employment or training when they leave the scheme and to learn to identify and highlight their skills, regain self-confidence and take control of their

life. The advisers often emphasise the techniques used to give them the desire to act and to get them moving.

Some challenges are increasing. For instance, in an emergency, some advisers may decide to act on the person's behalf, generating a deficit of autonomy transmission to the participant. The tendency to organise upskilling/training activities in groups by level of competence can interfere with the specific needs of some participants and slow down the process of them becoming autonomous.

The provision of seamless individualised support is based on solutions that can be identified within the local partnership ecosystem, in the contact network of the structure or even on the individual adviser or local actors developing the habit of working together in their own communities.

Continuity of support is delivered through various solutions leading to different objectives: to make progress through the system as flexible as possible (for example, making it possible to have continuous entry and exit points); to limit time loss during the support schemes (by maintaining the participants' constant focus on being committed to something); to limit dropouts (with a strong focus on external barriers, not only at the start but also over time); to deal with the issue of continuity of support post-scheme (for instance, by enrolling in a training programme leading to a qualification). The common feature of all of these solutions is the involvement of different actors at all levels and the importance of the local partnership ecosystem.

Scheme providers rarely develop formal partnerships with companies for the implementation of work placements.

Advisers may have a portfolio of companies that are willing to receive participants and to which they can be referred if they do not find a placement on their own. Securing a traineeship can take more or less time depending on personal profiles and the stage of maturity of the individual's career project. Some of the advisers interviewed also carry out awareness-raising activities with companies or local authorities to encourage them to take on participants.

Low-skilled workers at risk of skills obsolescence and job loss

The increasing and evolving ways, particularly online, of communicating and accessing the CEP service affect all employees alike; no specific measure is adopted for the low-skilled and more needs to be done to reach remote areas.

Findings show that a lot of effort has been put into promoting the CEP service to the public, mainly online but also through, for example, radio broadcasts, urban posters and bread bag advertising, which have led to an increase in the take-up of the service. In a less formal way, the CEP advisers also contribute to the dissemination of information about the service to intermediary actors by relying on their knowledge of the local professional, associative and social fabric.

However, it seems that more effort could be made to strategically implement information campaigns to target low-skilled adults specifically, for whom the online advertising may not work, and to reach remote areas.

Employers and their HR departments have so far not played a real role in raising awareness and directing employees to the CEP service.

The relationship with companies remains complex and seems to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding. Indeed, the perception of the CEP service seems to be that of a service that helps employees to retrain and evolve outside of the company, inducing an incentive to leave, and is thus perceived as a vector of turnover.

Certain categories of employees, including some of the low-skilled and/or those with low or no digital skills, seem to have little, or even no, access to the service.

These categories of employees include those with more unstable careers (temporary work, fixed-term contracts), older employees (over 50 years of age who, in certain sectors or occupations, may also be confronted with health problems due to the arduous nature of their jobs), employees of micro and small companies, employees without any ideas about retraining or any business project, employees in more remote areas that are further away from the CEP sites. Among the main obstacles mentioned about the access of low-skilled employees to the CEP service are the lack of information, the lack of time, or that it is perceived as an intellectual process.

As mentioned above, the communication strategy has not been sufficiently well designed to reach out to certain categories of more vulnerable employees. Further, the service being accessed exclusively online (the first meeting needs to be arranged via an online platform), while intended to facilitate access to the service, has the opposite effect on those workers who have low or no digital skills and so limits or even blocks their access to the service.

CEP advisers are important points of reference for guiding users towards other structures depending on their individual cases and their needs, but the strict compartmentalisation of structures and services for the unemployed and employed

poses a problem for the continuity of the support for those individuals who are in precarious jobs and in between these two statuses.

Some CEP advisers describe themselves as links between users and the several different stakeholders (occupational medicine, skills development or training provider, labour inspectorate, associations and other public services, business creation actors). The extent and mobilisation of the partnership network varies according to the profile of the CEP adviser, his or her previous professional career, and the history/rootedness of the structure in the territory. Overall, the partnership relations do not always seem to be structured and are sometimes based on informal contacts. The CEP advisers would like to see more information exchange with the public employment service (PES) in relation to employees in precarious jobs and whether they could refer these employees to the PES. Workers with unstable work trajectories and fixed-term work contracts are likely to access the CEP service once they have become unemployed (being referred to the services offered by the PES). The main reason for this is that, when employed, any funding scheme for job mobility cannot support this category of workers. This finding questions the dichotomy that exists in France between the actors operating with employees and those intervening with unemployed adults. These are two non-permeable ecosystems with different services and logic, which do not necessarily correspond to the frequent changes of economic status. Additionally, these changes in status are more frequent for the most precarious and vulnerable people.

Support is provided in line with the user's needs and requests but is dependent on the various profiles and expertise of the CEP advisers. Supporting the less skilled and/or the people who are least autonomous often requires more support time, especially to overcome digital barriers, lack of writing skills and generally lower autonomy.

Support is provided on a case-by-case basis and encompasses help in: seeking information, supporting autonomy, checking the feasibility of the desired project, preventing the person from making a decision if the project seems unrealistic, setting up the project, referring the person to another service provider, guiding the person to help him or her make a choice and plan for the future (often requiring support based on knowledge of work psychology) and guiding the person to avoid failure in the process.

However, the breadth and depth of the support that an individual may get depends on the skills of the CEP adviser, the adviser's vocational background (ranging mainly from psychologists, social science and business administration), previous work experience and the network established on an individual basis by the adviser or by the institution. One challenge for CEP advisers in providing individualised support consists of the need for them to have a wide range of skills,

encompassing knowledge of psychology, skills profiling and assessing socio-psychological risks, labour market analysis and anticipation, as well as knowledge of human resource management and project management.

There are several key obstacles for individuals in planning and implementing upskilling projects, with the less skilled workers facing more than one. The main obstacles identified include digital barriers and language barriers that can sometimes lead to a need to go for a lower certification level than the one desired. This is combined with a financial barrier if the training cannot be included in the financing plan. Another barrier is linked to timing frictions: the time lag between requesting the service and beginning the training course and the length of training courses requested (that cannot always be supported financially). Financial barriers are associated with limits to existing funding schemes, including for long-term certified training, as well as for the recognition and validation of prior informal learning. Finally, barriers to engaging in the upskilling pathway may be related to mobility and family constraints and the lack of employment opportunities nearby.

Summary of main messages

The multifactorial problems faced by the people furthest from training and employment lead to an increasing complexity of support actions and a progressive shifting towards forms of comprehensive support for the individual. From an institutional perspective, this requires a major change and de-compartmentalisation between, for instance, the Departments (responsible for the application of social support policies), the Regions (responsible for steering guidance and training policies) and the PES actors (fulfilling the task of offering labour market integration opportunities). This would encourage crosscutting of purposes, interconnecting public action fields that were not previously very connected (guidance, training, medical and social actors, socio-cultural actors, housing, companies, associations). In particular, the dichotomy operated in France between the actors operating with employees and those intervening with unemployed adults would need to be challenged.

Low-skilled adults often accumulate more than one obstacle and they need more time and resources for outreach and to guide themselves towards an upskilling and employment pathway, which is not always factored into the design of services. The advisers themselves may be overwhelmed by, and unprepared both professionally and psychologically to deal with, often complex situations of exhausted, suffering and burnt out people. The location of potential beneficiaries

in remote areas and the needs of those employed in micro and small enterprises are issues that require particular attention for providing outreach and support.

The findings also illustrate a situation where the aim of systematic individualised support is not always met. Actual practice shows that the level of individualisation varies and depends on factors such as the number of beneficiaries and on the means the scheme provider can deploy on every single site. Limited resources lead to a sort of rationalisation that itself leads to a prevalence of collective activities (often classroom-based) or the making up of groups by level of education.

On the aspect of seamless pathways, besides the issue of de-compartmentalisation between actors and services, it also turns out that guidance users are not usually followed up during their upskilling and/or employment project. Guidance stops once the individual has built his/her personal project and has moved into the training or employment phase. Ensuring a systematic follow up requires time, stable human resources over time (an appropriate number and profiles) and significant means.

The second phase of the study will build on these findings to discuss the challenges identified with meso level stakeholders, which will be selected in the upcoming phase of methodology preparation.

CHAPTER 1.

Thematic country reviews on upskilling pathways

1.1. Policy background

In December 2016, the European Council adopted the Recommendation on upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults (Council of the European Union, 2018) (hereafter referred to as the UP Recommendation). The UP Recommendation calls Member States to help adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences, who are not eligible for support under the Youth Guarantee, ‘to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital competence and to progress towards higher European qualifications framework (EQF) levels relevant for the labour market and for active participation in society’. At the centre of the UP Recommendation is the concept of upskilling pathways, which is characterised by the centrality of the individual to the pathway (individualisation of the pathway), and by a design based on a three-step approach: skills assessment; provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer; and validation and recognition of skills acquired. The UP Recommendation adds that ‘those steps could be facilitated by guidance and support measures (...) and by making best use of the potential of digital technologies, if appropriate’. Developing adults’ skills not only refers to training but also to information, career choices and guidance to give individuals the means for being actors of their own professional pathways.

In designing and implementing UP for low-skilled adults, Member States would consider national circumstances, the resources available and existing national strategies and they would identify priority target groups for the delivery of upskilling pathways nationally. Thus, Member States are not expected to develop anything *ex novo* but to adapt and optimise what is already in place in the optic of a new philosophy, which acknowledges the heterogeneity of the low-skilled adult population and the need for an individualised approach, which encompasses more than the provision of education and training.

As Cedefop argues in its publication *Empowering adults through upskilling and re-skilling pathways, Volume 2: Cedefop analytical framework for developing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults* (Cedefop, 2020), upskilling pathways is about pulling together resources and creating the right synergies for supporting every (low-skilled) adult towards an individual path to empowerment. It is about creating a comprehensive approach to the upskilling and reskilling of the low-skilled adult population. This approach

should be able to address their needs in a coordinated and coherent way between actors and services and ensure that they have all the tools and support to embark on sustainable learning pathways leading to their full potential and fulfilment.

In view of the implementation of the Recommendation by the Member States, Cedefop has developed an analytical framework aimed at supporting policy-makers and stakeholders in designing and implementing sustainable, coordinated and coherent approaches to flexible and inclusive upskilling pathways. The framework is articulated around important systemic features needed for a coherent and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. It is grounded in a lifelong learning perspective and focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary. It comprises 10 key areas of intervention:

Decision-making:

- (a) an integrated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults;
- (b) a planning strategy for identification of target groups;
- (c) governance (multilevel/multi-stakeholder);
- (d) monitoring and evaluation.

Support:

- (a) financial and non-financial support;
- (b) outreach;
- (c) lifelong guidance.

Implementation:

- (a) a skills assessment;
- (b) a tailored learning offer
 - i. leading to a qualification;
 - ii. with work-based learning (WBL);
- (c) validation and recognition of skills and competences.

In the TCR on UP, Cedefop's analytical framework constituted the basis for identifying the TCR's scope and objectives (Section 1.5).

1.2. Aims and steps of TCR on UP

Cedefop launched the first round of thematic country reviews (TCRs) in 2021 ⁽⁵⁾ in France and Italy to support the implementation of the UP Recommendation nationally and to increase the evidence base which can support policy/decision-makers at European level. TCRs aim to analyse in depth the national approaches to the implementation of the UP Recommendation by understanding their strengths

⁽⁵⁾ Expected to conclude at the end of 2023.

and weaknesses and the challenges at stake. France is one of the first two countries (with Italy) to conduct a TCR on UP.

As stated in the study's terms of reference, 'the TCR is a country-owned and country-driven review process of their upskilling pathways approach, based on the close collaboration between Cedefop and the ministry(ies) responsible for the implementation of upskilling pathways. It is carried out through an interactive and collaborative process with a steering group of national stakeholders, endorsed with a formal mandate, and it results in policy recommendations' ⁽⁶⁾. The steering group brings the strategic direction to the TCR, gives feedback on the documentation produced and validates the intermediate and final outputs, including the policy recommendations.

Thus, through the TCR launch, the relevant ministry (the Ministry of Labour in France and Italy), in cooperation with Cedefop, have appointed a steering group that represent important stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of upskilling pathways. The French steering group is composed of the Ministry of Labour, the CARIF/OREF ⁽⁷⁾ network, France Compétences ⁽⁸⁾ and Pôle Emploi ⁽⁹⁾.

1.2.1. Preparatory phase

At the beginning of the process, the main, crucial role of the steering group was to agree on the target groups of the TCR on UP (Section 1.3), identify the TCR's scope and objective i.e. the priority area(s) to be reviewed in the TCR from among those indicated in Cedefop's analytical framework on upskilling pathways (Section 1.4), and the national strategies that could be considered the national equivalent of the UP Recommendation in France relevant for the selected target groups (Section 1.5).

In view of the preparation of the field work (in particular the micro and meso phase), the regional coverage was selected (Section 1.6) and, within the selected regions, which specific schemes and initiatives (Section 1.7.1), falling under the

⁽⁶⁾ Cedefop tender specification (2020). [Promoting lifelong learning of adults through CVET 1 systems and upskilling pathways](#).

⁽⁷⁾ The Centres of organisation, resources and information on training – regional observatories on employment and training are backed by the State and the Regions and involve the social partners. They have three main missions: to inform; to observe and analyse; to encourage the development of competence, contributing to job insertion and the fight against unemployment.

⁽⁸⁾ France Compétences has been the core institution of the French vocational training system since 2018.

⁽⁹⁾ Pôle Emploi is part of the French Public Employment Service.

relevant national strategies, were to be investigated from the prism of the priority areas of the review and in light of the TCR objectives for France.

1.2.2. Field work

The field work phase is made up of three different rounds of research directly involving national stakeholders. In the first round (also called the micro phase) information for practitioners and beneficiaries has been gathered from various organisations (adult learning organisations, third sector organisations, including non-traditional actors and organisations involved in outreach and guidance at community/local level), careers/guidance advisers, beneficiaries, private service providers involved in the development of tailored pedagogical/upskilling/learning activities, as well as other professionals relevant for the priority areas. The results of this first field work phase of the French TCR on UP are presented in the current report and will be used as a basis to develop the survey strategy and contents of the next round (the meso phase) of the French TCR.

In the meso phase, opinions at the institutional level will be obtained about any gaps in the strategy, identifying possible causes and potential solutions and, especially, how to improve the cooperation and partnerships among stakeholders and their capacity-building strategies. Regional/local government representatives, social partners, sector organisations, representatives from local authorities and third sector organisations acting at community level will be involved in this phase.

In the third, macro phase, policymakers, social partners, experts and other system actors will assess and discuss the proposed solutions and recommendations stemming from the first two field work rounds.

1.3. Target groups of TCR on UP for France

The UP Recommendation focuses on the low-skilled adult population as a whole, meaning that it targets adults (not eligible for the Youth Guarantee) who are employed, unemployed or economically inactive,, with low levels of qualification (under EQF level 3 or EQF level 4 if the qualification has become obsolete or insufficient to respond to changing work requirements) and often with low levels of numeracy, literacy, and digital skills. In France, it should be underlined that policies that intend to develop skills and to fight unemployment have a strong focus on young people. Thus, promoting lifelong learning and upskilling in France entails adopting a broader understanding of the adult population that includes young adults (for instance, those who are eligible for the Youth Guarantee). It should also be stressed that in France, there is a clear dichotomy between the economic status of the unemployed and that of those in employment. This dichotomy implies two

separate ecosystems of actors with specific policies, schemes and services. Thus, looking at UP for low-skilled adults in France means looking both at UPs for low-skilled unemployed adults and at UPs for low-skilled workers and at the (missing) links between the two.

The TCR steering group in France chose to narrow its focus to low-skilled unemployed adults, paying particular attention to the pathways integrating work-related training activities, and to low-skilled private-sector workers at risk of skills obsolescence and job loss. For both target groups, the intention was to focus on those individuals who are sometimes referred to as the invisibles, meaning those who are furthest away from the upskilling services, who are off the radar of the institutions or other traditional actors (the situation of invisibility may, in some way, have been created by those institutions or traditional actors) and who may suffer from multiple vulnerability factors. The TCR for France will also consider the grey area where many low-skilled adults are to be found, due either to their frequent changes of economic status (mainly in-between employment and unemployment) or to their precarious, unstable professional pathways.

1.4. Scope and objectives of the TCR on UP for France

In considering the French UP framework and the target groups defined, the steering group of the TCR on UP for France indicated some priorities for analysis among the 10 key areas defined by Cedefop in the Analytical framework for the development of upskilling pathways. The TCR on UP for France highlights the following key areas: #5 Outreach, #7 Guidance and its crosscutting dimensions #3 Governance and #5 Financial and non-financial support. The TCR will try to highlight the extent to which the actors who offer financial and non-financial support, coordinate with each other, articulate their services and develop innovative, concerted and adapted strategies and methods to reach out and provide learning guidance⁽¹⁰⁾ to low-skilled adults in the logic of building an individualised and seamless or continuous learning and/or employment pathway⁽¹¹⁾.

Outreach is a key area that will be looked at, particularly the issues encountered in reaching out to so-called invisible low-skilled adults (invisible from

⁽¹⁰⁾ Guidance is a learning process.

⁽¹¹⁾ A seamless or continuous pathway means that the users benefit from the necessary means, conditions, organisation and partnerships that avoid (non-voluntary) breaks and disruptions in individual pathways, which makes the transition from one stage of the pathway to the next (from outreach, to guidance to training) smoother.

the point of view of the institutions and the traditional actors involved in upskilling services/pathways) to provide solutions to meet their particular circumstances and the kinds of difficulties they face, and to make it possible for them to be part of upskilling and professional pathways.

Unemployed invisibles are people who the Public Employment Services (PES) ⁽¹²⁾ have not managed to reach out to so far. Some of them may have developed a feeling of distrust towards the institutions that are supposed to support them. This target group may also include the low-skilled and long-term jobseekers registered at the PES ⁽¹³⁾, but who have not yet benefited from any tailored measures. Most of the time, they face multiple barriers to training and to employment (Chapter 2).

Invisibles in employment are people who have not had the opportunity to participate in upskilling activities since the end of their initial education and who have not received any information on existing upskilling opportunities from their employers. Recent Céreq ⁽¹⁴⁾ studies underline the fact that low-skilled workers are more often in this situation of invisibility than others. For instance, while 21% of workers with a higher education diploma have never had access to a training activity since the end of their initial education, the figure rises to 51% for workers without a diploma ⁽¹⁵⁾. During the COVID-19 crisis, while 42% of executives received a training proposal, the figure dropped to 27% for blue-collar workers and to 24% for workers without a diploma ⁽¹⁶⁾. Access to information seems to be at the core of the outreach issue for low-skilled workers. Employers have had a direct and historical responsibility for giving information and training opportunities to their employees. The latest reform has opened the way for new actors and services to provide outreach and information to workers, including the low-skilled.

⁽¹²⁾ In France, the PES actors are: Pôle Emploi for adult jobseekers, Mission Locale for the unemployed under the age of 26, Cap Emploi for people with disabilities and the joint association APEC, which has a public service mission for the employment of executives (in French: *cadres*; the employment status *cadre* is a specific feature of the French labour market. *Cadres* may encompass high-skilled (e.g. engineers) people in management positions).

⁽¹³⁾ In France, people who are looking for a job must register at the PES to obtain jobseeker economic status. As jobseekers, they have rights (including the right to unemployment benefit) and obligations.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The Centre for Studies and Research on Qualifications (Centre d'Études et de Recherche sur les Qualifications, Céreq) is a national public institution under the authority of both the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour. It carries out studies and research to better understand the links between training, work and employment. Céreq and the Institute of Research on Education (Institut de Recherche sur l'Éducation, IREDU) are carrying out the TCR on UP for France on behalf of Cedefop.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Céreq's DEFIS survey.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Céreq's IMPACT survey.

The key area of guidance is also a matter of interest since UP not only refers to/relies on training activities, but also on information, counselling and guidance services that enable low-skilled adults to make informed choices and to think of, build and implement their own pathways. Those services may even lead to upskilling and empowering the individuals who benefit from them. The paradigm of the guidance function in individual pathways has progressively shifted towards an iterative and co-constructed process in which the individuals play an active role, and also towards a more learning-centred approach that provides a formative dimension and an ability to add individual empowerment to the guidance function. Besides, guidance, training and support are supposed to be more linked and interconnected to complement each other. The 2018 vocational training reform (see Law 2018-771, 5 September 2018, Freedom to choose one's own professional future) has reinforced/confirmed this shift. Defining the training action as 'a learning process aimed to achieve a professional objective' not only leads to opening up the range of upskilling methods and activities but also to reconsidering the links between training and guidance, and to giving more weight to the latter in the upskilling pathways.

As for the key areas of governance and financial and non-financial support, according to the steering group, they must be considered through the lens of low-skilled adults. It means not only looking at who does what and who finances what, but also questioning governance as a tool to help low-skilled individuals receive the support and services they need for seamless pathways, and whether the financial and non-financial support available are appropriate means and resources for upskilling pathways. There is no consensual definition of what constitutes a seamless pathway. Nonetheless, the idea is to provide the necessary means, conditions, organisation and partnerships to avoid (non-voluntary) breaks and disruptions in individual pathways and to make the transition from one stage of the pathway to the next (from outreach to guidance to training) smoother.

1.5. National strategies considered equivalent to the EU UP Recommendation

The UP Recommendation encourages Member States to consider their national circumstances, available resources and existing national strategies to offer low-skilled adults upskilling pathway opportunities based on a three-steps approach: skills assessment, tailored and flexible learning offer and validation and recognition, all of which are underpinned by coordination and partnerships, outreach, guidance and support measures, follow-up and evaluation. This approach pervades different national policies and strategies, initiatives and

institutional mandates, implying the need for pulling resources together and for better coordination and cooperation.

Based on information given by the French government, the UP Recommendation in France is implemented through the 2018 vocational training reform (see Law 2018-771, 5 September 2018, Freedom to choose one's own professional future). The main objective of Law 2018-771 ⁽¹⁷⁾ is to renovate the system of initial and continuous vocational training as well as the unemployment insurance scheme. 'The aim is to invest massively in training and skills to give everyone the ability to build their career path and to protect the most vulnerable' ⁽¹⁸⁾. Since 2020, the Recovery plan for the French economy (France Relance) ⁽¹⁹⁾, through its dedicated training and employment component, also contributes to implementing the UP Recommendation.

These policies and means of funding build on a systematic and coordinated strategy similar to the orientation of the UP Recommendation. They give the impetus for acting at both national and local level to encourage the various stakeholders at different levels to work together, to promote integrated and personalised pathways enabling the individuals to design and implement their own professional project plans and to develop and validate their skills. They introduced a new definition of the training activity: 'a learning path to reach a professional goal', which may include work-based training activities, validation of prior learning processes and skills assessment schemes.

However, the dichotomy between the economic status of the unemployed and the economic status of those in work also implied the identification and selection of two different and more specific strategies per selected target group.

1.5.1. Selected strategies for the low-skilled unemployed

To bring about part of the 2018 vocational training reform, in 2018 the French government launched the Skills investment plan (Plan d'Investissement dans les Compétences, PIC), which is a 5-year investment plan (EUR 15 billion) that aims at building a society of competences. The main objectives are: to train one million low-skilled young people who are outside the labour market and one million low-skilled and long-term unemployed adults; to speed up the transformation of the national vocational training system starting by identifying current and future skills needs and innovative teaching/learning methods and tools; to meet the recruitment

⁽¹⁷⁾ LOI No 2018-771 du 5 septembre 2018 pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Transformer la formation professionnelle pour construire une société de compétences.

⁽¹⁹⁾ [Recovery Plan \(France Relance\) of 3.9.2020.](#)

needs of companies, especially for promising occupations ⁽²⁰⁾. PIC is based on three strands: accompanying and securing professional pathways; ensuring core competences; meeting the skills needs of companies and upskilling the workforce. PIC is a governmental initiative and a large financial lever for reinforcing or launching national measures and bringing in additional resources to regional measures. Indeed, part of PIC is implemented through the agreements signed between the State and the Regions (as the local authorities have a mandate to organise and finance the regional vocational training and guidance services, especially for jobseekers). Those agreements are called regional skills investment pacts (Pactes régionaux d'investissement dans les compétences, PRIC).

1.5.2. Selected strategy for the low-skilled in the private sector

For low-skilled workers, the Career Development Counselling Service (Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle, CEP) for people working in the private sector is identified as a key service that can provide an overview of outreach and guidance practices and of the opportunities for career and professional development. CEP was introduced in France by the Act on vocational training, employment and social democracy of 5 March 2014 and thoroughly revised in 2018 by the Act on freedom to choose one's own professional future. No such service provided for free existed before these dates.

Even though the CEP service for people working in the private sector is not specifically designed for low-skilled workers, it appeared interesting to look at the extent to which they access this service, benefit from appropriate counselling and use it to build and implement UP.

1.6. Geographical coverage of TCR on UP for France

The Regions play a central role in the vocational training system (especially for young people and jobseekers). Through Law No 83-8 of 7 January 1983 on the division of competences between the Municipalities, the Departments, the Regions and the State (République Française, 1983), the Regions have jurisdiction over the implementation of apprenticeships and continuous vocational training. Law No 2004-809 of 13 August 2004 on local liberties and responsibilities states (République Française, 2004) that the Regions are responsible for apprenticeship and vocational training for young people and adult jobseekers. Through Law No 2014-288 of 5 March 2014 on vocational training, employment and social

⁽²⁰⁾ Promising occupations are either emerging occupations from new fields of activity or occupations that are facing manpower shortages in employment sectors that are struggling to recruit workers with the required skills.

democracy (République Française, 2014), the Regions' competences have been increased by including career guidance policies. The regional public vocational training service and the regional public career guidance service have been created. Through Law No 2015-991 of 7 August 2015 on the new territorial organisation of the Republic (République Française, 2015), the regional coordination of employment, vocational training and guidance policies is based on a three-party mode of governance (State, Regions, social partners) and on dialogue between the relevant local actors. Through Law No 2018-771 of 5 September 2018 on freedom to choose one's own professional future (République Française, 2018), the Regions' role has changed slightly; for instance, their competences on apprenticeship have been reduced. In addition, part of the PIC has been implemented through agreements that were signed by the State and the Regions. The agreements clearly specify the shared goals that the contracting parties try to reach and their respective responsibilities and financial contributions. Basically, for unemployed adults, the ecosystem of actors comprises the State (along with decentralised authorities), the Regions, other local authorities (such as the Departments in charge of social support), PES actors, and other actors on a local level such as not-for-profit organisations, training centres and integration through economic activity (Insertion par l'Activité Economique, IAE) ⁽²¹⁾ organisations.

Even though the role of the Regions is not as pivotal when it comes to policies and funding related to UP for low-skilled workers, the policies and funding rely on the cooperation between the stakeholders and the coordination of the support and services they provide at a local and regional level. Basically, for the employed, the ecosystem comprises the State (along with the decentralised authorities), the new national institution (under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour) in charge of managing the vocational training system (France Compétences), the Regional committee for employment, orientation and vocational training (Comité Régional de l'Emploi, de la Formation et de l'Orientation Professionnelles, CREFOP) ⁽²²⁾, companies, professional branches ⁽²³⁾, Competences facilitators (Opérateurs de

⁽²¹⁾ Integration through economic activity is a scheme that aims to foster the socio-professional integration of people who are furthest from employment through intensive support and a specific fixed-term employment contract.

⁽²²⁾ The CREFOP is made up of representatives of the State, the Regions and the social partners. Its main mission is to coordinate the stakeholders and ensure the coherence of their strategies at the regional level.

⁽²³⁾ The professional branches group together companies from the same sector of activity, covered by the same collective agreement concluded between the employers' representatives and employees' trade unions. Providing companies with support on upskilling strategies has become part of the mission of the professional branches.

compétences – OPCO) ⁽²⁴⁾, and other actors such as training centres, guidance service providers and funding providers.

Since the regional and local levels are of relevance for the TCR, three French regions (out of the 13 that make up the territory of France excluding regions overseas) were selected for the study: Bourgogne Franche Comté (BFC), Nouvelle-Aquitaine (NA) and Provence Alpes Côte d’Azur (PACA).

Figure 1. **Regions of France**



NB: in yellow, the regions covered by Cedefop's TCR.

Source: Cedefop.

The three regions have been selected for their geographical configuration and the socioeconomic characteristics of their population, relevant to the study:

- (a) they all have to address territorial disparities, especially in challenged urban districts and remote rural areas. Both characteristics mean that the designated zones are considered fragile, with poor socioeconomic indicators, and are benefitting from specific policies and funding;

⁽²⁴⁾ Eleven OPCOs have been created by the 2018 Law; they group together one or several professional branches and help the companies that belong to those branches in defining and financing their strategies for developing workers' skills.

- (b) a significant proportion of the out-of-school population over 15 years old has a low level of education in all three regions (no diploma or with a diploma up to EQF level 2): 29.4% in BFC, 26.8% in NA, 27.7% in PACA;
- (c) the unemployment rate of the population without a diploma is 23.2% in BFC, 23.9% in NA and 24.8% in PACA ⁽²⁵⁾.

Figure 2. The remote rural areas and the challenged urban districts in France



NB: the remote rural areas are in green.
 Source: Observatoire des territoires, 2022.



NB: the dark blue squares represent the municipalities with one or more challenged urban districts; the blue circles represent the number of inhabitants in these districts
 Source: Agence Nationale de Cohésion des Territoires, 2015

1.7. The micro phase

1.7.1. Identifying the areas of study

Defining the areas of study, within the selected strategies (Section 1.5) and the methodology to be followed, was carried out after an exploratory step, which consisted of preliminary contacts with key actors in the BFC, NA and PACA regions. This exploratory step made it possible to choose, under the selected strategies, the services and schemes offering outreach and guidance that could best fit the priorities for analysis and the TCR target groups, as well as to check the feasibility of the study.

⁽²⁵⁾ Figures for 2019 (source: INSEE : dossiers complets Région BFC, Région NA, Région PACA).

1.7.1.1. *The area of study for low-skilled unemployed adults*

For low-skilled unemployed adults, one scheme covered by the PRICs has been selected in each of the three regions: DAQ 2.0 covered by BFC PRIC, Mobilisation-Formation covered by NA PRIC and Axe 2 covered by PACA PRIC. The three selected schemes were chosen because they aimed to encourage cooperation between different kinds of actors, to promote seamless pathways and to improve and/or to innovative in how they reach out, support and provide guidance to low-skilled adults (who are the furthest away from employment and training activities and even the PES).

While the three schemes contribute to the regional implementation of the PIC strategy and, as such, have common features, they also differ from one another in several aspects. Before outlining the content of each scheme, it is important to focus on the main differentiating elements between them.

The three schemes draw on different funding models and different steering and managing principles. Like most of the PRICs, BFC PRIC and NA PRICs were signed between the State and, respectively, the BFC region and the NA region. However, the PACA PRIC was signed between the State and the PACA regional office of Pôle Emploi (the French PES).

The three schemes also take different forms. DAQ 2.0 is a general economic interest service provided by a consortium of actors mandated by the BFC region after a public call for tender. Axe 2 is a call for tender for training services issued by the PACA Pôle Emploi. The implementation of the training services has been handed over to several private training organisations, which responded to the tender. Mobilisation-Formation is an experimental scheme subsidised by the NA region through a call for proposals.

The three schemes do not rely on the same backgrounds and territorial roots. DAQ 2.0, which is a revised version of a former scheme, was launched in 2020 ⁽²⁶⁾ and is implemented by a consortium whose leaders are traditional public education and training organisations with longstanding local roots. Axe 2 is a new scheme launched in 2020, implemented by training organisations, which often cooperates with PACA Pôle Emploi. These training organisations are quite long-established private associations (operating for at least 25 years) that usually provide support and training activities to the unemployed, each with its own specific approach (cognitive education, social support). Mobilisation-Formation is also a new and recent scheme (the first call for proposals was launched in 2019) which aims to

⁽²⁶⁾ DAQ 2.0 has replaced a former scheme, DAQ, which was implemented in 2017, and was also the continuation of a former experimental scheme, PAQ, set up in 2010. It is, therefore, a revised version of an older scheme which has incorporated some improvements over time, such as new ways to access the scheme and modules to construct one's work project plan.

open the fields of vocational training and employment to actors that do not usually intervene in these fields, such as social support actors, cultural organisations and sports associations.

In their respective regions, whatever the actor in charge of the implementation, DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 provide quite a homogeneous service in the various places where it takes place and are attended by a significant number of participants. Mobilisation-Formation, however, gives rise to heterogeneous small-scale experimental projects scattered across the regional territory. This is partly because Mobilisation-Formation contributes to meeting the third objective of the PRICs which tries to encourage innovative and experimental activities to 'move towards modernising the contents and modes of implementation of training, guidance and support services', whereas DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 contribute to meeting the second objective of the PRICs which is 'ensuring for the most vulnerable groups the access to qualifying pathways through the strengthening of core and key competences'.

Description of the DAQ 2.0 scheme in BFC

The implementation of DAQ 2.0 has been entrusted for 5 years to a consortium led by public training organisations in the BFC region. DAQ 2.0 aims to offer secure, individualised and personalised training pathways to any unemployed person over the age of 16, whether or not they are registered with Pôle Emploi, and with a particular focus on the low-skilled. The pathways seek to bring the prerequisites and support for participation in qualified training and employment.

In reaching out to the target groups, DAQ 2.0 relies not only on a local service (through 21 geographic platforms) ⁽²⁷⁾ but also on a partnership and synergy between local actors. For example, the BFC region signed agreements with eight departments (as local authorities in charge of social support policies) to give them the possibility of referring people to DAQ 2.0, without the need for a prior step with PES actors. Other local actors (e.g. the PLIE platforms ⁽²⁸⁾ and the IAE organisations), who are used to working with low-skilled unemployed adults, have been given the opportunity by the region to refer people to DAQ 2.0. An individual can also register directly with DAQ 2.0 on his/her own initiative. Unlike the previous versions, even individuals without a defined professional project plan can access DAQ 2.0. In this case, modules to build their own professional project plans are provided.

⁽²⁷⁾ EMFOR <https://www.emfor-bfc.org>

⁽²⁸⁾ The PLIE (Plans Locaux pour l'Insertion et l'Emploi) platforms are local partnership platforms that bring together the actors involved in the field of labour market integration and employment and provide individualised and intensive support to the unemployed who are the most removed from the labour market.

Individual pathways in DAQ 2.0 can last up to 750 hours. Participants have the right to interrupt their pathway and then resume it. The pathways include several modules: support for defining one's professional project plan, refresher courses, preparation for certification related to one's work project plan, workshops on life skills and self-confidence and work placements. DAQ 2.0 participants benefit from a monthly allowance paid by either the BFC region or Pôle Emploi, depending on the status of the participants (if the participant was entitled to a Pôle Emploi allowance before accessing the scheme, he/she continues to receive this allowance; otherwise, the participant receives the regional allowance. The amount of the regional allowance depends on the participant's attendance rate, which is not the case for the Pôle Emploi allowance.

Several types of professionals from the public training organisations are involved in the DAQ 2.0 pathways. The coordinators play a role particularly at the beginning of the pathways. They inform people about DAQ 2.0. They not only meet the candidates and evaluate their motivation for entering the programme, but also identify the obstacles that need to be removed before taking part in DAQ 2.0. They organise the diagnostic step from which the individual training plans are established. The pathways advisers act as intermediaries and facilitate the links between the participants and all DAQ 2.0 professionals as well as the other external actors who intervene throughout the individual pathways. They also provide an individual follow-up, up to 6 months after exiting DAQ 2.0. The trainers oversee the several modules and the training; employment relationship managers oversee consolidating and developing the local partnership networks.

Description of the Axe 2 scheme in PACA

The call for tender for Axe 2, managed by PACA Pôle Emploi, aims to purchase training activities that encourage the participants to engage in upskilling pathways and to acquire the prerequisites to access training leading to a qualification or to employment. The 3-year contract (2020-22) was awarded to several training organisations with which PACA Pôle Emploi signed annual agreements, specifying the number of individual pathways to be covered, the number of hours of support and the corresponding funding.

The participants should be the people targeted by the PIC (regardless of age) and for whom direct access to training leading to a qualification or to employment is not possible. The target groups are the low-skilled unemployed, people living in the challenged urban districts, people with disabilities and people who have difficulties of different kinds to overcome. According to the specifications, they must be registered with Pôle Emploi to participate in Axe 2, but this registration can be done at the time of their enrolment so as not to exclude the so-called invisible population. There is no single date for all participants to enter the programme, but

the programme can be accessed at any time to accommodate the time constraints of the target groups. The participants benefit from a monthly allowance paid by Pôle Emploi.

According to the specifications, the training organisations entrusted to implement Axe 2 should provide comprehensive support to the participants and focus on removing the barriers (financial, social, psychological) that prevent the latter from attending a qualified training programme or from getting a job. Thus, the training pathways should be a lever for diversifying the ways and methods of reaching out to the target groups, and for encouraging them to engage in UP in a non-academic way. They should reinforce the self-confidence and commitment of the participants as the first step towards a return to training and work integration. The average duration of the pathways is 615 hours, including 105 hours of work placement.

All participants go through the following components:

- (a) the individual meeting prior to entering the Axe 2 programme;
- (b) the individual prior assessment of basic skills to determine the participants' levels, to establish the individual training plans and to set up relatively homogeneous groups;
- (c) refresher modules (basic literacy, numeracy, digital skills, transferable professional skills);
- (d) support for defining individual professional project plans;
- (e) work placements.

Depending on the training organisations in charge of the implementation of Axe 2, other types of activities may be included in the pathways: collaborative projects (such as setting up job dating events), cultural outings, theatre activities or coaching to work on self-confidence.

Description of the Mobilisation-Formation scheme in NA

The call for projects was launched by NA to encourage innovative approaches and methods for reaching out to the most vulnerable groups among young people and adults, and to favour their access to training and qualifications. The target groups are the unemployed who are the furthest away from accessing training opportunities, the labour market and the PES, and who may be experiencing social or family disruption.

Beside the innovative dimensions of the projects, NA is expected to promote cooperation and a synergy of support between the actors who provide social support and the actors who provide training or employment support. Those actors do not usually intervene in the same field and tend to work in parallel. The call for projects aims to increase the links between the two forms of support that the most

vulnerable groups need at the same time. According to the coordinator of the call for proposals, the objectives were to go beyond what we usually see by initiating new partnerships between community-based organisations, training providers, PES actors as well as the social support services from the Departments to create seamless pathways extending from the initial reaching out to people to them entering qualifying training programmes.

The first wave (2019) of the call for proposals received 35 applications; 17 were awarded. The nature, size, location and duration, as well as the type of lead partners of the projects awarded, are very diverse. Some projects are carried out by charitable organisations, by cultural organisations and by sporting organisations, whereas others are carried out by municipalities or by not-for-profit organisations dedicated, for example, to women's rights or to socioeconomic insertion. The projects are carried out in challenged urban districts or in remote rural areas. Most of them are concentrated in two departments out of the 12 that make up the NA. region. Depending on the chosen approaches and activities, the projects awarded by the region are constructed on a short-term, (1 month) full-time format or on a longer term (up to 5 months) part-time format, and the number of participants varies from 10 to 150. There is no specific financial support, such as a monthly allowance granted to those participating in the projects. The projects rely on unusual methods for reaching out to the target groups (for instance, sport and theatre activities or tours of neighbourhoods on a tricycle to go out and meet the inhabitants) and for encouraging them to take the first steps towards upskilling pathways (for instance, educational gardening, formative economic activities on topics such as cooking or environmental preservation or organising trips that could end up in a company visit).

1.7.1.2. *The area of study on low-skilled workers*

Introduced in 2014, and then reformed in 2018, the CEP service is defined as a support and guiding service to take stock of one's professional situation and, if necessary, to build and implement a strategy for professional development. It is a free service that any active person can access, regardless of age, sector of activity, economic status or level of education. It contributes, throughout a person's life, to improving his or her ability to make his or her own work choices and to progress professionally, particularly by increasing his or her skills and obtaining new professional qualifications. It is based on the logic of a co-construction of upskilling and work project plans through individual initiative rather than through instruction from an organisation.

The CEP service is entrusted to different kinds of providers depending on the status of the individual:

- (a) to PES actors and, more specifically, to Pôle Emploi for adult jobseekers, to Mission Locale for people under the age of 26, to Cap Emploi for people with disabilities and to the APEC for executives (*cadres*);
- (b) to specific service providers selected by France Compétences, through a public sector award determined on a regional basis (in France and in the French Overseas Departments and Territories) for people working in the private sector

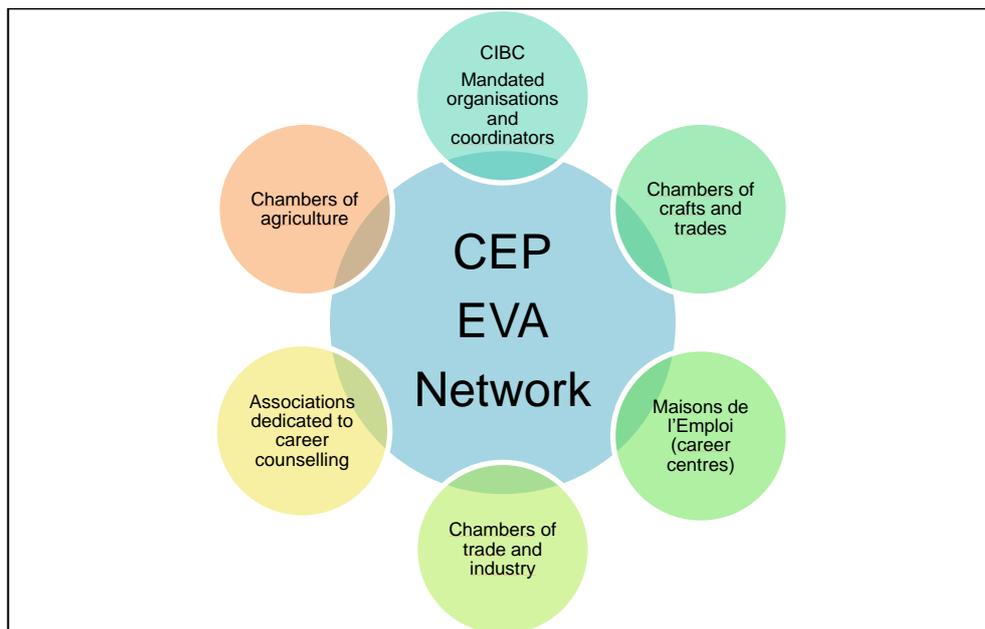
Description of the Career Development Counselling (CEP) service for people working in the private sector

The CEP service for people working in the private sector (hereafter referred to as the CEP service) came into force in 2020 and has been provided since then by 18 actors selected by France Compétences for a period of 4 years. In eight regions, including the BFC, NA and PACA regions, the leading providers are the Inter-institutional skills assessment centres (Centres Inter-institutionnels de Bilans de compétences – CIBC) ⁽²⁹⁾. They deliver the CEP service together with regional co-contracting actors ⁽³⁰⁾. They form the EVA network (Réseau EVA).

⁽²⁹⁾ CIBC were created in 1986 on the Ministry of Labour's initiative to accompany public policies in employment and vocational training. As its name may suggest, the CIBC have historically developed an expertise related to the competence assessment scheme. However, they have progressively extended their mission and methods towards career choice, guidance and lifelong vocational training. Today, not only do they deliver the competence assessment scheme and CEP services, but also services linked to validation of prior learning or the Cléa certification.

⁽³⁰⁾ Depending on the regional partnerships, the co-contracting actors may be Chambers of commerce and industry, Chambers of agriculture, Chambers of crafts and trades, as well as organisations dedicated to providing information on training and employment, to support for retraining and to socio-professional integration.

Figure 3. **EVA network**



Source: Cedefop.

The CEP service is provided in accordance with the specifications defined by France Compétences, which precisely describe the framework, the methods and the content. Some units of work (UO) are set for each step of the CEP service, providing an indication of length, time frame, objectives and associated deliverables.

The main steps are:

- (a) UO 0: referral, provided by a regional call centre for planning an appointment with an adviser according to the closest available timeslots and/or geographical location;
- (b) UO 1: first individualised appointment, provided by the CEP adviser and tailored to the needs of the user; it results in the drafting of a shared situational analysis;
- (c) UO 2: personalised guidance, provided by the CEP adviser; this unit of work comprises two sub-units, UO 2.1 which helps the user to define his/her upskilling and job path, and results in the drafting of a professional project plan, and UO 2.2 which helps the user implement his/her professional project plan and also results in the drafting of a deliverable.

Figure 4. **Indicative length and timeframe of each step of the CEP service**



Source: Cedefop.

The specifications also indicate the advisers' expected profiles and backgrounds (at least 3 years of experience in career transition support or at least a level 5 qualification in work insertion/career transition and 1 year of work experience), as well as the skills and competences that they should have to deliver the service and the approach that they should stick to for delivering the service. The CEP advisers must benefit from professional support for their practice.

The mandated CEP service providers are also required to set up plans for enhancing access to the service, to promote the service to the target groups and to the actors who can act as intermediaries, to develop regional partnerships and to ensure the quality of the service delivery. They are required to increase ties with local actors so that the CEP service can become a common structure of support for professional development and foster complementarity between the existing forms of support (for instance, in-house interviews with employers, validation of prior learning, skills assessment schemes, funding schemes dedicated to changing work ⁽³¹⁾ and social or health support services). The CEP service for people in work is supposed to facilitate the use of resources and means that they need to build and implement their own individual work project path.

Access to the CEP service comes through a voluntary request from the individual, except in the case of some professional retraining funding schemes (e.g. Dispositif démissionnaire ⁽³²⁾ and Transitions collectives ⁽³³⁾) for which the use of the CEP service is mandatory before applying. The user can choose

⁽³¹⁾ For instance, the *Projet de Transition Professionnelle (PTP)* is a scheme that stems from the last vocational training reform (as a revised version of a former scheme) to facilitate job changes as a result of gaining a qualification through training. Under certain conditions, an employee may apply for it and benefit from training leave. The employee continues to be paid during the training period.

⁽³²⁾ *Dispositif Démissionnaire* is a scheme (launched in 2019) that enables an employee, under certain conditions, to quit his/her job and receive unemployment benefit during the qualified training programme he/she attends for retraining or creating his/her own business.

⁽³³⁾ *Transitions Collectives* is a scheme (launched in 2021) that companies can apply for, under certain conditions. It aims to support retraining towards promising occupations for those employees whose jobs are at risk.

between three types of appointments: face-to-face, remote by telephone and remote by video conference. There are several dedicated CEP service locations in each region to ensure a dense territorial coverage. Depending on the type of site, opening days and opening hours are not the same (for instance, the main sites must be open at least 2 evenings a week, during 2 lunch breaks a week and on Saturdays).

In the BFC region, there are 43 sites where the CEP service is provided by either the mandated CIBC or the co-contractors. They are spread over the eight departments of the region and over 34 municipalities. In the NA region, there are 107 sites where the CEP service is provided by either the mandated CIBC or the co-contractors. They are spread over the 12 departments of the region and over 76 municipalities. In the PACA region, there are 30 sites where the CEP service is provided by either the mandated CIBC or the co-contractors. They are spread over the six departments of the region and over 24 municipalities. In all three regions, there are some areas with a concentration of CEP sites and other areas with no nearby sites.

1.7.2. Methodological approach for data collection

The micro phase of the study used a mixed methodological approach to collect data from the actors in the field.

For low-skilled unemployed adults, qualitative interviews, based on a unique template, were carried out with staff members from DAQ 2.0, Axe 2 and Mobilisation-Formation. The interviewees' role was to reach out and/or provide support and guidance to the participants and/or to develop local partnerships. Depending on the schemes considered and on the organisations in charge of the implementation, the interviewees held different positions/titles: coordinator, project manager, training-employment relationship manager, pathway adviser, vocational and job adviser, educator, social mediator, trainer and coach.

Collecting the opinion of the participants required two methods. The significant number of participants in DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 enabled a quantitative approach to be taken through an online questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed during collective workshops, in the presence of a DAQ 2.0 or Axe 2 staff member and a TCR team member, to obtain as many completed questionnaires as possible, as well as to reduce the risk of misunderstanding and to offset the lack of computer skills among the participants. For Mobilisation-Formation, qualitative interviews were carried out with some beneficiaries due to the very diverse nature of its experimental projects and the small number of participants, which lowered the likelihood of collecting enough data for statistical analysis. The interview template was based on the same items and scope as the online questionnaire.

For low-skilled workers, qualitative interviews were carried out with CEP advisers from the three regions. The advisers who carried out the interviews had

various education and vocational backgrounds, worked within either the mandated CEP service provider or the co-contractor organisations, were full-time or part-time CEP advisers and were located in urban or rural or coastal areas.

In addition to this qualitative information, secondary data from Céreq's DEFIS and IMPACT surveys ⁽³⁴⁾ were used. The employees' training and trajectories survey (*Dispositif d'Enquête sur la Formation et les Itinéraires des Salariés*, DEFIS) is an official, national survey that links company practice with their employees' career trajectories and the training they have received. A representative sample of 4 500 companies with three or more employees was surveyed and a panel of 16 500 employees from these companies was surveyed and followed over a 5-year period (from 2015 to 2019). A complementary ad hoc study, the IMPACT survey, was carried out to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on skill development practices. These surveys provided information on the access to, and the use of, upskilling opportunities and support. The TCR focused on data about low-qualified employees ⁽³⁵⁾, according to qualification and occupation.

During the micro phase of the study, 78 interviewees and 225 questionnaire responses provided primary data, which were complemented by secondary data from the two Céreq surveys.

⁽³⁴⁾ More information on Cereq surveys [DEFIS](#) and [IMPACT](#).

⁽³⁵⁾ Employees with no diploma or with a diploma under EQF level 3, and in unskilled occupations.

CHAPTER 2.

Main findings of the micro phase for the low-skilled unemployed

2.1. Outreach/access to the schemes surveyed

2.1.1. Enlarging the pool of actors closest to the potential beneficiaries

Identifying and encouraging potential beneficiaries to enrol in a guidance scheme is notably influenced by the capacity of the main stakeholders to cooperate on their aim of reaching those members of the public most on the periphery of training and employment.

Most of this public is not (yet) registered or supported by the Public Employment Services, which could provide them with potential benefits, such as enabling them to become acquainted with their rights, to receive an allowance and to have access to some forms of support to move forward in their social and work reintegration. The lack of demand for PES support may be not only the result of a lack of motivation, a mistrust of institutions or difficulty in formulating a project or in finding coherent solutions to various cumulating difficulties (see below), but also the perceived complexity of accessing the services.

However, similar difficulties can be also experienced by some low-skilled unemployed adults registered with the PES who, for multiple reasons, did not manage to benefit from tailored solutions. Even if they are already known by these services, these adults require specific, reinforced support to follow guidance services. The provision of this improved support is among the objectives of PIC fund in general, and the schemes described in this chapter specifically.

Whether these unemployed low-skilled public groupings are known or not known by PES, reaching out to them to offer guidance support is a highly challenging process. Considering all the schemes surveyed together, three similar patterns for reaching out to the target population emerge.

2.1.1.1. *Through classic PES actors*

First, the PES maintains a dominant role in the recruitment of unemployed adults for the schemes surveyed. The mandate of the PES in France is primarily to provide support and to offer solutions to the registered unemployed but it may also cover those people on a minimum income (*Revenu de Solidarité Active*, RSA) who are registered (voluntarily) with the social services.

Whether they are organisations specialised in adult training (such as GRETA or AFPA ⁽³⁶⁾), which are responsible for the local implementation of DAQ 2.0), guidance/training providers working mainly in work integration (for Axe 2), social economy associations or local authorities (for Mobilisation-Formation), they all have pre-established links with the PES, which they use to source the schemes observed. Since the main outreach issue is to reach the so-called invisibles, namely those members of the public who are not on the institutional radars of PES, it is clear that if identification practices were limited to PES sourcing, the efficiency of the schemes surveyed would be reduced, with a clear risk of aggravating the situation of invisibility. Therefore, the scheme providers have also developed two other ways of reaching out.

2.1.1.2. *Through other emerging actors*

To broaden participation towards the most vulnerable categories of the public, scheme providers use networks of associations and several diverse organisations located in the local communities and close to target populations. These local actors include social mediators, neighbourhood associations, social centres, departmental social services, medical support professionals (work medicine), temporary employment agencies and IAE organisations. They act as guides or relays for awareness-raising activities for the local scheme, establishing partnerships with the scheme providers, generally of an informal nature and based on pre-existing mutual knowledge and habits of cooperation.

These cooperation arrangements function in different ways in each scheme:

- (a) in DAQ 2.0, training actors (notably public actors) are entrusted and financed by the region to implement the scheme, but the recognition of the status of referral actors is granted to professionals belonging to other types of organisations (enabling their enrolment into the scheme without compulsory registration to PES);
- (b) the implementation of Axe 2 is entrusted to training providers traditionally acting as PACA Pôle Emploi contractors. In the Axe 2 framework, for example, they are explicitly encouraged to establish relationships with field actors acting as relays (it is in the specifications of the contract);
- (c) the Mobilisation-Formation call fund projects are directly managed by actors closer to social work than to training/employment. They are new intermediaries who help to improve outreach capacity and reach new

⁽³⁶⁾ GRETA are public adult training schools funded by the Ministry of Education while AFPA is the main para-public adult training provider in France. In the BFC region both organisations cooperate with a third actor, Poinfor (a private network of training providers) on the implementation of DAQ 2.0.

categories of the public. Thus, the role of these (new for the region) field actors is fully recognised and supported.

2.1.1.3. *Through word-of-mouth (once the scheme is well established)*

The gradual establishment of the schemes surveyed will encourage the passing on of information between the beneficiaries to create a real word-of-mouth network. As one of the Axe 2 advisers pointed out: ‘our best ambassadors are our trainees’. Social proximity and language combine to promote information being shared.

For DAQ 2.0 and Mobilisation-Formation, direct enrolment in the scheme is possible without PES prior referral ⁽³⁷⁾. Thus, word-of-mouth proves to be an important means of recruitment. According to the beneficiaries’ survey (Table 1), 13.8% of the unemployed adults interviewed indicated that they had heard about the scheme through word-of-mouth and 20.9% declared they had joined the scheme by their own personal initiative without going through PES beforehand ⁽³⁸⁾.

Table 1. **Knowledge and access to DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2**

	DAQ 2.0	Axe 2	Total
How did you hear about the scheme?			
Public employment service	63.0% (87)	70.1% (61)	65.8% (148)
Other social and support services	12.3% (17)	8.0% (7)	10.7% (24)
Word-of-mouth	8.7% (12)	21.8% (19)	13.8% (31)
How did you join the scheme?			
Personal initiative/advice from relatives	18.1% (25)	25.3% (22)	20.9% (47)
Enrolled by a PES adviser	68.8% (95)	67.8% (59)	68.4% (154)
Enrolled by another professional/adviser	8.7% (12)	3.4% (3)	6.7% (15)

Source: TCR France survey on beneficiaries ⁽³⁹⁾.

The stakeholders involved in the implementation of the schemes can be hierarchised on three levels: the funding bodies, the implementers (including the beneficiaries who actively participate in the definition of their upskilling pathway) and an extended pool of partners who contribute to the efficiency of the pathway

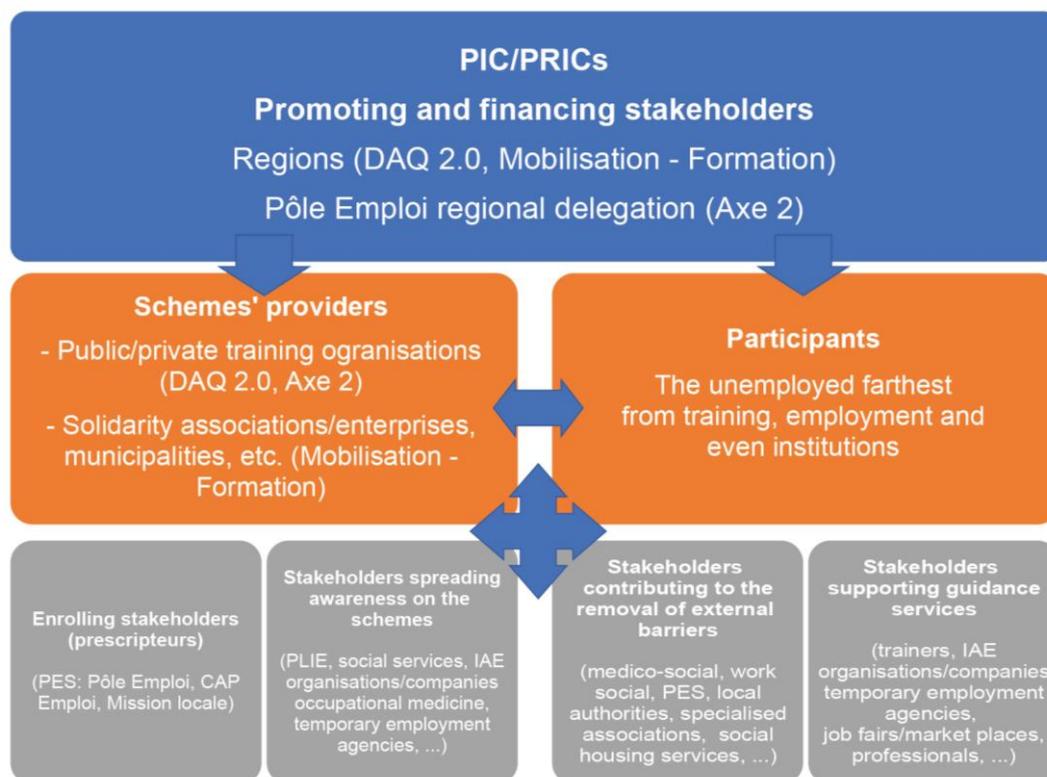
⁽³⁷⁾ For Axe 2, even if there is an intentional first contact from the individual, the registration beforehand to Pôle Emploi is compulsory.

⁽³⁸⁾ The same number of personal initiatives is confirmed by qualitative interviews carried out with the beneficiaries of Mobilisation-Formation.

⁽³⁹⁾ Questionnaires were completed only by participants to DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2; qualitative interviews were carried out with some participants to Mobilisation-Formation (Section 1.7.2).

(Figure 5). The implementers are thus able to work within an ecosystem of differentiated actors in all stages of the pathway, which favours success.

Figure 5. **The ecosystems of actors for DAQ 2.0, Axe 2 and Mobilisation-Formation**



Source: Cedefop.

2.1.2. Building, maintaining and developing local partnerships: a question of time and resources

The outreach goal is clearly dependent on the efficiency of the provider organisations to build, maintain and develop local partnerships. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the advisers, the people referenced and the coordinators interviewed mentioned the time constraints inherent in developing efficient communication and partnerships, a task that must be combined with the other duties specific to the provision of guidance services and the overall management of the scheme on site.

It is worth mentioning that in some successful cases, awareness-raising activities have been entrusted to social mediators and facilitators acting in the local area and neighbourhood, which made it possible to allocate dedicated resources to the identification and even recruitment of beneficiaries. Social mediators can be a member of the staff (as is the case for Axe 2) or belong to external organisations working closely with service providers (some examples are found among the

Mobilisation-Formation projects). Carrying out information and awareness-raising activities in the places where people live contribute to the success of reaching the most vulnerable.

2.1.3. Building interest, enhancing motivation and removing barriers Setting the first contact through innovative outreach practices

It is among Mobilisation-Formation financed projects that it is possible to identify the most innovative practices aimed at supporting efficient outreach. The call for projects made explicit reference to avoiding the traditional sourcing pathways (based on PES jobseekers' compulsory enrolment to guidance/training schemes) and to implementing new strategies to reach out to the most disadvantaged target audience. As a result, the call funded projects submitted by non-traditional stakeholders who were not previously part of the ecosystem of regional providers (Section 1.7.1.1) ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The findings based on a panel of seven projects funded by the Mobilisation-Formation call suggest that the outreach objective was generally achieved. Four out of seven projects surveyed introduced innovative outreach practices as a key element. Whether it be through the organisation of sports sessions at the beginning of a building block, information tours in the most disadvantaged areas of the city promoting collective craft/artistic/ludic activities, or even regular visits to neighbourhoods by a social mediator on a tricycle, these practices have made it possible to get closer to a very varied community of people in need. This more relaxed approach and the establishment of a personal connexion enable discussion, thus helping people to regain confidence and gradually bring them back into the field of work reactivation.

The first contact with those on the periphery of training/employment rarely arises in direct connection with these issues. The key to outreach work lies in the capacity of the mediator/adviser to listen and to allow people to express themselves, about seeking solutions to their daily or urgent problems. The analysis strongly suggests that the invitation to enrol on a specific guidance scheme should be based on a request from the individual and not driven by the available existing scheme provision or the need to fulfil scheme vacancies.

Support through encouragement and help in re-establishing self-confidence

In relation to the modalities of access to support schemes, findings clearly show the importance of personal motivation, which is difficult to (re)build for people who are often discouraged, long-term unemployed and feel themselves abandoned by

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Regional traditional providers are organisations delivering training to achieve State-recognised qualifications or certification.

public support services. In addition, the classical French mechanism of PES compulsory enrolment into guidance schemes⁽⁴¹⁾ greatly hangs on the development of these motivational resources.

As an enhancement to motivation, the fieldwork shows that topics related to training and employment do not immediately come up in the preliminary discussions with potential beneficiaries⁽⁴²⁾. Access to guidance schemes is often based on other drivers, such as the need to reactivate oneself, to get out of one's home, to enter or re-enter the sphere of interpersonal relations and an interest in a practical activity offered in the scheme (e.g. gardening, sport, etc.), which enable self-confidence to be rebuilt. 'All means are good (...) Really, the point is the bonds of trust with people, after which everything becomes simpler' stated one professional in discussing this mediation fieldwork.

Once the project has caught on, particularly for personal motivation, during the first contact with scheme advisers, participants are recommended to enrol with the employment service if they are not yet registered, and with departmental social services, to enable them to get to know about their rights and to get access to public support.

Removing the external barriers and financial obstacles

The removal of external barriers appears to be a central issue. It refers to the capacity of scheme providers to reduce obstacles to meeting scheme objectives or fix practical problems to enable people to attend guidance programmes and initiate upskilling pathways. Nevertheless, it is necessary to put the external barriers concept into the right perspective, as it can be narrowed down to the individual's characteristics. In fact, these obstacles are external to the training/employment objective but not external to the person who is likely to participate in the scheme (and perhaps who is not yet a jobseeker in the strict sense of the term, since employment is not the most urgent issue for many of these people). This is the reason why practices developed for this target group are progressively shifting towards forms of comprehensive support for the individual.

For the groups not in training and employment, the difficulties encountered by a large proportion of participants in the schemes (all schemes combined) are numerous: financial, housing and family issues, and difficulties associated with geographical mobility, insecurity, addiction problems and psychiatric disorders.

⁽⁴¹⁾ It is called *prescription* in French. A PES *prescription* is a formal act, which validates a training or skills development project for an unemployed person and triggers the means and support made available to achieve it.

⁽⁴²⁾ This is particularly true where social mediators are involved (sometimes in Axe 2 and Mobilisation-Formation).

These are situations that are widely addressed in the schemes studied, in partnership with specialised services or internally by specialised staff ⁽⁴³⁾. Removal of these obstacles is essential to enable participants to commit to a training/employment project.

Different types of obstacles require different solutions, with varying degrees of intervention and timescales to be considered. Some examples are illustrated here:

- (a) choosing activities and strategies to maintain the link between the adviser and the beneficiary if there is a delay between the first contact being made and the beginning of the support action (DAQ 2.0);
- (b) analysing the participant's personal situation to remove any non-training related specific obstacles as an integral part of the support (Axe 2, Mobilisation-Formation);
- (c) providing a public transport flat-rate allowance on entry into the scheme to remove geographic mobility/transportation obstacles (DAQ 2.0); providing financial support to get a public transport card (Axe 2); choosing scheme premises located close to the participant's place of residence and/or accessible by public transport; developing a solidarity taxi service, particularly in rural areas (Mobilisation-Formation);
- (d) targeting socialisation/resocialisation of the individual through sports/leisure/craft activities (Mobilisation-Formation);
- (e) supporting the search (not always easy) for childcare solutions.

Financial issues are a crucial aspect to be addressed for enabling participation by beneficiaries. It is dealt with differently in the different schemes:

- (a) a monthly allowance paid by Pôle Emploi proportional to the attendance rate; lunch is also covered (Axe 2);
- (b) a flat-rate allowance from Pôle Emploi or the Region (DAQ 2.0);
- (c) opening up ways of solving the economic resources issue (no allowance provided); case-by-case support (Mobilisation-Formation).

Taking account of the heterogeneity of the low-skilled population

All of the schemes and projects surveyed receive people with lower qualifications (\leq EQF 3) or with a diploma obtained abroad, are outside of employment and unable/unwilling to enter training leading to a qualification. However, there is great

⁽⁴³⁾ We can also find newcomers in France who are qualified in their country of origin but whose level of French does not allow them to have direct access to employment. In addition, there is also an over-representation of women who are returning to work after having been a housewife for many years.

heterogeneity of participants in terms of age, social situation and external barriers faced ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

The large mix of population in terms of age can be found in the three schemes (from 16 for the youngest to 65 for the oldest) ⁽⁴⁵⁾, which can be explained both by the sources of enrolment mentioned above (Pôle Emploi for adults and Mission Locale for the younger population, for example) and by the system of continual entry and exit that the different schemes allow ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

The varied composition of the participants justifies the variance in terms of governance and support set ups mentioned above. Second, it shows the complexity of achieving the objectives attributed to the schemes, which should not cater for homogeneous groups with similar problems, but a plurality of profiles to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in the logic of individualised support.

Table 2. **Profiles of DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 participants**

	DAQ 2.0	Axe 2	Total
Gender			
Women	64.5% (89)	82.8% (72)	71.6% (161)
Men	31.2% (43)	16.1% (14)	25.3% (57)
Age Group			
25-35 years	29.0% (40)	21.8% (19)	26.2% (59)
35-45 years	31.2% (43)	29.9% (26)	30.7% (69)
45-55 years	25.4% (35)	34.5% (30)	28.9% (65)
> 55 years	14.5% (20)	13.8% (12)	14.2% (32)
Nationality			
French	68.1% (94)	46.0% (40)	59.6% (134)
Foreign	29.0% (40)	50.6% (44)	37.3% (84)
Family status			
Single	35.5% (49)	20.7% (18)	29.8% (67)
A couple with no child(ren)	13.0% (18)	18.4% (16)	15.1% (34)
A couple with child(ren)	23.2% (32)	39.1% (34)	29.3% (66)

⁽⁴⁴⁾ In DAQ 2.0, people with disabilities and people undergoing work reconversions seem to be more represented than in the other schemes.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Quantitative survey data produced for DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 (Table 2) are confirmed by the qualitative observations carried out for the Mobilisation-Formation scheme, where similar mixing can be found.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ The schemes surveyed do not have a start and end date. Participants can enter and quit them at any time (if they find a more fitting option or find a job, for instance). Temporary suspensions are also possible. This flow of persons contributes to the mixing of participants enrolled and the composition of the groups of beneficiaries.

	DAQ 2.0	Axe 2	Total
Single with child(ren)	22.5% (31)	19.5% (17)	21.3% (48)
If with young child(ren), percentage of participants benefiting from childcare solutions	67.3% (33)	46.5% (20)	57.6% (53)

Source: TCR France survey on beneficiaries.

2.2. Guidance provided by the schemes surveyed

2.2.1. Acting collaboratively to support beneficiaries build individual projects

Ensuring continuity of support (seamless pathways)

The PIC/PRIC strategy strongly focuses on the importance of limiting the risks of a rupture between the different kinds of support actions that the beneficiaries need (outreach, guidance, pre-qualification training, work-based skills development, qualification, labour market access support). In practice, however, the continuity of support is delivered through various solutions leading to different objectives: making the passage through the system as flexible as possible (for example, with the possibility of continuous entry and exit points), limiting time loss during the support schemes (by maintaining a constant focus on the participants being committed to something), limiting dropouts (with a strong focus on external barriers, not only at the start but also over time), and dealing with the issue of continuity of support post-scheme (for instance, by enrolling in a training programme leading to a qualification).

The common feature of all of these solutions is the involvement of different actors at all levels. Primarily, it includes the participants themselves, who are often involved in the very definition of the action (guidance support stemming from the expressed needs and wishes of the participants) and of their individual project.

The schemes' providers also maintain links with PES actors who support guidance work, the depth of which varies according to the scheme and the territory. Coordination between scheme providers and PES advisers ranges from the organisation of tripartite meetings with the participant (a practice more often adopted by Cap Emploi and Mission Locale), in the office hours of PES advisers (mostly Pôle Emploi) within the structure of the scheme's provider, or different forms of support for PES administrative issues that the schemes' advisers provide to the participants.

The provision of seamless individualised support is based on solutions that can be identified within the local partnership ecosystem, through the contact network of the structure or even of the individual adviser, or on local actors

developing the habit of working closely together in their localities (diversifying their contacts using old partnerships or creating new ties, even informal ones, according to their immediate needs).

Ensuring access to the workplace

All the schemes surveyed have a workplace component. Work providers (companies, temporary employment agencies, IAE organisations, individual professionals) intervene at various stages of the guidance process. Different and complementary forms of intervention by these actors have been identified. All of the following activities have been put into the framework of the schemes' guidance actions and organised by the schemes' providers:

- (a) the expert interview: an interview with a professional, not only informing the participant about the trade or job identified, deconstructing representations and stereotypes about certain trades/jobs and validating or invalidating the professional project, but also finding out what skills need to be worked on to achieve the objective;
- (b) the work placement (through the PMSMP format: finding out about a trade or a company during a period of on-the-job experience. Schemes' providers reach agreements with companies and organisations eager to offer opportunities for on-the-job experience;
- (c) one-day, on-site visits organised in companies, based on (informal) agreements with the scheme's provider;
- (d) attendance at job forums, fairs or speed dating with companies or temporary employment agencies to obtain an integrated or fixed-term contract.

Professionals also intervene through visits to technical facilities belonging to vocational training centres offering qualification courses. The aim of the visit is always to help provide a suitable on-the-job experience to potential candidates for a training course following on from the period of guidance support of the scheme.

Within the framework of Mobilisation-Formation, the work environment has been recreated within some associations or IAE organisations, which offer activities and engage the participants in a collective project (e.g. market gardening, building or urban space site renovation/maintenance, manufacturing workshops, meal preparation/cooking, communication/event workshops). The participants are hired and remunerated by these organisations⁽⁴⁷⁾. Since the main criterion for access to this type of structure is to integrate people dealing with work issues, the absence of qualifications or experience in the specific field is not a criterion for

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Different contractual forms: specific fixed-term contract for social integration purposes, subsidised contracts (*contrat aidés*), temporary work contracts provided by a temporary employment agency.

refusing recruitment. The objective is twofold: first, to enhance the value of experience in CVs and second, to develop new skills. In addition, as the beneficiaries of Mobilisation-Formation do not benefit from a specific financial allowance (Section 1.7.1.1), the perceived salary helps to foster commitment towards the scheme.

Finally, the main way of using the work environment is through internships. This is a compulsory activity within DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 schemes to validate the participants' pathways and projects. The advisers agree that the work placement is a pivotal stage during the participants' pathway, which helps them to develop their skills, gain autonomy and work on their career plans by confirming or invalidating them.

Scheme providers rarely develop formal partnerships with companies for the implementation of work placements. Nevertheless, the advisers can have a portfolio of companies that are willing to receive participants and to which they can be referred if they do not find a placement on their own. Securing a traineeship can take time, depending on personal profiles and the stage of maturity of the career project. Some of the advisers interviewed also carry out awareness-raising activities with companies or local authorities to encourage them to take on participants.

For the advisers, it is important to ensure that the placement is a real immersive experience (real practical assignments or work tasks are given to participants) and not simply a passive observation of work.

2.2.2. Providing individualised and learning guidance

Tailoring guidance on an individual basis: varying degrees of effectiveness and modes of implementation

In all the three schemes, each participant is assigned to an adviser with whom individual meetings are held at varying intervals depending on the scheme and the time available (in some cases, there is only one adviser for all participants). This adviser plays a key role in the individual monitoring of progress within the scheme.

The individualisation of the support lies, first and foremost, in its development, which is centred on the construction of a work (and life) project for each person, considering his/her previous experience and aspirations. Thus, the composition of the modules, the positioning by level (for DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2), the work placement and the search for solutions based on the involvement of external partners (i.e. removal of external obstacles) will be developed in this context.

In practice, the challenges of individualisation are dealt with in varying ways in the three schemes analysed and are closely linked to the organisation and resources made available by the schemes' providers. It is worth remembering some individualisation dimensions found in the different schemes:

- (a) an adviser is assigned on an individual basis, supporting the beneficiary throughout the service;
- (b) an initial consultation on career aspirations and plans, drafting an individual plan which can include upskilling activities, refresher modules and work-based experiences (DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2); adaptation of activities to the person (Mobilisation-Formation);
- (c) at the starting point of the support action: dedicated sessions aimed at helping develop the professional project plan of each person (DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2);
- (d) searching for a comprehensive support package for each person; working to identify and remove the external obstacles that could endanger participation in the given scheme (the guidance service varies according to the scheme and the local partnership ecosystem);
- (e) the distribution of participants by competence level (organising subgroups of participants) and the diversification of the activities for each group (choosing from a range of available options, including basic skill training) (DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2).

Field experience shows that making the aim of individualisation possible presents some challenges and shortcomings:

- (a) a lack of time and sufficient human resources to assure appropriate individual follow-up for each participant, particularly for those who are the least autonomous;
- (b) a limited number of staff, with consequences such as less time being available for individual support and a shift towards group meeting formats;
- (c) there is sometimes an unclear distribution of roles between the scheme's coordinators, career counsellors and trainers.

For the upskilling/learning provision component within the scheme ⁽⁴⁸⁾, large groups of participants also require a rationalisation of means which, in turn, lead to setting up pre-established sets of upskilling activities (i.e. refresher courses, basic skills training, workplace visits and short work placements).

In group training sessions, the number and mixed ages of the participants does not always match with the profiles (sometimes school/academic) of the trainers, which could impact negatively on the effectiveness of the training provision component. The intergenerational mix is perceived as a limitation by DAQ 2.0 staff as it may create tensions due to the extremely heterogeneous skill levels of the participants. However, in other types of schemes intergenerational

⁽⁴⁸⁾ In the schemes surveyed, guidance support is intrinsically interconnected with upskilling/training. sessions that are embedded within the schemes (Section 2.6 for detailed schemes descriptions).

mix is seen as a positive resource in terms of interpersonal exchanges and mutual aid. According to interviews with the staff of the Mobilisation-Formation and Axe 2 schemes, the mix of young and adult populations (for instance, in training sessions or collective practical work) is often a key to success and a springboard for the development of personal and social competences (such as discipline, work attitudes, communication for young people and a useful resource for the development of new skills related to coordinating teamwork for adults).

The above findings illustrate situations where the aim of systematic individualised support is not always met. The actual practices show that the level of individualisation varies and depends on factors such as the number of beneficiaries and the means the scheme provider can deploy on every single site. The beneficiary-adviser relationship can, in some cases, be tied to choosing from an array of pre-constituted options, which is particularly the case in schemes with many participants (DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2). Limited resources lead to a degree of rationalisation that, in turn, leads to a prevalence of collective activities (often classroom-based) or the making up of groups by level of education.

Learning guidance: (re)gaining self-confidence, autonomy and energy

In all three regions, the learning nature of the support is highlighted as a value at the centre of the scheme: the objective being that the people targeted learn to master their own remobilisation (motivation), discover their (inner) resources and use them to be actors in their own labour market re-insertion pathway. Ultimately, they will be expected to be autonomous in their search for employment or training when they leave the scheme and also to learn to identify and highlight their skills, regain self-confidence and take control of their life. The advisers often emphasise the techniques used to give them the desire to do and to get them moving.

It is possible to identify common features in the three schemes (which are applied in varying degrees and modes), contributing to the (re)mobilisation and increasing skills of the participants:

- (a) a search for comprehensive (global) support provision combining social/personal issues, competence development (through training sessions or workshops on specific topics) and career counselling aimed at developing a personal professional project;
- (b) a search for project co-construction and autonomy at both personal and professional levels (through the definition of a professional project plan, the search for a work placement, administrative procedures, training pathways and qualifications) supported by a unique adviser (reference point) and regular appointments;
- (c) an emphasis on (re)gaining confidence and (re)acquiring awareness of one's abilities (through coaching, theatre, ludic activities);

- (d) individual progress through the teamwork and intergenerational exchanges (including the realisation of collective projects, organisation of workshops and practical/manual activities).

Many participants highlighted the benefits of the schemes, particularly in (re)gaining self-confidence, autonomy and energy. They feel they are learning and developing skills and showing better awareness of the steps needed to undertake the development of their professional project. Quantitative data (collected for DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 participants - see Table 3) and qualitative data (collected from a group of Mobilisation-Formation participants) did not diverge from the positive appreciation of the experience within the schemes.

Table 3. **DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2 contributions according to the participants**

	Axe 2	DAQ 2.0	Total
I learned new things/I developed my skills	72.4% (63)	77.5% (107)	75.6% (170)
I met new people	75.9% (66)	70.3% (97)	72.4% (163)
I know better the steps needed to do what I want to do	54.0% (47)	59.4% (82)	57.3% (129)
I have more confidence in myself	55.2% (48)	57.2% (79)	56.4% (127)
I know better than before what I want to do	55.2% (48)	55.1% (76)	55.1% (124)
I am more independent	50.6% (44)	41.3% (57)	44.9% (101)
It keeps me busy	39.1% (34)	27.5% (38)	32.0% (72)
I can earn a living	40.2% (35)	26.8% (37)	32.0% (72)

Source: TCR France survey on beneficiaries. Multiple choices of statements were possible.

Some challenges are increasing. For instance, in an emergency some advisers may decide to act on the person's behalf, generating a deficit of autonomy transmission to the participant. In addition, the tendency to organise upskilling/training activities in groups by level of competence can interfere with the specific needs of some participants and slow down the process of independency acquisition.

2.3. Concluding remarks

The three schemes surveyed were generally well received both by the participants and the professionals. The latter state that, compared to previous measures, the

schemes provide a renewed framework for action, additional resources that enable a wider cross section of the low-qualified population to be reached and provide more tailored guidance.

Nevertheless, the observations made raise questions about the current implementation and development prospects of these schemes beyond the period supported by the PIC/PRICs' policies and funding (which is deemed to stop at the end of 2023).

Taking stock of all the observations carried out, two main issues have arisen on the governance aspect of the schemes.

Sustainability of the most innovative practices

Some questions have arisen about the sustainability over time of the three schemes, which have progressively established themselves in the landscape of services in the territories, and which have become recognisable by the local actors and the potential public beneficiaries.

The observations carried out show that, with additional PIC funding, even schemes that were built on more traditional forms of skills development (DAQ 2.0 and Axe 2) ⁽⁴⁹⁾ have been able to introduce some innovative features, such as comprehensive support provision, continuous entry and exit, mixed groups and different forms of financial support to the participants. This result has been achieved without renouncing the aim of reaching a consistent, quantitative impact in the number of enrolled individuals.

Conversely, Mobilisation-Formation has opened up the possibility of going off the beaten track (of vocational training provision) to test a new approach consistent with the objective of the PIC to reach out to the invisible public, which requires reinforced support and adapted dialogue before being able to consider training or employment. In view of the experimental character of the projects funded, the impact on the number of participants was necessarily limited.

The interviewees emphasised the importance of the existence of such schemes and the need to maintain them so as not to create a void, which raises the question of the conditions, particularly the financial conditions, for their continuation.

However, for the most innovative and successful Mobilisation-Formation projects, the conditions for reproducing these schemes on a larger scale should be looked at at governance level.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ With collective awareness/information/training sessions organised in classrooms, for instance, and work-based training components.

De-compartmentalisation and coordination of policies, actors and actions

At an institutional level, the increasing complexity of the support actions, and the multifactorial problems faced by the people furthest from training and employment, require a major change and de-compartmentalisation between, for instance, the Departments (responsible for the application of social support policies), the Regions (responsible for steering guidance and training policies) and the PES actors (who fulfil the task of offering labour market integration opportunities). This would encourage crosscutting of purposes, interconnecting public action fields that were previously not very connected (guidance, training, medical and social actors, socio-cultural actors, housing, companies and associations).

The schemes observed have explored different configurations in this direction. They are promoted by different institutional stakeholders (the Region or Pôle Emploi), they tend to introduce a dynamic of change involving new actors in the field, build new alliances, and provide coordinated action strategies (especially in Mobilisation-Formation); they rely on specific agreements between the Region and the departmental councils (in the case of DAQ 2.0) and they open up guidance to actors other than the PES. The status of guidance/insertion adviser is also granted to a wider panel of actors, which encourages the structures involved to work in partnership.

These issues call for further exploration, within the framework of the regional strategies in which these interconnexions are embedded, of the forms of inter-institutional cooperation (formal and informal) that exist to build adapted policies.

Taking stock of all the observations carried out, two additional questions arise on the aspect of support.

Mobilisation of human resources and means necessary for comprehensive support

Comprehensive support, individual work project plans, the search for actions within a territory, (drawing synergies with other local actors), the objective of reaching out to the target population (to reach people who are very far from training and the labour market and who are sometimes invisible to PES in the field) and the will to create conditions that are favourable to seamless pathways, especially in terms of transition to post-schemes, are all principles that are, without a doubt, relevant and coherent and recognised as such by the professionals interviewed. However, putting them into practice requires time, stable human resources over time (an appropriate number and profiles) and significant means. The organisations tasked with implementing the schemes have been confronted with several HR issues (juxtaposition of tasks for the same function, investment of professionals beyond their initial set responsibilities, sometimes blurred distribution of roles, turnover and

professional profiles of support staff sometimes out of step with the needs of the people served).

Based on the feedback from the field, it seems relevant to question the perimeter of action of the support schemes, particularly on the management, organisation and human resources and capacities necessary to provide effective and sustainable implementation.

Concordance and (temporal) limits of the multiple objectives entrusted to the schemes' providers

The interviews carried out reveal:

- (a) limits to the feasibility of receiving all the profiles of unemployed adults with low qualification levels or no qualifications at all;
- (b) limits to the duration, the steps and means of support required, dependent on the target group, to move from outreach to access training leading to a qualification or a job corresponding to a work project;
- (c) limits relating to the feasibility of the definition of a work project.

These questions once again are related to the scope of the schemes from the perspective of how they are engineered and designed, the attribution of realistic and attainable objectives and the search for a cost/benefit balance to enable the schemes to function properly.

CHAPTER 3.

Main findings of the micro phase for low-skilled workers at risk of skills obsolescence and job loss

3.1. Outreach and access to CEP

3.1.1. Promoting the service to potential beneficiaries

The career development counselling service (CEP) was introduced in France by the Act on vocational training, employment, and social democracy of 5 March 2014 and thoroughly revised by the 2018 Act on the freedom to choose one's own professional future. A free service did not exist before these dates. Therefore, it is crucial that the existence of the service and how to access the service is well known by people in employment (private sector employees and the self-employed), and in particular by the low-skilled and their employers.

Evolving ways to communicate the service and how to access it: through the internet, local campaigns in remote areas, a network of actors and by word of mouth

From the first quarter of 2020, which coincided with the first period of containment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, actions to promote the service were initiated and improved to make the service known and encourage its use by more of the working population.

Information on the CEP service for employees and the self-employed is made available online on the dedicated website Mon-service-cep.fr provided by the EVA network (Section 1.7.1.2), and in addition, the members of the EVA network provide information about the service on their respective websites.

Information on the CEP service is also provided on the websites of all the other CEP providers (for instance, on the Pôle Emploi website).

Other websites of actors linked to the CEP service, such as the [Associations Transition Pro](#) (AT Pro)⁽⁵⁰⁾, which provide financial support to employees with vocational retraining or business creation projects, provide information on this service. Eventually, according to some CEP advisers, some of the CEP users

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Associations Transitions Pro are regional joint associations stemming from the last vocational training reform. They also monitor the implementation of the CEP service at the regional level.

discovered the service in this way (these are generally employees who already had a retraining project and had taken steps to obtain funding).

The service has also been promoted on the [MonCompteFormation](#) website ⁽⁵¹⁾ since the end of 2021 which everyone (independent of their current employment situation) interested in using their individual learning accounts could consult. Thus, this is also an important entrance point for the employed and self-employed. According to some advisers interviewed, this has led to an increase in the number of requests for the service in general and, more specifically, from those low-skilled workers comfortable with using digital platforms.

In addition to this online information, information campaigns were implemented by the CEP mandated organisations in each of the three regions. These took the form of promotional activities aimed at the general public (e.g. radio broadcasts, urban posters, bread bag advertising - on the paper bags of baguette loaves), information directed at players in the professional world (companies, skills facilitators (OPCOs)) or activities aimed at employees (e.g. professional development week webinars, CEP Mondays). These information campaigns took place mainly in large cities (over 20 000 inhabitants) and at medium-sized and large companies or relevant institutions (between 100 and 500 employees). Thus, information campaigns have not been conducted across the whole territory and information gaps quite probably persist.

In the PACA region, on an experimental basis, information sessions in remote areas (in relation to the major employment/living areas) have been organised to try to reach the rural population further away from the current CEP sites and also seasonal employees. These actions have not yet proved conclusive, but they should be repeated with adjustments and could help attract other less qualified people. One challenge here is that in rural areas seasonal work, and thus precarious employment conditions, plays an important role, but CEP services are usually targeted at workers who have a more stable and longer work history.

According to interviewees, many people initially arrived at the CEP service after a long and arduous journey, sometimes even by chance. The situation has improved over time. The take-up of the service has increased, not only thanks to information campaigns but also thanks to mouth-to-mouth channels and through referrals by other institutions. In a less formal way, the CEP advisers also contributed to the dissemination of information on the service to intermediary actors by relying on their knowledge of the local professional, associative and social fabric. This may, in part, have been a substitute for more information campaigns.

⁽⁵¹⁾ The access to, and the use of one's Individual training account (Compte Personnel de Formation – CPF), are online on the dedicated [moncompteformation.fr](#) website.

The advisers stated that they received applicants referred by other organisations that were approached beforehand. These may include Pôle Emploi, which is sometimes the first reflex of employees (especially those who are planning to leave their jobs), or the Associations Transition Pro (identified as a funder of professional transition projects), but also gradually other actors dealing with health and safety at work (occupational medicine) or training organisations.

The CEP service offer across the region is organised and delivered by the members of the EVA network. For some of the users, the request to the CEP service was first made by approaching the most recognisable hosting structure. The structure's reputation then takes precedence over knowledge of the service. In cases where the structures offer actions for less skilled people, this access route may have led to an increased demand for the CEP service by less skilled employees.

Over time, the deployment of the service has encouraged access to the service by word of mouth, which is an important means of disseminating and promoting the CEP service among employees. Some CEP advisers have even insisted that the users are their true ambassadors, passing on information and promoting the service among their peers. Flyers are also made available to visitors for distribution to companies.

Finally, as mentioned above, advisers also guess that a significant proportion of users, particularly low-skilled employees, made use of the CEP service after learning about it on the [moncomptedeformation.fr](https://www.moncomptedeformation.fr) website. However, there is some positive selection taking place among workers, as it is mainly those who are already motivated to engage in training who will access the website. Thus, quite probably, those with low motivation for training may not be well informed.

These awareness-raising actions are targeting all kinds of employees irrespective of their level of qualification, and no specific measure has been adopted for low-skilled employees. It seems that more effort could be made to strategically implement information campaigns to target low-skilled adults specifically.

A secondary analysis of Céreq's DEFIS and IMPACT surveys can help to illustrate the level of workers' awareness of the CEP service. In 2017, before the reform of the CEP service by the 2018 Act on the freedom to choose one's own professional future, the level of knowledge about the service was not encouraging. Only 15% of employees stated that they had been informed by their own HR department of the existence of the CEP service (DEFIS data). The number of employees who stated they had used the service in 2016 or 2017 was equally low, between 1% and 2% of the French workforce in the private sector. The IMPACT survey conducted in 2021 (after the reform and after the first COVID-19 lockdown started in March 2020) showed some evolution, with the number of employees who

declared they had reached a CEP adviser increasing to 8% (Table 4). The effect of the lockdown, combined with the increase in awareness actions, have improved knowledge of the service. What is also illustrated by the data are the absence of significant differences of awareness between the low skilled (EQF level 3 or below and clerical and manual workers) and other employees. In fact, in its early years the low use of the CEP service seems to be generalised to all employees.

IMPACT data also show that 20% of employees expressed a wish to receive advice on career development opportunities, showing some timid steps forward (with no significative difference between low-skilled and medium-high skilled workers).

Table 4. **Employees who met with a CEP adviser, by skills level and gender, from March 2020 to the time of the survey (March-May 2021)**

	Low-skilled employees			Medium-high skilled employees		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Yes	7% (35)	11% (17)	9% (52)	5% (52)	10% (41)	8% (93)
No	84% (417)	82% (129)	83% (546)	91% (935)	88% (349)	90% (1284)
Not concerned	8% (42)	6% (10)	7% (52)	3% (32)	1% (4)	2% (36)
Do not know	0% (1)	1% (2)	1% (3)	0% (4)	0% (1)	0% (5)
Total	100% (495)	100% (158)	100% (653)	100% (1023)	100% (395)	100% (1418)

Source: Céreq's IMPACT survey 2021.

NB: The number of respondents is in absolute terms and the sample is nationally representative. The not concerned represent employees who are retired or pre-retired at the beginning of March 2020.

Difficulties in engaging companies and their representatives in making the service known

It appears that employers and their HR departments have so far not played a significant role in raising awareness and directing employees to the CEP service.

Even if the advisers were able to count a few applicants who came to request the CEP service following an exchange with their employers, and very exceptionally within the framework of the Transitions collective scheme ⁽⁵²⁾, this target group remains a real minority among the people benefiting from the service.

⁽⁵²⁾ Transitions Collectives is a scheme (launched in 2021) that companies can apply for, under certain conditions. It aims to support retraining towards promising occupations for employees whose jobs are at risk.

In addition to the lack of information, which still concerns several companies, it was also noted that employers/HR staff were reluctant to discuss the CEP service with their employees.

The relationship with companies remains complex and seems to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding. Indeed, the perception of the CEP service seems to be that of a service that helps employees to retrain and evolve outside the company, inducing an incentive to leave, and is thus perceived as a vector of turnover. Companies are not likely to perceive that the CEP service could also serve to improve career development within the company (e.g. starting with an assessment of one's own professional situation, possible progress within the company and developing internal skills). This would, however, be one of the tasks of the CEP service.

According to interviewees, in the eyes of the companies, the use of the CEP service is, therefore, more of an individual initiative for career development outside the company.

Several CEP advisers insisted on the need to raise awareness in companies to change their culture, so that the CEP service becomes better known and more positively perceived by employers, HR managers and other managers. Despite the legal obligation of employers to provide career guidance to their workers on a regular basis and to inform workers on the existence of the CEP service, the feedback CEP advisers received from the beneficiaries was that companies do not always comply with this obligation. It was also suggested that communication should be made to staff and trade union representatives and that all companies should communicate awareness of the CEP service systematically.

A lack of communication has also been noted with the OPCOs⁽⁵³⁾ (*opérateurs de compétences*, skills facilitators). At the very least, the level of partnership cooperation between these actors and the CEP providers seems to be unknown to the CEP advisers interviewed, who, at their level, do not maintain relations with the OPCOs' regional delegations⁽⁵⁴⁾.

3.1.2. Accommodating heterogeneous groups of users

Heterogeneity of profiles but quasi-absence of more vulnerable workers

A few outreach support measures are aimed at ensuring the flexibility of the service to accommodate different categories of users. In the first place, the service is free, which is a clear asset for take-up. Regional online platforms are set up to simplify

⁽⁵³⁾ OPCOs have been created by the 2018 Law; they group together one or several professional branches and help the companies that belong to those branches in defining and financing their strategies for developing workers' skills.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ The issue of partnership cooperation with OPCOs will be explored in the second phase of the fieldwork.

making an appointment with an adviser, according to their availability and proximity. Diversified appointment formats are offered to accommodate different needs (a physical meeting, telephone or video conference appointments).

The profile of those employed who request the guidance service is rather diverse, as highlighted by CEP advisers during interviews. Nevertheless, a few characteristics can be identified across the three regions:

- (a) there is balanced mix of men and women (except in one region where the participants of the CEP service were more often women). However, differences exist regarding the chosen measures for vocational reorientation: more men than women plan to become self-employed;
- (b) there is a concentration of people enrolling in the CEP service around the age of 40, which is a typical age for a change in career. There are only a few older workers;
- (c) most employees had previously held a permanent work contract and had, on average, worked with the same company for at least 5 years;
- (d) most users have an average level of qualification (from EQF 4 to EQF 6). They are often technicians and skilled workers but some skilled participants needed to improve their French language skills;
- (e) users with a low qualification level are less represented ⁽⁵⁵⁾ and there are only a few people having no formal qualification at all;
- (f) the previous work experience of participants covers many sectors, with a focus on mass distribution, logistics, construction, the paramedical sector, the social sector and catering. They often project themselves towards well-being sectors (e.g. naturopathy sophrology, care), construction, the liberal professions (e.g. the field of medicine), logistics, transport and small retail trade.

The level of autonomy of users has been found to be variable. It is the level of autonomy in searching for information on training, identifying and applying for training offers and finding out how to finance the training that will have an impact on how the guidance is organised. The level of autonomy depends on individual competences that are not necessarily linked to the level of education. Autonomy

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Available Céreq 2020 data seem to nuance advisers' perceptions on this point. No significant difference has been observed between low-skilled and medium-high skilled employees' participation in the CEP service (Table 4). In addition, Céreq 2020 data show a (continuing) reduction in the use of the service (which was in the first steps of its new format following the 2018 reform and had not yet had the chance to be properly disseminated, (even more so during the COVID-19 crisis). Therefore, advisers' perceptions one year after, in 2021, can reasonably reflect possible changing situations.

also depends on the participants' French language skills and their digital skill levels.

Certain categories of employees, including some of the low-skilled, seem to have limited or even no access to the service. These include employees with more unstable careers (temporary work, fixed-term contracts), older employees (over 50 years old, who in certain sectors or occupations may also be confronted with health problems or are not suited to the arduous nature of the work), employees who work in the smallest companies or have arduous jobs, employees without any ideas about retraining or without a business project or those in more remote areas that are further away from the CEP sites.

Among the main obstacles mentioned regarding the access of low-skilled employees to the CEP service are the lack of information, the lack of time or the fact that according to the advisers the CEP service can appear to be too much of an intellectual process for the employees. As shown above, the communication strategy has not been sufficiently well developed and strategic to reach out to those less qualified workers who can be most isolated in their work environment.

The issue of the digital divide also seems to be a major limitation in accessing the service for low-skilled employees. Thus, the lower use could be explained not only by an information deficit but also by the exclusively online access format of the service: appointments for a first meeting need to be arranged via an online platform. Thus, the platform dedicated to UO 0 (referral step, Section 1.7.1.2), which is intended to facilitate access to the service, may be a blocking format for those who are furthest from the digital world, and may lead to self-selection within the target groups wishing to apply for the CEP service.

Beneficiary motivations

The reasons for those in employment to revert to the CEP service are manifold:

- (a) people may face issues in their work life: e.g. conflicts with colleagues and/or supervisors, health problems, burn-out syndrome, mismatch with the company's values and conflicts in reconciling work and family life because of working hours. A large proportion of the people getting guidance from the CEP service report a desire to leave their company, often linked to a *malaise* or a feeling of being fed up;
- (b) people may have a complex set of problems, some personal and some work-related, and have an undefined wish to change their (working) life;
- (c) other applicants may seek out the service to find better working conditions;
- (d) people may wish to leave their company, either with the concrete idea of making a professional transition (mainly a change of sector) or with the idea of setting up their own business. It is mentioned by interviewees that COVID-19 has given rise to the wish for a fundamental change of occupational fields.

People mainly seek to change their employer, employment status and field of activities. Few people approach the CEP service with the desire to upgrade their skills to get a better job, possibly with the same employer, such as upskilling from being a nurse assistant to becoming a nurse). The strong orientation of the service towards advising the employed on a wide range of individual work-related issues may raise questions about the purposes of the CEP service.

Quantitative data (Céreq IMPACT survey) corroborate the advisers' point of view about employees' aspirations. In fact, 19% of workers declared they had plans to change their job or profession (with no difference between low-skilled and medium-high skilled workers). 20% of the low-skilled and 24% of the medium-high skilled wanted to find a job in another company. 5% of the low-skilled and 8% of the medium-high skilled had a project to run their own business.

Table 5. **Employees' wishes over the previous 12 months before the time of the IMPACT survey (March-May 2021) by level of qualification and gender**

	Low-skilled employees			Medium-high skilled employees		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Change job/profession	16%	21%	19%	14%	24%	19%
Change company	17%	22%	20%	19%	29%	24%
Start own business	5%	4%	5%	7%	8%	8%
Number of respondents	495	158	653	1 023	395	1 418

Source: Céreq's IMPACT survey 2021.

The type of services requested by employees approaching the CEP service include the need for orientation and guidance to clarify their aspirations, to develop a problem-solving strategy and to increase their competences. Typical questions that need to be addressed for all sorts of motivations and participant profiles include questions about training rights and access to the individual learning account, business creation, opportunities to mobilise funding and the search for better working conditions.

According to the CEP advisers, it is common to see applicants using their services in search of support for mobilising funds for the implementation of a well-constructed project. These are applicants who wish to change their sector of activity or who want to set up their own business. In this respect, the support action mainly takes the form of support in obtaining funds within the framework of the two

main financial instruments: Dispositif Démissionnaire (see Footnote 32) or PTP ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

The large influx of exhausted, suffering and burnt-out users and those on sick leave does not seem to have been anticipated and has surprised some of the advisers. Some of them also mentioned a lack of tools to deal with these situations. Others felt that this was not within their field of competence, or the scope of their work.

Even if the motivations of the less skilled are similar to those of others, some specificities were highlighted by interviewees. These relate to the search for better working conditions, less arduous tasks, more convenient working hours and better pay.

3.2. Guidance provided by CEP

3.2.1. Bridging of beneficiaries to relevant services and structures

The guidance provided includes different dimensions and activities, such as active listening and profiling, empowerment and providing information and support in setting up a concrete plan for the upskilling pathway. For all of these activities the CEP advisers will rely on their knowledge of the local labour markets and training offers, the relevant actors on the ground to which they can refer participants, their knowledge about programmes and the requirements of actors providing financial support for training. Therefore, partnerships are essential for delivering a good quality service.

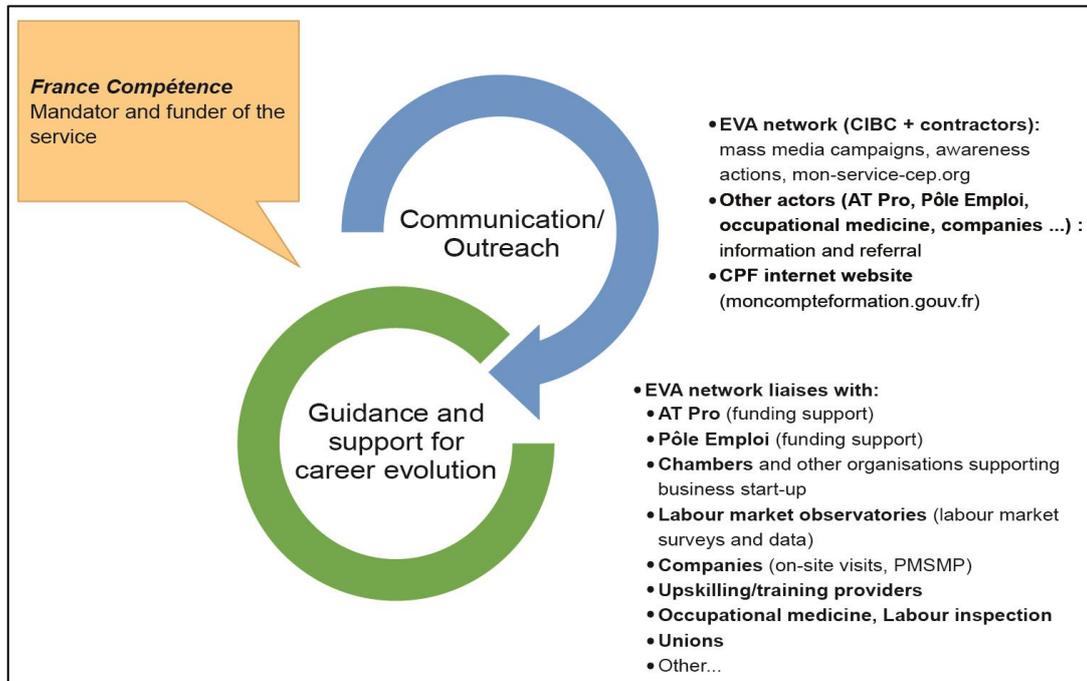
CEP advisers remain an important point of reference for guiding users towards other structures depending on their individual cases and needs.

The CEP adviser works as a facilitator for knowing and accessing the multitude of tools, resources, schemes, actors involved in vocational training and the professional transition of employees. Some CEP advisers even present themselves as the link between users and the several different stakeholders (occupational medicine, skills development or training provider, labour inspectorate, associations and other public services and business creation actors). The extent and mobilisation of the partnership network varies according to the profile of the CEP adviser, his or her previous professional career and the history/rootedness of the structure in the territory.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Projet de Transition Professionnelle (PTP) is a scheme to facilitate changes of job through qualified training. Under certain conditions, an employee may apply for it and benefit from training leave. The employee continues to be paid during the training period.

The following figure gives an overview of the main actors involved (or who should be involved) in the communication and outreach and support for career development.

Figure 6. **The ecosystem of actors for the CEP service**



Source: Cedefop.

In the view of the CEP advisers, partnership relations do not always seem to be structured and are sometimes based on informal contacts. Some advisers have pointed out the need not to confine partnership relations to the hierarchical level and to open them up more at the adviser level.

The strict compartmentalisation of actors for those who are unemployed and those who are in employment does not allow for a seamless pathway in cases of transition between the two statuses. For instance, the CEP advisers would like to see more communication with Pôle Emploi (at their level as well as that of the users), particularly in pathways including the Dispositif Démissionnaire instrument (see Footnote 32), to check whether users' training needs can be supported by Pôle Emploi funds.

The cooperation with the Associations Transition Pro seems to be well developed in two regions, while in the third region the exchanges could be more intense and direct, especially at the level of the CEP advisers, who testify to a lack of direct contact dedicated to the CEP service and are forced to go through the usual channels available to the public.

The partnership with the OPCOs and contact with companies are often difficult to establish. Generally, contacts with these actors are not envisaged at the support stage, but only upstream, to make employees more aware of the CEP service. The EVA network's steering teams report on their website the achievement of formal agreements with some OPCOs at regional level, which at the time of this research were not yet perceived as valid support by the advisers' for their day-to-day work.

A limitation of the assessment of the seamless dimension of the service is also due to the lack of knowledge on the part of advisers of the level of success of the projects with which they were involved. Indeed, the CEP terms of reference do not provide for following up users beyond the CEP support provided to verify the success of the professional pathway designed jointly. Therefore, post-CEP follow-up and feedback from beneficiaries is not systematic and is based solely on the willingness of the adviser to take this on board, or for the employee to provide, news about the outcome of the project.

3.2.2. Support actions

Aiming for individualisation with limits for the less skilled and least autonomous workers

Due to COVID-19, the CEP service, which was initially planned to be provided mainly in person, was also offered remotely, by telephone and video conference (the less qualified often preferred the telephone over video conferencing). It appears that users now prefer a face-to-face service overall (especially in two of the three regions). It was noted that the less skilled more often request face-to-face appointments. Some advisers believe that face-to-face meetings, which allow direct contact and the use of visual aids, are preferable for the less skilled. This may be related to their less well-developed digital skills and limited access to a computer. Nevertheless, advisers note the advantage of the remote service, which saves employees a lot of time and can reach people who are geographically more distant.

In all three regions the approach to guidance provision is individualised. Support is provided on a case-by-case basis. This corresponds well to the heterogeneous profile of the users of the CEP service. Depending on the user's needs and requests, different services are used to varying degrees and have different purposes: seeking information, supporting autonomy, checking the feasibility of the desired project thereby preventing the person from making a decision if the project seems unrealistic, setting up the project, referring the person to another service provider, guiding the person to help him or her make a choice and plan for the future (often requiring support based on knowledge of work psychology) and guiding the person to avoid failure in the process.

Besides, the EVA network created online modules (for instance, look at an occupation, explore new horizons and get to know the job market) to provide the CEP advisers with other tools for counselling their users. According to the advisers, the modules seem to be well done, but not necessarily adapted to all profiles of beneficiaries. The modules are useful for the most autonomous people and those most comfortable with digital tools, which is not always the case for the less skilled employees.

The CEP advisers stress that they must listen (in the sense of active listening and helping the person to take a step back and reflect on his or her situation at work), especially when the individual is uneasy. It is a question of paying attention to reactionary reconversions when people are close to or in burn out (in this case there is a need to dig delicately, to identify what is being rejected and what is really motivating the reconversion; sometimes referral to outside help is appropriate).

One challenge for the CEP advisers is their need to have a wide range of skills, encompassing knowledge of psychology, skills profiling and assessing socio-psychological risks, labour market analysis and anticipation, as well as knowledge of human resource management and project management. In the view of some advisers, the tasks of the CEP should go beyond providing information in the first place. They propose that they should also include some employment services such as helping to write CVs, preparing for recruitment interviews and negotiating a salary increase. Currently, it seems that advisers respond to a user's need for change, focusing more on retraining than on the development of the person in his or her company. This may be linked to the motivation of participants for approaching the service, but it is also linked to a less well-developed awareness by advisers of their role in also supporting upskilling, so that users remain with the same employer or in the same domain of activity.

Despite a common service structure, the delivery of the CEP guidance service not only depends on the various needs of the participants but also on the skills of the CEP adviser (the vocational background of advisers is quite diverse, ranging mainly from psychologists, the social sciences, and business administration), their previous work experience and the network established on an individual basis by the adviser or by the institution.

Supporting the less skilled and/or the least autonomous people often requires more support time, especially to overcome digital barriers, lack of writing skills and generally lower autonomy.

Aiming for learning guidance with limits for the less skilled and least autonomous workers

Support consists of helping people to orient themselves towards their choice of direction and this has already been made in the implementation of their project.

The CEP adviser generally adheres to the concept of co-construction of the project. The first step is to establish a shared diagnosis of the person's situation, after which the adviser's approach is to continuously seek to improve the co-construction dimension (rather than to be prescriptive) so that people really take ownership of their project and the adviser becomes merely a facilitator.

The transition between the first appointment and the continuation of support is approximately 40%. The dynamics of the support in the UO 1 (first individualised appointment step, Section 1.7.1.2) are based on needs and are structured step by step. Generally, an action plan is established at each meeting. The CEP support is considered to be asynchronous work, which requires autonomy on the part of the user and therefore does not correspond to all employee profiles.

Empowerment may be needed in relation to digital tools and online procedures, use of the French language, writing/argumentation and in contacting stakeholders. Another aspect is to strengthen self-confidence. One of the difficulties is then to support and help as much as necessary (for example in writing) and at the same time as little as possible to increase autonomy. Most of the advisers consider that support in writing applications for funding is not part of their job role, but that they do it regularly for people with major difficulties who do not have anyone around them to help them.

Some advisers feel that the time allotted for the CEP guidance is not sufficient to work on the emergence of a project and to work on it in depth. This assessment depends on the profile of the beneficiary. The least autonomous would need more guidance time. Some CEP advisers also felt that the competence profile analysis they can offer during the first interviews is not deep enough for those beneficiaries that are looking for vocational reorientation but who do not have any concrete ideas in mind. Among the schemes that can be financed through the CPF are in-depth skills assessment schemes (Bilans de compétences). In some cases, users are advised to purchase this in-depth assessment with their individual learning account. However, users of the CEP service often refrain from opting for this assessment, feeling instead that it would be better to save CPF resources for certifying training.

In sum, the CEP service cannot be as accurate as a skills assessment service provider, above all because the CEP protocol does not foresee enough time for this type of support. This could lead to a setback if the users do not work out their career project sufficiently before accessing the CEP service. This is often the case for lower skilled workers who need reinforced guidance to set personal objectives but do not have the necessary resources for financing a thorough skills assessment by themselves. This is a dilemma for advisers who often spend more (unaccounted) time than foreseen in the CEP protocol for specific categories of users.

Engaging in upskilling projects: key obstacles, which are potentially cumulative for lower skilled workers

The main obstacles identified for individuals in planning and implementing upskilling projects include the digital barriers outlined above. Language barriers also can sometimes lead to a need to go for a lower certification level than the one desired. This is combined with a financial barrier when the training needed cannot be included in the financing plan. Another barrier is linked to timing frictions: the time lag between requesting the service and beginning the training course and the length of the training courses requested (that cannot always be supported financially). Financial barriers are not only linked to the limits of existing funding schemes, including for long-term certified training, but also for the recognition and validation of prior informal learning. Finally, barriers to engaging in the upskilling pathway may be related to mobility and family constraints and the lack of employment opportunities nearby.

Some CEP advisers have a feeling that lower skilled users give up more often/quickly than others. Some advisers guessed that the service is perhaps too long and not in line with their expectations (looking for turnkey or immediate solutions); the files (online procedures, drafting) may perhaps discourage them; the use of the service is perhaps not sufficiently anticipated in relation to the deadlines for applications for funding and/or entry into training; the coordination of appointments with their professional schedule may be difficult.

3.3. **Concluding remarks**

A service with a still uncertain scope

On the website dedicated to the CEP service, a series of reasons for requesting the service are presented and relate to the person's career path in all its dimensions, such as: 'take a step back from my professional situation; progress in my business; evolve in my function; prepare my professional interview; better articulate my professional life with my personal life; changing jobs, retraining; identify my skills needs; enhance my skills; train myself or find the right training; find a job; resume or create an activity'. However, it seems that the CEP service has so far provided more support for career evolution projects and occupational transition than for skills development projects.

Even those advisers interviewed do not all express themselves in the same way on what the perimeter of the CEP service and the role of the CEP adviser exactly should cover. The CEP service is often presented as a service to inform, to guide towards the appropriate resources, tools and actors, to work on a career project plan and to assist in obtaining funding, mainly (or exclusively) in a career

transition perspective. Some of them are aware of the extreme breadth of the CEP mission and would like its scope to be better clarified.

It seems necessary to refocus the nature and objectives of the CEP service to have a direct impact on how it is communicated (and indirectly on how it is used).

Very likely, these uncertainties contribute to the biased perception of companies and OPCOs and their weak engagement in informing employees about the service (particularly those with low qualifications).

The limits of available funding

Career evolution (including business creation) remains the area most frequently used by CEP service users, and which can be financially supported by the Associations Transition Pro and/or Pôle Emploi depending on the financial instruments available. Nonetheless, the available funding cannot cover all projects and the application criteria are not suitable for all projects (e.g. the funding is foreseen for 2-year training programmes at most, which excludes the financing of 3-year training courses).

In addition, access to these funds requires the submission of complex administrative files, entailing a great deal of drafting and argumentation, and can only be done by electronic means. This makes it difficult for the less autonomous and less digitally and/or linguistically competent to access them. What is more, the available funding does not allow for the financing of certain skills development services (e.g. validation of prior learning, in-depth skills assessment schemes and refresher programmes).

Lastly, depending on the territory, the collaborative relationship between the CEP service providers and the funders appears to be of variable efficiency or, in the case of Pôle Emploi, mainly non-existent.

A service that does not yet reach out enough to the most vulnerable workers

One shortcoming of the CEP service is that it cannot sufficiently reach out to the lower skilled (and oldest) workers and it does not seem tailored for people with a precarious work history.

This shortcoming may be due to outreach and partnership strategies that seem to be designed globally for the promotion of the CEP service to working people in the private sector, without specific measures for low-skilled workers. In addition, the completely digital format of the service could represent a major obstacle. Information on the service, access to the service, remote support, online support tools, support for dematerialised applications for funding, the creation of personal accounts on the websites of the various actors to be contacted for the realisation of one's project, are all now done by this means. This transformation aggravates the divide with the least well-equipped members of the public (in terms

of equipment and digital skills), particularly the least skilled and least autonomous employees, and significantly limits their participation.

Workers with unstable work trajectories and fixed-term work contracts most likely access the CEP service once they become unemployed (referring to the services offered by PES). The main reason is that, when employed, any funding scheme for job mobility cannot support this category of workers. This finding leads us to question the dichotomy that exists in France between those actors operating with employees and those intervening with unemployed adults. These are two non-permeable ecosystems with different services and logic, which do not necessarily correspond to frequent changes of economic status. Additionally, these changes in status are more frequent for the most precarious and vulnerable people.

CHAPTER 4.

Conclusions

The first phase of the study enabled the collection of data on some schemes and services that were launched or reinforced by the Law of 5 September 2018 and the funding of the PIC/PRICs, as well as the CEP service. The data reflect the points of view of both the participants/users of the schemes and services and the professionals who are involved in the implementation of the latter.

Even though the nature and the scale of those schemes and services are not the same, even though not all of them are dedicated only to low-skilled adults, and even though they are part of larger strategies, the micro phase of the TCR on UP in France highlights some levers, challenges or obstacles (to be further discussed) to reaching out and providing support in the most appropriate way to low-skilled adults for embedding them in upskilling pathways.

The findings stress issues about the level of coordination (more or less formalised) and the types of cooperation (sometimes emerging) between traditional and new actors, as well as between the actors from the training/employment fields and other actors from correlated fields.

The findings show the persistence of two, insufficiently linked ecosystems corresponding to the employed or unemployed status of the low-skilled, which leads to more questions about the access to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults who move back and forth between these two statuses.

The findings highlight the key role played by the individual adviser who can be the reference point for a low-skilled adult in an upskilling pathway and who acts as an interface between the multiple stakeholders. However, sometimes too many tasks may be entrusted to the adviser and the distribution of the tasks may be blurred between the adviser and the other staff members.

Besides, the findings underline the importance of considering the degree of autonomy of the target populations. Autonomy can be intended not only as a core dimension of personal empowerment (the capacity to make informed choices and take initiatives overcoming existing barriers) but also as the acquisition of digital autonomy for an individual to benefit from services that are progressively shifting to a dematerialised digital format. Therefore, less skilled does not automatically mean least autonomous, and vice versa.

A second important dimension underlined by the fieldwork is bringing back confidence for the participants or users who have lost self-confidence and/or confidence in institutions, and who have suffered from many difficulties in their work life and/or personal life.

The findings also highlight the need to have a complete picture of the situation of the target individuals to implement the most appropriate approaches, with the necessary time, resources and partnerships, for reaching out to them and providing them with comprehensive support. The search for tailored solutions can take time and continuous attention, conflicting sometimes with the services' or schemes' compulsory timeframes. The advisers show a high degree of flexibility, commitment and self-regulation for devoting more time to the participants or users who need it most while following the terms of the services/schemes.

The second phase of the study will build on these findings to discuss the challenges identified with meso level stakeholders, which will be selected in the upcoming phase of methodology preparation.

Acronyms

AFPA	<i>Agence nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes</i> (National agency of vocational training for adults)
APEC	<i>Association pour l'emploi des cadres</i> (Association for the employability of executives)
AT Pro	<i>Association Transition Professionnelle</i> (regional joint association supporting employees' retraining projects).
BFC	Bourgogne Franche Comté (one of the 13 regions of France)
CARIF-OREF network	<i>Centres d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation - Observatoires régionaux de l'emploi et de la formation</i> (Centres of organisation, resources and information on training – Regional observatories on employment and training)
CEP	<i>Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle</i> (Career development counselling service)
Cereq	<i>Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Qualifications</i> (Centre of Studies and Research on Qualifications)
CIBC	<i>Centre Inter-institutionnel de Bilans de Compétences</i> (Inter-institutional centre for skills assessments)
CPF	<i>Compte Personnel de Formation</i> (Individual training account)
CREFOP	<i>Comité Régional de l'Emploi, de la Formation et de l'Orientalion Professionnelles</i> (Regional Committee for Employment, Orientation and Vocational Training)
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DAQ 2.0	<i>Dispositif en amont de la qualification</i> (Pre-qualification service)
DEFIS	<i>Dispositif d'Enquête sur la Formation et les Itinéraires des Salariés</i> (The Employees' training and trajectories survey)
EVA	EVA network:
EGF	European qualification framework
EU	European Union
GRETA	<i>Groupement d'Etablissement de l'Education Nationale pour la formation des adultes</i> (Consortium of institutions of vocational training for adults under the authority of the Ministry of National Education)
IAE	<i>Insertion par l'Activité Economique</i> (Integration through economic activity scheme)

INSEE	Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies)
IREDU	<i>Institut de Recherche sur l'Education</i> (Institute of Research on Education)
MS	Member States
NA	<i>Nouvelle-Aquitaine</i> (one of the 13 regions of France)
OPCO	<i>Opérateur de Compétences</i> (skills facilitator)
PACA	<i>Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur</i> (one of the 13 regions of France)
PES	public employment service
PLIE	<i>Plan Local pour l'Insertion et l'Emploi</i> (local partnership scheme for labour market integration and employment)
PIC	<i>Plan d'Investissement dans les Compétences</i> (skills investment plan)
PMSMP	<i>Périodes de Mise en Situation en Milieu Professionnel</i>
PRIC	<i>Pacte Régional d'Investissement dans les Compétences</i> (regional skills investment agreements)
PTP	<i>Projet de Transition Professionnelle</i> (financial instrument for vocational retraining)
UO	units of work
TCR	thematic country review
UP	Upskilling pathways
VET	vocational education and training

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Thematic country review on upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults in France

Key findings of the first research phase

This report summarises the outcomes of the first (micro) phase of the thematic country reviews (TCRs) on upskilling pathways in France, which reflect the points of view of both the beneficiaries of the outreach and guidance schemes and services under investigation, and the professionals involved in their implementation.

The TCR on upskilling pathways for France highlights outreach and guidance for low-skilled adults, and the crosscutting dimensions of governance and financial and non-financial support in relation to the two areas of focus.

Cedefop's work on the thematic country reviews on upskilling pathways aims at supporting Member States in the development of systematic, coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. The aim is to undertake in-depth reviews of countries' national approaches to the implementation of the upskilling pathways Recommendation, with the support of key national stakeholders. France and Italy were the first two countries that undertook this TCR exercise in 2021; implementation is expected to last until the end of 2023.



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