

Training & Employment

CONTINUING TRAINING IN THE PRIVATE-SECTOR PUT TO THE TEST OF AGE

Given the fact that wage-earners are less and less likely to participate in training after the age of 45, the question of training the older members of the workforce is inseparable from that of the inevitable prolongation of working life. But the critical age divide is not the only boundary to be crossed if we are to rethink lifelong learning.

Half of Europe's 55-64 age group in employment by 2010: such is the objective fixed by the European Council's Stockholm summit in March 2001 and endorsed by France and other EU Member States. This prospect, however, calls for reflection on the means of keeping older workers in employment, especially in France, which lags behind most of the EC on this issue: according to a 2001 study on the demography of the labour force, only 32 percent of French men and 25 percent of French women between 55 and 64 years of age are still working.¹ Among the projects aimed at increasing the employment rate of this age group in order to meet the requirements of the European Council, many measures call for renewed efforts of continuing education and training. The fifties are often considered the critical period in terms of continuing training behaviours; for this reason, it is useful to examine that cut-off point, which imposes itself both in studies on older workers and in public policies aimed at lengthening working life, but which would seem to intersect other dividing lines as well.

According to Céreq's "Continuing Training 2000" survey (see Box, p. 4), between January 1999 and February 2000, 31 percent of France's private-sector employees participated in some form of training. However, those in the 25-34 age group reported twice as much training as those over 55 (36 % and 18 %, respectively). This disparity would seem to reflect a basic economic logic: for employer and employee alike, the return on training rises in proportion to the remaining number of working years. Employers would thus be less inclined to fund this training for employees at the end of their working lives and the employees less inclined to seek it. Seen in this perspective, access to training should gradually decline with the ageing of the employees. In fact, it only shows a significant drop after the age of 55. In addition, the curve tracing the rate of access to training in function of age varies considerably by socio-professional group (see Fig. 1).

Manager or Operative?

France's 1971 law on vocational training was intended, among other things, to reduce inequalities, but thirty years later, it must be recognised that continuing training has in fact contributed to aggravating them. At the beginning of working life, those with the least schooling find themselves in the least favourable jobs in terms of category, status, wages and working hours. It only seems just that in the course of their working lives, these individuals should benefit from more frequent and intensive training efforts in

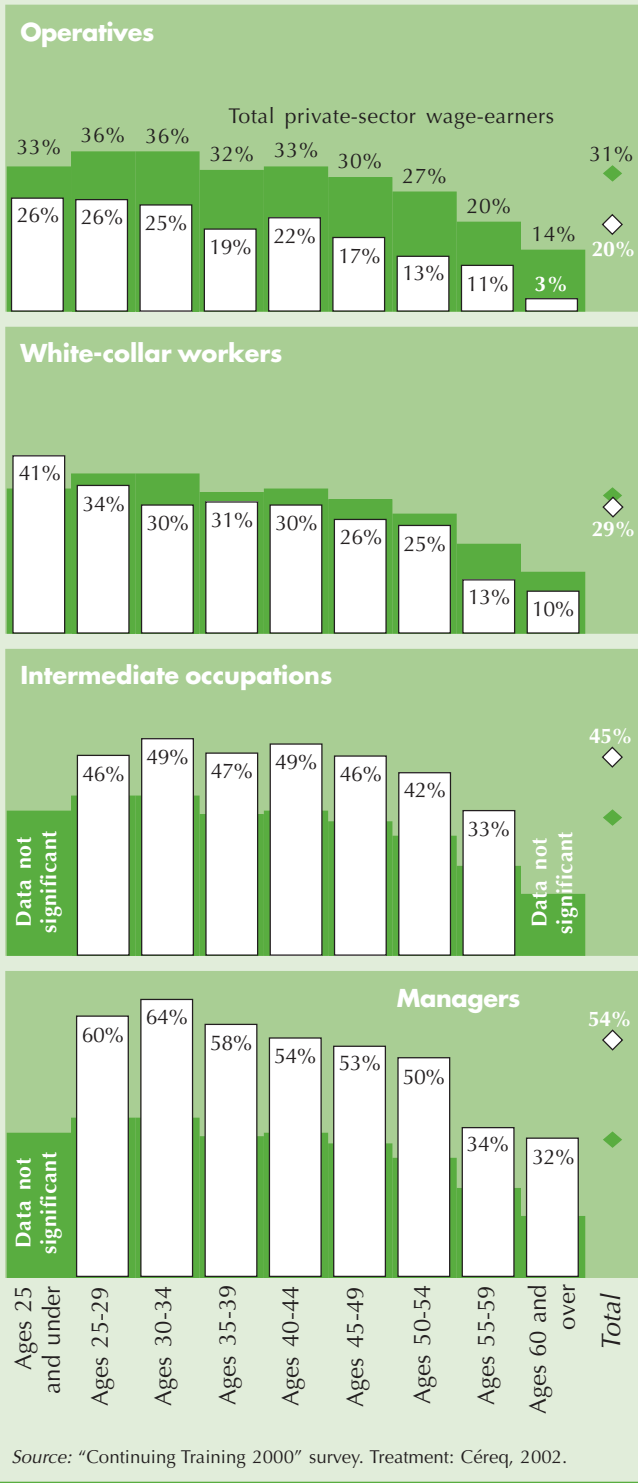
1. Annie Fouquet, "Démographie et population active: situation actuelle et cadrage prospectif," in *Âge et travail, un axe de réflexion essentiel pour l'âge des retraites, conseil d'orientation des retraites* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2001).

Fig. 1 AGE AND ACCESS TO CONTINUING TRAINING



Rates of access to training

Percent share of wage-earners employed in the private sector in January 1999 and participating in at least one training activity of three hours or more between January 1999 and February 2000.



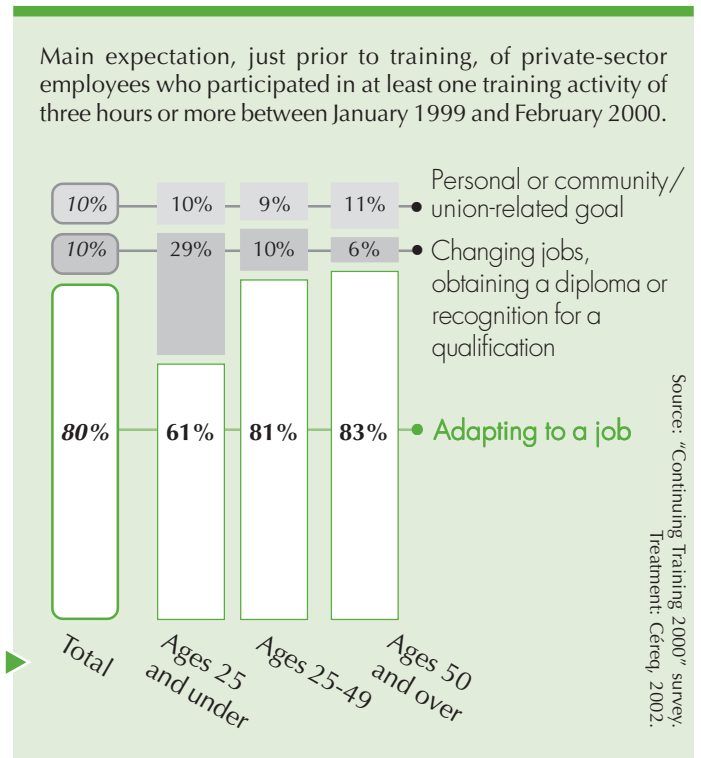
order to improve their situations. But just the opposite has been the case: training goes to the most qualified. Thus, 54 percent of the managers and 45 percent of employees in intermediate occupations participate in at least one training activity per year, as compared to only 29 percent of white-collar workers and 20 percent of operatives.

If the qualification level is the predominant factor in access to continuing training, however, age further aggravates the situation. Indeed, access to training decreases with age and this decrease begins even earlier for those at the bottom of the job ladder. Thus, a large proportion of managers continue to participate in training after 50 years of age while operatives see their rate of access to training drop significantly around the age of 40.

We might conclude that access to training only reflects timing differences in career calendars: the operatives, who enter the labour market at a younger age, would face an earlier decline in their opportunities for advancement, and at the same time, their possibilities for training. Managers, meanwhile, would encounter possibilities for promotion at a more advanced age because of their later entry into the labour market and the greater number of training programmes they participate in would foster later job mobility. This explanation finds support in the population pyramid: 0.3 percent of managers are under 25 years old, as opposed to 8 percent of operatives, while 28 percent of managers are over 50, compared to 18 percent of operatives.

As tempting as this argument might be, however, it should not be allowed to overshadow two essential aspects of the inequalities between socio-professional groups. For one thing, these inequalities divide wage-earners from the very beginning of working life: between 25 and 29 years old, 60 percent of managers have access to continuing training, compared to 26 percent of operatives. For another, these disparities are seriously aggravated by the decrease in training participation, which begins earlier for the least qualified

Fig. 2 AGE AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT TRAINING



workers. Ultimately, a manager over 55 years old has more training opportunities than an operative, regardless of the latter's age.

This preponderant influence of the socio-professional group is reinforced when we analyse what employees expect from training. Regardless of generation, 10 percent of wage-earners participate in training for reasons which are related to community action, union activity or personal development. By contrast, the distinction between those who see training as a means of adapting to the job and those who see it as a means of changing jobs or obtaining a diploma or recognition of a qualification evolves with age. The youngest are relatively more numerous to envision a significant change—although it must be kept in mind that alternating-training programmes account for 11 percent of those under 25 who participate in training. At the other extreme, it is the over-50 age group which most often sees training as a means of job adaptation (see Fig. 2).

Clearly, as wage-earners grow older, they are less likely to undertake training aimed at changing jobs or obtaining a diploma or recognition of qualifications. Overall, 6 percent of those over 50 participating in training fall into this category. But the percentage also varies according to socio-professional group, ranging from 4 percent among managers to 6 percent among intermediate occupations, 7 percent among white-collar workers and 9 percent among operatives. In the end, operatives participating in training after the age of 50 more often target a significant change than managers between 25 and 39, at the prime of their careers (9% versus 7%). Here too, it is less the age than the qualification level which orients the wage-earners' expectations about training.

Frequent Disappointments

The same age and socio-occupational disparities emerge when we query wage-earners about their unmet training needs (see Fig 3). Contrary to what common sense would lead us to expect, however, the less training they receive, the less they express a need for training. This paradox reaches its peak with untrained employees, who are the least frequent to indicate that they have unmet training needs (20% compared to 26% of those who have received training; among those over 50 years old, 11% compared to 17% of those who have received training). The paradox is only apparent, however, because these wage-earners evaluate their needs in relation to their career prospects, notably in terms of financial benefits. And according to the most recent studies on this subject, the wage return on continuing training is actually quite limited.

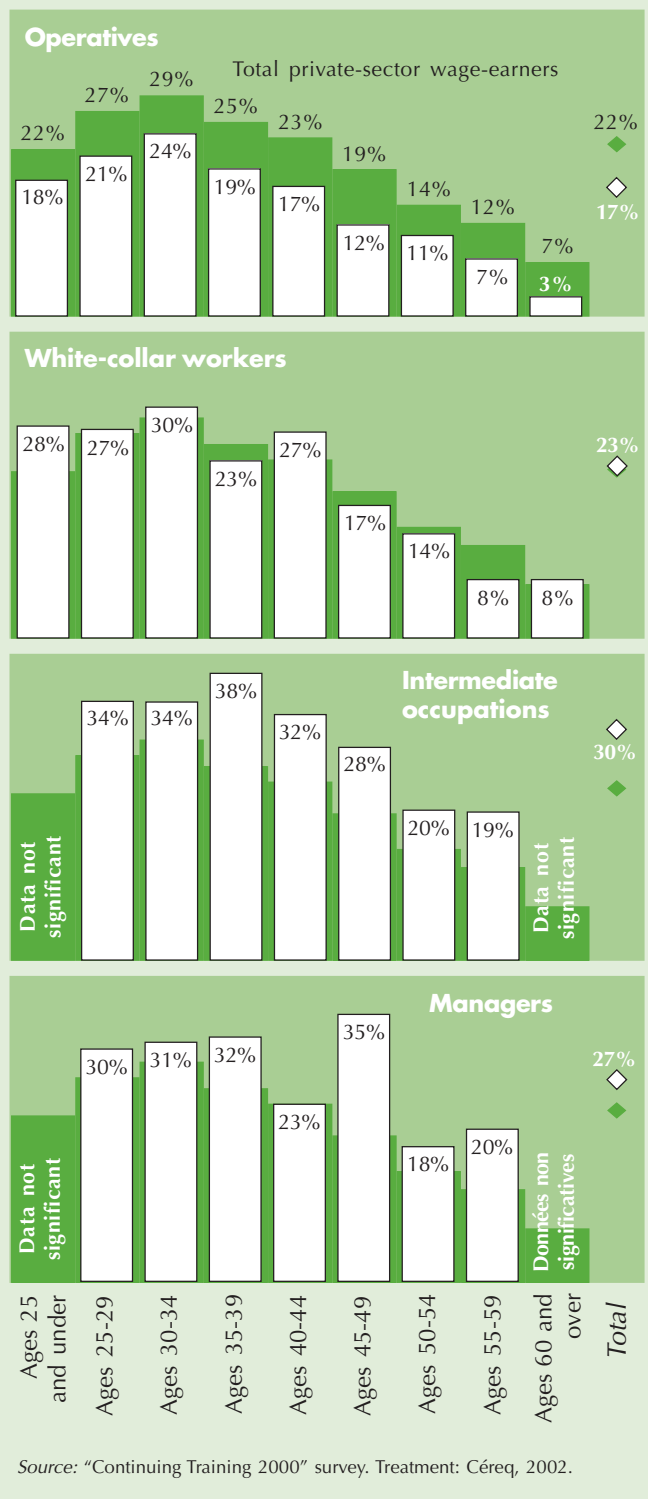
Nonetheless, a significant share of trained employees (15%) hope for a wage increase after training, although these hopes are quite variable. Logically, those who seek training for personal or union-related reasons do not expect a financial benefit; on the other hand, adaptation to a job gives a number of them (13%) hopes of a wage increase. And employees who participate in training in order to change jobs or obtain a diploma or recognition of a qualification are the most numerous to hope for higher wages (44%).

Age has just as much influence on hopes of increased wages as does the aim of the training: the older the wage-earner, the more limited these hopes are. Should this be seen as the

Fig. 3 AGE AND UNMET TRAINING NEEDS

Unmet training needs

Percent share of individuals employed in the private sector in January 1999 and declaring in March 2000 that they had unmet training needs.



reflection of a system of professional mobility which favours the youngest employees? The economic approach encourages such an interpretation, insofar as it leads to calculating the yield of an investment in proportion to the remaining period of work activity. Or should this be interpreted as lessons from the experience of the oldest workers, who understand that their hopes are most often disappointed?

These two arguments are equally valid and complementary, as can be seen from the way that trained employees evaluate the financial consequences of the training they received between March and December 1998. Two years after a training experience, 5 percent of them declared that they had received a wage increase after the training. It is clearly possible that after such a time lapse, their memories failed them and they only retained the most intensive training, especially if these turned out to be profitable. But the trained workers' recollections of wage increases nonetheless allow us to identify several disparities which shed light on the factors enhancing the value of training. The proportion of wage-earners considering that their wages had increased after training is only 1 percent for those over 50, while it is 6 percent for those under 50. However, this small percentage has less to do with age than with the nature of the training itself. Only 3 percent of those in their fifties who received training went on to obtain a new job, a diploma or recognition of a qualification. By comparison, the figure is 11 percent for their counterparts between 29 and 35 years old.

A wage increase results from a combination of all of the factors involved in a company's human resources management, among which training is only one element. The fact that an employee associates training with subsequent financial benefit thus does not allow us to say that such training is undeniably at the origin of the gain. But the employee's impression nonetheless helps to forge his or her confidence in training as a tool for career advancement. And it is thus easy to understand the disappointment of all those who undertook training with hopes of a financial gain which did not materialise.

Putting Training Back into Career Paths

To sum up, age reinforces the inequalities in access to continuing training which separate wage-earners according to their socio-professional group from the very beginning of working life. The decline in access to training sets in all the earlier when the qualification level is low. The least-qualified workers, including those under 50, are relatively more likely to obtain training with the prospect of changing jobs or obtaining a diploma or recognition of a

Continuing Training Survey

The data presented in this article are taken from the "Continuing Training 2000" survey carried out by Céreq and INSEE, the French national statistics institute, within the framework of a partnership also including the Department of Research and Statistics (Dares), the Bureau for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP) and the Women's Rights Unit at the French Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity, as well as the Department of Programming and Development (DPD) at the Ministry of Education and the Planning Commission.

"Continuing Training 2000" complements INSEE's "Employment" survey carried out in March 2000. It was aimed at identifying continuing training obtained by individuals, including training which was not strictly work-oriented. It was conducted among a sample of 28,700 persons who were under 65 years old, had completed their initial training and were not carrying out their military service at the time of the survey. Through live interviews, these subjects were queried about the training they received after exiting the educational system, and more specifically about the period from January 1999 to February 2000.

This information permitted the calculation of the 'rates of access to continuing training' for the different categories of wage-earners—in other words, the percentages of individuals who had participated in at least one training activity lasting at least three hours during this period, regardless of the objective (explicitly professional or more personal) and the form (training courses, alternating training, in-service training or self-training).

qualification. And finally, the less employees participate in training, the less they indicate unmet training needs, which explains the apparently slight 'appetite' for training among the least-qualified older workers.

With the ageing of the labour force, the stakes of life-long learning take on ever more importance. In many sectors where ageing is accompanied by growing risks, keeping older workers in the labour force presumes policies for their distribution in companies which take their age into account. In addition, keeping them in employment after 55 calls for reinforcing professional mobility after 40, not only in order to stimulate activity but also to avoid excluding wage-earners made vulnerable by the obsolescence of their qualifications.

Once training is viewed in the context of professional change, it has to be reorganised if it is to have a real weight on career paths. In return, a better articulation between training and career advancement would undoubtedly help to increase the desire for training at all ages. Such a prospect presumes a new approach to lifelong learning which would envisage training programmes at different ages in function of qualification levels. Indeed, overall measures aimed at those 'over 50' without distinctions, and thus denying the multiplicity of strategies, objectives, employment conditions and above all career paths, cannot reduce inequalities and are even likely to aggravate them.

Christine Fournier (Céreq)

Further reading

- Christine Fournier, Marion Lambert and Coralie Perez. *Les Français et la formation continue. Statistiques sur la diversité des pratiques*. Document no. 169, "Observatoire" series. Marseilles: Céreq, 2002.

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Lifelong Learning and Staff Training in Sweden

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The issue of lifelong learning is also high on the agenda in European countries other than France. One reason lies in the demographic developments which will lead to decreases in the labour supply unless current (early) retirement patterns are changed and older workers remain in the labour force a longer period of time. Another reason is the desire for greater productivity in Europe. Increased training of older European workers, it is argued, would contribute both to increasing their productivity and to deferring their retirement.

The employment rates of older workers are higher in Sweden than in many other European countries. In 2001, for example, the employment rate for the 55-64 age group was 67 percent in Sweden as compared to an average of 38 percent for the EU as a whole. A comparison with France in particular shows that in 2000 the employment rate for Swedish men aged 55-59 was 79.7 percent, compared to 60.4 percent for their French counterparts, while the employment rate for Swedish men aged 60-64 was 51.6 percent, compared to 14.8 percent for the same age group in France. Similarly, Swedish women aged 55-59 had an employment rate of 76.0 percent (14.8 % for France) while the rate for Swedish women aged 60-64 was 45.0 percent (12.8 % for France) (SOU 2002:29, p. 187).

In spite of these relatively high employment rates, however, there is much concern in Sweden about what are considered to be overly early withdrawals from the labour force. This preoccupation is reflected both in pension reforms (i.e., to make pension systems more equitable in actuarial terms) and in policy proposals dealing with continuous competence development over the entire life cycle. One such proposal involves the creation of what are called 'Individual Learning Accounts'. An official in-depth study of such accounts and how they could be designed was presented in 2000 (see SOU 200:51 and SOU 2000:119). Based on this study, a government proposal to create such accounts was approved by the Swedish Parliament in 2002. The principle behind this scheme is that the learning accounts should be made available to all workers, on a voluntary basis, with contributions made by both the employee and his/her employer. The State will contribute in the form of tax subsidies of various kinds. It is the individual who decides when to draw on the account in order to finance his/her competence development and also what kind of competence development to undertake, with the idea that it will be broader and more general than current staff training and less closely tied to the present job. The employer is to continue financing training directly related to that job, as is already the case. Thus, the Individual Learning Accounts should serve as an addition to the employer-financed staff training already taking place within the Swedish economy. Funding for the public costs of the accounts (including some special start-up stimulation grants) has been reserved by the Swedish Parliament, but owing to unresolved administrative and tax issues the implementation of the Individual Learning Accounts has been delayed.

What then is the extent of existing employer-financed staff training of older workers in Sweden? And how does it compare to the French data presented in this issue of *Training and Employment*?

Data about staff training is collected by Statistics Sweden twice a year through additional questions to those individuals classified as 'gainfully employed' in the regular Labour Force Survey. These questions deal with the individual's participation in staff training (frequency, number of days, type, etc.) during the six months preceding the interview (as compared to 12 months in the French survey). The figures presented here cover the first six months of 2003.

During this period, 48 percent of all gainfully employed Swedish women and 44 percent of all gainfully employed Swedish men participated in staff training. The average length of training (among those receiving it) was about five days for both men and women. Those employed in the public sector had a higher training rate (63 % for government-sector employees, 53 % for those employed by local authorities) than those in the private sector (43 %). The Swedish training rate for private-sector employees was thus considerably higher than the corresponding French rate (31 % for a 12-month period).

The age pattern in Swedish training rates seems much less marked than in the French ones. For Swedish men, the highest training rates (48 %) are observed for the 25-34 and 45-54 age groups,

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- SCB (Statistics Sweden). *Personalutbildning, Första halvåret 2003*. Statistiska Meddelanden UF 39 SM 0302.
- SOU 2000:51. *Individuellt kompetenssparande, IKS, en stimulans för det livslånga lärandet*. Delbetänkande. Stockholm: Fritzes.
- SOU 2000:119. *Individuellt kompetenssparande med start år 2002*. Slutbetänkande. Stockholm: Fritzes.
- SO 2002:29. *Riv ålderstrappan! Livslopp i förändring*. Stockholm: Fritzes.

but the rate for the 55-64 age group also remains relatively high (42 %). The same is true in the case of women, where the training rate for 55-64-year-olds (49 %) is almost as high as that for younger age groups. There is a tendency for older workers to average fewer days of training but this is not very pronounced. There is also no tendency for the training rate to decrease with the length of service with the current employer: employees with lengthy service (11 years or more) have a training rate of 51 percent, compared to 47 percent for those with 3-5 years.

As in France, however, there are very marked differences in training rates between different categories of workers. When we look at training rates by educational level, for example, workers with only compulsory education (9 years or less) have training rates of about 28 percent; workers with secondary education have training rates of about 44 percent and those with higher education have training rates in the 55-60 percent range. We also find that members of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) have training rates of 37 percent, whereas members of the Swedish Central Organisation of Salaried Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO) have rates of 62-63 percent.

A comparison of the situations in Sweden and France leads us to suspect that there might be something of a vicious circle between early retirement and staff training. Expected early retirement could mean that the incentives to invest in training of older workers are small for both employers and employees, thus leading to lower productivity among older workers, which would in turn reinforce early exits, and so on.

Other Readings



Lifelong Learning Enforcement and the Empowerment of Older Workers (L.L.E.E.O.)

Leonardo Da Vinci Programme (2000-2001)

On the basis of initial research in Finland, Italy, Spain and Sweden with particular reference to the 'elderly' workforce, mechanisms which have distanced this occupational group from the labour market as well as training systems and institutions involved with continuing training and lifelong learning, a project was developed among social partners and institutional actors and based on initiatives for the discussion and sharing of hypotheses and results of the research (focus groups), namely its application in other national and transnational contexts.

The theme common to all the meetings was the analysis of training actions and initiatives targeted at the 'over-45' generation of workers, believed to be particularly exposed to the risk of marginalisation and work expulsion if characterised by weak skills and professions. The issues discussed were:

- causes for the expulsion of older workers from the labour market
- analysis of the training supply available to the 'over-45' workers
- factors which facilitate/hinder training initiatives for older workers
- initiatives and policies to reinforce the position of older workers.

Participants in discussions on these issues included actors in the institutional, entrepreneurial and union spheres as well as experts in adult education and training policies.

Working Life Changes and Training of Older Workers

Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) Programme (1997-2000)

This project studied 27 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in England, Finland and Norway. It looked at the learning of older (45+) workers and addressed the maintenance, development and utilisation of their job-related competences: knowledge, skills, learning, values, and attitudes. The following conclusions were reached:

- *Older workers are competent workers.* Job competence is often qualitatively different between older and younger workers, owing to the differences in their work histories and experiences and educational background, but not their age.
- *Learning at work among older and younger workers alike is challenged by the changes in working life and workplace.* Continuous changes both stimulate learning and reduce opportunities for it. Age as such has little to do with effectiveness of learning.
- *A fuller utilisation of the job competence of older, highly experienced workers in the collective setting of the workplace can enhance productivity and facilitate cooperative learning.* Its full recognition poses as much of a challenge to management as many other areas of modern knowledge management.
- *Development of learning organisation requires capability, motivation and opportunities to reflect upon one's own and company practices with management setting the bottom line.*
- *Flexibility and productivity of the older workforce, as well as social cohesion, are not given in any particular context.* Rather they are produced and reproduced in and through policies we create and our everyday practices in working life.

(selected by Miriam Rosen)

L.L.E.E.O.

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WORKTOW

■ Final report published in 2002 and available from VOX, Trondheim, Norway. Tel. 47 73 99 08 40 Fax 47 73 99 08 50 E-mail: vox@vox.no

■ Website

<http://www.pjb.co.uk/npl/bp21.htm>

A Reorganisation of Céreq's Publications Programme for Increased Access to the Centre's Research

In order to meet reader demands and widen the paths of access to its research, databases and documentation for its partners in France and abroad, Céreq has undertaken an in-depth restructuring of its publications programme and distribution channels. The *Bref*, Céreq's French-language newsletter, will provide the basis for its English and Spanish equivalents, *Training and Employment* and *Calificaciones y Empleo*, and thus improve the international visibility of the centre's research. The three newsletters will continue to be distributed both in printed form (available free upon request) and on Céreq's website (www.cereq.fr). The "Documents" and "Études" (Studies) series have now been combined to form a new series known as RELIEF (Rapports et Échanges sur les Liens Emploi Formation, Reports and Exchanges on the Training-Employment Relationship). These publications will include reports on studies carried out by the Centre and its network as well as papers from seminars and conferences in which Céreq has participated. Another new series, NEF (Notes Emploi Formation, Employment-Training Notes), will consist of relatively short texts (ca 40 pp.) concisely summarising the findings of individual studies. Distributed by mail order (as is the case for the RELIEF series), these notes will soon be made available on Céreq's website as well. This new format is aimed at readers who are interested in a given topic but do not necessarily want to know all the findings or the circumstances of the related study. It is intended to meet a frequent demand for rapid access to findings in a form which is less restrictive than a journal article and less cumbersome than a complete research report. The final element of this redefined publications programme is *Formation Emploi* (Training-Employment), Céreq's multidisciplinary journal, created in 1983 to address all of the relations between training and productive systems. Its status is different from that of the other publications insofar as its editorial committee and selection process guarantee its independence from the Centre.

Céreq's Documentation Centre, which has been re-computerising its collections since 2001, has now created a documentary portal for the Centre's website in order to provide simple, comprehensive access to different information sources, both internal and external, as well as various documentary services.

This portal is accessible to anyone visiting the Céreq website, without ID or password. Complementing the institutional information and news presented on the rest of the site, it allows users to search Céreq's multiple databases: the Documentation Centre's collection of over 40,000 documents and its periodicals catalogue, the on-line collections including more than 400 publications in PDF format, a base of Internet links, Céreq's annual programme and the staff directory. Searches may be carried out in French, English, German and Spanish on the basis of some 3,500 subject entries.

The new portal also provides links to the bibliographical bases of the Centre d'études de l'emploi (Centre for Employment Studies, CEE) and the Centre Inffo (for information on training). In addition, it gives access to all of Céreq's public statistical resources, such as the findings from surveys on the youth transition or continuing training, statistical profiles of France's occupational branches or data on technical education and training. And it also makes available various compilations of documents, including thematic selections (the first of which deal with "Age and Employment" and "Higher Education"), replies to FAQs from Documentation Centre users and links to the main newsletters in the fields related to Céreq's activities.

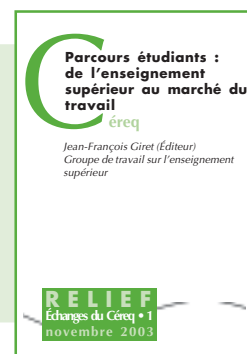
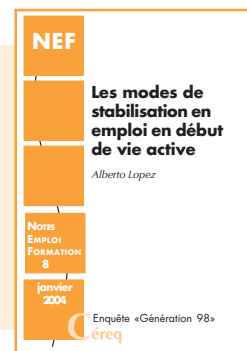
By reorienting and enlarging the range of services offered by the Documentation Centre, the documentary portal thus permits a comprehensive vision of the information resources that Céreq produces, along with a selection of outside sources in the areas of employment, training and work.

"Knowledge, Education and Future Societies"

The fifteenth annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE), held on 26-28 June 2003 in Aix-en-Provence, was hosted by the Laboratoire d'économie et de sociologie du travail (Institute of Labour Economics and Industrial Sociology, LEST), Céreq's associated centre in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region.

This year's theme, "Knowledge, Education and Future Societies", was addressed in plenary sessions featuring Céreq's director, Hughes Bertrand (professor of economics at the University of Paris 7), Hermann Schmidt (professor at the

University of Duisberg and former General Secretary of the BIBB), Robert Boyer (economist, research director at the CNRS, France's national research centre) and David Marsden (economist and former LEST doctoral student).



Documentary Portal
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www.cereq.fr

Céreq researchers working within LEST took an active part in this conference. Thus, Annie Lamanthe presented a paper on the initial results of a study on the renewal of the productive fabric in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region which focused on the dynamics of the participants and the role of training at four different sites. Céreq-LEST studies on the labour market for recent PhDs gave rise to two papers. The first, by Saïd Hanchane and Isabelle Recotillet (Céreq-LEST), addressed a controversial point in the early career of PhDs—the post-docs, which have been showing a steady increase since they were introduced in France during the 1990s. Extending the issue to relations between public and private sectors, Pierre Béret (LEST), Jean-François Giret (Céreq) and Isabelle Recotillet drew on data

from Céreq's Generation '98 survey to bring out the difficulties encountered by recent PhDs in transferring the professional experience acquired in public-sector research to the private sector. Data from the Generation '98 survey was used in other papers as well, such as that of Vanessa Di Paola (LEST), Stéphanie Moullet and Josiane Vero (Céreq) on downgrading in the civil service. Coralie Perez (Céreq) also presented the findings of a study dealing with 'precarious' employees' access to continuing training, which was carried out on the basis of the "Continuing Training 2000" survey. For Lest's director, Éric Verdier, this meeting, which included more than 600 participants and nearly 150 papers, will mark "an important date in the institute's itinerary," in terms of the wealth of topics and disciplinary approaches alike.

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A number of the papers presented at this meeting are available on the website of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics:
<http://www.sase.org>

New Publications

De l'enseignement supérieur à l'emploi : les trois premières années de vie active de la Génération 98

[The School-to-Work Transition: The First Three Years of Working Life of Generation '98]

Jean-François Giret, Stéphanie Moullet and Gwenaëlle Thomas

NEF no. 1, Céreq, June 2003. 10 €.

This first publication in Céreq's new "Training Employment Notes" (NEF) series presents the main findings of the "Generation '98" survey on the labour-market entry of young people exiting higher education in 1998, with or without diplomas.* It begins with an overview of their school-to-work transition in comparison with the results of preceding surveys over a ten-year period. It then presents detailed findings by diploma and training speciality as well as a broad survey of the main jobs held three years after the end of studies. The young people of Generation '98 clearly enjoyed better conditions of labour-market entry than all those who began their working life in the 1990s. However, this overall improvement is not reflected in the same way from one training stream to another. Thus, the most clear-cut progression concerns the short higher-education programmes, namely the BTS (higher technician certificate) and DUT (polytechnic diploma), while young people exiting the second cycle of university studies (*licence*) seem to have benefited much less from the economic recovery marking the period when they left the education system. This publication also shows the great diversity of the paths taken by the young people of Generation '98 prior to their labour-market entry. Many of them, for example, had in-company placements, odd jobs or more regular activities during their studies.

Codifier la nomenclature PCS à quatre chiffres : une ambition raisonnable ? Analyse d'un flou statistique sur la relation formation-emploi

[Codifying the PCS Classification in Four Numbers: A Reasonable Ambition? Analysis of a Statistical Ambiguity in the Training-Employment Relationship]

Françoise Cédo and Alberto Lopez

NEF no. 2, Céreq, July 2003. 10 €.

Like most household surveys, those concerning the itineraries of young people who have recently left the education system are based on the individuals' replies to a battery of questions. The objective is to classify the successive jobs they have held among the 455 posts of the PCS classifications (occupations and occupational categories). The fact of drawing on the standard questionnaire repertory, of briefing the interviewers about the need for a very precise description of the job and of using a computer coding system might be thought to create an ideal situation for surveying the first steps into working life. As this document shows, however, "there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip".

By comparing the findings of two coding processes—one known as 'manual' and the other automatic—applied to the same corpus of jobs, the authors bring out a number of divergences. And in half of the divergent cases, there is a real impossibility of categorising the jobs with any certainty given the imprecision of the information collected during the survey. The examination of this ambiguity turns out to be instructive not only for identifying the limitations of a survey using the PCS classifications but also for assessing the pertinence of certain subdivisions of this system.



These publications are available at the Céreq bookstore or by mail order to Marie-Christine Antonucci, Céreq, 10, place de la Joliette, BP 21321, 13567 Marseille cedex 2.
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* See also "Generation '98: Who Benefited from the Economic Upturn?" in *Training & Employment* no. 51 (April-June 2003).