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Lifelong guidance policies in France and in Europe : where reforms are heading ?

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**Lifelong guidance policies in France
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where reforms are heading ?

Traduction du texte : *“Le pilotage de l’orientation tout au long de la vie. Le sens des réformes »*.
(Note emploi formation n°29, Cereq, juillet 2008)

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Lifelong guidance policies in France and in Europe : *where reforms are heading ?*

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Translation of the French text : “*Le pilotage de l’orientation tout au long de la vie. Le sens des réformes* ». Note emploi formation n° 29, Cereq, Juillet 2008.

Abstract

The transformations occurring in work and employment at the present time are raising new expectations with respect to guidance policies. Public action concerning guidance is challenged by the growing complexity of educational and professional pathways and increasing career mobility.

In France, most school and vocational choices are actually made without involving public guidance services. More often than not, they are the result of directly confronting the individual's choice regarding training and employment with the constraints inherent in the systems where these take place: constraints regulating educational streams in the selected training options, constraints on placement influencing professional choice within public service employment, constraints with respect to manpower management affecting professional choice among the employed. Sometimes, however, such choices are made with the help of guidance counselling provided by a public guidance service. But the quality of these services is perceived as somewhat suspect: too much emphasis on the psychological aspect, not enough information on jobs... This shortcoming on the part of public guidance services emphasises social inequities in the face of choice, disadvantaging less qualified populations. It is also an issue for employers up against recruitment difficulties.

To deal with these new expectations with concerning guidance, its steering system needs to be reformed. The aim of this survey is to describe the reforms underway in France. French specificities will also be revealed by comparison with examples from other countries based on a literature review.

There are barriers between guidance services in France due to the history of their development. Several networks, more or less specialised in guidance counselling, offer differentiated services targeting school populations, jobseekers or employees. Reforms are in progress in each segment led by either the State or by regional actors fostering cross-sector development. The latter are notably developing initiatives to coordinate regional guidance networks and promote quality-driven approaches. At the present time, it's at the regional level that the most significant reforms are underway to promote an improved lifelong guidance policy and individually tailored services without changing resource levels. Implementing such a policy means guidance services which are less subject to the constraints of initial and continuing education systems and public employment services. The challenge does not lie in doing away with these constraints but in readjusting them to the advantage of both individuals and employers.

Finally, this survey leads to suggestions for public action to progress in this direction. The regional councils cannot bear the responsibility for such changes alone for they require a joint political initiative with the State to establish a real, and improved public guidance service. In the first instance, this service could rely on the hard core of existing specialised public services (CIO, SCUIO, and AFPA) before being extended to other actors. It should be implemented in neighbourhood services such as one-stop lifelong guidance counters which would almost certainly entail thinking about quality standards remaining to be defined.

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Introduction

This survey of reforms in the steering system of school and vocational guidance in France and other countries is carried out in the framework of a collective study platform promoted by Cereq and dedicated to lifelong guidance.

This document is therefore an initial contribution to this theme-based endeavour by the Céreq's associated Centre in the Rhône-Alpes region . Its main aim is to inform national and regional decision-makers of current reforms in school and vocational guidance and make suggestions for improved public action.

To deal with the steering system of school and vocational guidance in France, we first need to clarify what this means and put the successive public policies dealing with the subject into perspective by briefly summarising their history.

The first section will thus explain the new demands being made on guidance linked to the changes affecting work, employment and training at the present time. This section will also describe the focus of reforms in progress: tailoring services to the individual, territorialisation and developing quality standards.

The next three sections deal with the internal reforms necessary in each of the three guidance segments: school guidance, vocational guidance for jobseekers and for the employed. Although these segments continue to operate completely separately and these internal reforms should not be forgotten, today's main challenge is to implement decompartmentalisation and develop a lifelong guidance policy which transcends status in terms of school, unemployment, adults etc. and attempts to reconcile the constraints of educational systems, public employment services and human resources policies in companies.

The fourth section concerns cross-sector reform of these segments linked to the decentralisation process: in France, cross-sector reforms in terms of guidance are largely left to the responsibility of Regions, more specifically, to a few pioneer Regions.

However, these reforms in France correspond to a wider movement of international reform relayed by organisations like OECD and the European Commission since the early 2000s. It is for this reason that international perspectives are included for each point addressed. The idea here is not to understand the internal characteristics inherent in each country but to illustrate the overall significance of reforms affecting all national guidance policies. These comparisons also enable us to identify the institutional specificities of public guidance services in France and their steering systems.

1. What do we mean by guidance?

Guidance primarily designates the choices and decisions made by individuals concerning their working life in general, in terms of both school and occupation: "Guidance consists in helping the individual to determine his personal characteristics and develop them in order to choose his learning and professional activities throughout the vicissitudes of his existence with the joint goal of serving the development of both society and his personal responsibility" (Danvers 1988).

1.1. A process of individual choice subject to constraint

This definition is consistent with the current notion of lifelong guidance (OTLV) which includes choices related to school and vocational guidance. One of the challenges facing lifelong guidance is to support the increasing career mobility prevailing in current job environments.

School and vocational guidance

School guidance designates educational choice and leads to the distribution of pupils and students among the various courses on offer within a given school system. Vocational guidance more specifically designates choosing a professional activity or occupation and leads to distributing individuals throughout the employment systems.

Educational and career choices are obviously linked: we sometimes refer to vocational guidance when talking about guidance towards vocational streams in the school system. The link is particularly strong with respect to regulated professions for instance, where access to employment or to the profession requires specific training: driver, nurse, doctor, lawyer... However, it is generally the case in France that initial education does not predetermine future employment: its general nature opens up a wide range of possibilities – and employment renewal. Nevertheless, in the traditional institutional context of the relationship between training and employment in France, early guidance towards vocational training in the school system is also a kind of selection process based on failure. These educational options, traditionally less valued on the labour market than general education options, reduce the prospects of professional development and access to higher social status.

School and vocational choices are generally the result of confrontation between an individual's ambitions and the social processes of selection and professional distribution. "Vocational guidance designates the set of processes and social and individual factors leading to the distribution of individuals among the various trades, professions and jobs and playing a role in the development of these individuals' careers and employment paths" (Guichard 2006).

This confrontation between the expression of individual liberties and the expression of social and economic constraints is at the heart of guidance professionals' activity. The development of guidance services, their nature and purpose, repeatedly comes up against the question of the tension between two potentially contradictory and even conflicting aims: is it possible for guidance to meet both the demands of individuals, their desire for social emancipation and those of the economy's manpower requirements and a hierarchy-based employment system?

Arbitration between guidance to serve the choice of individuals and guidance to serve selection and distribution among the various training options and employment hierarchy depends on the economic context. Individual choice is subject to far more constraints in periods of recession and high unemployment.

Conceptions of guidance and work organisation systems: historical summary

Change in work organisation systems also influences guidance. As a general rule, it could be said that vocational guidance should answer the following question: "How can I steer my life in the right direction within the society to which I belong?" But society changed during the

twentieth century, influenced by transformations in work organisation systems. Guichard (2006) makes the distinction between four different periods in the twentieth century.

In the vocational work system linked to craftsmanship, the source of individuals' professional identity lies in their knowledge and know-how. In this system, vocational guidance needs to answer the following questions:

- “Which occupation or profession suits this individual the best?”
- “Which apprenticeship will give this individual the best chances of success?”

In Fordist organisation, individuals carry out basic tasks in a task-oriented framework. Qualification refers to the position held and not to the individual. This latter has to find his place within a working team. Here, vocational guidance needs to answer the question:

- “Which professional environment suits this individual the best?”

The flexible manufacturing system relates to the development of automated processes. In this environment, qualification is considered as a set of various skills included in a network organisation.

At the same time, we observe that individuals are less stable in their employment. Vocational guidance responds to the need for lifelong career building but also more generally for construction of self.

Globalisation and increased economic competition continue to transform work organisation systems, intensifying the dichotomy between stable cores of individuals ensuring the continued existence of companies and fringe workers, in insecure jobs, often low-skilled, alternating periods of employment and unemployment. In this case, guidance needs to answer the question:

- “How can fringe workers deal with the multiple transitions occurring throughout their professional life?”

And so there is a different conception of the purpose of vocational guidance for each work organisation system. Nowadays these systems coexist. Nevertheless, it is the last two systems which most need reform of public guidance services. These latter are faced with two issues:

- “How to provide increasingly personalised solutions and more specifically, to support the career mobility of workers in insecure jobs?”

1.2. Public guidance services, a resource for making choices

Although school and vocational choices are mostly individual decisions made within the domestic environment, other actors may be involved such as teachers or employers and of course, public intermediaries and guidance professionals. Guidance is also a State matter, involving public funding. The State dedicates resources to providing guidance services to both youngsters and adults. This begs the question of how this public funding is used, how services are organised and steered.

The weak position and discredit cast on the quality of public guidance services

The literature on decision-making processes concerning guidance does indeed underline the fact that the role of these public intermediaries is relatively limited to the advantage of the role of the other stakeholders.

Concerning school guidance, it is often teachers and class councils that play a major role along with peers (friends, other pupils and students). This also proves to be the case during working life where public service involvement is very limited and individual decisions are the rule. Along the same lines, the Céreq report (2007) also shows how the nature and role of actors vary according to the guidance levels in the school system. Families, teachers, class councils, professional relations all play a more or less decisive role at the different levels.

In addition to which, public school and vocational guidance services are currently the target of a lot of criticism concerning their efficiency; their quality is questioned and is the subject of negative representations.

NEGATIVE REPRESENTATIONS REGARDING THE USEFULNESS OF PUBLIC GUIDANCE SERVICES

In his report (2007), deputy (member of the French Assemblée nationale) Frédéric Reiss refers to the poor reputation among users of school guidance services and guidance counsellor/psychologists (COP). He mentions the fact that COPs emphasise the “counselling” aspect linked to their psychologist training whereas parents express a real need for vocational “information” and would prefer profiles with a background in economics.

The psychologist qualification required by the 1991 decree is often suspected of being the result of lobbying rather than a necessary competence. The report also underlines the dearth of COPs (on average, one COP for 2.8 schools); children and their parents feel that this is insufficient and above all, the fact that offices are only open during school and working hours means that they are virtually inaccessible. This report advises diversifying the recruitment of COPs – extending it beyond those who merely have a degree in psychology – linking them hierarchically to one or more establishments, or transferring responsibility for them to the Regions (an attempt of this sort failed in 2003).

Céreq (2007) likewise shows that vocational guidance services for jobseekers also suffer from a poor image among individuals. The survey reveals a negative opinion with respect to guidance assistance provided by public employment services: lack of intelligibility, inexistence of meaningful contacts, incapacity in their role of go-between. Individuals therefore feel helpless when faced with the labour market and new issues in managing their jobs and careers. This shortcoming has a positive outcome in that it encourages those who are capable of doing so to develop greater autonomy in deciding on which path to follow and seeking work. The French labour market is therefore a “structurally under-equipped labour market where most contacts are left to the initiative of candidates” (Bessy et al. 2007).

A multiplicity of institutions with no “systemic” approach

Beyond these issues of accessibility and quality, providing guidance services in France is spread over a multiplicity of institutions with various steering systems and missions: specialised guidance services (CIO and AFPA), guidance services offered within the wider framework of employment (ANPE and ML), counselling in career mobility (Fongecif...).

STAKEHOLDERS IN GUIDANCE IN FRANCE: MANPOWER AND MISSIONS

Under Ministry of Education/School guidance authority	
CIO	3,757 COP 518 CIO directors Around 1,000 CIO administrative staff whose tasks include, among others, reception; Steering: 117 schools' inspectors responsible for guidance, technical advisors to departmental directors of education; 30 heads of academic information and guidance services (CSAIO) and technical advisors to chief education officers
Under Ministry of Labour/Vocational guidance authority	
AFPA	800 occupational psychologists (70% dedicated to guidance, 10% to vocational transition, 20% to psycho-pedagogical monitoring of trainees, recruitment counselling and skill and employment management), supported by 200 guidance technicians (30% dedicated to information and 70% to administrative and technical support). 22 directors of Regional vocational guidance centres, supported by 45 executive coordinators responsible for guidance
ANPE	1,300 local employment agencies with 27,631 staff Three profiles: director, operational managerial staff and polyvalent advisors
CAP EMPLOI (Handicapped persons)	119 specialised employment organisations 1,100 professionals specialised in job-seeking assistance for handicapped persons
Youth advisory centres and PAIO (Youth)	10,000 staff 70% carry out guidance tasks with three profiles: receptionist, advisor, project manager
APEC (Managerial staff)	Around 400 itinerant consultants operating in 48 centres
APECITA (Agricultural managerial staff)	More than 20 regional delegates and consultants for combined employment and training
Interinstitutional and joint organisations/Vocational guidance	
CIBC	1,300 skills assessment counsellors, skills assessment managers, guidance counsellors
FONGECIF	200 to 220 career mobility counsellors The number of consultants has doubled in 10 years

Source : Inffo Centre (2007) completed by Borrás and Campens.

As in most OECD countries (OECD 2004), in France these services were traditionally structured not as a unified public service but as a series of juxtaposed services assigned to various areas of competence in the public sector. The most long-standing services are generally the responsibility of educational policy. We are referring to the school guidance of children where one of the purposes is also to control streams in the education systems. Guidance services as tools for employment policy also appear early on the scene; these concern adult vocational guidance which, during periods of low structural unemployment, serves to redirect and redeploy workers to meet the needs of an economy with changing employment structures.

Alongside these two traditional segments, changes in the labour market during the 1970s were to result in two other specific segments in the area of guidance services. The first was in response to mass unemployment. It concerns guidance for jobseekers and its implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour. The second segment in recent guidance

services aims to provide employee management with the tools to meet the new demands of manpower flexibility and constant adaptability.

Therefore three segments - structured according to target populations – currently exist in guidance services in France: school guidance, vocational guidance for jobseekers and vocational guidance for the employed. These segments operate as distinct entities with no overall steering system: guidance lacks a systemic approach. This results in the low visibility of these services with respect to individuals, in redundancies, the dispersal of resources and difficulty in building a consistent lifelong guidance policy.

1.3. Individualisation, coordination and quality: three keys to understanding lifelong guidance (OTLV) reforms

The most significant reforms in guidance to date are cross-sector reforms aiming to rise above the fragmented concept and create the necessary conditions for institutional cross-functionality in order to implement a true lifelong guidance service.

How can assistance be tailored to individual needs without changing resource levels?

These cross-sector reforms respond to a fundamental objective: to tailor services to individual needs without changing resource levels. This objective of individualisation is consistent with changes in the way labour markets operate which have greatly modified individuals' expectations. It is a fact that flexibility and the increase in transitions between periods of training, employment, unemployment or inactivity mean that career renewal now appears to be the norm. Linear school and vocational paths would seem to belong to the past and marginalised. Throughout their lives, individuals would appear to be increasingly confronted with decisions concerning training or employment, decisions with an influence on their employability. Demands on guidance assistance are therefore inevitably greater in terms of volume but above all, and progressively more so, in terms of differentiation; in this sense, demands are more and more individualised.

By definition, however, individualisation supposes a more complex, personalised service which therefore costs more. And this is a key issue in carrying out reforms in guidance services. How can these services be individualised using existing resources, in a best-case scenario, given the constraints of controlling public spending?

The individualisation of guidance assistance at constant cost to the State implies seeking to be more efficient. This is done based on two types of tool: tools for coordinating public action, more often than not at the local level, and tools to improve quality. In addition to which, territorialisation, which usually goes hand-in-hand with a transfer of responsibilities to local authorities, opens up the prospect of new financial support. At the same time, quality-based steering consisting in a monitoring process by the public funding entity opens up the prospect of initiating competition between service providers and privatisation.

Local coordination and quality-driven steering

Territorialisation is one solution for reducing inefficiencies inherent in institutional compartmentalisation and segmentation of specialised services according to different

populations. It constitutes an alternative but complementary means of reform to the centralised merging of guidance services.

The gain in efficiency obtained through territorialisation is based on the idea that greater proximity with individuals means a better understanding of their expectations and the capacity to build more suitable responses. Territorialisation also aims to coordinate services on a local basis. It is supported by tools such as pooled resources, organisation into networks and local one-stop counters grouping together all the services (“guichets uniques”).

It is also potentially a source of locally and regionally unequal access to services, an issue which can be solved by implementing national quality standards.

A principle of public action now widely spread throughout most OECD¹ countries, the tendency is for quality-driven steering to replace traditional means-driven steering.

On the international front, the importance given to the quality of guidance systems is part of the more general reform of public services designated under the term “new public management” (NPM). NPM consists in importing management tools from the private sector into the sphere of public services, such as performance standards. It aims to develop the means for public funding entities to monitor service providers. It usually involves competition between these providers (Kopac, Ignjatovic, Darmon, 2006) and in particular, between the public and private sectors. Introducing a means of competitive regulation in public services is designated by the generic term “quasi-market”.

The oldest versions of quasi-market were developed in the field of health. They were investigated on the basis of economic incentive theories revealing two types of justification for their implementation. On the one hand, they provide a solution to the issue of ethical risk, according to which public prescription offices seek primarily to defend the interests of their members rather than those of public service users. And on the other, they solve the issue of opportunism on the part of certain users who consume free services not necessarily useful to them to the detriment of other users with greater needs. The hypothesis here is that introducing a means of control by defining standards of quality and competition between providers would be conducive to improving efficiency and equity in limiting this type of behaviour. These issues arise today in similar terms concerning employment and vocational guidance policy.

The pertinence of developing quasi-market mechanisms for guidance is debatable. An OECD report (2001) concludes that results of experimentation using such mechanisms for guidance are not very promising, due in particular to the difficulty of measuring results in guidance counselling. This report advocates the idea of developing a large public sector. Two other reports (2001, 2004) are more favourable to “quality approaches”. One emphasises the scarcity of regular, systematic assessments of guidance service quality; the other, the definition of quality standards together with definition of the skills required of guidance professionals.

In addition to these cross-sector reforms, the various segments of guidance for schools, job seekers and the employed are undergoing internal reform. The goals for guidance of these “localised” reforms per segment are necessarily limited: either a regulation of training flows;

¹ International organisations like OECD are particularly involved in quality approaches, with several reports on the subject published since the early 2000s.

or jobseeker flows; or maybe flexible management of human resources. The significance of these internal reforms should be clarified before describing the nature of cross-sector reforms in France, carried out essentially at the regional level.

2. Reforms in school guidance

From an institutional perspective, school guidance is subject to a clear, single steering strategy well-distributed throughout the national territory. It comes under criticism however concerning the quality of its services and its consequences in terms of failure at school (Tharin 2005). Hénoque and Legrand (2004) mention that “no clear directive concerning their mission has been given to these counsellors for years”. Reform is in progress and the study of a few foreign cases in this area puts light on French specificities.

2.1. In France, a clear steering strategy and controversial services...

The steering of school guidance² is currently placed under the authority of the French Ministry of Education. A specialised school guidance network for secondary education comprises information and guidance centres (CIO) and guidance counsellors/psychologists (COP) working in secondary schools. For higher education, guidance counselling is given by the joint university information and guidance centres located in the different universities. In each education district, these different stakeholders are placed under the authority of the head of academic information and guidance services (CSAIO). The Ministry of Education has at its disposal an additional organisation specialised in producing documents containing information on occupations and training streams: the National Office for Information on Education and Occupations (ONISEP).

Guidance counselling in secondary education influenced by psychology

The structuring of school guidance services goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Municipal centres were created in 1922, becoming departmental in 1938. Their role was to deliver professional information. The people involved in these centres were volunteer teachers and doctors who had undergone further training. They were to be replaced by professional staff with the creation of Institut national d'orientation professionnelle (INOP - National Institute of Vocational Guidance) in 1928, a training organisation which was the ancestor of the current INETOP (Institut national d'étude du travail et d'orientation professionnelle - National Research Institute for Labour and Vocational Guidance)³.

However, at this time selection and vocational guidance are not clearly defined despite common practices in applied psychology. The actors based their methods on psychometric tests for the “objective assessment of skills”. The aim of creating “Centres publics d'orientation professionnelle” (Public centres of vocational guidance) in 1955 was to apply the theory of “The Right Man in the Right Place”.

² Initial training in the school system in particular until the age of 16 which is the age of compulsory school attendance.

³ To begin with, INOP enjoyed the status of a “free school of higher education”. After becoming the Institut du Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM) in 1941, its aim became to train guidance professionals and carry out fundamental and applied research in the area of man in relation to occupation and guidance.

At the end of the 1950s, guidance appears in the school system with the aim of managing the flows of pupils and students between the different fields and specialities of educational system. Due to a poor understanding of prospects, partly linked to the mediocrity of employment forecasts at that time, the public authorities asked guidance staff to guide populations varying from the first year of secondary education to adults. The agreement signed between employers and trade unions concerning training and vocational development on 9th July 1970 mentions the role of school guidance counsellors to serve adults. This recommendation was never implemented.

The information and guidance centres were created in 1971. The criteria for the title of psychologist guidance practitioner were determined by decree in 1991. Thus CIOs were gradually to organise themselves into forming a public guidance service specialised in supporting children in their life projects within the framework of secondary education. The COPs demonstrate expertise in assessing school curricula, individual capacities and purpose. Their training is regulated by various ministerial texts⁴. They are recruited by means of a competitive civil service exam at the level of a licence (Bachelors degree) in psychology and follow a two-year training programme (baccalaureate + 5 years) in accredited higher education establishments, ending with the *diplôme d'État de conseiller d'orientation psychologue* (DECOP - State diploma of guidance counsellor/psychologist). Four higher education establishments are accredited in France for delivering this training. In these establishments, responsibility for training lies with the units responsible for research and training in psychology.

From information to the absolute necessity of study-to-work transition in higher education guidance

Concerning guidance in higher education, the distinction needs to be made between two eras. To begin with, guidance was done by the Bureau universitaire de statistique (BUS – University office of statistics) established in 1932. Its task was to carry out analysis and documentation to determine an action plan enabling public authorities to find a solution to “intellectual unemployment” and “bottlenecks in liberal professions” in order to ensure “better job distribution”. At that time and because of the low number of pupils awarded the baccalaureate (5% of a given age group in 1939, i.e. 27,000 baccalaureate holders) BUS services were the privilege of “good family background”. In 1954, BUS acquired status as a public undertaking.

Subsequently, when the age of compulsory and voluntary schooling was increased under the French Fifth Republic, and to meet the necessity for guidance within universities (the Faure law of 12th November 1968), BUS was replaced by ONISEP in 1970. As from 1975, two years after new guidance processes came into existence, an information and guidance department was established by agreement in each French university. The Savary law (1984) structured public service in higher education: “Student guidance includes information concerning courses, study-to-work prospects and the options available for switching courses”. Several subsequent decrees and measures (decree of 6th February 1986, “Bayrou” measures in 1997) clarified and recalled the importance of study-to-work guidance in higher education but nothing really revolutionary occurred in organising the services.

⁴ Decrees and law of 20th March 1991 and law of 25th July 1985 relative to the title of psychologist.

The initial goal of guidance was to distribute information in the higher education sector and during integration days (integration mentoring). With the increase in the number of baccalaureate holders and the professionalisation of higher education, new profiles appear at undergraduate level and expectations change. The service is therefore extended to the fight against dropping out and academic failure and more recently, to including actions facilitating the professionalisation of courses and study-to-work transition.

2.2. ... ending in a reform in progress

Following the failure of efforts to transfer responsibility for moderating the COP network to regional councils and suburban riots in autumn 2006, the Prime Minister appointed an interministerial delegate for guidance (DIO) whose mission was to lead a think-tank on reforming the national guidance system. This resulted in a national scheme for guidance prepared by a commission placed under the delegate's authority (March 2007). The main recommendations for action concern secondary and higher education.

Concerning secondary education, there are two goals: to reduce the number of school-leavers with no professional qualification (18% of an age group graduating in 2001 according to Céreq); to develop a better understanding of occupations and the professional environment. With respect to this dual requirement, several actions are in progress: the generalisation of the vocational discovery module in the fourth year of secondary education, optional until the present time; the personalised guidance interview for all in the third and fourth years of secondary education and in the seventh year of general, technological and vocational education, the personalised interview for all pupils in the first year of CAP (Certificate of Vocational Aptitude) and BEP (Certificate of Vocational Education) in an effort to support and motivate pupils and prevent dropping out. In addition to which, the second term's class council becomes essentially dedicated to guidance and the CIO ensures the local coordination of listing young school-leavers with no qualification by collecting the information from interviews examining their circumstances.

Concerning higher education, the reform aims primarily to reduce the amount of dropouts: it is a fact that nearly half of new registrants drop out or change course in the first year of university. Better information on success rates and prospects but also proposals for switching courses during the first semester would probably help reduce these failures. Proposals contained in the national scheme for guidance also advocate increased support for university-to-work transition. As a result, additional resources have been allocated to create units for assisting this transition. Given that resources are limited, student mentoring is being developed. This reform is carried out within the framework of the 2007 Law relative to universities ("libertés et responsabilités des universités"), assigning them two new missions in addition to their traditional tasks of transmitting knowledge and research. These two new missions concern guidance and study-to-work transition.

As from the end of 2006, the operational transposition of these guidelines for reform into higher education includes, among other measures, the support of 50,000 new entrants by 10,000 student mentors in Master 2 or doctoral studies; creating university/business committees in each university; generalising the principle of a single application file for higher education and regional coordination of vacancies in education and systems; creating directorates for guidance, traineeships and study-to-work transition within the management spheres of higher education establishments; generalising observatories which should be

operational on each university site for the academic year beginning in 2008 and continuing vocational training schemes for academics where guidance and study-to-work transition are of prime importance.

SOME INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES IN TERMS OF SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Bridges to the professional environment

In Germany, vocational guidance includes visits to discover the world of business and usually, a traineeship in a company. Implementation is made easy in this country by the fact that companies are very amenable to contact with schools. These traineeships last from one to three weeks and are documented by logbooks and reports. They take place within a strict legal framework and can be carried out in other European countries.

Empowerment of teachers and all staff

In Finland, teachers and other involved staff are given an operational description of their respective activities in order to guarantee the organisation of guidance services. The result is an improvement of minimum services while institutional responsibility is fostered in terms of vocational counselling and guidance at school. In Quebec, schools are encouraged to foster the concept of “school for vocational guidance”. Planning for personal and vocational future is considered to be one of the major concerns of learning throughout school life. In primary education, this involves helping pupils to build their identity and during secondary education, make career choices. A declared objective is for pupils to understand the usefulness of what they learn at school for their future employment, thus giving a meaning to schoolwork. This involves qualified vocational guidance specialists in schools but also active participation by all the stakeholders, stimulating discussion and collaboration between teachers and guidance staff, partnerships with parents and local authorities.

Privatisation

Several countries encourage schools to set up partnerships for vocational guidance: with parents or former pupils, with representatives from the world of business, trade unions and non governmental organisations. In Germany, schools sometimes outsource vocational guidance to an external public or private agency, closely linked to the professional world. These subcontracted tasks are considered as complements to the action of schools and not substitutes. In Denmark, some of the major vocational colleges recognise that vocational guidance skills are now at the heart of teaching and learning processes. Their guidance counsellors provide services for the pupils but also work with the teachers as consultants. It may well be that in the future, guidance counsellors dedicate half their time to direct counselling and the rest to consultancy. Vocational guidance is monitored on the basis of a quality assurance procedure for each school.

2.3. Service privatisation, teacher empowerment and search for bridges to business in other countries.

In most OECD countries, as in France, we observe that youth does not often resort to public service school guidance and that the family is the principle actor in choice-making (OECD 2004; Sultana and Watts 2005). Service development does not seem to be due an increase in the number of specialised counsellors but rather to a greater and sometimes formalised mobilisation on the part of teachers or outsourcing to public or private service providers, since guidance counsellors sometimes acquire consultant status.

Another observation concerns the need, in a number of cases, to improve the specific training of guidance staff, teachers when they are confronted with providing this advice, and professionals. For the latter, the issue often emphasised concerns initial training, based too much on psychology: guidance counselling today requires ever-more understanding of occupations, employment and a capacity to "deliver information" and not merely "guide" (OECD 2000, 2001).

And finally, in most European countries except those like Germany with a dual training system, guidance seems to suffer from too little contact between pupils and the professional world and employers.

2.4. School guidance in France: a “public” service and a State diploma

The reforms undertaken in secondary and higher education in France confirm the specialised COPs’ role in coordinating guidance even though they involve the whole educational community on a wider scale. Yet these reforms do not appear to be as far-reaching as in certain foreign schemes: lighter timetables and training in guidance counselling for teachers; guidance counsellors acting as consultants for teachers responsible for guidance, etc.

The change in France change responds mainly to a recurrent issue in OECD countries – improving pupils’ and students’ understanding of the economic and professional environments. This is done based on mechanisms frequently used at the international level such as building bridges with the professional world.

However, while in other countries the emphasis is often on training professionals to increase their understanding of employment and occupations, this is not fundamental in France. Here, after passing a competitive exam, professionals benefit from an initial training period of two years leading to a State diploma of guidance counsellor/psychologist; from this perspective, France is certainly in advance of other countries where the training of guidance professionals is far less regulated and does not last as long.

One wonders however if the time has not come to implement a change in counsellors’ skills: they are very much involved in the “counselling” aspect of their work, calling upon the psychological component of their training, while the challenge is to develop the “information” aspect involving other skills. Is there not a case here for undertaking other actions, by developing continued vocational training to ensure constant updating of their knowledge-base with respect to occupations, employment and working conditions?

3. Reforms in vocational guidance for jobseekers

While school orientation aims to support training choices or school-to-work transition, the goal of vocational guidance for jobseekers is to support unemployment-to-work or -to-training transition. It targets both adults and recent school-leavers who are finding difficulty in accessing the labour market. It comes under the responsibility of a number of services working separately from one another depending on the type of population concerned and as often as not, with no specialist guidance skills. At the present time, the reform of vocational guidance for jobseekers is basically linked to the implementation of active labour policies.

The example of other countries where action targeting guidance of the unemployed has been more significant calls for the clarification of certain French specificities in this area.

3.1. Guidance counselling “split” among the various French actors in employment services

In France, jobseeker guidance falls to a multitude of non-specialist and insufficiently coordinated actors. Some of these come under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, others are managed by interinstitutional or joint organisations. All the actors contributing to public employment services prescribe and/or deliver guidance counselling.

AFPA alone has access to a specialised service and staff. Managed as a tripartite system by State representatives, employee trade unions and employer vocational organisations, AFPA has always combined two tasks: skills training for adults provided in their own training centres and guidance provided in psychometrics centres⁵. This guidance service, known as the “integrated service in support of career projects”, is managed separately within the AFPA system. Theoretically, it is therefore independent of the training task.

All organisations guide populations coming under their responsibility within the wider framework of return-to-employment, without the support of specific staff or separate departments. Guidance counselling occasionally makes use of clearly identified resources such as detailed skills assessment, counselling for accreditation of previous learning or training in project assistance. But most of the time, it is not carried out by specialised counsellors and is generally delegated to service providers in the private sector.

ANPE⁶, a public undertaking under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, funds and delivers guidance services⁷ in the framework of its mission as a public placement service. It is impossible to calculate the number of staff dedicated specifically to guidance, all the more so since services may be delivered internally or outsourced to service providers such as the interinstitutional centres for skills assessment (CIBC) mentioned further on.

Likewise concerning APEC⁸, ensuring tasks similar to those of ANPE but for managerial staff, and ML-PAIO or CAP-Emploi networks. The ML-PAIO network is responsible for the guidance, training and integration of youngsters in the 16-25 age group who have dropped out of the education system. Likewise, the Cap-Emploi network supports all handicapped workers. This overview of aid for return-to-employment services would not be complete

⁵ Created in 1966, AFPA replaces the Association nationale interprofessionnelle pour la formation rationnelle de la main-d’œuvre (ANIFRMO – National interprofessional association for rational manpower training), which was created in 1949 to develop the fast-track training for adults required for vocational manpower redeployment purposes following the war.

⁶ The change in guidance provision for actors in the public employment service – and in particular for the public placement service – is linked to socio-economic changes and policies decided by government. In 1963, the Ministry of Labour included the task of vocational counselling in the mission of regional level of employment public policy (ERE). In 1965, the ILO advocates setting up vocational guidance positions within public employment services, supported in this matter by preparatory work on the fifth plan (1966-1970). It’s in this context that ANPE was created in 1967.

⁷ “Individual Project Target” and “Group Project Target”.

⁸ Association for managerial staff employment, created in 1966. There is also the association for managerial staff and technicians in agriculture (APECITA), created in 1954. The mission of APEC and APECITA concerns aid to managerial staff and companies, recruitment, training and information.

without mentioning the measures for beneficiaries of minimum social allowances⁹, implemented at departmental level by local return-to-employment committees. But only 60% of these beneficiaries are supervised by a referral councillor and 40% participate in integration initiatives. Guidance is far from being the priority in these initiatives: social benefits (accommodation, health) or State-aided contracts¹⁰ predominate.

Alongside these networks with clearly identified missions spread over the national territory, other structures more specifically target the guidance of certain populations, sometimes within a limited territorial sector. The CIDFF network informs women on occupations and employment. The MIFE network informs all adult populations. And so, over the past twenty years, the most significant factor is the increased diversity of municipal employment services supported by locally elected representatives. Some of these were to inspire the agenda of the 2005 social cohesion plan promoting job centres called “Maisons de l’Emploi” (one-stop counters grouping together and coordinating all the services in a same area- Borrás, 2006). Last but not least, to complete the overview of local public action potentially involved in vocational guidance for jobseekers, we should mention the network of local integration and employment plans (PLIE) supporting long term unemployed persons on the path to employment.

3.2. Guidance as a lever for activation

Guidance for jobseekers comes within the scope of the particularly complex institutional framework of employment services. At the present time, these services are undergoing reforms seeking to improve their efficiency: reduction in unemployment rates and improvement in the percentage of return to employment. Following the 2005 social cohesion plan emphasising activation of the unemployed, the tripartite agreement State-ANPE-Unedic of 5th May 2006 redefines the monitoring methods of jobseekers receiving benefits from the unemployment insurance system and registered with ANPE¹¹. This monitoring is now carried out jointly by ANPE and ASSEDIC on a monthly basis in the context of PPAE (Projet personnalisé d’aide au retour à l’emploi – personalised project for return to employment), based on a single file for each jobseeker. Differentiated solutions are proposed to jobseekers depending on the amount of time they have been unemployed: from autonomous search to close supervision. In 2005, the integration of ANPE and UNEDIC information systems was begun and in 2007, the two institutions began their merger at the central level.

An appendix to the tripartite agreement of May 2006 defines the AFPA participation in this agreement and defines the missions:

- “through its actions with respect to guidance, training, support, certification and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL – validation des acquis de l’expérience or VAE), to

⁹ 1,194,000 on 30th June 2007 (source: Ministry of Labour Directorate for research, analysis, assessment and statistics (Direction de la recherche, des études, de l’évaluation et des statistiques du ministère du Travail - DREES).

¹⁰ Source: DREES 2006. The RMI is paid out by the departments. Since the 2003 law concerning RMI decentralisation, a referral agent should be designated as soon as the allowance is made available and a contract signed within three months. This contract may include social support, referral to the public employment service, activities or traineeships aimed at improving vocational skills, access to a State-aided contract or a strengthened and individualized accompaniment.

¹¹ 2,415,000 jobseekers registered with ANPE and 900,000 receiving compensation from ASSEDIC on 30th June 2007.

contribute to meeting objectives which aim to improve performance and the quality of actions undertaken for the return to employment of jobseekers and the reduction of unemployment”;

- “to conduct its activity in conformity with the general regionalised policy of public employment service. It should notably participate in building a service proposal jointly defined with ANPE and ASSEDIC”...;
- “together with ANPE, to ensure the implementation of guidance provision to meet requirements for the training and qualification of jobseekers”.

Article 2 and 3 stress the necessity for ANPE and ASSEDIC to better inform jobseekers concerning the AFPA training offer and develop synergies in service provision (vocational retraining linked to different sectors, APL support...). AFPA is encouraged to improve the efficiency of its specialised guidance service. All these legislative initiatives aiming to redeploy guidance services within the framework of jobseeker activation still need to be actually implemented. In the future, special attention should be paid to the follow-up and assessment of their impact.

3.3. Wide range of populations, service heterogeneity: heading for a generalisation of the problem?

International comparison first leads us to observe that theoretically, jobseeker guidance should give access to training. However, it appears that guidance provided by public employment services is insufficiently developed in this respect.

A second observation concerns the implications of guidance counselling provided by non-specialised staff in public employment services: the importance of vocational guidance is played down. Objectives in terms of guidance and placement are not always compatible in the short term and can be the source of conflicting interests. And finally, specific training in guidance counselling for staff in public employment services is limited. They are more competent in administrative tasks than in vocational guidance techniques.

The final observation is linked to the wide variety of populations managed by the public employment services: elderly workers, mothers having brought up their children, ethnic minorities, and dismissed workers do not have the same requirements. Employment services do not always have the resources necessary for diversifying their service provision, or to meet the demands of people with a high risk of unemployment. In a number of countries, the specific needs of high risk populations are managed by collective or municipal vocational guidance services or are outsourced, which brings us to the question of quality standards guaranteeing homogeneous services at the national level.

SOME EXAMPLES OF STEERING VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR JOBSEEKERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Wide range of populations

The public employment services in Austria and to a lesser extent, in Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom, usually offer three levels of service:

- the first level gives individuals self-access to printed, audiovisual and online data with no assistance from staff,
- a second level of service consists in relatively short personal interviews,

- a third level involves counselling for those who seem to need it or believe they could benefit from it: in-depth interviews, jobseekers clubs, “motivation” sessions.

In Luxemburg, voluntary non-profit organisations develop programmes for women victims of domestic violence in addition to other local projects. In Canada, more than 10,000 collective organisations deliver targeted vocational guidance services. Some of them total five to seven members of staff, others employ up to two hundred people.

Service heterogeneity

In Ireland, nearly eight out of ten staff members in employment services delivering vocational guidance services benefit from training. They can follow a part-time university course in adult guidance for a year. They use their training leave and those who pass their training successfully benefit from an increase in salary. An increase in the number of qualified staff is forecast.

In the Netherlands, a website offers resources for analysing needs (based on expressed interests), data on occupations, training, and access to an electronic version of the available vacancy database. It is intended to develop a user-assistance centre accessible by telephone, email, fax and letter.

In Belgium’s Flemish Community, the public employment service has initiated an all-purpose service system based on the use of self-assessment and self-steering tools for jobseekers. This generation of tools contributes to user self-sufficiency in the use of electronic files: this file includes information on the opportunities, curriculum vitae and training possibilities. Users manage their profiles online with the help of a manual describing the access to the many services available online.

3.4. A specialised service within the public employment service: the specific problem of institutional coordination in France

To begin with, France is characterised by the existence of a specialised guidance service at the very “core” of public employment services via AFPA’s integrated service for career project support. But this coexists with specific services provided by other actors in public employment services, including ANPE. The main problem here is institutional coordination between independent entities, involving AFPA and ANPE. The future decentralisation of public commissioning to AFPA will not simplify the problem since the organisation born of the current merger of ANPE with UNEDIC remains under State responsibility. Coordination therefore needs to be improved to develop guidance counselling which is visible and consistent within the public employment service.

Secondly, differentiation in support provided to jobseekers is currently being implemented with the PPAE. However, this individualised monitoring is mainly aimed at reducing the compensation period: guidance counselling is far less important than placement objectives. A challenge facing upcoming reforms will be to avoid reducing guidance counselling in the public employment service to a lever aiming to increase controls of the unemployed.

Thirdly, in France there is a profusion of organisations capable of providing solutions to the wide range of demands and populations, a problem emphasised at the international level. Alongside the guidance service provided by the public employment service “hard core” elements, there are in fact a number of organisations more or less specialised in guidance, whose national scope is sometimes limited but which are capable of meeting the demands of specific populations (youth, handicapped, women, high-risk categories). But the resulting multiplicity is detrimental to the consistency and efficiency of these services as a whole.

And finally, while the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and “self-service Internet” has been widely developed in the French public employment services, as in other countries moreover, there needs to be a more accurate assessment of the real impact of these new tools on vocational guidance processes.

4. Reforms in vocational guidance for employed adults

Vocational guidance for the employed is intended to support lifelong career mobility. This is supported in France by original measures administered by the social partners, mainly skills assessment (BDC “Bilan de Compétence”) and accreditation of prior learning (VAE “Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience”). Two organisations are involved, the FONGECIF and the intermediary advice point (PRC) network for VAE.

4.1. Measures funded by employers

Access to skills assessment or mechanisms for the accreditation of prior learning is also available for jobseekers, if prescribed, with funding by the public employment service. Others may also benefit from these measures at their own expense. Access to these measures for the employed is subject to the rules defined by the social partners concerning funding of continuing vocational training.

The founding laws of continuing vocational training drawn up in 1970 and 1971 have changed with time. Reform in the 2000s ratifies the principle of compulsory funding by companies¹². This is where the FONGECIFs¹³ have a role to play in employee guidance counselling, assistance with career mobility and choice of training.

The role of skills assessment is to define a professional project and/or a training project¹⁴. It resulted from the inter-professional agreement of 3rd July 1991 and the law of 31st December 1991. More than 900 organisations carry out assessments, including 94 inter-institutional skills assessment centres (CIBC) where this is the main activity. CIBCs were established by the 14th March 1986 circular of the Ministry of Labour and extended in 1989 to include one centre per department. Their aim is to manage populations who wish to position the experience they have acquired in relation to career projects. The other organisations are private. Directories of accredited skills assessment organisations are kept up-to-date by DRTEFPs.

At the present time, 70% of assessments concern jobseekers, 19% are carried out at the initiative of employees and 8%, that of employers. In 2003, more than 50,000 assessments skills (BDC) were carried out for the benefit of employees and 155,000 in-depth skills

¹² Interprofessional agreement on continuing vocational training of 20th September 2003 and law passed in 2004. In 2004, the obligation stipulates 0,9 % of the payroll allocated to the training plan – at the employer’s initiative –, 0,5 % to part-time training and 0,2 % to individual training leave – at the employee’s initiative.

¹³ Joint organisations whose mission is to collect and reassign employers’ expenditure obligations designed to fund individual training leave.

¹⁴ “Bilan de compétences et bilans de compétences approfondis, BDC et BDCA”, Premières informations, premières synthèses, DARES 2005. “They target different publics and respond to specific logics. The first is designed for employees to help them in their quest for career mobility. The second is intended for jobseekers to help them find employment.”

assessments (BDCA) were commissioned for the benefit of jobseekers. “Professional practices of the organisations providing the service are rather heterogeneous due to a significant turnover and the precarious status of a third of them” (DARES 2005).

Finally, the accreditation of prior learning (VAE) means that anyone can gain recognition of their experience through the award of a diploma, a title or certification by presenting a file to be assessed by a jury. This measure was introduced by the law on social modernisation of 18th January 2002. There is a charge for the accreditation of prior learning with a variable cost depending on the Ministries involved and the diploma applied for. Coverage of the cost may be granted to a private sector employee by an accredited organisation in the context of the CIF. Entitlement to accreditation leave was introduced to enable private sector employees to obtain a 24-hour leave of absence during working hours to go before the accreditation jury or if necessary, to obtain support for putting their file together¹⁵.

In 2003, the total amount of files presented was 24,900 irrespective of the “accrediting” Ministry. In 2004 this figure rose to 36,530. The success rate in obtaining accreditation is 45% for these two years on average. It should be observed that these accreditation processes concern a mere fraction of the people contacting the intermediary advice points (PRC): 70,000 people had appointments in 2004 to obtain more detailed information on the VAE process and to seek out the most suitable solution for achieving the goals of their professional project. 42% of these people were jobseekers (Céreq 2006).

4.2. More services and more equality in access: the principles of the French reform

Two main criticisms have been directed at the French system of continuing vocational training. The first concerns inequalities in access to training: this benefits the most highly-qualified. The second questions the current pertinence of a measure where the rights are linked to the company. In a context where employees are increasingly mobile and training requirements tend to materialise when transitions are in view, the challenge is to link rights to people. The 2004 law thus laid the basis of an individual right to training which was nonetheless non-transferable from one company to another. Progress still needs to be achieved and negotiations are on-going linked to discussions on how to secure career pathways.

The impact of these reforms on employee guidance should be limited. The main issue concerns the low amount of resources in terms of career mobility counsellors, particularly within the FONGECIFs. The 2002 law relative to VAE provides opportunities for substantial development of guidance counselling in the PRC network: the effectiveness of this guidance counselling organisation in the regions should be assessed. In concrete terms, the applicant for accreditation may obtain information from a PRC to understand his rights and choose the most suitable accreditation for his project. The organisation of PRCs is now under the responsibility of regional councils. In fact, “the PRC information and counselling service has been added to, without replacing, the systems already existing in the accrediting Ministries. PRCs were nevertheless visited by 70,000 people in 2004; seven out of ten benefited from a counselling interview but only half of these then chose to go through the VAE process, due to the difficulty of funding at this time, especially for jobseekers” (Céreq 2006).

¹⁵ VAE actions are now considered as part of training and employers may now charge them as their participation in funding the continuing vocational training the accreditation applied for is listed in the National Directory of Vocational Certifications (RNCP - Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles).

4.3. International convergence towards promoting guidance of the working age population

Employed adults use vocational guidance as a tool for their career development within a given company or for career mobility. In a world where the likelihood of remaining in the same position within the same company is decreasing, employees' expectations are on the rise. Yet in most OECD countries, both public and private services dedicated to employed adults are under-developed. To encourage lifelong learning – which is an important OECD recommendation, an EEC and Lisbon strategy objective – it therefore seems essential to develop access to guidance services for the employed.

STEERING VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE OF EMPLOYEES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Vocational guidance services within companies

In the Netherlands, vocational guidance is part of the expenditure covered by training taxes. Certain sectors of activity have developed measures using the funds collected as part of these taxes, particularly for SMEs. Companies are encouraged to call on specialised consultants to support their vocational improvement examination systems. Some large Dutch companies have moreover created mobility centres for their employees. Human resources specialists, supported by external consultants, provide an assessment of training needs. Their priority concerns movement within the company but they may also enable the investigation of possibilities on the external market.

In the United Kingdom, some employers are testing associations, call centres, electronic support and qualified guidance consultants. A subsidised programme of "Investors in People" awards a quality label to companies adopting good practices in enhancing human resources: organisations which inform their staff, advise them and guide them concerning learning and careers are officially recognised.

Vocational guidance of employees in the public employment services

In Norway, the public employment services do their best to respond to employed adults' need for vocational guidance by organising the way they deal with these populations in a totally different way from jobseekers and the beneficiaries of allowances. Employees are welcomed discreetly and have access to information on vacancies, word processors for their correspondence and CVs, free phone services... Self-help tools on Internet have been developed which employees use to analyse their centres of interest, define their career paths, test their projects, and confront their ambitions and qualifications with job offers. A programme to raise awareness with respect to professional choice mainly targets higher education graduates.

In 1997, Italy created permanent regional centres dedicated to guiding employed adults in their professional choices.

In Portugal, a national system of recognition, accreditation and certification of acquired skills (RVCC) is based on a network of centres. Adults, both employed and unemployed, benefit from an information service, counselling and additional training, including official recognition of their skills. Guidance counsellors and companies send individuals to these centres. By 2006, the network should number 84 centres spread throughout the country.

In European countries, the companies making career development services available to their employees are rare. When they exist, they are most often limited to managerial staff and concern prospects within the company. On the same lines, trade unions show little interest in the creation of vocational guidance services. When they provide these services themselves, they are usually delivered by staff without training and are dedicated more to access to

training than to vocational guidance in its generally accepted definition. And finally, the private services emerging in this sector are most often placement offices or head-hunters handling the return to the job market of redundant workers, very often managerial staff. In France as abroad, the private, paying market of vocational guidance is very limited.

4.4. A French particularity: joint mechanisms

Employee guidance in France is based on an original system involving the social partners and substantial funding through an obligation concerning employers' expenditure determined by law. The result is services organised at the national level such as skills assessment delivered by the CIBCs and accreditation of prior learning now coordinated at the regional level by PRCs. The main challenges facing the reforms in progress concern a significant development in the use of these mechanisms, the reduction of inequalities in access to these services which essentially benefit the most highly qualified individuals and the implementation of individual rights within the framework of discussions on how to secure career paths.

In the field of vocational guidance for employees, France seems to have tested a number of institutional solutions spotted on the international scene, excepting the development of services for employees within the public employment service. The considerable historical involvement of social partners, the financial mobilisation of companies and the precise definition of guidance services for employees have led to establishing a private provision under State control.

5. Cross-sector reforms for lifelong guidance

The French institutional context surrounding vocational guidance is therefore exceptionally complex and segmented, organised according to a segmentation of beneficiaries depending on their status. In this environment, the question of “who rules?” appears to be the controversial issue.

It is undeniably at the regional level that the most progress is being made with respect to cross-sector reforms across the different segments and promoting a public lifelong guidance service. The Regions' concern in this area is to establish a user-oriented service. To do this, three levers for action are set in motion: the understanding of needs, cooperation between stakeholders and access to services. The current measures for reform undertaken by a few pioneer regional councils basically reiterate various experiences in other countries aiming to break down institutional barriers and develop quality standards.

5.1. Who rules and who reforms lifelong guidance in France?

Since the different laws on decentralisation were passed (between 1983 and 2004), the regional councils have been able to take on responsibilities in the field of guidance. Nevertheless, in dividing the “training-employment relationship” – where matters of vocational training in general are delegated to regional councils and the State retains responsibility for employment policy – the issue of guidance functions has not really been solved and currently remains as it was. The interstitial position of guidance – maintaining a balance between training policies assigned to their area of competence and employment

policies which have remained under State responsibility – leads to a certain amount of indecision concerning the distribution of responsibilities between the central and regional levels of public action regarding guidance.

This partly explains the slowness of and difference in decision-making processes among regions. Some regional councils are behind attempts to break down institutional barriers with a view to strengthening local coordination between school and vocational guidance, employee and jobseeker networks at the local level.

Lack of clarity in the distribution of responsibilities between the State and regional councils

In spite of the fact that regional councils are under obligation to establish an “action plan for implementing an information and guidance policy within the PRDFPJ” (article 53), the five-year plan of the 1993 law remains highly ambiguous in the light of its article 49: “The Region will have overall responsibility for continuing vocational training for the under-26 age group and to this end, will have access to State competencies concerning vocational training in terms of youth reception, information, guidance and monitoring networks.” In other words, the regions would be responsible for training guidance related to youth, while the State would retain responsibility for ML and PAIO activities related to return-to-work and employment. The prevailing vagueness regarding responsibility for regulating a regionalised guidance offer leads to a multi-level governance detrimental to service visibility and efficiency.

Due to this vagueness regarding the allocation of responsibilities, both the State and the Regions are at the source of reform initiatives aiming to break down barriers between guidance services. A good example of this ambiguity in steering systems is to be found in the vocational training experimentation protocols decided in 1999 by the State together with seven regions¹⁶ aiming to establish networking practices between reception, information and guidance. Two recent State-endorsed initiatives for reforming steering are to be mentioned. The first of these concerns the creation in 2005 of the nation-wide system of job centres in the context of the social cohesion law : the Maisons de l’Emploi. They are supposed to regroup on a territorial basis all the training, employment, guidance services and to deliver and coordinate these services to the citizens of the territory. The government’s second initiative in this field was to create the Inter-ministerial Delegation for Guidance (Délégation Interministérielle à l’Orientation – DIO) mentioned previously with respect to its tasks and recommendations.

However, the regional actors certainly seem to be the ones currently supporting the most significant and innovative forces at work in terms of reform. Observations following the first two phases of the five-year plan did indeed heavily underline hesitations in the involvement of regional councils regarding guidance. And it was not until more recently that, pressed by the addition of school guidance to the political agenda in view of COP transfer, the guidance issue was really tackled head on. Slow progress in involving regional councils in guidance system facilitation and steering mechanisms is also due to the fact that the resources, both financial and legal, at the disposal of the Regions took a long time to establish.

The 2004 law moreover consolidates the role of Regions concerning guidance by assigning them the tasks of helping applicants for VAE and coordinating actions to promote the

¹⁶ Aquitaine, Centre, Pays de la Loire, Midi-Pyrénées, Réunion, Basse-Normandie, Rhône-Alpes. See the DGEFP n° 2002-8 circular of 21st March 2002 concerning vocational training experimentation.

reception, information and guidance of youth, in addition to adults, with a view to their social and professional integration. The impact of this law – which restates the responsibilities of the Regions concerning school and vocational guidance – remains to be assessed.

Regional councils slowly take on responsibilities

As from 1993, certain French Regions therefore began to seek involvement in the steering of guidance policies. The Regions generally began to be involved in guidance in the context of preparing the guidance section of the PRDF. Inventory reports on guidance (AIO in its broadest sense: *accueil, information et orientation* or reception, information and guidance) established at the regional level led to formulating a fundamental problem:

"The French AIO system seems to be a mixture of segments which cannot be combined into one system equipped with standards, values and practices common to all its actors". There seems to be an urgent need for "continuing the efforts of clarification and simplification announced by the 1993 five-year law so that every citizen can find nearby, locally, high-quality support for his otherwise individual actions and active guidance well beyond information distributed over an institutional counter" (CCPR 2004).

The Regions are therefore in line with the European Union concept of promoting active guidance as a "public service accessible to all, of all ages, so that the approach of these services ceases to focus on offer and becomes focused on demand". The reforms are therefore planned with the intention of individually tailoring services in response to user demands and not with the idea of using guidance as a lever to regulate flows of trained individuals or jobseekers. System constraints are considered secondary.

For instance, the Limousin PRDF adopted in 2004 develops three main concepts: "Inform, guide and train individuals on a tailor-made basis within the framework of FTLV (*formation tout au long de la vie* or lifelong training), anticipate demands related to skills and training in collaboration with companies, develop a territorial approach". The basic idea throughout the PRDF is "to focus on the citizen by seeking to secure training pathways and access to employment. All too often these pathways come to a halt through lack of support, monitoring and efficient interaction between the stakeholders and the services offered"¹⁷.

When first taking on responsibility for guidance, the Regions therefore agreed on three areas of involvement: pooling understanding of user requirements (individuals and employers), developing cooperation between all the actors and developing access to guidance services with a good territorial coverage. Regarding these three areas, initial assessment is very critical: there is plenty of room for progress.

Three shared objectives for a regional guidance policy

Despite their particularities, the Regions which recently proved to be the most innovative in terms of guidance appear to share three public policy objectives: pooling their understanding of requirements; promoting practices of interinstitutional cooperation; and finally, guaranteeing conditions of equal access.

¹⁷ Centrinffo, 647, Nov. 2004: interview with J.-P. Denanot, then President of the Regional Council.

Pooling understanding of requirements

The Regions investing in guidance report a large capacity for collecting information on user requirements with respect to guidance services, notably through the variety of networks, their tasks and the populations they deal with and their in-the-field presence: CIO, ML-PAIO, ALE, chambers of commerce and industry, but also service-providers of guidance and training activities, etc. The problem here lies in the lack of sharing and pooling of these data which considerably lessens the impact of existing information. Data exchange procedures among the different stakeholders are very rare. Some regional inventory reports stress the necessity of organising the pooling of information collected by the different stakeholders at the regional level to provide a detailed quantitative and qualitative understanding of requirements.

The OREF are designated as being of a very high level and as good tools for pooling and globalising territorial assessments carried out infra-regionally. For instance, in Burgundy or in Languedoc-Roussillon, territorial assessments of this kind are performed to give a clear, up-to-date picture of local labour markets. Only actors in the public employment service participate in these assessments but they could be improved with the input of other actors such as CIOs, local social and economic actors, training organisations and service-providers; even if the latter may be tempted to modify their assessments to suit their interests, they have a detailed qualitative understanding of requirements which it would be a shame not to use. More recently, the State entrusted Maisons de l'Emploi (job centres) with the task of analysing and anticipating a local's requirements by establishing joint assessments. These organisations are therefore potentially places where understanding of employment and training could be pooled at the infra-regional level, to be coordinated with the existing regional tools.

Develop cooperative practices

The Regions also point out the advantage of developing cooperative practices in the guidance service offer, in different directions.

These practices exist: organisation of local employment forums, "open days" in training establishments, joint initiatives involving actors in the training sector, the employment service and chambers of commerce and industry. But cooperation between actors of the public employment service and the French Ministry of Education are generally limited to employment forums. CCI initiatives are rarely relayed in schools or MLs and PAIOs.

Likewise, company requests are insufficiently coordinated by stakeholders in the guidance sector. The Regions refer to the need for greater consistency in company participation in the different tasks: welcoming trainees, developing apprenticeship, information on occupations, help with recruitment, etc. The tools may be diverse: file-sharing in addition to sharing information on opportunities provided by companies at this regional level.

Different methods of cooperation are possible, ranging from formal national co-contracting between public employment service operators to local agreement. For instance, in the context of certain mechanisms, actors could confer regarding the follow-up of individual paths with the aim of coming to a collective ruling on the decisions to be made. Another form of dialogue is to be found in the shape of PLIEs, joint platforms enabling efficient collaborative work.

These methods of cooperation nevertheless have their limits. Due to the lack of an institutional framework, dialogue depends primarily on personal relationships and some institutional divides seem insuperable: the changed status of people modifies rights and access to mechanisms and prevents operational cooperation. While bilateral partnerships strengthen synergies and consistency among services through the exchange of practices in project frameworks and jointly developed tools (guides, information media, sharing premises, etc.), they are not enough to break down barriers between actors. And finally, when areas of dialogue become more numerous, new issues emerge. This is a source of dispersal and makes it difficult to establish a global policy. Thus a certain number of regional actors regret the lack of an appropriate regional framework dedicated to the issue of guidance.

Develop accessibility and territorial coverage

The regions also raise the issue of improving physical accessibility and territorial coverage. Some regions have given priority to sharing reception areas and developing neighbourhood services for users in sparsely populated rural areas. The premises of local employment agencies are used by the AFPA guidance services in one of the regions under study. However, these actions remain hesitant and could be strengthened by promoting a more systematic methodology based on a global approach. Similar actions arising from local actor initiatives to network the region exist in Languedoc-Roussillon.

The implementation of PRC (intermediary advice points) for VAE (accreditation of prior learning) is an opportunity to strengthen accessibility to services and better organise the first level of information. This implementation is carried out in the context of the DGEFP no 2002/24 circular of 23rd April 2002 describing the organisation at the plural, national, regional and local levels of the information and counselling service for VAE. As a result, we find 900 PRCs spread nation-wide in 2005. This implementation is not without its difficulties: some populations located in rural areas are still at a disadvantage. The regional organisation and resources are sorting themselves out and developing, but occasionally remain too equivocal.

Developing reception facilities, information and guidance for the working population in employment is also considered essential by the regional councils faced with anticipating requirements linked to changes in the labour market. For these populations, there is still huge progress to be made for other than the scant resources of the FONGECIFs, few specific resources are dedicated to informing and counselling employees who wish to benefit from training leave, accreditation of prior learning or skills assessment procedures. Some isolated initiatives should be mentioned: reception facilities, information and guidance of employees in the public employment service (AFPA); APEC-FONGECIF collaboration for informing and guiding managerial staff intending to take training leave.

5.2. Breaking down institutional barriers, a common priority in OECD countries.

With a view to developing lifelong guidance – advocated by the European Union and OECD – all countries are seeking better coordination between school and vocational guidance services. Solutions, which are extremely varied in their approach to political and institutional steering, are being tested in other countries. Current experimentation solicits the unifying and coordinating potential of the central State in some cases, in others, the implementation of coordinating authorities responsible for organising the actions undertaken at various levels

(local, regional, national or European), and in yet others, the introduction of single structures for access to information, counselling and support.

INITIATIVES IN OTHER COUNTRIES RELATED TO BREAKING DOWN INSITUATIONAL BARRIERS AT THREE LEVELS

Coordination centralised in a single Ministry

The Leonardo reports (Frade... 2005, Kopac... 2006, Personnaz... 2007) show that only the United Kingdom seems to have succeeded in developing overall coherence of its guidance system (allowing for differences between Scotland, Wales and England) by relying on a strong central coordination of guidance policies. On the one hand, vocational guidance is considered in the context of both spheres of influence (education and employment). On the other, when Tony Blair came to power and introduced his education policy, the role played by the Ministry of Education in national policies gained considerably in importance. This centralisation was supported by implementing quality standards conditioning public funding and public programmes of vocational training.

Creation of regional governance authorities

In Spain, a general council for vocational training – comprising the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the regional governments, the autonomous communities and the social partners – is responsible for ensuring the coordination between the different spheres of political action and laying the foundations of an integrated guidance system. The real results of these well-meant efforts are slow to materialise. Decentralisation is such that mere recommendations are not sufficient to guarantee the system's coherence. And in spite of decentralisation being conducted based on an equality-of-treatment principle throughout the territory, defined by law, disparities appear when responsibilities are transferred to municipalities and towns due to local political considerations and inequality of resources.

Likewise, in Italy which is a highly decentralised country, the role played by central administration in coordinating public action is fairly small giving rise to a wealth of local experimentation with no systemic approach. In order to deal with higher education graduates' transition to work, a National guidance committee was introduced in 2004 at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research. Comprising representatives from the university environment, regions, provinces and communes in addition to family and student associations, this committee is responsible for determining a national plan for guidance and establishing working groups to guide public action. Its action has yet to be assessed.

Local one-stop counters, specialised in consulting

In 2001, the National Assembly for Wales launched "Careers Wales", a vocational guidance service for all ages which is operated by a confederation comprising seven regional companies brought together under a single banner. In its statement of intent, the service believes that vocational guidance lies at the heart of economic and social prosperity and states its belief in individual development through lifelong vocational guidance. "Careers Wales" is responsible for statutory services dedicated to youth, vocational guidance for adults, the call-centre network "learndirect", "Youth Gateway" (a short intensive course in acquiring the necessary skills for transition to professional life designed for high-risk youngsters in the 16-17 age group) and the relationships between education and companies. It also supports vocational guidance programmes organised in primary and secondary schools (compulsory in Wales for the 13-19 age group): help in choosing the subjects to be studied, teacher training and support to libraries with collections of books on occupations. Its multidimensional services are available to individuals of all ages without requiring an appointment. Other services for adults are provided in a wide variety of ways, through itinerant services, by telephone or on line. The "Careers Wales" staff works with both youth and adult populations but is generally specialised. Belonging to a single organisation means management flexibility and promotes career mobility.

5.3. Quality standards, a prevailing necessity in all countries

Strategic management is necessary to better match vocational guidance services to requirements and to assess them according to their results. Up until now, it has all too often been the demands of professionals and public prescription offices rather than user requirements, which have determined the services provided.

Furthermore, it would appear that these free public services do not benefit those who need them most. And finally, with decentralisation, the disparity in the service offer has increased, especially in the United Kingdom, Spain and Poland (Sultana and Watts 2005). Legislation or the definition of quality standards and reference systems regarding the competence of guidance professionals theoretically aims to solve these issues – to better assess the correct use of public funds marked out for guidance and reduce local disparities.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE INTRODUCTION OF QUALITY APPROACHES ABROAD

Legislation relative to vocational guidance services

In Germany, the law administering higher education requires that higher education establishments “inform students and applicants concerning the different options of study conditions and content, course structures and requirements” and “help students by advising them with respect to the disciplines studied” throughout their studies. The establishments are also under obligation to cooperate with the authorities responsible for vocational guidance.

National quality standards and accreditation

The “National Information Advice and Guidance Board” in the United Kingdom ensures coordination of vocational guidance implemented by the ministerial departments for Education and Skills and for Work and Pensions. Another organisation, the “Guidance Council”, defines quality standards for the multiple actors in guidance. In order to guarantee the implementation of these recommendations, the organisations responsible for vocational guidance only receive subsidies if they comply with these standards.

National reference bases for professional skills

The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners were established on the basis of a careful process of consultation and dialogue. They list essential skills for vocational guidance consultants, independent from working conditions, and specialised skills which vary according to the type of service provided, professional environment and populations concerned. Its implementation in the field aims to extend its potential for use. It has had a great influence on the international standards determined by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance which are the reference in other countries.

Other countries have made similar attempts, not always successfully. For instance, the State-Regions Conference created in Italy in 2001 for the purpose of defining minimum standards of competence for guidance counsellors at the national level had little impact: only eight out of twenty regions subscribed to them. This relative failure of a reference base supposed to regulate access to guidance professions in the context of opening up the guidance services market to the private sector raises serious issues. Anyone in Italy wishing to set up as a guidance counsellor can now do so. Opening up to the private sector dates from a Ministry of Labour decree issued in 2001 which introduces a method of accrediting institutions authorised to practice in the field of guidance: employment services (at the provincial

level), guidance to employment centres (COL) or centres of local initiatives for employment (at the municipal level) and training agencies (private).

University training programme for increased professionalization

In the United Kingdom, the University of East London has been offering a postgraduate diploma in career guidance since the beginning of the 2000s. This can be achieved in one year fulltime or in two to three years part-time. This diploma opens up work prospects for all types of profile and individuals holding this diploma may become members of the Institute of Career Guidance (ICG). The programme covers the theory and practice of guidance, equal opportunities (including strategies aiming to promote equal opportunities in a vocational guidance context), the change and development of organisations (including the study of a vocational guidance agency in the framework of organisational theory and change management), the study of the labour market and educational systems.

5.4. In France, cross-sector reforms lead by pioneer Regions

Experiments in other countries show that breaking down institutional barriers is more difficult to achieve in countries with a tradition of centralised politics. In spite of its tradition of decentralised politics, the United Kingdom has implemented a centralised solution which has the advantage of clarifying responsibilities related to guidance. Likewise, implementing one-stop specialised counters for guidance has the advantage of visibility for users. Implementing multi-level systems of governance in decentralised countries has had less visible results, resulting in the risk of increased regional inequalities and raising the issue of controlling the quality of the services provided. It has not clarified responsibilities with respect to central and local public authorities and other stakeholders. This is the case of regional action in France concerning guidance: establishing a network of guidance services and their local coordination come under the responsibility of multi-level systems of governance.

For instance, in Rhône-Alpes, a pioneer region in the field of guidance, the involvement of the regional council in guidance policy has resulted in the establishment of the Public Interest Group (GIP) Rhône-Alpes Guidance Centre (PRAO). Its mission is to improve and develop reception, information and lifelong guidance services: public information, cooperation between actors and professionalization of guidance actors. It comprises eighteen member networks (550 structures and 5,000 professionals) both public- and private-sector, national and local, specialised in guidance or not, involved in reception, information, guidance and support of the various populations, skills and capacity assessment, information with respect to occupations, employment. In 2005 and 2006, PRAO organised its partners into working groups in order to draw up an inventory listing all the requirements of their various populations. These groups led to a project for implementing a "common, unifying tool". Two web portals for information are established: prao.org for professionals and RhôneAlpes-Orientation.org for the general public.

Likewise in Île-de-France, a Centre for Facilitation, Resources and Information concerning Training (CARIF) was created in 1996 with the task of distributing information on vocational training financed using public funds. Its mission was broadened in 2002: and so today it also handles information concerning occupations, the professionalization of actors and their networking.

More generally, the inventory report established in 2002 concerning results of experimentation in the seven regions under contract with the State¹⁸ shows a variety of tools for setting up reception, information and guidance services in networks at the regional level: establishment of resource centres for actors in the field of information (Réseau nouvelle chance in Aquitaine), online publication of comprehensive information for both actors and the general public (programme @-toile du Centre, ICT in Pays de la Loire). In 2002, one region was intending to establish one-step sites (joint centres in Midi-Pyrénées... which since 2005 have joined the national programme of job centres under the social cohesion plan). Several regions tried to optimise collaboration methods between professionals (Réunion, Basse-Normandie and Rhône-Alpes).

Reforms undertaken by the Regions also aim to define and control quality. The assessment established for the Languedoc-Roussillon regional council (Amnyos 2006) to prepare the PRDF section defines the challenges facing the development of lifelong guidance. It develops four recommendations for action: organising and motivating AIO actors at the local level, developing a shared culture and professional practices, pooling methods and resources and a regional approach to service quality.

Burgundy has been investing in the field of guidance for longer. A second assessment aims to follow-up the regional AIO priorities listed in the PRDF of December 2004. The recommendations concerned reinforced cooperation and synergy between actors, a clearly defined distribution of responsibilities, the improvement of strategic steering. At the end of 2006, Burgundy intended to implement an AIO federating charter to establish a framework of incentives to develop cooperation with a view to improving AIO pertinence, quality and efficiency.

Rhône-Alpes is once again a pioneer in integrating a quality approach. In the context of the “DROA” project, the region has defined a common “reference base for guidance quality” capable of fostering better lifelong guidance. This reference base designates six themes whose content is largely established on reforms experimented internationally with respect to coordinating stakeholder networks, steering by standards and counsellor professionalization.

THE TRANSNATIONAL DROA PROJECT: DEVELOPING NETWORKS FOR ACTIVE GUIDANCE

This project was carried out between 2003 and 2006 in the framework of the European Leonardo da Vinci programme in partnership with “Quatre Moteurs pour l’Europe (Four Motors for Europe - Bade Wurtemberg, Catalunya, Lombardy and Rhône-Alpes). It consisted in an inter-regional comparison relative to the organisation of actors involved at the local level and local guidance practices for the various types of population. It also aimed to determine criteria for improving the quality of guidance and sharing them.

The comparison reveals strong points: a strong motivation on the part of professionals plus free-of-charge services, the availability of services for all and specific services targeting unqualified youngsters and the handicapped, a good level of competence on the part of professionals and services which are technically well-equipped.

This comparison also identifies weak points. The concept of guidance is ill-defined, requirements are poorly estimated and diverge according to ideas. Networking is difficult due to lack of coordination,

¹⁸ Aquitaine, Centre, Pays de Loire, Midi-Pyrénées, Réunion, Basse-Normandie, Rhône-Alpes. See the DGEFP n° 2002-8 circular of 21st March 2002 concerning vocational training experimentation.

mutual understanding, lack of continuity in the offer and inadequacy of provision with respect to the requirements. Guidance professionals are not fully appreciated and there are not enough of them; their administrative tasks have increased and the continuous training offer is poor. And there are other obstacles such as the lack of lasting funding and quality standards.

Following these observations, the four European regions involved in the project have proposed several recommendations. They concern:

1. The concept of guidance:

- raise awareness of the need for lifelong guidance among all stakeholders (political, administrative, funding, in society at large),
- give priority to a “lifelong learning” approach rather than a “mechanistic” approach

2. Adapting provision to the requirements of populations:

- global approach to supporting individuals, equality of access to services and confidentiality,
- develop the active participation of users, their capacity to manage and plan their pathways and make their own decisions,
- develop a service offer adapted to user requirements: individual advice, others...

3. The conformity of available resources:

- efficient information system regarding training programmes, employment and guidance services,
- availability of qualified staff, lasting financial resources and technical equipment to ensure the continuing existence of services

4. The development of the guidance network:

- recognised and valued authority for coordination and regulation
- develop partnership practices.

5. The professionalisation of staff responsible for guidance:

- need to define the profile of guidance professionals,
- importance of suitable initial and continuing training programmes,
- need to develop professionals’ understanding of the local context.

6. Quality assurance:

- need to select a quality approach and define the standards,
- need to implement assessment tools,
- need to consult users, guidance organisations and the administration and to take into consideration the results of these consultations.

Conclusion with a view to improved public action

Lifelong guidance policy raises numerous expectations notably as a result of the greater complexity of school and career pathways. In the face of these expectations, the existing structures in France are ill-equipped, raising the issue of institutional reform. A first observation consists in underlining the negative impact of barriers between the guidance services. Several more or less specialised networks – reception facilities, information, advice and support – are intertwined or are superposed without offering a coherent public service for all the segments concerned – pupils, students, jobseekers, the employed. A second observation concerns imperfections in the quality of the services provided, increasingly less adapted to the current demands of individuals. In the face of these two major challenges, namely breaking down institutional barriers and improving quality, reforms in lifelong guidance steering are a burning issue.

The law of 13th August 2004 relative to local responsibilities concludes a process lasting more than twenty years which aims to completely transfer responsibility for vocational training to Regions and restates their role in coordinating guidance services. However, “it is generally agreed that regionalisation still gives the impression that it has yet to be achieved. Many issues are still up in the air. What can this new organisation hope to achieve without investing regions with full negotiating powers? Above all, decentralisation laws have left the question of the system’s overall governance wide open” (Sénat 2007).

These issues regarding training are equally valid concerning guidance which at the present time also suffers from the existence of solid institutional barriers between services under the authority of different Ministries, occasionally involving the social partners, and from the lack of a global steering strategy for a multitude of more or less specialised services for pupils, students, jobseekers, the employed.

In this context, the investment of a few regional actors in guidance reforms is food for thought. While the distribution of responsibilities for guidance between the State and regional councils is vague, it would appear that the most in-depth reforms for promoting a lifelong guidance policy and meeting the new challenges of individuals’ career mobility are sustained by the regional actors. They are at the source of initiatives concerning quality approaches and the operational coordination of regional stakeholder networks. For reforms undertaken at the regional level to be successful and lead to real changes, they need to be relayed by the State. Lifelong guidance should benefit once again from the proactive involvement of the State. For this to be so, it appears absolutely necessary to redesign the structure of public action. This could be based on three pillars.

The first pillar would be the creation of a national public authority responsible for designing and promoting a new, decompartmentalised lifelong guidance policy. This authority should comprise four parties: State departments, all the regions, all social partners and all the representatives of the different professional networks relative to guidance. It should be based primarily on the hard core of existing specialised public services, merging CIO for secondary (and SCUIO for higher) education and AFPA's SOP (for adults).

Peripheral non-specialised services could contribute to this hard core: Fongecif, ML-PAIO, Cap-Emploi, Mife, ANPE... ; guidance counselling developed in companies undergoing reorganisation. In such a context, CIOs should be able to progress and acquire an inter-institutional dimension. It is not decentralisation which will enable them to develop and meet

the new challenges of guidance; however, their development could arise from strengthening their role at the national level - in a public guidance service extended to the other stakeholders – which clearly begs the question of training counsellors with respect to understanding jobs and work environments, to interaction and relationships with the professional world.

The second essential pillar for developing lifelong guidance consists in implementing regional public services. These services would be responsible for policy implementation and coordination at the regional level in a joint State-Region steering system.

Past history shows that State-region cooperation may sometimes be difficult. However, with respect to guidance, there is no other option; the Regions and the State are doomed to come to an agreement. This agreement could be facilitated by budgeting the funding of structures and guidance actions in the CPER. It could also be encouraged by creating a regional public guidance service steered jointly by the State and the Region which would rely on existing networks and result in the implementation of neighbourhood services like the one-stop, lifelong guidance counter. There are options based on existing networks: one is already under regional responsibility, PCRs, the other, under State responsibility and supported by municipalities, concerns job centres. Other options should be explored.

The third pillar consists in defining new quality standards targeting to-work transition. In order to progress towards a shared concept of this service, international experiences in defining national quality standards, creating reference bases for counsellors' training and skills which have occasionally resulted in establishing training programmes and accreditation procedures, should be studied in more depth. The recent Rhône-Alpes experience which led to determining a quality charter, involving the different professional networks concerned in the process, should also be studied.

Alongside representatives of State departments, social partners and the Regions, it seems important to involve professionals in this process. The challenge lies in identifying the common elements of longlife guidance counselling which transcend the current specificities of targeting by population – school-age youth, adults, the employed, jobseekers, unemployed – and are more efficient in taking into consideration the new labour market and irrevocable transformations of the working world.

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Glossary

AFPA National Association for Adult Vocational Training

AIO Reception, Information and Guidance

ALE Local Employment Agency

ANPE National Employment Agency

APEC Association for Managerial Staff Employment

APECITA Association of Managerial Staff and Technicians in Agriculture

APL Accreditation of Prior Learning

BEP Certificate of Vocational Education

BDC Skill assessment

BDCA In-depth skill assesment

BIT International Labour Office

BUS University Statistics Office

CAP Certificate of Vocational Aptitude

CARIF Centre for Facilitation, Resources and Information on Training

CCI Chambers of Commerce and Industry

CCPR Committee for the Coordination of Regional Apprenticeship and Continuing Vocational Training Programmes

CIBC Interinstitutional Centre for Skills assessment

CIDFF Centre for Information on Women's Rights

CIF Individual Training Leave

CIO Information and Guidance Centre

CNAM – a Public Scientific, Cultural and Professional Institution

COP guidance counsellor/psychologist

CPER State-Region plan contract

CSAIO Head of Academic Information and Guidance Services

DARES Directorate for the Facilitation of Research, Studies and Statistics

DGEFP Delegate-General for Employment and Vocational Training

DREES Ministry of Labour Directorate for Research, Studies, Assessment and Statistics

DRTEFP Regional Directorate for Labour, Employment and Vocational Training

FONGECIF Body of management of Individual Training Leave

FTLV Lifelong Training

GIP Public Interest Group

ICT Information and Communication Technologies

INETOP National Research Institute for Labour and Vocational Guidance

INOP National Institute of Vocational Guidances

Maison de l'emploi : Job centres

MIFE Centre for Information on Training and Employment

ML-PAIO Permanent Reception, Information and Guidance Centre - Job Centre for youth (16 to 25 years old)

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OTLV Lifelong Guidance

ONISEP National Office for Information on Education and Occupations

OREF Regional Observatory on Employment and Training

PLIE Local Integration and Employment Plan

PPAE Personal Project for Return to Work

PRC Intermediary Advice Point (for VAE)

PRDF Regional Training Development Plan

PRDFPJ Regional Youth Training Development Plan

RMI Minimum Income Guarantee

RNCP National Professional Certificate Register

SCUIO Joint University Information and Guidance Service

SOP Vocational Guidance Service

UNEDIC/ASSEDIC Unemployment insurance

VAE Accreditation of Prior Learning