European Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2013

France

Education and Training

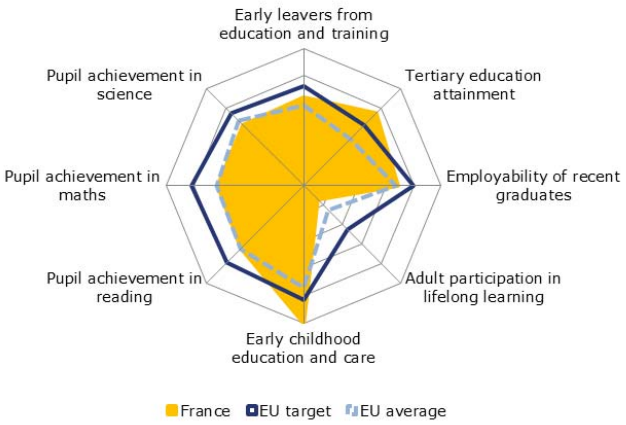
1. Key indicators and benchmarks

Europe 2020 headline targets			France 2009	France 2012	EU average 2009	EU average 2012	Europe 2020 target / Benchmark
1. Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)			12.2%	11.6%	14.2% EU28	12.7% EU28	**EU target: 10%** National target: 9.5%
2. Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)			43.2%	43.6%	32.1% EU28	35.7% EU28	**EU target: 40%** National target: 50%[4]
ET 2020 Benchmarks							
3. Early childhood education and care (4 years old - year before start of compulsory primary)			100.0%	100.0% 11	91.7%	93.2% 11	**95%**
4. Basic skills Low achievers (15 year-olds; Level 1 or lower in PISA study)	Reading		19.8%	:	19.6%	:	**15%**
	Mathematics		22.5%	:	22.2%	:	**15%**
	Science		19.3%	:	17.7%	:	**15%**
5. Learning mobility	Initial vocational training (IVET)	**a.** Students participating in Leonardo da Vinci programs as a share of vocational students at ISCED 3	0.6%	0.9% 11	0.6%	0.7% 11	
	Higher Education	**b.** Erasmus inbound students as % of student population in host country		1.2% 11		1.1% 11	
		c. Inbound degree mobile students as % of student population in the host country		11.9% 11		7.0% 11	
6. Employment rate of graduates (age 20-34) having left education 1-3 years before reference year			77.2%	76.5%	78.3%	75.7%	**82%**
7. Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)			5.7%	5.7%	9.3%	9.0%	**15%**
Proposed ET 2020 benchmark							
8. Foreign languages skills	**a.** ISCED 2 students at proficiency level B1 or higher in first foreign language[1]		:	14.3% 11	:	43.5% 11	
	b. ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages		50.8%	52.6% 11	58.6%	60.8% 10	
Other ET 2020 Indicators							
9. Investment in education and training	**a.** General government expenditure on education (% of GDP)		6.1%	6.0% 11	5.5%	5.3% 11	
	b. Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€ 5,806 08	€ 6,039 10	€ 5,732 08	€ 6,021 10	
		ISCED 3-4	€ 9,437 08	€ 9,825 10	€ 6,964 08	€ 7,123 10	
		ISCED 5-6	€ 11,072 08	€ 11,606 10	€ 9,309 08	€ 9,168 10	
10. Digital competences	**a.** Pupils in grade 4 (ISCED 1) using computers at school		:	:	60.7% 07	64.7% 11	
	b. Individuals aged 16-74 with high computer skills[2]		31.0%	30.0%	25.0%	26.0%	
11. Entrepreneurial competences	Individuals aged 18-64 who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business		27.0%	36.0%	42.3% a	42.0% a	
12. Vocational education and training	Share of vocational students at ISCED 3		44.2%	44.6% 11	49.6%	50.3% 11	
13. Skills for future labour markets Projected change in employment 2010-2020 in %	High qualification		:	29.5%	:	19.1% EU28	
	Medium qualification		:	1.3%	:	4.6% EU28	
	Low qualification		:	-18.5%	:	-20.2% EU28	
14. Low-skilled adults	Literacy		:	21.6%	:	19.9% EU17	
	Numeracy		:	28.0%	:	23.6% EU17	
	Problem solving in technology rich environments[3]		:	16.5%	:	13.0% EU17	

Source: Cedefop: 13 / EAC: 10a,b / European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC): 8a / Eurostat (Government finance statistics): 9a / Eurostat (LFS): 1, 2, 6, 7 / Eurostat (ISS): 10b / Eurostat (UOE): 3, 8b, 9b, 10c, 12 / IEA TIMSS: 10a / Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 11 / OECD (PIAAC): 14 / OECD (PISA): 4

Notes: 07 =2007, 08 =2008, 09 =2009, 10 =2010, 11 =2011, e= estimate, a= unweighted average b= break, p= provisional
Number of countries included in EU average: PISA=25, Entrepreneurship=18, Language skills=13, ICT/Computers at school=13, others: EU27
[1]= average of skills tested in reading, listening, writing, [2]= having carried out 5-6 specific computer related activities, [3]= Results refer to people without ICT experience and people who failed the ICT test, [4]= Tertiary educational attainment: the national target is defined differently and refers to the age group 17-33 years old

Figure 1. Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)



Source: DG EAC calculations on the basis of data from Eurostat (LFS 2012 and UOE 2011) and OECD (PISA 2009). *Note:* all scores are set between a maximum (the highest performers visualised by the outer ring) and a minimum (the lowest performers visualised by the centre of the chart).

2. Main challenges

Whilst the qualification level strongly influences the career path in France, too many young people leave school without qualifications or with poor qualifications and are unemployed or trapped in poor quality jobs. According to PISA, the widening gap between the top and lower achievers is one of the largest in the OECD countries. The early school leaving rate is stagnating. These trends hit France especially hard, as the employability of 15-19 year-olds, who are not in education (11% in 2010[1]) remains very low: in 2010, 71% were unemployed or entirely out of the labour force compared to 57% on average in OECD countries. While improving access of adults to education and training is crucial to increase the employment rates namely of young people, low-skilled and older people, the participation rate decreased during the last decade and lags far below the EU average and the 15% European benchmark.

Those challenges are reflected in two of the 2013 European Semester country specific recommendations: measures should be taken to improve the transition from school to work through, for example, a Youth Guarantee and promotion of apprenticeship as well as to increase the adult participation in lifelong learning, especially of the least qualified, older people and the unemployed.

3. Investing in skills and qualifications

Investing in education and training in a context of economic crisis

In the last years, general government expenditure on education in France as a share of GDP remained slightly above the EU average (6.0% vs. 5.3% in 2011). With a 0,3 % increase of this share, France is one of the few countries which significantly increased its total education expenditure during the period 2008-2010[2]. The pattern of expenditure in France is specific. Priority has been given to investment in higher education for the period 2000-2011 to the detriment of mandatory (in particular primary) and post-secondary non-tertiary education. With first measures already taken in 2012-13, the new government changed the policy priorities. The 2013 reform of compulsory education "Refondons l'école de la République" foresees additional means with a strong focus on pre-primary and primary levels[3] namely with the disposal 'More teachers than classrooms' (« Plus de maîtres que de classes »).

Skills

In general, France's relative position as regards basic skills vis-à-vis the EU average has deteriorated over the last decade. School education only shows average results, slightly worse than the EU average, for reading, mathematics and science as documented by the 2009 PISA tests[4]. French average results of 10 years-olds in Literacy at the 2011 PIRLS remain slightly above the average results without significant difference in the last 10 years. With regard to language learning, performance of pupils at the end of upper secondary level remains modest, as only 14.3% achieve B1 or higher performance.

1 This rate decreased to 9,8% in 2011 out of which 72 % are unemployed
2 See European Commission, Recent trends in the funding of education in Europe,2013
3 The reform foresees 60.000 new posts, 2/3d of the teachers posts will be allocated to the pre-primary and primary education
4 Between 2006 and 2009, performance in mathematics has remained stable whilst the results for reading and science have improved at a slower pace than the EU average.

The July 2013 reforms of both the compulsory education system and the higher education and research system demonstrates a comprehensive approach to adapt to the digital age[5] namely to the use and production of Open Educational Resources (OER). Both include training and support for teachers to adopt new pedagogical approaches. The 2013 industrial strategy focuses on four sectors, out of which the digital economy. The development of eEducation is seen as a major component[6] of the digital economy. an ambitious action plan "France Université Numérique" (FUN)", with specific funding, was launched in October 2013. It aims to support the international competitiveness of higher education actors by increasing their offer of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) and by developing distance learning. France joined the 2013 pan-European 'MOOCS' initiative.

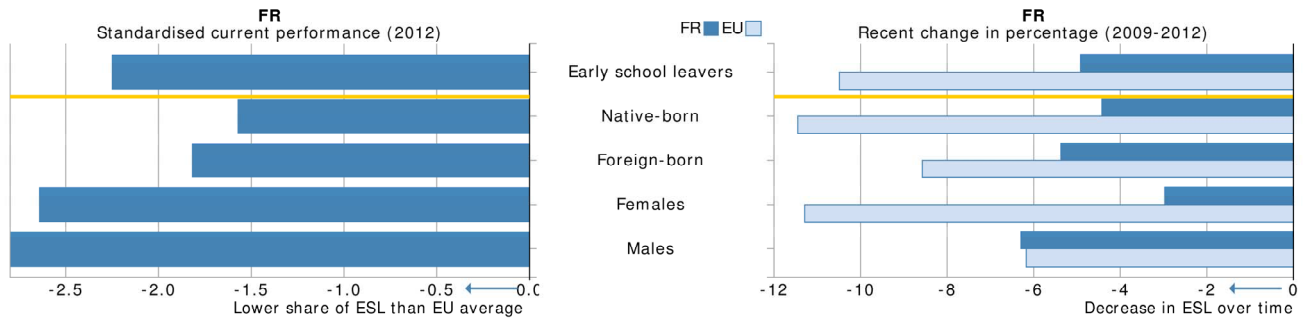
The French five-level national qualifications framework, established prior to the European qualifications framework (EQF), was referenced to the latter in October 2010. As of March 2012, Certificate Supplements of all qualifications in the NQF and in the national qualification data base (NRCP) refer to the relevant EQF level on. The decision to revise the structure possibly by an eight-level one as proposed by a 2009 reflection note has not yet been taken. In case a revised structure would be adopted, a new referencing report should be submitted, possibly in the next one to two years[7].

4. Tackling early school leaving and raising the bar in school education

In 2012 in France, the proportion of young people who left school early is still below the EU average (11.6% vs. 12.8%) although improving at a much slower pace than the EU average. Contrary to the EU general trend, girls and foreign-born youngsters are respectively nearly as much at risk as boys and native-born. The unemployment rate amongst early school leavers remains above the EU average (45.6% vs. 40.1% EU average). France continues to have full coverage of early childhood education of 4 years-old. The current school reform aims to raise the falling participation of the 2 to 3 years old with an appropriate pedagogy.

Whilst there is not yet evidence of a comprehensive strategy against early school leaving (ESL), measures have been reinforced the last years, most of them focusing on secondary level and compensatory programmes. Since late 2011, a detection system (SIEI, an interdepartmental system of information exchange) makes it possible to identify young school leavers. Data are put at the disposal of 360 local platforms to identify youngsters who dropped out without qualification and to support them in finding a solution for further education and training. The local platforms are composed of different organisations offering education and training programmes outside the regular mainstream education system. The network "Formation Qualification Emploi" (Foquale)[8] aims to offer a personalised return path to education and training for 20.000 youngsters by the end of 2013. In 2013, measures have been taken or planned to intervene at an earlier stage (e.g. a reference person for ESL will be appointed in upper-secondary schools with a high level of absenteeism). Moreover, an interministerial working group has been tasked with the development of a comprehensive early school leaving strategy based on a transversal approach across the different policies[9].

Figure 2. Early leavers from education and training: sub-groups



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* ESL = early school leaving. See Annex 2 for further information.

The sub-indicators below show that early school leavers have a greater employment disadvantage in France than in other EU countries. Therefore, particular attention is needed for this topic.

5 The first one encompasses the setting up of a 'public service for digital education 'and legal measures to facilitate the use of OER by teachers. The reform on higher education (HE) and research foresees the provision of OER by the public HE institutions as well as related services

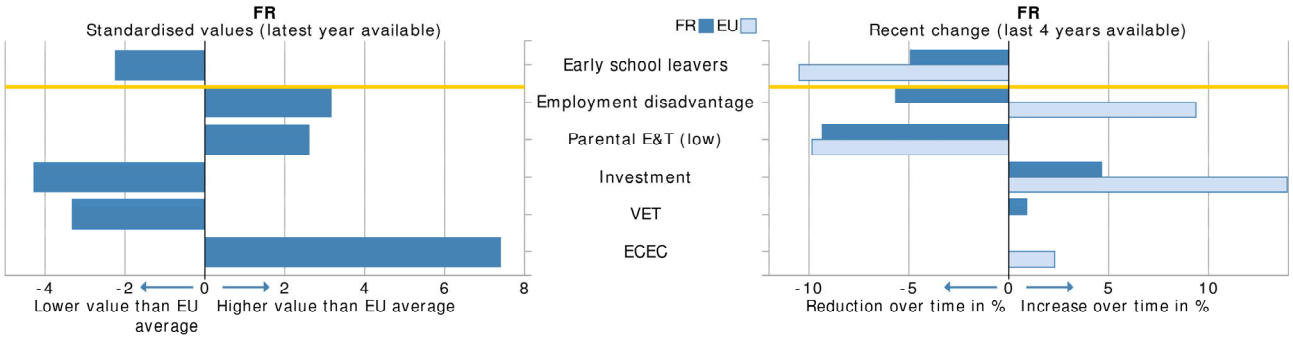
6 Ministère de l'Éducation nationale.htm ; 'La structuration de la filière du numérique éducatif : un enjeu pédagogique et industriel

7 Cedefop, Analysis and overview of NQF developments in European countries. Annual report 2012.

8 It succeeds to the 'network nouvelle chance' and was initiated in December 2012 as 'Objectif Formation – Emploi-ROFE'.

9 Peer learning Activity report on early school leaving (to be published soon)

Figure 3. Early leavers from education and training: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

In a medium to long term perspective, improving school quality and outcomes may help reduce early school leaving. The 2013 reform of the compulsory education system recognises the need to take upstream structural actions. One of the objectives is to halve by 2017 the number of youngsters leaving school without sufficient qualifications[10] to enter the labour market. According to estimates, this concerns currently 1 out of 6 youngsters[11].

The 2010 reform of initial teacher education raised the recruitment requirements of primary and secondary teachers from bachelor to master level. This requirement has had negative consequences in the short run including decrease in the number of applicants, shortage of training for new teachers or lower selection criteria for competitive examinations and recruitment procedures[12].

Reversing the previous trend, the recently adopted reform foresees a strong increase in the number of teachers and aims at more supportive pedagogical approaches. Both teacher and educational staff's initial education and continuous training will be revised and a new competence framework[13] leading to a new master in teaching is expected to be adopted soon. As regards continuing professional development, teachers have had a right to training since 2010, but this is under-used and attendance is hardly ever taken into account for career advancement purposes[14].

The set-up of one new accredited institution in charge of staff's initial education and continuous training (Ecoles supérieures du professorat et de l'éducation 'ESPE') by 'Académie' is a key measure[15] of the reform to introduce innovative approaches and more practical training for the future teachers. ESPE will replace the current IUFM from the 2013/14 academic year and will be tasked with a larger mission (e.g. offer of specific masters for teaching, closer links with universities, research and the world of work)[16] and open to a larger public (all educational staff from pre-primary to university).

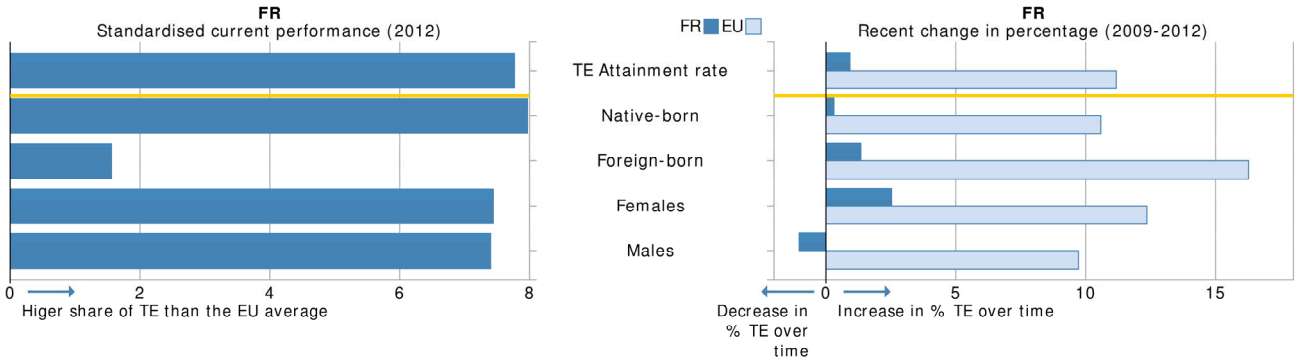
Besides, the "emplois d'avenir professeur (teaching jobs for the future)"[17] setup in 2013 seeks to attract, by 2015, 18.000 students from low-income backgrounds by providing the possibility of progressive entry into the teaching profession with a professional development path and financial aid.

5. Encouraging participation in tertiary education and modernising higher education

As regards the Europe 2020 target on tertiary education attainment, progress has been made from 39.7% in 2006 to 43.6% in 2012; this rate is well above the EU average (35.8%). France has a national target of 50 % of higher education attainment of 17- 33 year olds defined differently than the EU target[18]. The share of graduates at doctoral level is lower than the EU average as a possible consequence of the dualisation of the French system between 'grandes écoles' and universities.

10 Minimal level of qualification: CAP ou BEP at level 5 of the French qualification system (level 3 of the EQF)
11 National Reform Programme 2013, statistical annex
12 Report of the Court of Auditors, February 2012: "Initial education and recruitment of teachers", p. 78, cited in Study on Policy Measures to Improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe, European Commission 2013)
13 Project Decree of 6 June 2013.
14 Study on Policy Measures to Improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe, European Commission 2013
15 Out of the 60.000 new posts foreseen, 27.000 posts are planned for the ESPE
16 Ministères de l'éducation nationale et de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, Lancement des Ecoles Supérieures de Professorat, 1 July 2013
17 For three years from the second year of their Bachelor's degree course, students will receive financial aid and will work a certain number of paid hours (not as teachers) in primary and secondary schools. In return, students concerned will undertake to sit for a competitive examination for recruitment of teachers into the national education system, to be held at the end of the three years.
18 The EU benchmark considers the proportion of graduate within the 30-34 age group whereas the national indicator calculates the probability for someone to be first time graduate, at each age from 17 to 33, for a given year (synthetic indicator). The national target is not the educational attainment of an age-group, such as measured by a household survey. The national target is a "net graduation rate", defined as the estimated percentage of an age group that will complete tertiary education, based on graduation data and on current patterns of graduation.

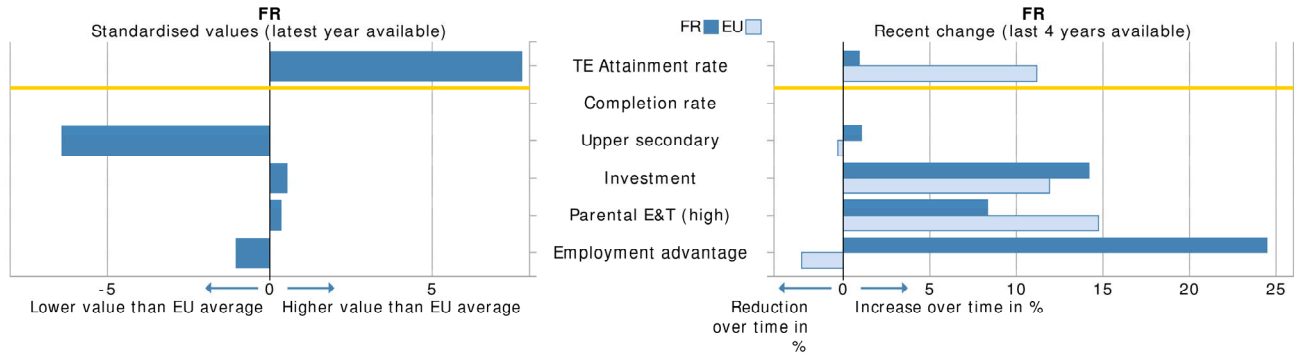
Figure 4. Tertiary education attainment: sub-groups



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* TE = tertiary education. See Annex 2 for further information.

The sub-indicators below show that as regard employment, the comparative advantage of tertiary graduates is slightly smaller in France than in the EU average, but has significantly increased during the recent crisis years.

Figure 5. Tertiary education attainment: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

Major reforms of the higher education system have been made since 2007 with mixed results as regards widening participation to under-represented groups, lowering the high drop-out rates and shortening of completion time. Broadening access to holders of professional and technical bachelors as well as improving student success rate in Licence is a key objective of the Higher Education and Research reform. Measures aim at a strong simplification and greater transparency of the teaching offer, support for more informed choice and reinforced guidance for the students. Governance and curricula (namely with the development of traineeships and the offer of training in English) reforms as well as measures to support new modes of learning should contribute to greater efficiency of the academic bodies, increased employability of the students and higher competitiveness in an international environment

France is still firmly committed to promote outgoing ('Mobilité internationale 2020')/incoming learning mobility of students. After the 2009 visa procedure, further improvement is discussed as regard multiannual visa to attract talented foreign students.

6. Facilitating the transition from education to work and reshaping vocational training

Reflecting the general EU trend, the employment rate of recent graduates from upper secondary and tertiary education decreased in 2012 whilst remaining slightly above the EU average (76.5% vs. 75.7%). Youth unemployment increased in 2012 (from 22.8% to 24.3%) in particular for those with the lowest level of education. This trend had already been visible since the start of the economic crisis in 2008. The situation of the low qualified will become ever more difficult, since employment in high qualification jobs is forecast to increase by 29.5% in France and represent 43% of total jobs in 2020 (compared to an EU average of 34%).

To facilitate transition to work, initiatives taken or planned by the government in 2013 aim at securing jobs with a focus on the less qualified ('emplois d'avenir'[19] and 'contrat de génération') reinforcing alternate training

[19] The 'emplois d'avenir' initiative aims to offer 150.000 subsidised jobs by 2014 to young people, mostly in the public sector and with a focus on the young people (16-25 years) without a diploma.

(namely apprenticeships[20]), developing measures for early school leavers and launching the 'youth guarantee' with a focus on youngsters which are the most at risk of exclusion and poverty.

In 2012, 44.6% of upper secondary students were enrolled in vocational education and training, slightly below the 50.3% EU average. The number and share of young, low-qualified individuals entering apprenticeship have decreased despite various measures[21].

The evaluation of the 2009 reform of the 'Lycée professionnel' is planned for 2013. The reform aimed to support the access to a professional baccalaureate in a shorter period of time[22] and to introduce more flexible and diversified pathways with work-based learning opportunities.

New measures to combat early school leaving are particularly relevant for those lycées which on average suffer from the highest level of absenteeism. One of the objectives of the 2013 school reform is to equip every youngster leaving the education system with sufficient qualifications[23] to enter the labour market. Support after the compulsory age of education (16) should be provided and the possibility to benefit from apprenticeship schemes whilst being enrolled reinforced. Access to short term higher VET will be rendered more easy to the professional bachelor graduates.

In parallel, the bill on further decentralisation of national competences to the regions, currently under discussion, foresees an increased role of the regions in the initial professional pathways to be taught in their territory in order to ensure a better match with the regional skills needs.

In the medium-term, the reform of apprenticeship and lifelong learning, announced by beginning 2014 (initially in 2013), aims among others to ensure that the less qualified benefit from the system. For the moment, among the population of young people between 16 and 19 years old, the proportion of pupils in apprenticeships is on average of 8%[24]. This represents quite a low proportion.

Moreover, the recently adopted 'Refondons l'école de la République' reform of compulsory education provides an upstream structural reform to prevent low achievers which was called for by many experts.

7. Upgrading skills through lifelong learning

The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC[25]) reveals that French adults (aged 16-65) perform slightly below the EU average in the literacy and numeracy tests. Proficiency of adults, with at most lower secondary educational attainment, is among the lowest in the EU, in particular for numeracy. Results for other educational levels are close to the EU average. However compared to the OECD average, the relative position of France appears more critical.

This relative high share of low skilled people seems to be related to a large skill gap between young and old generations[26]. The youngest generation (aged 16-24) scores better than the overall population in literacy (by 13 points, i.e. equivalent to skills usually acquired with 2 years of education). While results for the age group 25-34 are close to the EU average in literacy and below average for numeracy, adults aged 55-65 are amongst the worst performers in the EU.

These first results suggest analysing further the impact of adult learning policies in the long run considering that in France the proportion of low skilled people (level 1 or below) is slightly above the EU average (22% vs. 20%) and that results are more influenced by the generational gap than in EU average. Indeed, there is a high share of people aged 55-64 with at most lower secondary education attainment (41% vs. 36% at EU level) compared to 17% for the age group 25-34 (below the EU average of 19%).

Adults' participation in lifelong learning declined since 2006 and lags far behind both the EU average (5.7% vs. 9% in 2012) and the 15% European benchmark. Low skilled adults continue to participate much less (2.5% in 2011) that the most educated. In 2010[27], the share of the French companies providing training to their employees was above the EU average (76% versus 66%).

[20] The previous target was revised downwards at 500,000 apprenticeship contracts by 2017, see 2013 French NRP.

[21] Pierre Cahuca, Stéphane Carcillob et Klaus F. Zimmermannc, L'emploi des jeunes peu qualifiés en France, les notes du conseil d' analyse économique no 4, avril 2013

[22] In 3 years period equivalent to the one needed for the general baccalaureate.

[23] CAP ou BEP at level 5 of the French qualification system (level 3 of the EQF).

[24] Source: national statistics http://www.data.gouv.fr/DataSet/564571?xtmc=%C3%A9volution%20nombre%20apprenti&xtcr=1

[25] Volume I of the Education and Training Monitor (chapter 6) provides an overview of the results of the survey. Skills levels are presented either in terms of average score points or proportion of adults at a given proficiency level in literacy or numeracy (level 1 to 5) or problem solving in technology-rich (ICT) environments (level 1 to 3 or no ICT experience).

[26] Only partial results are available for France.

[27] Eurostat, news release on continuing vocational training, June 2013.

Despite ongoing reforms undertaken in 2009 (law on Lifelong guidance and training[28]) and 2011 (law on 'Alternate routes and career security' (Loi pour le développement de l'alternance et la sécurisation des parcours), the French lifelong learning system fails to adequately target those most in need. The reform of apprenticeship and lifelong learning aims to address those shortcomings and to revise also the financing system of vocational training. New measures to promote flexibility of adult education for all have been announced or recently adopted (namely the 'compte personnel de formation' for each adult independently of his status). In addition, the planned decentralisation of State's vocational training competences to the Regional Councils aims to reinforce a coherent lifelong guidance (based on the 'compte individuel de formation') and to better adapt the offer of initial and continued training to the needs.

[28] Which had the objective to encourage the development of a coordinated national strategy, planned and implemented by national authorities, regions and social partners.