

Training & Employment

A FRENCH NEWSLETTER FROM CEREQ AND ITS ASSOCIATED CENTRES

EUROPE IN THE FEMININE: THE UNION OF CONTRASTS

Within similar training structures, women's competences are mobilised differently from one country to another.¹ Conversely, there are similarities concerning the situation of women on the labour market in different countries which correspond to varied conditions of training among these populations. Statistical data from the labour force survey conducted by the European Union's Statistics Office (Eurostat) permits a comparative analysis of this training-employment relationship.²

Training Structures: Three Groups of Countries

The economic and social histories of the twelve countries that were members of the European Union in 1994 are extremely varied. The structures of their productive apparatus, as well as their vocational education and training systems have evolved at relatively different paces and with equally varied ways of functioning.

The role of women within these systems is both singular—insofar as it reflects a certain form of the "female condition"—and strongly rooted in each country's employment and training structures. Thus, despite certain constant features in the trends, the situation of women in terms of training and employment is far from similar from one country to another.

1. This article is based on an earlier version of the same title, in French: "L'Europe au féminin : l'Union des Contrastes." In *Femmes sur le marché du travail : l'autre relation Formation-Emploi*. Collection des études no. 70 (Marseille: Céreq, 1997).

2. All the data used in the article involve subjects between the ages of 25 and 59. This age group was chosen in order to avoid statistical inconsistencies introduced by differences in the rates of continued studies and retirement age from one country to another.

The structure of training levels of the female population by country allows three groups to be distinguished (Graph 1):

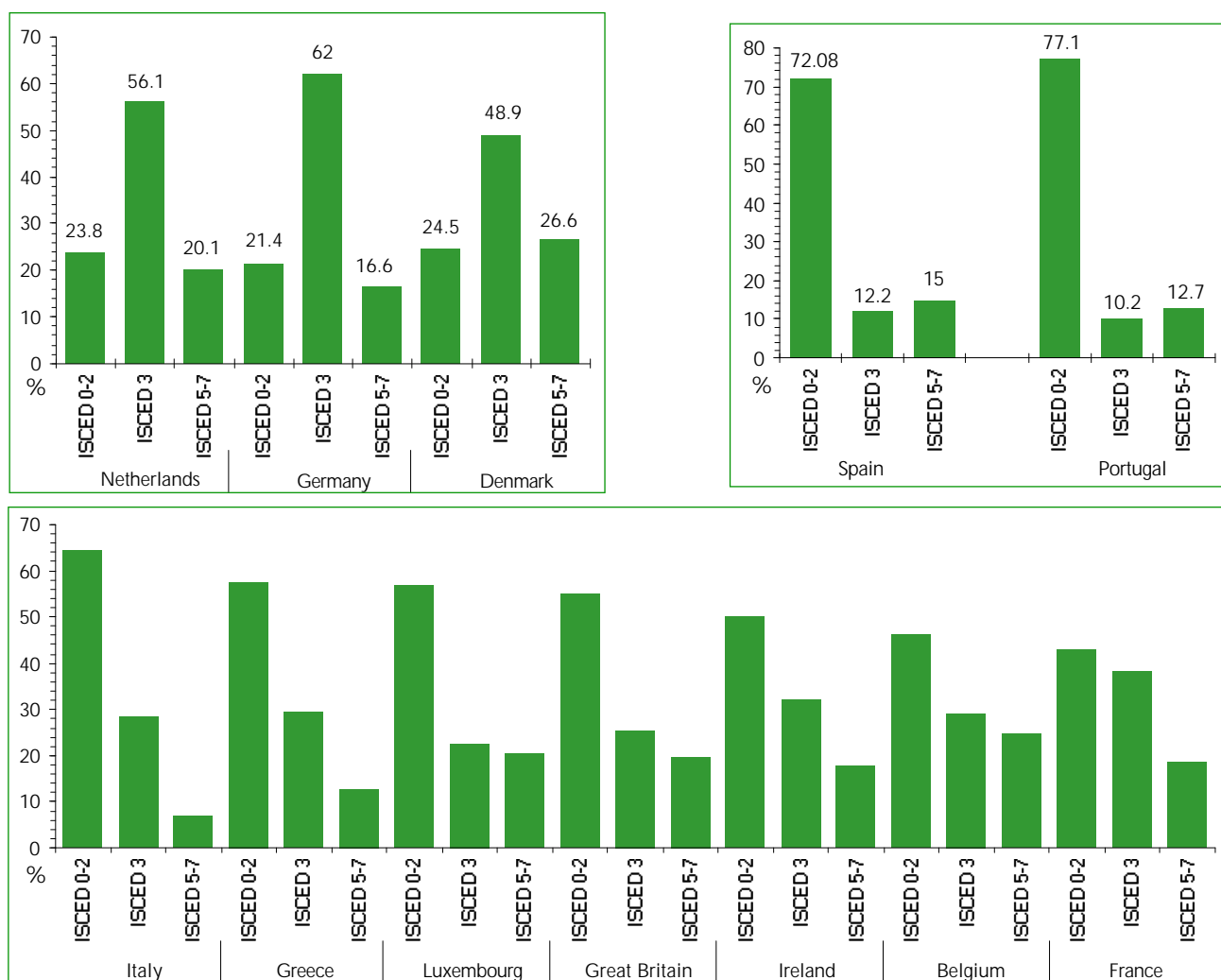
1. A first group, consisting of Portugal and Spain, is characterised by a high proportion of ISCED levels 0-2 (over 70 %), a slight proportion of ISCED level 3, and a proportion of ISCED levels 5-7 diploma-holders that is also slight but greater than the preceding category.³
2. A second group, consisting of the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark, is characterised by a sharp predominance of ISCED level 3 (48 to 62 %) and fairly similar, low proportions of ISCED levels 0-2 and 5-7.
3. A third group, consisting of Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium and France, is characterised by progressively decreasing proportions from ISCED levels 0-2 to levels 5-7.

These results probably reflect two phenomena. The first corresponds to a common process of access to training among the female population, with Spain and Portugal representing the upstream phase and the countries of the third group representing the downstream phase. A second phenomenon involving Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands suggests that the forms of development correspond to specific cultures, in this instance, alternating training in apprenticeship.

3. ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education.

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Graph 1. Distribution of the Female Population by Training Levels



Activity and Training

If we examine the link between training level and activity rate, the latter varies sharply by country (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Economically Active Women by Training Levels

COUNTRY	TRAINING LEVELS		
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3	ISCED 5-7
Portugal	63.5	81.7	94
Denmark	65.4	82.5	90.5
Great Britain	64.1	77.7	86.7
France	62.4	78.4	85.5
Belgium	44.5	70.1	84.3
Germany	54.2	71.4	84.3
Spain	40.7	68	83
Italy	36.7	67.5	85
Netherlands	42.2	62.3	81.9
Greece	42.7	51.3	80.6
Ireland	34	59.8	80.3
Luxembourg	43.9	59.1	65

The highest activity rates obviously correspond to women with a higher level of education, ISCED 5-7: 80 to 95 percent of those with this level are active (with the exception of Luxembourg, where the proportion is only 65 %). But depending on the country, the activity rates of women with an ISCED level 3 varies considerably—from 51 to 82 percent. In all countries, women with ISCED levels 0-2 are the least active but here the variations are even greater (from 34 to 65 %). In short, there are sharp differences in behaviour among European women: Danish women with a low level of training have an activity rate comparable to that of women in Luxembourg with higher training levels.

A certain dissociation may be observed within the three country training structures. Despite their similar structures, the Spain-Portugal couple breaks down insofar as Portuguese women are always much more active.⁴ In this respect, they are similar to the women of Northern Europe. Conversely, Dutch women might be compared to those of Greece, in spite of the vast difference in training structures. Along the same lines, level 3 women present fairly different activity levels in the countries

4. + 20 percent for levels 0-2 and 3, and + 10 percent for levels 5-7.

where this level is preponderant: 82.5 percent of the active women in Denmark, 71.4 percent in Germany and 62.3 percent in the Netherlands. Thus, among countries with the same structure of training levels, there may be considerable differences in the decision to join the workforce. A certain level of training is not necessarily a prerequisite for pursuing an activity; other features of the labour market and female employment play a role, probably along with cultural choices as well.

Unemployment and Training⁵

In general, a close link may be observed between training level and unemployment rate: the higher the training level, the lower the rate of unemployment. There are two exceptions however—Greece and Portugal, where the women of ISCED level 3 show higher unemployment rates than women of the other two levels. In these countries, female employment seems to be concentrated at the two extremes of training, upper and lower.

The protective effect of training varies considerably from one country to another. In comparison with the overall rate of female unemployment (for the same age group), the fact of being at ISCED levels 0-2 most often translates into a greater risk of unemployment. This risk is much higher in Ireland (+8.5 %) and Belgium (+6.9 %); it decreases slightly but remains high in Great Britain (+5.4 %), the Netherlands (+4.8 %), Germany (+4 %), Denmark and France (both +3.8 %).

The contrast between North and South is also strong. Indeed, in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and even more so in Greece, women of ISCED levels 0-2 are not more vulnerable to unemployment than the average. The predominance of this level in the training structure makes it less penalising than elsewhere.

Table 2. Female Unemployment Rates by ISCED Level

COUNTRY	TRAINING LEVELS			ALL WOMEN 25-59 YEARS
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3	ISCED 5-7	
Spain	30.3	28.3	20.8	27.8
Ireland	21.6	10.9	5.4	13.1
France	16.5	12.3	6.9	12.7
Italy	13.7	10.5	8.6	11.8
Belgium	17.9	11	4.2	11
Germany	14.8	11.2	7	10.8
Greece	9.5	13.5	7.2	10.1
Denmark	12.7	9.7	4.9	8.9
Netherlands	12.7	7.7	5.5	7.9
Portugal	7.1	9.1	2.4	6.5
Great Britain	11.8	7.9	4.1	6.4

5. The statistics and comments that follow do not include Luxembourg. Because of the low number of persons involved, data concerning this country are not significant.

At the other extreme, the fact of being at ISCED levels 5-7 offers relative protection against unemployment. In all countries, the unemployment rate at these levels is below that of the total rate. In decreasing order by country, the differential is as follows: Ireland (-7.7 %), Spain (-7 %), Belgium (-6.8 %), France (-5.8 %), Portugal (-4.1 %), Denmark (-4 %), Germany (-3.8 %), Italy (-3.2 %), Greece (-2.9 %), Netherlands (-2.4 %) and Great Britain (-2.3 %).

Once again, the differences between countries are marked:

- Ireland and Belgium, the two countries where the ISCED levels 0-2 are the most disadvantageous, are also those where the protection granted by levels 5-7 is the strongest. The training investment there is highly "profitable" (if not indispensable), notably in the context of a high overall rate of unemployment.

- Conversely, in Great Britain and the Netherlands, the relative protection obtained by ISCED levels 5-7 is slight, even though women at levels 0-2 are among those with the greatest comparative risk of unemployment. The investment in training is only slightly rewarded, but non-investment is clearly sanctioned. These two countries are among those where the overall unemployment rate is the lowest.

In the majority of the countries, the fact of being at ISCED level 3 carries a risk close to the average. Four countries constitute exceptions, however:

- Greece (+3.4 %), Portugal (+2.6 %), and Great Britain (+1.5 %), where it is necessary to have higher training in order to enjoy a relative protection;

- Ireland (-2.2 %), where the opposite is true: training leads to real protection, regardless of the level.

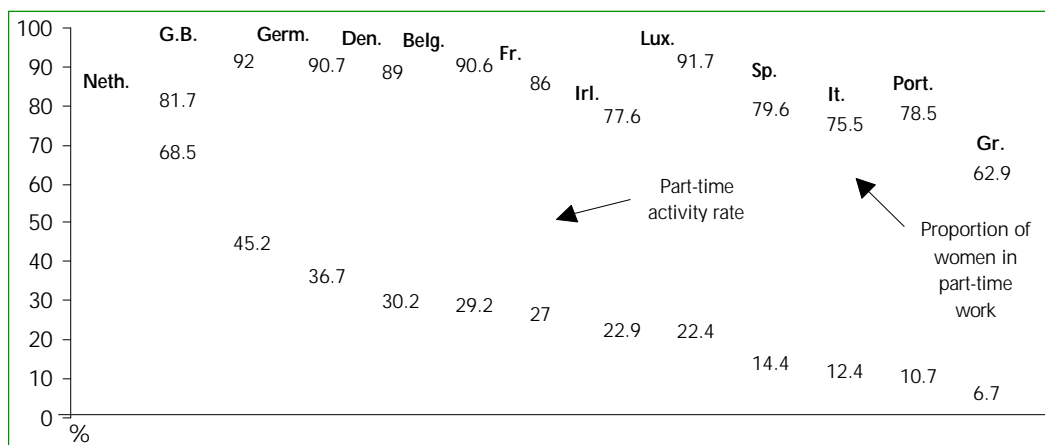
The extent to which training protects against unemployment thus varies greatly from one country to another. Even if, at first glance, common trends seem to emerge, the differences do not permit any conclusions to be drawn about the "status of women" in Europe.

Part-Time Employment and Training Level

Part-time work is female. Women constitute between 63 and 92 percent of the labour force having reduced working hours. But if this observation appears to bring European women together, it must be qualified by the part-time employment rate, which, as Graph 2 shows, varies between 6.7 percent (Greece) and 68.5 percent (Netherlands).⁶ Thus, the trend toward part-time work is essentially female, but the tendency of women to hold this kind of job varies sharply from one country to another.

6. Percentage of women working part time in relation to the active female labour force.

Graph 2. Part-Time Employment: Activity Rate and Proportion of Women



In fact, part-time work differentiates Northern and Southern Europe:

- In the countries of the South (Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain), part-time work involves a minority of the employed female labour force (7 to 14 %).
- At the other extreme, in the Netherlands, the large majority of female employment (68.5 %) is part time.
- In Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, France, and Luxembourg, part-time work affects a variable proportion of the employed female population (22-45 %), but it remains essentially female (about 90 %). The variations among these different countries are thus considerable. They clearly reflect the country's production and employment structure, which encourages and/or permits a greater or lesser possibility of creating part-time jobs.
- Ireland constitutes a case apart, with a part-time female labour-force rate (22.9 %) close to certain countries in the preceding group (North) but a rate of feminisation of part-time jobs approaching the situation of the countries of Southern Europe (77.6 %).

Overall, the structure of female part-time work by training levels reproduces that of the female labour force between the ages of 25 and 59 for the same levels, but the gaps vary from country to country.⁷

In the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, the proportion of the different training levels in part-time work is close to the proportion that each level occupies in the labour force except for the higher levels, which are less present (-3 to -5 %). As a result, more than half (53 to 59 %) of the women working part time are ISCED level 3. Thus, it cannot be concluded that one level or another has a greater propensity for part-time work (with the exception of a slight negative trend for the higher levels).

In Spain and Portugal, part-time work accentuates the predominance of low levels of training. The part-time labour force is overwhelmingly ISCED level 0-2 (73 and 90 %, respectively), and the proportion of this level within part-time work is considerably higher (+20 %) than the proportion it occupies in the female labour force. On the other hand, the proportion of ISCED levels 5-7 in part-time work is much lower than their proportion in the female labour force (-14 to -15 %).

In the other seven countries, we can observe an over-representation of women classified at ISCED levels 0-2 in part-time work and an under-representation of those classified at levels 5-7 and at level 3 (even though this level represents the majority of the female labour force in the cases of France and Ireland).

The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark thus seem to offer relatively egalitarian access to part-time work, and it would appear that the organisation of female work has been arranged to this end. In the other countries, holding a part-time job selectively involves the least skilled, which leads to the conclusion that this is probably the result of a constraint linked to the jobs rather than a choice of the people holding them, and that the nature of the jobs themselves is certainly different.

For most European publications describing a comparative analysis of the dynamic of women's labour-market participation in Europe, there is still a great temptation to stop at examinations of trends. This carries the risk of hiding significant gaps which have been emphasized here. There is no specifically female form of labour-market involvement. An approach through country training structures might have allowed similar forms to be identified, but that was not the case. Country-specific features of labour markets, employment structures and organisation of work go beyond possible specificities of female employment. Europe in the feminine is indeed the Union of Contrasts.

7. This data is presented in the article published in the article cited above, n. 1.

Annie Boudier, Céreq

briefing

▼ Updates

▼ Vincent Merle Leaving Céreq

Vincent Merle, Céreq's director since 1994, has been named principal aide to the new junior minister for vocational training, Nicole Pery. Before joining Céreq as deputy director in 1992, Merle had worked with Bernard Bruhnes Consultants (1990-1992) and served as director of research and statistics at the French national employment office (1984-1992).

▲ A New Associated Centre Created in Bordeaux

A seventeenth regional centre associated with Céreq has come into being in the Aquitaine region. The Centre d'études et de recherches sur la vie locale (Centre for Studies on Local Life) is a multidisciplinary research body for the study of local societies, institutions and actors in their social, economic, political and administrative dimensions.

The centre is directed by Thierry Berthet, researcher at the CNRS (France's national research centre); its main researcher is Laure Gayraud, doctoral candidate in education. Its two main objectives will be:

- developing a system of relations with the academic community and regional bodies working in the area of the training-employment relationship;
- developing new activities corresponding to a broader field of investigations.

Contact: Centre d'études et de recherches sur la vie locale, IEP de Bordeaux. BP 101, 33405 Talence cedex. Tel. (33 5) 56 84 42 60

Conference on "Education and Vocational Training, Decentralisation and Co-ordination"

A conference jointly organised by the Institut d'économie publique (IDEP) and Céreq was held in Marseilles last October. Discussions were aimed at analysing decentralisation in the field of education and training, the development of policies at the regional level and the evolution of government action. To this end, three main themes were addressed: development of regional policies, regional policies and national policy and evaluation processes.

The development of regional policies presumes the allocation of considerable means, both financial and structural, which are adapted to local needs. At the same time, government action at the regional level implies a high degree of dialogue, notably with the occupational branches. But this dialogue is limited by the differences in economic and political stakes at the national and local levels, and in practice, the region's power has more to do with influence than decision making.

Training policy, which depends on the regional level, must now be directly articulated with employment policy, which is elaborated at the national level. How can meaningful local actions be conceived on the basis of instructions from the central government? How can the effects of decentralisation be brought under control and government action developed?

The evaluation process follows from the logic of improving government action. But the effectiveness of training policies depends above all on the quality of the co-operation and co-ordination between all the actors in decentralisation. Contact: Antoine Richard, Céreq

European Commission Fourth Programme in Socioeconomic Research

Teams from nine countries (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain) are coming together for a research project on the employment of higher-education graduates in Europe. The project is aimed at measuring the impact of various factors on employment, including structural factors (such as higher education systems), behaviour during studies, curriculum or the quality of performance at university.

The study will be carried out on the basis of 36,000 questionnaires (4,000 per country) sent to 1994-1995 graduates. The first results should be published early in 1999.

Contact: Jean-Jacques Paul, Institut de recherche sur l'économie et l'éducation (IREDU)

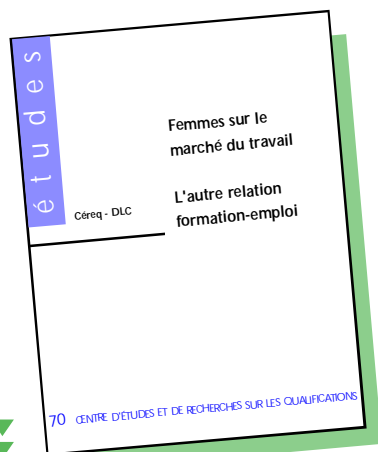
New Locations for Two Céreq Associated Regional Centers (ARC)

- The Laboratoire d'économie sociale (social economics laboratory) has left the University of Paris Tolbiac campus for the Maison des sciences économiques at the University of Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne.

New address: Le Titien, 106-112, bd de l'Hôpital, 75647 Paris cedex 12. Tel. (33 1) 55 43 41 00.

- The ARC Languedoc-Roussillon is now located at the University of Montpellier III-Paul Valéry. New address: Route de Mende, 34199 Montpellier cedex 5. Tel. (33 4) 67 14 24 43. Fax (33 4) 67 14 25 22

▼ New Publications



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Femmes sur le marché du travail : l'autre relation formation-emploi

[Women on the Labour Market: The Other Training-Employment Relationship]

✍ Céreq, Direction des études et de la prospective (DEP) - Direction des Lycées et collèges (DLC)

The authors' approach grows out of the analysis of the situation of women in society that was initiated by the feminist movement of the 1970s and is now developing problematics that focus on the originality of the woman's world.

The resulting presentation addresses phenomena such as economic inactivity, unemployment, occupational choices and the importance of training in order to highlight a space of freedom for women, no matter how limited it may be, rather than their submission to the system. A parallel examination of the situations in other European countries allows the French case to be placed in perspective, notably with regard to the training-employment relationship.

This publication thus constitutes a kind of partial assessment which, in its conclusion at least, sketches out the new problems created by life-long training and the accreditation of work experience in relation to specific women's practices in acquiring competences.

Etude no. 70, Céreq, November 1997, 170 pp. Price outside of metropolitan France: 172.18 francs.

✓ This study is available from La Documentation Française, 29, quai Voltaire, 75340 Paris cedex 07, tel. (33 1) 40 15 70 00.

Rapport français pour le programme Leonardo da Vinci Etat du système de formation professionnelle et analyse des projets retenus dans le cadre de l'appel à propositions 1995

[French Report for the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

The state of the vocational training system and an analysis of projects selected from the 1995 call for proposals.]

✍ François Aventur, Elyes Bentabet, Anne-Marie Charraud, Jean-Louis Kirsch, Isabelle Marion, Elsa Personnaz, Pierre Simula and Christian Zygmunt

The first part of this publication includes an introduction and analysis of French measures for initial and continuing vocational training. It describes the features specific to the French systems and the main trends in their evolution.

The second part is devoted to an analysis of the implementation and impact of the French section of the European "Leonardo da Vinci" programme based on the examination of projects selected from the 1995 call for propositions.

If the difficulties encountered by the promoters of these projects mainly stress the unwieldiness of the programme, an initial analysis of its impact brings out the diversity of the forms of partnership and the logics underlying them. The transnational relations created through these projects encourage the mobility of individuals and the spread of knowledge, the creation of European training guidelines and the evolution of national problematics.

Document no. 127, "Evaluation" series. Céreq, October 1997, 175 pp. Price outside of metropolitan France: 172.18 francs.

La formation professionnelle continue financée par les entreprises. Exploitation des déclarations fiscales des employeurs n° 24.83. Année 1995.

[Continuing Vocational Training Funded by the Companies. Analysis of Employer Tax Return Form 24.83 for 1995.]

✍ Elyes Bentabet and Christian Zygmunt

During 1995, the real continuing vocational training expenditures declared by French companies amounted to 3.26 percent of their wage bill, thus exceeding the legal requirement of 1.5 percent. This high rate of spending, which seems to have definitively surpassed the 3 percent cutoff point, attests to the importance of employee training for the companies.

The increase in the training effort is nonetheless tending to drop off, which reflects the spread of the economic slowdown to investment in training. In addition, the training expenditures of more than half the companies are below the legal threshold. This confirms the disparities already observed in 1993, which are generally tied to the size of the company or the influence of the sector and which tend to reinforce inequalities in access to training on the basis of socio-occupational category, gender and age.

Beyond these disparities, however, the rate of financial participation and the rate of access to training in each of the activity sectors remains high, and the training effort is gaining ground in France's regions.

Document no. 130, "Observatoire" series, Céreq, September 1997, 117 pp. Price outside of metropolitan France: 172.18 francs.

THE CODING OF EDUCATION LEVELS

The European Labour-Force Survey brings together harmonised national data from surveys of individuals carried out in each of the member countries. Two questions (1995) permit the identification of the "highest level" of studies attained, with a distinction between general education on the one hand and vocational or post-academic training on the other. These questions allow Eurostat to reconstitute the ISCED classifications, but this reconstitution is based on the different interpretations of the individual countries. Several remaining sources of ambiguity merit further consideration in order to understand the limits of country comparisons and guarantee the relevant use of the information obtained.

- **Different translations of the notion of "training cycle completed":** On the basis of the questions related to training, individuals are credited with the highest ISCED level for which they have completed a training cycle. The Eurostat instructions suggest translating "completion of training" by "obtaining a diploma," and in the coding of vocational or higher training, the items make explicit reference to the diploma or certificate. For the coding of general education, some countries refer to either the last year of training or the obtaining of the diploma, while others more systematically apply certification criteria.

- **A relative devaluation of vocational training:** Certification in vocational training leads to an ISCED level 3. Depending on the diploma that is sought, failure to pass the exam places candidates at ISCED 1 or 2; this status is determined by the highest level of general training completed before entering vocational training, but the points of entry into vocational programmes do not necessarily correspond to the ends of general education cycles. Thus, the level attributed does not reflect the number of years of studies, and as a result, the period of vocational training is downgraded. In practice, this problem is resolved by avoiding the distinction between the first three ISCED levels (0,1 and 2).

- **Differences in the organisation of and articulation between training systems:** The two questions asked about the highest training level are in fact intended to synthesise three dimensions: the educational level corresponding to the instruction received; the specific calling of the knowledge presented (general or vocational), and the way this knowledge is obtained according to the training sites. Dealing with these three dimensions thus requires positing equivalences in training systems which do not correspond, or correspond less and less, to the reality of each country. This situation calls for compromises, notably concerning apprenticeship, which is entirely integrated into ISCED level 3. Furthermore, in order to compare higher education systems that are organised quite differently, it is preferable to combine the three ISCED levels 5, 6 and 7.

A new version of the ISCED was reworked for the labour-force survey in 1997. Better adapted to the diversity of vocational training, it will permit improved country comparisons. It is likely, however, that problems raised by the differences in country interpretations of the common norm will persist.

Thomas Couppié
Michèle Mansuy

▼ **Formation Emploi**

Recent articles in Céreq's quarterly journal, no. 60: October-December 1997

**SPECIAL REPORT:
SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION
AND METHODOLOGY**



**L'insertion professionnelle des jeunes
À la recherche d'une définition conventionnelle**

[The School-to-Work Transition
In Search of a Contractual Definition]

✍ Jean Vincens

Over the past twenty years, approaches to the school-to-work transition have multiplied and diversified in the context of a significant increase in youth unemployment. But what does it mean to "make the transition"? A contractual definition that would allow public aid measures for youth employment to be harmonised would make research on the subject more scientific.

Modéliser l'insertion

[Modelling the School-to-Work Transition]

✍ Jean-Pierre Fénelon, Yvette Grelet and Yvette Houzel

The debates around tools for analysing individual trajectories often oppose typological approaches and defenders of econometric models. Through the examination of a group of recent studies, the authors demonstrate that the selection and presentation of data and the choice of an interpretative grid are as determinant as the methodological options and that, in fact, the two approaches are more complementary than antagonistic.

**Temporalités de l'insertion professionnelle
Une approche longitudinale**

[The Time Frames of School-to-Work Transition
A Longitudinal Approach]

✍ Henri Eckert and Saïd Hanchane

Seeking to identify the role of the school in the transition process, the authors propose an approach that combines the prior development of an interpretative framework and a longitudinal statistical approach.

Les profils de gestion de la main-d'oeuvre au niveau des secteurs d'activité. Conséquences pour l'emploi des jeunes

[Profiles of Work-Force Management at the Activity-Sector Level
Consequences for Youth Employment]

✍ Nathalie Moncel

The factors that determine young people's access to employment do not depend solely on individual characteristics or the functioning of the school system but also on overall work-force management and its sectoral components.

And also:

**Anthropologie de l'échange social
Apprentissages professionnels et dynamiques des relations au travail**

[Anthropology of Social Exchanges
On-the-Job Learning and Dynamics of Relations to Work]

✍ Béatrice Maurines

Drawing on the concept of social exchange, the author analyses the process of on-the-job learning in the context of the chemical industry. She thus suggests what an anthropological perspective can bring to the understanding of day-to-day life in the company.

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