

**Life-long learning and new skills in France: a gender perspective**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning – whether initial or continuing – is a major issue in France. From the 1970s (with the law adopted in 1971), a legal framework made it possible to develop tools promoting continuing training. This issue meets with a certain degree of consensus amongst social partners, as was the case with the National Intersectoral Agreement (Accord national interprofessionnel, ANI) that was signed more recently, in 2003.

Even though there is real concern regarding training, results are, however, mixed: the French educational system and also access to continuing training suffer from growing inequalities. In spite of many attempts and successive reforms, the educational system remains rigid. In the area of continuing training, however, many measures have been developed in recent years, which have consolidated employees' rights to training. But these rights are often individual and do not always meet the needs or receive the agreement of companies. The latter certainly invest in training (more than the compulsory level - which is the equivalent of 1.5% of the total wages bill - with an average of about 3.5%), but very unequally, depending on the sector, company size and also depending on the level of employees' qualifications and their age.

As for the place of women in these measures, we know that girls always do better than boys in initial education, but educational guidance remains rigid and their access to highly professional and qualifying training is significantly lower. Although women seem generally to access continuing training as much as men, it is not the case for all women: women executives benefit significantly more than other women. Major obstacles persist, in spite of some good company practices that take into account family constraints regarding access to training.

We will see, however, that women mobilise certain measures more than men, such as Validation of skills acquired by experience<sup>1</sup> (Validation des acquis de l'expérience, VAE), in line with traditions of companies in certain sectors, such as personal services.

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<sup>1</sup> Not only work-based experience, but also life experience.

## 2. LIFELONG LEARNING: NATIONAL PROGRESS AND DEBATE (8-10 PAGES)

### 2.1 Early school-leavers

#### 2.1.1 National situation (including progress towards EU target)

The problem of early school leavers is a serious one. It is a sign of a poor relationship between education and employment, a signal reflecting young people's defiance regarding the school system, and often a problem of social inequalities. The following table makes it possible to compare the French situation with that of EU 27 since 2000. Firstly, we can see that the proportion of young people without diplomas is tending to decrease everywhere. The proportion of young French people in this situation is significantly smaller than the EU average. This is even more the case for girls, of whom less than 10% are in this situation: **they are the only ones to have met the European target of less than 10% of early school leavers without diplomas.** French boys do better (13.8%) than the European average (16.9%), but do not meet the EU target. The gap between girls and boys was 4 points both at the European level and in France in 2008, thus confirming that girls succeed better than boys in school and continue their studies for longer, notably in France. It should be noted, however, that the European Lisbon target is an average for both sexes and thus France has still not reached the target of 10%.

**Table 1: Early school leavers\* 18-24 years**

	EU			FR		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
2000	19,6	15,5	17,6	14,8	11,9	13,3
2001	19,2	15,2	17,2	15	12	13,5
2002	19,1	14,9	17	14,9	11,9	13,4
2003	18,7	14,5	16,6	15	11,4	13,2
2004	18,4	13,8	16,1	14,7	10,8	12,8
2005	17,8	13,7	15,8	14,1	10,3	12,2
2006	17,6	13,4	15,5	14,4	10,6	12,4
2007	17,1	13	15,1	15,1	10,3	12,6
2008	16,9	12,9	14,9	13,8	9,8	11,8

\* At most lower secondary education and not in further education or training - Eurostat

#### 2.1.2 Policies

Many initiatives have been introduced in France to combat early school leaving. For example, a Senate report showed that it was necessary to diversify paths to success. According to this report: *“Representatives of families, who were interviewed, insisted on the need to propose more diversified paths to pupils who do not feel at ease in the educational system, which puts more emphasis on abstraction than on a more concrete approach to knowledge compared with other countries.”*

Thus, as one parent said during consultations in the framework of a national debate on the future of schools, *“schools are fine for children who are fine.”* All that needs to be done is adapt them to the 20% or so of children for whom the ordinary system does not promote their development and success.

More value given to manual, sports and artistic activities promoting “gestures”, would make it possible to recognise the skills of each child and use these strong points to “hook” them on to

learning. It is a matter of changing mentalities, in order to combat hierarchies of forms of intelligence, which are still strongly anchored in our mentalities. As André Gauron (2000) emphasised, *“Each person has their own approach to knowledge, and acquiring knowledge does not function in the same way for everyone. Some people have a concrete approach and need to learn via a practical approach, while others learn rather via abstract teaching methods.”*

In this respect, **“active” teaching methods via sandwich courses<sup>2</sup> can be helpful** for pupils who are not able to find their place within the “mould” of today’s lower secondary school (collège). **It should be possible to extend experiments underway since 2003, for pupils in the third year of collège (quatrième)** – concerning about 20,000 pupils, namely 3.5% of the age group - even in a one-off and transitional way. Jean-Louis Nembrini, general director of school education, has confirmed the advantages: *“the results tend to prove that these young people become interested again in general studies. Indeed, these work experience sessions give a concrete dimension to abstract knowledge. Sandwich courses should not be seen as early vocational guidance, but as a way of raising interest in mastering shared basic knowledge.”*

Moreover, in the short term, each young person leaving the educational system having failed - without a diploma or sufficient qualifications - should be offered suitable follow-up and mentoring.

As Annie Thomas, national officer of the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT), emphasised: *“We do not have a simple measure like the Swedish one in which young people without the baccalaureate are immediately taken on board by their local authority. Via sandwich courses, work experience or return to academia, the nation undertakes to ensure that these people acquire a qualification. It is not a matter of creating yet another contract, but an obligation.”*

The first year following leaving school is the “year of all dangers”; there needs to be immediate follow-up for it to be effective.

In this respect, **strong coordination via networking of the various actors concerned – educational authorities (académies), regional councils, local youth advice centres (missions locales), training and employment information centres (Maisons de l'information sur la formation et l'emploi, MIFE), etc.** – is essential in order to reduce “periods of wandering” and to provide evidence of necessary reactivity in the solutions that are proposed.

There are big margins for progress in most regions. Indeed, Jean-Raymond Lepinay, president of the National union of local youth advice centres (Union nationale des missions locales), observed that *“the measures lose credibility because they are isolated and scattered”*: thus, in his view, the waiting period of a year, during which schools – in the framework of the General integration mission (Mission générale d'insertion, MGI) - are responsible for and obliged to propose accompaniment towards access to qualifications, by making it possible to return to initial education or to enter training leading to a qualification, is not suitable: *“Transition with the Ministry of education (Education nationale) is deplorable. (...) The problem is that a*

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<sup>2</sup> Courses that alternate school and work experience

*young person, who has left the national education system, will not go back to school. It would be better if he was summoned to go elsewhere”.*

However, it is not a matter of setting structures against each other, in that each leads to positive results, but rather to ensure there is a better relationship between them, in order to avoid people skipping from one measure to another. **Generalising shared automatic accompaniment tools**, that are “activated” as soon as pupils leave school or their course early, or without obtaining the diploma they were aiming at, seems a necessary pre-condition in order not to “lose sight of” the pupils concerned .

As is emphasised in a recent report of the school inspectorate<sup>3</sup>, these tools either do not exist or are insufficiently developed in order to lead to precise knowledge of the phenomenon, and thus provide - in an individualised way on the basis of an assessment of skills and motivation - suitable preventive and curative solutions. **Such tools should be led by schools and authorities, in close relationship with and support of the Information and guidance centres (Centres d'information et d'orientation, CIO)**. This proposal is in line with the recommendations formulated by Pierre Lunel, inter-ministerial delegate, in the “national schema for the vocational guidance and integration of young people.” He suggests giving CIOs the role of locally coordinating the identification and accompanying of young people who have left the educational system without any qualification.

Another solution is via the Diploma for accessing university studies (Diplôme d'accès aux études universitaires, DAEU), which provides a **second chance: it is “the means of remedying early school leaving”**, according to Jean-Marie Filloque (Conférence des directeurs de service universitaire de formation continue, CDSUFC). This national level IV diploma provides the same rights as the baccalaureate.

On 14 December 2007, Prime Minister François Fillon declared at the Sorbonne University that *«tertiary education should become more available and more accessible for all ages, in order to play its role of rendering occupational paths more secure»*. On 31 January 2008, at Paris-XIII University, Valérie Pécresse, minister of tertiary education and research, spoke of her desire to double the number of people registered for the courses leading to the DAEU.

Many people thought that the DAEU (which has now existed for 14 years) would disappear given the new procedures for validating skills acquired via experience (VAE). However, this examination continues to fulfil its role of social promotion and integration with more than 13,000 people registered each year. The exam results are stable, with 33% of diplomas each year, of whom 37% continue in tertiary education. But, according to the minister, *“The biggest change observed in recent years concerns, without a doubt, the average age of those registered, which regularly drops. In 1999, the under-25s represented only 33% of those registered; in 2004, they accounted for more than 45% of them. The biggest age-group is those who are 22.”* This confirms that the DAEU really is a diploma providing a second chance and a way of remedying early school leaving.

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<sup>3</sup> *« Sorties sans qualification. Analyse des causes, des évolutions, des solutions pour y remédier »*, Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale (IGEN) et Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche (IGAENR), juin 2005.

However, the CDSUFC has a reservation: “We must not be blind, doubling the number of people registered for the DAEU is a challenge, which – if we are to achieve it – requires reviewing both the way in which the measure is promoted and implemented, especially its funding. The latter is entirely covered by the regions and/or the candidates, with the situation varying greatly from region to region. Moreover, the funding is often refused by the prescribers of the public employment service networks.”

### 2.1.3 Gender issues

We have already highlighted the fact that girls have better school results than boys and that fewer of them leave school without diplomas (9.8% of girls are in this situation). However, educational guidance for girls still poses the same problems: their access to the diplomas that are most highly valued in our society, such as those obtained in the “grandes écoles”, remains limited. Some progress has of course been made, but a lot still remains to be done. Likewise, the fact that there are few men in areas where women predominate harms gender balance: social services, education, care and cleaning all remain the domain of women; and the corresponding training is rarely accessed by men, thus symbolically and financially devaluing such occupations.

In Table 2, it can be seen that girls have an expected length of studies that is overall longer than that of boys, especially in tertiary education (after the baccalaureate), but less for the younger ones in secondary education, where boys are slightly ahead. But if one looks at the education expectancy of 2 year olds, it is 18.9 years for girls and 18.4 years for boys.

**Table 2: Development of education expectancy of 15 to 29 year olds (France +overseas departments) in years**

	2000-2001	2007-2008
<b>All education</b>	<b>6,28</b>	<b>6,18</b>
Girls	6,47	6,52
Boys	6,10	5,95
<b>Secondary education</b>	<b>3,87</b>	<b>3,75</b>
Girls	3,81	3,69
Boys	3,92	3,80
<b>Tertiary education</b>	<b>2,42</b>	<b>2,43</b>
Girls	2,66	2,71
Boys	2,18	2,16

Interpretation: education expectancy is the sum of education rates by age. It represents the duration of studies of a generation, using the education rates observed in a specific year.

Source: MEN, le système éducatif, repères et références statistiques 2009.

In the following data, it can be also seen that girls are better motivated at school: at 14 years, 69% of girls are in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of coll ège (la troisi ème) (just before level V)<sup>4</sup> and only 60% of boys<sup>5</sup>. At 17 years, 38% of girls at school are in general and technological final year of upper secondary school (lyc ée: classe terminale) (level IV) and only 26% of boys, who go more into short vocational training (CAP-BEP in a vocational lyc ée).

<sup>4</sup> Level V is reached at the end of lower secondary education (coll ège) with registration for the first year of upper secondary education, i.e. preparation for a general or technological BAC in a lyc ée or for a CAP-BEP in a vocational lyc ée or apprenticeship centre (CFA).

<sup>5</sup> The other 14-year old children may have repeated one or two years.

**Table 3: Which classes were girls and boys in at the beginning of the 2007 -2008 school year?**

**At 14 years (“normally” in 3<sup>ème</sup>, final year of coll ège)...**

	Girls	Boys
Quatri ème (3rd year lower secondary school)	23%	29%
Troisi ème (4th year lower secondary school)	69%	60%
Others	8%	11%

**... and at 17 years (“normally” in final year (terminale) of lyc ée, i.e. level IV)**

	Boys	Girls
Premi ère (year before final year) GT (general and technological lyc ée)	17%	16%
Terminale GT	38%	26%
CAP-BEP	26%	37%
Not in education	8%	9%
Others	11%	12%

Source: MEN «Filles et garçons sur le chemin de l'égalité, de l'école à l'enseignement supérieur, 2010.

95% of girls and 93% of boys finally accessed level V 2008-2009, but significantly more via general courses rather than vocational ones for girls.

**Table 4: Access rate to level V (all types of education including apprenticeships) in 2008-2009**

Types of education	Girls	Boys	Total
General and technological	64,8	52,1	58,3
Vocational	30,5	41,2	36
Total	95,3	93,3	94,3

Source: idem

The gap widens afterwards: 77% of girls and 67% of boys access level IV (registration in the final year of a lyc ée (classe terminale))

**Table 5: Access rate to level IV (all types of education including apprenticeships) in 2008-2009**

Types of education	Girls	Boys	Total
General	42,5	30,5	36,4
Technological	19,2	17,4	18,3
Vocational	15	18,8	17
Total	76,8	66,8	71,7

Source: idem

But girls are still penalised by the choice of courses. Even though they stay in the education system longer and do better than boys, this does not prevent them from being under-

represented in vocational and scientific courses, namely those which offer more job opportunities and promotions. Thus, table 6 shows that there is parity in the whole of the educational system with the number of girls being equal to that of boys; however, there are more of them in the lycées and amongst students. But when one examines the courses they take, they are always doing the same specialisations: in the lycée, they constitute the great majority of those studying arts subjects, and also doing technological courses in management and health. However, they are almost totally absent from vocational baccalaureates in production, and from industrial scientific courses in the lycée (less than 10% are girls). Girls constitute the majority of students (56%), but there again they are under-represented amongst those preparing entrance examinations for the grandes écoles and above all in engineering schools (25.5%), even though significant progress has been made in this area. Finally, their share of apprenticeships has stagnated for decades at 30%.

**Table 6: Lack of gender balance in education**

	Proportion of girls
<b>All pupils, students and apprentices</b>	<b>49,7%</b>
<b>Collège pupils (lower secondary school)</b>	<b>48,8%</b>
<b>Lycée pupils (general and technological upper secondary school)</b>	<b>54,4%</b>
Incl. final year (terminale) S (scientific)	46%
Incl. final year (terminale) L (arts)	78,6%
Incl. final year (terminale) ES (economics and social studies)	62,2%
Incl. final year (terminale) STI (science and industrial technology)	9,8%
Incl. final year (terminale) STG (management science and technology)	57,1%
Incl. final year (terminale) ST2S (health and social science and technology)	93,8%
<b>Vocational lycée pupils (vocational upper secondary school)</b>	<b>46,1%</b>
Incl. production CAP – BEP	14,7%
Incl. services CAP-BEP	71,5%
Incl. production vocational baccalaureate	9,5%
Incl. services vocational baccalaureate	65,6%
<b>Students</b>	<b>55,9%</b>
Incl. preparatory classes for the grandes écoles (CPGE)	42,7%
Incl. tertiary Technicians Sections (STS)	50,8%
Incl. universities	59,2%
Incl. university technological institutes (IUT)	40,3%
Incl. Engineering studies	25,5%
Apprentices	30,6%

## 2.2 Educational level of the labour force

### 2.2.1 National situation (including progress towards EU targets for 22-year olds and 30-34 year olds)

The proportion of young people with upper secondary education diplomas (2<sup>ème</sup> cycle), in France exceeds the European average. However, there is a significant gender gap: it is the case of 86% of French women and only 81% of French men. In other words, only young French women have met the Lisbon target 85%.

**Table 7: Proportion of 20-24 year olds with an upper secondary education diploma (2<sup>ème</sup> cycle) in 2008**

	EU 27	France
Men	76%	81%
Women	81%	86%
Total	78,5%	83,7%

Source: Eurostat

The Lisbon target is for 40% of 30-34 year olds to have tertiary educational attainment by 2020. The following data show that Europe is far from approaching this target, whereas French women had already achieved it in 2005. French men are behind (by 5.6 points), but their situation is better than the European average.

**Table 8: Level of education of 30-34 year olds in 2005**

	Low		Medium		High	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
EU -25	24.6	22	48.6	47.1	26.8	30.9
FR	21.3	19.5	44.2	39.9	34.4	40.6

Source : Eurostat, *Statistics in focus* n°130/2007

Low: (basic): pre-primary education, primary education, lower secondary education

Medium: (upper secondary): upper secondary education, post-secondary non tertiary education

High: (tertiary): first stage of tertiary education, second stage of tertiary education.

### 2.2.2 Policies

The development of training and education is part of what is at stake in the battle against unemployment. Policies for continuing studies and accessing training leading to diplomas for young and not so young people are highly developed in France. All studies confirm that the probability of being unemployed is smaller for those with a tertiary diploma. Thanks to public encouragement, two-thirds of young French people have the baccalaureate or a tertiary diploma.

### 2.2.3 Gender issues

Women have long had more diplomas. However, until now, these diplomas, especially tertiary ones, give them little protection from unemployment. For example, amongst young people with a CAP, the unemployment rate is 19% with an industrial specialisation, but 27% with a services specialisation (the majority of whom are girls). Although overall (apart from the recent crisis), women's unemployment is higher, since 2007, girls seem to do better than boys: the unemployment rate of girls is 15% and that of boys 17%. According to Insee (2009), three factors explain this result. Firstly, girls do better educationally than boys and this has at

last been recognised: in 2007, 55% of economically active young women had a tertiary diploma compared with 41% of young men. Secondly, girls go more into health and social sectors, where there are greater employment needs and where occupational integration is quicker than elsewhere. Finally, more young women take up studies again or do supplementary training. But it should not be forgotten that amongst those who do not have tertiary diplomas, girls' unemployment rates remain higher. Table 9 shows that the lower the diploma, the bigger the gender gap, especially when they have recently left education (40% of girls without diplomas are unemployed compared with 35% of boys). However, as time goes by, the impact of one's original diploma fades.

**Table 9: Unemployment rate in 2007 by diploma, gender and length of time after studies**

		Left education since...			Total
		1 to 4 years	5 to 10 years	11 years and more	
Tertiary diploma (high)	Men	9,8	4,7	4	4,9
	Women	8,2	5	4,3	5,1
BAC, CAP, BEP (medium)	Men	16,3	8,1	4,3	5,8
	Women	18,7	12,6	6,1	8
Collège brevet, no diploma (low)	Men	35,6	21,7	9	11,9
	Women	40,8	28,9	9,9	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>17,1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5,6</b>	<b>7,2</b>
	<b>Women</b>	<b>14,8</b>	<b>10,4</b>	<b>6,8</b>	<b>8,1</b>

Source: Insee, enquête emploi, in Insee, 2009

## 2.3 Participation in lifelong learning

### 2.3.1 National situation (including progress towards EU target)

Participation in lifelong learning has become an important issue in France. Many speeches, measures and agreements refer to giving a second chance to those who left school with insufficient basic education. But it is not certain that this principle is really recognised. For example, changing direction, making a different occupational choice from the path originally chosen is often encouraged by the authorities (especially, the employment centre, Pôle Emploi), but not always welcomed by companies. In France, initial diplomas are the passport for entering economically active life. Experience related to one's initial diploma is a required pre-condition for recruitment. Retraining and changing occupations are often considered to be suspect and not seen as a positive signal. Much still has to be done to convince all actors to really value mobility in their practices.

The following table reflects the above analysis. France is way below the European average concerning LLL: from 2000 to 2005, the average gap between France and Europe even increased from 4 to 7 points to France's disadvantage. But from 2006 onwards, there was a significant improvement in France: the LLL rate increased by more than 4 points. But France remains way below the European target of 12% (with only 7.1% in 2008). It can be observed that women access LLL slightly more, but the difference is significantly smaller than the difference regarding initial education.

**Table 10: Life long learning by gender from 2000 to 2008**

	EU			FR		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
2000	6.7	7.5	7.1	2.8	3	2.9
2001	6.6	7.6	7.1	2.5	2.8	2.7
2002	6.6	7.8	7.2	2.4	2.7	2.6
2003	7.9	9.1	8.5	2.6	3.1	2.8
2004	8.7	10	9.3	2.5	3	2.7
2005	9	10.5	9.8	2.4	3	2.7
2006	8.8	10.5	9.7	7	7.2	7.1
2007	8.6	10.4	9.5	7	7.1	7.1
2008	8.7	10.4	9.5	7	7.2	7.1

Source: Eurostat

### 2.3.2 Policies

Lifelong learning policies have firstly obliged employers to contribute to funding the vocational training of their employees. The compulsory rate is equivalent to 1.5% of companies' wages bill, but was quickly surpassed (it is on average about 3.5%). However, there are big differences depending on gender, occupational category, company size and sector: low-skilled women lose out, as do SME employees.

Since the 1990s, debates and measures have changed a lot – the involvement of the social partners has been great (National intersectoral agreement on vocational training in 2004), and the aim is not only to see employees develop within their company. Given the crisis, it is clear that it will be difficult to have one's whole career in the same company; periods of unemployment and changes in employer will be increasingly frequent. In this context, the primary aim is to provide the economically active with access to training and consolidate their own rights - not only in line with the interests and objectives of companies. The idea of "rendering occupational paths secure" has been launched by the trade unions. It is a matter – notably via training – of attaching rights to employees so that they are transferable if their employment contract is terminated.

#### Existing measures for employees:

- *Training plan (plan de formation)*: in line with the company's priorities, employees benefit from short training units paid for by the company, in order to adapt to their work stations following technological change and also in cases of a new work position within the company (recognised by promotion).
- *Individual right to training (Droit individuel à la formation, DIF)*: 20 hours per annum of training that can be accumulated over a period of 6 years (i.e. 120 hours) and is transferable from one job to another (cf. point 3.2.).
- *Individual training leave (Congé individuel de formation, CIF)*: it can last for a maximum of one year, is chosen by employees with the agreement of their company, and can be training leading to a diploma in an area that is different from their job (for example with a view to a change of occupation). Sometimes, the choice of training is in line with an objective shared by the company and employee (with a view to internal promotion).

There are also other measures (VAE, skills assessment, professionalisation contract and so forth), which we will present below (in points 3 and 4).

### 2.3.3 Gender issues

Vocational training and life-long learning are still accessed less by women: 23.8% of them, compared with 25.9% of men, but we do not have information on the length and kind of training. In the public sector, more women access training (a third of them), but this figure remains very low for those providing personal services to individuals (6%). The following data do not correspond totally with the Lisbon indicator concerning life long learning (table 9), because there are no age criteria and it concerns vocational training provided by employers.

**Table 11. Rate of access to training, by type of employer (%)**

	Women		Men	
	Distribution	Rate of access to training	Distribution	Rate of access to training
<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>68,3</b>	<b>20,3</b>	<b>79,1</b>	<b>23,4</b>
Personal services to individuals	8,6	6,6	0,6	9,8
Under 10 employees	11,1	10,8	11,2	8,1
10-49 employees	10,7	17,6	14,4	12,8
50-99 employees	4,4	23,7	5,8	19,4
100-199 employees	4,3	21,5	6,1	22,3
200-499 employees	4,9	21,5	6,1	24,0
500 employees or more	24,3	29,7	35,0	33,5
<b>Public sector</b>	<b>31,7</b>	<b>31,0</b>	<b>20,9</b>	<b>32,8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>23,8</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>25,9</b>

Interpretation: in May 2003, 8.6% of employed women in the private sector worked in providing personal services to individuals; 6.6% of them went on training organised by their employer since January 2002.

Field: economically active employees in May 2003 in Metropolitan France.

Source: Insee, enquête Formation et Qualification Professionnelle (2003).

It appears extremely important to develop women's access to continuing training, in order to enable them to access greater promotion and career developments. Gender mainstreaming policies would imply facilitating or even giving priority to women - not only in terms of helping towards the cost of childcare, as is usually proposed. Some company agreements advocate going further and giving priority to women's access to training (e.g. Schneider Electric); and ensuring that the place and length of training is adapted to their needs. Finally, on returning to work after maternity and parental leave, companies are introducing access to training.

## 2.4 Summary and conclusions

In France, recent years have seen major changes regarding both initial education and vocational training. Laws, agreements and participation of public and private actors have made it possible to put new life into policy combating school drop outs and consolidating lifelong learning. Although this has been on the agenda for 40 years in France, the impact of these choices has not yet been entirely felt. There are important efforts concerning early school leavers, but continuing training is not general practice, even if it is wanted by every one. Moreover, women are ahead in terms of education - especially regarding tertiary education - but they continue to be penalised in the labour market: with less recognition for their diplomas, and greater difficulties in accessing training, especially if they are low-skilled.

In fact, those who are most qualified (both men and women) benefit most from continuing training, which is totally paradoxical.

### 3. LIFELONG LEARNING AND FLEXICURITY

#### 3.1 National situation

As we have recalled in previous reports<sup>6</sup> in France there are many debates at different levels that more or less directly concern flexicurity - university debates (symposiums, publications and so forth); institutional and governmental debates (numerous official reports and proposed laws, etc.); and also debates at the level of the social partners (union proposals for “guaranteed social protection and employment rights throughout working life” (CGT) and for “making career paths secure” (CFDT), as well as the signing of an agreement on this topic (signed by all representative unions, except for the CGT, which is the union with the greatest support, according to the results of workplace elections)). The specifically French feature of these debates is to focus on the employment contract, much more so than on the other dimensions of flexicurity (for example, when the Danish model is advocated in France, reference is not made to the major differences between the French and Danish versions of the Welfare State). Moreover, the French industrial relations system is far from being similar to that of the Nordic countries or even of the Netherlands - with difficulties regarding the social dialogue, low levels of unionisation and strong union divisions... And for many years already, certain labour advantages have been challenged, including a major reduction of the unemployment benefit system and controls of the unemployed; reforms of pension schemes; while unemployment remains high. These are all factors that are incomparable with the countries that are quoted as being a “model”. Therefore, for many people in France, flexicurity is synonymous with rendering employment contracts more flexible and termination of contracts without sufficient compensation for employees and the jobless. But it can be seen that lifelong learning is not a central measure. Given the current crisis, measures are directed more towards employment and return to employment, whereas the issue of lifelong learning appears to be secondary, because it concerns the long-term and not emergency situations.

#### 3.2 Policies

Many training measures concern accompanying employees with a view to greater qualitative flexibility (i.e. promoting occupational mobility) and/or jobseekers and those on minimum social benefits (especially Active solidarity income (Revenu de solidarité active, RSA) for which accompaniment towards return to employment is provided in many cases), in order to promote occupational integration or reintegration.

**DIF:** Following a multi-sector agreement, which was signed by all the unions, a law on vocational training was adopted on 4 May 2004. It incorporates the principle of an **Individual Right to Training**, which aims at enabling every employee to build up a credit of training time of 20 hours per annum that can be accumulated over six years and up to a limit of 120 hours. DIF is now transferable and therefore maintained if one’s employment contract is terminated (either because of redundancy or resignation). The initiative for using this acquired right to training belongs to the employee, but the implementation of DIF requires the employer's agreement as to the content of the chosen training.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example: “Gender segregation in the labour market in France”, 2008.

**VAE:** this is another kind of measure that may have repercussions in this area, namely by validating experience, thus making it possible to obtain recognition for informal skills, and also validate certain diplomas. VAE makes it possible to acquire recognition of occupational and non-occupational experience by obtaining a diploma or occupational document awarded by the State. Employees have the right to 24 hours of leave for preparing VAE and can also use their DIF. Companies can be involved by incorporating such requests in their training plan.

However, in the social inclusion report (2005), we showed the limits of this measure: “This measure is *a priori* of interest, as it will enable those who are economically inactive, unemployed or without recognised qualifications to access jobs notably in the social services area (social workers, carers and those providing services to individuals, etc.), where there are shortages. It involves validating social, family and other kinds of experience and, thereby, obtaining part of a diploma. In order to do this, training in this area will be totally overhauled and these occupations will become “more professional”.”

- **Skills assessment (Bilan de competence):** it enables employees to take stock of their skills, abilities and motivations and define an occupational or training project. Skills assessments are carried out by an outside service-provider in the framework of precise stages. The decision for an employee to have a skills assessment can be made by their employer or by employees themselves, with specific leave of 24 hours, which can be covered by the vocational training fund in the context of the company’s training plan if it is suggested by the employer (with the employee’s agreement).

- **Other measures, which have been consolidated given the current crisis, can be mentioned: The Agreement on personalised redeployment (Convention de reclassement personnalis   CRP) and the Occupational transition contract (Contrat de transition professionnelle, CTP)** concern redeployment of employees who have been made redundant (companies of less than 1,000 employees). CTP is experimental (15 employment areas are currently involved and 25 will be by the end of 2009). It involves guaranteeing a high level of financial security (80% of previous gross pay during 12 months, i.e. almost 100% of net pay); highly personalised mentoring (one advisor for 30 jobseekers); **the possibility of training and work** without losing these rights. CRP is applicable throughout the country and is in line with negotiations between social partners. The system exists since 2005 and is now similar to CTP: its duration has increased from 8 to 12 months; benefits will be 80% of gross pay for the first 8 months (instead of 3), then 70% for the rest of the time. Mentoring will also be consolidated (1 advisor for 50 beneficiaries instead of 80-100 currently). 173,000 people have benefited from CRPs since 2005. 4,830 people were on CTPs at the end of 2008.

- **The Professionalisation contract (Contrat de professionnalisation):** is aimed at young people and also jobseekers over 25 and those on minimum social benefits (such as RSA and Specific solidarity allowance (Allocation sp  cifique de solidarit   ASS)). This contract, which lasts between 6 and 12 months (or even 24 months for the unskilled and those on minimum social benefits), is signed by an employer and employee with a view to integration via acquiring an occupational qualification through a sandwich course (combined work in the company and training). A tutor can accompany these people in the company. Adults are remunerated at the level of minimum pay (SMIC). Training constitutes between 15% and

25% of working time (or even more for those on RSA). Companies benefit from exemption from social contributions for young people under 26 and for those on minimum social benefits.

### 3.3 Gender issues

**The impact of DIF:** The multi-sector agreement indicates that one of the objectives is to introduce gender “parity” regarding access to training. **But it should be noted that some of the training time envisaged is outside working hours, thus making access more difficult for mothers.** At the beginning, DIF was not transferable from one sector to another, thus greatly limiting its accessibility in cases of employee mobility – and especially for women, who have more transversal skills and occupations, such as assistants and administrative staff. The recent agreement on modernising the labour market should facilitate transferring this right. A survey on DIF was carried out in 2006, which shows that more than 45% of training carried out in the framework of DIF concerned manual and clerical workers, 33% concerned foremen and higher level technicians, 15% managerial staffs and 10% professional staffs (thus reversing the usual situation of managerial and professional staffs having much more training than others). Most of the requests for training were made in **big companies**. Industry (64%) and banks-finance-insurance (63%) received most requests. Another striking fact of the study is the balance observed between training during working hours and training outside working hours – 48% of those using DIF in the companies that were interviewed do so mainly during working hours and 44% outside working hours. In all, 78% of DIF training in the banks-finance-insurance sector takes place during working hours, whereas industry accepts them mainly outside working hours. The most popular courses requested concern languages (36%) and mainly take place at lunchtime or in the evening. Computer and word processing courses are also popular (35% of requests), followed by those which are directly linked to a specific occupation (15%). **But, it should be noted that, according to the Ministry of Employment, only 3.6% of employees used DIF in 2006 (i.e. 14% of companies). Amongst them, more than half were men...** This could still change, as it is a recent measure (in 2005, only 6% of companies used DIF). Moreover, the share of women can increase as, in general, more of them benefit from specific forms of training (such as for validating skills acquired on the job and for skills assessment) compared with all forms of training, which they request less, because of the structure of employment (more managerial and professional staffs than clerical workers go on courses).

**The impact of VAE:** It is well known that many women work in services to individuals and their work is undervalued (carers, nursing assistants and childminders, etc.). VAE could improve their situation if it involves taking into account, for instance, family experience (bringing up children and care for the elderly). There should also be parallel reflection with a view to gender balance in these jobs (promoting these occupations and possibility of external mobility), in order to encourage more men to come into the area of social services.

The most recent assessments of VAE show that more than 22,000 applications are studied each year and the number is going up all the time (except in 2007). Women account for 66% of the applications. 77% are in employment and 21% are unemployed. The biggest age group is the 30-40 year olds. The high proportion of women is explained by the sectors of activity that are in most demand: CAP for working with young children (14.6% of VAEs); diploma for special needs workers (12.8%); personal assistant BTS (8.5%); vocational secretarial BAC (8.1%); and hairdressing vocational Brevet (5.3%). In other words, half are in sectors with many women.

Overall, it is still difficult for women to access continuing training. Women employees' unequal access to continuing training reflects their levels of qualifications and their family situations. We have already referred to the fact that women executives' access rate is similar to that of men, or even higher in public employment. However women office and manual workers access training less than men because of their working time (part-time work reduces access to training) and because of work and training organisation (training that takes place during several days, unsuitable timing and transport arrangements, and so forth). Moreover, family constraints accentuate disparity in access to training: women with young children train much less than men who have the same family situation. According to a survey on continuing training in 2006, 20% of women have to reorganise their personal lives in order to participate in training, whereas this is the case of only 10% of men (Bref Cereq, 2009). This penalises the least skilled above all, because - contrary to the very idea of lifelong learning - in fact, access and value given to training concerns the 20-40 year old age group, namely when women are most subjected to family time pressures. Women executives have more solutions for help thus enabling them to access training.

Going on training does not change personal organisation of women and men in the same way: for women, it is above all a question of childcare, whereas for men, both leisure activities and childcare need to be changed. The cost involved in such reorganisation also influences the differing involvement of men and women, and also of mothers compared with women without children: 32% of mothers with young children say they have to pay for reorganisation (childcare), compared with 24% of fathers and 21% of women without children. In all, given equivalent levels of qualifications, especially tertiary, both men and women access vocational training, but one's family situation is a real source of discrimination: the probability of access of mothers of young children drops by 30% compared with fathers in the same situation.

Some company experiences go in the direction of promoting women's access to continuing training and thus increasing their flexibility (see the following information box).

#### **Promoting women's access to training: company experiences**

In the equality agreements that we analysed in 2005, the issue of training is systematically referred to:

##### ***Guaranteeing equal access to training and the principle of proportionality***

In more than half of the agreements, mention is made of a will to monitor gender distribution of employees in training and to "*make sure that equal access to training is respected*". Some agreements go further, for example:

- In **EDF – Gaz de France**, the objective announced by the agreement is to reduce the gender gap regarding participation in training. It is a matter of improving the organisation of training: ***short, local, more decentralised training with modules***.

- In **Crédit du Nord**, training must be in line with the proportion of men and women in a given occupation. The aim is to develop the organisation of training so as to limit travelling. *Childcare allowances are provided if training involves being away from home*.

- In **Crédit Mutuel Loire-Atlantique**, a list will be drawn up of those employees who have not changed positions or been on training leading to qualifications since more than 6 months. This aims at "*developing their employability*", in agreement with the employees concerned. The latter will benefit from internal help (advisors for drawing up their training project, tutors and so forth).

- In **AFPA**, the proportion of women and men in training is equal, however another indicator is used, namely **duration of training** that turns out to be unequally distributed. It is envisaged "*to adapt methods of organising training to make them more reconcilable with the constraints of family life*".

### ***Training actions that promote the gender balance of jobs***

In some agreements, training actions that are more targeted have been implemented with a view to improving the gender balance of jobs.

- This is the case in **PSA**. Training actions aim at promoting the entry of women, especially jobseekers, in occupations where men predominate, thanks to partnerships with training bodies.
- The **Schneider Electric System** agreement is amongst those that undertake the most on this point: the company has observed that women access training less than men, and that this situation is related to the distribution of women in occupational categories. A deficit persists amongst manual workers. The company will ensure that their hierarchy proposes training in an identical way to men and women, and if possible reduce problems related to travelling to training. The company undertakes to develop training for women manual workers: training leading to qualifications and/or diplomas for at least **200 voluntary women manual workers** are programmed over a period of 3 years. Other action plans are envisaged regarding gender balance of jobs: for sectors where women predominate, the company will promote their access to other occupations, especially technical ones: training leading to diplomas or qualifications will be open for 50 volunteers (passage from level V to IV). ***Conversely, the presence of men in positions traditionally held by women will be facilitated***, especially by changing job titles, and via training for men, for example in occupations concerning assistance.

Source: Extracted from Laufer, Silvera, 2005

## **3.4 Summary and conclusions**

It is possible to say that in France there is no lack of measures and laws with a view to promoting lifelong learning. In very recent years, lifelong learning takes into account the principle of flexicurity by promoting occupational paths and accompanying both companies and employees in this area. It involves promoting internal mobility (via continuing training), and also external mobility (resulting from redundancy and termination of employment contracts). From this point of view, the rights of employees and jobseekers in terms of training have increased (DIF, access to professionalisation, skills assessments and so forth). But these measures will only be effective in a context of increasing employment, which is far from being the case today. Certainly, people who are better trained will be more able to adapt to changes in employment, but recovery is nevertheless necessary.

## **4. 'NEW SKILLS FOR NEW JOBS'?**

### **4.1 National situation**

The development of new skills with a view to tomorrow's jobs is an essential challenge that has been referred to for a long time already, but which is difficult to implement in France.

*A fortiori* in the current context of financial and economic crisis, future developments of jobs and skills remain vague for most actors. Before this crisis, a survey (Inffolor et alii, 2005) of companies on the role of training in the development of skills showed that the majority of them had a short-term vision of their activity and development of human resources (between 6 months and a maximum of one year: 39.5%) or very short-term vision (less than 6 months: 23.6%). These companies indicated that it is still difficult to anticipate: 45.6% of them adapt the skills of their employees in line with the emergence of new needs. This short-term vision is also emphasised by the fact that only 20% have a skills management plan covering several years. Internal training services are in fact centred on taking into account individual training needs in relation to posts that employees occupy and not in line with forecasts regarding jobs

of the future. However, a different survey (Demos), which was carried out in 2006, shows that for 63% of the companies interviewed, the main issue regarding skills management was the risk of lack of adjustment or obsolescence of skills related to the development of occupations. But it seems that this principle is not applied everywhere, even though awareness is on the increase. In fact, only big companies can have a wider vision of tomorrow's skills and jobs.

On the employees' side, there is awareness regarding developing their own skills, especially amongst executives. A survey carried out by APEC<sup>7</sup> (2008) shows the importance of informal learning in developing skills: "Occupational activity (...) plays an important role in training – having to deal with new situations (new challenges, occupational mobility and so forth), leads to acquiring new skills (via informal learning and also continuing training). (...). There are different informal ways of acquiring skills (self-training, asking others, the Internet and so forth)."

Even though there are significant changes, new needs regarding jobs and required skills still need to be defined.

## 4.2 Policies

French authorities take into account the issues described in the European plan regarding "new skills for new jobs". The measures presented throughout the report reflect this: improving the skills of employees, jobseekers and those excluded from the labour market, on the one hand ; and involving companies more in defining future needs regarding jobs and skills (drawing up agreements regarding forward-looking employment and skills management), on the other.

Various occupational areas are targeted, with the following being the two most important ones:

- 1- new "green" jobs; and
- 2- jobs in personal services

*1. New green occupations* have been defined especially in the framework of the "Environment Grenelle". According to the Minister responsible for sustainable development, "investment in building, renewable energy and thermal renovation will make it possible to gain an additional 0.8% of growth and create about 500,000 jobs between 2009 and 2020". Energetic performance of buildings is a priority, especially renovating housing. 80% of this work is carried out by craftsmen or very small companies, which generally do not have training based on mastering energy. Traditional occupations (insulation, carpentry, heating, ventilation and so forth) are most concerned, as well as consultancy regarding technical skills. Sought-after skills concern **mastering new technology, knowledge of suitable technical solutions, and transversal knowledge on energy issues**. There will also be new jobs in consultancy regarding saving energy. However, paradoxically, this new sector finds it difficult to recruit because of a lack of **available skills** resulting from lack of suitable training. According to those working in the sector, not all traditional training in building is suitable and much of it has introduced the "fashionable" topic of "sustainable development" without providing any real content that leads to skills in this area. In fact, academic Masters exist in these disciplines, but their approach is too conceptual, while the real need is for technicians (with CAP/BEP-level training) and higher technicians (BTS). However these short vocational

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<sup>7</sup> APEC: Association pour l'emploi des cadres (Executives employment association)

courses are poorly viewed, while training of professional engineers is not practical enough in this area.

The same goes for the sector of renewable energy, where there is a striking lack of skills, both at the technical level (installation of thermal solar panels, etc.) and commercial and technical-commercial levels.

**2. Personal services occupations:** as we recalled in our last report (2010)<sup>8</sup>, there are considerable needs in this area regarding home-helps for the dependant elderly, young children and cleaning, as well as childminders, paediatric nursing assistants, nursing assistants and so forth. In theory, this occupational area represents 500,000 new jobs, but they are not all of the same kind. Some require well-defined skills with a diploma and collective agreement, as well as a career path, such as paediatric nursing assistants, who work in crèches and hospitals, with a paediatric nursing assistant diploma involving 1,435 hours of training and validated by a competitive examination (concours).

Others are vaguer, such as social life assistants, for whom there is well-established training with a State diploma, but training can last anywhere between 9 and 36 months, with levels that are not homogeneous. In the area of individuals who are employers, working relationships are beginning to be developed, but they do not come under the labour code. Nor is there a clearly defined situation for those who are employed by an association or a company (there is not a specific collective agreement). Although we have referred to the big range of skills required in this area, “informal” ones still predominate.

### 4.3 Gender issues

Developing skills and meeting the needs of tomorrow’s jobs are clearly issues that concern women in particular. Given increasing uncertainty regarding the development of tomorrow’s occupations, **skills that are sought-after are ones that are wide-ranging and transversal, as well as an ability to adapt quickly.** Training that is mainly done by women is in line with this profile: general and methodological training, ability to write, understand and adapt are terms that are often used to define the skills of jobs where women predominate. Indeed, amongst the paths that are often explored, **the issue of transversal and informal skills** is important. Jobs where women predominate often require such skills that are not recognised and valued in employment. In my view, new skills management regarding tomorrow’s jobs involves giving value to informal skills (in care jobs) and also to under-valued jobs that are considered only to be “support” jobs.

Men predominate in the booming ecology sector. However, we know that the building industry has organised campaigns to bring women into the industry, but they have not had significant results. There is thus an important challenge in developing these green jobs in such a way as to incorporate the issue of gender balance. The needs of the “green” sector in fact involve skills that could attract women more, namely environmental consulting, mastering new technology, knowledge of suitable technical solutions and transversal knowledge of energy issues.

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<sup>8</sup>*Silvera (2010), Care for dependent elderly and gender equality in France.*

Moreover, amongst tomorrow's jobs, the area of personal services concerns women in particular. But we have recalled on many occasions that this sector is not valued, nor recognised, and is worthy of a real process of professionalisation via the creation of a real collective agreement, including recognition of all experience acquired both outside and inside the labour market; development of suitable training that makes career paths possible (especially towards positions of responsibility (supervising teams) in the personal services sector); improvement of schedules and working conditions, and so forth.

Finally, besides both of these sectors, all companies will be pursuing the development of NICT – a field in which there is no reason for women not to be involved (their numbers are however declining in this area of training).

In order to enable women to be involved in new areas, training needs to be adapted to their constraints. Open and remote training (Cabanat, 2004) is a possible response. It involves developing new training that is adapted to the needs of reconciling working, training and family times of all employees, especially mothers. However, access to information technology is necessary for this to be possible. A study of the Ministry of research and new technology in 2003, entitled “Women and the Internet”, showed that some obstacles still exist regarding women's access to this type of tool, especially for the least skilled and oldest ones, as well as those living in the countryside. Time is one of the important obstacles – in order to be able to invest in ICT, it is necessary to have time for training and getting used to the tool. According to Cabanat, two major reasons explain why women use ICT less: “lack of time to get involved in it and their habit of giving priority to others; big resistance to change, because many of them do not see the interest and potential of ICT”.

Remote training aims at removing these obstacles. The proposed programme has thus succeeded in convincing women to use this tool in order to improve their training, create networks and share experiences; and also develop teleworking as a solution, given family constraints.

Thus, e-learning is an interesting tool for everyone, especially for parents, and it could offer gradual access to more qualified jobs for those women who have most difficulties, by taking into account constraints related to space and time. Along with other measures such as VAE, this kind of measure could enable women to access and benefit from new skills, while also preparing for tomorrow's jobs.

#### **4.4 Summary and conclusions**

It is clearly difficult to determine the future of jobs in a crisis context. Nevertheless, certain paths are opening up in France: many measures encouraging people to develop skills exist both for employees and companies. Likewise, the relationship between the world of training and that of companies is better than before. Suitable tools for transforming traditional apprenticeships also exist. But, nevertheless, there is no real focus to ensure that these changes incorporate gender equality, as well as the battle against social inequality in accessing training and skilled employment. If one examines both of the sectors that are creating jobs of the future, there is gendered division of labour *du travail*: on the one hand, jobs in the process of being transformed (“green jobs”), where the initial traditional level will be greatly increased; on the other hand, the personal services sector finds it very difficult to recognise new needs in skills and to improve the quality of these jobs. It appears essential to change this division, by encouraging women to go into these skilled jobs and men into

personal services, provided the latter are given greater value. Finally, it is also necessary to develop training tools that are adapted to employees needs, especially of those of parents, such as e-learning and training modules.

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Participation in lifelong learning has become an important issue in France. Many speeches, measures and agreements refer to giving a second chance to those who left school with insufficient basic education. But it is not certain that this principle is really recognised. For example, changing direction, making a different occupational choice from the path originally chosen is often encouraged by the authorities (especially, the employment centre, Pôle Emploi), but not always welcomed by companies. In France, initial diplomas are the passport for entering economically active life, even if – with the influence of Europe and development of the economic and social context - other paths appear to promote lifelong learning.

Firstly, we noted that the proportion of young French people without diplomas is significantly smaller than the EU average. This is even more the case for girls, of whom less than 10% are in this situation: **they are the only ones to have met the European target of less than 10% of early school leavers without diplomas.** French boys do better (13.8%) than the European average, but are well below the EU target. Persisting early leaving can be explained by the fact that the French educational system promotes abstraction rather than a more concrete approach to knowledge than is the case in other countries. “Active” teaching methods used in sandwich courses can be useful for pupils who do not manage to find their place within the “mould” of the “collège” as it is today.

But girls are still penalised by the choice of courses. Even though they stay in the education system longer and do better than boys, this does not prevent them from being under-represented in vocational and scientific courses, namely those which offer more job opportunities and promotions. Thus, table 6 shows that there is parity in the whole of the educational system with the number of girls being equal to that of boys; however, there are more of them in the lycées and amongst students. But when one examines the courses they take, they are always doing the same specialisations:

Although girls do better, in the lycée, they constitute the great majority of those studying arts subjects, and also doing technological courses in management and health. However, they are almost totally absent from vocational baccalaureates in production, and from industrial scientific courses in the lycée (less than 10% are girls). Girls constitute the majority of students (56%), but there again they are under-represented amongst those preparing entrance examinations for the grandes écoles and above all in engineering schools (25.5%), even though significant progress has been made in this area. Finally, their share of apprenticeships has stagnated for decades at 30%.

In France, recent years have seen major changes regarding both basic education and vocational training. Laws, agreements and participation of public and private actors have made it possible to put new life into policy combating school drop outs and consolidating lifelong learning. Although this has been on the agenda for 40 years in France, the impact of these choices has not yet been entirely felt.

Important efforts have thus been made in France to limit the number of early school leavers, but continuing training is not general practice, even if it is wanted by every one. Moreover,

women are ahead in terms of initial education - especially regarding tertiary education - but they continue to be penalised in the labour market: with less recognition for their diplomas, and greater difficulties in accessing training, especially if they are low-skilled. In fact, those who are most qualified (both men and women) benefit most from continuing training, which is totally paradoxical.

France is way below the European average concerning lifelong learning: from 2000 to 2005, the average gap between France and Europe even increased from 4 to 7 points to France's disadvantage. But from 2006 onwards, there was a significant improvement in France: the LLL rate increased by more than 4 points. But France remains way below the European target of 12% (with only 7.1% in 2008).

Overall, it is still difficult for women to access continuing training. Women employees unequal access to continuing training reflects their levels of qualifications and their family situations. We have already referred to the fact that women executives' access rate is similar to that of men, or even higher in public employment. However women office and manual workers access training less than men because of their working time (part-time work reduces access to training) and because of work and training organisation (training that takes place during several days, unsuitable timing and transport arrangements, and so forth). Moreover, family constraints accentuate disparity in access to training: women with young children train much less than men who have the same family situation.

It is possible to say that in France there is no lack of measures and laws with a view to promoting lifelong learning. In very recent years, lifelong learning takes into account the principle of flexicurity by promoting occupational paths and accompanying both companies and employees in this area. It involves promoting internal mobility (via continuing training), and also external mobility (resulting from redundancy and termination of employment contracts). From this point of view, the rights of employees and jobseekers in terms of training have increased (DIF, access to professionalisation, skills assessments and so forth). But these measures will only be effective in a context of increasing employment, which is far from being the case today. Certainly, people who are better trained will be more able to adapt to changes in employment, but recovery is nevertheless necessary.

Amongst the paths that are often explored, **the issue of transversal and informal skills** is important. But jobs where women predominate often require such skills that are not recognised and valued in employment. New skills management regarding tomorrow's jobs involves giving value to informal skills (in care jobs) and also to under-valued jobs that are considered only to be "support" jobs.

It is clearly difficult to determine the future of jobs in a crisis context. Nevertheless, certain paths are opening up in France: many measures encouraging people to develop skills exist both for employees and companies. Likewise, the relationship between the world of training and that of companies is better than before. Suitable tools for transforming traditional apprenticeships also exist. But, nevertheless, there is no real focus to ensure that these changes incorporate gender equality and the battle against social inequality in accessing training and skilled employment. If one examines both of the sectors that are creating future jobs, there is gendered division of labour *du travail*: on the one hand, jobs in the process of being transformed ("green jobs"), where the initial traditional level will be greatly increased. On the other hand, the personal services sector finds it very difficult to recognise new needs in skills and to improve the quality of these jobs. It seems essential to change this division, by

encouraging women to go into these skilled jobs and men into personal services, provided the latter are given greater value. Finally, it is also necessary to develop training tools that are adapted to employees needs, especially those parents, such as e-learning and training modules.

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