



Career Transitions: Revitalizing and Better Targeting Public Action



Report

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2023-108R
March 2024

SUMMARY

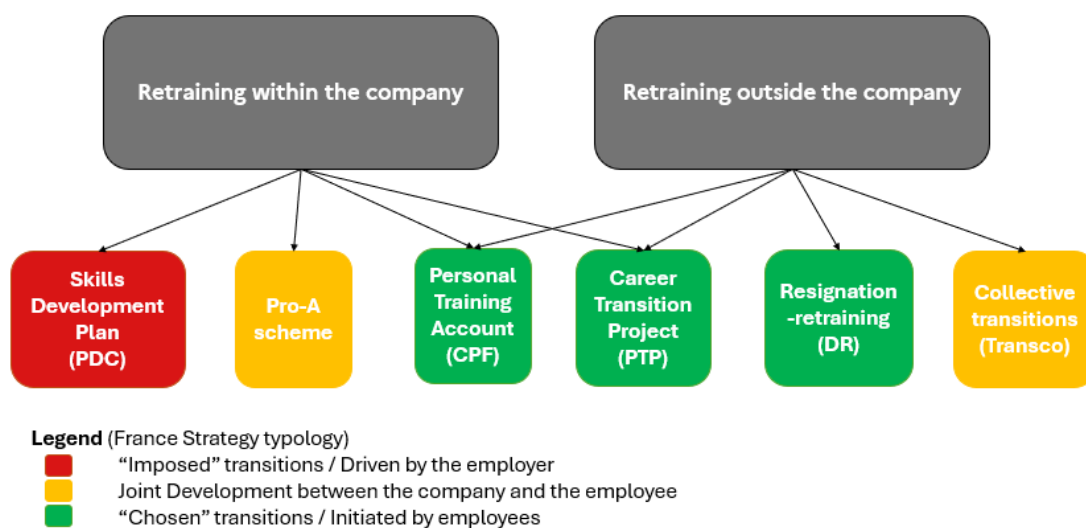
Commissioned by the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs and approved by the ministers responsible for labor, employment, and vocational training, the mission aimed to evaluate primarily the “Career Transition Project” (Projet de Transition Professionnelle - PTP), which succeeded the Individual Training Leave (CIF). The assessment focused on its alignment with career transition goals, its operational effectiveness, its integration with other available support schemes for professional mobility, and, more broadly, the clarity, relevance, and governance of the overall policy on professional transitions.

The mission first recalls that career transitions were initially implemented to address two primary **challenges**: supporting economic shifts in declining industries and regions and enabling salaried workers who so desire to switch careers. Over time, two additional challenges emerged: facilitating recruitment into sectors with high projected labor needs and supporting mid- to late-career transitions to extend working lives and counteract occupational wear and tear. These concerns intersect significantly with ongoing and future transformations in the labor market—demographic, ecological, and digital in nature—as well as with renewed questions about the meaning and conditions of work, which became especially salient after the COVID-19 crisis in certain professional sectors. This context highlights both the scale of the need for career transition support and the operational investment required to meet it, even though most career transitions do not involve formal training or necessarily rely on public mechanisms.

In response to these needs, a **complex ecosystem of tools** to support professional transitions has gradually been built, most recently overhauled by the September 5, 2018 law granting individuals the freedom to choose their professional future. This law reaffirmed employer responsibility via the “Skills Development Plan” (Plan de Développement des Compétences - PDC) and bolstered the right to professional training through autonomous use of the Personal Training Account (Compte Personnel de Formation - CPF), assuming the employee has accrued sufficient credit to fund extensive training programs. Within this system, a distinction can be drawn between:

- Transition tools post-hiring, limited to job seekers (e.g., professionalization contracts);
- Career changes within the same company, which may use the PDC and CPF (with little available data on the scale of such use), sometimes supported by the National Employment and Training Fund (FNE-Formation) and the “Pro-A” scheme for career change or advancement through work-study;
- Transitions to jobs outside the original company, which dominate current public offerings: PTP, resignation-to-retraining pathways, collective transitions (Transco), professional security contracts, and mobility leave options related to economic layoffs.

Graph 1: Ecosystem of professional retraining programs



Source : Mission

A comparative look at Germany and Austria reveals that training leave mechanisms comparable to the PTP or Pro-A exist but offer less generous financial support and reach twice the proportion of the working population.

The mission focused its analysis on a set of programs that fall into two categories: those co-designed by employer and employee (Pro-A, Transco), and those initiated independently by the employee (CPF, PTP, resignation-to-retraining).

Regarding co-constructed programs, Pro-A, designed to support internal job changes or promotions, has seen limited development due to overly strict criteria (training below bachelor's level, restricted list of eligible certifications set by industry agreements, capped and limited reimbursement rates). Similarly, although attractive in theory, **Transco** has seen only marginal use in practice.

Among **employee-driven programs**, the **CPF**—whose access has been simplified since 2018—has financed 47,000 career transition pathways, making it the leading vehicle for long-format, certified training (over 150 hours). However, co-funding from employers remains rare.

The **resignation-to-retraining program** has shown steady growth, particularly among young and well-qualified participants, though France Travail has not implemented follow-up monitoring of these individuals' post-training outcomes.

As for the **PTP**, the mission's detailed analysis yielded several key findings:

- Despite a sharp drop in PTP applications and budget compared to the CIF, the approval rate for funded applications is 10 percentage points higher (70% vs. 60%);
- The relevance of the project—assessed in terms of training pathway coherence, funding strategy, and employment prospects—is the main selection criterion, though evaluation standards vary widely across regional commissions;

- Unlike the CIF, PTP application review now includes prioritization, though this is largely ineffective except for low-qualified or medically unfit workers;
- PTP is a high-cost-per-participant program, partly due to longer training durations, especially in health and social care. However, co-funding (from employers, Agefiph, training operators, or EU funds) remains limited;
- A significant portion of transitions involve moves within the same sector or even the same company (15% of PTP cases);
- The effective transition rate six months after training is just over 60%, with wide variation by profession (e.g., 88% for nursing assistants).

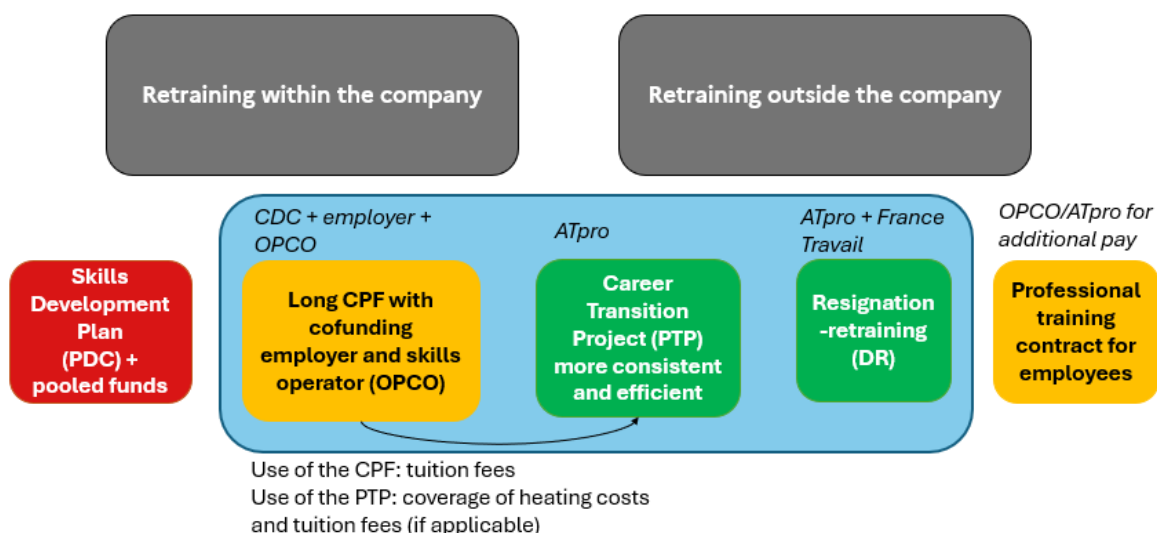
The **overall governance of professional transition programs** appears weak. There is no systematic tracking of employer or industry engagement in career transitions due to limited data on PDC implementation and relevant collective agreements, though partial data suggest that some do include pooled or co-funded arrangements. Parity-governed Career Transition Associations (ATpro) operate with broad autonomy, and their national umbrella, Certif Pro, currently plays only a limited coordination and public liaison role. Regionally, the mission found that Regional Councils play a minimal part, as they lack jurisdiction over employee training. France Travail, while not currently active in this area, could play a broader role given its involvement in programs for job seekers, resignation-to-retraining, and career counseling. Despite the emergence of transition advisors, public authorities remain largely passive on these matters.

In response, the mission envisions a **target model for career transitions, with key priorities**: strengthening the role of employers, industry branches, and training operators (OPCOs) in supporting internal career mobility; preserving employee-initiated programs, coupled with better safeguards; expanding co-constructed options, especially through work-study formats; prioritizing specific groups (low-skilled workers, those exposed to hardship, mid- or late-career employees, workers deemed unfit); ensuring more equitable access across regions; improving efficiency to support more transitions within a stable budget.

To **streamline and simplify the professional transition landscape**, the mission proposes:

- Better coordination between CPF and PDC when internal labor relations allow for aligning employee goals with company needs;
- Reducing the number of programs (e.g., eliminating Transco and replacing it with FNE-Formation via local intermediation platforms, as well as integrating its aims into Pro-A);
- Using the well-known professionalization contract to offer retraining through work-study to currently employed individuals—whether they stay with or leave their current employer. This would be piloted with a cap, e.g., 10,000 contracts, to control cost;
- Requiring co-financing of PTP applications through CPF credits and employer/branch/OPCO contributions;
- Reinforcing established programs like the PDC and resignation-to-retraining.

Graph 2: Target of professional transition measures



Source : Mission

The mission also calls for **broader and more consistent use of PTP** to meet professional mobility needs, setting selective goals based on beneficiary profiles and targeted sectors, optimizing funding by reducing training durations, increasing co-financing, and allowing partial funding for non-priority cases. Application review practices should be standardized nationwide.

Support services for applicants and beneficiaries should be improved, though the mission does not recommend mandating use of Career Development Counseling (CEP).

Finally, the mission recommends transforming Certif Pro into a robust national network head for the ATpro associations, providing it with **adequate governance and resources**. It suggests reorganizing ATpro governance, ideally integrating it into Certif Pro while preserving regional parity commissions' authority to issue opinions on PTP and resignation-to-retraining applications. Lastly, it advocates diversifying and deepening partnerships and co-financing frameworks.