

euTalent

Business in Europe Hosting Apprenticeships for Youth

National Policy Recommendation Report France

Identification and removal of
policy obstacles to engage SMEs





Business in Europe Hosting Apprenticeships for Youth

Supporting SMEs to offer more and better quality apprenticeships

Introduction- National context/ background

This national recommendation report closes the two and a half year of the EU TALENT project, that was ran in France by the Foundation Acting Against Exclusion (FACE). This project was implemented through the territories of Ile de France (Face Paris, Seine Saint Denis, Val de Marne) and Grand Est (Face Vosges) and impacted 104 Smes.

This project has been designed to develop apprenticeships in SMEs. This learning programme is a key lever to the raise of employability of young people in France. 70 % of apprentices find a job in the seven months following their training.

In 2015, there were approximately 3.81 million SMEs in France and they offer 74 % of jobs. However, recruitment of apprentices in companies from 10 to 50 employees is decreasing, as for SMES having between 50 to 199 employees. The development of apprenticeship has thus been set by the government as a priority, with the objective of 500 000 apprentices.

Moreover, apprenticeships programmes are facing quality issues. Only 57 % of SMEs' heads of companies are renewing every year apprenticeships programmes. 28 % of contracts are interrupted during the training. High cost of recruitment, complexity of the process, lack of match between skills needed by employers and those offered by apprentices are some of the factors explaining this challenge.

The EU TALENT project thus aimed at understanding better the barriers met by SMEs and to offer concrete solution to tackle them. In total, 17 pilots SMEs have received a tailor support. 7 good practices of pioneer SMEs have been collected and shared, 3 pilots webinars were organised and an apprenticeship tool box resuming all the knowledge collected during the project was sent to a learning network composed of 104 SMEs.



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Introduction- National context/ background

This report summarizes challenges faced, activities ran and recommendations towards public stakeholders made by stakeholders during the project, (through 2 stakeholders meeting, 4 webinars and 1 national workshop, gathering in total 203 participants).

Recommendations are framed in the context of the changing legal landscape in France, with the adoption, in August 2018, of the law “Pour la liberté de choisir son avenir professionnel” and that aims at reaching the following objectives :

- Simplify apprenticeship framework, reduce number of stakeholders and give more flexibility to employers, in order to increase companies’ involvement
- Design the apprenticeships programmes according to the needs expressed by the companies and the professional branches
- Make apprenticeship a real alternative to higher education
- Valorise apprenticeship as a great employment lever by talking more about it and earlier at school, to reach both the youth and families

Challenges



1. **SMEs lack of information on the business benefits and available financial support for providing apprenticeships**

Activities



1. **Rolling out of a communication campaign on social medias on the benefits of apprenticeships, reaching 9 261 SMES**

- **Creation of a company mobilisation kit**, composed of communication tools (arguments list, visuals, testimonies, good practices), to convince SMES of the benefits of quality apprenticeships and to engage them in the project.
- **Building of partnerships with 4 organisations members of the FACE network (FACE Paris, Val de Marne, Seine Saint Denis, Vosges) and 5 main stakeholders of apprenticeships in France (Agefos PME, CCCA BTP, CCI FRANCE, APCMA, CPME)** which related the communication campaign through their network.
- **News of the project and raising awareness campaign was rolled out through weekly posts on medias channel** (facebook, twitter, linkedin, Instagram).
- **Creation of a page** dedicated to the project on the FACE website

Policy



Recommendations

- A. **Clarify the content of information** towards SMEs on opportunities for recruiting apprentice
- B. **Favor the communication through SMEs network and representatives** to better manage the stream of communication
- C. **Design learning programmes provided by VET organisations according to the needs of companies.**

Challenges



2. SMEs lack human resources, network and structures to access and provide quality apprenticeships

3. The apprenticeships landscape is very complex. Numerous actors are taking part to it: state bodies, business network, local associations.

Activities



2. Rolling out of the online assessment tool on quality of apprentices and creation of a pilot group of 17 SMEs to improve the quality of apprenticeships

- **The online assessment tool** was especially designed for SMEs to assess their internal apprenticeships systems in 5 areas: governance, recruitment, quality of learning, quality of training and working conditions. The test helped to identify gaps and areas of improvement (recruitment and learning process).
- **Support was provided to SMEs based on the main issues identified through the assessment tool.** A practical guide with indication of tools, and relevant actors in the 5 category of the diagnostic was sent to each of the Sme. A follow up call and a final round of assessment was offered to monitor progress.
- **3 pilots webinars were organized, gathering 26 participants, including 20 SMES, and the intervention of 5 experts (Vit-On-Job, CCI Bretagne, les Compagnons du Devoir, Face Vosges).** They aimed at giving practical information about apprenticeship regarding what we identified as being the most challenging issues for SMEs. The webinars gave useful resources, indicated key actors to help SMEs improve the quality of apprenticeship and shared inspiring practices. The webinars covered the following subjects:
 - How to recruit an apprentice (governance, recruitment, working conditions)
 - How to train tutors / mentors (sharing of innovative practices)
 - How to improve the quality of learning for the apprentices within the company (development of hard and soft skills)
- **A learning network composed of 104 SMEs was created and received a newsletter in the frame of a tool box,** containing all the webinars and practical information. This aimed at facilitating the appropriation of digital tools for SMEs, not always at ease in using tools and exchanging through webinars. This was also aimed for SMEs who did not attend those webinars.

Policy



Recommendations

D. Encourage a relationship based on proximity with SMEs to better match their needs and issues

E. Increase the financial support to SMEs to encourage them to recruit more apprentices and to offer a better quality of apprenticeship

F. Simplify the organisation of apprenticeship in France, and the legal and administrative framework

Challenges



4. Apprenticeship is still perceived as a dead-end road and young people and their parents are reluctant to engage in it

Activities



- **4 stakeholders webinars** were set up to increase the dialogue and exchange of good practices among education and employment stakeholders. They gathered **106 participants** and **8 experts** including Engie, CCCA BTP, AG2R La Mondiale, EDF, APCMA, Jean Arthuis's team, Les Compagnons du Devoir, Adecco)
- Barriers and levers to the development of apprenticeships in Smes
- Digital tools as a lever to apprenticeships development
- Mobility of apprentices in the European Union
- Making Apprenticeship a pathway to excellence
- **2 stakeholders meeting** were organised, gathering **71 participants** with local associations and apprenticeships actors (smes, experts as France Stratégie, big companies as GRDF, Starbucks, Allianz, Air France, associations as Crée ton avenir, national education bodies, Vet providers as AFDAS)
- **7 good practices of Smes engaged in quality apprenticeships** programmes have been shared on the Eu Talent website :
 - Horizon Jardin on the professional transition
 - Humando on the recruitment process
 - UCP Scop Val de Marne and Decomatic, Hotel Mercure Grenoble, on the quality of training
 - Canatec and Movea on the quality of learning

Policy



Recommendations

G. Stimulate and reinforce the role of intermediary organisations (associations) to create strong partnership between schools and companies

H. Promote apprenticeship and deliver a more professional oriented approach in secondary school (company visits in 8th grade, presentation of fields of activity and jobs ...)

I. Valorise the best practices of the companies engaged in quality apprenticeship through a European certification

Conclusions

We identified through the activities rolled out during the EU TALENT project **main challenges met by SMES to develop quality apprenticeships**. These conclusions are based on the results of online assessment realized by the 17 pilots SMEs, but also on the exchanges, debates and discussions held during the stakeholders meetings and webinars, as the pilot web-conferences organized.

The main barriers are the following :

- **Business barriers :**

- SMEs lack of information on the business benefits and available financial support for providing apprenticeships
- SMEs lack human resources, network and structures to access and provide quality apprenticeships

- **Society barriers :**

- The apprenticeships landscape is very complex and SMEs are lost in it. Numerous actors are taking part to it: state bodies, business network, local associations.
- Apprenticeship is still perceived as a dead-end road and young people and their parents are reluctant to engage in it

Fortunately, the EU TALENT project contributed to tackle these issues, by the tailored support to 17 pilots SMEs and by the exchange of experiences and good practices through the building of the learning network and the identification of good practices already existing in SMEs.

Our main recommendations are pointing **the need to improve the stream and the content of information towards SMEs, to support them in findings tailored financial and operational solutions and to find their way in a complex landscape, in order to offer quality apprenticeships. Awareness rising campaign on the added value of apprenticeships programmes for young** must also be ran, to change the look on a learning experience full of opportunities. **Eventually, needs of companies must be better taken into account in the design of training and diplomas, for a better match between theoretical and practical training.** With these conditions met, **SMEs could play their actual role in the training of young generation.**

More global recommendations can be suggested on project design concerning apprenticeship development in SMEs.

It is first very challenging to mobilise SMEs. If they are globally interested in tackling the issue of apprenticeship, they are struggling to fully commit themselves on a long run in a project. This is of course linked to the lack of resources mentioned above. A second key factor is the focus of the project. **The main challenge when it comes to apprenticeship encountered by SMES is rather linked to the complex governance, legislation and grant system to recruit an apprentice.** SMES are still struggling on this very first step and seem **not mature enough to tackle the qualitative aspects**, which were at the heart of the EU TALENT project. Thus they did not always perceive the business case during our experimentation.

Tools identified to improve the quality of apprenticeships during the project might also be reconsidered. The organization of a second round of assessment less than one year after the first test prevent to perceive qualitative results of the project impacts. Indeed, **it requires a lot of time to Smes to actually change their practices.** Moreover, the gathering and sharing of good practices among was key challenge. SMES don't identify their good practices or don't perceive the advantage to share it.

Last but not least, SMEs are not at ease in using digital tools and exchanging through online platform or webinars. Thus it was more difficult to mobilize them to participate to online meetings. **Physical meetings organized in the frame of the project where more successful.**

Despite these numerous challenges, developing apprenticeships in SMEs remains a priority. Quality aspects must be tackled, as the access to apprenticeships for companies and for young. **To this regard, pre-apprenticeships programmes must be developed to prepare young people to this training, full of opportunities.**

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